A process study of sensemaking and sensegiving During organisational change

Nabi Zaher

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A PROCESS STUDY OF SENSEMAKING AND SENSEGIVING DURING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award to the degree:

Doctor of Philosophy
from
University of Wollongong

by
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHSP</td>
<td>Commonwealth Home Support Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FECCA</td>
<td>Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCPP</td>
<td>Home Care Packages Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IECC</td>
<td>Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCCI</td>
<td>Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDIS</td>
<td>National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICAC</td>
<td>Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMS</td>
<td>Roads and Maritime Services</td>
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Abstract

Traditional views of organisations often presume that organisations ought to be stable entities, and lack of stability shows the failure of organisational management. Research studies that are influenced by such views feel that they should provide a justification for any changes that they identify in an organising context. At the same time, there is a burgeoning body of research that, drawing on process philosophers, such as Whitehead, Mead, Bergson and Rescher, investigates the affordance of process views for organisation studies. For this stream of research, the presumption is that all things are in a state of flux and becoming, and change is the default explanation for an organisation’s becoming. However, despite their significant contributions to the field, process studies of organisation are nascent, providing much room for further investigation. One of the areas of interest for process scholars has been the empirical application of a process view to organisation studies. The underlying question for this challenge is how practical a process view of organisation is. In other words, can an organisation’s state of flux and becoming be shown empirically? This research is an attempt to respond to this question.

This research empirically investigates how an organisation’s becoming unfolds. The study also investigates how organisational members make sense of the becoming and change. Using a process ontology and performative epistemology, the study employs a collaborative-participatory methodology to investigate the becoming of the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI), a local, peak community organisation in south-east New South Wales (NSW), Australia. By bringing the constitutive happenings of MCCI to the fore, the study challenges some of the established

---

1 It is the real name of the subject organisation.
notions in organisation studies, such as organisational stability, and change management as a stability-restoring exercise.

In developing a process view congruent with everyday life in organisations, the research shows that the becoming of an organisation is defined by the flux and flow of happenings, which are characterised by continuous change. The study draws attention to organisational sensemaking and sensegiving as inseparable sub-processes of its becoming. It is shown that organisational sensemaking and sensegiving are influenced by power, resistance and political dynamics. While the research findings reinforce the political characteristic of organisational becoming, they underline the effects of temporal dimensions on organisational becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving. The study suggests that managing organisational change needs to be seen as streamlining the flow, rather than attempting to impose stability. In streamlining efforts, the mutually constitutive relationship between sensemaking and other processes of organisational becoming needs to be given due consideration.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter Structure

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Dominant Body of Literature on Organisation Studies
1.3 Process Thinking and Its Affordance for Organisation Studies
   1.3.1 Definition of Terms
1.4 Limitations of Existing Process Organisation Studies
1.5 Research Questions
1.6 Research Context
1.7 Organisation of the Thesis
1.1 Introduction

Organisational change may create anxiety and discomfort for those who are involved in and affected by it. At times, its occurrence is denied, its presumed absence is celebrated as stability, and ‘too much’ of it is viewed to reflect badly on management. At the same time, it is seen as necessary for an organisation’s evolution and is thought to provide opportunities for achieving organisational goals and objectives. What is organisational change? What does too little or too much change mean for an organisation? How does change relate to the making and remaking of an organisation? How do organisational members\(^2\) make and give sense of it? More broadly, what is change? What is the relationship between time and change? Such questions are the precursors to this research.

This research is an empirical investigation of organisational becoming. It sets out to investigate how organisational change happens, how change relates to organisational becoming and how organisational members make and give sense of that becoming. It aims to explore what role organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving play in the making and remaking of an organisation. By focusing on the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI)\(^3\), a small, community-based organisation, the study aims to investigate whether an organisation’s becoming and its members’ sensemaking and sensegiving of that becoming can be demonstrated empirically. But what academic grounds exist for such an investigation? This chapter highlights the opportunities and limitations that the existing body of research in organisation studies

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\(^2\) Unless specified otherwise, the term ‘organisational member’ used in this thesis covers staff, volunteers and ‘financial members’ of an organisation in general or MCCI in particular.

\(^3\) MCCI’s management committee/board and senior management consented to the use of the organisation’s real name in this thesis and other publications resulting from this study.
offers for such an investigation. It also introduces the research questions and research context before outlining the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 Dominant Body of Literature on Organisation Studies

The current body of literature in organisation studies is dominated by traditional views of organisation, which conceptualise organisations as stable entities with well-defined boundaries and characteristics (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008; Blau & Scott 1963; Silverman 1970; Van de Ven & Poole 2005). These entities are thought to be formed by interactions of material bodies (Berryman 2011; Van de Ven & Poole 2005), which are assumed to have endurance through time. Stability, therefore, is seen as the default explanation for organisations (Bickhard 2008, 2011). Although the equilibrium-based approaches to organisation studies are framed variously (Romanelli & Tushman 1994; Scott 2010), at their core is the argument that organisational change is a temporary instability between enduring stable states (Romanelli & Tushman 1994). Change is seen as an episodic response to external and/or internal factors that drive organisations to move from one stable state to another (Burnes 2004). Since change is seen as a temporary or episodic happening, traditional investigations of organisational change focus on the causes of organisational change, the difference between the so-called pre-change and post-change states, and the things or bodies that oscillate between these states. Change itself often remains missing from the discussion. From these perspectives, not only is the notion of ongoing change in organisations denied (Bickhard 2008), but organisational practices, such as management, are also seen to have the prime task of ensuring and restoring stability. Studies that come from traditional views of organisation try to present a justification for any changes that they recognise in organisations, attempting to show them as unusual situations.
Traditional views of organisation and organisational change, however, have come under scrutiny and criticism from many perspectives (for example, Dawson 1994; Tsoukas & Chia 2002; Van de Ven & Poole 2005), including from within the tradition. Whilst some of these criticisms do hint at the ‘complex and chaotic organisational reality’ (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008, p. 28), their explanations are limited. This section of the literature often uses the term ‘complexity’ to refer to the multiplicity of the substantial parts that make these entities (Silverman 1970). Their alternative views do not adequately explain how organisations are made and remade in practice. Their explanations mainly differ in terms of their stance on the frequency and modalities of organisational change (Bullock & Batten 1985; Burnes 1996, 2004; Dunphy & Stace 1993). The assumptions of organisations as stable entities and change as a temporary state or undesirable occurrence in organisational life remain unchallenged. Traditional approaches to organisation and organisational change do not adequately explain what happens in an organising context and how an organisation’s becoming unfolds (Hernes 2014a). They, therefore, do not afford a suitable theoretical framework for investigating organisational flux, constant change and becoming.

The approaches and positions adopted by this section of the literature in organisation studies indicate a more fundamental issue about organisations. Their limitations come from a difference in the broader mode of thought, which, as Tsoukas and Chia (2011) point out, determines how organisations are theorised, and how organisation studies are undertaken. That mode of thought is about the philosophical underpinning of organisation studies, which centres on the nature of reality – what is an organisation? Is it a stable entity or flux of changes? Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and Van de Ven and Poole (2005) argue that it is this philosophical underpinning or the response to the general question about the nature of reality that marks the deep divide in the
literature in organisation studies. An alternative to the philosophical approach adopted by traditional views in organisation studies is process thinking. What is process thinking and what is its affordance for organisation studies?

1.3 Process Thinking and Its Affordance for Organisation Studies

Process thinking has a long and rich history in both the Western and Eastern traditions (Helin et al. 2014). Traced back to Heraclitus’ doctrine in Western philosophy (Rescher 1996; Whitehead 1929), it is a broad movement and a mode of thought that provides explanations to the fundamental questions about reality. Process thinking starts with conceptualising ‘reality as exclusively processual’ (Chia 1999, p. 214), prioritising change and becoming over stability and being. It sees substances and substantial things as processes at bottom (Rescher 1996). It shifts the focus to the ongoing becoming of things (Mead 1932) – how things are shaped and reshaped. Substantial things, body, life and the associated factors that characterise life are conceptualised and explained in terms of their becoming. Their being or existence is seen in a state of becoming; therefore, their becoming, which explains their being, is given priority and/or primacy. Process thinking recognises time and change as the principal categories of metaphysical understanding (Rescher 2000). From a process perspective, the passage of time cannot be treated without becoming (Mead 1932), and becoming unfolds in the form of flux of happenings or constant change. The affinity of process thinking with flux and constant change makes the earlier a useful approach for the study of organisational change and becoming.

Process thinking is diverse (Rescher 1996). Within the process tradition, positions on the fundamentality of processes can be located on a continuum between the denial of substances (Whitehead 1929) and what Rescher (1996) calls the downgrading of processes to a quality of substances. Hernes and Weik (2007) refer to these ends of the
process continuum as the endogenous and exogenous process views, whereas Chia and
Langley (2004) call them the strong and weak process views, respectively. Drawing on
Rescher’s (1996) process philosophy, the process approach adopted in this study gives
primacy and priority to processes without denying the existence of substances or
advocating detachment from them. From this position, processes are viewed as the
fundamental building blocks of reality, rather than a quality of substances. Reality is seen
as processual (Chia 1999) and substances are conceptualised in terms of the processes
that constitute them. Matter and body are viewed as temporarily hardened processes
(Kristensen et al. 2014). Their significance, therefore, is associated with and seen through
what they do, rather than what they are (Rescher 1996, 2000). Congruent with this
approach, process is seen and used as the principal category of ontological description
(Rescher 1996, 2000), and time and relationality are viewed as the fundamental
ontological categories (Hernes 2014a; Simpson et al. 2018). Further, change, emergence,
novelty, happening, occurrence, event and activity (these terms are defined in the
glossary in the following section) are seen as the principal categories of process thinking,
each representing a process. Processes are seen as mereologically homogeneous – that
is, every stage, phase or part of a process is also a process (Rescher 2000, p. 23). Further,
‘product-productive processes’ and ‘state-transformative processes’ have ontologically
equal significance (p. 28). Processes can be both owned – involving a doer – and
unowned – that is, unfolding without the involvement of a doer, such as the change in an
organisation’s relationships, the effect of the get-together of the clients with dementia on
their health, and the growth of mould on the coffee machine when the organisational
members do not use it for a while.

The process approach adopted in this study has its particular tendencies, which
bring some aspects of process thinking to the fore. For example, emphasis is placed on
conceptualising reality as processual, rather than reforming the language to understand processes (Rescher 1996, p. 33). The approach, therefore, does not support the notion of linguistic reform, as suggested by some philosophers and scholars (for instance, Whitehead 1929; Weick 1974). However, the study still makes choices, for example, between various terms used to describe processes. Most of these choices are based on the semantic characteristics of the terms, rather than their philosophical meaning. Below are some of the key terms and their definitions in the context of this thesis.

**1.3.1 Definition of Terms**

*Process*

In this thesis, the term process is used with three different connotations. First, in its broad philosophical sense, it is used to underline the mode of thought that has unequivocal commitment to ontological primacy of processes – that is, everything is process and process is everything (Rescher 1996). It is also used ‘as the principal category of ontological description’ (p. 31) to show that beneath all beings and becomings, including the various temporary stable substantial things, there are colourless (Bergson 1922) and boundary-less processes (James 1890). In the latter sense, the principal categories of processes, such as change, happening, event, activity, novelty and emergence, are viewed to occur only in processes, whereas processes always involve and unfold in the form of these principal categories (Rescher 1996, 2000). Further, it is these principal categories, and processes in general, that make and remake substances and life. Second, the term ‘process’ is used as a unit of analysis to refer to a cluster of happenings or ‘coordinated group of changes’ that are systematically linked to one another (Rescher 1996, p. 38). Third, the term ‘process’ is used in its ordinary sense to refer to a sequence of controlled events or activities, either continuous or discrete, that are intended to produce a predefined result (Atkins & Escudier 2014).
**Becoming**

The term ‘becoming’, drawn from Tsoukas and Chia’s (2002) work, is used to place emphasis on the unfolding, shaping and reshaping of substantial and non-substantial beings. The term highlights the pervasiveness of organisational happenings or change in organisations (Tsoukas & Chia 2002), and is intended to shift the attention from what substantial things are and have to what they do.

**Being**

‘Being’ denotes the existence of substances and non-substantial things (Tsoukas & Chia 2011). Drawing on Tsoukas and Chia’s (2011) notion of the term, when ‘being’ is used in this thesis, the primary concern is not to show whether and why things exist or how their existence unfolds. Rather, the use of the term acknowledges the existence of substantial and non-substantial things while keeping the ontological primacy and priority with the dynamicity of being (Seibt 2017) or the becoming of being (Rescher 1996).

**Intra-action**

This term has been borrowed from Barad’s (2007) work. Though it is used to acknowledge the mutual creation of processes, it does not reflect Barad’s (2007) conception of intra-action. The term covers the mutual agency within MCCI’s organising context. While MCCI is seen as a sub-process of a macro-process, the mutual agency between MCCI and processes outside its temporary boundaries is acknowledged by the use of the terms ‘interaction’ and ‘relation’.

**Change**

The term ‘change’ is used to denote a happening, which creates difference(s), either in kind or of degree (Bergson 1929). However, the term shifts the focus to the end result or the differences between states or happenings, rather than the intra-actions that
create the differences. Therefore, in this thesis, unless such a focus is needed, the term ‘happening’ is used instead of ‘change’.

**Activity**

The term ‘activity’ often captures what Rescher (1996) calls the ‘owned processes’ – the happenings that involve a doer or doers. It often indicates a subject-object relationship in process thinking (Seibt 2017) – a subject is required to perform an act, often, on an object. Though the subject-object dichotomy can be explained from a weak process view (Hernes & Weik 2007), from the strong process approach adopted in this study, not every organisational event involves a doer (Rescher 1996, 2000). Therefore, in this thesis, the term ‘activity’ is used to indicate that a doer or doers have a role in the unfolding of processes. To capture activities of any kinds and sizes, without the need for appreciating the doer’s role, the term ‘happening’ remains the preferred term.

**Event**

This term has an evaluative connotation based on the extent, size and type of the happening. In a non-philosophical sense, it does not include the micro-scale events that constitute the larger part of organisational becoming. In ordinary language, filling out a timesheet, for example, may not qualify as an organisational event. To address this issue, McDonald and Simpson (2014, p. 9), for instance, use the term ‘micro event’. To indicate events of any size, scale or type, the term ‘happening’ is generally used in this thesis.

**Happening**

Denoting a process, the term ‘happening’ is used to place emphasis on organisational unfolding and intra-actions. It is intended to show the ontological colourlessness of processes (Bergson 1922), without attaching an evaluative connotation to them. Unless another term is needed, as described in the circumstances above, the term ‘happening’ is used in this thesis to indicate the ontological significance of what unfolds.
within an organising context and to underline the agential capability of the happening, regardless of its extent, type or organisational value. The term includes both owned and unowned processes of any size and shape (Rescher 1996). However, from time to time, this thesis uses the prefixes ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ with the term happening, and any other principal categories of processes, to argue that one happening is part of another happening. Nonetheless, micro and macro are only relative characteristics of a happening, which can simultaneously be both a micro-happening and a macro-happening.

**Sensemaking**

Sensemaking, or ‘the making of sense’ (Weick 1995, p. 4) or creating meaning (Degn 2015), is a process that occurs when individuals and collectives with multiple identities (Weick 1995) face happenings, no two of which are the same even if they are repeated (Deleuze 1994). In these circumstances, individuals and collectives, whose becoming is shaped by the past and the future, focus on aspects of the happening to extract a cue (Weick 1995), and relate to the happening in an entangled web of relationships (Hernes 2008) to construct ‘accounts that allow them to comprehend’ (Gephart 1993, p. 1485) and influence the unfolding of a happening.

**Sensegiving**

As a construct of sensemaking (Rouleau 2005), sensegiving is individuals and collectives’ attempt to influence others’ sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991). Sensegiving is functionally linked to sensemaking; therefore, every sensemaking involves sensegiving, and vice versa, though they may not function the same way and at the same time.

This introductory discussion on process thinking shows that this mode of thought offers a useful theoretical framework for investigating organisational flux, constant change and becoming and organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving in
relation to these processes. From a process perspective, ‘organizations are construed as temporarily stabilized event clusters abstracted from a sea of constant flux and change’ (Nayak & Chia 2011, p. 281). Since change is the default explanation for the existence of an organisation (Van de Ven & Poole 2005), it is stability that needs to be explained and justified. It indicates that the deep affinity of process thinking with constant flow and flux provides an opportunity to move away from the stability-seeking thesis in organisation studies and provide an adequate explanation for what happens in an organising context. Not only does a process perspective accommodate the becoming of an organisation, but, as Chia (1999) points out, this approach is an ontology of becoming. Not only can it provide adequate explanation for the notion of constant organisational change, but it also sees constant change as the building block of reality (Rescher 1996). However, an important question is: what are the limitations of the existing body of process studies of organisations?

1.4 Limitations of Existing Process Organisation Studies

There is a burgeoning body of research that, drawing on process philosophers, such as Whitehead, Mead, Bergson and Rescher, investigates the affordance of process views for organisation studies. Among the early process studies of organisations, Pettigrew (1973, 1985) and Dawson’s (1994, 2003a, 2003b) works are seminal in a number of ways. First, given the dominance of Parmenides’ view of unchangeable substance in Western intellectual tradition (Seibt 2017), the explicit use of process thinking in empirical organisational research, without notable precedents, is a significant contribution to process organisation studies. In his eight-year longitudinal study of ICI, *The Awakening Giant: Continuity and Change in Imperial Chemical Industries*, first published in 1985, Pettigrew underlines, among other ideas, the co-existence of change and continuity in organisational life. He highlights the importance of context in
understanding change processes and draws attention to the political characteristics of
organising and organisational change. Similarly, in his book, *Organizational Change: A
Processual Approach*, first published in 1994, which is based on a series of longitudinal
studies carried out in three different countries over a period of twelve years, Dawson
provides an understanding of organisational change as it happens. In Pettigrew’s (1990,
p. 268) words, Dawson’s (1994) work focuses on ‘catching reality in flight’. Using
workplace observation, discussions and interviews with employees, he develops his
processual framework, according to which the dynamicity and non-linearity of change
processes come from their temporal context, socio-material relations and power-political
processes (Dawson 2019). Second, Pettigrew (1973, 1985) and Dawson’s (1994, 2003a,
2003b) works are strongly empirical. As pointed out later in this section, lack of
empirical work in process studies, especially from strong process positions, is one of the
limitations of process research. Third, these early process studies (Dawson 1994, 2003a,
2003b; Pettigrew 1973, 1985) explicitly talk about the politics of organising and
organisational change. They show that these processes are highly political. However,
these strongly empirical studies present a limited view of processes. As Chia and Langley
(2004) characterise this approach, their process views fall on the weak end of process
continuum. Nonetheless, Dawson (2019) finds the strong and weak labels as value-laden,
which, as he argues, ‘is not descriptively useful’ (p. 14)4. According to weak process
views, whilst processes are important for understanding organisations, they are seen as a
characteristic of substances. Further, whilst processes, such as change, do happen
continually, they do not occur without substantial entities (Langley & Tsoukas 2017).

4 The terms ‘weak’ and ‘strong’, as used by Chia and Langley (2004) to characterise the two ends of the
process continuum, are familiar in the literature. Therefore, without attaching an evaluative connotation to
the two terms, in this thesis, they will be used as prefixes to refer to the two ends of the process continuum.
In contrast, those process views of organisation that fall on the strong end of the process continuum present vigorous theoretical arguments. As briefly discussed earlier, these views afford a useful theoretical framework for investigating organisational flux, constant change, and becoming. In recent years, there has been a growing body of theoretical work in this area. For example, the works of Hernes (2014a), Hernes and colleagues (2014), Hernes and Maitlis (2010) and Langley and Tsoukas (2017) provide significant points of reference for conceptualising organisational becoming. They successfully engage with the philosophical and theoretical questions on process views of organisation and advance an understanding of process organisation studies. Underpinned by process views, there is a growing interest in exploring a variety of approaches to empirical process work. For example, among others, Czarniawska (2007), McDonald (2005), McDonald and Simpson (2014) and Vásquez and colleagues (2012) underline the significance of shadowing as an ethnographic-inspired methodological approach for capturing the day-to-day practices that constitute organisations, and studying how organisational members enact organisations through their daily interactions. Similarly, over the past couple of decades, strategy and leadership studies have experienced a shift from the dominance of substance views. The shift is characterised by the recognition of processes in studying the performativity of strategy (Jarzabkowski 2005; Whittington 1996; Whittington 2006) and leadership (Carroll & Simpson 2012; Crevani et al. 2010; Simpson et al. 2018). However, broadly, process organisation studies have two significant limitations. First, they are mainly silent on the political characteristics of organisational becoming. In their theoretical discussions, at times, it seems as if humans with various interests, intentions, objectives, views, understandings, and interpretations were not involved in organisational becoming and flux. Whilst these characteristics of organisational becoming have been addressed from the weak process views, as pointed
out above, the terms ‘politics’ and ‘political’ have been significantly excluded from the
glossary of key terms in the strong process studies (Dawson & Sykes 2016). Second, only
a limited number of strong process views empirically show the ‘world on the move’
(Hernes 2014a, p. 11). For instance, Helin and colleagues (2014) have titled the
introductory chapter of their handbook ‘Process is how process does’ (p. 1). Yet this and
other similar works leave the how aspect unanswered and empirically unsubstantiated.
Whilst they hold strong views on organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming, they
do not demonstrate these processes empirically. The empirical work from strong process
perspectives (Chia & Langley 2004) remains limited.

A third and related area in organisation studies that has been closely linked to
process views of organisation (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015) and has significantly
contributed to the field is sensemaking (Bakken & Hernes 2006). Weick’s (1969, 1979)
seminal work, The Social Psychology of Organizing, brought sensemaking, as the active
authoring of events, to the fore of studying organising processes (Maitlis & Christianson
2014). Weick has been unequivocal about his views on the link between sensemaking and
organising. He argues that his ‘recipe for sense-making’ provides the ‘basic theme of the
entire organizing’ (Weick 1979, p. 133). The link between sensemaking and organising
has been acknowledged in most of the works on sensemaking (for example, Bakken &
Hernes 2006; Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015). Further, Weick
has been radical in his process views. He argues that organisation as a noun is a myth; it
does not exist (Weick 1974). It is in the context of this argument that he urges process
scholars to ‘stamp out noun’ (p. 358). There has been some empirical work on
sensemaking and its construct, sensegiving (Degn 2015; Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991;
Rouleau 2005; Weick 1995, 2001), most of these studies have been carried out in relation
to organisational change. However, there has been little empirical study of sensemaking
and sensegiving in relation to organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming. Given the close link between sensemaking, sensegiving and organising, this lack of focus on organisational becoming as the context for sensemaking and sensegiving is a significant limitation. This study, therefore, simultaneously focuses on both organisational becoming and its indispensable subprocesses, sensemaking and sensegiving. The study investigates whether organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming and organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to these processes can be empirically demonstrated.

1.5 Research Questions

Considering the limitations in the existing body of research in organisation studies, as highlighted in the preceding section, this research is organised around two research questions:

1. *How can organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming be demonstrated empirically?*

This question focuses on the empirical demonstration of an organisation’s becoming as a state of flux and ongoing change. By way of exploring the link between these conceptions, it intends to contribute to the conceptualisation of organisational stability and change management. Focusing on the political characteristics of organisational becoming, this question explores the impact of the temporal dimensions on organisational becoming and its political dynamics.

2. *How do sensemaking and sensegiving temporally unfold in relation to organisational becoming?*

The prime focus of this question is on the ongoingness, or otherwise, of sensemaking and sensegiving. At the core of this question is whether sensemaking and sensegiving
unfold processually and what constitutes some of their processual characteristics. Further, this question investigates the temporal dimensions of sensemaking and sensegiving, with specific focus on their retrospective and prospective characteristics.

1.6 Research Context

A collaborative-participatory methodology (Denis & Lehoux 2011) is used for knowing how (Rescher 2003) organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming unfold, and how organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving occur in relation to that becoming. The methodology is congruent with seeing reality and knowing about reality as exclusively processual (Rescher 1996; Tsoukas 1996). In this performative epistemology (Barad 2003; Butler 2010), the knowability of the organisational issues at stake depends on organisational performances and practices. Therefore, the actors (organisational members) and what they do in practice are at the core of the investigation (Simpson et al. 2018). This orientation also places importance on ‘the sites and sights encountered during an unfolding research journey’ (Simpson et al. 2018, p. 297). Hence, participation of organisational members in the research journey and collaboration between us (researcher and research participants) are key considerations.

The study is undertaken at one research site, which presents typical organisational flux and ongoing change. By working in a participative way through a deliberate set of interactions, I, along with members of MCCI, engage in creating knowledge of how the phenomena under investigation work (Denis & Lomas 2003). Research participants are included in planning, observing, discussing, identifying organisational artefacts and analysing the data that are generated in the process. Over a period of two years, they are observed at their usual workplaces to see what they do in practice (Simpson et al. 2018). They are engaged in discussions both to reflect on the meaning they make of organisational change (Weick 1979) and to see how they influence each other’s meaning-
making of the events (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991). Further, given the significance of what is seen during the unfolding of the study (Simpson et al. 2018), organisational events are observed. Without necessarily focusing on who is involved in the events, the observations focus on the unfolding of happenings in those events.

Research participants are involved in analysing the data. Within the opportunities and limitations of a PhD project, research participants are asked to provide comments on the preliminary data analysis. Further, seeing reflexivity as an important characteristic of participatory methodologies (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995), research participants are engaged in discussion to critically reflect on the findings of data analysis. This practice is intended to provide different angles for seeing the subject matter (Alvesson 2003) and to enhance the credibility of the research findings (Cutcliffe 2003).

In their early works, Pettigrew (1990) and Dawson (1994) recommend adopting what has been termed a contextualist approach in process organisation studies. In this approach, among others, having knowledge of the organisation’s culture and politics and of the broader political and societal context is an important factor. Congruent with Pettigrew and Dawson’s recommendations, two factors play an important role in the choice of both the research topic and research site. Those factors are my own becoming and the context in which MCCI operates.

My becoming is characterised by experiencing the radical end of the ‘world on the move’ (Hernes 2014a, p. 11). Unending political turmoil, social upheavals and messy and chaotic changes (Dawson 1994) in my country of birth, Afghanistan, have been part of that world. Social injustice and discriminatory policies and practices have influenced my perspective on social justice and my views of bottom-up approaches to social services and grassroots organisations. My involvement in non-profit activities, including the post-2001 developments in Afghanistan, is part of my becoming. Such a becoming, in turn,
has influenced this research and catalysed the adoption of a process view of reality. Further, my work experience in the non-profit sector and my background as a former refugee, and my subsequent interactions with the local community and multicultural organisations during my resettlement in Australia, have influenced the choice of the research partnership with MCCI.

This research is undertaken in relation to the becoming of MCCI, which is a local, peak, community-based, service organisation (MCCI 2018) in south-east New South Wales (NSW), Australia. With fifty-seven staff and about one hundred volunteers, the organisation operates from two offices in Wollongong, located in the Illawarra region of NSW. As of the 2016-2017 reporting period, it has seventy-six financial members, of which fifty-four are multicultural organisations. It began with a strong advocacy and lobbying focus on behalf of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in 1975. As time passed, it added service delivery to its activities. Currently, aged care services make up the largest part of MCCI’s service of care delivery activities. However, these activities and the organisation’s overall operations have been significantly affected by the neo-liberal reforms and individualising of the aged care services systems in Australia, which were introduced in 2012 (Australian Government 2018a), and the introduction of the National Disability Scheme (NDIS), which started as a trial in 2013, for a gradual roll-out from July 2016 (National Disability Insurance Agency n.d.). In the new market-driven industry, survival became a serious challenge for small and community-based organisations, such as MCCI. Broadly, to adapt to these reforms and new programs, and, most importantly, to survive, MCCI launched some major structural and strategic changes in 2016. It began restructuring, added a middle management tier to its organisational hierarchy, and adopted a business-oriented strategic plan. The situation made the changes within the organising context more robust and
visible, and created anxiety among its members, especially the staff and volunteers, most of whom had worked with the organisation for many years. The changes in the context of MCCI, which coincided with the start of this study, attracted our attention. Having assessed MCCI a suitable context for studying ongoing change and becoming, we established a research partnership with the organisation.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter two positions the research as a process study of organisation. This positioning takes place at three levels. In the first part, drawing on selected literature, the study broadly contrasts substance and process views of reality. It, then, defines the position of this study along the continuum of process thinking. The discussion in this part also highlights some of the key characteristics of process thinking adopted in this study. In the second part of chapter two, the literature on process and substance views of organisation and organisational change is contrasted to highlight the limitations of substance views of organisation. It, then, underlines the affordance of process views for organisation studies and the areas in process organisation studies that could benefit from further research. The last part of chapter two focuses on sensemaking and sensegiving as an inseparable part of organisational becoming. It specifically highlights the debate in the literature on the ongoing versus episodic and the retrospective versus prospective characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving in organisation studies.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach adopted for this study. After reiterating its process ontology, the discussion justifies the use of the performative epistemology and collaborative-participatory research methodology that are applied to this research. It, then, discusses the emergence of the study, including the methods of accessing and co-generating data, such as observation and interview, and the analysis of
organisational artefacts. The chapter describes how the data were co-analysed. It concludes by highlighting the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter four demonstrates the temporal becoming of MCCI. In the first part, the discussion focuses on three temporal dimensions of MCCI’s becoming. It is shown that this becoming is shaped by the past and the future, and unfolds in the present. Part two shows how the organisation’s intra-actions and its relation to other processes outside the organising context generate an impetus, or what is termed push and pull, for the creation of more organisational happenings. The focus in the chapter, then, shifts to attempts that are made to stabilise organisational change. The last part of the chapter revisits the conception of managing organisational becoming and ongoing change.

The discussion in chapter five is about some of the processual characteristics of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving that have come to the fore in this research. These characteristics include the link between sensemaking, sensegiving and organisational becoming, the constitutive relation between sensemaking and sensegiving, the possible gap between sensemaking and sensegiving and their political dynamics. The chapter, then, discusses the manifestation of sensemaking and sensegiving through performance and resistance.

The discussion in chapter six focuses on demonstrating the temporal characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving: their ongoingness and their retrospective and prospective characteristics. The chapter shows why sensemaking and sensegiving cannot be episodic. On the temporal dimensions of sensemaking and sensegiving, the discussion focuses on the effect of the past and the future on their present unfolding. It underlines the simultaneously retrospective and prospective characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving.
Chapter seven draws a three-part conclusion for this thesis. The first part revisits some of major issues introduced in this chapter. In light of the discussion in chapters four – six, it summarises the key findings and conclusions of this study and the responses to the two research questions. Part two highlights the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of the study. Chapter seven concludes by underlining the limitations of this study and the areas that can benefit from further research.
Chapter 2: Positioning the Study

Chapter Structure

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   2.2.2 Why Process Thinking Matters
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      2.4.2.2 Retrospective and Prospective Characteristics of Sensemaking and Sensegiving

2.5 Conclusion
2.1 Introduction

Chapter one introduced the research as a process investigation of sensemaking and sensegiving during organisational change in the context of a community organisation, which typifies organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming. The reasons for undertaking this study, as discussed in chapter one, can be summarised as follows. First, the dominant approaches to organisation studies, which are influenced by substance views of reality, do not and cannot explain the ongoing change that characterises organisational becoming. Seeing organisations as stable entities, these equilibrium-based approaches view change as an unusual event that takes organisations from one stable state to another. Second, process views of reality, in contrast, provide strong theoretical explanations for organisational flux and ongoing change. They see change as the default explanation of organisational becoming. Third, process views can be positioned on a continuum between seeing processes as the ultimate realities and viewing them as a characteristic of substances. Some views on the earlier end of the continuum deny substances altogether and advocate detachment from them. Fourth, there is an emerging body of empirical studies from less radical process views of organisation. Though they are strongly empirical, they present limited views of processes. While those process views that are on the strong end of the process continuum offer compelling theoretical explanations for organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming, they present limited empirical evidence to substantiate these strong views. Fifth, one of the areas where strong process views have been applied is organisational sensemaking and sensegiving. However, despite the indispensable link between sensemaking, sensegiving and organisational becoming, organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming largely go to the background of empirical studies of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving. Only a limited number of these studies empirically demonstrate how
organisational becoming, in relation to which sensemaking and sensegiving happen, unfold. Because these limitations inform this research, chapter two discusses these and the reasons for undertaking this study in more detail.

Chapter Two begins with an introductory discussion on process philosophy, which provides the distinctive framework for this study. The first section highlights the importance of process thinking in Western and Oriental cultures to give a glimpse of the deep-seated tradition in the face of the dominance of substance philosophy in both theory and practice. The section, then, underlines the importance of drawing a distinction between process and substance views. Having introduced the works of several process expositors, it locates the specific position of this study on the continuum of process thinking. The distinction and positioning have a direct bearing on how process-associated factors, such as activity, happening, change and time, are viewed. The position, subsequently, influences the discussion on organisation, organisational change, sensemaking and sensegiving. Relationality and temporality, two of the key characteristics of process thinking that are referred to throughout this thesis, are discussed in the last part of the first section.

Section two presents a review of the literature on organisation and organisational change. The review is selective and broadly structured under the themes of substance and process ontologies, with more weight attached to process thinking as the theoretical underpinning of this study. The discussion, then, identifies the potential gaps or areas in the literature on organisational becoming where this study can make contributions and which inform the first research question.

Section three selectively reviews the literature on sensemaking and sensegiving in organisation studies to understand the limitations in the body of existing research. However, given the limitations on this research, the focus is on the temporal unfolding
of sensemaking and sensegiving. The literature review in this section, therefore, identifies the gaps on the ongoingness, or otherwise, of sensemaking and sensegiving, and the effect of temporal dimensions on their unfolding. First, though, a brief discussion on process philosophy is in order.

2.2 Why Philosophical Position Matters and What Process Philosophy Offers

This study has a philosophical tone throughout although it is not an exploration of philosophy. It is an investigation into organisational becoming and change, and how organisational members make and give sense of that becoming and change. Such an investigation, nonetheless, cannot bypass the questions of what change and organisation are, and which one has primacy over the other. The thesis began with an explicit position on the subject of primacy. This chapter is an attempt to expand on that position and provide the rationale for adopting a process view. At the same time, answering the question on the primacy of change or organisation is neither a focus on the literal meanings of the terms nor a choice of ‘either/or’. It requires positioning the study with respect to process and substance philosophies. This discussion ultimately leads to the question of a general theory of reality, which, as pointed out by Rescher (1996, p. 7), ‘is a venture in metaphysics’. It is for this reason that the thesis, and this chapter in particular, has a philosophical tone and begins with a discussion on process philosophy. The philosophical discussion is also an attempt to respond to the challenge that organisation studies must enter an area ‘where philosophy and social science meet’ (Burrell 1994, p. 15).

The discussion is equally practical and organisational. The divide between process and substance philosophies and the implications of adopting a specific process view are discussed at the level of organisation studies. The discussion begins with a brief
account of the traditional significance of process philosophy. This account is important in the face of the popularity and dominance of substance thinking in organisation studies.

2.2.1 Process Philosophy Transcends Philosophical Traditions and Cultures

In Western philosophy, process thinking dates back to Heraclitus’ work (Rescher 1996). The few remaining fragments of his doctrine, such as ‘you cannot step twice into the same river […]’ (Russell 1945, p. 45) and ‘everything flows’ (Rescher 1996, p. 10), demonstrate his belief in ubiquitous dynamicity (Seibt 2017), and that things are in a state of motion (Russell 1945) and in the making (James 1909). For Heraclitus, the river is not a static thing but an ever-changing flow (Rescher 1996, p.10). At any two points in the passage of time, neither the river nor the person remains the same (Graham n.d.); they constantly change. Their never-ending change is not by choice, rather the productive passage of time produces ongoing becoming (Mead 1932); it involves change. Heraclitus’ writings, however, remain obscure (Seibt 2017), and his works are often known only through others quoting his words. His reputation as the proponent of radical flux is mainly due to his early commentators, such as Plato and Aristotle, both of whom endorsed many of Heraclitus’ doctrines. His view of the never-ending flow of things is an emphasis on seeing reality as processual and in becoming, which is the cornerstone of the metaphysics of process (Rescher 1996, 2000). However, Russell (1945) argues that despite Heraclitus’ belief in change, he subscribed to a substance view as he ‘allowed something everlasting’ – that is, fire (p. 46; emphasis in the original text). Hence, according to Russell (1945), for Heraclitus, reality was a perpetual transition between fire, air, soil and water. Nonetheless, regardless of how radical a particular process disposition may be, process metaphysics has a long history and transcends philosophical traditions and cultures.
In the East, the idea of an ‘ever-changing and never-ending process of creativity’ is accepted as a given (Fang 1987, p. 683). Process philosophy has been a rich source of reflection in many Eastern schools of thought (Seibt 2017), such as Taoism (or Daoism) and Buddhism (Hustwit n.d.). The classic Chinese text of the Book of Changes, *I Ching*, which dates back to Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu and is cherished by both Confucianism and Taoism, has often been used as a reference to the deeply held concept of constant change and a dynamic universe in Eastern philosophy (Chan 1963). The *I Ching* interprets reality as a constant change and transformation (Jullien 2004). ‘The way of ch’ien [heaven] is to change and to transform so that everything will obtain its correct nature and destiny […]’ (Chan 1963, p. 264). This firm belief in constant change and transformation is the negation of substance metaphysics although not every quarter in process philosophy may believe so.

Process thinking is diverse (Rescher 1996). For instance, in strict Whiteheadean (Whitehead 1929) terms, it is tempting to see Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu’s belief in *heaven* as the source or subject of change, and the pre-existence of a *thing* in our thought that can obtain its destiny by changing and transforming (Chan 1963) as the prioritising of the *thing*, rather than *change*. Similarly, drawing on James’ (1909) work, it is convincing to say that if things obtained their destiny (Chan 1963), they would be ‘made’, rather than ‘in the making. And once made, they are dead […]’ (James 1909, p. 263). From such a radical process position, despite Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu’s firm belief in change, their metaphysical stance can be labelled as what Rescher (1996) calls a process reducibility thesis, which centres on substance-coordinated processes and sees a two-tier reality consisting of things and their processes.

However, as Rescher (1996) points out, process philosophy is not about an absolute single position; nor is it about the denial of substances and temporary stable
things. It is a broad movement and covers a spectrum of views that give ontological centrality to process, and are committed to treating time, change, emergence, novelty and creativity ‘among the principal categories of metaphysical understanding’ (Rescher 2000, p. 5). Substances in general, including matter and body, do have existence, but their existence is secondary to the processes that make them. As temporarily hardened processes, or, in Kristensen and colleagues’ (2014, p. 506) words, as the ‘gradual hardenings’ of processes, the importance of substantial things is secondary to the significance of the processes that constitute them. However, despite their characteristic emphases and tendencies, the diverse process views have a common ground, which is the processual nature of reality. For James (1909), though things would be dead once they are made, their death would not equal nothing or the absolute end of becoming. According to James (1909), the death of things would present ‘an infinite number of alternative conceptual decompositions’ (p. 263), each offering another flow and a multitude of possible becomings. Mead also subscribes to a philosophy of reality that emphasises emergence and temporality (Simpson 2014), in which the present offers a lens for viewing the past and the future (Aboulafia 2016). His discussion of time and temporality is part of a general proposition that constant change is a reality that shapes and reshapes the universe (Mead 1932). The common threads among different tendencies of process thinking establish a strong affinity between Western process philosophy and the ancient Oriental philosophies (Chia 2010). For instance, where Whitehead (1929) emphasises ‘the flux of things’ (p. 317), Chuang Tzu sees nature in a state of constant flux (Chan 1963). At the same time, while the Western intellectual tradition is dominated by Parmenides’ view of unchangeable substance and Democritus’ atomism (Bickhard 2008; Seibt 2017), mobility and dynamism are deeply rooted in Oriental philosophies, reflected, for example, in Chinese calligraphy and painting (Chia 2010; Jullien 1995).
Confucius’ comment on the flow of water, ‘To pass by like this, with no let-up, day and night!’ (Jullien 2004, p. 171), shows his admiration for the constant flow of water and its resemblance to the dynamic process of universal change. Such a constant flow and endless transformation also characterise the relationship between yin and yang (Wang 2013).

The concepts of yin and yang, which characterise Daoism (Chan 1963), underline dynamicity and cyclical changes as much as they centre on the multiplicity of relations and interconnection (Wang 2013). Jullien (2004) argues that the *Dao* is a continuous process that stems from the interaction of the two opposite but complementary factors, yin and yang. In China, the Dao is seen as ‘a dynamic state of balanced movement’ (Mattsson & Tidström 2015, p. 349), whereas Taoism relates all change in the universe to yin and yang and the interaction between the two (Chan 1963). These fragments of historical and cross-cultural accounts show that irrespective of the particular position on the continuum of process philosophy, a process view of reality has a long history and is deeply seated in both the Western and Eastern traditions. Yet, in the West, it has remained in the background and has been overshadowed by the popularity of substance metaphysics (Rescher 2000). Not only will the process view remain in the foreground of this study, but it will also be the point of departure for the research as a whole. Before this position is explained, it is important to highlight why process thinking matters in organisation studies.

### 2.2.2 Why Process Thinking Matters

An ontological distinction between process thinking and substance thinking is necessary as this distinction goes to the heart of seeing the nature of reality, whether it is substance or process (Rescher 1996). For this study, this distinction determines whether organisations are seen as flow of happenings or stable entities. Regardless of the specific
philosophical tendencies and tradition, seeing reality as processual is a fundamental
departure from the doctrine of Parmenides, which is in search of eternity and permanence
that is ‘not subject to the empire of Time’ (Russell 1945, p. 47). From a process
perspective, the passage of time cannot be treated without becoming (Mead 1932), nor
can becoming be conceptualised without change. It is from a process position that
constant change and flux become constitutive of things, such as an organisation.

The primacy and priority of flux, change and flow, which represent processes and
are among the principal categories of metaphysical understanding (Rescher 2000),
become a defining question in process thinking. Where Heraclitus believes that ‘all
things flow’ (Hernes 2008, p. 24), Whitehead (1929) argues that Heraclitus’ view of
*things* and *flow* shows the pre-existence of things – flow is associated with things – in
our thought in order for flux and change to happen. Such a view assumes *things* as
primary and *flux* as secondary, which, according to Whitehead, is a substance ontology
or a weak process view (Chia & Langley 2004). Coming from a strong process position,
Whitehead (1929), therefore, uses the phrase ‘the flux of things’ (p. 317) to give privilege
to the notion of flux and movement, rather than things. However, Whitehead’s
proposition, ‘the flux of things’, can be challenged by similar counter-criticism. First, in
the latter phrase, the meaning and conceptualisation of *flux* have been closely and
inextricably linked to ‘things’ by the use of the preposition of possession, *of*. The phrase
creates the question *flux of what?* and promotes the proposition that flux can be classified,
at least, based on *thing* and *non-thing*. This conceptualisation of flux demands some
explication in light of Bergson’s (1922) notion of colourless processes and undefined
becoming. For Bergson, while becoming is indefinitely varied and variously coloured,
beneath all of them flows a colourless becoming, which should define our ontological
position. Bergson (1922) uses the metaphor of colour to explain the differences in
movements and states. While a becoming goes from one state to another and may have
different movements and qualities, at the ontological level, a becoming is colourless.
Second, while the meaning is complete in Heraclitus’ ‘all things flow’ – being a complete
sentence – Whitehead’s (1929, p. 317) phrase, ‘the flux of things’ begs completeness in
meaning. One can ask the basic question ‘what happened/happens/will happen to the flux
of things?’ It lacks a verb of happening or action. Third, and related to the second
countercriticism, where Heraclitus’ remark underlines the significance of flow as a verb
(happening), Whitehead shifts that importance to flux as a noun. This discussion
becomes important in the context of Weick’s (1979) argument that verbs, rather than
nouns, can adequately conceptualise perpetual change and flux. A detailed philosophical
discussion along the lines of the above argument is beyond the scope of this thesis.
Nonetheless, it is important to note here that giving ontological privilege and primacy to
flux, happening and change is about conceptualising processes as the ultimate reality,
rather than any linguistic reforms.

Giving primacy to movement, process and emergence is an ontology of becoming
(Whitehead 1929) or process ontology (Chia 1999), which centres on the dynamicity of
being (Seibt 2017) or becoming of being. Such an ontology gives primacy to what things,
including self and organisation, do rather than what they are (Rescher 2000, emphases
added). What a thing is becomes secondary to what it does. Rescher’s (1996, 2000)
argument is along the same lines in that processes and their associated factors, such as
change, can happen without the pre-existence of things, but things cannot exist without
processes. For instance, in the case of a change in policy, or a fluctuation in the interest
rate, there is no identifiable thing or substance known as policy, or interest rate. Though
a reference to a policy may apparently make a reference to a substantial document, the
significance of a policy is what the words in the document (can) do, rather than their
physical appearance and existence. A policy can be written in any language and organised and codified in any form or shape, or may be uncodified. What is significant is the processes, unfolding in the form of happenings or occurrences, that bring the policy into being and that the policy can cause (Rescher 1996, p. 38). It is these processes that are at the bottom of every policy. A change in policy or a fluctuation in interest rate can happen without the existence of a physical thing or substance. On the other hand, the becoming of things, such as organisations, depends on processes, which are represented, among others, by events, happenings, flow and change, actualised through the passage of time. This process view shifts the primacy from being to becoming and provides a more adequate explanation of things as temporarily hardened processes (Kristensen et al. 2014).

However, as the discussion so far has shown, there is no single process view or position; nor, as Rescher (1996) emphasises, should there be one. Process philosophy is a broad and highly diversified field, which despite being characterised by consensus on the processual nature of reality, is deeply divided on some fundamental questions, such as the directedness or inner dynamicity of processes (Seibt 2017). On the processuality of existence and the pervasiveness of process, the field remains diversified on a continuum of process thinking. One end of the continuum is characterised by the denial of substantial things. For example, Bergson claims that there are processes but no substances (Russel 1945) and James’ conceptualisation of process-associated factors, such as change, flux and creativity, is based on ‘a philosophy of substantiality without substance’ (Rescher 1996, p. 16). In organisation studies, denying the existence of ‘organisation’ as a noun, Weick (1974) comes from such a position in process philosophy. At the other end of the continuum, processes are treated as important, but are viewed as associated with substantial things (Rescher 1996). From such a position,
processes are ultimately reducible to things (Hernes & Weik 2007; Van de Ven & Poole 2005).

Having a closer affinity with the strong end of the continuum of process philosophy, this research gives primacy and priority to processes, but without denying the existence of substantial things. While this position will be discussed in the later section, the following section touches on the diversity of process views in terms of their emphasis and elaboration of processuality. Given the wide diversity of process views and the long list of contributors to process thinking, a comprehensive discussion on this topic is well beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, it is appropriate to mention that among the responses to such a need, Langley and Tsoukas’ (2017) *Handbook of Process Organization Studies* and Helin and colleagues’ (2014) *Handbook of Process Philosophy & Organization Studies* are useful resources. Though Helin and colleagues (2014) emphasise that the purpose of their book is not ‘to invite organization scholars to become philosophers in a text’ (p.15), the book is an important starting point for exploring the affinity between process philosophy and organisation studies. Understanding this affinity encourages both ‘thinking process’ (Helin et al. 2014, p. 5) and ‘working processually in organization studies’ (pp. 14-15); this relation works the other way round as well.

Further, both thinking process and working processually will ultimately lead to defining the philosophical underpinnings of the thought and work, for which the work of Helin and colleagues (2014) and others are useful resources. The discussion that follows will only serve as a short note on the diversity of process thinking in the Western tradition. It will highlight a few examples, which will provide a point of reference for the positioning of this study on the continuum of process philosophy.
2.2.3 Appreciating the Diversity in Western Process Thinking

Proponents of process thinking in modern Western history include, but are not limited to, Spinoza (1632 – 1677), Leibniz (1646 – 1716), James (1842 – 1910), Nietzsche (1844 – 1900), Bergson (1859 – 1941), Dewey (1859 – 1952), Whitehead (1861 – 1947), Mead (1863 – 1931), Deleuze (1925 – 1995), Wittgenstein (1889 – 1952), Heidegger (1889 – 1976) and Rescher (born 1928). While these and many other scholars have made significant contributions to process thinking, for the purpose of this section, the focus is on the work of a few philosophers whose views have been referred to in this thesis more than a mere footnote. Reference to some views, showing a tendency toward aspects of some works, and being committed to or adopting a particular position in process thinking are not intended to value these views, works or positions over others. The tendency is an outcome of my processual becoming, as hinted at in chapter one. Further, the unfolding of this research itself has had an impact on the adoption of a particular tendency in process thinking.

William James is known as an original thinker in process philosophy and beyond (Goodman 2017; Powell 2014). His masterwork, *The Principles of Psychology* (James 1890), is a blend of philosophy, psychology and physiology. For James, the human psyche is an organised sum of complex processes (Rescher 1996). He sees reality as a manifold of processes, which are boundaryless and fuse into each other, rather than having a clear-cut state. These processes are never the same as ‘the world may be a place in which the same thing never did and never will come twice’ (James 1890, p. 460). The world is ‘an unbroken flux’ yet perceived as repeated experience. In reality, experience is a ‘flow of mental discourse’ (Powell 2014, p. 172). According to James, humans’ affective and cognitive experiences provide typical examples of the processual nature of things (Rescher 1996). However, though some process philosophers, such as Whitehead,
whose work is influenced by James’, adopt a radical process view, James’ process-based account of self does not deny the existence of substance and the possibility of sameness in substance. He is unequivocal in that his notion of sameness comes from a psychological point of view, rather than a philosophical position. ‘[W]e do not care whether there be any real sameness in things or not, or whether the mind be true or false in its assumptions of it’ (James 1890, p. 460). What is important for James is the continuous flow of experiences (Hustwit n.d.), which does not show any sameness. He refers to the constant flux of experiences as the ‘blooming, buzzing confusion’ (James 1890, p. 488). James, along with Dewey, is credited for marrying process philosophy and pragmatism by claiming that for pragmatism reality is in the making, whereas for rationalism it is ready made and complete (Goodman 2017). At the bottom of this close affinity between pragmatism and American process philosophy, at least in its early stages, is an effort by process philosophy to come to terms with science and technology, especially the Darwinian theory of evolution, rather than critically reflecting on them. According to Seibt (2017), this tendency marks the difference between continental process philosophy, represented by Heidegger and Deleuze, for example, and American process philosophy, reflected in the works of Whitehead and process-based pragmatism developed by Dewey, James, Mead5.

The influence of an evolutionary framework can also be seen in Mead’s process views (Joas 1980; Simpson 2009). Mead (1932) emphasises dynamicity as a source of novelty and emergence. Space-time without emergence and becoming is inconceivable for him, and he strongly argues against ‘the treatment of time as passage without becoming’ and reducing space and time as a four ‘dimensional continuum of indistinguishable events which is neither space nor time’ (Mead 1932, p. 19). As

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5 For an overall overview of pragmatism and organisation studies, see Philippe Lorino’s (2018) work.
Simpson (2014) points out, Mead’s interest in Darwinian theory is in the temporal dynamics of emergence, reflected in evolution, which is exclusively the defining characteristic of the present. For Mead, ontological reality exists only in the present, which provides the lens to see both the past and the future (Aboulafia 2016; Simpson 2009). As Dewey explains in his preparatory notes on Mead’s book, *The Philosophy of the Present* (1932), Mead’s theory is ‘a philosophy of nature in the present tense’ (p. xi). The past and the future are epistemological resources, the continuous interplay between which constructs the ongoing present (Simpson 2009, 2014). Mead’s works have been influential in philosophical circles. He and Dewey have had a mutual influence on each other, and his works are highly regarded by Whitehead (Simpson 2014).

Whitehead is an influential name in American process metaphysics though he spent much of his life in the country of his birth, the United Kingdom, working on subjects as diverse as mathematics, logic, the philosophy of science and the philosophy of education (Hernes 2014b; Irvine 2015). His metaphysical framework is perhaps the most comprehensive descriptive framework for contemporary process thinking, yet difficult to penetrate. Whitehead’s (1929, p. 27) ‘philosophy of organism’ has ‘actual entities’ or ‘actual occasions’ as its basic unit of reality. The becoming of the actual occasions constitutes their being. The notion of actual occasions is influenced by atomism, which is ‘the ultimate metaphysical truth’ for Whitehead (1929, p. 53). However, Hernes (2014b) points out that materialist atomism is untenable to Whitehead. According to him, Whitehead, therefore, uses occasions, rather than physical particles or substances, which produce experience or prehensions (Whitehead 1929, p. 28). Each actual entity is analysable and divisible in a number of ways. Based on the fragments of Whitehead’s works and the work of those who have substantially drawn on them (in organisation studies, for example, Hernes 2008, 2010, 2014a, 2014b), Whitehead’s
process philosophy can safely be positioned toward the strong process views on the continuum of process thinking. His works make it tempting to deny substances altogether. Despite the rich contributions of many process philosophers to process philosophy, process philosophy has in recent years become virtually synonymous with Whitehead and his followers’ doctrines (Hustwit n.d.). However, as Rescher (2008) points out, ‘[i]f there indeed is a “philosophy” of process, it must pivot not a thinker but on a theory’ [sic]. As discussed in the preceding section, process philosophy has a longer history than any particular exposition or expositor.

Parallel to the speculative process philosophy, to which Whitehead adheres (Hernes 2014b), the continental process philosophy has its proponents, such as Bergson and Deleuze. Bergson is known as the ‘progenitor of modern process philosophy and the language of “becoming”’ (Linstead 2014, p. 218). Where James puts the becoming of being partly in the hand of human agency, Bergson argues against the subject-object dichotomy as, according to him, it constitutes a subscription to substance metaphysics (Seibt 2017). Though he does not deny things, they are only abstractions from movement, which is continuous and indivisible (Lawlor & Leonard 2016). Bergson is strongly influenced by Darwin and the notion of evolution, extracting his philosophical concept of life from the Darwinian philosophy of evolution (Grosz 2004). Bergson’s (1946/2013) view of change is that ‘all real change is an indivisible change’ (p. 121), and underneath change there is no thing. At the same time, he argues that the treatment of change as a series of states and being interested in the states rather than the change itself are useful for practical purposes. This treatment of change ‘enables us to act upon things’ (Bergson 1946/2013, p. 122). Yet, the underlying argument is that all beings are in a constant state of becoming. One of the key concepts in Bergson’s process philosophy, on which Deleuze (1994) has drawn, is his differentiation between the differences in kind and
differences of degree. Differences of degree are quantitative, whereas differences in kind are qualitative. The inner experience of time, which is qualitatively different from objective clock time, show a difference in kind. For Bergson, ‘time is real’ – that is, durée, or duration, as it is experienced rather than measured (Linstead 2014, p. 222; emphasis in the original text). Real duration is irreversible, qualitative and heterogeneous, and its moments dynamically permeate one another (Bergson 1922, 1950). The heterogeneity of duration explains novelty in the ongoing becoming.

Deleuze is another prolific and influential philosopher in continental process philosophy (Smith & Protevi 2012). His thinking and works are seen to be ontological or, as he himself claims, metaphysical (Kristensen et al. 2014). At the core of his ontological concept is the notion of difference, which is of relevance to this study. Deleuze (1994) rejects the primacy of identity over difference and repetition as, according to him, identity ‘defines the world of representation’ (p. xix). For him, difference and repetition are free from prior identity. Difference provides reason for empirical diversity. Not unlike the ongoing flux and change, difference has primacy and produces existence (Smith & Protevi 2012). Further, repetition is the return and production of difference (Deleuze 1994). For Deleuze, repetition has the same role as does creativity for Whitehead (Halewood 2005). While the interest in repetition through difference indicates the desire to avoid identity and representation (Deleuze 1994), it equally shows a commitment to the processuality of events, happenings (Aroles & McLean 2016) and reality in general. In other words, it is the prioritising of becoming over being and the language (not in a representational sense) of constant flux that can describe Deleuze’s notion of difference.

With the commitment to the ontological primacy of process, a number of process thinkers’ views, regardless of where they stand along the process continuum, have been
used as a point of reference throughout this thesis. Drawing on James’ (1890) work, reality is seen in the making and as a manifold of boundary-less processes that fuse into each other. Becoming and process-associated factors, such as change and happening are conceptualised as ontologically indivisible and ongoing. However, their treatment as a series of states with temporary boundaries, as proposed by Bergson (1946/2013), is for practical reasons. Further, to underline change in organisational happenings, this thesis draws on Deleuze’s (1994) concept of repetition as the production of difference. However, while the process view adopted in this thesis can be positioned on the strong end of the process continuum, this view does not deny the existence of substance and substantial things altogether. This position is discussed in the following section.

2.2.4 Positioning the Research on the Continuum of Process Philosophy

In recent years, process metaphysics has ‘gained an important, original voice in Nicholas Rescher’ (Seibt 2017, p. 14). Rescher presents a systematic, non-Whiteheadian process metaphysics, which gives primacy to processes without denying substances (things). It is the principal approach taken in this study for conceptualising and describing processes, such as change, organisation, sensemaking and sensegiving. This approach has been influenced by my processual becoming, including the way I conceptualise and have experienced organisations. As a result, drawing on Rescher’s (1996, 2000) process philosophy, in this research reality is seen as processual at bottom and substances and substantial things are understood in terms of their constituent processes (Rescher 2006). Rescher (1996) refers to this duality of philosophical perspective as the ontological version and epistemological version, respectively. However, as Rescher (2004) himself points out, the two cannot be effectively separated. Just as the discussion about what reality is, without discussing how it can be understood and known, is incomplete, so is the reverse. Therefore, starting from an ontological position, this research remains
committed to both ontological and epistemological primacy of processes. Substance and substantial things, such as organisations and individuals, are seen as processual. Further, the existence of such substantial things is understood in terms of the processes that constitute them or what they do (Rescher 1996), rather than what they are. While this commitment prioritises ‘activity over substance, process over product, change over persistence, and novelty over continuity’, it does not deny the existence of the second members of these pairs (Rescher 1996, p. 31). It is only that the first members are the default and among the fundamental categories of existence, whereas the second members are secondary. Temporarily stable entities, such as organisations, do have substantial existence. However, they are only transient collections or gradual hardenings of processes (Kristensen et al. 2014), and their significance lies in what they do or can do. To understand the temporarily stable substances, therefore, it is necessary to understand their relational flow or the happenings that make the whole. It is in this context that attention is shifted to the becoming of a substance or entity or what a substance or entity does, rather than what it is (Rescher 1996). From this perspective, what a building, desk, individual, organisation or universe does – change, happenings, events, etc. – is primary and explains its substantial being. At the same time, where processes are necessary for substances, the reverse is not the case.

In light of the discussion so far, the defining characteristics of the process mode of thought adopted in this study are reiterated here. First, there is an unequivocal commitment to the primacy of processes over substances (Rescher 1996). Reality is seen as processual, which means that every substantial and non-substantial thing is viewed as a process at bottom – process is reality and reality is process. Second, this research does not deny the existence of substantial things, nor does it advocate any detachment from substances, as suggested by Whitehead’s (1929) critiquing of Heraclitus’ ‘all things
flow’ argument (Hernes 2008, pp. 24&25), and Weick’s (1974, p. 358) urging to ‘stamp out nouns’. Substantial things, including body and matter, do exist, but they are conceptualised as temporarily stabilised clusters of happenings (Nayak & Chia 2011, p. 281) or temporarily hardened processes (Kristensen et al. 2014). Further, as primacy is given to processes – reality is seen as processes at bottom (Rescher 1996) – in conceptualising and discussing substantial things, priority is given to what those things do and how they become, rather than what they are. Moreover, the firm belief is that ‘[p]rocess philosophy is concerned with modes of understanding, not modes of discourse’ (Rescher 1996, p. 33). Linguistic reform, as promoted by Weick (1974) (see also the later sections), and transformation of language, as suggested by Whitehead (1929), can be helpful in so far as they can help in conceptualising the primacy and priority of processes over substances. At the same time, if ‘[substance concepts and] terms are in principle reducible to process talk’ (Rescher 1996, p. 33), they can equally serve the purpose of process metaphysics and, therefore, need not be reformed. Third, congruent with the above philosophical position, whilst process is used as the principal category of ontological description, the principal categories of process, such as change, happening, event, activity, novelty and emergence, are viewed to occur only in processes. Further, processes always involve and unfold in the form of these principal categories (Rescher 1996). Fourth, to appreciate that processes are mereologically homogenous – every stage, phase or part of a process is also a process (Rescher 2000, p. 23) – and colourless, though becoming is indefinitely varied and variously coloured (Bergson 1922), the term ‘process’ is used in this thesis to refer to both substantial and non-substantial constituents of organisational becoming. However, when the default focus is only on non-substantial things, preference is given to the term ‘happening’ over other terms, such as change, event, and activity. This choice is intended to emphasise the
ontological colourlessness of processes (Bergson 1922) and acknowledge their ontological importance regardless of their size or type. Fifth, there is no ontological difference between ‘product-productive processes’, which produce substantial things, and ‘state-transformative processes’, which transform the state of affairs (Rescher 2000, p. 28). For Bergson, whilst this is a distinction between differences of degree and differences in kind (Deleuze 1994), processes are ontologically ‘colourless’ (Bergson 1922). Processes, such as sensemaking, may not produce any substantial things, but they still change the state of affairs (Rescher 2000). Further, state-transformative processes may lead to product-productive processes as products can change the state of affairs by way of what they do. Sixth, whilst processes can be owned and unowned, they have the same ontological position (Rescher 1996) regardless. Though owned processes involve agents, the agents themselves are the products of processes. Seventh, as a unit of analysis, a process is defined as a complex of occurrences (Rescher 2000), or ‘coordinated group of changes’ (Rescher 1996, p. 38), that are systematically linked to each other. The temporal and structural (causal or functional) coherence of a process distinguishes one process or cluster of processes from the other.

The process view and the specific position on the continuum of process thinking that have been adopted for this study do not merely reflect a philosophical commitment or theoretical conceptualisation of processes. They have implications for the empirical investigation of organisational becoming and organisational change. It is this choice of philosophical approach that determines whether organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming can be demonstrated empirically. The divide between substance and process views of reality marks a fundamental difference in organisation studies. As the selective review of the literature on organisational change will later show, those that are congruent with substance views of reality deny constant change as the default explanatory of
organisational life (Bickhard 2008), whereas those that subscribe to process views have becoming and change as their central themes (Rescher 1996). Before shifting the focus of the discussion from philosophy to organisation studies, the following section highlights two defining characteristics of process thinking, relationality and temporality, which resonate throughout this thesis.

2.2.5 Relationality and Temporality as the Defining Characteristics of Process Thinking

As a complex of occurrences (Rescher 2000), or ‘coordinated group of changes’ (Rescher 1996, p. 38), processes have temporal coherence and integrity. Through their temporal nature, they present a ‘generic patterning of occurrences’ (Rescher 2000, p. 24). At the same time, processes always involve various events or occurrences. They never happen twice (James 1890). By virtue of their temporality, occurrences involve change. As they temporally develop, they change (James 1890) or, in Deleuze’s (1994) words, produce difference that may be in kind or of degree. These characteristics of processes apparently create a contradiction; that is, a process can preserve its self-identity in the face of continuous change (Rescher 2000). To understand and explain this contradiction, it is important to note that a ‘process is mereologically homogenous’ (Rescher 2000, p. 23). A process of any size, not in a geometrical sense that denotes absolute interiority or absolute exteriority, but in a temporal and functional or causal sense, consists of micro-processes (Rescher 1996). The unity and identity of a process are temporal and structural. Given these characteristics of processes, it becomes easy to understand that continuous change does not necessarily have to be a change in or of a process or individual thing in a particular context but may relate to its general condition. Continuous change comes from ‘unifying amalgamation of stages or phases’ – micro-processes (Rescher 1996, p. 39).
Based on the discussion above, processes are seen as relational and temporal in nature (Helin et al. 2014). The relational characteristic of processes becomes significant in terms of both the relevance of a process in a broader set of relations (Hernes 2008) and the manifold nature of a process itself (Rescher 1996). This argument, however, may imply the notions of absolute interiority and absolute exteriority, which can be linked to a metaphysics of individualism (Barad 2007). To avoid such a conclusion, Barad (2007) introduces the term ‘intra-action’ – ‘the mutual constitution of entangled agencies’ (p. 33) – and refrains from using the term ‘interaction’. According to her, interaction presupposes the prior existence of individual or determinate entities. However, process philosophy can comfortably accommodate individuality, albeit not in absolute terms. As pointed out previously, following Rescher’s (1996) argument that a process can preserve its self-identity and coherence or its temporal and structural unity, it can be argued that process thinking does not deny the individuality of processes. Further, as Rescher (1996) argues, process metaphysics does not, and need not, deny the existence of substances. Substances (things) also have their individuality ‘by [their] acting in a unitary way in the overall context at issue’ (p. 51). This unity, for both substances and the processes that constitute them, is temporal and structural. Ontologically, processes are viewed as boundary-less (James 1890). Agency comes from both the intra-action and interaction of processes – the way processes within one context interact with processes in another context.

Given the temporal-structural unity of processes, their relational characteristic is seen in terms of their intra-action and the way they relate to other processes outside a specific context. As Rescher (1996, p. 54) points out, ‘[p]rocesses are Janus faced: They look in two directions at once, inwards and outwards’. They simultaneously constitute macro-processes and are constituted by micro-processes. Further, the relation between
processes is of productive contribution to the aggregate whole, rather than of mere part to whole. Rescher (1996) uses the example of the productive contribution of notes to the becoming of a song. If each note were listened to separately, without relating them to each other, the musical piece or song would not be created (Cobb 2007). Further, a particular song is the aggregate of the productive contribution of all the notes played for that song, not only their numerical sum. The addition or omission of a note, as an example of a process, results in a different becoming – that is, a different song/music. It is through such a heterogeneous relationality (Hernes 2010) – how processes variously relate – that varied, but mereologically homogenous processes are shaped (Rescher 1996).

The relationality of becoming is not a static one; time is an indispensable active agent in this relationality (Mead 1932). Appreciating the relationship between notes and a song, from Rescher’s (1996) example, also requires acknowledging time and temporality as ‘an ongoing process of becoming’ (Dawson & Sykes 2016, p. 25) of the musical piece or song. Without time, as an intrinsic quality of becoming with agential quality in its passing (Hernes 2010), the becoming of processes would not unfold. Subscribing to this view of time and temporality helps us conceptualise ‘the ongoingness of the experiencing of being in time’ (p. 45) and having a position internal to time’s flow, rather than what Purser and Petranker (2005) refer to as ‘a bystander relation to time’ (p. 187). Referring to these contrasting notions of time, Rescher (1996) points out that from a bystander position to time (Purser & Petranker 2005), time and space are viewed as ‘a container within (or a stage upon) which’ (p. 95) processes unfold. However, he adds, the process views of time and space see them as a state of processes. Moreover, from a temporal perspective, we are always in the middle of doing something, as being part of it, and try to connect and relate to the past and the future as dimensions of the present, rather than as separate and distinct temporal elements (Dawson 2014; Dawson & Sykes
2016). In organisation studies, Langley and Tsoukas (2010) and Dawson (2014) also use the example of music and song to explain how the sensemaking of tones in the present happens in relation to the tones already played and the ones yet to be played. Through this temporal relation, our experiences in the present are shaped by both what has happened and what is expected to happen (Dawson 2014). Further, as Helin and colleagues (2014) and Hernes (2010) note, the passing of time represents the impermanence and perishability of becoming, which creates new forms of becomings.

The discussion so far has been of philosophical nature. Given that this research focuses on organisation, organisational change, sensemaking and sensegiving, some valid questions are: what are the consequences of seeing reality from a particular philosophical perspective; here, process philosophy? How does adopting a particular process perspective, as discussed previously, determine the way organisation flux, ongoing change, becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving in that context are understood and described? The following section takes the philosophical discussion to the organisational level, describing the link between process philosophy and organisation studies. The discussion also highlights the limitations and opportunities that the substance and process views of organisation offer for this research.

2.3 From Philosophy to Organisation Studies: Approaches to Organisation and Organisational Change

The field of organisation studies is characterised by diversity and fragmentation (Morgan 2006; Perrow 1973; Silverman 1970; Westwood & Clegg 2003). The diversity in views on what an organisation is can be discussed under various headings. However, in light of the earlier philosophical discussion, the brief and selective review of the literature in this section is organised around the ontological question of whether an organisation consists of things or processes (Tsoukas & Chia 2002). The response to this
question, which follows the divide between the substance and process ontology (Rescher 1996), influences the way organisational change and the sensemaking and sensegiving of organisational change are conceptualised and treated. Though expressed in different terms, this difference “is deeply embedded in the literature on organization studies” (Van de Ven & Poole 2005, p. 1378) and, consequently, on its associated categories.

2.3.1 Organisation and Organisational Change from a Substance Perspective

The traditional views of seeing organisations as social entities, with well-defined structures and formal authority and communication lines, and established to achieve certain goals dominate organisation studies (Blau & Scott 1963; Silverman 1970; Van de Ven & Poole 2005). Such entities are characterised by, among other things, multiple variables (March & Simon 1958) or tightly coupled interdependent subunits and powerful norms (Weick & Quinn 1999). According to Bittner (1965), while in these stable associations, persons are engaged in concerted activities to achieve the defined goals and specific objectives, the process, albeit not in the ontological sense of the term, involves substantial rational planning. The elements of rationality (Bittner 1965) and specificity of communication content and channels (March & Simon 1958) differentiate formal and rational organisations from others. Silverman (1970) argues that drawing a distinction between formal and (other) social organisations is partly a matter of convenience and partly based on empirical observations. Drawing on Blau and Scott’s (1963) work, he adds formal status structure and formal lines of communication and authority to the distinguishing characteristics of formal organisations. Hernes (2008) believes that classification of organisations, which is associated with an Aristotelian view of the world, implies that they are seen as things in physical sense. The idea behind
classification is that an organisation is a ‘simple, definable, stable, element in timespace’ (Hernes 2008, p. 9).

From the materialist perspective, in the metaphysical sense of the term (Daniel 2015), organisations are the embodiment of a complex sum of multiple parts (Scott 2010). Organs of the body (organisation), Scott (2010) adds, are made of different components that maintain different functional positions in the body. Along a similar line of argument, Krikorian (1935) defines organisations ‘as a manifold of elements, each element being distinct, in a set of relations forming a whole’ (pp. 121-122). For Krikorian (1935), the pattern of elements and relations, which the whole signifies, persists through change. In other words, the identity or substance of the organisation, as viewed by Democritus (Van de Ven & Poole 2005), does not change. Endurance through time is one of the characteristics of substances, which, according to Ayers (1991), are the ‘only beings with independent existence’ (p. 70) and the ultimate source of change. Further, according to Krikorian (1935), the elements and relations of an organisation are interdependent, but the whole is independent. In contrast, for Scott (2010), the organs of a corporate body can exist independently of the organisation. This characteristic makes corporate bodies different from corporeal bodies; otherwise, as Scott argues, both are made of animate and inanimate parts. This view of organisation reflects Democritus’ atomism (Bickhard 2008) in that the differences in these entities are accounted for by changes in the mixtures and compositions of the subunits and that these entities are formed by the interaction of material bodies (Berryman 2011; Van de Ven & Poole 2005). However, where for Whitehead (1929) an atomistic view of reality is the ultimate process perspective because of its many possible novelties and becomings (Hernes 2008), seeing organisations as “becoming organ-ized” (Scott 2010, p. 11) shifts the focus to the constituting substance and atoms of organisation. Further, the latter view also
emphasises the notion of organisation as an ‘organon’ or instrument (Morgan 2006). The instrumentality of organisations is reflected in most of the metaphors used for them, which, though framed differently (Bolman & Deal 2008), can comfortably be covered under the umbrella of substance ontology.

From a substance perspective, whilst the unchangingness, or stability, of organisations is seen as the default explanation, their processes and associated factors, such as change, are perceived as secondary and as interactions among classical objects (Bickhard 2008, 2011). Organisations, from time to time, need to undergo change. Triggered by internal and/or external factors, organisational change happens in a linear fashion that can be divided into predicable, reducible and manageable steps (Burnes 1996; Gready 2013; Graetz & Smith 2010; Pollack & Pollack 2015). Lewin’s phased model of unfreezing, changing, refreezing (Burnes 1996; Dawson 2003a), Kotter (1996) and Kotter and Cohen’s (2002) eight step prescription for successful implementation of change and Hammer and Champy’s business process re-engineering (Graetz & Smith 2010) all reflect the elements of linearity, rational planning, top-down implementation and the end goal of stability for the process of organisational change. For example, as Dawson (2003a, p. 31) notes – quoting from Huse’s (1982) work – improving ‘an organization’s ability to cope with changes in its external environment and' increasing ‘its internal problem-solving capabilities’ are two of the key underlying concepts behind the organisational development models of organisational change, which has roots in Lewin’s conception of organisational change (Burnes 2012). Change in the external environment of an organisation is perceived as a problem or unwelcome happening that an otherwise stable organisation needs to address and overcome. These planned models of organisational change, having adapted and diversified since their inception, as discussed by Boje (Boje et al. 2012), advocate incremental, and episodic change as a
response to internal and external factors (Burnes 2004). The managers or change agents’ role is to identify the forces for and against change, and to increase the driving forces and reduce the restraining forces, with emphasis being placed on the latter (Dawson 2003a). Lewin’s model of change management has had a lasting influence on organisational development approaches as the predominant theoretical and practitioner models of organisational change (Dawson 1994; Sonenshein 2010).

The linear, planned models of change have received criticism from multiple perspectives, including from within the traditional approaches (for example, Bullock & Batten 1985; Burnes 1996, 2004; Dunphy & Stace 1993; Luiking et al. 2015). However, most of the criticism and alternatives offered do not go much beyond what they criticise. For example, Bullock and Batten (1985) propose seven criteria for evaluating the phase models of organisational change, which, according to them, none of the phase-models they have reviewed satisfies. Some of these criteria seem promising in terms of appreciating ‘the unfolding and complex nature of ongoing change processes’ (Dawson 1994, p. 3). Bullock and Batten (1985) propose that a phase model of change must view change longitudinally with a broader time horizon, such as months and years not days and weeks. Their perception of longitudinal change in organisations is that ‘an organisation exists as different states at different times and that there is some form of movement from one state to another’ (p. 384). They add that the phase model, therefore, should be able to capture the process of movement from one state to another. This movement or leap should be described by strategy making (Mintzberg et al. 1998). Bullock and Batten (1985), further argue that the conception of longitudinal change must allow for the processes of change as ‘dynamic and perpetual’ (p. 386). However, their notion of the longitudinal study of change ignores the complexity of this methodological approach, which goes beyond the objective and linear notion of time expressed in days,
weeks, months or years (Menard 2008; Pettigrew 1990). This Newtonian perspective of
time assumes time as a linear, divisible continuum (Dawson & Sykes 2016) that is
external to the organisations and is a medium for explaining organisational change (Van
de Ven & Poole 2005). Moreover, linearity and rationality as the common threads of
planned organisational change models (Pettigrew 1985) are evident in the proposed four-
phase model, which is intended to accommodate the dynamicity and perpetuity of
organisational change. Equally important, especially in the process-substance context, is
that the model advocates for the organisation’s return to stability by way of integration.
The four-phase model of exploration, planning, action and integration (Bullock & Batten
1985) falls short of ‘applying an understanding of complex and chaotic organisational
reality’ (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008, p. 28), which is far from linearity and orderliness
(Dawson 1994).

Graetz and Smith (2010) categorise approaches to organisational change into ten
philosophical standpoints. They range from psychological philosophy to institutional
philosophy, contingency philosophy, political philosophy and postmodern philosophy.
Some of the theories and approaches covered under these philosophical positions, such
as the life cycle and evolutionary theories (Van de Ven & Poole 1995), are explicit about
the continuous nature of change; others, such as the punctuated-equilibrium theory
(Gersick 1991; Gould 1989), advocate organisational change as an oscillation between
long periods of stability or a quasi-stationary state and short bursts of radical change.
From situational (Dawson 2003a) or contingency models (Graetz & Smith 2010),
organisational change is subject to environmental factors. Yet, according to political
philosophy (Graetz & Smith 2010) or dialectical theory (Langley & Sloan 2012; Van de
Ven & Poole 1995), organisational change is the result of conflicting ideologies,
interests, values and beliefs. By (2005) links the high failure rate of change programs
with the existing contradictory and confusing theories and approaches, and, most importantly, links the failure to the lack of a valid framework for implementing and managing change. Though there is some validity in the latter argument, limitations in the traditional approaches to organisation studies go beyond the framework. They start with the way reality is seen and organisation and organisational change are conceptualised at the first place. As briefly discussed here, the conception of organisation and organisational change from a substance perspective does not and cannot capture organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming. This stability-seeking perspective is in denial of constant change and flux, which, in turn, does not accommodate organisational becoming as a flow of happenings. Questions abound. For example, if organisations are stable entities, how can the day-to-day activities that make an organisation be explained? As time passes, does an organisation remain the same? Is every happening in an organising context the same as the previous happening? As the discussion in the later chapters of this thesis will empirically demonstrate, the happenings within an organising context, no two of which are the same, show that organisations are far from stable entities. They are continually made and remade. The substances, such as buildings, individuals and substantial resources, that may be referred to as an organisation make only a tiny percentage of what represents that organisation. Organisations’ worth and values are not necessarily determined based on the substances that they have but what they do and/or can do. Nonetheless, substance views of organisations do not provide adequate explanations for these questions. But do process views have satisfactory answers to these and similar questions? The following section explains this possibility.
2.3.2 Organisations and Organisational Change from a Process Perspective and Areas for Further Research

The conceptualisation of an organisation and change from a process perspective is in contrast to that from a substance perspective as discussed in the preceding section. From a process perspective, ‘organizations are construed as temporarily stabilized event clusters abstracted from a sea of constant flux and change’ (Nayak & Chia 2011, p. 281). They are patterns that emerge and are shaped from change (Chia 1999; Tsoukas & Chia 2002). This view of organisations contradicts the propositions that organisations are the sum of their thing-like parts with existence in their own right (Boal et al. 2003), they are stable entities (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008), they move from one stable state or equilibrium to another in a linear fashion (Romanelli & Tushman 1994), and that ensuring stability and control is the end goal of organisational management (Graetz & Smith 2010). As previously discussed, the latter conceptions of organisations follow Democritus’ views of reality as composed of stable substance or things that only change their positions in time and space (Van de Ven & Poole 2005). As criticised by Bergson (1946/2013, p. 121), from this ontological position, movement is conceptualised in terms of ‘immobilities’ and a series of stages and positions. For Hernes (2008), such a view of change or movement sees change as an outcome, rather than a process. According to Chia (1999), this view emphasises the outcomes of change, rather than the change itself. A substance perspective, therefore, cannot adequately explain how organising and organisational change unfold.

The inadequacy of the substance views for explaining how organising and organisational change happen and how they relate to each other echoes in various quarters of organisation and management studies. It has resulted in the adoption of process and process-influenced approaches to studying organisations’ constitutive
processes. Adjacent to the field of organisational change, for instance, Jarzabkowski (2005) and Whittington (1996) emphasise the recognition of strategy as a practice. Though they draw a distinction between process and practice approaches to studying strategy, albeit without exploring their philosophical underpinning, their practice approach puts ‘the work and talk of practitioners’ (Whittington 1996, p. 732) at the core of strategy thinking. According to Jarzabkowski (2005), strategy as a situated activity is continuously in the making and it is the strategising practices of managers that contribute to the activity of an organisation. Though the perspective of strategy-as-practice does not deny the conception of organisations as entities, or substances as the sources or doers of practices, it recognises strategy as something that people in an organisation do, rather than what an organisation has (Whittington 2006). Similarly, influenced by the practice turn, there has been recognition of leadership as practice in the field of leadership studies (Carroll et al. 2008). Crevani et al. (2010) argue that a perspective that focuses on leadership as the day-to-day practices and interactions is more promising for understanding how leadership happens. Echoing this view, Simpson, Buchan and Sillince (2018) make an urgent call for developing ‘dynamic theories and complementary methodologies’ to capitalise on the promise of leadership-as-practice. Crevani (2018) argues that in leadership studies, leadership is often conceptualised and studied separated from organising. He adds that the meaningfulness of conceptualising and studying leadership as an aspect of organising in a fluid world lies in process ontology. Nonetheless, though some of the recent shifts away from the traditional approaches in organisation studies are not explicitly adopting a process perspective, they (for example, Jarzabkowski 2005; Whittington 2003) are explicit about the influence of process studies, such as Weick’s (1969, 1979) suggestion of moving away from nouns, on their approaches. What is significant to underline here is that the process views and process-
influenced views provide a more adequate explanation for organisation and organisational change. They bring to the fore the practices, doings or happenings that constitute organisations.

For Weick (1974), organisation as a noun is a myth; it does not exist. Following Bateson’s (1972, p. 334) urge to ‘stamp out nouns’, Weick (1974) believes that the temptation to use a lot of nouns to refer to organisations is misleading because what exists is events and happenings, linked together, around which we erroneously erect boundaries and make into substances (Weick 1969). Finding the use of nouns as distorting in terms of understanding reality, Weick’s (1979) view is that perpetual change and flux can be more adequately conceptualised by verbs. Therefore, he urges organisation researchers to ‘become stingy in their use of nouns, generous in their use of verbs, and extravagant in their use of gerund […]’ (Weick 1979, p. 44, emphasis added). At the same time, Czarniawska (2010) sees the use of gerund as part of the ‘fashion favouring “processes” and “practices” in organization studies’ (p. 155). For Czarniawska (2010), process is not a new term in organisation studies, but a return to the past; nor is ‘organising’ an unfamiliar term. She claims that the root of the processual approach to organising, in Anglo-Saxon theory, can be traced to Taylor’s notion of flow/workflow. According to Czarniawska (2010), organisation and organising are two different phenomena; organisations are the sites where organising takes place. However, where Czarniawska’s tracing the root of processual approach to organising to Taylor’s concept of workflow can be debated based on historical accounts of processual approach (Dawson 1994, 2005), her treatment of an organisation as a stage upon which processes unfold and drawing a distinction between organising and organisation do not adequately explain organisations from a process perspective.
Underlining change, events, activity, movement and temporal evolution as the core elements of process thinking, Langley (2007) identifies the shift from noun to verb as a way of developing processual thinking. However, the urge to shift from noun to verb or the generous use of verbs can be put to the test for two reasons. First, not every verb shows movement and flux. Verbs can also describe states, conditions and experiences (Aarts 2014; Thomson & Martinet 1986). In the sentence ‘organising is a complex process’, the verb ‘is’ does not show an activity; rather, it expresses a state. However, in the same sentence, ‘organising’, which is a gerund or verbal noun – it qualifies as a noun, functioning as the subject of the sentence – shows an activity and flow. Second, while researchers, such as Weick (1974, 1979), Langley (2007) and Tsoukas and Chia (2011), advocate a shift from nouns to verbs, the arguments they present and the examples they use in elaborating their arguments are less about verbs, than about gerunds. ‘The use of gerunds immediately adds movement to an initially static and well-defined object…’ (Langley 2007, p. 275, emphasis added). There seems to be a misplaced attention in the ‘stamp out nouns’ argument (Weick 1974) as a verb does not necessarily show movement, nor is every noun (for example, verbal noun) void of movement and flow. Nonetheless, the proponents of verbs could offer another argument. A verb, either alone or in combination with another verb(s), can show a difference of tense or temporal dimensions, which a noun or gerund cannot do. The notion of the tenses is important in the discussion of time and temporality as the key characteristics of process thinking (Mead 1932).

Process views of organisation and change remain diverse, and so does the language of process thinking and process studies. A number of explanations can be provided for this diversity. First, as previously discussed, process views can be positioned along the continuum of process thinking, the two ends of which are
represented by weak and strong process views (Chia & Langley 2004). Second and partly related to the first reason, the diverse views on organisation have root in the various definitions and interpretations of the term ‘process’, which Langley (2007) believes is an obstacle for communication. Third, the changing positions of the individual scholars also contribute to the difficulty in following a single line of argument in process studies. For instance, drawing on Whitehead’s work, Bakken and Hernes (2006) make an important point in the context of moving from nouns to verbs (Weick 1974, 1979). They argue that entities as nouns are necessary for our sensemaking of processes. However, and more importantly, it is the process of noun-making and its implications that we should pay attention to, rather than the noun itself. According to Bakken and Hernes (2006), we are incapable of purely thinking in process terms and, even from a strong process view, ‘nounmaking is an indispensable ingredient for coming to grips with processes […]’ (p. 1601). This argument is in line with Bergson’s (1946/2013) focus on states for practical purposes. While Bergson (1946/2013) gives primacy to process and change, he argues that focusing on nouns ‘enables us to act upon things’ (p. 122). Nonetheless, in his later works, Hernes (2008, 2014) takes a relatively stronger process position – not very different from Weick’s (1974, 1979) denial of organisation as a noun. According to Hernes (2008, p. 37), ‘Talking about organizational change does not make much sense because organization never was in the first place’. What exists is change, not as the transformation of something but as the process of becoming of something (Langley & Tsoukas 2010). While Hernes’ (2008) latter argument is more congruent with Whitehead’s (1929) process philosophy, it also corresponds to James’ (1909) thought in that once things are made, they are dead. An organisation is alive only when it is in the making and going through change. However, as Rescher (1996) points out, ‘[t]he philosophy of process is also a philosophy in process’ (p. 165). With its processual
nature, process philosophy does not and must not impose a definitive position. As the philosophy itself changes and evolves, so does every individual process scholar’s position. The difference and diversity in process perspectives and, as a result, the diverse process views of organisations and organisational change can also be looked at in this context.

Process philosophy has been traditionally committed to the fundamentality of ontology over epistemology (Weber 2004). As a result, it does not address epistemological questions with the zest with which it focuses on ontological questions. While processes are given primacy over substances (Rescher 1996), questions as to how this primacy happens in practice and how it can be shown empirically that processes make substances get limited answers. In organisation studies, the important questions include how organisations as flux and ongoing change can be demonstrated empirically, and how organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving occur in relation to organisational flux and ongoing change. Based on the responses to these and similar questions, process organisation studies fall into two broad categories.

In one category, there is a burgeoning body of research that, drawing on process philosophers, such as Whitehead, Mead, Bergson and Rescher, investigates the affordance of process views for organisation studies. Among the early process studies of organisation, Dawson (1994, 2003a, 2003b) and Pettigrew’s (1973, 1985) works are seminal in a number of ways. First, given the dominance of Parmenides’ view of unchangeable substance in Western intellectual tradition (Seibt 2017), the explicit use of process thinking in empirical organisation studies, without notable precedents, is a significant step and contribution to process organisation studies. Second, Dawson (1994, 2003a, 2003b) and Pettigrew’s (1973, 1985) works are strongly empirical. Against the limited empirical process studies of organisations, their works are also significant in
terms of bringing the temporal characteristics of organisational change to the fore. In his eight-year longitudinal study of ICI, *The Awakening Giant: Continuity and Change in Imperial Chemical Industries*, first published in 1985, Pettigrew underlines, among other aspects, the co-existence of change and continuity in organisational life, and the importance of context in understanding change, and draws attention to the political characteristics of organising and organisational change. Similarly, in his book, *Organizational Change: A Processual Approach*, first published in 1994, which is based on a series of longitudinal field work carried out in three countries over twelve years, Dawson provides an understanding of organisational change as it happens. The book focuses on what Pettigrew (1990, p. 268) calls ‘catching reality in flight’. Using workplace observation, discussions and interviews with employees, he develops his processual framework, according to which the dynamicity and non-linearity of change processes come from their temporal context, socio-material relations and power-political processes (Dawson 2019). Third, these early process studies explicitly talk about the involvement of politics in organisations and organisational change (Dawson 1994, 2003a, 2003b; Pettigrew 1973, 1985). Though limited in their conceptualisation of power and politics in their early days, these works underline the need for incorporating political analysis into understanding organisational change.

Conceptions of power and politics in organisational change have attracted more attention in later process studies of organisational change (for example, Buchanan & Badham 2008; Buchanan & Dawson 2007; Dawson 2019; Fleming & Spicer 2007; Pettigrew & McNulty 1995; Sykes & Dawson forthcoming). Though not all coming from process views, these political approaches to organisational change tend to promote a broader conceptualisation of organisational politics. Power starts to be seen as a relational phenomenon, rather than in its mechanical form or as a quality of individuals.
(Fleming & Spicer 2007; Thomas & Hardy 2011). Seeing power-political processes as temporal-relational (Dawson 2019) underlines their fluid nature. It is the relation that contains power and performs politics. Buchanan and Dawson (2007) underline the various narratives, interpretations, and sensemaking that add to the complex political processes in organisational change. Studies of organisational power, politics and resistance also highlight the intertwined nature of power and resistance (Balogun et al. 2011; Fleming & Spicer 2008; Hardy & Thomas 2014; Mumby et al. 2017). Whilst organisational change involves the exercise of power and politics by the way people relate and re-relate, it also involves people resisting change in various forms. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of power, some of these studies emphasise the prevalence of power (Hardy & Thomas 2014), the co-constitutive nature of power and resistance (Thomas & Hardy 2011) and the multidimensional dynamics of power, resistance and politics in organisations (Fleming & Spicer 2008). Nonetheless, whilst these studies successfully highlight the complexity and processuality of organisational change, including its political characteristics, they provide limited theoretical explanation for organisational flux and ongoing change. Either they do not conceptualise organisations as processes and do not investigate power and politics from a process perspective, or their process views fall on the weak end of the process continuum. For them, whilst processes are important for understanding organisations, they are downgraded to the happenings of entities or substances (Chia & Langley 2004; Langley & Tsoukas 2017).

On the other hand, those process views of organisation that fall on the strong end of the process continuum present vigorous theoretical arguments. As briefly discussed earlier, these views afford a sensible theoretical framework for investigating organisational flux, constant change, and becoming. Recent years have seen a growing body of theoretical work in this area. For example, the works of Helin and colleagues
(2014), Hernes (2014a), and Hernes and Maitlis’ (2010) compilation of reflections on process philosophy and organisation studies, and Langley and Tsoukas’ (2017) *Handbook of Process Organization Studies* provide significant points of reference for conceptualising organisational becoming. These studies successfully tackle some philosophical and theoretical questions on process views of organisation. They establish a strong link between process philosophy and organisation studies and help in a better understanding of process organisation studies.

In recent years, there has been a promising interest in empirical work from a process perspective (for example, Carroll & Simpson 2012, Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff 2010; Crevani 2018; McDonald & Simpson 2014; Sergi & Hellin 2011; Simpson & Marshall 2010; Simpson, Buchan & Sillince 2018; Simpson, Tracey & Weston 2018; Vásquez, Brummans & Groleau 2012). Two points are important to underline here. First, these studies make explicit attempts to shift the focus from entities to processes. Carroll and colleagues (2008), for instance, critique the competency-oriented perspective of leadership literature, which, according to Chia and Holt (2006), gives primacy to the individual agent and focuses on causal relationship. ‘To both contest and supplant’ the competence models, Carroll and colleagues (2008, p. 365) propose a practice ontology, which is based on the assumption of relationality and privileges practice over actor. Along this line of argument, Simpson et al. (2018) differentiate ‘between leadership as a set of practices, and leadership in the flow of practice’ (p. 644). For them, the earlier gives primacy to the predefined entities that pre-exist their interactions, whereas the latter, which is congruent with the strong process perspective, reverses the order. They emphasise that conceptualising leadership as the flow of practice acknowledges the world on the move. Coming from a similar ontological position, Crevani (2018) argues that leadership in a fluid world can be conceptualised by drawing
attention to interactions and fluidity of leadership work. From this perspective, leadership is the process of doing leadership, rather than individual leader traits and competences (Crevani et al. 2010). It is about the unfolding of everyday practice and accomplishments (Simpson et al. 2018), which make an aspect of organising processes (Crevani 2018).

Second, these empirical studies refute the argument that strong process view is primarily conceptual (Chia & Langley 2004). Investigating organisations from a strong process ontology can be equally pragmatic and empirically grounded (Carroll & Simpson 2012; McDonald & Simpson 2014; Simpson, Tracey & Weston 2018). However, broadly, there are two significant limitations regarding strong process organisation studies. First, they are largely silent on the political characteristics of organisational becoming (Dawson & Sykes 2016; Sykes & Dawson forthcoming). In their theoretical discussions, it seems at times as if humans were not involved in organisational becoming and flux. Either these studies have given only limited attention to the relevant conceptions, such as power, politics and resistance, or these terms have been significantly excluded from the glossaries of their key terms altogether. Second, strong process views leave room for further research to investigate whether the ‘world on the move’ (Hernes 2014a, p. 11) can be demonstrated empirically. For instance, Helin and colleagues (2014) have entitled the introductory chapter of their handbook as ‘process is how process does’ (p. 1). But after reading this and other similar works, the how part still remains unanswered and empirically unsubstantiated. Whilst they hold strong views on organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming, they do not empirically demonstrate how these processes happen. Despite the recent trend, it is fair to argue that there is precious little in the way of empirical work from an ontological process perspective.

At the same time, a related area in organisation studies that has been closely linked to (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015) and has significantly contributed to the strong process
views of organisation is sensemaking (Bakken & Hernes 2006; Tsoukas & Chia 2002). Weick’s (1969, 1979) seminal work, The Social Psychology of Organizing, brought sensemaking, as the active authoring of events, to the fore of studying organising processes (Maitlis & Christianson 2014). Weick has been unequivocal about his views on the link between sensemaking and organising. He claims that his ‘recipe for sensemaking’ is also providing the ‘basic theme of the entire organizing’ (Weick 1979, p. 133). The link between sensemaking and organising has been further acknowledged in most of the subsequent works on sensemaking (for example, Bakken & Hernes 2006; Dawson 2019, Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015). Dawson’s (2019) processual framework of organisational change has sensemaking and storytelling as important elements both in terms of the temporal context and power-political processes of change. According to Buchanan and Dawson (2007, p. 674), ‘organizational change [is] a history of competing narratives. Nonetheless, Weick’s study of sensemaking is also used as a point of reference for understanding organisation as a process (Hernes 2008).

Further, Weick has been radical in his process views. As noted above, he argues that organisation as a noun is a myth; it does not exist (Weick 1974). It is in the context of this argument that he urges process scholars to ‘stamp out noun’ (p. 358). There has been some empirical work on sensemaking and its construct, sensegiving (Degn 2015; Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Rouleau 2005; Weick 1995, 2001), and most of these studies have been carried out in relation to organisational change. However, there has been limited empirical study of sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming. The becoming of an organisation as an ongoing change and flux largely goes to the background in these studies. For example, where for Weick (1974) organisation as a noun is a myth, the question as to how organisation as a verb, or in Weick’s (1979) words, how organising unfolds in practice has received only a limited
answer. Given the close link between sensemaking, sensegiving and organising, this lack of focus on organisational becoming as the context for sensemaking and sensegiving shows a significant limitation.

Considering the limitations highlighted above, this research focuses on the empirical demonstration of organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming and organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to these processes. As explained in chapter one, the first research question focuses on whether organisational becoming and its temporal unfolding can be demonstrated empirically. Given the constraints on the study, and the existing tension in the literature regarding sensemaking and sensegiving, as explained in the following section, the second research question focuses on the temporal characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving. More specifically, the second research question investigates the ongoingness of sensemaking and sensegiving and their temporal dimensions. These two aspects of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving have been the subject of debate in the literature. This debate is highlighted in the following section.

2.4 Organisational Sensemaking and Sensegiving

2.4.1 ‘Making Sense of Sensemaking’ and Sensegiving

Maitlis and Christianson (2014) trace the roots of sensemaking in organisational literature to James (1890) and Dewey’s (1922) work. However, while James and Dewey did not explicitly discuss sensemaking as a distinct topic of study, their works and those of other scholars, such as Mead (1934) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), provided a fertile ground for sensemaking-related studies. It was Weick’s (1969, 1979) seminal work, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, which brought sensemaking, as the active authoring of events, to the fore of studying organising processes (Maitlis & Christianson
2014). While the main theme of Weick’s (1979) work was to move away from conceptualising organisations as stable entities to assuming them to be collectives of processes that constitute the work of organising, his work provided the ‘recipe for sense-making’ (p. 133), which was discussed in depth in his subsequent works (for example, Weick 1995, 2001). As discussed later, the recipe, which according to Weick (1979) also provides the ‘basic theme of the entire organizing’ is ‘How can I know what I think until I see what I say?’ (p. 133). Though a number of other scholars’ works on sensemaking will be acknowledged throughout this study, the Weickian perspective on sensemaking will remain in the foreground for three reasons. First, any discussion of sensemaking in organisation studies that goes beyond the general notion of the term needs to cultivate an appreciation of the historical roots of organisational sensemaking in Weick’s (1979, 1995) pioneering work (Brown et al. 2008; Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010). Second, despite its short history, not only has sensemaking been a driving force behind process study of organisations but the two are also mutually interlocked (Hernes & Maitlis 2010). The close affinity between sensemaking and organising hints at the indispensable relation between sensemaking and organisational becoming. Further, hardly any scholars have been as unequivocal and radical as Weick (1995) in his process approach toward organisational sensemaking. Third, Weick’s (1995) emphasis on the cognitive aspect of sensemaking resonates with this study. Nonetheless, cognition and mind are not seen from the standpoint of the individual, but as social phenomena. The recognition of social characteristic of mind will enable to conceptualise sensemaking as a social process even if the focus is centred on individuals. Given these reasons, the Weickian perspective on organisational sensemaking provides a better lens for investigating both sensemaking as a process and its role in organisational becoming. But what is sensemaking?
The diversity in conceptualising sensemaking is reflected in the variety of definitions used to refer to it. From the general notion of the term to seeing it as a cognitive function (Louis 1980) to defining it as a social process (Weick 1995), definitions abound. Louis (1980) defines sensemaking as a recurring cycle of events that begins with individuals’ formation of ‘unconscious and conscious anticipations and assumptions’ about future events, and concludes with ‘alterations in cognitive scripts’ (p. 241). In this process, individuals experience discrepant events, develop interpretations for discrepancies, update their understandings of actors, actions and settings and revise their predictions about future events. For Starbuck and Milliken (1988), the common thread through the constitutive processes of sensemaking is ‘that they involve putting stimuli into frameworks (schemata) that make sense of the stimuli’ (p. 51). The influence of cognitivist orientation toward sensemaking is visible in Weick’s (1995) emphasis on the sensemaker as the starting point in sensemaking process though he sees the individual sensemaker as a multitude of selves. Weick (1995) appreciates Mead’s (1934) argument that social process precedes the individual’s mind. Nonetheless, the influence of James’ (1890) *The Principles of Psychology* and Starbuck and Milliken’s (1988) cognitive approach is stronger on his early works (Powell 2014). It is on these grounds that Gephart and colleagues (2010) identify the Weickian view of sensemaking as a cognitive psychological perspective. However, though the cognitive camp still has its proponents in organisational study (Holt & Cornelissen 2014), research on organisational sensemaking, including that of Weick, has moved away from its strong cognitive origins to where it is now being studied as a social process (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015). The social characteristics of cognition are receiving more recognition in the study of sensemaking.
Sensemaking is ‘the making of sense’ (Weick 1995, p. 4) and creating meaning (Degn 2015), which, in an organisational context, is fundamentally a social process (Maitlis 2005). According to Weick (1995), sensemaking is a process that is: ‘1. grounded in identity construction 2. retrospective 3. enactive of sensible environments 4. social 5. ongoing 6. focused on and by extracted cues [and] 7. driven by plausibility rather than accuracy’ (p. 17). Organisational sensemaking occurs when individuals, with multiple identities (Weick 1995) and in a social context characterised by the presence of other actors (Weick et al. 2005), either physically present or imagined (Weick 1995), face discrepant happenings (Maitlis 2005). In these circumstances, individuals engage in retrospective construction and interpretation of their world – trying to make meaning of what is happening. They may do so through interactions with each other, ‘constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively’ (Gephart 1993, p. 1485). The process may also involve verbal and non-verbal (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991) or conversational and other social practices (Gephart 1993). It is in this process that individuals intentionally attempt to influence each other’s sensemaking, a process Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) called sensegiving.

Sensegiving, first discussed in an organisational context by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), happens when organisational members construct and reconstruct the meaning of a happening and concurrently attempt to influence others’ meaning creation toward a preferred explanation of the happening (Gephart et al. 2010). It has often been studied as an influence tool at the disposal of organisational leaders and managers (Degn 2015; Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Rouleau 2005). However, Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) and Maitlis and Christianson (2014) argue that sensegiving is not necessarily a top-down process or a control tool at the disposal of managers. According to them, anyone, at any organisational level, even people from outside the organisation, can engage in
sensegiving. The notion of influence through sensemaking and sensegiving also highlights the prevalence of power and resistance in organisations, especially with respect to change (Hardy & Thomas 2014; Thomas & Hardy 2011). Further, the argument that sensegiving is not necessarily a top-down process (Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Maitlis & Lawrence 2007) indicates the ‘multiple possibilities for organizational resistance’ as change unfolds (Mumby et al. 2017, p. 1161). With the processual characteristic of organisational change (Dawson 1994), the role of sensegiving in the unfolding of organisational politics and resistance during change becomes prominent.

There is an important debate surrounding the functional relation between sensemaking and sensegiving (Degn 2015; Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Rouleau 2005; Weick 1995, 2001). The literature has either treated sensegiving as a separate process or as a construct of sensemaking. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) suggest that sensemaking and sensegiving are sequential processes that start with sensemaking. Once people make sense of something, they engage in sensegiving, constructing meaning with an orientation toward future (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Smerek 211). Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) identify factors that, according to them, facilitate and motivate sensegiving. They argue that sensegiving is triggered by a perception or anticipation of a gap in sensemaking. Their argument suggests that in the absence of a perceived or anticipated gap in sensemaking, there should be no (need for) sensegiving. However, other researchers view sensegiving as a construct of sensemaking and acknowledge their difference only at the conceptual level (Hill & Levenhagen 1995; Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sonenshein 2010). For Rouleau (2005), sensemaking and sensegiving are ‘two sides of the same coin’ (p. 1415), and one cannot exist without the other. Though the conceptualisation of sensegiving as a construct of sensemaking is the dominant view in the literature (Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Weick et al. 2005), their functional
relation has not been fully explored and explained. How sensegiving helps to understand sensemaking or how critical it is for the unfolding of sensemaking has not been given due attention in the study of sensemaking.

The conceptualisation of sensegiving as a construct of sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Weick et al. 2005) underscores the inextricable role of the unfolding of one for the happening of the other. ‘[A]s an organized family of occurrences that are systematically linked to one another either causally or functionally’ (Rescher 1996, p. 38), sensemaking and sensegiving constitute a single process. Therefore, discussing the unfolding of one without acknowledging the other would leave a gap in the debate on organisational sensemaking. Further, sensemaking as the active authoring of events (Maitlis & Christianson 2014) or the enactment of a sensible environment as part of sensemaking process (Weick 1995) bears meaning with the intentional and purposeful influencing attempt through sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991). Drawing on this perspective, in this study, not only are sensemaking and sensegiving conceptualised and treated as two dimensions of the same process where one cannot exist without the other, but it is also argued that conceptualising sensemaking without acknowledging and understanding sensegiving does not acknowledge the relational unfolding of sensemaking. Therefore, sensegiving as an inextricable construct of sensemaking remains a topic of interest for this study. Any reference to sensemaking entails sensegiving. The question about which one comes first is the chicken-egg argument. The relation between sensemaking and sensegiving is not unidirectional.

Building on Weick’s (1995) work, there is considerable variation in what sensemaking is, what it encompasses and how it is accomplished (Brown et al. 2014; Maitlis & Christianson 2014). Part of the reason for the variation lies in the different contexts in which sensemaking has been studied and applied (Maitlis & Christianson
For instance, sensemaking and sensegiving have been applied to the study of technological disruptions (Griffith 1999), strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Rouleau 2005), disaster and crisis (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010; Weick 1988, 2010) and organisational change in general (Buchanan & Dawson 2007; Weick & Quinn 1999), to name a few. A common thread running through most of these studies is the presumed requirement of a trigger for sensemaking. Drawing on Weick’s (1995) argument that people cannot make sense of everything, studies on sensemaking have often looked for shocks, discrepancies, surprises and unusual happenings that enable or trigger sensemaking. Such triggers and enablers are often conceptualised as unusual surprises or rare happenings in organisational becoming (Maitlis & Lawrence 2007), rather than a characteristic of organisational flux. The earlier view is the reason why organisational change, as an unusual happening, has been seen and used as a fertile ground for studying organisational sensemaking (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015). Despite the proclaimed positions of some of the studies that dictate differently, many of these studies look for change and unusual happenings in otherwise stable organisations. This indicates an ontological difference that defines the significant divide between the two streams of literature on organisation studies in general (Van de Ven & Poole 2005). While this difference was highlighted in the previous sections, it will also be evident in the discussion on some of the characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving, which begins below.

2.4.2 Temporality of Sensemaking and Sensegiving

Weick (1995) identifies seven characteristics of sensemaking (pointed out in the definition present by Weick, above), which are more or less reflected in most of the discussions on organisational sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015). However, given the constraints on this study, the research question on
sensemaking and sensegiving focuses on two of these seven characteristics. With an interest in the temporality of sensemaking and sensegiving, the second research question specifically focuses on the ongoingness and temporal dimensions of sensemaking and sensegiving (Weick 1995).

2.4.2.1 Ongoingness of Sensemaking and Sensegiving

The literature has a binarised position on the ongoingness of sensemaking. Sensemaking is seen to unfold either episodically or continuously (Weick 2011; Maitlis & Christianson 2014). This divergence, which indicates ontological differences, is a source of tension in conceptualising sensemaking (Maclean et al. 2011). In his early work on sensemaking, Weick (1995) makes an explicit emphasis on the ongoingness of sensemaking by identifying flow as a constant. For him, ‘[s]ensemaking never starts’ as its ‘pure duration never stops’ (p. 43). This conception of sensemaking is congruent with the process view in that, in its pure duration, ‘states melt into each other’ (Hernes 2014a, p. 28), flow is continuous and its decomposition is only artificial and for the convenience of customary knowledge (Bergson 1929, p. 243). To explicate his view of the ongoingness of sensemaking, Weick draws on Winograd and Flores’ (1986) Heideggerian notion of thrownness in that ‘[…] people find themselves thrown into ongoing situations […]’ (Weick 1995, p. 43), which they need to make sense of. However, this notion of thrownness implies a situation that cannot be adequately explained by a process view. The implied situation assumes people’s detachment from the ongoing situation, by way of not being thrown into the situation, as a possibility. Further, the assumption behind this proposition is that ongoingness or flow is a characteristic of the situation only, not that of the people thrown into the situation. Such a view appreciates the correlation between people and the situation, rather than their
relational becoming or how they combine in the process of their ongoing becoming (Hernes 2008; Tsoukas & Chia 2002).

Alternatively, relational process thinking provides the much-needed explanation for the ongoingness of sensemaking. To paraphrase Mintzberg (1973), people are always in the middle of the flow of happenings. Their ongoing becoming is part of the flow (Hernes 2014a; Tsoukas & Chia 2002). Those happenings are intrinsically associated with the becomings, including that of the people, within their relational context. Further, as Hernes (2014a) points out, in Bergson’s view of pure duration, ‘states melt into each other’ (p. 28). Drawing boundaries in the form of episodes is only temporary and imaginary bracketing, as pointed out by Weick (1979). Thrownness, as described by Heidegger (1962) is a characteristic of existence or being, rather than an unfortunate situation for becoming. As the becoming of being temporally unfolds, its states and sub-processes fuse into each other (Bergson 1922), and its relationships are shaped and reshaped. The intra-actions of becoming and its interactions with other processes beyond the subject context create impetus – here, called push and pull – for its temporal-relational unfolding. To make sense of this flow in its active and ongoing relational context or to give order to the flow in an organisational context, people bracket or bound the flow and attribute meaning to it (Smerek 2011). Nonetheless, bracketing⁶ and the overall sensemaking process, or, as Hernes (2008) points out, the process of ordering the flow cannot be studied separate from the flow. Hence, as a complex of occurrences with its temporal coherence and integrity (Rescher 2000), while sensemaking is a process in

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⁶ In this thesis, the term ‘bracketing’ is used in the sense of sampling as used by Weick (1979) – ‘when an object is sampled, only portions of it are pulled out for closer inspection’ (p. 156). It does not reflect Langley’s (1999) notion of temporal bracketing as an analytical strategy – ‘decomposing time lines into distinct phases where there is continuity in activities within each phase and discontinuity at the frontiers’ (Langley 2010, p. 919).
its own right, it happens continuously as a sub-process of flow and becoming, with their pure duration flowing into each other (Hernes 2008).

The ongoingness of sensemaking is not a mere description presented in cognitive terms (Rouleau 2005). Researchers, such as Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), Hopkinson (2001), and Maitlis and Lawrence (2007), have investigated how sensemaking and sensegiving work in social contexts, such as strategic change management, marketing and managing organisational and stakeholder relationships. Maitlis (2005) identifies two streams of research that investigate organisational sensemaking as a social process. One investigates how certain groups influence others’ sensemaking. Whilst sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991) remains the dominant topic of study in this stream of research, these studies largely ignore the multi-directional and dynamic characteristics of relationships in social settings. The relationships are mainly investigated in a top-down direction (Degn 2015; Maitlis & Lawrence 2007; Rouleau 2005), ignoring the creative nature of intra-actions in the network of relations. A second stream of research, with a more holistic approach, investigates sensemaking in extreme situations, such as crises and disasters (Mailis & Sonenshein 2010; Weick 1988, 2010). However, as Maitlis (2005) points out, while these situations provide a rich context for investigating sensemaking among multiple groups, they fail to reflect organisational contexts in general. What is pertinent to the discussion on the ongoingness of sensemaking is that these studies focus on how individuals navigate through ongoing stream of experiences, interpret and explain sets of clues from their environments and socially construct meaning. Seeing sensemaking ‘as an ongoing social activity’ (Dawson & McLean 2013, p. 202), these studies conceptualise sensemaking within the framework of social constructionism (Maitlis 2005). From this perspective, greater emphasis is placed on active and ongoing construction of reality through discourse (Hopkinson 2001). In line
with this perspective, discourse as constructing social reality is used as a lens to conceptualise ongoing collective sensemaking, and narrative is seen as a vehicle for sensemaking and sensegiving (Dawson & McLean 2013). Boje (2008), for instance, notes that while story constitutes a key part of organisational sensemaking, the force and counter-force of narrative and story drive the organising process. However, the question here is whether discourse and narrative are continuous in nature to account for the ongoingness of sensemaking as a process. Although studies, such as Maclean et al. (2011) and Dawson and McLean (2013), try to accommodate the continuous aspect of sensemaking and sensegiving by highlighting the ongoing characteristic of storytelling, the ‘temporary stability[ies and] provisional resting points’ in storying and storytelling (Weick 2011, p. 146) suggest that sensemaking unfolds episodically. Further, what is given limited attention in this stream of research is the link between action, discourse and narrative (Hopkinson 2001). While sensemaking is viewed as ‘inextricably bound up with language’ (Maclean et al. 2011, p. 20), an important question is whether language is the only means of constructing meaning.

The concept of ongoingness of sensemaking is in tension with the notion of unexpected happening as the trigger of sensemaking. Appreciating sensemaking as an ongoing process, with no timeout (Gephart et al. 2010), can have two explanations. First, sensemaking should not cease even when the unexpected events are not unexpected anymore. Depending on the context, even if nothing is extracted as a cue from the environment and interruptions and anomalies are less frequent (Weick 2011), or there is no interruption to projects, or the interruption does not induce emotion (Weick 1995), sensemaking should happen and keep happening. However, not only does this explanation challenge the traditional role of the trigger, but it also fails to fit well with the ‘swift’ nature of sensemaking (Weick 1995, p. 49). The proposition of swiftness of
sensemaking has the assumption of a beginning and an end (conclusion), however brief they may be. With this assumption, the discussion turns full circle to the episodic view of sensemaking. It is for such reasons that Weick (2011) argues that though sensemaking is ongoing, it consists of ‘many distinct plausible images’ (p. 146) or episodes. Weick is not alone in shifting his position between the episodic and continuous views of sensemaking. To paraphrase Weick (1995, p. 25), drawing on William James’ work, though it makes sense to talk about a stream of sensemaking within a pure duration of time, rather than sensemakings (note the plural) within distinct episodes of time, research shows that the episodic view of sensemaking is currently dominating the field (Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Hultin & Mähring 2017). The second explanation of ongoing sensemaking, which is in line with a process view, is to see disruption and unexpected events – that is, change, not necessarily in kind, though – as continuous and to view stability, predictability and sameness as exceptions (Rescher 1996). The ongoing disruption should trigger ongoing sensemaking. With the latter explanation, however, continuous disruption and ongoing unexpected happenings become an oxymoron. When a happening occurs more frequently or when change happens continuously, it defines the normalcy, as a result, the happening may not be a disruption nor may the change be unexpected. What happens less frequently should disrupt the normal process and, therefore, trigger sensemaking if the latter is to be assumed as a conditional process (Maitlis & Lawrence 2007). The oxymoron can also be addressed by conceptualising and empirically showing continuous disruption in the flow of happenings or ongoing change in the patterns of change.

The episodic view of sensemaking, with its proponents in both the cognitive and social process camps (Starbuck & Milliken 1988; Maitlis & Lawrence 2007; Weick 1995, 2011; Mills et al. 2010), shifts the focus from process to the end result. An episode
is defined by its distinct beginning and conclusion; the latter includes the sense that is made or the meaning that is constructed. However, shifting the focus from making and constructing to sense and meaning, as their outcomes, goes contrary to Weick’s (1974) ‘stamp out noun’ (p. 358) argument and his emphasis on the use of verbs to focus attention on process. Based on what Weick’s argument, the end results lack the relational quality and fail to give primacy to connections and flow, which ‘are the stuff of process’ (Weick 1974). The shift of focus to sense and meaning also creates questions, such as: Does every episode of sensemaking produce the intended result? What is an intended result (sense and meaning)? The study of enacted sensemaking around crisis and disaster (Weick 1988) suggests that the outcome of sensemaking is not necessarily the intended one. It could be enacted crises in organisations (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010). Nonetheless, while these and many more questions around sensemaking are important and demand further investigation in their own right, what remains of primary interest for this study is the investigation of ongoingness of sensemaking. It is an investigation into the view of organisational sensemaking that appreciates its duration from an interruption in organisational normalcy to its restoration (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015) versus an appreciation of sensemaking whose states melt into each other (Hernes 2014a). It is an investigation into sensemaking as an isolated happening versus a view of sensemaking that appreciates the wholeness of process thinking, without rejecting the notion of parts (Helin et al. 2014) and sub-processes or micro-processes (Rescher 1996), but acknowledging the intimate relationship between parts and whole in which ‘one emerges from the many, or vice versa’ (Helin et al. 2014, p. 6). The tension between the two approaches informs the second research question. The second question also investigates the temporal dimensions of sensemaking and sensegiving. As the following section shows, the literature is generally divided between seeing sensemaking and sensegiving.
as retrospective (Weick 1995) and prospective (Gioia et al. 1994). The following section underlines the tension in the literature in light of a process view of temporality of sensemaking and sensegiving.

2.4.2.2 Retrospective and Prospective Characteristics of Sensemaking and Sensegiving

‘The most distinguishing characteristic’ of sensemaking is its retrospective focus (Weick 1995, p. 24). Not only has this characteristic remained consistent throughout Weick’s (1969, 1979, 1993, 2011) study of sensemaking, but it has also been reflected in numerous other investigations of sensemaking (for example, Gioia et al. 2002; Maitlis 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010; Sonenshein 2010). However, retrospection has been interpreted variously. Mills and colleagues’ (2010) view of retrospective sensemaking is that one interprets current events by comparing them to similar past happenings. This conception of retrospection appreciates the immediacy of action (Dawson 2014) by seeing the past events as a frame of reference for sensemaking in the present. As there is no time out from sensemaking (Gephart et al. 2010), the past dimension of temporal sensemaking (Wiebe 2010) flows into its present dimension only to provide another point of reference for sensemaking in the present, which, in turn, provides materials for another sensemaking that is yet to happen – ‘the present continually becomes the past’ (Dawson & Sykes 2016, p. 18). However, drawing on Mead’s work, Weick (1969, p. 65) argues that ‘an action can become an object of attention only after it has occurred’ and, hence only makes sense retrospectively. At the heart of his argument is the often-quoted question?, ‘How can I know what I think until I see what I say?’ (Weick 1979, p. 133) (Figures 2.1 and 2.2). According to Weick (1979), not only is this quote a ‘recipe for sense-making’ but it is also the basic theme of his organising model.

7 Versions of it have been attributed to EM Forester (Persaud 2008).
Figure 2.1 Retrospection in sensemaking (Weick 1979, pp. 132 & 134)

Figure 2.1, as Weick (1979) notes, shows the *four elements of organising*: ecological change, enactment, selection and retention. Change in the environment provides the raw materials that create two options of enactment for the actor, to bracket the change or part of it for a closer look, or to do something that creates further change and more materials for enactment. Enactment – ‘saying’ – which according to Weick (1979, p. 130) ‘is the only process where (emphasis added) the organism *directly* engages an external “environment”’, feeds its equivocal displays to the selection stage. The latter is also affected by knowledge from the past experiences. At the same time, change in the environment is not always necessary to induce enactment as ‘past experience in the form of previously enacted environments often provides sufficient materials by itself for sense-making’ (Weick 1979). Selection, then, acts as structures or cause maps to reduce equivocality. According to this model (Weick 1979), it is only after the selection – having seen what the actor says – that sense is made and ‘the products of successful sense-making’ are retained. The retained product feeds back to the enactment stage and the cycle continues.

Weick’s (1979) simplified model of sensemaking, as shown in Figure 2.1 and briefly explained above, provides raw material for refuting some of his own arguments. At the same time, it creates more questions. The first trigger should put the model on autopilot with a non-ending cycle of enactment-selection-retention. The cycle, which
supports the ongoing view of sensemaking (Weick 1995; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015), contrary to the episodic view, then, does not need any ecological change, as the latter is not the source of trigger for enactment (Weick 1979). Here, the question is, will the cycle continue even when sense has been made, the actor trusts their past experience and the feedback from retention to enactment is positive, as shown by Weick? More importantly, since enactment is the only process for a direct link between the external environment and actor’s sensemaking (Weick 1979, p. 130), as a result of a disconnect between the two through the self-sufficiency of the sensemaking process, the latter becomes an isolated cycle, void of process characteristics. Further, as highlighted by the adverb of place ‘where’ (see above), Weick (1979) treats each phase and, subsequently, the entire sensemaking process, as a space detached from the actor. Weick (1995) has no hesitation in saying that the only way to perceive experience as distinct episodes or events and to talk about experiences (plural) is ‘by stepping outside the stream of experience and directing attention to it’ or paying attention to ‘what has already passed’ (p. 25). He points out that this conception of experience is not possible within the notion of the pure duration of time, but time as discrete segments. However, not only does this description not help to conceptualise sensemakings (note the plural) but it also puts the actor in a bystander position in relation to both space and time (Purser & Petranker 2005; Dawson 2014). As Dawson (2014) notes, such an approach undermines a process view of sensemaking.

Figure 2.2 ‘Recipe for sensemaking’ (Weick 1979, p. 134)

How can (I/we) know what (I/we/they) (think/feel/want) until (I/we/they) (see/hear) what (I/we/they) (say/do)

The actor Retention Selection Enactment
Gephart and colleagues (2010) make a valid argument in that Weick’s (1969, 1979) view of sensemaking is cognitive. As the discussion of Figure 2.1 shows, two of the three phases of sensemaking process do not have a direct link to the external environment, whereas enactment can also happen without directly engaging the external environment. The situation presents the whole process as the cognitive processing of information. Weick (1979) attempts to incorporate the element of ‘social’ into this process by giving the option of choosing plural pronouns in the process shown in Figure 2.2. It suggests that sensemaking has the possibility of being a cognitive or social process. If the earlier holds true, which seems to be the case when the pronouns in Figure 2.2 are singular and the cycle is self-sufficient, it fails Weick’s (1995) own argument that sensemaking always happens in the presence of others, either real or imagined. Nonetheless, before returning to the topics of retrospective and prospective sensemaking, a few possible situations are depicted here. First, there are multiple sequential and simultaneous narratives in an organisation (Brown et al. 2008; Mumby et al. 2017) or a collective (Dawson & McLean 2013). The often-competing accounts and narratives highlight both the social aspect and the politics of sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010). The latter, when put together with sensegiving as a construct of sensemaking (Rouleau 2005), with its future orientation (Smerek 2011), draws attention to the political struggle that happens around organising (Hall 1984) and resistance (Mumby et al. 2017) and its intertwined multiple, simultaneous sensemaking processes (Bakken & Hernes 2006). In this situation, does the enactment-selection-retention process operate independently for every instant of sensemaking, or do multiple sensemaking processes fuse into each other and constitute a stream of sensemaking influenced by what may happen in the future? Second, individuals and collectives may not necessarily be making sense of what they themselves say. There are times when the sensemakers (need to) make
sense of what others say or do. In these cases, will the sensemakers have the flexibility of seeing what others say/do before they know it – rationally and retrospectively making sense of what others say or do? What role does the possibility of or the need for anticipating future happenings play in making sense of happenings in the present? Is retrospective sensemaking not similar (figuratively) to walking backward?

While retrospective sensemaking dominates the literature (Weick 1993, 1995, 2001; Holt & Cornelissen 2014; Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015), it has not avoided criticism (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Colville et al. 2014). According to Stigliani and Ravasi (2012), prospective or future-oriented sensemaking ‘underpins fundamental organizational processes’ (p. 1234). Strategy making and product development are examples of organisational processes that, to a large degree, depend on future sensemaking. Ybema (2004) highlights the significance of managerial nostalgia during organisational change processes. He argues that organisational members use both nostalgia and postalgia, ‘glorification of the past’ and ‘idealization of the future’ (p. 825), as part of their struggles to navigate through organisational change. Gioia and colleagues (1994) underline the significance of prospective sensemaking in strategic decision-making. Their work shows that in making strategic changes, it is not the mere retrospective information processing and sensemaking that shape the future-oriented decisions made in the present. Managerial thinking and discourse are inherently nostalgic (Ybema 2004). Inferring the future consequences of the proposed actions, and often glorifying them, plays a key role in shaping both the future plans and present practices in an organising context. Along the same line of argument, Bolander and Sandberg’s (2013) study of decisions made with regard to employee selection demonstrates that the selection of an employee is ‘not only retrospective writing of history but also prospective forming of the future’ (p. 306). While the predefined selection criteria, the way the
organisation has operated in the past and the candidate’s past experiences help make sense of the selection and recruitment retrospectively, what the organisation plans to do and anticipates doing in the future play an equally significant role in this prospective sensemaking and shaping of the future. Creating a situation and enacting a happening prospectively is what makes the difference between reactive and proactive decision-making. The latter is what Gioia and Mehra (1996) refer to as creating meaningful opportunities for the future. In their commentary on Weick’s (1995) work, Gioia and Mehra (1996) raise the question of whether it is Weick’s ‘shortchanging the phenomenology of everyday experience’ (Gioia & Mehra 1996, p. 1229) to ignore the possibility of prospective sensemaking. In the face of these criticisms, Weick (Weick et al. 2005) reaffirms his unequivocal commitment to retrospective sensemaking by drawing attention to his recipe of organising (discussed above) and emphasising that only lived experiences can be meaningful. Even sensegiving with its future-orientation, as Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) note, is thought to be derived from retrospective sensemaking. To refute the notion of future thinking in organisational processes, such as future-oriented planning, Weick (1969) uses Schutz’s argument that thinking about the future does not happen in the future indefinite tense; rather it happens in the future perfect tense. According to Weick, though the plan is oriented to the future, ‘the actions gain meaning because attention is directed to them as if they had already occurred’ (Weick 1969, p. 66). He does point out, however, that the act is visualised as a whole, rather than in the form of its constituting actions. MacKay (2009), nevertheless, questions the idea of the future perfect tense. According to him, in an environment characterised by complexity and uncertainty, the idea of thinking in the future perfect tense is inadequate and imperfect. Purser and Petranker (2005) argue that approaches that rely on the future perfect assumptions fail to engage the notion of time as dynamic flow or duration.
As suggested by Purser and Petranker (2005), the debate between retrospective and prospective sensemaking is not an issue of the tenses or a factor of the complexity and uncertainty that are said to characterise the present environment (MacKay 2009). The debate is ontological with regard to temporality of sensemaking (Dawson & Sykes 2016; Maitlis & Christianson 2014). It is not only praising or criticising the past, present or future; it underlines the temporality of organisational change and sensemaking (Ybema 2004). Appreciating the temporality of sensemaking as a process is important in understanding how sensemaking happens. As Wiebe (2010) argues, temporal sensemaking in the present draws on all dimensions of temporality (present, past, future). However, the current dominant literature on sensemaking remains under criticism for its inability to study prospective or future-oriented sensemaking (Bolander & Sandberg 2013; Gioia et al. 2002; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Stigliani & Ravasi 2012). The limitations of the literature and research on the temporal characteristic of sensemaking and sensegiving – the inadequate explanation of the ongoingness and retrospective and prospective characteristics of these processes – have strong relevance to a process study of organisations (Dawson & Sykes 2016). As pointed out so far, this relevance is based on two grounds. First, sensemaking and sensegiving are sub-processes of organisational becoming. They are indispensable for people’s involvement in organisational becoming. Without making and giving sense of organisational happenings, involvement in them – being part of the intra-actions and streamlining the flow and flux – may not actualise. Second, seeing organisations and organisational sensemaking and sensegiving from a performative process perspective (Tsoukas & Chia 2002) while denying their temporal characteristics cannot be explained from a process mode of thought. It is on these grounds that in addition to investigating organisational becoming, this study focuses on organisational sensemaking and sensegiving in the first place, and on their temporal
aspects. The second research question investigates the temporal characteristic of sensemaking and sensegiving, including its retrospective and prospective aspects.

2.5 Conclusion

Appreciating the historical tradition of process thinking, this chapter defined the philosophical position of this study, which gives ontological primacy to processes without necessarily denying substances or temporally stabilised processes in the form of substantial things. This position justifies a firm belief in a state of flux and ongoing change in an organising context, which make sense in their temporal and relational context. Seeing organisations as ‘temporally stabilized event clusters abstracted from a sea of constant flux and change’ (Nayak & Chia 2011, p. 281) can only be supported by a process view. However, as the chapter discussed, though process views offer a better explanation for organisational becoming and change, substance views dominate the literature. More importantly, the discussion showed that the biggest challenge for process views in general, and for radical process views in particular, is to demonstrate the practicality of the views. Whilst process views offer convincing philosophical and theoretical explanations for organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming, there is limited empirical investigation of these conceptions. To contribute to filling this gap, the first research question for this study focuses on demonstrating organisational becoming empirically.

The discussion showed that sensemaking and sensegiving are inseparable parts of organisational becoming. Yet, in the studies of former, the latter is often in the background. How organisational sensemaking and sensegiving happen in relation to organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming remains unresearched. At the same time, the review of the literature on sensemaking showed that there is tension between the conception of sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to their temporality. More
specifically, the views in organisation studies are divided on whether sensemaking and sensegiving unfold on an ongoing basis and if they are prospective or retrospective. While the tension and the existing support in favour of an episodic view raise a number of questions, the root cause can be traced to how reality is viewed. The latter determines how organisational becoming and change, which organisational members need to make sense of and navigate through, are seen. Similarly, tension characterises the debate on the temporal aspects of sensemaking. Though there is an increasing interest in studying prospective sensemaking, the concept of retrospection remains one of the defining characteristics of the discussion on sensemaking. Given the tension associated with temporality of sensemaking and sensegiving, the second research question investigates the ongoingness and prospective and retrospective characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving. Before discussing the empirical evidence on these topics, the following chapter describes the methodology and methods of conducting this investigation.
Chapter 3: Defining the Research Methodology and Methods

Chapter Structure

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3.1 Introduction

Chapter two presented a brief review of the literature on organisation, organisational change and sensemaking. Locating the study on the continuum of process thinking, the chapter highlighted the limitations of the equilibrium approaches and the affordance of process approaches to organisation studies for explaining organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming. The review also underlined the importance of sensemaking and sensegiving as inseparable parts of organisational becoming and described the debate that divides the literature on some of the characteristics of organisational sensemaking. Chapter three explains how the study unfolded and what methodology and methods were used for investigating the principal research questions.

The chapter begins with reiterating the ontological positioning of the research with regard to the phenomena under investigation. While the discussion recapitulates some of the points discussed in the preceding chapter, the focus here is on what adopting a process ontology means for the choice of research methodology and methods. The discussion of ontology leads to another integral aspect of the study, how knowledge about the phenomena under investigation is gained. The chapter highlights the usefulness of a performative epistemology for investigating organisational becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving. After clarifying the ontological and epistemological positions of the study, the choice of a collaborative-participatory research methodology is discussed and justified. The discussion, then, focuses on the research methods. It describes how the data were accessed and generated and how they were analysed. The last part of this chapter highlights the significance of the trustworthiness of the research process, ethical considerations and what measures were taken with regard to these aspects of the study.
3.2 Ontological Positioning of the Research

Ontological questioning is ‘an essential moment in any adequate social scientific research’ (Noonan 2008, p. 578). Such questioning can be framed variously, including, what is the phenomenon of investigation made of; ‘what is the Being of’ the object of inquiry (Tsoukas & Chia 2011, p. 7); what is out there; (Hofwever 2014); and what is the nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln 2005)? As Reed (2009) points out, a phenomenon cannot be studied without including it in the study. Its inclusion starts with defining its being; for a process study, it is about becoming of the being. Researchers’ ontological assumptions, which demonstrate their fundamental orientations and commitment toward reality, are unavoidable. Their understanding of the constitutive elements of, for example, an organisation as the subject of investigation is a product of ontological questioning and commitment (Tsoukas & Chia 2011). Such commitments have philosophical characteristics (Creswell 2003), and relate to metaphysics in general; consequently, they make such ontological questioning a metaphysical venture (Rescher 1996). The key question, then, is what is the nature of reality? However, Hofweber (2014) argues that the philosophical discipline of ontology, which is part of metaphysics in general, is more complex than merely answering this question. Moreover, settling such questions is a philosophical dilemma in the first place. For instance, speaking of reality raises the question of number. Are there numbers associated with reality? To put it differently, is there a reality or are there multiple realities? Assuming that there are realities, how do they relate to each other? Such questions should be answered by meta-ontology, which, though implicitly expressed throughout this thesis, will remain outside the scope of this study. Here, the discussion of ontology will focus on explicating the ontological commitment of this study – what the characteristic of the phenomena under investigation is.
The unavoidable assumption about the reality of organisations, change, sensemaking and sensegiving as the phenomena under investigation (Reed 2009) was made at the outset of this study. The term ‘process’ used in the title of this study is meant to declare that organisations, change, sensemaking and sensegiving are fundamentally processes (Rescher 1996). Their constitutive processes and associated factors, such as time, change, innovation, happening, activities and so forth, have primacy and priority over the substantial things these processes make. Therefore, to understand the phenomena under investigation and to understand their temporarily hardened states, the investigation was focused on their constitutive processes. It was from such a position that the becoming, rather than being, of the phenomena (Tsoukas & Chia 2011) was given both primacy and priority (Rescher 1996). What happenings, events, occurrences, and activities were constituting the substantial things were the focus of this study.

The ontological position adopted in this study was located toward the endogenous (Hernes & Weik 2007) or strong end of the continuum of process thinking (Chia & Langley 2004). Chia and Langley (2004) argue that the weak process perspective is pragmatic, empirically grounded and analytical in orientation. According to them, the strong process perspective is primarily conceptual and philosophical. However, as the discussion will later show, a strong process view can be pragmatic and empirically grounded. Instead, the study had problems finding an organisation to be a substantial thing. What could be referred to as the substantial aspects of the organisation, such as individuals, office space, furniture and so forth, only constitute a fraction of the organisation. Most importantly, these substantial things themselves are collections of processes, which temporally relate to each other. They are the outcomes of happenings, and their importance lies in what they do and can do. Even if they are physically divided into their smallest constituent parts, quantum physics has long drawn attention to the
infinite choice of possibilities for atoms and subatomic particles, photons (energy) and uncertainty involved in the movement of particles (Barad 2007). This shifts the focus to the intra-actions that make the substantial things meaningful. In an organising context, process ontology draws attention to the happenings that form the transient stabilities. Whilst the transient appearances of processes (Hernes 2014a) contribute to the organisation’s becoming, to paraphrase Barad (2007), they are only traces of multiple processes. Numerous other happenings, events and activities, which do not have any gradual, temporarily hardened form (Kristensen et al. 2014), are contributing to the organisation’s becoming. This becoming does not unfold as a chronological order of happenings, but as a flux of happenings at many levels. Therefore, it was and is practical to focus on and investigate how organising takes place – that is, how change, sensemaking and sensegiving unfold – rather than looking for a substantiated entity, or the outcome of change, sensemaking and sensegiving.

Having accepted process as reality and everything in a state of flow and flux, the challenge is how knowledge about process and its flow and flux can be gained or created. If nothing is static, can knowledge about things be ‘a static embedded capability or stable disposition of actors’ or ‘an ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted as actors engage the world in practice’ (Orlikowski 2002, p. 249)? These are epistemological questions, which can hardly be separated from the ontological questions (Rescher 2004). As Rescher (2004) puts it, ‘object and concept are fused together’ (Rescher 2004, p. 317). ‘[I]n the order of becoming (of ontology and causality) processes have priority vis-à-vis over our conceptualisations of them. But in the order of understanding (of epistemology and hermeneutics) our process concepts are in the driver’s seat. And an adequate philosophical account requires a suitable coordination here […]’ (p. 318). To paraphrase Barad (2007, p. 185), it is the ‘onto-epistem-ology’ or
the study of knowing of becoming that bears meaning. So, in this sense, separating knowing from becoming of being or prioritising one over the other is a less meaningful discussion. Giving equal weight to ontology and epistemology, the focus now turns to the next question: what is the epistemological position of this study?

3.3 Epistemological Positioning of the Research

Having accepted reality as process and process as reality (Rescher 1996), the next question is about the “‘knowability’ (epistemology)’ of reality (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006). For this research, this means how organisational becoming, state of flux, constant change, sensemaking and sensegiving can be known. It also means whether knowledge about these phenomena resides somewhere or with someone that can be discovered, or if it can be created. Ryle (1945) identifies two approaches to knowledge, ‘knowing how and knowing that’ (p. 1). In the latter approach, knowledge is objectified or commodified (Gherardi 2000). It is treated as information or facts that are to be discovered, and how that knowledge is performed and practiced is given little to no attention (Ryle 1945). However, according to Ryle (1945), ‘knowing how’ is prior to ‘knowing that’. It is in the knowing how that ‘knowledge is actualised or exercised’ (p. 8). Knowing how is about practice, performance and how things are done (Guérard et al. 2013). Hence, the notion of the performative, developed by Austin (1962), is used to characterise this epistemology. Guérard and colleagues (2013), however, also trace this concept to Lyotard’s (1984) development of the notion of performativity in knowledge development.

Austin (1962, p. 6) used the term ‘performative’ in the context of ‘a performative sentence or a performative utterance’ (p. 6, emphasis in the original text) in that utterances are not merely saying something but performing something. Drawing on Austin’s work, it can be argued that what the researcher and research participants in a
research process say are not innocent utterances. For instance, ‘to think of investing in [the] private sector’, ‘to emphasise putting MCCI out there’ and ‘to talk about a strong relationship between individual project coordinators and volunteers, rather than MCCI and volunteers’ are performances rather than mere utterances. For Austin (1962), in a performative utterance, to say something is to do something. At the same time, as Austin (1962) points out, performance is not confined to utterances. For example, an organisational member may perform an act, such as not showing up at an event, without uttering words. Nonetheless, since Austin’s use of the term ‘performative’, it has been used widely and in different contexts. For example, Butler (2010) uses the notion of performativity in gender studies. For her, gender is not a stable or intrinsic characteristic. It is performatively constituted through ‘gendered expressions and activities’ (p. 147).

While Gond and colleagues (2016) identify a variety of uses for the terms performative and performativity, with a sharp increase since the late 1990s, they note that the terms have also been misused in organisation and management theory. Nevertheless, the various conceptions of performative and performativity have the verbs doing, performing and practicing as their key elements. Hence, performative epistemology used as a theory of knowledge in this study emphasises practice-based (Gherardi 2001) and performance-based knowing (Guérard et al. 2013). It is the belief that the knowability of the phenomena under investigation is determined by the processes of creating knowledge (Gherardi 2009), or the processes of knowing how the phenomena unfold and how organisational members perform them.

Performativity refers to more than performance and practice. Barad (2003) uses performativity to emphasise that sociomateriality matters. Her use of performativity challenges the representational use of language where words are believed to represent pre-existing things. She underlines the entangledness of human and non-human agencies
(Gond et al. 2016) and the dynamic intra-activity between discursive and material phenomena (Barad 2003). Performativity exists within a social context, in which both actors and context engage in mutual transformation. It is in this context that actors (both the researcher and research participants) themselves change in the process of research (Simpson 2009). This notion of performativity also challenges the detached and the objective role of the actors in the study. While their discursive role is significant in shaping and reshaping reality and creating knowledge, the process is mutually transformative. It is in line with this epistemological position that this thesis has been written in the first person. Resonating with this epistemology, Simpson and colleagues (2018) suggest abandoning our fixation with the meanings of concepts in favour of exploring and appreciating what concepts do in practice. This view challenges the notion of ‘discovering knowledge’; it points to the need for understanding the micro-processes in organisations and their relational context (Crevani et al. 2010).

From a performative epistemology, knowledge is perceived as fluid and as a process of inquiry (Rescher 1996). As Tsoukas (1996) points out, knowledge is processual and inherently indeterminate. The fluidity of knowledge comes from the processuality of reality and the fluidity of relationships, in which reality is shaped and reshaped. It is in the context of the social relationships that knowing is constituted and reconstituted. According to Gherardi (2009), knowledge as an activity or practice is situated in practices and distributed between humans and non-humans. Congruent with the process thinking in that substantial things are gradual hardenings of processes (Kristensen et al. 2014), Gherardi (2009) argues that non-human things, such as objects, artefacts, values and norms, also anchor practices in them. Therefore, this research attaches importance to both human performances in the context of the study and non-human things, such as organisational artefacts. Both play significant roles in the process
of creating knowledge about organisational becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving. Such a conception of knowledge shifts the focus from knowledge as fixed and definitive truth about the phenomena or end result to knowing how things happen (Rescher 2003). Referring to this characteristic of knowledge, Gherardi (2000) argues that knowledge is ‘neither in the head nor as a commodity’ (p. 212).

In this research context, the knowing how actualises through what the research participants do in practice (Simpson et al. 2018) and the practices that have been anchored in non-human things (Gherardi 2009). The way they perform their usual organisational roles, respond to organisational happenings and see and engage with the research create knowledge about organisational becoming and their sensemaking and sensegiving of that becoming. Further, given the collaborative-participatory nature of the study, my own performance – the way I frame and present the study, interact with participants, and ask questions during conversations/interviews and observations – also affects the knowability of the subject of investigation (Simpson 2009). As Guérard and colleagues (2013) suggest, performance involves micro-politics. Who takes part in the research, whether organisational members see the research as a management-run happening, what discourse influences organisational happenings (Gond et al. 2016) and what narrative is encouraged about organisational change involve politics and affect the creation of knowledge about the subject of investigation.

By way of shifting the focus to performances and practices (Gherardi 2009; Guérard 2013), performative epistemology puts organisational happenings and organisational members at the forefront of the process of inquiry and the methodology used to conduct the inquiry. As Reed (2009) points out, a phenomenon cannot be studied without including it in the study. It was for this reason that the involvement of organisational members and happenings, which define the practices and performances
within the organising context, was a key factor in the choice of the research methodology, as discussed in the following section.

### 3.4 Adopting a Collaborative-Participatory Research Methodology

As the defining characteristic (Cibangu 2010; Creswell et al. 2007) or roadmap of a study (Schensul 2008a), methodology should provide justification for the methods and techniques of study (Fisher 2010). However, the choice of methodology cannot be made without consideration of the ontological and epistemological commitments (Hawkesworth 2006). The way reality is viewed and knowledge and knowledge creation are defined have a bearing on what processes and strategies are deemed appropriate for studying that reality (Creswell 2003). Postulating that the phenomena of interest are processes and asserting that knowledge creation about these phenomena is a processual enterprise and that it is about performance and practices underline the need for capturing the relational unfolding of these processes (Rescher 2004). In this relational context, organisational members, who are part of the organisation’s becoming, mutually affect the organisation’s constitutive changes, and whose sensemaking and sensegiving relate and contribute to these ongoing changes and becoming remain as an integral part of the investigation. To make sense of their sensemaking without involving them would not reflect a relational process ontology and performative epistemology. Their relational becoming should have a direct role in knowing and knowledge creation. It was for these reasons that a collaborative-participatory research methodology (Denis & Lehoux 2011), which is more sensitive, among other things, to relationality (Bradbury & Lichtenstein 2000; Pushor 2008), was adopted for this study.

As a deliberate set of interactions and processes, collaborative methodology was employed to bring us (research participants and myself) together (Denis & Lomas 2003,
The purpose was to conduct research with, rather than on, members of MCCI, who were directly contributing to MCCI’s becoming, which was being investigated (Bergold & Thomas 2012; Pushor 2008). As Reason (2006) points out, the processes could not have been studied without involving those who were part of the processes. Collaborative methodology was intended to position the practitioners’ voice alongside my voice in a shared inquiry of mutual interest and benefit, with the potential for richer research results through collaboration (Pushor 2008). Brydon-Miller and colleagues (2011) support this view in saying that collaborative methodology combines theory and practice in a participatory way. Its anticipated benefits include, but are not limited to, ‘enriching the interpretation of research findings’ and ‘fostering the use and application of research findings in action or decision-making context’ (Denis & Lomas 2003, p. S2:1; Denis & Lehoux 2011, p. 363).

In the literature, the term ‘collaborative research’ has been used loosely and often interchangeably with, among other concepts, action research, participatory action research, feminist praxis, critical ethnography and participatory learning research (Argyris & Schôn 1989; Jordan 2008; Kindon et al. 2007; Reason 2006; Whyte et al. 1989). At the same time, contributions from action research and from one of its more recent forms, participatory action research, to the growing interest in collaborative research have been widely acknowledged (Argyris & Schôn 1989; Denis & Lehoux 2011; Denis & Lomas 2003; Jordan 2008; Reason 2006; Whyte et al. 1989). Whether the genesis of collaborative methodology is traced to the work of post-World War II social scientists, including that of Lewin in the 1940s and 1950s (Jordan 2008), or to the emancipatory agenda of liberationists, such as Freire (1970), the active participation of MCCI’s members and collaboration between us, which are reflected in this study, are the key characteristics of collaborative methodology. The methodology was adopted based
on the notion that knowledge generation is about knowing in practice (Orlikowski 2002) or knowing how, and is performative (Ryle 1945). Including organisational performance and practices through involving organisational members and happenings was a key factor in choosing the research methodology. Given the significance of collaboration and participation in this methodology, for the purpose of this study, the hyphenated term ‘collaborative-participatory’ research methodology (Denis & Lehoux 2011) has been used.

The adoption and implementation of collaborative-participatory methodology was not without challenges. One of the challenges, as anticipated by Argyris and Schön (1989), was striking a balance between appropriate scientific rigor and practical relevance, or what Pettigrew (2001, p. 61) refers to as the ‘double hurdles of management research’. Pettigrew (2001) makes the point that the first hurdle in management research is building and maintaining scholarly quality and scientific relevance. Seeing this aspect of research as a measure of its contribution to the body of research in the relevant field, Denis and Lehoux (2011) associate scientific relevance to the originality of research questions and findings and the attributes of processes that lead to the generation of those findings. At the same time, the originality of research questions is not about a state they have but the processes from which those questions are derived (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006). As discussed in chapter one, the social processes from which the research questions for this study were derived include, among others, my own assumptions about reality, which, in turn, are influenced by where and how I grew up. My becoming has shaped my views of the world and, subsequently, the way I look at the issues. The gap in the literature has been another factor in deriving and framing the research questions and shaping the overall research process. Further, MCCI’s participation in the study, its becoming and the way processes were unfolding in that context influenced the design
and implementation of the research. Therefore, ensuring scientific rigor and relevance was viewed as a processual challenge, and its solution was sought in the processes that preceded and followed the challenge.

The question of keeping a balance between scientific and practical relevance is also pertinent to the challenge of negotiating research roles or the level of participation and collaboration between the researchers and research participants (Denis & Lehoux 2011). To overcome this challenge, as suggested by Denis and Lehoux (2011), an informal advisory group, consisting of two members of MCCI, my research supervisors and myself, was established. The group would review the progress of the research, discuss avenues for involving and engaging more research participants in the process, identify organisational happenings for collecting and co-generating data, and suggest options for making the research process relevant to both MCCI and the field of study. Further, as Pushor (2008) emphasises, although authentic and genuine participation of the stakeholders in collaborative research is critical, ‘the mutuality of the research is based on equity, not equality’ (p. 92). The individual research participants’ availability and the time they could commit, along with their skills, interest, and confidence in the research process, were some of the determining factors with regard to the role and level of their participation. However, Denis and Lehoux (2011) make the important point that ‘collaborative research engages researchers in journeys that can transform the very practice of research itself’ (p. 373). As discussed under the research methods, the research process proved to be emergent (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2008), often unfolding in ways that had not and could not have been anticipated when the research initiated. In the productive passage of time (Mead 1932), happening otherwise should be treated with scepticism. As Creswell (2009) anticipates for any qualitative research method, the initial research plan could not be tightly prescribed. The process evolved because of the
multitude of other processes, based on the lessons learned along the way and the feedback fed from the research process itself (Denis & Lehoux 2011). The following section details how the research process emerged.

**3.4.1 Research Methods: How the Research Process Emerged and Unfolded**

The term ‘research method’ refers to the tools and techniques used to collect, analyse and interpret data (Creswell 2009; Leavy & Hesse-Biber 2008; Schensul 2008b), or the specific strategy that a researcher uses to investigate research questions through data collection and analysis (Cibangu 2010). These and similar definitions commonly view research methods as a means to an end. The focus is on the hard data and information obtained in the form of audio recordings, interview transcripts etc., rather than the actions and interactions and their mutual impacts on other sub-processes, including the researchers and research participants. Contrary to this notion of research method, as Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) emphasise, the research methods employed in this study were treated as ‘offering ends in themselves’ (p. 1670). While for operational purposes the research process and its sub-processes have been discussed under discrete subheadings, they are inextricably linked and interwoven, both internally (Barad 2007) and externally (Rescher 1996). In practice, most were happening simultaneously (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006), in no linear order. The apparent linearity, reflected in the description of the unfolding of the research process, is bound by the forward arrow of clock and calendar time (Dawson & Sykes 2016) that was controlling the entire research. The non-linear happening or processual characteristic of the research process means that the order in which different sub-processes of the study have been discussed here does not necessarily show the order in which they unfolded. Nonetheless, the description of how data were accessed and co-generated for investigation is in order.
3.4.1.1 Accessing and Co-generating Data

‘Collecting data’, ‘gathering data’ and ‘accessing data’ are terms that are typically used to refer to the means of knowing (Ryle 1945). However, as Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006) point out, the terms ‘collect’ and ‘gather’ have the connotation that data have an ontologically prior existence, independent of the interaction between the researchers and research participants. Similarly, the term ‘accessing data’ often refers to gaining entrée to a research site or a source of information. While the latter conception could be used in the case of data coming from organisational artefacts, in other cases, we were co-generating the data as a result of our interactions (Garnham 2008). There was no fixed and definitive knowledge about the organisation to be discovered (Rescher 2003); rather the performances and practices of MCCI’s members were used for ‘knowing how’ MCCI’s becoming was unfolding and its members were making and giving sense of it (Orlikowski 2002). However, this is not to say that the relation between us and data was unidirectional. The co-generated data had its own effect on us (the researcher and research participants) and the unfolding of the study. Even in the case of organisational artefacts, their position was secondary to the performances and practices that had generated them. In other research methods, such as observation, interviews and focus groups, knowing how was actualised and exercised through organisational members’ performance (Ryle 1945). To recognise and appreciate the active role of both parties (research participants and researcher) in co-creating the data, the phrase ‘accessing and co-generating data’ has been used in this study. Observation was one of the methods of accessing and co-generating data.

3.4.1.1.1 Observing Processes

To know how the becoming of MCCI was unfolding and how its members were making and giving sense of it, one of the most common qualitative research methods
(Alvesson & Ashcraft 2011), observation, was used. Organisational processes (activities, happenings, events) and the context in which these processes were unfolding were observed and notes were taken to generate basic empirical data for interpretation and analysis (Pader 2006). Some scholars (for example, Pettigrew 1973, 1990) use the term direct observation, some (Trochim 2006) draw a distinction between direct observation and participant observation, and some (for example, Dawson 1994, 1997) regard participant observation and non-participant observation as two different methods. However, one of the defining characteristics of this study is that observation focused on processes, rather than substantial things or individuals. While some of the processes under observation were closely connected to individuals, whose sensemaking and sensegiving were also being observed, other processes were observed at a different level – events and happenings, without specifically focusing on a particular individual, were observed. Even in the case of observing individuals (research participants) and their physical environment, it was not their substantial or material existence that was of primary interest for observation but what they were doing, what they could potentially do and what was happening in relation to them. Therefore, the observation of processes in this study was organised in two clusters: observing participation (Tedlock 1991) and observing events. Nonetheless, all these observations involved practice and performance, to different degrees, from the researcher and non-researchers (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006). Clustering or categorising the observation of processes around participation and events was only for operational purposes. Further, observation involved becoming immersed in the culture and context and engaging with people who were closely relating to the processes under investigation (Dawson 1997; Fetterman 2008; Sykes 2018). However, the level of engagement and participation evolved as time passed.
Observation is often used as a data collection method to cross check the data – triangulation – and identify discrepancies between what research participants say in their casual conversations and interviews and what they do (Dawson 1997; Pettigrew 1990). However, from a process perspective, sameness, rather than discrepancy, in the data would be treated with scepticism. Discrepancies and outliers were seen in their temporal-relational contexts in their own rights, without any attempts to reconcile them. However, multiple research methods, including observation, were used to access and co-generate rich data and make sense of the processes (Bryman 1988), flow and fluidity in various contexts. As the following chapters show (see also Appendices 1 and 2), the temporal-relational contexts in which participation of organisational members and the unfolding of events in the organisation’s becoming were observed would vary significantly. Treating this variation in the context as richness, observation was used to capture the flow and fluidity of happenings or events, often with multiple temporalities (Dawson & Sykes 2016). While the arrow of time for the research, which a manager, for instance, was relating to, was forward (Dawson & Sykes 2016), it was cyclical or a return to the past for her with regard to recruiting and re-recruiting for the same position as MCCI was becoming (more discussion on these topics will follow in the subsequent chapters). As pointed out by Alvesson and Ashcraft (2011), this research method allowed the me ‘to see organizing in action’ (p. 70). It was these happenings and events that were making the organisation. Jorgensen (1989) is correct in saying that this method is exceptional for studying processes, relationships among people, patterns and continuities over time. MCCI’s members were observed relating to each other and to a multitude of other processes both within and outside the organising context. The relationships were affecting how they were making sense of and giving sense of a happening or event.
One of the key aspects of observation that come to the fore in process epistemology is the interaction involved in the processes of observing. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) reject the notion of ‘pure, objective, detached observation’ (p. 416). They argue that the observer’s presence, let alone their participation, affects the process of observing and its outcome. Whether I was sitting at a desk next to the research participant and noting down my observations, or sitting among dozens of participants at an annual general meeting and observing the session, or observing a beach-safety demonstration for community members, my presence was not detached. Every observation session would involve social interaction between myself and the research participant(s) (Waddington 2004); and, at times, non-participants would also be involved in such interactions. Based on the level of this interaction, Waddington (2004) identifies four distinct identities/roles for the researcher/observer: complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. Others (for example, Jorgensen 1989 and McKechnie 2008) see the role of the researcher along a continuum between a complete observer or complete outsider and a complete participant or a complete insider. Though I was not an insider (staff or volunteer) to MCCI, I was not a complete outsider either. For the first few months of the study, I was a member of a community organisation that was, in turn, a member of MCCI. Regardless of this particular relationship, interaction between me, the research participants, and non-participants was complex, each with its own mutual impact on the happenings. While the level of interaction would depend on the type of event, more often than not, I and the research participants were parliaments of selves, as noted by Weick (1995). We would have multiple identities simultaneously. At a beach-safety demonstration for the communities, for instance, the non-research participants would expect me to play the role of a community member and an interpreter for them. In the same way that Jorgensen (1989) and Hinings (1997) point
to a wider web of interaction in the context of participant observation, interaction and participation were complex and dynamic, with their mutual effects. Interaction would happen between me as the researcher and multitude of other processes, including but not limited to the research participants (Hinings 1997). Limiting the interaction to only two clusters of processes – that is, the researcher and research participants – would mean implying a narrow definition of relationality (Cooper 2005) and denying the interrelated web of processes (Rescher 2004). The essence of observation goes beyond engaging with people (Sykes 2018); it is about engaging with a multitude of processes in a specific context.

Nonetheless, to access and co-generate rich data, the participation of MCCI’s members in the processes of organising and their sensemaking and sensegiving of these processes were observed over a period of two years. Given the determining factors of practicality of engagement and participation, such as accessibility of the organisation and organisational members, available resources and time (Dawson 1997), a total of roughly ninety hours of process observation was conducted in fifty-seven sessions. The duration of the sessions, which included forty-six hours of observing processes that were closely associated with MCCI’s members and forty-five hours of observing organisational events, would vary from one to six hours. Performances and practices of organisational members were observed during their usual work at their workstations (Appendix 1: Observing Participation of Organisational Members). During mutually agreed times, on different days of the week and at different times of the day, I would be located near the research participant’s desk and take notes as the research participant would perform their normal work. As discussed before, the focus of the observation was on what the research participant was doing, what the context was, what was happening in that particular context and how it related to other happenings. I would also engage in short
conversations with the research participants and ask questions to clarify happenings. Similarly, organisational events were observed as they were happening. Events varied from hanging around at MCCI’s office to attending a one-day staff development day, the annual general meeting of the organisation, beach-safety session for community members, and multicultural gala dinner (Appendix 2: Observing Organisational Processes). At the events, I would focus on the way the event was unfolding in its temporal-relational context. Notes were taken and organisational artefacts associated with that particular event were collected for analysis. The data collected during these observational sessions were supplemented through other research methods, including interviewing research participants.

3.4.1.2 Interviewing Research Participants

The term ‘interview’ has been a subject of debate in social sciences. It has been treated both as a distinct research method and as part of a broader methodological category (Platt 2012). Traditionally, interviews have been viewed as asking people questions and receiving answers from them (Gubrium et al. 2012; Marvasti 2004). With this notion of interview in mind, Gubrium and Holstein (2012) believe that interviews happen everywhere, in different settings and in various formats. Given the prevalence of and preoccupation with interviewing, Atkinson and Silverman (1997) argue that we live in an ‘interview society’ (p. 304), in which, as they critique, interviews are used as the interviewer’s biographical description and the interviewee remains mute and concealed in the process. Characterising interviewing as a ‘unilaterally guided means of excavating information’ (Gubrium & Holstein 2012, p. 27) depicts a hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee and presents the practice as an interrogative process. In contrast, Berg (2001) and Bogdan and Biklen (2006) describe interviewing as a purposeful conversation, and Kvale (2006) refers to it as a dialogue. Yanow and
Schwartz-Shea (2006) draw a distinction between using the term ‘interview’ to indicate a range of talk modes or the administration of questionnaires and surveys, on the one hand, and to refer to a tool for collecting and generating qualitative data, on the other. In interpretive modes of research, they add, interviews are a discursive conversation, rather than an interrogation. The conversational notion of an interview, which is quite popular in the literature (for example, Brinkmann 2008; Carruthers 1990; Holstein & Gubrium 2004; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006), introduces the qualitative interview ‘as a democratizing force’ (Sandelowski 2002, p. 105) and places the interviewer and interviewee on a level playing field. From this perspective, in an interview setting, both the interviewer and interviewee have an equal opportunity to speak openly, trustfully, frankly and freely.

However, researchers warn against romanticising the use of interview as an ideal tool to elicit authentic accounts of subjective experiences in qualitative research (Alvesson 2003; Miller & Glassner 2004; Sandelowski 2002). Atkinson and Silverman (1997) caution against uncritical adoption and unreflective endorsement of interview in research. Remaining critical of the notion of ‘interview as a means of access to the inner world of the respondent’ (p. 310) and a neutral medium of data collection, they highlight the asymmetry of power between interviewer and interviewee. Referring to such asymmetry, Alvesson (2003) uses the metaphor of ‘political action’ for the interview. From this position, interviewees can be viewed ‘as politically aware and politically motivated actors’ (p. 22; emphasis in the original text). In view of the political characteristic of organisation and organisational change (Buchanan & Badham 2008; Dawson 1994, 1997, 2003b, 2019; Pettigrew 1973, 1992, 2012), Alvesson’s (2003) scepticism about the neutrality and symmetrical power relations within the interview setting is important to note. Though the dynamics of the interviews in this study were
found to depend on their temporal-relational contexts, their overall political characteristic proved to be too important to ignore. Therefore, as recommended by Bryman and Cassell (2006), reflexivity was introduced into the study (further discussed later).

Interviews have been categorised in numerous different ways. Morse (2012), for example, discusses the use of unstructured, semi-structured, guided, focus groups and closed-ended interviews in quantitative, qualitative and mixed research methods. Interviews have also been categorised around different themes, such as survey interviewing (Boyce & Straits 2012), life-story interviewing (Atkinson 2012), oral history (Denzin & Lincoln 2011), and auto-ethnography (Crawley 2012). However, though terminology continues to vary, interviews have commonly been differentiated based on their structure and the extent to which the interviewer determines their progression (Cassell 2011). Based on these criteria, the interviews have been categorised as structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Baumbusch 2010; Carruthers 1990; Cassell 2005; Fontana & Frey 2005; King 2004; Ryan et al. 2009). However, given the dynamics of interviewing, the impact of contextual factors on each interview session and the processual nature of research (Rescher 2004), it is appropriate to conceptualise interviewing along a continuum of structured-unstructured, rather than applying a specific categorisation system to the process and, consequently, oversimplifying it. Interviews conducted in this study can be placed toward the latter end of the aforementioned continuum. Unstructured interviews were used to obtain the perspectives of MCCI’s members without superimposing my viewpoints onto them (Firmin 2008). Interviewees were given freedom to tell their stories. They were seen as active participants in shaping the interview process, rather than passively responding to pre-established questions (King 2004). Nonetheless, as pointed out above, every interview would differ from the other, depending on various factors, including who the interviewee
was, what their position in the organisation was, how they related to organisational change, when the interview was conducted and so forth.

Like any other qualitative research method (King 2004), a key factor in interviewing the research participants was the relationship between us. Moyle (2002), King (2004) and Ryan et al. (2009) argue that qualitative research interview cannot be free of relationship. Relationships, both interpersonal and social, proved to be of paramount significance in shaping the interview process. The asymmetry of relationship between us required building rapport with the interviewees (Kvale 2006). Fifteen members of MCCI participated in semi-structured interviews over sixteen months. Participants included volunteers, junior staff members, middle managers, general manager/chief executive officer, chairman of the organisation and board members (Appendix 3: Interviewing Research Participants). Sixty percent of the interviews were conducted in the second half of the fourteen-month period, when considerable work had been done on rapport building. One third of the participants who were interviewed in the first three months of the research also participated in a second round of semi-structured interviews. However, the significance of relationship in interviewing goes beyond the need to seek “‘deep” information and understanding’ (Johnson & Rowlands 2012, p. 101). It is not merely the relationship between the researcher and research participants that defines the process; nor is the relationship always skewed toward the researcher. Where research participants stand in relation to the becoming of the organisation, including the process of change, for instance, affects how they make and give sense of change and how it is communicated during interviews. The significance of relationship needs to be seen in the context of the relationality of becoming (Helin et al. 2014; Sykes et al. 2015) and the web of processes that defines the individuals and other processes in that context.
Interviews can be conducted using a number of media, the common ones being face-to-face or in-person interview, telephone interview and email interview (Babbie 2008; Cassell 2011; Clark 2008; Egan 2008; Hughes 2008; Quinn et al. 1980; Sturges & Hanrahan 2004). With the technological development and advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), many other modes of interviewing, such as online, discussion board and real-time chat, have been added to the list. Interviews using ICTs as their medium of communication have been termed as ‘electronic interviews’ (Morgan & Symon 2004, p. 23) and ‘virtual interview[s]’ (Turney 2008, p. 924). Nonetheless, researchers (for example, Berg 2001; Carruthers 1990; Cassell 2011; Hughes 2008; Ryan et al. 2009) identify face-to-face interviews as better suited for building trust and rapport, interpreting the non-verbal cues and, consequently, remoulding the interaction to the needs of the research. Further, these researchers associate the use of face-to-face interviews with the collection of richer data and production of in-depth knowledge. As relationality and how processes relate to each other are fundamental aspects of this study, and thus are of great significance for understanding the processes, the interviews were conducted in face-to-face mode. Research participants were engaged in unstructured, face-to-face conversation to explore how they were making and giving sense of organisational change. The interviews were not the first point of interaction between us. I had met most of the research participants a number of times, they had been part of observation sessions, and emails had been exchanged with them prior to the interviews. Further, the interviews were preceded and followed by conversations that seemed apparently less relevant to the research. For instance, research participants were provided with information about the study, which was, then, linked to my background as a refugee and my interest and work background in the non-profit sector. The conversations with indirect relevance to the research were
intended to strengthen the relationship and rapport with the research participants (Morgan & Symon 2004) and redress the power asymmetry between us (Alvesson 2003; Fine et al. 2011). With the research participants’ formal consent (Appendix 9: Consent Form), the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The interview transcripts were shared with the research participants (as described in the following the sections), and the interviews were followed up with emails and additional questions. Further, observations and interviews were supplemented with other research methods, such as the study of organisational artefacts.

3.4.1.1.3 Studying Organisational Artefacts and Using Electronic Communication

To supplement the data accessed and co-generated through observing processes and interviewing research participants, organisational artefacts, including documents and emails, which are important in processual research (Buchanan & Dawson 2007), were investigated for this study. However, the question of what could and should be investigated as an organisational artefact was not a straightforward one. Between a narrow definition of organisational artefacts as the ‘physically present and graspable “things” that are part of an organization’ (Reischauer 2015, p. 290) and a broader conceptualisation of the term to include organisation performance and behaviour (Cappetta & Gioia 2006; Strati 2006) there could be a long list of artefacts (Hancock 2012) to include in the study. However, for the practicality of conducting the research (Dawson 1997), a workable definition had to be used as the starting point. For the purpose of this study, organisational artefacts – drawn on Clegg et al.’s (2016) definition – were viewed as those visible things and happenings that distinguish one organisation from another. This distinction was not meant to specify the organisation as an entity without any relationship with its environment. Further, rather than seeing the apparently
stable physical artefacts as inert substances and mere historic remains of organisational behaviour (Reischauer 2015), they were viewed as dynamic embodiments of organisational activities that had mutual relationships with other processes. As Hernes (2008) points out, drawing on Whitehead’s work, the physical artefacts and other processes make each other in their dynamic and mutual relationship.

Artefacts were conceptualised as data through asking questions about them and assigning meanings to them (Norum 2008). However, asking questions and assigning meanings cannot happen in a vacuum. They are influenced, among other things, by the becoming and being of the artefacts, which include the processes that have contributed to their becoming. For this research, questions were posed about organisational documents and images available through MCCI’s website and provided by the research participants, images and documents put on display on the walls and noticeboards at the research site, the office settings and décor, organisational documents that were used during events and for specific purposes, such as marketing, and photographs obtained through the research participants. Samples of these artefacts were collected, and notes were taken for analysis.

Similarly, electronic communication, mainly through email, was an important part of both the data collection and data analysis. Despite its very short history (Egan 2008), email is increasingly used in qualitative research (Cook 2012; James 2016; Ryan et al. 2009). Seen as a less threatening and more sensitive approach with decreased perceived status difference between the researcher and research participants, the use of email is often used as a substitute for face-to-face interview. Emails were used to share the interview transcripts and observation notes with the research participants for ‘member checking’ (Guba & Lincoln 1981, p. 186) and to access and co-generate additional data. Using email, following the interviews and observations and based on the
transcripts and notes from those happenings, participants were asked additional questions to make sense of their sensemaking and sensegiving. Further, research participants also used emails to ask questions about the aspects of the research or the project as a whole.

3.4.1.2 Research Context: Identifying the Research Site

The decision to use a particular research site, if not the most important, is one of the most critical decisions in a research process. Berg (2001) ties this decision to the accessibility of ‘an appropriate population of potential research subjects’ (p. 29). He emphasises the appropriateness of the research site vis-à-vis the ease of accessibility. As discussed in chapter one, though the term ‘appropriate’, despite its strong positivist tone, was an important criterion for selecting a research site, the organisation’s willingness to engage in a research partnership was the key factor in determining which organisation could be an appropriate context for this research. Given the complex and often chaotic characteristic of organisational change (Dawson 1994) as a subject of this study, the organisation’s willingness and readiness for partnership was the most important factor in identifying the research site. However, the challenge in this regard was not only to identify and engage an organisation. Having, or not having, access to an organisation’s sub-processes for investigation was an equally important point for consideration. Gatekeeping to withhold or, at least, limit access to the sub-processes of organising (Minichiello et al. 1990) has to be accepted as an undeniable reality of any organising process. It is for such reasons that Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, p. 41) highlight ‘the role of pragmatic considerations’ when it comes to selecting a research site. Nonetheless, Dawson (1994) and Pettigrew (1990) recommend a contextualist approach in process organisation studies. From this approach, having knowledge of the subject organisation’s culture and politics and the broader political and societal context in which the organisation operates becomes an important factor in identifying a research site. Based
on this recommendation, my work background in the non-profit sector and my background as a former refugee, who had had interactions with the local community and multicultural organisations during my resettlement in Australia, were used as a determining factor in identifying MCCI as the research site for this study.

As introduced in chapter one, MCCI is a local, peak, community-based service organisation in south-east New South Wales (NSW), Australia (MCCI 2018). Established in 1975, it began with ‘a strong advocacy and lobbying focus’ on behalf of CALD communities. As time passed, service provision was added to its operations. Currently, aged care services comprise the largest component of its programs. However, what is relevant here is that MCCI’s operations have been significantly affected by the reforms in the aged care and disability systems in Australia. Of the most profound impacts have been the reforms in the aged care system and the introduction of NDIS, both with some parallels.

Australia’s national aged care services are designed along a continuum between entry level and high-level needs (Australian Government 2018a). As part of the three-phase reforms in the aged care system introduced in 2012, the services were brought under two streams of funding, the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and Home Care Packages Program (HCPP) (Australian Government 2018b). The former, which is at the entry level of aged care services, is targeted at service recipients who need short-term or basic long-term assistance. The latter, which covers four categories of services between basic and high-level care needs (Levels 1 to 4), is designed for greater level of support and provides a tailored package of support for the service recipients (Australian Government 2018a). The bigger part of the aged care services is run and managed through the newly introduced HCPP. Consumer-directed care, which is at the core of the reforms in the aged care system, is reflected more through the HCPP. Under
the reforms, the potential service recipients under both funding models have to go through a robust assessment process to determine their eligibility for receiving aged care. Going through separate mechanisms for the two funding models, once the applicants are accepted as eligible and the level of care that they need is determined, the amount of government subsidy will go to the selected approved care provider.

Parallel to the reforms in the aged care system, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was introduced as a trial in a number of sites around Australia in July 2013 (National Disability Insurance Agency n.d.). Rolling out gradually around Australia from July 2016, the scheme is designed for ‘Australians under the age of 65 who have a permanent and significant disability with reasonable and necessary supports they need to enjoy an ordinary life’. Not unlike the aged care services, potential ‘participants’ of NDIS have to go through a vigorous assessment process before they are recognised as eligible for the service. Once they are recognised as eligible, their individualised plans are prepared and they choose their approved providers (Patterson 2017).

The reforms and introduction of the new scheme have created two major challenges for MCCI and similar organisations. First, prior to the reforms, service providers, such as MCCI, were working under a block-grant model of funding. They would receive a block of grant for a period of time. It was targeted at programs, more or less, at the discretion of the provider. However, both the reforms in the aged care system and the introduction of NDIS have the notion of consumer-directed care at their core, putting greater choice in the hands of consumers of services that are funded by the government. Under the new funding regime, the funds go to the service recipients, who can then can go to the service providers of their choice. In the new situation, money is with the service recipients, or as they are referred to, customers. They can do their ‘shopping’ wherever they prefer. This means that organisations like MCCI must adopt an
approach and strategy that can sell their products and attract customers if they want to survive. It is the ‘market logic’ (Bourdieu 1998) that determines the relationship. Second, service providers must be approved/accredited, for which they have to meet certain criteria. This requirement has put additional pressure on service providers. Further, the neo-liberal driven reforms (Baum et al. 2016) have implications for the bottom-up approach to public services in general. In the neo-liberal dominated context, not only are the traditionally closer links between MCCI and its members and its strong advocacy and lobbying focus less important and relevant, but they also are no longer desired. The bottom-up, emancipatory approach to welfare services, which is in line with the principle of community empowerment through community-based organisations (Dodds & Paskins 2011), is contrary to the top-down approach adopted in the neo-liberal discourse (Keevers et al. 2008).

The reforms in the community sector and the shift in policies on public services in general have created significant tension between MCCI’s past and its future. Though these reforms and the discourses on which they are based are not new (Keevers et al. 2008), they were felt close to home when the choice of using the money was taken from the service providers and given to the consumers. To adapt to the changes, MCCI launched some major structural changes in 2016, which coincided with the start of this research. The changes were linked to its survival. Although, as the later chapters will show, these changes were not the first, nor were they the last, they would provide a rich processual context for process study of organisational becoming, change, sensemaking and sensegiving. At those critical times, the organisation was also appreciating the need for understanding what was happening. During the negotiation with MCCI, the research partnership was identified to be important for both the organisation’s practices and academic purposes. Therefore, despite the risks involved in conducting research with an
organisation that was going through some of its toughest times, a research partnership was established with MCCI.

3.4.1.3 Selecting the Research Participants

Sampling in qualitative research is purposive rather than random (MacDougall & Fudge 2001). It is driven by the theoretical approach, the purpose of the study and the research questions (Pettigrew 1990). Organisational becoming, constant change, sensemaking and sensegiving as the subject of this investigation are also affected by processes that directly involve and affect organisational members. Weick (1995) points out that sensemaking begins with a sensemaker. However, from a process perspective the sensemaker does not have ontologically prior existence (Rescher 1996). Sensemakers themselves are constructed by numerous other processes, including the mutually related and constitutive sensemaking (Hernes & Maitlis 2010). Further, while sensemaking is ‘grounded in identity construction’ (Weick 1995, p. 18), the identity construction does not happen in vacuum. It shapes and is shaped by a multitude of processes. Weick’s (1995) quote from Mead that an individual – here, sensemaker – is ‘a parliament of selves’ (p. 18) can be well explained by the mutually productive contribution of processes (Rescher 1996) in constructing identities. The selves or identities vary as a result of their interactions with other processes, both within and outside the organising context. Therefore, who the sensemakers are in their relations to others makes a difference in what sense is made of a process. In an organising context, factors, such as the length of the research participant’s work experience with the subject organisation, the terms of their relationship (casual, permanent, fixed contract, paid, volunteer), position or role in the organisation, gender and cultural background can affect their role in organisational becoming, and their sensemaking and sensegiving of the becoming. However, the voluntary characteristic of this research limited the option of a free choice
and keeping a balance between these features in the final list of the research participants. Nevertheless, the research participants represented a variety of processes contributing to MCCI’s becoming.

Having provided written information about the study (Appendix 7: Participation Information Sheet), secured MCCI’s support and consent (Appendix 6: Support Letter from MCCI), the organisational staff, management (including the Management Committee) and volunteers were informed about the research. They were formally invited to register their expression of interest if they wanted to take part in the study (Appendix 8: Invitation Letter). Initially, eight potential research participants expressed their interest in the study. However, the ‘sanitized view of the research process’, which has been criticised by Baum (cited in MacDougall & Fudge 2001, p. 117), does not work in practice. Stages overlap, they do not work as they are planned, and they emerge and evolve as the study progresses (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2008). To rephrase, the research process is temporal and contextual. In this instance, two of the potential research participants withdrew their interest from the study before signing the consent form, with one referring to her relationship with the organisation in terms of clock time – the relatively fewer months that she had been on the job and her casual employment contract. The six remaining potential research participants, who accepted the invitation, signed the consent forms. However, as the research progressed, more organisational members decided to take part in the study. Before the conclusion of the study, the number of participants reached fifteen, some of whom took part in both the observation and interview, whereas others participated in only one. Further, their contribution to the organising process varied from chairing the management committee/board, to managing at the senior level, managing finance, and volunteering for the organisation. They came from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. In terms of objective time, the
length of their relationships with MCCI ranged from a few weeks – closely associated with the recent changes – to more than a decade. MCCI’s management committee/board and senior management consented for the organisation’s real name to be used in this study, whereas the research participants opted for anonymity. Therefore, in this research they are referred to with pseudonyms.

Reflexivity in the research enabled the researcher to draw lessons from the process and feed those lessons forward (Denis & Lehoux 2011). Nine months after accessing and co-generating data began, suggestion was sought at a meeting of the advisory group on how the research could be meaningful and helpful for MCCI in the short term; that is, while the study was in progress. The organisation’s senior management expressed their interest in understanding how the middle managers and newly hired staff felt about the overall process of change in the organisation and how they saw their role in the process. The suggestion fell squarely within the objective of the research, to investigate how organisational members were making and giving sense of organisational change. Subsequently, the middle managers and newly hired staff were invited to take part in a round of face-to-face, in-depth interviews. They were informed that while the data co-generated as a result of the interviews would be used for the research, a report would be prepared for the organisation’s senior management. Nine members of the organisation responded positively to this invitation. Their interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and the interview transcripts were shared for member checking (Guba & Lincoln 1981, p. 186) before they were used for analysis.

3.4.1.4 Co-analysing Data

Participation of organisational members in the research was not limited to generating data. In line with the research epistemology and methodology, they were also involved in the data analysis. The interview transcripts were shared with them for
member checking (Guba & Lincoln 1981, p. 186), as were the themes generated as a result of coding the data for their comment. As discussed in the following section, research participants were also invited to a reflexive discussion, in which themes were shared for discussion. Some of the research participants who could not take part in the reflexive discussion or had left the organisation since their participation in the data generation were sent the research themes via email for their comments. Given the involvement of the research participants in analysing the data, though at various levels, the term ‘co-analysis’ has been used in this thesis.

When does data analysis begin? Where can the line be drawn between accessing or generating data and analysing them? Dey (2005, p. 272) presents a ‘logical sequence’ of qualitative data analysis that begins with the first encounter with the data and continues through ‘producing an account’. As Dey (2005) implies, there are discrete steps that are logically connected in terms of both their existence and happening in a research process. For instance, patterns cannot be identified nor can they be connected unless the data are read and annotated, whereas data cannot be read unless interviews and/or observations are conducted or organisational artefacts are studied. However, such a conceptualisation of data analysis is simply categorising the processes, or putting the processes into clusters and drawing boundaries around them. It does not take account of the processual characteristic of a research. Questions about the validity of such a depiction of the process abound. When does the first encounter with the data take place? Does it begin when the first interview question is asked or much earlier? What constitutes data? Are data only what a researcher collects in the form of interview transcripts, for instance? Are only the interview transcripts and observation notes analysed to understand the phenomenon under investigation? While these and a multitude of similar questions may not receive definitive answers, the question relevant in this section is whether these steps,
if it is assumed that there are discrete steps, happen in a ‘logical sequence’, as explained by Dey (2005).

The logical-sequence view of a research process is refuted by many texts on data analysis. According to these texts (for instance, Corbin & Strauss 1990; Iacono et al. 2009; Reischauer 2015; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006), in practice, a research process and its sub-processes, such as data generation and data analysis, rarely happen in a linear or orderly fashion. It is only for conceptual purposes and analytical reasons that these processes are demarcated and ‘neatly bracketed off’ as discrete steps (Burgess et al. 2002, p. 142). As suggested by Reischauer (2015), in practice, data analysis and data collection were happening concurrently. Data analysis, though at a preliminary level, was integral to the way the interview questions were posed, the research site was selected and the data were collected. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that when a researcher sees or hears a word, they assign meaning to it – they interpret it – which is the core of data analysis. Such encounters with words began much earlier in this research study. The preliminary meetings with MCCI’s management, for instance, had an impact on the focus of the interview questions and observations. This impact would not have been possible without analysing the subjects of discussion in those meetings. Williams (1976) makes an important point in that describing the relation between one action and another within a context is equivalent to interpreting that action. The research process began and ended with actions/happenings and describing the relationships between them. Accessing and co-generating data and analysing them were happening simultaneously, rather than as discrete phases. The choice of accessing and co-generating more data was influenced by the results of previous data analysis. Researchers (for example, Burgess et al. 2002; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006; Thorne 2000; van den Hooaard & van den Hooaard 2008) have reported similar findings.
Nonetheless, regardless of when data analysis took place, it was important to
determine how this study would define data analysis and how it would be carried out.
Miles and Huberman (1994), whose book is one of the classic and often-quoted texts on
qualitative data analysis, define data analysis as a process ‘consisting of three concurrent
flows of activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification’ (p. 10). While each of these activities has been discussed in considerable detail, Miles and
Huberman (1994) provide a variety of methods, such as contact summary sheets, codes
and coding, and memoing, for focusing, simplifying and abstracting data – data
reduction. However, this and similar approaches shift the focus of an inquiry to the end
result, rather the process itself. They give misplaced significance to the data as substantial
things without accommodating for their temporal-contextual factors. Further, they
present the trap of falling into a representational view of language (Barad 2007).
Nonetheless, though the process of data analysis in this study consisted of many sub-
processes, for reasons of space, this part of the research is briefly discussed under the
headings of coding the data – ‘coding for processes’ – and memo writing (Charmaz 2011,
p. 367). The diffusion across grounded theory approach toward coding (Charmaz 2008,
2011; Corbin & Strauss 1990) is evident for the reasons highlighted in the discussion
below.

3.4.1.4.1 Coding the Data – ‘Coding for Processes’ – and Identifying
Themes
Coding, the fundamental analytical process (Corbin & Strauss 1990), used in this
study has been defined as the process of categorising and sorting data (Babbie 2007;
Bryman & Burgess 2002). However, it was more than using tags or labels for chunks of
information or assigning such chunks to a category, as it is often understood to be the
case (Babbie 2007; Dey 2005). This inductive process involved reviewing the data,
dissecting them meaningfully, assigning units of meaning to them (Charmaz & Belgrave 2012; Miles & Huberman 1994) and describing the relation between them (Williams 1976). Coding in this study was line-by-line, which helped the researcher engage with the data and go deeper into the phenomena (Charmaz 2008, 2011). The key characteristic of coding in this study, and the prime reason behind choosing principles of grounded theory for coding, was the focus on actions, rather than topics, through the use of gerunds. Whereas identifying topics or standardised units prior to data analysis would have led to synthesising the data based on the topic areas, line-by-line coding using gerunds made it possible to reverse the process: the data themselves determined the topics, themes and patterns. This approach brought the implicit actions or happenings – processes – to the fore and enabled us to identify the links between them (see Appendix 4: Sample of Initial Coding). Therefore, the phrase ‘coding for processes’ was borrowed from Charmaz’s (2011, p. 367) writing on grounded theory coding. What was analysed to be happening in a segment of data was the result of interpretation and co-interpretation, rather than a definition or discovery (Charmaz & Belgrave 2012).

Analysis took place in a number of steps. It began with open coding (Charmaz 2011), in which interview transcripts, observation notes, organisational artefacts and emails were scrutinised, line-by-line, by asking ‘what is happening in the data?’ (Charmaz & Belgrave 2012, p. 355). In this scrutiny, the context in which the data had been collected remained an inextricable part of the data. This process resulted in the identification of tens of codes, all described in terms of actions and happenings – that is, process codes. However, at this stage, the coding was unstructured and tentative. The focus was merely on identifying implied and explicit actions and happenings without any concerns for patterns and themes. As Charmaz and Belgrave (2012) suggest, the coding,
while it preserved processes, also proved useful in discerning sequences of happenings, which was a step in temporal awareness and appreciation.

To focus and simplify the data further, the coding was taken to another level of analysis, identifying themes. At this stage, the initial coding was scrutinised against the data, and frequently reappearing codes and the links between various codes were identified to sort the large number of codes and make them analytically incisive. However, as emphasised by Miles and Huberman (1994), the data and code reduction were not in quantitative terms. Rather, the codes were reduced and transformed through summarising and paraphrasing the initial codes in the form of phrasal themes. The key questions in this round of data analysis included, what is the relationship between the codes? And what are the temporal-contextual factors that define the themes? Care was taken not to exclude the outliers or the codes and themes that stood out from the rest; they were treated the same as the common codes and themes. A short descriptive note was added to each theme to summarise the interpretation of the codes. This process was carried out for the entire data set.

The initial themes were reviewed against the codes, the data, and the contexts in which the data were accessed and co-generated. Based on their temporal-relational factors, they were organised and reorganised under two topic areas: organisational becoming and change, sensemaking and sensegiving; these constitute the discussion in the following chapters (see also Appendix 5: Major Themes). However, the themes and their interpretation were treated as tentative, subject to further analysis. The themes, along with their short interpretive notes, were shared with the research participants in a reflexive practice (see the following section). Their comments were added to the interpretive notes and subjected to further analysis and discussion within the research team.
The key focus of data analysis, including coding and identifying themes, was to understand how organisational becoming was unfolding, how it reflected ongoing change, how organisational members were making and giving sense of the becoming by way of understanding the meaning of what they were saying and doing and the meaning of the happenings in which they were involved. As Adcock (2006) asserts, the interpretation did not conceptually isolate meanings from happenings and actions; nor did it disentangle the happenings and actions from those who engaged in them. The actions were perceived as indispensable sub-processes of the larger processes (here, actors) that were, in turn, contributing to the becoming of yet another larger process – MCCI. Therefore, the focus was on an empathetic understanding (Neuman 2014) of the happenings and actions from the position of those who were temporally relating to them. Thus, not only were the research participants asked for explanations of the happenings in their particular contexts; they were also actively engaged in the data analysis. While subjectivity in the meanings by way of varying relationships of processes was recognised, it was intended to create intersubjective meanings in a process of which I was an entangled part (Hernes 2008).

The entangledness of processes (Hernes 2008) also posed questions, such as: ‘how can reflexivity be introduced into practice’ (Denis & Lehoux 2011, p. 368)? How can process research deal with bias or subjectivity (Langley 2011)? What ethical challenges does process research pose? While these questions are not less entangled than the processes themselves, the following sections address them separately.

3.4.2 Reflexivity

What has been made explicit so far is that, as Denzin and Lincoln (2011) commented on participant observation, this research was not and is not an objective and detached process. This feature is congruent with the epistemology and methodology
adopted in this research. The approach that was adopted rejected the notion of definitive and fixed knowledge about the phenomena under investigation and showed a commitment to the role of performance and practice in knowing (Orlikowski 2002; Rescher 2003). That commitment ‘turn[ed] a reflexive eye’ on the methodological choice and what it involved (Yanow 2006a, p. 6), and provided a lens for an ongoing critique of the concepts and practical operations of the research (Oren 2006). In this sense, reflexivity is a built-in characteristic of the research process. However, there are mixed reports from the field. For example, where Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) identify reflexivity as one of the defining characteristics of participatory methodologies, Denis and Lehoux (2011) report that introducing reflexivity into practice is one of the challenges of implementing collaborative-participatory research. As discussed below, reflexivity proved to be a challenge for this study.

The concept of reflexivity has been used in the literature in markedly different ways (Wilkinson 1988). For some of its proponents, the practice centres on the researcher (Oren 2006). Guba and Lincoln’s (cited in Lincoln et al. 2011, p. 114) view of reflexivity is about ‘reflecting critically on the self as researcher’, or, as Wilkinson (1988, p. 493) notes, it is ‘disciplined self-reflection’. In a similar vein, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2008) define reflexivity as the practice of actively locating oneself in the research process. The latter definition focuses on the relational aspect of research dynamics. Relational reflexivity is one of several types of reflexivity that Finlay (2012) identifies. A study by Cutcliffe (2003) demonstrates that the conceptualisation of reflexivity ranges from seeing the researcher as part of the research, rather than separate from it, to the mutual influence of the researcher and the research field, to conceptualising who the researcher is, to self-consciousness and self-reflection, to attaining neutrality, and to enhancing ‘the credibility of the findings by accounting for researcher's values, beliefs, knowledge and
biases’ (p. 137). For Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000), paying attention to reflexivity means paying attention to the interconnectedness of the factors that affect knowledge creation. Alvesson (2003) also emphasises the researcher’s role as part of the social world that is investigated. Drawing on a similar notion of reflexivity, Denis and Lehoux (2011) invite researchers to get immersed in a practice setting. According to them, not only will immersion help the researchers become a resource for stimulating learning, but it will also help them become aware of the limits and potential of the adopted research methodology. However, according to Alvesson (2003), this type of reflexivity can lead to attaching too much significance to the researchers’ selves and, consequently, place their personal experiences in the centre of the research process. Therefore, he recommends the use of ‘conscious and consistent efforts to view the subject matter from different angles’ (p. 25). Alvesson (2003) and Oren (2006) also recommend the use of reflexivity that focuses on other elements of the research, including the research participants. Denis and Lehoux (2011) use the notion of diffusion to encourage and enhance this type of reflexivity. They assert that diffusion will enable the researchers to debate their findings with a wider range and number of stakeholders.

As made explicit in this thesis, I have not attempted to detach myself from the research or vice versa. Who I am as the researcher – my being and becoming, values and beliefs – has been part of the research, with mutual consequences for the unfolding of the study (Cutcliffe 2003). The factors affecting the study and creation of knowledge (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000) were continually subjected to discussion both within the research team and between the organisational members and the team. In line with Neuman’s (2014, p. 95) view of producing social science knowledge, the research methods were not merely focused on inductively, observing, interpreting and reflecting on what the research participants were ‘saying and doing in specific social contexts’.
Simultaneous reflection on my experiences and interpretations was part of the process. This level of reflexivity had impacts on the research process. For example, at the early stages of the study, organisational members would try to keep a distance from the study and tended to view it with scepticism. However, as the process evolved and lessons from the reflection were fed into the process, organisational members began engaging with the study. For example, they would invite me to attend the staff dinner.

In addition to the above, it was originally planned to take the findings of the coding, identifying themes and memo writing to a group of individuals who were working or had worked in similar organisations to reflect on the preliminary findings of the research. This group was to be identified from the community organisations in the region. However, as the study unfolded against its prescribed objective timeline and it took turns that could not have been anticipated in the early stages, the reflexive practice needed to be curtailed. Subsequently, the findings of the data analysis (themes and short memos) were taken to the research participants themselves for a reflexive discussion. The participants were invited to an informal group discussion, with the research team, organised at MCCI’s central office. However, given the voluntary nature of their participation and their organisational commitments, not all research participants could attend the reflexive discussion. The fifty percent, who took part in the reflexive discussion, shared their views on the themes. Notes were taken and the discussion was audio-recorded. A transcript of the discussion was shared with the participants for member checking (Guba & Lincoln 1981). Further, findings of the data analysis were emailed for comment and input to two of the three research participants who had left MCCI since the data collection stage, and who were willing to continue their participation in the research. Nonetheless, the implementation of a participatory research methodology, including reflexivity, is not without challenge, as pointed out by Denis and
Lehoux (2011). Organisational members have their own commitments, which create limitation for their involvement in a research. Yanow (2006b) correctly points out that ‘[t]he researcher involved in conversational interviewing and observing-participating cannot adhere “rigidly” to a research protocol’ (p. 70). There are ambiguities in organising, and the researcher has little control over the happenings within an organising context and to what extent research participants can engage in the research. Moreover, the time constraints on a study with a well-defined timeline requires setting achievable targets and sensible expectations (see also the following sections). For example, there is little that a researcher can do but to move forward when a research participant cannot/does not respond to an email in a few months. Given these challenges and the unfolding of the overall research methods, an important question to address is how trustworthy and rigorous the research has been. The following section addresses this question.

3.4.3 Trustworthiness of the Research Process

Evaluating a qualitative study is one of the most contentious issues among qualitative researchers. While one can easily get caught up in the use of terminology and definitional issues, there has been no consensus about what aspect(s) of a qualitative research should be evaluated and what criteria should be used (Neuman 2014; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006). Using the term ‘criterion/criteria’ itself is not without a challenge, especially from a non-positivist paradigm. One can raise the question of whether criteria are necessary (Hammersley 2007, p. 288). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Hammersley’s (2007) response to this question is the outright rejection of either universal or a finite set of explicit criteria that substitute for judgement. The issue of criteria also brings the evaluator into the equation. Is it the researcher, the research participants or the reader who should evaluate a study? Is it enough to evaluate only the research findings or should
the entire research process be subjected to scrutiny? Questions abound, with divergent views about the answers (Bailey 1997; Neuman 2014). Lincoln et al. (2011) see the diversity of views on evaluative criteria as deeply rooted in paradigm differences.

However, positivist concerns have had a lasting impact on almost any discussion among adherents of qualitative research paradigms, on the topic of research evaluation (Angen 2000; Schwartz-Shea 2006). For example, Miles and Huberman (1994), whose work is often seen as a classic qualitative-interpretive text (Schwartz-Shea 2006), review ‘twenty-six tactics for drawing and for verifying conclusions’ (p. 277; emphasis added).

At the core of their discussion is the question of ‘How will you [the researcher], or anyone else, know whether the finally emerging findings are good?’ (Schwartz-Shea 2006; emphasis in the original text). While the focus of this evaluative approach is on the research findings, rather than the whole process, underpinning the approach is the presupposition of a truth or truths existing out there, which makes verifying and judging on the ‘goodness’ of a research finding not only possible but necessary. The issue here is not with adopting a positivist approach toward research evaluation; rather, the argument is that these approaches often contradict their own theoretical and paradigmatic underpinnings (Schwartz-Shea 2006; Yanow 2006b). For example, according to Langley (2011), one of the four elements that contribute to communicating the credibility and trustworthiness of process research is the use of multiple researchers. This implies that every researcher’s collection, generation and analysis of data should produce the same or similar results. However, as Merriam (1995) asserts, the real question for qualitative research is not whether results of one study are the same as those of another study, ‘but whether the results of a study are consistent with the data collected’ (p. 56; emphasis in the original text). This point is particularly valid for a process study, which rejects the notion of a programmed world (Rescher 1996). As previously discussed, there are
numerous reasons to believe that multiple researchers’ interpretations of the same data yield multiple results. Moreover, a major preoccupation of qualitative researchers has been to avoid bias and subjectivity in the research process, which shows the belief in ‘[t]he separation between mind and act’ or what Yanow (2006b, p. 74) calls ‘impersonality’. Such an attempt does not seem to take into account the built-in bias that begins with defining one’s onto-epistemological commitments. Bias reflects the worldviews (Hernes 2008) that define a research process and to which a researcher adheres. At the same time, the researcher’s worldview is not shaped in isolation or in a world free of relations and values. As pointed out in this thesis, my becoming is the key factor in shaping my worldview, which is value-laden. Nicolson’s (cited in Finlay 2012, p. 324) remark that interviewing ‘can never be “neutral, objective and unbiased […]”’ holds true for the entire research process, particularly a qualitative research (Cassell & Symon 2004). Therefore, attempting to avoid any bias or subjectivity is no different to producing objective results in a process detached from the researcher. This view was rejected at the outset of this study.

The above discussion had two ramifications for this study. First, any evaluative criteria were viewed as general guidelines, rather than a finite set of standards (Hammersley 2007). Further, it was the meaning of the terms used in the specific contexts that mattered rather than the taxonomy. This is what Schwartz-Shea (2006) refers to as the inductive approach to evaluative criteria, according to which a criterion is open to constant reinterpretation. Second, while the entire (not in an absolute sense of the term) process of the research remained a subject of interest for evaluation, it was the process itself that provided benchmarks for its own evaluation. Therefore, the term ‘trustworthiness’, introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is used here to highlight the strategies that were used to maximise the credibility of the research and, in Schwartz-
Shea’s (2006) words, to ensure that the efforts made were ‘self-consciously deliberate, transparent, and ethical’ (p. 101).

The strategies used to enhance the trustworthiness of this research were not activities or happenings separate from the research process; they were the research process itself. One of those constituting processes was accessing and co-generating data in various contexts, studying multiple processes, and using different methods to attain a more rigorous and in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Bhattacharya 2008). The thick, rich and detailed data were to provide adequate evidence for rigorous research (Yanow 2006b). Data came from organisational members, artefacts and documents through interviewing organisational members, observing processes and studying the documents. Denzin (in Beitin 2012) would have divided it into the separate processes of data triangulation and methodological triangulation, as multiple sources and multiple methods were used to access and generate data. However, only in the context of the act of listening, observing and reading – processes – were the sources meaningful for a larger process; that is, the research. This relationship worked the same way in the reverse direction.

Member checking (Guba & Lincoln 1981) was used to ensure that the study was transparent and ethical (Schwartz-Shea’s 2006). Interview transcripts were sent to the research participants for their comments. They were explicitly asked to check if the transcripts reflected what they had said. They were asked to add comments they deemed necessary to the text and omit anything from the transcripts they did not want to be included in the analysis. As discussed in the previous sections, the research participants were also actively involved in the data analysis. This process was intended to enhance the credibility not only of the raw data but also of the analysis. Sharing the data with the research participants and engaging them with the data analysis encouraged reflexivity.
This, along with the reflexive discussion, made the researcher reflect on his presupposition and go back to check the process of constructing and co-constructing meaning (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Schwartz-Shea (2006) identifies both member checking and reflexivity as a way to enhance the trustworthiness of a research process.


Having this conclusion in mind and as recommended by Becker (in Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2007), verbatim transcripts of interviews, rather than selected notes, were used for data analysis; detailed, descriptive notes were taken about specific happenings, events and behaviours while observing these processes. Further, detailed notes were prepared to contextualise each interview. These descriptive notes, along with organisational artefacts, shape the discussion in the later chapters.

While these processes were meant to ensure and enhance the trustworthiness of the research process, they were closely linked to the ethical aspects of the research. Therefore, to avoid repetition, the following section will briefly underline this aspect.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

‘[T]he becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter.’ (Barad 2007, p. 185).

Further, as Barad (2007) points out, the becoming of a phenomenon and the knowing of its becoming are mutually implicated. It is in the context of this mutual implication that the intertwining of ethics, ontology and epistemology – ‘ethico-onto-epistemology’ (Barad 2007) – can be fully appreciated. Moreover, while Barad underlines the significance of intra-action for appreciating the intertwining of ethics, ontology and
epistemology, the relational aspects of process ontology (Cooper 2005) and performative epistemology (Barad 2003; Butler 2010) also bring to the fore the relations, besides organisational intra-actions, that extend beyond the organising context. Relationality further highlights the ethicality of both becoming and knowing of becoming. From this perspective, it would be naïve to think that some processes or sub-processes in a study involve ethicality, but others do not. Drawing on Barad’s (2007) argument, it is concluded that every intra-action and relation matters and, hence, it involves ethicality. In this context, it is ‘ethical mindfulness’ or some predisposition towards and ongoing concerns for ethicality that is needed (Heggen & Guillemin 2012, p. 472). However, it is only for the reason of space that only a few of what Bell and Wray-Bliss (2011, p. 82) call ‘explicit engagements with ethics’ are discussed here.

These ethical considerations are presented as parts of larger processes or as individual happenings. Explaining what preceded and followed each happening would pose a practical challenge. Further, the order in which they are discussed here does not necessarily show the order of their unfolding. Nonetheless, the first ethical consideration for this study began with obtaining a consent/support letter from the subject organisation (this process was repeated every time the research site was changed). The consent (see Appendix 6: Support Letter from MCCI) was given after formal discussions were held with the organisation’s management, at which the purpose of the research, methods and demands on participants, possible risks and inconvenience were discussed (see Appendix 7: Participation Information Sheet). The consent letter was part of the process of Ethics Application through the Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong. The process was robust and thorough.

Following the approval of the Ethics Application (Ethics Number: HE16/029), the organisation’s staff, management committee (board members), along with some
volunteers, were formally informed about the research (see Selecting the Research Participants, above). Once some organisational members expressed their interest in the study and provided their email addresses, they were sent an invitation letter (Appendix 8: Invitation Letter), participant information, along with samples of the interview questions (Appendix 7: Participation Information Sheet) and a consent form (Appendix 9: Consent Form). Every participant was engaged in negotiating consent at an individual level (Finlay 2012). This was to respect the individuals’ autonomy and their right to give informed consent (Christians 2011). The dates and times of interviews and observations were also negotiated individually.

In a research setting, there is often said to be an asymmetry of power toward the researcher (Fine et al. 2011; Herzog 2012; Johnson & Rowlands 2012). Power by the researcher is said to be exercised through interviewing (Atkinson & Silverman 1997) by way of, among others, asking in-depth questions (Johnson & Rowlands 2012), determining the interview location (Herzog 2012) and controlling the interview process through ‘turn-taking’ (Wang & Yan 2012, p. 234). Similarly, according to Fine et al. (2011), in observational research methods, there is a power imbalance in favour of the researcher. In this study, my access to the organisation’s CEO, my authority to document organisational happenings, and my being a student of the University of Wollongong point at the asymmetry of power toward me. One of the purposes of introducing reflexivity into the research process (discussed above) was to compensate for this power imbalance (Bryman & Cassell 2006; Cassell 2011). Also, to mitigate some of the power asymmetry, the choice of every interview location was made by the research participant. In the case of observations, the research participants could ask the researcher at any time to discontinue the observation. Further, they had the free choice of determining the length of each observation session. However, as noted by Wang and Yan (2012), power
inequality, especially in casual conversation, as most of the interviews conducted for this study could be regarded, is covert and often hard to scrutinise. The fact that the research participants would choose the dates, times, durations and locations of interviews and observations significantly redressed the power imbalance. Most importantly, as argued by Finlay (2012), power is complex and can be enacted in multiple layers and exerted in multiple directions. While the power dynamics were different for every interview and observation, overall, I found this relationship – as shown by Finlay (2012) – skewed toward the research participants. The fact that they could withdraw from the entire research process, or any part of it, and that whether the interview and observation session would happen depended heavily on their responses – often slow – to my email requests, had changed the whole power dynamics. In practice, it was the research participants that controlled the course of the research.

Reflexivity and trustworthiness, and, consequently, the measures taken to introduce and enhance these aspects of the research process, are deeply connected to ethics (Bhattacharya 2008). For example, while member checking and engaging research participants in data analysis helped encourage reflexivity and enhance the trustworthiness of the process, they also helped avoid the fabrication and omission of data, which are unethical (Christians 2011; Schwartz-Shea’s 2006). Nevertheless, as advised by Rowan (2001), as the researcher I was aware of my own views. I was also aware of how my views and assumptions could have affected the research process. Where it was not completely feasible to consider balancing points of view, I would disclose my assumptions and views.

As suggested by the research participants, to ensure their privacy and confidentiality, data were de-identified, and, for the purpose of referencing, pseudonyms have been used in this thesis. No identifiable information was shared between the
research participants. However, since a small number of organisational members participated in the research, complete confidentiality within the organisation was not possible. Using the subject organisation’s actual name was by consent of the organisation’s board and senior management.

3.6 Conclusion

Without denying the existence of substance and substantial things, the study came from the position of giving ontological primacy to process. Such a position meant (and means) that the phenomena under investigation – organisational becoming, constant change, sensemaking and sensegiving – are ultimately processes. To understand and produce knowledge about these phenomena, it is necessary to investigate their constitutive processes, which temporally relate both inwardly and outwardly. At the same time, investigation and the subsequent production of knowledge about these phenomena and their temporal relationship is not about the end result, or ‘knowing that’, but the processes that lead to the end result. It is about knowing how change constitutes organisations, and knowing how organisational members as the contributing processes of the organisation’s becoming make and give sense of change. It is about the process of investigating how processes, including individuals, temporally relate to each other. The fundamentality of temporal relationality required to include the processes of interest themselves – organisational members’ performances and practices – in the investigation.

Therefore, a collaborative-participatory methodology was adopted for this research. The methodology was accommodating participation and engagement of the organisational members, whose performances and practices were making the organisation, and whose very processes of sensemaking and sensegiving were under investigation.

Through observing processes (organisational events and members), interviewing organisational members, studying organisational artefacts and using electronic
communication, rich, qualitative data were accessed and co-generated. In collaboration with the research participants, the data were co-analysed and the analyses were reflected on. The themes drawn from the analyses provide the substance of the discussion in the subsequent chapters. The discussion has been organised under two broad topics: organisational becoming, and sensemaking and sensegiving. The following chapter focuses on MCCI’s becoming – how ongoing change temporally makes the organisation, how organisational happenings intra-act to generate the pull and push and create more happenings, and how the whole organisational becoming is streamlined.
Chapter 4: Findings: The Becoming of MCCI

Chapter Structure

4.1 Introduction

4.2 MCCI’s Temporal Becoming
   4.2.1 Having Emerged from Many Possibilities
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4.4 Attempts at Stabilising the Flow Remain Futile

4.5 Streamlining the Flow

4.6 Conclusion
4.1 Introduction

This research is focused on how the becoming of an organisation and its members’ sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to that becoming may be demonstrated empirically. The discussion in this and the two subsequent chapters is about that possible empirical demonstration. In this chapter, the discussion is focused on the first research question, whether and how organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming can be demonstrated empirically. It will demonstrate how MCCI’s becoming is shaped and reshaped, how it is organised from a sea of possibilities and how this process is characterised by ongoing change. As discussed in chapter two, temporality and relationality are two of the principal categories of process thinking. Therefore, in the first part of this chapter, the focus is on MCCI’s temporal becoming. The discussion covers a brief period of the unfolding of the organisation’s becoming, examining the flow of happenings in which the researcher was able to participate and which he could observe during his time spent at the research site.

In the second part, the focus is on the relationality of MCCI’s becoming. The discussion shows that as a macro\textsuperscript{8} process the organisation intra-acts\textsuperscript{9}, which creates its constitutive happenings. At the same time, its constitutive happenings, either individually or as a whole, interact\textsuperscript{10} with and relate to other processes beyond the organising context. The organisation’s intra-action and its relations generate the push and pull\textsuperscript{11} for further happenings and, subsequently, move the organisation forward. The

\textsuperscript{8} The prefixes ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ are used with the term ‘happening’, and any other principal categories of processes, to highlight that a process has many folds. A process is always part of another process and is constituted by many other processes. Nonetheless, micro and macro are only relative characteristics of a happening. A happening can simultaneously be both a micro-happening and a macro-happening.

\textsuperscript{9} The term ‘intra-action’ has been borrowed from Barad’s (2007) work. Though it acknowledges the mutual agency of processes, it does not reflect Barad’s notion of intra-action. It is used in the sense of intra-personal, acknowledging the mutual constitution of processes within the context of MCCI.

\textsuperscript{10} The term ‘interaction’ refers to the mutually constitutive relationship between MCCI (either as a whole or as sub-processes) and a process or processes outside its organising context.

\textsuperscript{11} Push and pull are the impetus from organisational intra-action and interaction.
constraints on the study do not allow a comprehensive coverage of the processes that constitute MCCI. The section looks into a limited and selective number of processes that have been observed during the study.

The third part focuses on some stabilising attempts within MCCI’s context. The discussion shows that while organisational members try to stabilise the flow of happenings, such attempts remain futile. The discussion also shows that any attempts to draw a distinction between organisational change and the so-called non-change organisational happenings are meaningless as every organisational happening is different from the previous one; it indicates ongoing change. Further, organisational change is indivisible. It starts with the inception of the organisation and continues throughout its life. Marking the beginning and end for change is for bracketing\textsuperscript{12} the flow for making sense of it. Part three also briefly discusses the political characteristics of organisational happenings and streamlining the flow of happenings. The chapter concludes that MCCI’s becoming is not an exception to the fact that organising is defined by ongoing change in the present. As change unfolds, it is affected by both the organisation’s past and anticipated futures. The discussion shows that change in an organising context would only cease if the organisation ceased existing.

4.2 MCCI’s Temporal Becoming

MCCI declares the purpose of its existence as ‘a leadership voice for culturally and linguistically diverse communities’ (MCCI 2018). To pursue this purpose, it has been in the making since June 1975. During this time, it has been shaped and reshaped continually. Its being in the present is the cumulative effects of the changes since its establishment. The organisation began as the Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council

\textsuperscript{12} As pointed out in chapter three, in this thesis, the term bracketing is used in the sense of sampling as used by Weick (1979, p. 156).
(IECC), and was ‘rebranded as Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra’ (MCCI) in 2009 (Organisational Artefact). As a local, peak, community-based service organisation, MCCI started with a strong advocacy and lobbying focus on behalf of CALD communities. Having hired its first community worker in 1984, the organisation now has fifty-seven staff and about one hundred volunteers. These examples of milestones in the organisation’s becoming show glimpses of its past, and provide a lens for understanding what futures have been anticipated at different times. For example, Elias\(^\text{13}\) (7 June 2018) points out the reason for the change of name in these words, ‘[…] in time, the word ethnic started to get a real bad influence, bad name’. Though working with ethnic communities still characterises MCCI’s operations, it is argued that the term ‘multiculturalism’ is a better reflection of what it stands for. The futures that were anticipated and shaped the happenings at different times have become the organisation’s past; now it has new futures to anticipate and new reasons to shape the happenings in the present. As Mead points out, the ongoing present activities that define and redefine the organisation offer a lens for understanding its past and future (Aboulafia 2016). From a temporal perspective, its present activities are shaped by what has happened in the past and what might happen in the future (Dawson 2014; Dawson & Sykes 2016). To understand the present happenings that make MCCI, or to understand why MCCI’s becoming unfolds the way it does, an appreciation of its past and future is necessary. Starting with the past, this part highlights these temporal dimensions. While the discussion has been organised under the discrete headings of past, present and future, they are not being conceptualised and treated as separate and independent temporal

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\(^{13}\) To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the individual research participants, and in accordance with their own request, pseudonyms are used for reference purposes.
dimensions, but as complementary dimensions of the same temporal becoming (Dawson & Sykes 2016).

**4.2.1 Having Emerged from Many Possibilities**

MCCI has an inseparable relation to its past. At times, it is overshadowed by the nostalgic and postalgic managerial discourse (Ybema 2004). It is open to different interpretations, and part of it is disowned. However, the way the past has contributed to what MCCI is today cannot be reversed. The unfolding of the happenings in the past and the way those happenings have contributed to the organisation’s becoming are part of its history. However, this history is interpreted variously, and the various interpretations affect the present happenings. At the same time, whilst the organisation has been shaped and reshaped along the way, it has the characteristics of the context of which MCCI and similar organisations became a part and which they shaped.

The Good Neighbour Council originally was looking after the ethnic groups. But, unfortunately, after a while they went bust, financially. And, then, just the few of us that were taking part with the Wollongong Show Society, we were going on our own [sic], so we sat together to form a group to act on behalf of the ethnic groups (Elias, 22 June 2017).

Khaled (22 June 2017) completed Elias’s comment by saying, ‘And this is how the Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council started back in June 1975.’ Elias and Khaled were asked for their views on the structural changes that began in MCCI in mid-2016. But to describe the present changes, they began their explanations from 1975. Their reference to the past was intended to highlight MCCI’s long history in the industry and underline its role as a supporter and advocate for ethnic groups, renamed as MCCI in the present context. The links to the Good Neighbour Council and Wollongong Show Society, however, do not provide a full account of how MCCI emerged. Its establishment was not

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14 Starting in 1949, the Good Neighbour Council was an Australian Commonwealth Government-funded initiative to assist with the influx of post-World War II refugees and settlers (Winter 2006).
an isolated happening. It was an emergence from many possibilities in a context ripe for the becoming of MCCI and similar organisations. On 14 November 1975, the local newspaper, *The Illawarra Mercury*, reported the following survey results:

> **SURVEY SHOWS MIGRANTS NEED HELP**

Migrants were disproportionate-ly represented among disadvan-
taged workers in Australia, the former Labor and Immigration Min-
ister, Senator James McClelland told the recent migrant workers’ confer-
ence at Melbourne.

The report highlighted some of the challenges the migrant or ethnic communities were facing following Australia’s strictly controlled migration regime. Being disadvantaged in the national workforce was one of the challenges. Though the report does not directly point to the policies that had contributed to the situation in which people were advantaged or disadvantaged based on their linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, it does identify the lack of English language skill among the non-English speaking migrants as a major factor in their being disadvantaged. In Elias’ (22 June 2017) words, ‘the only people that were really looked after were the British’. The quote suggests that being disadvantaged based on language and ethnic background had root in Australia’s then dominant socio-political system and the policy that had driven it.
The policy Elias was hinting at was the remnant of the Immigration Restriction Act (1901), which constituted the core of the White Australia Policy\textsuperscript{15}. However, a focus on the issues facing the ethnic migrants and their needs was only possible as the White Australia Policy was dying out. Though the death of the policy was as long and slow a process as was its establishment (Tavan 2005), this process offered an infinite number of conceptual decompositions and potential for other becomings (James 1909). The major social democratic reforms implemented by the Whitlam\textsuperscript{16} Government in the first half of the 1970s were redefining many socio-economic relationships in Australian society. The introduction of the Racial Discrimination Act (1975), Australia’s first national human rights legislation, was paving the way for racial equality and multiculturalism (Soutphommasane 2015). In Rescher’s (1996) words, these happenings were Janus-faced: they looked both inward and outward. While the gradual abolition of the White Australia Policy was a foreign policy imperative in the post-colonial era (Corbett 1958), the process was also instigating internal happenings at micro levels. On 3 September 1975, \textit{The Express} ran the headline shown below.

The newspaper article demonstrates an example of the inward productive effect of the macro-happenings (Rescher 1996). Issues facing the migrant communities and policy changes at the national level had a role in the creation of relatively small-scale happenings, such as the University of Wollongong’s establishment of a training school

\textsuperscript{15} As one of the first pieces of legislation introduced to the newly established federal parliament of Australia in 1901, the Immigration Restriction Act came into effect to limit non-British migration to Australia and allow the deportation of ‘undesirable’ people who had settled in the colony before federation. This act marked the beginning of the policy that came to be known as the White Australia Policy (National Museum of Australia n.d.).

\textsuperscript{16} Gough Whitlam, Australia’s 21\textsuperscript{st} Prime Minister, took office in December 1972. His Labor government introduced a wide-ranging reform program, which included the establishment of the publicly funded universal health care system, free university education, and equal pay for women (National Archives of Australia n.d.).
advocacy and lobbying focus’ (Organisational Artefact) for a community organisation that represented ethnic groups beyond Australia’s dominant Anglo-Celtic ethnic group had become possible. Talking about diversity in culture and language was no longer a taboo. However, for MCCI it was a slow emergence.

And now, and obviously it started as a very, very small organisation and our first grant was probably around 1978, and was only one thousand dollars back then. And that one thousand dollars was to employ a worker to help emigrants settle in the Illawarra, just help emigrants to settle in the Illawarra (Khaled, 22 June 2017).

The organisation secured its first public funding in 1978 and hosted its ‘first Aged Care Forum for CALD communities in Illawarra’ in 1980 (Organisational Artefact). At the same time, the micro-happenings, including the becoming of MCCI, had outward impacts. The changes in economic realities – labour shortages in various industries, for instance – had triggered the changes in Australia’s immigration policies, which, in turn, had necessitated bringing in migrants from non-Anglo-Celtic ethnic backgrounds.
although they were still predominantly European. However, as Elias (22 June 2017) points out, the ‘new settlers’, for most of whom English was not their first language, were left largely on their own, with only minimum support from the government. Nonetheless, Australia’s post-war migration regime had far-reaching impacts; it changed the country’s demographic composition, and re-defined its entire social dynamics (Lalich 2010). Among other effects, the changing demographic structure was shifting the focus of civil society organisations, which had traditionally been self-focused (Horne 1980). While, as Khaled (22 June 2017) suggests, government initiatives, such as the Good Neighbour Council, had focused on the assimilation and integration of migrant groups, rather than their meaningful participation, ethnic community organisations, such as MCCI, were providing a new space for migrant communities to voice their concerns. With a strong advocacy focus, these organisations were emerging and bonding together to define the new relationship and dynamics.

The Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council (IECC) formed in 1975 with members from the Good Neighbours Council recognising the importance of providing representation for the CALD and migrant communities in the Illawarra. The organisation was formed with a strong advocacy and lobbying focus with the IECC hosting the first aged Care Forum for CALD communities in the Illawarra (Organisational Artefact).

This strong advocacy and lobbying focus was the key purpose for MCCI’s emergence as a peak community organisation17. This purpose emerged from its member organisations, which represented different ethnic communities. MCCI started with a simple structure: the committee and volunteers (Organisational Artefacts). However, with the flow of time, the organisation became complex in terms of both its structure and operations. Organisational documents highlight its programs, such as home and

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17 Peak organisations can exist at different levels, such as local and national. MCCI is a local organisation that has a membership base consisting of other community-based organisations and individuals. In addition to lobbying and advocating on behalf of these members and providing support to them, it offers services mainly in the areas of aged care, disability and youth.
community care, language-specific care, dementia day-care services, in-home and social support and respite services, and a multicultural youth development program, as the defining activities of the organisation that were added along the way. Narratives from organisational members and organisational artefacts collected during this study show that not only were people from CALD backgrounds playing prominent roles in both initiating and organising these activities but MCCI also had closer ties to the ethnic communities.

However, MCCI in its current form is not the same MCCI that was founded in June 1975, nor will it be the same organisation that it is now. As discussed previously, it changed its name in 2009. It also changed leadership and staff, moved offices, changed its logo, reviewed and modified strategic plans, and went through restructuring (Organisational Artefacts), to name only a few of the changes it has undergone. While these happenings in the becoming of MCCI are well-noted events, what remains less noted is the multitude of day-to-day happenings that have contributed to today’s MCCI. For example, upon entering the organisation’s office building, one of the organisational artefacts which acknowledge change is a series of photographs of the organisation’s former and current chairpersons. Except for one year, 1990-1991, MCCI’s management committee has been chaired by eight males for more than four decades. The nine chairpersons from non-Anglo-Celtic ethnic backgrounds have mostly been middle-aged and older. The photographs have been captioned with the following time periods: 1974-1975, 1975-1976, 1977-1980, 1980-1982, 1983-1990, 1990-1991, 1992-1998, 1998-2001, 2001-present. However, questions, such as what processes unfolded during each of these time periods, what triggered each change in the chairmanship, how each unfolded, what was happening when the organisation did not have a chairperson (see the above time periods) and what other organisational happenings were caused by those changes cannot be answered by the artefacts and the officially recorded information.
Similarly, despite the considerable changes in the organisation, especially in the recent years, its current chairperson has been in the job for nearly eighteen years. The stories of these happenings have been condensed into organisational artefacts.

The above set of photographs shows MCCI’s members painting the organisation’s office building some time in 1975. While the official records can highlight the major organisational events, achievements and junctures in the organisation’s history, they do not and cannot capture the myriad of organisational happenings, such as the ones shown in these photographs. All those happenings, both large-scale events and micro-happenings, which are linked to the multitude of other told and untold stories, offered a multitude of possibilities for various becomings. However, in light of the anticipated futures, those happenings were consciously influenced, distinctively coloured and streamlined to shape and reshape MCCI. Today’s MCCI is a cluster of those happenings. As its becoming unfolds, holding all the various characteristics from the past, it is influenced by the anticipated futures. As discussed earlier in this section, even in the past,
organisational happenings were influenced by possible futures – future in the past. Therefore, an appreciation of the influence of the future on the present becoming of MCCI is equally important.

4.2.2 Shaping and Being Shaped by the Future

Making sense of MCCI’s becoming in the present requires as much understanding of its anticipated futures as it needs an appreciation of its past. Its organisational processes, including its artefacts, have been influenced by its past – what happenings have contributed to its current existence. At the same time, these processes provide a constant reminder of what is expected for the organisation’s possible futures and, therefore, what needs to happen in the present to actualise the futures. A 2016 discussion paper prepared by the CEO for the review of the organisation’s strategic and business plans, identifies the following drivers of change:

Consumer directed care and person-centered approaches to service delivery; evidence-informed service delivery accountabilities to customers and funding bodies; imperative for strong market presence/brand identity and marketing platform that establishes a clear value proposition for services; ‘contestable’ grant space at government level and increasing competition for private and philanthropic resources; entry to market of bigger, for-profit players. The bigger are getting bigger. The smaller need to partner with trusted allies with shared values or go for niche products and services that the consumers want and will pay for […] (Organisational Artefact).

The discussion paper is intended to make a case for the review of MCCI’s strategic plan halfway through its four-year life cycle. The change drivers, which apparently herald a different future for the organisation, are presented as evidence for the case the CEO makes. However, though these change drivers may be part of MCCI’s present or futures, the discourses that bring them under the spotlight are not new in the policy space and the community sector. Market-driven, evidence-based, accountability- and transparency-oriented and planning-based practices have been known to the sector, under different labels, such as the neo-liberal and managerial discourses, for several decades now.
(Keever et al. 2008). For MCCI, ‘the past is relived in the present’ (Dawson & Sykes 2016, p. 180) and coexists with the future to shape the organisation’s practices in its ongoing present.

Aligned with these discourses, the notion of ‘consumer-directed care’, which is a defining characteristic of the reform in Australia’s aged care system (Australian Government 2018b) was brought to the fore in every conversation with the research participants. What the consumer-directed care will translate into for the existence of MCCI in the present is put into the following words by Khaled. He underlines the urgent nature of the organisational change so that they can respond to the apparently unavoidable future:

From next year onward, they will give you the money to go. You go anywhere you want. You go to MCCI, you want to go anywhere. It is your money […] Now for MCCI to survive and stay, well, we are hoping that those clients who we have been servicing for years and years that one day do get their package from the government that they come back to MCCI [sic] (Khaled, 22 June 2017).

The future scenario depicted in this quote, which was made nearly one year (mid-2017) after the major structural changes in MCCI, is not only about expressing the organisational members’ anticipation of a possible future. It demonstrates the day to day practice of leadership (Crevani et al. 2010; Simpson & Buchan 2018). It is also about actively shaping the future and giving sense of the happenings that constitute the organisation in the present – the dynamics of contrasting organisational strategy (Jarzabkowski 2005; Whittington 2003). Though consumer-directed care is presented as an external factor that has caused the structural changes in MCCI, the changes in the organisation and the streamlining of its activities for consumer-directed care also shape the future context for service delivery by community organisations. Further, the changes also have their tentacles in the past, which is constitutive of, not determining, the present (Crevani 2018). Khaled’s (22 June 2017) subsequent comment makes it clear, ‘We even
looked at something last year, like an investment property […] (emphasis added). Nearly one year after the above comments were made, MCCI’s newsletter, which was released at its general meeting in mid-2018, contained the following update:

As Chairperson, I am delighted to inform our members and stakeholders that MCCI has recently purchased a new building in the Wollongong CBD. This small office building has been acquired as part of our long-term sustainability strategy to make better use of our funds for future services and programs. We will continue to operate from our current head office in Corrimal Street but this new site will give us future options as our services expand (Organisational Artefact).

The sense of urgency for change, which was expressed in mid-2017 and for which steps had been taken one year before, translated into practical measures, such as the purchase of an investment property by mid-2018. The narrative suggests that MCCI considers its survival in the futures to be paramount although the need for survival at times may contradict its past and non-profit characteristic. Not only is the need for survival in its possible futures affecting the narrative and language within MCCI, but it is also said to justify the organisation’s involvement in for-profit practices. These practices and performances, in turn, help to anticipate and understand the futures, which will be influenced by the non-profit organisations’ involvement in business activities. Once the organisational members make sense of the survival and sustainability strategy or that sense is given to them, it starts reverberating throughout the organisation, even to the most recently hired staff. The following comment was made in response to the interview question on whether organisational members were clear about MCCI’s future direction:

Even though they are not for profit organisation, they still need to run as a business, still need to make money to be able to then provide more services to other people and to grow and to ensure that the staff can have their positions, it is all funded and it has to be justified (Jessica, 24 October 2017).

Jessica had a shared past of only two weeks with MCCI at the time of her interview. But her view of the anticipated future justified the present happenings and possible future happenings for her. In fact, her role, which was centred on developing business and
looking for possible partnerships with other organisations, was created based on MCCI’s anticipation of the future. Similarly, it was in the context of the anticipated future, or, as one Brandon (26 October 2016) put it, for ‘positioning [the organisation] for the future’, that media coverage was actively sought for the organisational happenings, such as the school cook-off (Event 6, 16 June 2017) and beach-safety events (Event 9, 3 October 2017). Anna responded to a research question on what had caused the recent changes in MCCI. From this organisational member’s point of view, the fear of not being recognised as an approved provider18 and, subsequently, missing out on funding for its various programs, has made MCCI reshape, and streamline its flow in a way that can presumably respond to future needs.

Well, I think it is probably, mainly, governed by the change in the industry and the way they are going to fund the industry. And everyone, or the organisations who still want to be in the industry need to be an approved provider. And to be an approved provider, there are certain conditions that they want those providers to have. So you, then, have to mould your organisation to fit what the funders deem to be a good organisation, or an appropriate structure, or appropriate skill set, or whatever (Anna, 11 October 2016, emphasis added).

Ivana (5 December 2016) hinted at the considerable effect of the future on the present, in these words, ‘if we don’t do something, we may not be here into the future’. The argument, therefore, is that the streamlining of the organisation for the future should happen in the present even though some of the expected futures may not occur.

In late 2016, MCCI’s strategic plan was reviewed and its vision, purpose, values and key result areas were revisited (Organisational Artefact). The review and revision took place months after the structural changes had already begun. Two themes, collaboration and business, heralding considerable change in the future direction of the

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18 The Department of Health defines an approved provider of aged care as ‘an organisation that has been approved to provide residential care, home and/or flexible care under the Act’ (Australian Government 2018c). The criteria for being an approved provider include relevant experience, understanding responsibilities, having systems in place to meet those responsibilities and having ‘sound financial management’.
organisation, were added to the strategic directions and values for MCCI (Organisational Artefact). These developments show that while they are influenced by the expected future, the present happenings, in turn, influence the future in the form of the future happenings. For example, while the anticipated future shapes the structural changes and instigates the review of the strategic and business plans, the goal-oriented review of the strategic directions and incorporating value statements into the present operations shape the future activities of the organisation and, subsequently, influence its becoming.

I think the main take-out for me, from working in MCCI in the first half of 2017 compared to earlier years, is that the organisation feels more like a business than a community organisation or NGO, if I could define it like that […] Where the organisation will be in five or 10 years’ time, I think, will depend a lot on whether MCCI decides to retain its community organisation identity – or go “all the way” down the business road (Paul, 28 July 2017).

Paul was commenting on the future direction of MCCI and his understanding of the change that the organisation was going through. The narrative underlines the multiple and competing interpretations and meaning-making in the process of organising and change (Maitlis & Soneneshein 2010). For this research participant, the organisation was already changing in terms of its non-profit characteristic. Although, as discussed previously, the organisation’s emphasis on pursuing ‘strengthened partnerships with government, business, [and] non-government organisations […]’ (Organisational Artefact) and its focus on financial sustainability under these themes may be the right moves for the organisation’s survival, from this research participant’s point of view, this strategy put the organisation on ‘the business road’. The difference in views, interpretations and meaning making underlines the need for organisational members to make conscious attempts to influence decision-making processes and the unfolding of happenings. They use power and politics to shape and influence the happenings (Buchanan & Badham 2008). Nonetheless, regardless of how the organisational
members view the change in the strategic direction, the present happenings contribute to the shaping of the future, as this relation also works in the reverse direction.

Given the effects of the past and future on MCCI’s becoming, the next question is how its becoming in the ongoing present unfolds. The following section looks into the becoming of MCCI in the present, which is simultaneously influenced by both the past and the future.

4.2.3 The Drumbeat Exercise: Unfolding in the Present

The happenings in the present are continuously shaped by the interplay between the past and future (Mead, cited in Simpson 2014). As the present becomes the past, its contributions to the organisation’s becoming remain with the organisation. Influenced by the futures, these remnants of the past make the present happenings. As they are streamlined, the organisation’s temporary, but distinctive, being is shaped. Below is an observation note from an organisational event. To capture some of the major happenings of the event, the note is relatively long.

Most of MCCI’s staff have gathered for a ‘Team Development Day’ (Organisational Artefact). Today, away from the organisation’s office and service recipients, organising is taking place in a function room of a hotel overlooking the harbour in a small coastal town of New South Wales. The organising is unfolding through, among others, a presentation, a workshop, games and a big lunch. With no apparent concern about the activities at the harbour, telephone calls from the clients, filling out timesheets, getting petty cash from the finance team, cooking in the kitchen of the hotel and the organising and preparation happening behind the scenes, staff spend the morning getting to know each other as some of them are meeting each other for the first time, listening to the CEO’s presentation on MCCI’s recent changes, playing a rock-paper-scissors game and reflecting on their best time, best job, best team and best manager. After the lunch break, they line up in the hallway and get ready to enter the function room to start the afternoon session. However, except for a couple of staff who are playing the lead role in today’s event, the rest are not allowed to enter the room as some preparation is still in progress inside. Once the preparation inside is completed, a drummer comes outside the room, with her drum hanging from her neck. With the rhythm of the drumbeats, she guides the staff to enter the room. Once inside, staff are asked to sit on the chairs which are arranged in two semi-circle rows. In front of each chair, there is a drum. While staff occupy their seats, the lead drummer, who is supported by a second drummer standing in front of the wall
facing the participants, keeps beating the drum, helps the staff to find an empty seat, and encourages them to hold the drum and start beating it to the rhythms of her movement. Within the first minute or two, staff start following her instructions. It does not take long before the drumbeat sounds like an orchestrated piece of music. Figure 4.1, which is a visual image of a few beats from the actual recording of this drumbeat exercise, shows the rhythm or pattern in the drumbeat exercise. As time passes on, the lead drummer distributes more simple musical instruments among the staff and by pointing at one or more staff at a time asks them to play their instruments. The exercise continues for more than an hour. The lead drummer concludes the session by comparing the drumbeats with teamwork in an organisation (Event 4, 24 March 2017).

**Figure 4.1: A distant view of part of the drumbeat exercise**

The above observation is from an organisational event – a staff development day – at a local hotel on 24 March 2017. More than thirty staff, both full-time and casual, were brought together for the day to know each other, hear some updates on MCCI’s change programs, share their experience and develop some organising skills, such as teamwork. While the morning session included the general manager’s/CEO’s presentation on why MCCI was changing and where it was, and some group exercises to
help staff share their experiences, the major activity in the afternoon session was the drumbeat exercise.

Drumbeat is an exercise used for team building and communication across a wide range of events and organisations. Through this exercise, MCCI intended to create an energetic environment, building confidence and group dynamics and reducing stress level among organisational members (Organisational Artefact). The exercise on the day was concluded by drawing an analogy between the drumbeat exercise and teamwork in an organisation. However, what makes the exercise relevant to this discussion is its similarity to the processual unfolding of organisational becoming. Not unlike the drumbeat exercise, MCCI is made up of micro-processes. Where in the drumbeat exercise individuals (themselves as processes) synchronise the sound of their instruments with those of others to create a rhythm or musical piece, in the context of MCCI, individuals and teams work on aged care, disability and youth programs, engaging and consulting with stakeholders and organising capacity-building programs to create MCCI (Organisational Artefact). Where the drumbeat exercise, beating the drum or playing other instruments has to be in sync with the movements or actions of the lead drummer, who at times does not beat the drum but only guides the participants through body movements, in the context of MCCI, vision, purpose, values and strategic directions – all outcomes of processes – guide the activities, albeit with a higher level of complexity than the drumbeat exercise. The managers make sure that the activities are in sync with these guiding principles/documents, producing the ongoing direction in the fluid world of happenings (Crevani 2018). The synchronising of notes and beats and playing of specific pieces of music resemble a practice or activity that is called **streamlining** in this thesis (discussed below). When the drumbeat stops, there is no musical piece or rhythmic sound although the instruments and individuals are still there. As the drumbeat continues,
the musical piece keeps forming, with effects on other processes, such as the listeners’ enjoyment and affection or lack thereof. At the same time, to create the musical piece, there is a need for musical instruments and individuals that are themselves processes. Moreover, in creating every beat, the previous beat and what move the conductor (here, the lead drummer) might make next are kept in mind. Both the preceding and following beats contribute to the becoming of every beat in the present. What has occurred in the past and what the future requires to occur make the happenings in the present, which, in turn, define MCCI. In Rescher’s (1996, p. 39) words, ‘it combines existence in the present with tentacles reaching into the past and the future’. As time passes, with no clear and discrete parts but flowing and merging dimensions (Dawson & Sykes 2016), MCCI’s becoming unfolds, giving the organisation a distinct but fluid form. It is distinct because as a cluster of happenings (Nayak & Chia 2011, p. 281) in a specific context it has its own characteristics, which make MCCI different from other organisations. At the same time, it is fluid because it takes on a different becoming with the flow of time. Although, in Bergsonian (Bergson 1929) terms, most of the differences are difference in kind, their cumulative effects result in differences of degree, showing quantitative differences. The organisation becomes bigger in terms of operations and staff, it changes offices or operates from multiple sites and so on.

The drumbeat exercise also demonstrates another characteristic of MCCI’s processual becoming. Not unlike the exercise, from a distance, MCCI’s becoming seems a smooth process. Similar to the still image of the drumbeat exercise (Figure 4.1), the patterns look smoother. However, a closer look or going into detail (Figure 4.2) shows the various happenings that increase the troughs and peaks of the organising pattern. It reveals the disruptions – ups and downs – in the patterns and makes the peaks and troughs more visible and obvious. The troughs and peaks demonstrate the difference and change
in the happenings and patterns of happenings. As the examples discussed so far (and more examples discussed in the subsequent sections and chapters) demonstrate, MCCI is a cluster of different happenings, analogous to the beats and pieces of the drumbeat.

**Figure 4.2: A closer view of part of the drumbeat exercise**

![Figure 4.2: A closer view of part of the drumbeat exercise](image)

Its becoming is defined by such happenings. Here, an important question draws attention: if the happenings, marked by differences, make MCCI, and if MCCI is different at every fraction of time by way of the productive contribution of these happenings, where is the stable entity that the traditional views in organisation studies see (Bittner 1965; Romanelli & Tushman 1994)? The empirical evidence collected during this study did not and could not identify any stable or equilibrium states between which MCCI should be oscillating, as argued by the equilibrium-based approaches to organisation studies (Gersick 1991; Gould 1989). Whilst the traditional views of organisations may see these happenings as the result of unusual time – the organisation is going through restructuring, for example – evidence shows that regardless of time it is these different happenings or changes that make MCCI. Further, as the following sections demonstrate, a closer look
at these happenings, especially at a micro level, shows that organisational happenings do not unfold in a chronological order or linear fashion. They are in a state of flux. Their mutual constitution provides the impetus for creating more happenings and, subsequently, maintaining the flow.

4.3 Impetus Arising from MCCI’s Intra-action and Relations: Push and Pull

A highlight of MCCI’s historical development prepared on its 40th anniversary begins as: ‘1975: [MCCI] was founded by members from Good Neighbours Council’. The document ends as: ‘2015: MCCI celebrates 40 years of service to CALD communities in the Illawarra’. These historical notes point to an underlying attribute of MCCI as a process, its intra-action and relation to other processes. The organisation’s dynamic and productive relations to other processes and its constant intra-action generate the needed impetus, here called push and pull, for its becoming. The distinction between organisational intra-action and its relations to other processes – how it interacts with other processes – is made in relation to the temporary boundaries that are drawn to define and distinguish MCCI. These boundaries are not fixed and permanent. In the actual unfolding, for instance, hosting a roundtable of the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA) with representatives of the emerging communities in the Illawarra (Event 14, 20 February 2018) demonstrates both MCCI’s relation to FECCA as the umbrella organisation – outwardly, and a mutually productive relationship – and the intra-action of the organisation by way of its members and activities. This part of the chapter briefly discusses how MCCI simultaneously intra-acts and relates to processes beyond its organising context and how these two characteristics generate the impetus for moving the organisation forward.
4.3.1 Push and Pull from MCCI’s Intra-action

MCCI consists of its members (individuals and organisations), management committee, chief executive officer, corporate services, care services, youth services and PICAC (Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care) NSW & ACT (Organisational Artefact). Its seventy-six members include fifty-four multicultural organisations, whereas its management committee or board has twelve volunteer members, half of whom are elected at every second annual general meeting for two-year term. Fifty-seven staff and a hundred volunteers achieved the target of providing three hundred and eighty years of combined service in the 2016-2017 reporting year (Organisational Artefact). The small team of corporate services primarily manages the organisation’s administration and human resources. As part of the recent changes, the team was renamed from operations and administration. Care services, which constitute the largest part of the organisation’s operations, provide and manage the in-home care services, social support groups, multicultural meals services, community visitors scheme, sector support and development, carers support and disability services. Youth services consist of three projects, additional assistance and support to high school students from non-English language backgrounds; support to socially isolated and disadvantaged young people; and a cooking program that connects young people and seniors. The organisation also has a partner team that works with the ‘aged care services, community organisations, government, health services and other peak agencies and organisation’ to provide them ‘information, advice, training, resources, consultations and advocacy’. This team is operationally semi-independent (Organisational Artefacts). Regardless of how these teams and projects are positioned in the organisation, they engage in constant organisational intra-action, which contributes to the becoming of MCCI, and generates the push and pull for further happenings.
A few months after the new CEO assumes office, he recommends that the management committee note that a review of the strategic and business plan will be completed by the annual general meeting in three months’ time. His recommendations form a discussion paper and an agenda item for the management committee’s monthly meeting. Following the management committee’s approval, the middle managers start consulting the staff, and a discussion on the subject begins among the staff members. After weeks of consultation and discussion, a revised version of MCCI’s ‘strategic plan, vision, purpose, values and performance statements’ is recommended for the management committee’s discussion and approval. The subject matter forms the agenda and discussion of another monthly meeting of the committee. After the management committee’s approval, the organisation’s 2017-2020 strategic plan is presented for the annual general meeting’s approval. The proposed plan forms part of the meeting agenda, the CEO’s presentation, and the annual report submitted to the annual general meeting. Once the annual general meeting approves the new strategic plan, it becomes part of the organisation’s guiding documents to change the states of affair and instigate new happenings in the future (Organisational Artefacts).

The structural changes, including the hiring of the new CEO, instigate some social processes (the CEO’s preliminary discussion with the senior staff, for example) that shape the management committee’s meeting agenda. The meeting agenda contributes to the happening of the meeting, the discussion that takes place in the meeting and the exercise of power by the committee. If the meeting did not take place, what has been proposed as an agenda (item) would remain a note on a piece of paper, without its consequences in the form of the monthly meeting of the management committee and its subsequent approval of the review, and so on. Similarly, in the absence of the agenda or the specific agenda item, the meeting could be a chat between friends and colleagues, without exercising the power of the management committee over the subsequent happenings and the review of the strategic plan. The discussion and approval of the committee contribute to the unfolding of the review and consultation among the staff and revision of the strategic plan. The review, consultation and revision contribute to the committee’s subsequent approval of the revised plan and its inclusion in the agenda for the annual general meeting. In Rescher’s (1996) words, some of these processes ‘produce actual products’, whereas others ‘transform states of affairs’ (p. 41). Substantial products,
such as the meeting agendas, copies of the revised documents and annual report, are the product of the intra-action described above. Similarly, a number of happenings in the context of MCCI would unfold differently if this process of revising the strategic and business plan did not happen. Further, these happenings contribute to the becoming of the CEO and members of the management committee. They help to justify their roles as the CEO and management committee, respectively, elevating them from individuals without these titles and powers.

The internal push and pull for MCCI are produced by numerous organisational processes. Every sub-process of the organisation, some of which were listed above, is produced as a result of the intra-action. Their intra-action also creates the push and/or pull for further happenings. Organisational projects and programs are one of the key sources of internal push and pull as they form the bulk of organisational happenings. In the following narrative, Rachel is highlighting the tension that is created by the implementation of two software systems by two teams within MCCI.

[…] because we are implementing this client management system. He is implementing his finance system, and for him, it is just all about his finance system. He doesn’t see the, you know, we have to focus on the client management system. This is what we are doing. That is what you are doing. And you need to sort that out. We can’t sort that out for you [laughter], but yeah, there is quite a bit of angst around the work that is coming, that he is delegating to people out of the finance (Rachel, 9 November 2017).

That tension pushes and pulls the happenings around the two organisational functions, finance and client management, in different directions while both of them contribute to the same organising process. Though the intensity of the internal push and pull depends on the robustness of organisational intra-action – what processes are involved in the intra-action and how intense the intra-action is – they exist at all times during organisational life. The push and pull give rise to the use of power and politics, with ‘multiple possibilities for organizational resistance’ (Mumby et al. 2017, p. 1161). However,
neither the push and pull nor resistance necessarily come in the form of tension between the teams, projects or programs. They can also arise as facilitative, constructive and necessary characteristics of organisational change and becoming (Balogun et al. 2011; Hardy & Thomas 2014).

Some of the documents need to be kept in hard copies for audit purposes. For example, the report the auditor prepares annually has to be prepared in paper form as it needs a number of signatures. Most of the documents in relation to staff’s timesheets can be done electronically, but the orange colour cover page needs some signatures on paper. It has to be in paper form. Therefore, the whole set is prepared and kept in paper form. If I decide to archive the documents electronically, it will take at least two years, that is, if archiving is my only work for two years (Anna, 29 November 2016).

During an observation session, pointing at the shelves and cabinets full of organisational documents, Anna expresses her dissatisfaction with the way organisational documents are archived. For her, while preparing the organisational documents in hard copies adds to her current workload, it creates the challenge of archiving them in the long term. However, as she suggests, because the authorised members of the management committee sign the cover pages of the timesheets manually, she cannot do anything but keep producing physical documents. The above comment highlights three points in relation to organisational intra-action and the resultant push and pull. First, internal push and pull are prevalent and necessary for organisational becoming. The push in this situation is not because of the recent changes in the organisation or a pull from the future. Preparing and archiving the documents in hard copies has been happening for years as an evidence of which Anna mentions other rooms and the garage, which, according to her, are full of organisational documents. Creation of these documents, which is a part of MCCI’s becoming, pushes the happenings in a specific direction. It requires the physical archiving of the organisation’s documents in the present, creating more paperwork and storage issues, and creates more future work for computerising them in the years to come. Second, the intra-action has produced
clusters of gradually hardened processes (Kristensen et al. 2014) in the form of an archive of hard copies of documents. These hardened processes equally have the potential for push and pull to create further happenings both in the present and in the future; the pull from the possible electronic archiving of the documents in the future, for instance. Third, the narrative indicates another source of internal push and pull, the management committee and/or senior management. The way they do their work affects the work of other organisational staff and teams, such as finance and administration. Therefore, the intra-action at the level of the management committee and senior management creates stronger push and pull within the organisation. It indicates that every organisational process engages in intra-action as these processes are the results of intra-action. However, not all have the same potential for creating the push and pull. The push and pull that come from a meeting between a manager and her subordinate is not generally the same as those created by a meeting between a manager and the CEO. The following comments, which were made in response to an interview question as to what could be improved with respect to a program, show the internal push and pull at a different level.

Look, realistically, it is just circumstances at the moment. There is so many different things going on and just being pulled in all directions at the time. We also lost our Meals on Wheels person. So the person that we employed to coordinate the social support groups didn’t work out. That was very difficult to manage. She wasn’t coping […], so what happened was that the Meals on Wheels person left […] So we have moved her over to the Meals on Wheels […] but this gave us the opportunity to put somebody else in the Social Support Group coordinating role which has made a big difference to the level of work. But I have had to sort of manage while that person was in that role […] I guess there is going to be some big decisions that has got to be made around those particular roles in the coming months. But yeah. I don’t know. Look, I don’t know what else could be done to streamline things or make it easier (Rachel, 9 November 2017).

Rachel highlights an important characteristic of organisational becoming, when one happening creates another, then, another and so on. It is this ability of happenings to create other happenings that gives meaning to organisational intra-action. However, as she points out, at times, streamlining these happenings becomes a challenge. Regardless
of how desirable these happenings are, they pull in different directions. This is because multiple people with diverse understandings, objectives, intentions and demands are involved in these happenings. Such differences give rise to the use of power, politics and resistance (Fleming & Spicer 2007; Hardy & Thomas 2014). The situation makes the streamlining, that is, the way Rachel desires to do things, harder for her. It necessitates further use of power and politics.

However, though organisational intra-actions are a big source of push and pull, which create more happenings and shape the organisational becoming, they are not the only source. MCCI interacts with and relates to multitude of other processes outside its organising context. The relation is another source of push and pull for organisational becoming. The following section presents some examples of this relatedness and the push and pull that come from it.

4.3.2 Push and Pull from MCCI’s Relations

The way MCCI relates to other processes, including organisations both within and outside the industry, varies. However, ultimately, it is the entirety of their fused and interdependent becoming that makes the entangledness meaningful (Hernes 2008, p. 85). Depending on time and the level of interdependence between processes, MCCI as a macro-process relates at times to other processes that are at different levels of complexity. At other times, it is the organisation’s sub-processes that relate in their own right. Part of one day, 17 January 2017, unfolded as follows for Rachel, whose activities were observed during the study.

At 10 am, when I enter the research site for observation, Rachel is not at her desk. Anna, who works out of the same office, informs me that Rachel is in a meeting. At 10:05 am, Rachel returns to her desk. After greetings, she reports that they have interviewed some candidates for two positions, one in MCCI’s head office and one in its sub-office. The two positions became vacant after one staff resigned and another one accepted redundancy. Upon inquiry, Rachel says that they ‘were good candidates’ and she hopes ‘they accept the offer’.
Rachel’s computer is not working today. She cannot access the documents on the organisation’s database. She, therefore, starts working manually on some documents. Rachel says that the front office has called the IT technician, who ‘comes from an external organisation’. MCCI ‘does not have an IT expert on the team’. It ‘has contract with another firm and staff call them for help whenever needed’.

At 10:47 am, the IT technician arrives to fix Rachel’s computer. At 11:12 am, the IT technician has apparently fixed the computer. In response to Rachel’s query on the issue with the computer, the technician makes a short comment, ‘It happens with the new software.’ He leaves the office. However, before Rachel starts working on her computer, another staff member enters her office. She starts talking to Rachel about the transportation of MCCI’s clients using the local council’s buses. From the conversation, it is clear that as part of the recent changes the organisation has contracted the council’s buses for transporting its aged care clients. It seems that the responsible organisational members are not familiar with the new bus routes and who they should pick up and drop off first. While the conversation continues, Rachel tries to log on to her computer. She makes a few attempts, but in vain. Anna goes out to see if the IT technician is still in the office building. She quickly returns and reports that the technician has left. At 11:35 am, the conversation between Rachel and the staff member ends and they both leave the room. Rachel returns to her desk at 11:42 am. After a few attempts, at 11:45 am she successfully logs on to her computer. However, before she completes her celebratory comments, the front office puts her through to a staff member from her team. After Rachel gives the caller a few instructions, the telephone conversation ends. According to Rachel, the staff member on the other side of the conversation has been issued a parking ticket for not displaying a permit on her car’s dashboard. The staff member is at the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) office to see if they can help with reviewing the fine […]

This observation note is used in full to illustrate well the flow, happenings, events, and their relations to other processes. The observation has focused on the unfolding of a sub-process of MCCI: managing the organisation’s aged care and disability program over a period of an hour and a half. Even within the program, the happenings captured in this observation make a small segment. Nonetheless, they highlight the typical interaction between MCCI and other processes and their entangled becoming. The interaction happens at different levels of organising: between the aged care and disability management of MCCI and the IT firm through the technician; between an aged care
worker and the local council through its rangers\(^\text{19}\), between the aged care worker and RMS, and between the aged care manager and the applicants for two vacant positions, to name a few. While the aged care manager interacts with the IT technician, the core of the interaction happens between the IT technician and the manager’s computer. The potential and actual ability of the computer to do something underlines its significance beyond its material existence. Further, while each of these relations contributes to the becoming of MCCI, as they do to a number of other organisations, they cause further interactions and intra-actions both within and outside the context of MCCI. For instance, when the council’s rangers issue a parking ticket, they interact, either at the time of issuing the ticket or later, with the State Revenue through the State Debt Recovery Office, and with RMS if the penalty incurs demerit points. Similarly, when the aged care worker attends an RMS office and presents a valid parking permit, RMS may need to interact with the council or its rangers, and/or the State Debt Recovery Office. The wave-like effects of these happenings continue and trigger further happenings, each contributing to multiple becomings or generation of processes. Each happening is the outcome of the productive relations and intra-actions of happenings, rather than their numerical sum. This empirical evidence goes contrary to the linear notion of organisational change (Burnes 1996; Graetz & Smith 2010), reinforcing the notion of relationality as entangled relationships in the process of becoming (Hernes 2008).

The entangledness of relations (Hernes 2008) affects the complexity of the happening in terms of both the number of processes involved and the contribution the relations make to the creation of other happenings. From a distance, a ‘multicultural intergenerational cook-off’ event, for example, may look very different to the event

\(^{19}\) Rangers are officers employed by local government areas in Australia to enforce the councils’ legislations.
described above. The cook-off event is different as the complexity and type of relations differ, the processes that are involved and created as a result of the intra-actions are different and the times of the events vary. However, a breakdown of the event into its smaller parts makes it possible to see the similarities. Those similarities come from the way the happenings intra-act, processes relate and new processes are created. It is important to note that the observation does not go to the micro level of the happenings. Such a dissection would involve discussing, among others, the physiological, cognitive, chemical and physical processes that have shaped the temporarily hardened processes, such as the individuals and other substances that are involved in the event. The observation broadly underlines the complexity of the event and the relationality and intra-action of processes, which generate more processes and contribute to the becoming of MCCI. The happenings captured by the following observation show a different level of complexity and interdependence between processes at various levels.

Teams of high school students, supported by their multicultural mentors, have practiced for the event over ‘at least three weeks’. Today, they are trying to prepare the traditional food of the multicultural community they represent. One of MCCI’s staff members continually takes pictures of the event, trying her best to take the best possible shots and keeping MCCI’s banner, especially prepared for the event, in the background of as many pictures as possible. Sometimes she stands on a small stool to capture the best moment of the event. At one point later in the event, her standing on the stool attracts the attention of the CEO and Chairperson, who make a comment from the Occupational Health and Safety point of view.

While the teams are busy preparing their traditional foods, at 10:20 am, a camera crew from a local television channel arrive. They start filming the event and interviewing participants. It becomes clear that except for one student, participants are interested in speaking with the reporter and being video-recorded. The reporter interviews MCCI’s facilitator and a few mentors of the cooking teams. The interviews take place in front of the banner with MCCI’s name and logo on it. One mentor who is interested in being interviewed but does not get the chance becomes unhappy. Others, including MCCI’s staff members, try to explain to her that not everyone has been interviewed. Having spent thirty minutes filming and interviewing people, the camera crew leave. Before they leave, they remind the participants that they can watch the report at six o’clock that evening.
Within a few hours of the event, pictures and a report of the event are posted on the local newspaper’s website and by the evening, the links of all the media coverage are shared through MCCI’s Facebook page.

The happenings on the day – not considering the weeks of preparation, securing funding, and so on – begin with the interaction of the sub-processes of MCCI, the high school and community organisations that are involved in mentoring the students. However, as time passes on, more processes, from MCCI, the school and beyond, get entangled with the event. The local television crew, newspaper photographer, MCCI’s management committee and senior management, and the high school’s management and staff start contributing to how the event is unfolding. While each of these processes can be broken down into sub-processes, it is significant that the interactions among these processes, rather than their mere presence, contribute to the becoming of, among others, MCCI, the high school and community organisations involved, the funding organisation, the local television network and local newspaper, which unfold at the local high school during a few hours on 16 June 2017.

The happenings outside MCCI’s organising context to which the organisational processes relate abound, and so do the possibilities of push and pull from those relations. From the state policies toward welfare, to the funding terms and conditions, the funding organisations, the requirements for service delivery, the competitors in the industry, the growing aged care industry, the social and demographic changes in the CALD communities, and the umbrella organisations of which MCCI is a member, all contribute to the necessary push and pull for moving MCCI forward. Regardless of how the push and pull are seen and what meaning is made of them, they surface everywhere. In his response to the interview question as to what drives the recent changes in MCCI’s context, Brandon points at some of the sources of the push and pull.

[…] there is a couple of drivers that are impacting on MCCI as a business. One is around changes to the service delivery environment that we operate in,
particularly across the aged care sector and the provisions of service on behalf of government. Non-profits are being asked to reshape their services particularly into a much more consumer-directed approach, so the model is changing from government providing block grants to organisations to putting greater choice in the hands of consumers of services that are funded by government [...] I think linked to that is the idea of increased levels of measurement of performance [which] is a big thing that is coming out of this work. So up until relatively recently most of the performance measurement of the work that we do has basically just been about numbers, how many clients did you see over how many occasions over how many hours of service. And our contract is set up for that [...] And I think that the non-profit sector, and also government, moving more towards wanting to understand the impact and outcome that is being achieved, rather than just the amount of work that you do. And so that is another challenge, and another change driver of what we do [...] (Brandon, 26 October 2016).

The research participant discusses two major drivers of the changes in MCCI’s context. One of them is the change in the government’s funding model, especially regarding aged care services. Until recently, the service providers in the aged care industry would compete with each other for block funding from the government. Such funding would be targeted at the provision of services, through organisations, such as MCCI, over a period of time, rather than at the individual service recipients. Once the funding was secured, it was chiefly at the discretion of the service provider how to spend and manage it over the specific period of time. However, under the new funding regime, which was launched in 2012 in a phased model, the funding goes to the individual service recipients. The recipients, who get the funding after a robust eligibility assessment, have control over the money. This funding model has added some levels of hardship for the service providers in receiving the money. First, the potential service recipients must go through an assessment process before they are recognised as eligible recipients of the service and the associated funding. Second, the service recipients have control over the use of the funding, and make their own choice of which organisation they want to go to for the type and level of service they need. Third, service providers must be accredited before they can receive the service recipients’ funds and provide services to them. To get
the accreditation, they have to meet certain criteria. Each of these changes and the happenings around them push and pull MCCI to specific directions and influence the way the overall organising process is streamlined and shaped.

However, the above characterisation of relationships, interactions and the push and pull that come from them would be too broad. The push and pull that provide the energy for further intra-action and, consequently, generate becoming, in the form of either happenings or hardened clusters of happenings (Kristensen et al. 2014), is not necessarily seen as undesirable or unnecessary. The push and pull also come from the relations that are viewed as desirable and necessary. The photograph (below) shows a banner used at one of MCCI’s events. While it exhibits the names of the organisations that have sponsored the event, the implicit recognition through the banner is the contribution each of these organisations makes to the becoming of MCCI. By way of their relations, each contributes to the push and pull that are seen as desirable. In introducing who MCCI is, for example, the organisation’s annual reports underline, ‘We partner with a wide range of community, business, government, and non-government organisations to provide a broad suite of diversity services […]’ The partnerships are realised in the form of interaction between MCCI and its partner organisations, which, in turn, not only enables the provision of the diverse services but also produces more partnerships.
Given that MCCI is a cluster of happenings (Nayak & Chia 2011, p. 281) unfolding through the agency of its intra-actions and relations to other processes, one of the important questions is how stabilised the organisation is and whether stabilised becoming (here, stabilised MCCI) is anything but an oxymoron. The discussion in the following section focuses on this question.

4.4 Attempts at Stabilising the Flow Remain Futile

Two questions – that is, if they could be separate questions – with inconclusive answers in this research are when MCCI began changing and when the more recent changes in the organisation began. The first question would get very simple answers from most of the research participants. ‘[I have been with MCCI] only for a year and a half’ (Grace, 30 November 2017), ‘this is my fifth week’ (Rachel, 9 September 2016), and ‘I started at the end of August last year. So it is just over a year’ (Lara, 17 October 2017)
are the typical reasons why most of the research participants could not pinpoint the start of MCCI changing. These justifications make sense as most of the research participants had joined the organisation a few years or months before this research began. They could not relate to the change that had preceded their contributions to the organisation. However, the answers from those who had been with MCCI for more than a decade, including those who had been with the organisation from day one, did not help to identify the exact beginning of the changes in MCCI’s context either. Speaking of the changes, the latter group of organisational members would highlight the difference in the robustness, desirability (or otherwise) and consequences of organisational change at different times. However, they could identify neither the beginning of the recent changes nor the start of change in MCCI in general. Salma (15 September 2016), for instance, makes this comment, ‘I have been here for 12 years. We went through changes, but this is the largest one’, adding that ‘there is a lot of changes’ happening in the organisation. In the next breath she says, ‘I don’t know what to say to them [clients]. I don’t tell them anything because I don’t know what the changes are. I just say at the moment we just carry on as normal.’ Helen (15 September 2016), who is part of the same conversation and has been with MCCI for more than a decade, agrees with Salma’s (15 September 2016) comments, adding ‘we don’t know what the changes are.’ When the question of the recent changes was put to more senior organisational members, Khaled (22 June 2017), for example, could not start his response from closer than June 1975. His description of the context and happenings makes it convincing to view the recent changes as being part of a series of changes that began with the establishment of MCCI. While both Khaled and Elias (22 June 2017) identify the relocation of MCCI’s head office in 2009 as ‘the biggest change’ for the organisation, they do not and cannot separate the changes that have unfolded between 1975 and the present. Describing the recent
restructuring of the organisation, Khaled (22 June 2017) makes a reference to the ‘change in the sector’, which according to him started in 2016. However, there is a consensus among the old and new members of MCCI that the changes in the sector and the policies that govern the sector had begun much earlier than 2016. These comments do not necessarily indicate contradiction in the research participants’ views on organisational change. Rather, they refute the arguments that organisations are stable entities (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008) and that organisational change happens when these entities move from one stable state or equilibrium to another in a linear fashion (Romanelli & Tushman 1994). These narratives are contrary to the stability-seeking thesis of organisational studies (Graetz & Smith 2010). They show that, for example, MCCI has never been static, stable or without change. It has been constituted by change, which is indivisible and creates a flow (Bergson 1946/2013, p. 21). It is for sensemaking purposes that the flow is bracketed and assigned temporary boundaries (Smerek 2011). Demonstrating the dynamicity of being (Seibt 2017), the data support the ongoing, dynamic, complex and chaotic notion of organisational change (Dawson 1994).

Change as a common theme resurfaced in every observation of MCCI’s processes. It was equally reflected in the organisational artefacts, from both the times of apparent calmness and the days of proclaimed instability. MCCI’s first newsletter, published in 2004, had the topic of change on its front page. The highlights of the change included an increase in the organisation’s services to CALD communities. The change in the form of an increase in MCCI’s services, however, was not happening for the first time in 2004, nor the last. It has been the defining characteristic of the organisation during its life. From securing its first one-thousand-dollar grant in 1984 (Khaled, 22 June 2017) to establishing Ethnic Meals on Wheels in 1989, starting the Multicultural Youth Development Project in 1994, establishing the Dementia Centre Based Day Care...
Services in 2001, expanding the ‘In-Home Support Services to include Dementia Respite and Monitoring Services for the CALD community’ in 2008 and establishing the Friendship Garden in 2014 (Organisational Artefacts), changes unfolded even at the times when, apparently, MCCI was not going through change. Yet, even a few points are enough to show how these happenings demonstrate change from a process perspective. First, the organisational events highlighted above were not the only happenings occurring at the time. Each was accompanied by numerous other simultaneous happenings, with many crossovers, shared unfolding, and multidirectional push and pull as a result of their intra-action and relations. Second, as discussed in the section on intra-action, each of these happenings is a cluster and manifold of other happenings that fuse into each other and become boundaryless reality (James 1890). It is here that the complex and chaotic characteristics of change (Dawson 1994) make sense. It resonates with the multivariable and multilinear (Dawson 2019) or multilayered (Tsoukas & Chia 2002) characteristic of organisational change. Further, no two hours, from the tens of hours of observation in this study, were found to be the same. Though from outside the organisation, many days seemed to be repeats of the previous ones or seemed to have many common features, a closer look — similar to the closer look at the musical notes in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 — would reveal that no two days, two parts of any day or two happenings were the same. Also, as argued by Feldman (2000), the so-called routines are not the same, not only because they involve humans but also because they involve time. Any change would extend to every process involved, including organisational members. At every moment of time, I and the organisational members were different, although not necessarily in our apparent forms or in quantity (Bergson 1929). A difference by way of happening and passage of time means change. Thus, these organisational events and happenings are, in fact, manifold of boundary-less change, which is a principal category of processes (Rescher 1996).
Third, MCCI did not and does not have existence outside such happenings. These happenings have made MCCI what it uniquely is today, and continue to maintain the difference as the organisation is temporally shaped and reshaped. The MCCI after each of these happenings is different to the one before the happening, not necessarily in its overall form (Bergson 1929). The first one-thousand-dollar grant has contributed to the ‘three and a half million dollars organisation’ it is today (Khaled, 22 June 2017). Similarly, the increase in its services and the unfolding of the services make MCCI, whose every fraction of time is different than before. Drawing on Heraclitus’ (Hernes 2008) quote, the same MCCI could not and cannot be found twice. Ivana’s comments, which were made in response to the question of whether things had settled down one-and-a-half years after the major structural changes in MCCI’s context had officially begun, show a paradoxical view of organisational change.

I know initially when [the CEO] started there was a lot of work to be done. But I think there is a lot more system in place now. Yea, things are definitely settling down. There is still work in progress, which is good. You know, change is happening, improvements and all that sort of stuff, which we knew would take time anyway. But in terms of the staff morale, it seems to be right (Ivana, 12 January 2018, emphasis added).

On the one hand, stability or absence of change is perceived as a desirable characteristic or a sign of healthy organisation, as suggested in the quote above. An organisation in which things have settled down, and change has been controlled or managed is perceived as a strong, and well-managed organisation, and its existence, therefore, is insured against the challenges of time, including changes in its external environment (Dawson 2003a). This perception is heavily influenced by Lewin’s model of organisational change (Burnes 2012), and comes from a substance perspective (Bickhard 2008, 2011). On the other hand, in line with reality, there is an unconscious appreciation of change as the fundamental building blocks of MCCI. The happening of change shows that work is in progress and improvements are being made, as Ivana points out. It is here that the term...
‘status quo’ is used in a pejorative sense. Status quo happens when change is hampered or denied as a reality. Ivana’s remarks below retrospectively reveal her concern about organisational status quo. According to her, if it was not for the changes in the sector, the changes within MCCI’s context would not have happened. She asserts that the organisation is already lagging behind other organisations. This situation, as she suggests, has been caused by status quo or lack of change.

It was primarily driven externally. Because if you, if I think about when I started in the organisation, you know, it is quite a few years behind from other organisations that I have worked at. And if it wasn’t for what was happening externally, I would say there would be very little change because not much has changed in quite a few years here. Although there might have been slightly more changes happening with, you know, maybe a little bit more funding coming in and things like that. Broadly, there wouldn’t have been anything of significance of change in the organisation (Ivana, 5 December 2016).

Although in what light change is seen and interpreted is a matter of sensemaking and sensegiving, its prevalence and omnipresence and its vitality for the organisation’s becoming are acknowledged widely, either implicitly or explicitly.

I am open to change and I am not fearful of change. I have been through so much change, as we all have, you know, in our personal lives, in our careers. So I embraced change. I like it, I love it (Grace, 30 November 2017).

Not only does Grace point at her ability to cope with and adapt to change, but she also explicitly acknowledges the prevalence of change everywhere. At an observation session, another organisational member summarised her experience of organisational change as, ‘I have volunteered with MCCI for 20 years. Everyone is a change’ (Event 7, 28 July 2017). She links organisational change to individuals, asserting that every individual brings change with themselves to the organisation.

Despite the prevalence and omnipresence of change that has been continuously making and remaking MCCI, the data suggest that attempts are made to stabilise the organisation, or, at least, it is hoped that the organisation would stabilise. The paradoxical desire and hope to stabilise MCCI could be seen in the organisational members’
frustration and disappointment caused by messy or chaotic change (Dawson 1994). For instance, during an observation session, Rachel (11, January 2017) expressed her disappointment in these words, ‘[t]hings seemed to have settled down before Christmas. But now everyone seems flat’. At the same observation session, Anna was clear in expressing her frustration with change in terms of hiring of staff and filling the vacant positions, which had been happening for more than six months, ‘I hope it stops some time soon’ (Anna, 11 January 2017). However, ten months later, stability in the organisation was still a hope for Rachel (9 November 2017), ‘So I am hoping everything will settle down now’. Yet, eighteen months after the corporate services manager’s position was filled, it became vacant again and was again filled. This was followed by a similar happening for the position of finance manager, which became vacant and was refilled almost one year after a new manager had been hired (Organisational Artefacts), and thus things never settled down, nor should they. Nonetheless, though organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving of these changes could vary, and, as a result, these changes might be termed as normal, unusual, expected, unexpected and so on, from a process perspective, these changes are the normal part of MCCI’s becoming. Staff members or their partners move interstate, they find better job opportunities elsewhere or expansion of the programs or projects necessitates new hiring, or all of these happen simultaneously, as the data have shown. With each hiring, scores of other happenings are triggered. In practice, for the survival of the organisation, things should never settle down in absolute terms. Any effort to stabilise the flow goes contrary to the intention and plan for keeping the organisation operational and alive. As the data have shown, such attempts have been futile. At the same time, organisational flow does not mean a free-floating process. The flow is influenced by organisational members. Conscious efforts are made to influence the flow, streamline it in accordance with the organisation’s vision, mission,
strategy and business plan and make and give sense of it by engaging in political activities (Dawson 2019). As a result of these streamlining efforts, temporary boundaries are drawn, processes are variously coloured (Bergson 1922) and MCCI becomes different from other organisations. In this context, stability could be viewed as a smooth flow of the organisational happenings, rather than as stopping the flow. The following section further discusses this aspect of organisational becoming.

4.5 Streamlining the Flow

The discussions in the previous sections showed that the stability-seeking thesis of organisational change (Graetz & Smith 2010) is far from the reality of organisational becoming. Organisations are fluid and flowing in continuous change (Dawson 2019). Stability in the sense of stopping change from unfolding or creating a situation that is characterised by the absence of change is doomed to failure unless the organising process is intended to be brought to an end. While this approach creates a challenge for the traditional conceptualisation of the role of a manager, it aligns the concept with its original use in English, Shakespeare’s use of ‘manager of mirth’ ‘in the context of theatrical management’ (Clegg et al. 2016, p. 21). This conception of the role of a manager could be seen in the drumbeat exercise that was discussed earlier in this chapter. While the team members were playing their musical instruments, the lead drummer was harmonising their behaviours, without bringing the exercise to a standstill unless when it was intended. She would incorporate the sounds of new instruments into what was already being played, shift the focus to one or more specific instruments at times, and create the required environment by actively influencing the individuals’ behaviours (Event 4, 24 March 2017). In organisational life, the managers’ behaviours at different levels resemble this exercise, albeit with some differences. In the drumbeat exercise, the creation of the rhythmic sound is pursued as an objective and goal in its own right. The
purpose is to strengthen the sense of teamwork. Further, the drumbeat is not following a complex script in the form of the organisation’s vision, values, strategic directions and business plan. Though the exercise has links to many other processes, the interconnectedness and relatedness are within a smaller network of relationships temporarily formed. As a result, there is a limited demand for accountability. Moreover, the lead drummer exercises her sole and exclusive power and, as a result, has the flexibility of determining both the flow and its outcome, without the exercise of power and politics from multiple other sources. What makes the role of the lead drummer similar to that of a manager is that both harmonise the behaviours and streamline the flow, rather than imposing stability.

Streamlining the flow resembles the work of a manager. However, one of the most significant characteristics of streamlining efforts is their political nature. Organisational flow does not happen in a vacuum. It relates both internally and externally. As the organisational happenings unfold, organisational members see them, interpret them and make sense of them differently. They are sceptical of some happenings and resist them, prefer others, prioritise yet others and so on. The differences lead to conscious attempts to influence how and when the happenings should unfold and how they should be streamlined to shape and reshape the organisation. These attempts involve the use of power and politics and involve resistance in various forms (Fleming & Spicer 2008; Sykes & Dawson forthcoming; Thomas & Hardy 2011). These characteristics of organisational becoming highlight the political nature of organisational becoming, as discussed variously (Buchanan & Badham 2008; Dawson 1994; Hall 1984; Pettigrew 1973). Though organisational members at different levels engage in influencing the organisational happenings and their streamlining, it is not a level playing field. Members at certain levels, such as the managers, play a dominant role in this
process. The imbalance in relation becomes a source of power (Fleming & Spicer 2007), intertwined with resistance from organisational members (Fleming & Spicer 2008). The following remark by Salma exhibits the dynamics of organisational politics:

> We need to be involved in the changes. Even though he [CEO] has said pretty soon they are going do consultation with us and talk to us. But I think at this stage it is a little bit too late. Because if I know now my job will be at risk, I could apply for [an]other position in the head office. But now if I lose my job and I didn’t apply […] (Salma, 15 September 2016).

Three months after the major structural changes, Salma draws attention to the need for the organisational members’ involvement in the changes. She hints at an imbalance in relationship in which some organisational members play a more dominant role in shaping and streamlining organisational happenings. Her open expression of dissatisfaction with the unfolding of organisational change also hints at what Mumby and colleagues (2017, p. 1169) call ‘individual infrapolitics’. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, three months later when Salma leaves MCCI, her micro-resistance and individual infrapolitics change to a more open form of politics. Using her relationship with MCCI’s clients, she tries to create issues for the organisation, as reported by Rachel.

> And there is one group that is still not happy about the changes that were made and that was with [Salma], who left. Her group on Tuesday continue to be a little bit negative and difficult at times. (Rachel, 9 November 2017).

Paul explains the changes and organisational members’ reaction to them from a different perspective.

> My own experience over more than 40 years in the workforce tells me that, when change happens, as it must, an organisation must bring its people along with it on the change process. Seldom does an organisation thrive for long if it implements change faster than its people can deal with. It is indeed better if the changes are “sold” within the organisation, before they are implemented, rather than afterwards (Paul, 28 July 2017).

In this comment, which was made as general advice on managing change within MCCI’s context one year after the major structural changes had begun, Paul’s key argument concerns readiness for change (Armenakis et al. 1993). Given his background, he stresses
the importance of communication in readiness for change. However, the most important message in his comment and the pertinent point in relation to streamlining organisational happenings is the indication of power-resistance relations regarding change (Thomas & Hardy 2011). He is channelling his dissatisfaction and disaffection, which, in Mumby and colleagues’ (2017) words, is a micro-political form of resistance. Though his resistance to change and his use of power is not intense and at a collective level, and may not change existing power-relations, the message he wants to give is clear. According to him, based on his forty years of experience, the way MCCI’s happenings are streamlined poses the risk, which is directly related to the organisation’s survival.

However, managing change in an organising context is about streamlining the flow, rather than achieving organisational stability as the default explanation (Bickhard 2008, 2011). The discussion so far shows that organisational happenings continually unfold. One happening triggers another happening, creating more opportunities and/or challenges for managing at different levels. For example, in February 2017, MCCI’s finance manager, who was then called ‘finance administrator’ and had held the position for less than two years, found another job and left MCCI. By March 2017, the new finance manager was hired. With the new hiring, while the finance administrator was promoted to finance manager and the incumbent formally became part of the ‘management team’, the new finance manager’s expectations from the program teams and his subsequent delegation of work to the program teams had created ‘all sorts of grief’ and ‘a little bit of angst’ for the latter (Rachel, 9 November 2017). As Rachel points out, the situation had led to some ‘blunt discussions’ between the teams. In March 2018, the new finance manager left MCCI. While there is no suggestion that the grief, angst or blunt discussions had directly resulted in the resignation of the finance manager, the way the happenings unfolded during his incumbency had likely effects on this development,
as was the case for the previous incumbent (Anna, 15 February 2017). Similarly, in 2017, MCCI hired someone to coordinate the Social Support Groups, but the recruitment made the relevant manager’s ‘job harder’ as more issues were coming from the new recruit’s office, which made it ‘quite time consuming’ and ‘difficult at times’ for the manager to deal with (Rachel, 9 November 2017). But at around the same time, the staff member who was managing the Meals on Wheels program, a relatively easier-to-manage program, left MCCI. It created an opportunity for the organisation to move the social support group coordinator to the Meals on Wheels program and assign another staff member to replace her. These recruitments and replacements are not the only happenings that make MCCI. Its becoming unfolds at multiple levels at the same time. As Rachel notes, there are often ‘so many things going on’ and organisational members are ‘being pulled in all directions’. This study shows that while the tempo of happenings varies from time to time, their unfolding never stops; nor should they. In practice, managers at different levels spend most of their time smoothing out the challenges, influencing and shaping the unfolding of happenings, and streamlining the flow of happenings as they contribute to the becoming of the organisation. Imposing stability is neither pursued nor practical. This conceptualisation of change and the role of a manager will help “to understand ‘change’ and ‘novelty’ in their own terms, rather treating them as special cases of ‘stability’ and routine” (Tsoukas 2005, p. 389). It will, thus, shift the focus from seeking stability to embracing creativity and novelty in an organisation.

Influencing and streamlining the flow of the present happenings, organisational members also influence the unfolding of subsequent happenings, with both short-term and long-term effects. While the goal-directed influencing and streamlining efforts happen at every organisational level, the power asymmetry gives the managers greater influence over the streamlining of happenings (Jarzabkowski 2005). At the same time,
leadership is a dispersed activity, which is not necessarily practiced by the formally designated leaders only (Crevani et al. 2010). The review of MCCI’s strategy influenced its business plan, which, subsequently, shaped the design and implementation of its programs, and the selection and recruitment of staff, including the creation of positions, such as the Business Development Officer. It led to the organisation’s investment in the private sector (Khaled, 22 June 2017) and refocusing on the role of the management committee in the governance of the organisation.

Many non-profit agencies are moving towards different governance structures, away from the old hockey club model, where you have management committees made up of well-meaning volunteers who may have some skills but essentially are there as volunteers to management committees and boards, that are developing and contributing a set of skills to the organisation whether that is in finance or business development or customer service or human resources or marketing. The inherent challenge with that, at the community organisation level, is that I don’t think you want a board or a management committee that is full of accountants. For me, it is really an interesting tension between ensuring that you have got the right skills and capabilities on a board to be thinking about the strategic direction of an organisation and the governance responsibilities and risks associated with what you do whilst also maintaining the true kind of values and heart and soul of why you are there […] So when we go looking for a new board member, we are not just looking at what skill gap there is, we’re also looking at what values they would bring to the organisation (Brandon, 26 October 2016).

Resonating with Austin’s (1962) argument, what Brandon discusses here is not mere utterance; it is performance. In mid-2018, it was reported that two members of ‘MCCI Board’, including one of the organisation’s founders, had resigned. They were replaced by two new members who had professional experiences in areas, such as management and business (Organisational Artefact). As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the general manager’s title changed to chief executive officer, and the management committee began to be referred to as the board. While these examples demonstrate that each happening was influential on the subsequent happening(s), they are only broad descriptions of the happenings. In practice, there were many layers of micro happenings in each happening. For example, as discussed in this chapter, the
review of the strategic plan was a multi-level and manifold of micro happenings, such as setting the agenda and selling the idea of the review halfway through the four-year life cycle of the plan. Whilst the micro happenings need to be streamlined to make and remake MCCI, each influences the unfolding of the subsequent happenings.

Given the discussion so far, a few points need to be reiterated here. First, selling an idea of change and building consensus on change are political processes (Dawson 1994). They involve the use of power and resistance (Hardy & Thomas 2014). Streamlining the flow would involve acknowledging the political characteristics of these processes and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes. Second, as organisational change directly affects individuals’ becoming, besides the organisational becoming, streamlining the flow should also take into consideration the tempo of change, which may differ for different individuals and collectives. Third, as pointed out in chapter two and hinted at in this chapter, organisational members are part of organisational becoming, rather than bystanders (Purser & Petranker 2005). Where Heidegger (1962) points out this relation by saying that people find themselves thrown into ongoing situations, Mintzberg (1973) argues that people are always in the middle of something. As organisational becoming unfolds in the form of organisational happenings, organisational members need to make and give sense of the happenings. They need to contribute to the creation of happenings, influence their unfolding and streamline the overall flow. Unless meaning is made of the happenings, neither can the flow be ordered nor can a meaningful contribution to the happenings be made. It is for this reason that organisational members continually bracket the happenings, make sense of them (Weick 1979) and give sense of them (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991). Whilst this chapter showed how organisational happenings unfold, and how they make organisational flux and ongoing change, the next question is how organisational members’ sensemaking and
sensegiving occur in relation to and as an indispensable part of those happenings. If the happenings are to be ordered to form a distinct cluster, such as MCCI, how do the sensemaking and sensegiving parts work? Drawing on Hernes’ (2008) argument, flow cannot be studied without studying the process of ordering the flow. The two subsequent chapters focus on sensemaking and sensegiving as part of studying the process of ordering the flow.

4.6 Conclusion

Analysis of the data demonstrates that MCCI’s becoming is a temporal-relational process. As it is made and remade, it is influenced by its past and anticipated futures. The context and processes that triggered its establishment in 1975 and influenced its years of becoming will continue to define and redefine its being and influence its becoming in the years to come. Further, the possible futures either reinforce what the present inherits from the past or remain in tension with it. In either case, the futures affect the organisation’s becoming in the present. Consumer-directed care and the subsequent need for business-oriented operations in the future pull and push the organisation in different directions and pose challenges for defining who or what MCCI is. At the same time, MCCI actively engages in making its future, or defining the elements of its future existence. In so doing, it interacts with and relates to other processes within the broader context, either as a unified macro-process or as sub-processes. As this interaction and relationality contribute to the organisation’s becoming, it generates more processes, in the form of either happenings or temporarily hardened processes. Simultaneously, MCCI intra-acts, which creates the internal generative push and pull. As a result, more processes are generated both within and outside the context of MCCI.

The ongoing intra-action creates a flow of happenings, no two of which are the same – that is, they create continuous change. While the continuous change or flow is
indivisible, for sensemaking and sensegiving purposes the flow is bracketed and bounded and the focus is shifted to the states or outcomes. However, this bracketing is not the same as imposing stability on the flow since stability as the absence of change is only possible and meaningful when the organisation’s becoming is brought to an end. For this reason, attempts to stabilise MCCI and keep it functional and alive at the same time remain futile. Attempts at stabilisation trigger more happenings or potential for happenings, and, as a result, the flow continues. In this context, organisational members, especially managers, should shift their focus to streamlining the flow rather than stabilising it.

However, the flow in the context of MCCI (as is the case in any organising context) involves humans. They develop different understandings of the happenings and the overall flow and have varying interests, intensions, and priorities. These differences lead to the use of power, the exercise of politics and shows of resistance.
Chapter 5: Findings: Organisational Sensemaking and Sensegiving

Chapter Structure

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5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, it was pointed out that as organisational becoming unfolds, organisational members as part of that becoming bracket the flow of happenings to make and give sense of it. This process is necessary for their participation in organisational becoming and for influencing and streamlining that becoming. It means that sensemaking and sensegiving are an inseparable sub-process of organisational becoming. But how do sensemaking and sensegiving happen in the context of organisational becoming? Chapters five and six focus on this question. This chapter covers some processual characteristics of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving that have come to the fore in this research. Though the discussion in this chapter does not directly address the research questions, it is important for underlining the link between the first and second research questions, between organisational becoming and sensemaking and sensegiving. The discussion in this chapter will also help to draw a conclusion on the ongoingness and temporal unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving that are discussed in chapter six.

The discussion in this chapter begins with reiterating the link between organisational sensemaking, sensegiving and becoming. It is shown that as part of their involvement in organisational becoming, organisational members need to make and give sense of the constitutive organisational happenings. Their participation in those happenings, including their role in influencing and streamlining the flow, to a large extent, depends on how their sensemaking and sensegiving unfold. The discussion, then, shows that sensemaking and sensegiving mutually constitute each other. However, despite such a relation, their unfolding may differ temporally and structurally. Due to this possible difference, whilst organisational members’ sensegiving of a happening aids in understanding of how they make sense of that happening, their sensegiving does not show the full picture. For a better understanding of organisational members’
sensemaking and sensegiving, an understanding of the relational context in which their sensemaking and sensegiving occur and the political dynamics of organisational becoming is important. This point leads to the discussion on the political characteristics and power-resistance dynamics of sensemaking and sensegiving. The discussion shows that organisational sensemaking and sensegiving involve politics, and the use of power and resistance. The last section of the chapter focuses on the manifestation of sensemaking and sensegiving beyond the use of language. The discussion underlines the argument that the occurrence of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving is not limited to the use of language. The next section examines the link between organisational sensemaking, sensegiving and becoming.

5.2 Sensemaking and Sensegiving Are Inseparable Parts of Organisational Becoming

Sensemaking and sensegiving do not happen for their own sake. They are an indispensable sub-process of organisational becoming. As part of organisational becoming, organisational members continually engage in making sense of organisational processes to determine their involvement in and relations to those processes. The link between organisational becoming and sensemaking and sensegiving can be seen at different levels of organisational becoming. Khaled, for example, refers to the major structural changes that MCCI implemented following the consultant’s assessment of the situation in early 2016.

We employed that lady as a consultant to look at what was happening in the sector, and what changes had happened in the sector, and what was needed for MCCI to actually accommodate all those changes in the sector. And she worked with our staff for about 2-3 weeks […]. And, then, she presented to the board a new structure [...]. Before that new structure, we had a general manager, and we had a couple of team leaders. But, then, all staff were more or less reporting to one person, which is the general manager. So, in the new structure, we came up with a middle management […]. So we employed managers on each of those services like a youth manager, like an admin manager, or we call it a corporate
services manager, an aged care manager and we’ve got the PICAC manager. So, this middle management structure is to support the general manager, which is now CEO. And obviously we did all of this because of the changes that originally came from the aged care sector, back like two and a half and three years ago (Khaled, 7 June 2018).

There are two important points in this narrative. First, the addition of a middle management tier, as discussed throughout this thesis, was neither the beginning of such changes nor the end. Personnel changes, varying in pace and complexity, remained a familiar happening for MCCI during the research. Creating new positions, moving staff internally, staff leaving the organisation and hiring new staff continued well after the initial structural changes that began in the first half of 2016. Second, according to the available data, most of the changes that followed the initial structural changes were not part of the original plan; nor were they a matter of concern for the organisation in early 2016. The primary interest of MCCI’s leadership and senior management was to make sense of what was happening in the sector and what it required the organisation to do internally. However, as it will be shown later, their sensemaking could not have been innocent and one-sided information gathering, focusing on and analysing what was happening both within and outside the organising context. These senior organisational members were actively engaging in giving meaning to the happenings, shaping perceptions, bringing some information to the fore and taking other information to the background and so on. As they were making sense of the initial structural changes after the consultant’s recommendations, their sensemaking and sensegiving triggered more changes and, as a result, the changes were extended beyond the addition of a middle management to the organisation’s hierarchy. During this process, their sensemaking and sensegiving were playing an indispensable role. As the narratives show, the leadership and senior management’s sensemaking and sensegiving were unfolding through their internal consultation, discussion with different teams and individuals and engaging
people from outside the organisation. These happenings were not occurring parallel to the organisation’s becoming, but as necessary parts of it. Further, as the following narrative shows, the happenings, such as consultation with staff, were not limited to the pre-structural change period.

We are not doing it because it is fun or because we particularly want to cause anxiety or stress amongst our staff. We invited the staff team to tell us what they thought we did well and also what they thought could be done differently, and what they thought could be improved. We opened the conversation that way and pulled all that work together, reflected it back to the team to say guys this is what you told us as part of that process. While that was occurring, we had our manager of care services go and visit all of the staff that were affected to actually see the services on the ground and talk to them on a one-on-one level and at the group level so that we had a really good understanding of what was happening day in and day out in the services [...] We’ve taken the time to understand it, so it is just, we slowed that process down. It has taken us about three months to do that work (Brandon, 26 October 2016).

The consultation process mentioned by Brandon happened after the middle management tier had been added to the organisational hierarchy and staff had been hired for those positions. However, it was not the end of the organisational changes. The new management team needed to make sense of what was happening in the organisation and give sense of the new recruitments, what the future would look like for the organisation and how the happenings needed to unfold in light of that future. What is important to note here is that it was these recruitments, delivering services, and instigating further changes, among other activities, that constituted MCCI. Further, organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving, at different levels, could not be separated from these happenings and the overall becoming of the organisation. Making and giving sense of the happenings was a necessary part of those happenings. Moreover, for organisational members to participate in organisational becoming, to show or not show resistance to happenings and to determine the level of power and politics that they needed to exercise during their participation, they needed to make and give sense of the happenings.
The important role of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving in organisational becoming is not limited to the decisions made and the happenings that unfold at the leadership and senior management levels. This relation can be traced at every level of organisational becoming. As shown elsewhere in this thesis, organisational members, for instance, resist the instructions on communicating organisational change to their clients. They argue that because they ‘don’t understand what the changes are’ (Salma, 15 September 2016), they are not telling their clients anything about the changes. However, their resistance may also be because of the sense they make of the structural changes. They are concerned that their jobs may be affected by the changes, and argue that they have not been consulted. They, therefore, engage in micro-level politics (Balogun et al. 2011) and show a ‘public form of micro-resistance’ (Mumby et al. 2017, p. 1169). Their response to the structural changes is based on their sensemaking, which instigates their sensegiving in the form of micro-level politics and micro-resistance. What is important to note here is that sensemaking and sensegiving are the indispensable part of the organisational members’ practices and performances, including their use of power and politics and demonstration of resistance, which, in turn, contribute to MCCI’s becoming.

Certainly, my interactions with staff suggest some are unsettled by [a] “harder” line being taken on sticking to hours-worked rules. Staff members seem to be more strictly collecting money from clients […] (Paul, 28 July 2017).

Paul’s comment also shows that organisational members’ practices and performances are influenced by their sensemaking of organisational happenings. For example, MCCI’s emphasis on efficiency, as part of the recent change in strategy, and staff’s understanding of the change have caused them to be stricter in collecting money from their clients. At the same time, they have been unsettled by the strict control of timesheets and pay-per-hour rule. Further, the comment shows that not only do organisational members engage
in making and giving sense of the instructions and behaviours of their managers or the happenings that directly affect their work, but they also engage in making and giving sense of each other’s performances without necessarily being directly affected by them. For example, whilst Paul’s work was not directly affected by the strict collection of money from the clients, he was consciously trying to understand what was happening in relation to money collection and timesheets. His later comment that MCCI’s move toward business was a significant change from its non-profit tradition was influenced by his sensemaking of the situation.

Organisational members and their sensemaking and sensegiving are not separate from organisational becoming. As organisational becoming unfolds, organisational members bracket the constitutive happenings (Weick 1979), attribute meaning to them (Smerek 2011) and make decisions and act on and in relation to their next step in organisational becoming. As it will be shown later, these happenings unfold at multiple levels and in an entangled form. Whilst the structural changes were unfolding, organisational members were making and giving sense of them. They were, subsequently, making conscious attempts to encourage or instigate more happenings, and to influence the streamlining of those happenings. Numerous other changes that had not been anticipated as part of the major structural changes in early 2016 unfolded throughout the year. As the following chapter demonstrates, organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving continually unfold as an unavoidable part of this process. It is because of this relation between organisational becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving that this study investigates sensemaking and sensegiving as part of organisational becoming. With that link in the background of this study, the next section discusses the mutually constitutive relation between sensemaking and sensegiving.
5.3 Sensemaking and Sensegiving Constitute Each Other

‘Moving towards consumer directed care’ is a key aspect of the reforms in Australia’s aged care system, launched in 2012 to be implemented in three phases over ten years (Australian Government 2018b). However, it took MCCI nearly four years to start explicitly adapting to the reforms. In the first half of 2016, MCCI began restructuring and refocusing its activities to explicitly respond to the requirements of consumer directed care. The reasons for this delay could be explored in a number of areas, including the approach itself being widely contested and disputed in the sector and, the political dynamics within the organisation. Given MCCI’s history and the shift that was required as a result of the reforms, it took time for the organisation to make sense of the reforms, translate them to a dominant narrative and initiate the required changes. Nonetheless, this process could not be straightforward. Whilst MCCI was going through structural changes and giving sense of the changes, many organisational members were still trying to make sense of the reforms, or aspects of the reforms. Ivana (14 February 2017), for example, criticises the reforms in the aged care system for lack of ‘culturally appropriate strategies and tools’ in a ‘culturally diverse market segment’. She points out that the computer and telephone are not the right tools for accessing My Aged Care eligibility, especially for members of CALD communities. She stresses the need for more options, including face-to-face interaction. Nonetheless, a dominant narrative around consumer directed care is taking shape. This narrative is at the core of sensegiving attempts at various levels within MCCI. From the organisation-wide review of the operations by an external consultant, to internal review of the Social Support Groups, to the CEO and managers’ communication to the staff, to the Chairperson and CEO’s annual report to the members (Organisational Artefacts), and to responding to the researcher’s questions about organisational change, all involve an attempt to highlight
the link between the changes within MCCI’s context and the introduction of consumer directed care in the aged care system. In conversations on the organisational changes, there seems to be a purpose and conscious effort to construct a meaning of the organisational happenings in the context of consumer directed care. Elements of the reforms begin coming to the fore. Terms, such as business, consumer, customer and marketing, which as part of the marketisation of non-profit organisations have been known to the sector since 1990s (Maier et al. 2016), become part of the organisation’s lexicon. Organisational members also begin to translate the terms into organisational happenings (Organisational Artefacts). MCCI creates roles, such as the Marketing and Communications Officer, and Business Development Officer, which further influences the sensemaking and sensegiving processes in the organising context. From late 2017, the title of the general manager was formally changed to the chief executive officer.

Developing a dominant narrative around consumer-directed care and what it means for MCCI could not be a straightforward process. Many members of the organisation have been with MCCI for many years. They have experienced a different past and have different understandings of the future. Some of them explicitly acknowledge the tension between the organisation’s past and its possible future. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, some organisational members, for instance, do believe that the orientation of organisational activities raises the question of what or who MCCI is and what it will become in the future. They see the present approach as a shift from the organisation’s history and its nonprofit characteristics. Though the voices showing this concern are in the minority as there was limited participation in the study from the lower ranks of MCCI, their concerns do underline the challenge of developing a dominant narrative and sensegiving in relation to what MCCI has been and what it will become as a result of these changes. Shaping a dominant narrative involves power,
politics and resistance (Thomas & Hardy 2011). Nevertheless, once the dominant narrative and sensegiving take shape, the rest follow; specifically, the changes in MCCI’s context are seen and described as necessary measures for capturing consumer directed care and positioning the organisation in the new context (Jessica, 24 October 2017). MCCI’s relatively more visible presence through social media, and the organisation’s overt efforts to get media coverage for its events are parts of organisational sensegiving efforts that have been triggered by organisational sensemaking of the changes in the sector. At the same time, the organisation’s past and its relations to CALD communities are used to position the organisation for the future. Collective efforts are made to bring these links to the fore and sell them to its stakeholders as the organisation’s strengths. For instance, recently, MCCI began putting organisational members’ pictures and a brief introduction, with clear references to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, on the organisation’s Facebook page. As a marketing strategy, this representation activity draws on MCCI’s history as an organisation that has been closely connected to the communities it serves. It offers a potential for attracting more consumers from the CALD communities for the new business-oriented operations. Using MCCI’s traditionally close links to the CALD communities as one of its strengths is significant in light of the disapproving comments from some of the organisation’s senior members about its past.

Organisational sensegiving is not a numerical sum of the individual members’ sensegiving, but a productive aggregate of them. Individuals and collectives’ sensemaking and sensegiving are purposefully influenced within the dynamics of power, resistance and politics, at both the micro- and macro-levels (Balogun et al. 2011; Fleming & Spicer 2008). Though the dominant sensegiving within the organising context provides a model or guideline for individuals and collectives’ sensemaking and sensegiving, the earlier may not necessarily reflect the latter or vice versa. There are
occasions when, for example, individuals’ sensemaking and sensegiving differ from the
dominant organisational sensegiving and sensemaking.

I personally don’t use the language as much. I prefer to use people. But that is
difficult when you do marketing. Whether you use people or clients because we
also want to make sure that we get the message across that we are delivering
services (Ingrid, 24 October 2017).

Ingrid prefers using the term ‘people’, rather than ‘customers’ and ‘clients’, but the
change in the organisation’s marketing strategy has a different focus, getting the message
across in the language that can reflect the shift to consumer directed care. Further, though
the dominant sensegiving reinforces sensemaking both at the individual and collective
levels, a subtle form of resistance, which Ybema and Horvers (2017) term as backstage
resistance, is evident in the above and following narratives. Using micro-level political
strategies, these organisational members show their subtle resistance to elements of
organisational change through ‘carefully staged compliant behaviour[s]’ (p. 1233).

I personally, sometimes I do feel a bit bad because not that I had anything to do
with it personally, but I feel that I didn’t speak up enough. But I did obviously. I
didn’t get my own way. I didn’t speak up enough to change that, the direction of
this particular staffing situation. I didn’t think at the time I had a voice to do that
because the decision had been made prior to [the CEO] and I (Grace, 30
November 2017).

Grace’s sensemaking of the structural changes in MCCI differs from the dominant
organisational narrative, which has driven the changes. Contrary to that narrative, she
does not see the ‘[…] change in the job of an experienced employee, reducing her hours,
reducing her salary […]’ (Grace, 30 November 2017) as necessary and helpful for the
organisation’s future. She argues that when staff feel that the changes affect clients
adversely, it affects them. She, therefore, identifies the change in staffing as one of the
areas that could have been done differently. As time passes, organisational members may
be able to reconcile such differences. However, a failure to do so can negatively affect
other processes in which the individuals are involved. As Mumby and colleagues (2017)
point out, micro-level politics and resistance can turn to more public forms of resistance, at both the individual and collective levels. It may lead to distrust in relation to the change, the withdrawal of support for the change, active resistance to the change and ultimately departure from the organisation. For example, during the study, I came across instances in which organisational members had begun looking for another job within a few months after joining MCCI or after having spent a relatively short period of time with the organisation. They mentioned higher position, better pay, and increased job security as the reasons for joining other organisations. These factors could come to the fore as a result of discrepancies between organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving and the dominant organisational narrative. On the review of organisational positions in MCCI, Grace commented, ‘I don’t think it was based on fact. It was based on people’s perception of what they wanted, the new MCCI’ (Grace, 30 November 2017). Such a distrust of organisational change has potential impacts on the unfolding of change and whether organisational members own it.

In summary, the way organisational members relate to organisational happenings and link those happenings to other processes in a broader context varies. Further, with multiple and varied identities (Weick 1995), their bracketing of organisational happenings, their focus on cues for sensemaking (Weick 1979) and their interpretations of those cues differ. As a result, their sensemaking of organisational happenings also varies. In the organising context, some people’s sensemaking dominates, and others’ is given less weight. For instance, the dominant narratives, which are supported and promoted by the organisation’s leadership and management, include that MCCI needs to survive in the newly created competitive environment, the review and restructuring and a business-oriented mode of operations provide the best chance of survival. In contrast, a minority voice, which, as pointed out earlier, also exists at the middle management
level, sees the situation differently. For them, the review and restructuring are not based on fact, and the mix of for-profit and nonprofit activities raises important questions for MCCI’s being and becoming. Such differences make the ground for sensegiving, which, in turn, requires further sensemaking. This mutually constitutive relationship between sensemaking and sensegiving resonates with the view that sensegiving is a construct of sensemaking (Hill & Levenhagen 1995; Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Rouleau 2005; Sonenshein 2010), rather than a separate process (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). It indicates that studying sensemaking without sensegiving, or vice versa, provides a limited explanation of this process. To paraphrase Rouleau’s (2005, p. 1415) words, studying one without the other would be looking at one side of the coin. The active authoring of events (Maitlis & Christianson 2014) and enactment of sensible environment in sensemaking process (Weick 1995) are inextricably linked to sensegiving. This mutually constitutive relation plays a critical role in shaping and reshaping organisational becoming. However, despite this relation between sensemaking and sensegiving, they may unfold differently. The following section discusses this characteristic of sensemaking and sensegiving.

5.4 Sensemaking and Sensegiving May Unfold Differently

Sensegiving is a construct of sensemaking (Rouleau 2005), and vice versa. However, sensegiving as an intentional and purposeful attempt to influence others’ sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991) may unfold differently to sensemaking. As discussed in the preceding section, due to multiple reasons, sensemaking may unfold differently for different people, both individuals and collectives. For example, the choice of cues and information to be brought to the foreground and/or kept in the background, influencing their temporal aspect, whose sensemaking should be influenced, and what tools or methods should be used for influencing others’ sensemaking are strategic and
goal-oriented choices. These choices are influenced by numerous factors in that temporal-relational context. For instance, organisational members make sense of consumer directed care differently. Some may reconcile the difference in their sensemaking, some may delay the time for sensegiving, and others may choose to comply or resist or to show a mix of both (Ybema & Horvers 2017) to a happening after making sense of it. Similarly, as an effort to give sense of organisational change, some organisational members may prioritise influencing the sensemaking of those above them, whereas others may focus their sensegiving on those who are below them in the organisational hierarchy. Some may choose language as their primary tool of sensegiving, but others might start changing their behaviours through performance and resistance. Such behaviours are political in nature (Balogun et al. 2011; Mumby et al. 2017) and have consequences for the unfolding of both sensemaking and sensegiving.

Individuals’ sensemaking and sensegiving may differ from the collective and dominant organisational sensemaking or/and sensegiving. For example, while MCCI’s management team and leadership were developing a dominant narrative of consumer directed care, staff members were the first whose sensemaking was to be influenced. According to Brandon, within the first three months of the major structural changes – once the senior and middle management positions were filled – the management team opened the conversation with staff to understand what the organisation was doing well and what could be done better. At the same time, they ‘had the manager of care services go and visit all of the staff that were affected to actually see the services on the ground and talk to them on a one-on-one level’ (Brandon, 26 October 2016). However, the consultations could not be only for making sense of what was happening in MCCI. They were also intended to give sense of the happenings as pointed out by Rachel, ‘I have met with them all individually and discussed what it is they need to do’ (Rachel, 9 September
2016). Given the views at the management level that some of the changes had been inherited and that the managers themselves needed to understand the happenings, it is safe to infer a differential unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving concerning those happenings.

The differential unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving can be seen in the difference between organisational members’ sensegiving at different organisational tiers. In response to the question on how the changes could be managed better, Paul made the following comment.

I feel the opportunity to manage understanding of the changes already in place has largely been missed […]. For the future, I believe it is important to put in place a strategy to communicate and manage coming change much more proactively (Paul, 28 July 2017).

This comment suggests that the recent changes in MCCI’s context could be communicated and managed better and more proactively. However, a month before the interview with Paul, Khaled had made the following assessment of the implementation of those changes.

We didn’t do the change for the sake of doing the change. But we knew what was coming. And we knew we could not keep going with the same structure that we had before. So we had the change. But when we did the change, obviously, some of the staff understood. We met with them, […] every single staff that their job changed, whether it is in hours or otherwise […]. Now, some understood and stayed with us. Some did not understand or did not want to understand and left the organisation. But the feedback […] We did a development day. We took all the staff somewhere for a day, a full day. And we had a consultant, a facilitator facilitating the day. And we’ve asked the staff, all staff in that development day. And we asked the staff what do you think, you know? And the feedback was excellent. So most of the staff were happy and most of them were happy because they understood that without the change that happened last year, we wouldn’t be here. So either shut shop, or have to change (Khaled, 22 June 2017).

Khaled’s sensegiving of change stands in contrast to the junior member’s sensemaking and sensegiving of it. As the narrative shows, Khaled’s comments are intended to give sense of the implementation of change, as a success story, for some of the organisation’s stakeholders, such as the research team and, through the research, the broader
community. They are also intended to justify the changes as a proactive measure to the challenges that are expected to face the organisation. On the other hand, for Paul, these changes, or, at least, the way they are managed, are not part of a well-thought plan.

This study shows that while organisational members are trying to make sense of change, albeit not as a single event but as a complex set of happenings each requiring sensemaking in its own right, they actively engage in sensegiving of those happenings to others both within and outside the organising context. For example, Rachel had been in the job for five weeks. As her comment – ‘I am still struggling a little bit, I guess, to get to know exactly [laughter] what I am supposed to be doing and getting to know the services’ (Rachel, 9 September 2016) – shows, she was at the early stages of analysing and understanding the decisions that had been made prior to her joining MCCI. She was new in the organisation and needed time to make sense of the organisation in its complex network of relationships and the changes that had started a few months before. However, her position as a newcomer did not discourage her from actively engaging in sensegiving of those changes and decisions. Referring to her meetings with her team members, she makes it clear it that those meetings were also used to give sense of the happenings.

I have met with them all individually and discussed what it is they need to do and, you know, what’s that they need for their groups and to continue their offering of good service. I’ve pretty much captured all that with them (Rachel, 9 September 2016).

As the comment shows, despite the short time Rachel had spent with MCCI, her meetings for the purpose of sensemaking of the changes were equally focused on sensegiving of the changes and what the staff were required to do in that context. This situation holds true for most of the organisational members who were responsible for leading and managing the organisational changes. Three of the four managers, including the CEO, joined the organisation after the changes had begun or, at least, after some of the key
decisions about those changes had been made. These examples underline the differential unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving.

The differential unfolding of organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving, however, is not about inconsistency in providing information or manipulating the change process. It is because of the political characteristics of organising, and organisational becoming, which Pettigrew (1973) and Dawson (1994) put to the fore of process studies of organisational change. As it has been pointed out so far, sensemaking and sensegiving as a sub-process of organisational becoming cannot be an exception to the political characteristic of organisational becoming. The following section further explains this aspect of sensemaking and sensegiving.

5.5 Political Dynamics of Sensemaking and Sensegiving

The discussion on MCCI’s becoming has so far shown that the day to day operations of the organisation are carried out by individuals and teams. As Fleming and Spicer (2007, p. 11) note, it would be naïve to assume that these people work together to achieve a common goal, or have a common understanding of the set goals and chosen strategy. They often hold contrasting views of the world, have different opinions on issues, come from various backgrounds and different pasts, and see the futures differently, to name only a few differences. These differences position them variously in the entangled web of relations (Hernes 2008) and become a source of endemic power and politics in the organisation (Fleming & Spicer 2007). The pervasiveness of power can be explained by the Foucauldian conception that power is everywhere and circulates through discourse, in the forms of both language and practices (Hardy & Thomas 2014). At the same time, power cannot be conceptualised without resistance (Mumby et al. 2017). The manifestation of power and resistance occur through various forms of politics, at both the individual and collective levels. The dynamics of power, resistance
and politics were manifested throughout the research. One of the key challenges during the research was how to encourage organisational members to participate in the study. Despite my verbal and written assurances that the study was not part of the structural changes within MCCI and was not driven by MCCI’s leadership and senior management, many organisational members were hesitant to take part in the study. Organisational members would make sense of the study differently. Even for those who did take part in the study, I was an outsider. The conversations that were taking place between us and among the research participants would often resist the opportunity to speak openly. At times, the internal issues were discussed among staff members in a way that did not make sense to me. The following is part of my observation note from a session with Anna.

It is 9:50 am on 18 November 2016 and I am here for the second observation session with Anna. Her office is in a small room next to the front office…While I place my chair in the only available space next to the door that separates Anna’s office from the front office, I face the research participant’s desk and have the front office desk on my right…It is hard not to be distracted by the visitors and staff who come to the front desk either to sign in or sign out in their relevant registers. The face-to-face conversations at the desk and the frequent telephone calls and subsequent conversations become regular distractions. While I am wondering how to keep the happenings in the two rooms separate, and whether any separation is possible and meaningful, Anna leaves her desk and goes to the front office, where she speaks to Lara. The two staff members speak in a low voice. *I do not make sense of the conversation…*Brandon enters the room. After a brief greeting with me, he starts talking to Anna. They seem to be using a technical language or it seems so. They use jargons, most of their sentences are incomplete and they offer little clue to the context of their conversation.

On 28 July 2017, when I arrived at MCCI’s sub-office for an agreed-upon observation session and conversation with volunteers, two volunteers were busy cooking food for the clients. When I requested some time for conversation, they said that they were too busy. However, it was only after the centre coordinator and other staff volunteered to take care of the cooking that the two volunteers agreed to sit for conversation with me. It was a very brief conversation, during which the senior volunteer summarised her view of the pervasiveness of organisational change in one sentence: ‘Everyone is a change’ (Event
7, 28 July 2017). She did not seem happy with the change. After a few short comments, the senior volunteer decided to conclude the conversation and return to the kitchen saying that she needed to be there. The junior volunteer, who had been with the organisation for three weeks, followed her. Though she was interested in the conversation, which she mentioned in our subsequent meeting, she seemed to have no choice but to follow her senior colleague, conclude the conversation and return to the kitchen. Such behaviours, which are linked to the being and position of organisational members and determine what they can or cannot do, show the existence of disciplinary power (Kelly n.d.; Mumby et al. 2017), which can be found everywhere in the organising context. Whilst in this example the volunteers’ use of power was less productive me, the use of power was productive elsewhere, as Hardy and Thomas (2014) have pointed out. It enabled me to negotiate a time and date for an interview and observation, be invited to observe organisational events and encourage more organisational members to take part in the study. Further, the use of power and politics was not limited to the making and giving sense of the relation between us. The dynamics were common in all organisational happenings.

A mid-term review of the Strategic Plan and Business Plan represents good governance. While the vision and mission of MCCI are unlikely to change as these statements represent the core values and aspirations for MCCI, there have been a range of changes in the human services and non-profit sector since these plans were written and the new management team is bringing new ideas to organisational priorities to achieve the Strategic Directions (Organisational Artefact).

The key sensegiving attempts in the above extract from an organisational document are the assertions that the proposed review of the strategic plan should be seen as a sign of good governance and the new management team can be entrusted with the good governance. The proposal was supported by a background paper, outlining the purpose of the review, the then-position of the organisation, the key drivers of change, and an
analysis of MCCI’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In accordance with the management team’s timeline, not only was a revised strategic plan submitted within a month for the management committee’s discussion and approval, but the review was also extended to the organisation’s vision and mission (Organisational Artefacts). Reviewing MCCI’s strategic plan, spelling out its set of values and determining the key result areas are evidence of the new management team’s attempt to streamline organisational flow by influencing organisational sensemaking concerning those aspects of organisational operations. Though I did not have access to the meetings and discussions that led to the change in strategic and business plans, nor to the process of determining organisational values and key result areas, it would be naïve to assume that making and giving sense of these critical aspects of organisational becoming are innocent happenings. Such happenings involve what Mumby and colleagues (2017) call frontstage and backstage micro-resistance, and micro-politics. Achieving a consensus on what the new strategic direction and value statement mean involves a political contest and bargaining (Thomas & Davies 2005). It could be safely assumed that any discussions about these topics would have been punctuated with subtle political manoeuvres. Grace’s comment more obviously manifests these characteristics of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving.

I think prior [to] us coming on board, the new team from [the CEO] onward, I think the Management Committee were quite hands-on. And their presence, they were here quite often. Now, they are not. They’ve basically left it to [the CEO] to run the business. And there is, there is obviously a communication line between [the CEO] and the Committee. But the Management Committee doesn’t necessarily get involved in the day to day things anymore […]. They have entrusted [the CEO] to do it. [The CEO] runs the business. He is the CEO (Grace, 30 November 2017).

This comment suggests that the hands-on approach of MCCI’s management committee in relation to the day-to-day operations of the organisation has changed. Though Grace mentions the transfer of responsibility from the committee to the CEO, it is not the whole
story. The happening raises a number of questions. First, is it an outcome of the new management team actively influencing organisational sensemaking and streamlining the flow within the dynamics of power and resistance (Fleming & Spicer 2008)? In this possible scenario, the new management team may have been able to determine the management committee’s role in MCCI’s day to day operations. Second, is the shift in power dynamics a result of hegemonic power processes which may involve an implicit domination of the management committee over the new management team by creating a self-managing and self-disciplining team (Doorewaard & Brouns 2003)? In this sense, the pressure might have been internalised by the management team. Third, is the change an outcome of the narrative of change or what Grace (30 November 2017) calls ‘the new MCCI’, which, according to her, has been authored by MCCI’s leadership? Whilst there is no evidence to answer such questions firmly, it is convincing to argue that the change in power dynamics, indicated in the preceding comment, must have involved politics. However, such infra-political behaviours are situational and contextual (Mumby et al. 2017).

I have very much an open-door policy in a sense. My role is not [the CEO’s] role by any means. But I block some of the things that don’t need to go to [him]. [He] needs to know about them, but I will tell him that. Some of the things that come to me can be blocked and I can deal with them, with the manager, with the individual. So it is listening to staff, allowing staff to come to you (Grace, 30 November 2017).

Political behaviours are not limited to the collectives, such as the management committee and new management team; nor are these collectives permanent and fixed coalitions. The working of the dynamics of power, resistance and politics within the new management team depends on the situation and context (Mumby et al. 2017). As the above comment shows, certain quarters, such as the corporate services, have a prominent role in decision-making processes, or, at least, they function as gatekeepers. Organisational members, both staff and other managers, need to channel their
communication through the new hierarchical chain. By giving sense of the new decision-making hierarchy in MCCI, these streamlining and sensegiving efforts are explicitly political and involve the use of power. Similarly, in the management committee, not all have the same level of participation and influence over the decision-making process. Throughout the research, it was only a limited member of the twelve-member committee that had a visible and active role in the organising process. Others’ roles were limited to their attendance at the committee meeting and/or MCCI’s public events.

I think originally when this few changes […] happened, there was a couple of people that rang about how disgruntled they were that one of the staff members had left and that sort of thing but and I asked for their names so I could take down their complaint and take it to management but they didn’t want to leave it (Lara, 17 October 2017).

Lara describes some of the initial reactions from MCCI’s clients to the organisational changes. In this instance, some of the clients, who did not want to disclose their names, approached MCCI to register their complaints about or disapproval of the staff members losing their jobs. Hinting at these issues, Rachel commented that ‘there are some issues with one group, mostly because of one staff member’ (Rachel, 24 January 2017). Though there is no definite evidence to show that the disgruntled former staff member was playing a direct role in creating some of these issues for the organisation, it can be argued that such behaviours or happenings are not void of politics. With the flux of happenings during organisational becoming, the widespread existence and multidimensionality of power, resistance and politics (Hardy & Thomas 2011) in sensemaking and sensegiving come to the fore. Nonetheless, the dynamics of power, resistance and politics during organisational becoming should be seen neither as abnormal nor worrying. From a Foucauldian point of view, not only is power everywhere, but ‘power is also productive’ (Hardy & Thomas 2014, p. 325). Streamlining the flow, including the influence exercised through sensemaking and
sensegiving, is an outcome of the productive use of power and politics, which cannot be conceptualised without acknowledging the existence of resistance (Thomas & Hardy 2011). From the strategic planning to negotiating staff’s working hours, organising a joint program with a local school, marshalling more than one hundred volunteers and involving the members in decision-making processes, to a volunteer convincing her manager to put more people on a shift, and a staff member getting her leave application approved, all involve the exercise of power and use of resistance, in various forms, and the use of political behaviours. As a result, whilst organisational members make and give sense of the happenings, MCCI’s becoming unfolds and it acquires its distinguishing characteristics. An important question here is, given the inseparable role of sensemaking and sensegiving in organisational becoming and given their political characteristics, are sensemaking and sensegiving only manifested through language? The following section has more on this topic.

5.6 Manifestation of Sensemaking and Sensegiving not Limited to Language

Sensemaking and sensegiving are not confined to the use of language. Organisational members perform different political activities and use different tools and techniques to make and give sense of organisational change. They do so to get more information about organisational happenings, identify cues and focus on them, define their own relation to the happenings, relate the happenings to other happenings both within and outside the organising context, express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with organisational happenings and influence others’ sensemaking of them.

I was happy right from the beginning [...]. But even when I first started, there were things that were happening. Why is that happening? Or some people were unhappy, weren’t sharing information. So, there was a little bit of that happening. But as time went on and people started to trust me and [the CEO] and the new team, then, things got a lot better, I think (Grace, 30 November 2017).
Organisational members make and give sense of organisational happenings in a number of ways, some of which extend beyond the verbal form of language. Grace points at one of them, not sharing information. Such behaviours are not subconscious reactions. Organisational members intentionally avoid sharing information, block information from reaching certain individuals or collectives and may actively discourage others from sharing information in order to make and give sense of organisational change. Though these behaviours are discursive, some of them do not use a verbal form of language. Further, organisational members make and give sense of change by taking part or not in organisational happenings. For example, whilst not attending a Christmas party may be a passive outcome of organisational change caused by lack of interest and motivation among organisational members, it can also be an intentional behaviour to demonstrate their displeasure and disappointment with the change. At the same time, organisational members engage in linguistic forms of resistance. For instance, Rachel (9 November 2017) refers to ‘bickering behind the scenes’. By arguing about trivial matters, especially behind the scenes, organisational members try to influence the dynamics of change and make and give sense of the happenings. On the other hand, they may also change their usual way of performing organisational tasks, avoid taking part in activities or tasks beyond their job description and withdraw their support for certain activities to give sense of how they see organisational happenings and how they want them to unfold. Brandon points at such behaviours in these words.

I think it is probably fair to say that two years ago, possibly as a reaction to what was happening with the changing structure stuff, people […] you know, they were naturally little bit stand-offish, defensive, work-to-rule type, work-to-spec type mentality. And there wasn’t a lot of, you know, if we had to do something that needed people from across the organisation to pitch in and help, there wasn’t a lot of people putting up their hand and say[ing] I am happy to put some of my time into that. There was very much, you know, people would come down and say, that is yours to deal with. It is not my responsibility (Brandon, 7 June 2018).
The types of behaviour Brandon describes are not random or subconscious responses to change. They are intentional behaviours intended to influence the behaviours of others, especially of those who have more influence on organisational intra-actions concerning change, and/or influence on their peers’ sensemaking of change. Moreover, to make and give sense of change, organisational members may change their usual way of doing non-task related activities, such as coffee breaks. According Ivana (2 September 2016), at around ten o’clock in the morning, tea and coffee are prepared. Once they are ready, a message is sent to all staff, who then can have their tea or coffee, often in the kitchen. According to Anna (18 November 2016), staff have two ten-minute breaks for coffee: one each in the morning and afternoon. They have the flexibility of using the ten-minute time whenever it suits them. Nonetheless, during many months after the initial structural changes, hardly any staff members were found at the coffee table together. Some staff members would get their coffee from the coffee shop in the street. On a number of occasions, staff were seen to have their coffee break at a time other than the usual time for break. Those occasionally found in groups were often the old members, who had been the most affected by the changes. Similar scenarios were observed around smoking times. Staff who had been with MCCI before the recent changes would often have their smoking break together. Though the use of language in each of these scenarios cannot be underestimated, the deviation from the established time and patterns of behaviours, joining or not joining a group of colleagues at a coffee or smoking break and the choice of whether to prepare a cup of coffee in the office kitchen or buy it from a coffee shop are equally meaningful behaviours for making and giving sense of change and the decisions made concerning change.

Following the initial structural changes that began in mid-2016, MCCI’s publications were transformed. The organisation’s biannual newsletter, CALD Talk, and
its annual report changed in terms of textual content, design and use of graphics and colours. An increasing dependence on photographs to tell the story of change marks the main difference in these publications. In the new publications, especially the annual reports, MCCI’s achievements and results of its progress are quantified through the use of figures and graphics, whilst the publications have become more compact. Language is still used as a primary tool in these publications to communicate the changes in the organisation. However, as these data show, language is not the only sensemaking and sensegiving instrument. The use of graphics, figures, and bright colours and the quantifying of results are meant to give a clear message about the recent changes in MCCI. As previously discussed, in changing the organisation’s logo, the use of colour was given importance to represent the values MCCI stands for, as explained in the organisational publication and by organisational leadership. For some organisational members, the new logo is fresh and sticks out.

I think it is nice. It is fresh, sort of fun. It is, our old logo was pretty boring [laughter]. And just the writing, you know, it doesn’t really, you have to really look at it because the way the writing is, it doesn’t stick out right away, that is what we are or who we are. It is just like, yeah. I think it is really positive thing (Rachel, 9 November 2017).

The non-linguistic aspect of the new logo is equally important in telling the stakeholders what MCCI is. In the 2016-2017 annual report, the four colours of pink, orange, green and blue, used in the new logo, were chiefly used in preparing the graphics and designing the overall report. They remained the prominent colours in subsequent publications.

MCCI also uses textual discursive forms of sensemaking and sensegiving. Along with the new strategic and business direction, publicity has become an important part of MCCI’s marketing and communication campaign. The high-visibility campaign is intended to ‘break into new communities’ (Ingrid, 24 October 2017). The organisation’s Facebook page has become an important area for putting MCCI out there (Jessica, 24
October 2017) so that its stakeholders, especially communities and potential customers/clients, know what the organisation is and what services it offers.

I mean, we should really make sure that they know who we are, you know. And one of doing that is [...] ok do [a] Facebook story, tag the people, at least to break into, parts of the community that are on Facebook and social media (Ingrid, 24 October 2017).

Photographs of MCCI-sponsored events and those of organisational members make the biggest part of the marketing and communication campaign. Regular and active presence in the social media is intended to communicate organisational change. The organisation closely monitors how people react to this presence and takes the number of likes and the organic reach through such platforms seriously. For instance, the number of likes on the Facebook page was reported as 465 and 1100 in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 annual reports, respectively.

The office set-up and decoration are other important sensemaking and sensegiving tools. At the conclusion of an important staff meeting soon after the implementation of the new structural changes, MCCI’s chairperson was very busy seeking suggestions and ideas from a few senior staff members. The topic was the colour for painting the exterior of the office building. Though it seemed more of a management job, rather than one for the chairperson, it is not hard to link the importance of a freshly painted office building to other organisational changes unfolding at the time. Once the major structural changes started unfolding, the interior of the office building was painted as well. Given that the building has been recognised as a heritage, the organisation needs to be mindful of the terms and conditions for making any changes in the building.

Spatial positioning is another sensemaking and sensegiving tool. Though the scope for rearranging the work desks is limited because of the small size of the rooms, after the major structural changes, moving the desks was a noticeable happening. Some of the staff members have kept moving their desks. In the most recent set-up,
project/function teams are mainly working out of the same room. However, those in managerial positions either have separate offices or are grouped together. Not only are these arrangements used to communicate change, but the politically coloured arrangements are also meant to influence the way organisational members and other stakeholders see the change.

Organisational members look for cues beyond the linguistic or discursive tools to make sense of organisational change. Some of the non-linguistic cues prove to be subtle, whereas others are more obvious. As the earlier comments show – for example, ‘what an organisation DOES will have a larger impact [than] what it SAYS it will do’ (Anna, 17 June 2018) – organisational members compare and contrast the linguistic and non-linguistic cues in their sensemaking effort. On the question of whether organisational members depend only on linguistic tools for sensemaking, Brandon commented:

I think language being very deliberate, being deliberate about language is very important. But equally important to that is about how leaders in the organisation, and I use that word to describe pretty much everybody. I don’t have a hierarchical form of leadership here. I think everybody exercises leadership in the role that they are performing and so the way that we behave, the way that we treat each other, the way that we work together is as important as what we say and how we say [it] (Brandon, 7 June 2018).

The use of performance and resistance in making and giving sense of organisational change happens beyond the management-staff relationships. For example, members of a community-based organisation which is a member of MCCI were trying to make sense of the changes in the context of MCCI by the relative difficulty in using some of the organisation’s resources, such as the photocopier and meeting room. Cues, such as the absence of some organisational members and presence of the new ones were given importance in understanding what was happening within MCCI. The acknowledgment of such non-linguistic cues and of the unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving beyond language is important for two reasons. First, non-linguistic cues have an equally
important role in sensemaking and sensegiving of change. The difference between how sensemaking is intended to be influenced and how it is influenced can come from underestimating the existence and role of non-linguistic cues. Denying or underestimating non-linguistic cues can lead to the failure of the use of language in sensegiving. Second, investigating sensemaking and sensegiving beyond language affects views on the continuous characteristic of this process. Acknowledging the existence of non-linguistic cues alongside the linguistic cues helps to reveal the continuous happening of sensemaking and sensegiving of change. The latter topic will be further discussed in the following chapter.

5.7 Conclusion

Organisational sensemaking and sensegiving make a sub-process of organisational becoming. They are inextricably linked. How organisational members contribute to organisational becoming and streamlining the flow of its happenings depends on their sensemaking and sensegiving of the happenings. Further, sensemaking and sensegiving are parts of one process. They mutually constitute each other. Therefore, any discussion of sensemaking would involve sensegiving and vice versa. However, the two may vary in their temporal unfolding. In an entangled web of relationships, organisational members focus on cues, relate them to other processes both within and outside the organising context, interpret the cues and translate their interpretation into actions. Further influenced by how organisational members relate themselves to other processes in the web of relationships, sensemaking unfolds differently for both individuals and collectives. The difference, which comes from any or all of these sub-processes that constitute and contribute to sensemaking, necessitates sensegiving – the need to harmonise individuals’ sensemaking. Further, whilst organisational sensemaking is the productive aggregate of individuals’ sensemaking, it is influenced by the dominant
sensemaking and sensegiving within the organising context, chiefly but not exclusively, of the organisation’s leadership and management. Similarly, organisational sensegiving is the sensegiving that is influenced by the dominant sensegiving and is sanctioned by the organisation although sanctioning may not be a formal and explicit process. The bigger the difference between individuals’ sensemaking and organisational sensegiving, the more challenging it becomes for individuals to reconcile the difference. A failure in reconciling the difference leads to, among others, anxiety for the individuals, withdrawal of support for the change process and departure from the organisation.

Not unlike the overall organisational becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving involve power, resistance and politics. Organisational members use various forms of power and show resistance by engaging in micro and/or macro-political behaviours. The multidimensional use of power, resistance and politics operates both productively and obstructively. This characteristic of sensemaking and sensegiving shows that they are not limited to the use of language. More often than not, they unfold through performance and resistance. Therefore, understanding organisational sensemaking and sensegiving requires the appreciation of the dynamics that involve power, resistance and politics and the context in which they unfold.

Having acknowledged these characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving, the focus in the following chapter turns to the temporal unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving, which is at the core of the second research question.
Chapter 6: Findings: Temporal Unfolding of Sensemaking and Sensegiving

Chapter Structure

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   6.2.2 Simultaneous Sensemaking and Sensegiving of Multiple Happenings
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6.3 Temporal Unfolding of Sensemaking and Sensegiving: Their Retrospective and Prospective Characteristics

   6.3.1 Sensemaking and Sensegiving Are Influenced by the Past
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6.4 Conclusion
6.1 Introduction

Chapter two highlighted an area of tension in the literature on organisational sensemaking and sensegiving. The tension was shown to be around the temporal characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving, which are the focus of the second research question. In light of that tension, this chapter discusses the temporality of sensemaking and sensegiving in terms of their ongoingness and their retrospective and prospective characteristics. The first part of this chapter will discuss the continual unfolding of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving. Being part of the present becoming of MCCI, organisational members continually come across situations that make them ask questions about their relations to other processes both within and outside the organising context. The situations make them focus on cues for sensemaking, relate the cues and the overall situation to other processes, interpret the cues within the relational context, make meaning of them and translate the meaning to action(s), including sensegiving. This is not, however, to argue that organisational members’ actions are always rational, nor is it argued that the sub-processes of sensemaking or the sensemaking of multiple happenings unfold step by step. Organisational members may act first and, then, make sense of it. Further, sensemaking does not unfold sequentially or in order – making sense of one happening after the other – since the organisational happenings themselves do not unfold in chronological order. Because organisational happenings overlap, there are often overlapping and simultaneous sensemaking and sensegiving of multiple happenings for individuals and collectives. The pace and complexity of organisational happenings, nonetheless, affect the complexity of sensemaking. The discussion shows that as with any other process, talking about instances of sensemaking is about bracketing part of the process for analytical purposes. In the actual unfolding, the sensemaking of one happening merges into the sensemaking
of another happening. Further, the fact that sensemaking and sensegiving also unfold beyond the use of language and through performance and resistance highlights the multiplicity of the sensemaking process. It further supports the case for the continuous characteristic of sensemaking.

Part two of this chapter focuses on prospective and retrospective characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving. Drawing on the data and the earlier discussion, it is shown that sensemaking and sensegiving unfold in the present but are shaped by both past and future happenings. This influence is deeper than the orientation of sensemaking and what triggers it; it comes from the contribution of past and future happenings to the becoming of the processes that play a role in the unfolding of sensemaking. In this sense, sensemaking is simultaneously retrospective and prospective. Conceptualising it as only retrospective or prospective denies the interplay of the past and future in the ongoing unfolding of a process in the present (Simpson 2009).

6.2 Temporal Unfolding of Organisational Sensemaking and Sensegiving: Their Ongoingness

As discussed in the preceding chapter, sensemaking is a sub-process or micro-process of organisational becoming. It also means that the unfolding of organisational sensemaking cannot be conceptualised separate from organisational becoming. The ongoing present becoming of MCCI, shaped by its past and future, was demonstrated in chapter four. Here, some of the characteristics of that becoming are reiterated in relation to organisational sensemaking. More specifically, this section discusses three temporal characteristics of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving that will help to draw a conclusion on their ongoingness. First, organisational happenings and their patterns are continually disrupted, which, in turn, triggers ongoing sensemaking and sensegiving. Second, organisational members simultaneously make and give sense of multiple
happenings at multiple levels. Third, sensemaking and sensegiving fuse into each other and, therefore, drawing clear boundaries around them is not practical. These characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving do not support the episodic perspective of this process.

6.2.1 Organisational Happenings and Their Patterns Are Continually Disrupted

The discussion in chapter four showed that the flow of happenings in MCCI forms patterns over time. However, organisational happenings themselves disrupt the patterns – every pattern of happenings is formed to be disrupted by happenings. Following is a note from an observation session, with the focus on happenings around Rachel and Anna. Though the observational note is relatively long, it is important to demonstrate the flux of happenings. Yet, it covers only some of the major happenings in relation to Rachel and Anna over, roughly, two hours on 24 January 2017, more than six months after the major structural changes had begun.

At 9:57 in the morning, Anna is at her desk. While I am greeting her, another organisational member enters her office. He and Anna start talking about a recent ceremony organised by the local council. It seems that the visiting organisational member was nominated for an award, acknowledging the significance of the project he is managing, but he has not been declared the final winner. Anna and her colleague are not happy with this outcome. At 10 o’clock, Rachel returns to her desk. Another colleague follows shortly after and starts talking to Anna about a program budget. The conversation does not take long, and Anna’s colleague leaves the room. At 10:15 am, another organisational member comes in. She starts explaining the hours she has worked and a half hour of overtime she has included in her timesheet. Rachel’s last comment on the overtime is, ‘It is okay as long as it is within the hours’.

At 10:40 am, both Rachel and Anna leave the room. Before leaving, Anna says that she has a meeting with the general manager. She adds that her meeting will likely take long (Note: During the following day’s session, Anna informs me that she is leaving the organisation as she has found another job). Rachel returns to her desk at 10:42 am and starts taking notes on the papers she brings in. She also looks a bit stressed and unhappy today. At 10:56am, she receives a telephone call. After she finishes her brief conversation over the phone, she says that it was her daughter, who normally lives with her but she has not seen for three days.
Rachel informs me that a new staff member has begun her work in MCCI’s sub-office. She adds that MCCI is going to make a job offer to a candidate who will replace one of the coordinators. The conversation leads to the issues around two groups of clients in MCCI’s sub-office. During her recent visit to the sub-office, she has tried to put the two groups together, from two separate days to one day. However, according to her, one of the two groups creates issues ‘because of a staff member’. She adds, ‘There is us and them mentality, which needs to be managed’. In response to my question about how MCCI recruits new clients for its projects, Rachel says that the organisation has advertised for a marketing and communications officer, who will hopefully help with the recruitment of new clients. She also mentions that she needs to do a lot of work, such as ‘streamlining the forms’ – ‘I have a lot of work to do before it changes again’. It is 11:55 am and Rachel gets busy on her computer again before I leave the research site.

The above observation shows that organisational members constantly come across situations or happenings that require sensemaking and sensegiving. During the roughly two-hour time period, Rachel and Anna were either directly involved in a happening or connected through what they were doing to the happenings from the past and/or possible future that required sensemaking and influencing others’ sensemaking. Happenings, such as a staff member being nominated for an award but not declared as the winner, a staff member having included half an hour’s overtime in her timesheet, Rachel not having seen her daughter for a few days, Anna’s meeting with the general manager, hiring a new staff member and making an offer to another candidate, and the group of clients creating problems ‘because of a staff member’ (Rachel, 24 January 2017) were disruptions in the streamlined flow of happenings. These disruptions, which are themselves happenings, trigger sensemaking and sensegiving. What is happening? Why is it happening? What does the happening mean? What might have caused it? What might it lead to? These are the types of possible questions that the organisational members directly linked to the happenings may ask around the happenings. Happenings, such as the inclusion of half an hour overtime in the timesheet and a meeting with the general manager, may not seem to be disrupting the streamlined unfolding of organisational happenings. However, seeing them in the context of their relations to other happenings makes them meaningful.
triggers for sensemaking and sensegiving. MCCI’s emphasis on project and organisational efficiency as part of the recent changes brings the importance of completing and submitting a timesheet and the inclusion of half an hour overtime to the fore. Similarly, Anna’s resignation from her job makes her meeting with the general manager a trigger for sensemaking and sensegiving for both Anna and the general manager. Though these happenings are further discussed in the following section, it is important to note here that they are not the only happenings to which these two organisational members are linked at the time. Many are not captured by the observation.

Organisational members constantly face disruptions in the streamlined flow of happenings. These constant disruptions continually trigger sensemaking and sensegiving. Two points are important to note here. First, a disruption does not necessarily occur in the form of an unwanted, undesirable or unpleasant happening. It can be any happening that stands out from other happenings. Second, a disruption occurs in a context. Depending on how one happening temporally relates to other happenings, it may be a disruption for one organisational member but not for others. Similarly, it may be a disruption at one time but not at other time. In the following comment, Sofia is describing the links between the project she is running and the happenings within other organising contexts. According to her, managing her project does not depend on the happenings unfolding within MCCI only. It also depends on what the partner organisations are doing and what changes are unfolding in them.

Well, there has been a lot of change out there, a lot to do with the structure of the organisations that we might partner with or collaborate with. Again, my role really is to collaborate with other organisations. As organisations change, then, that reflects in how we work together […] but it is really difficult to engage with other organisations if they are restructuring and so forth. That might impact on what we do. Equally, my role had been vacant; this role had been vacant for a couple of months before I came on board. I am sure there is an impact on that (Sofia, 10 October 2017).
This quote shows, for example, that any major changes in the organisations with which MCCI partners and collaborates on some projects can also disrupt the flow within MCCI’s organising context. This suggests that the disruptions in the streamlined flow of happenings can come from both within and outside the organising context.

Disruption in the pattern of organisational change is inevitable for a number of reasons. First, from time to time, organisational happenings and their relations need to be influenced in a way that can respond or adapt to the changes outside the organising context. This influencing creates disruptions in the organisational flow and any patterns in the flow by way of intensifying organisational happenings. Second, organisational happenings involve political behaviours, which influence the happenings, their intra-actions and the way the organisation and its sub-processes relate to other organisations. Subsequently, they shape the flow of the organisation. As previously discussed, such political behaviours occur by virtue of the relations among individuals and collectives. The happenings, which may or may not be based on the perceived needs for change, disrupt the pattern of change in the organisational becoming. For example, the change in the structure of MCCI’s management committee sends multilayered waves of disruption through the organisation’s streamlined flow of happenings. A closer look at the flow in the organising context reveals that such ups and downs in the pattern are familiar happenings. They resemble the graphs from a segment of the drumbeat exercise, shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. While the happenings always represent change, they make a pattern over a period of time however short they may be. At the same time, there are constant disruptions in the patterns that trigger organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving. Just as the happenings unfold at multiple layers, so do the disruptions. The multilayered characteristic of happenings and disruptions substantiates simultaneous
sensemaking and sensegiving of multiple happenings, which is further discussed in the following section.

6.2.2 Simultaneous Sensemaking and Sensegiving of Multiple Happenings

The discussion so far has shown that the becoming of organisational members is a part of the flow and flux of happenings. They are not bystanders or outsiders to the flow. Being part of the flow means that it is not possible for organisational members to have an outsider or holistic view of a major organisational change or the entire organising. They often have to deal with happenings at a micro-scale in terms of both time and the complexity of the happenings. At short segments of time, they face the flux of happenings, contribute to or influence them and are affected by them. The focus of their sensemaking and sensegiving also remains on the happenings at a small scale. Even when organisational members try to understand macro-happenings, such as the structural changes, they do so by breaking down the happenings into micro-happenings that become sensible for sensemaking and usable for influencing others’ sensemaking and shaping the overall organising. For example, in response to the question on whether Jessica felt supported in her new role, she made the following comment.

I am feeling that in my third week. I am feeling very supported. I’ve chatted with nearly everyone that works here about what jobs they do, whether or not that will have anything to do with what I am going to be doing in the future. It’s to get my head around, what MCCI does and what it does really well and who the staff are that deliver it. I am really getting positive information from all the staff, even the long-term staff that have been here for a long time that are probably seeing that change and being most affected; absolutely positive feedback from them about what they do and how they do it and why they do it […] (Jessica, 24 October 2017).

Though Jessica’s situation plays a significant role in the way she sees the happenings, relates them and herself to other organisational happenings, and prioritises some over others, her breaking down of the happenings into micro-happenings for assessing the
support she gets from her colleagues is reflective of the unfolding of organisational happenings in general. It is her conversation with the individual members (distinguishing the ones with longer tenure with MCCI), information on what MCCI does well, who does what within the organising context, and how the changes have affected individuals that she focuses on. Each of these happenings and their micro-happenings offer the grounds for sensemaking and sensegiving. At the same time, the happenings indicated in the above comment are not the only happenings to which Jessica is linked. She is simultaneously linked to multiple other happenings, unfolding at various levels, each with possible disruptions and ground for sensemaking and sensegiving. For instance, eighteen months after the major structural changes, Ivana made the following comment in response to the question on whether her colleagues knew where the organisation was heading.

They do. I mean we rebranded it, so I think that it gives them a little bit more feel because they were part of it, to some extent anyway, if not the design, it is certainly the launch. They were invited to be a part of that. And the idea is to create a one MCCI whereas there was a lot more silos. I believe that the silos are now slowly withering away. It is like anything, something that took that long to build will take a bit longer to, you know, to kind of ease out of [...]. (Ivana, 12 January 2018).

Whether staff members’ attendance at a public event – the launch of the new logo – indicates their participation in the rebranding of the organisation can be debated. The point to make here is that in order to give sense of the staff members’ understanding of MCCI’s future directions, Ivana’s sensemaking focuses on small-scale happenings. The rebranding of the organisation, the designing of the new logo, its launch, and staff’s participation in the launching event, among other happenings, become the focus of attention as separate happenings. While her sensemaking of these small-scale happenings helps her make sense of her colleagues’ understanding of MCCI’s future direction, she
is trying to give sense of the new MCCI by focusing on the rebranding and staff members’ role in it.

These examples and the discussion so far indicate that as organisational members simultaneously engage with flux of happenings, they constantly face multiple sensemaking and sensegiving situations, at multiple layers. Further, as the happenings fuse with each other, so does the sensemaking. Drawing clear boundaries around sensemaking and separating sensemaking of one happening from another is not practical. The following section discusses this aspect of sensemaking in more detail.

6.2.3 Sensemaking and Sensegiving of Multiple Happenings Fuse Into Each Other

Philosophically, it has been highlighted that boundary making of processes is temporary (Bergson 1946/2013). A reference to a process (singular) and processes (plural) is made with reference to their temporal and structural unity (Rescher 1996). Drawing on such a philosophical position, in process organisation studies, Hernes (2014a, p. 28) argues that processes ‘melt into each other’ (Hernes 2014, p. 28). They do not have clear and permanent boundaries. This argument can be demonstrated at a practice level in the context of MCCI. For example, this study shows that sensemaking of one happening fuses into the sensemaking of another happening. In response to a question on her role in the organisation, Lara responded in the following words.

My role has probably changed a bit because it is more finance than I would have hoped because I don’t have that background. But since [Anna] left, like [my new colleague] has different expectations of me. So, it’s sort of gone that way but I wasn’t expecting that. But then, well, you know, I have to do what I have to do really [laughter]. But in terms of the change I don’t feel my role changed that much in the organisation (Lara, 17 October 2017).

Lara talks about the change in her role, which comes from the change of staff in another team. The new member on another team has different expectations of her, so she does
more finance work than she had done before. When she was asked whether she felt her workload was appropriate, she made the following comment, in which she underlines her workload, her attitude to work pressure, the launch of a new accounting system, the lack of training on the new system and her holiday while the system was being launched.

It is always busy [laughter], but that is ok. I don’t feel pressured, like nobody is going to die if I don’t get something done, so [laughter] that is probably my attitude […] I mean, last week we had changed [the] accounting system. So that probably could have been done a lot better because they didn’t do enough training. I was on holiday […] I just feel like we don’t know enough, or there probably needs to be a bit more research done before we take on those big changes (Lara, 17 October 2017).

What is important in these comments is that states and happenings fuse with each other. Keeping the states and happenings separate with permanent boundaries is not practical. The research participant’s daily workload, the change in the finance team, the new team’s expectations of her, her attitude toward work pressure, the recent launch of the accounting system, her lack of knowledge about the newly introduced system, her recent holiday, and the need for training and research prior to introducing a system fuse together to give sense of her role and the workload to me. Her sensegiving is reflective of and influenced by her sensemaking of these different happenings. Though she brackets the happenings to refer to them as distinctly identifiable processes, in practice, she cannot separate her sensemaking of, for example, her recent holiday and the launch of the new accounting system. Her knowledge of the new accounting system could have been different if she had not gone on holiday. However, it still made sense for her to have training and research before the launch of any systems in the future.

At 1:30 pm on 27 April 2017, when I enter the observation site, the conversation between Ivana and her colleague is about the latter’s preparation for handing over her responsibilities. They inform me that having worked in the position since October 2014, the organisational member is leaving MCCI in two week’s time. My assumption is that she must have found a better or secure job, but upon my inquiry I find out that she is moving to Sydney because her husband has signed a job contract until September 2017 – roughly another five months. Further, the company that her husband is working with has secured funding for three to four
years and the chances that he can get the contract extended beyond September 2017 are high. Upon my further inquiry, Ivana says that the funding for MCCCI’s project, which her colleague is part of, has been extended for another year from June. However, they ‘do not know what happens next. Originally, we got funding for one year. Then, it was extended for two years, and, then, one more year.’

Ivana is asked how much of her team’s operations and continuity of their work depends on those of the entire organisation. According to her, though they have separate funding, a lot of what they do depends on what MCCCI as an organisation does. For example, the recruitment and marketing are done centrally. She points out that ‘after some hiring, there will be three and a half staff’ on her team as one staff will be working on part time basis […]

The organisational member’s decision to leave her job, without securing another job, and remaining hopeful for the extension of her husband’s job contract can make sense in light of the unknown future with regard to the availability of funding for her current project after one year from June. However, these happenings consist of multiple micro-happenings, each requiring decision-making, interpreting, sensemaking and sensegiving. For Ivana, her sensemaking of securing funding for another year, the resignation of two team members within three months, the hiring of a new staff member on her team, and some of the limitations caused by the centralised recruitment and marketing fuse with each other. Resignation of the team members, especially given her perception that ‘sometimes you expect things to happen, but sometimes you don’t, people want to have job security and a sense of belonging’ (Ivana, 31 January 2017), creates many happenings for both the team and MCCCI in general. As a manager, Ivana has to make decisions on the new recruitments – how many staff should be recruited, if they should recruit part-time or full-time staff, the ambiguity in terms of funding after one year, and so on. These decisions involve happenings, disruptions in the patterns of happenings, sensemaking and sensegiving. The unfolding of each fuses with that of others and contribute to MCCCI’s becoming. Though each of these happenings is bracketed and bounded for reference and sensemaking, the boundaries do not mark their exact beginnings and ends; they do not have exact beginnings and ends. The sensible environment enacted in
sensemaking (Weick 1995) of one happening provides cues for sensemaking and/or sensegiving of another happening, albeit not necessarily in the same order. The resignation of a team member three months earlier and securing funding for one year only help Ivana to make sense of her staff’s resignation without finding another job. Her resignation and moving out of town, with the hope of her husband’s job contract being extended, also helps Ivana to review her sensemaking of the short-term funding and the recent changes in MCCI – ‘a lot of what we do depends on what MCCI as an organisation does’ (Ivana, 27 April 2017).

Sensemaking and sensegiving are fluid. As happenings merge with each other and more happenings unfold, organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving of one happening fuse with those of other happenings, and their sensemaking and sensegiving may change or may be revisited. In the above comments, Ivana’s sensegiving focuses on the changing conditions of the staff members who leave MCCI, rather than the changes within MCCI’s context. The implied message is that there is nothing MCCI can do to stop these departures. The notion of merging and fusing sensemaking and sensegiving is also supported by the fact that, as discussed above, organisational members simultaneously face multiple sensemaking and sensegiving situations. The unfolding of chronologically ordered sensemaking and sensegiving, or their episodic unfolding with distinct beginnings and ends, which is the dominant explanation in the literature (Hultin & Mähring 2017; Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Weick 2011), does not reflect the flux of happenings and the subsequent multiple sensemaking and sensegiving processes at the same time.

6.2.4 To Conclude, Sensemaking and Sensegiving Unfold Continually

Based on the discussion so far, it is concluded that sensemaking unfolds processually. MCCI’s becoming is constituted by the flow of happenings. The
happenings intra-act and, as a result, create more happenings and push and pull the organisation’s becoming forward. This flow, which creates a pattern over time, involves political behaviours. These behaviours trigger both disruption to the patterns of happenings and cause goal-oriented activities to streamline them. The streamlining activities are intended to influence the intra-actions of happenings and their relations, and, subsequently, shape the organisation’s becoming and lead it in the intended direction. This effort also creates ongoing disruption to the pattern of flow. It increases the peaks and troughs of change as humans’ intentions, understanding, sensemaking and behaviours differ from each other. Organisational members’ involvement in organising, nonetheless, is not from an outsider’s position; they and their behaviours are parts of the flow.

As organisational becoming unfolds, organisational members need to make sense of the happenings and influence others’ sensemaking within and outside the organising context. Their sensemaking can be triggered by any disruptions. Further, since organisational becoming is not a chronological order of happenings, but constituted by the flux of happenings at different layers, organisational members face multiple sensemaking situations or triggers. Therefore, organisational members simultaneously engage in multiple sensemakings. These sensemakings fuse with each other as the happenings flow. Hence, sensemaking and sensegiving is a process without clear and distinct boundaries. Their unfolding is ongoing or processual. As the becoming of an organisation is bracketed for sensemaking and sensegiving, so is the case with sensemaking and sensegiving. They are bracketed out of the flow to make them sensible and understandable. How the temporal dimensions of sensemaking and sensegiving work is discussed in the following section.
6.3 Temporal Unfolding of Sensemaking and Sensegiving: Their Retrospective and Prospective Characteristics

The discussion in this part is organised under three temporal dimensions: the past, the future and the present. However, discussing sensemaking under distinct temporal dimensions does not indicate various modes of sensemakings. It is intended to highlight the influence of these dimensions on sensemaking, with a specific focus on each individually. The discussion here follows the pattern of the discussion about the becoming of MCCI, which was shown in chapter four to be the present unfolding of happenings simultaneously shaped by the organisation’s past and future. Sensemaking as a sub-process of that becoming cannot have a different pattern of unfolding. To show how sensemaking is temporally shaped, the discussion starts with a focus on the past. The discussion in the first section is lengthy as it first refutes Weick’s (1979) ‘recipe for sense-making’ – the way he describes retrospection in sensemaking – then offers another explanation for the past’s effect on sensemaking.

6.3.1 Sensemaking and Sensegiving Are Influenced by the Past

As MCCI’s present continually becomes its past, effects of the past on the ongoing present are certain in the form of the happenings and substantial things. As the past accumulates, its remnants become more and more undeniable. These remnants, however, are not inert residuals of the past; rather, they are processes, either as temporarily hardened clusters of processes, such as bodies and buildings (Kristensen et al. 2014), or as happenings, with consequences and effects. Further, it is not only the organisation’s past that influences the happenings in the present. Individuals, who may not have had a shared past with the organisation, bring their pasts with them. Though their pasts may not be compatible with that of the organisation, they affect the present processes within the organising context, including sensemaking and sensegiving.
Well, I knew that it was in time of change only because I actually used to work with [...] So, I just knew that here was a kind of changing. For me, it was interesting, because I had gone, sort of, through a similar thing at [...] where I was on the other end of it, where it was changing and I had been a long-standing staff member and a lot of people were made redundant and were leaving. So, I came in seeing both sides [...] – well, I get we have to absolutely change but I get how they are feeling as well. So, it was a bit [...] not that I experienced too much of that with staff members but there was a little bit of that undercurrent like they didn’t want to move on and change (Lara, 17 October 2017).

Lara was asked how it felt to join MCCI while it was going through major changes. Her understanding, interpretation and assessment of the changes unfolding in the context of MCCI would draw on her experiences of change in the organisation with which she had most recently worked. The experience and knowledge she had gained from the previous organisational changes were enabling her to extract cues from the environment, relate herself and her colleagues to the structural changes in MCCI, interpret them and make sense of the undercurrent and staff’s reluctance to change. Her experience from her previous job was also making the new context sensible for her – ‘I could ask questions and could go [laughter], writing everything down and finding out the answer if I couldn’t answer it straight away’ (Lara, 17 October 2017). In Mills and colleagues’ (2010) words, Lara was depending on her past experiences to interpret the current happenings. Her recruitment as part of the structural changes and her work experience with some of the staff, before joining MCCI, all play a role in the way she sees the changes in MCCI. The influence of the past happenings on interpreting the present situation was also explicit in Jessica’s response when she was asked whether she thought organisational members were clear about the future direction of MCCI.

Yes, yes. I do. I’ve come from an organisation that has had a lot of change over very long period of time, continual change and I know how that feels for long-term staff and short-term staff. People have only been here for months or a year. And I think that the direction of MCCI has been very clear about what they need to do [...] I think that to me it has been quite clear. That is the way I am seeing it anyway. That it has been quite clear in why they are doing, especially with my role. Why is this new role coming? Because you can imagine with organisations, why is there a new role? Why do they need this? (Jessica, 24 October 2017)
To describe the organisational members’ sense of the organisation’s future direction, Jessica draws on, among other things, her experience of change from her previous work, her conversation with colleagues, based on which she draws a distinction between the long-term and short-term staff, her understanding of the survival thesis and financial viability of the organisation in light of the future challenges, and the creation of her own role as part of the recent changes in MCCI. Though retrospection is evident in these comments, a few points are important to note. First, though organisational members draw on their past experiences for cues, their attention is not only focused on the past in order to interpret the present happenings. It is equally focused on the future, as seen in the second comment (above) where Jessica has been in the job only for three weeks. For Jessica, it is the possible future that will justify the anxiety among staff, the creation of her position (having taken place) and what will unfold as part of her role in the future – ‘[…] trying to get in touch with stakeholders and different organisations to see if we can have, perhaps form partnerships with brokerage […]’ (Jessica, 24 October 2017). It is the overall outcome of focusing her attention on these micro-happenings that enables her to conclude that MCCI’s future direction is justified and the organisational members are clear about it.

Second, organisational members are not necessarily making sense of what they themselves have said or done, as suggested by Weick’s (1979) ‘recipe for sense-making’ (p. 133). They often have to make sense of the happenings that they have not said or done, have not instigated and/or have little control over. Neither does Lara have control over the undercurrent she feels among the staff, nor did Jessica have a role in creating her position and defining MCCI’s new strategic direction. Similarly, though organisational members were consulted about the structural changes, most of them did not play a role in determining what positions should be created, who should be demoted,
who should be promoted and whose hours should be reduced. Some of the members joined MCCI after those decisions had been made as shown in the narrative below. Yet, these happenings continue to be the major foci of sensemaking and sensegiving for all of them. For most of the situations, then, Weick’s (1979) ‘recipe for sense-making’, ‘How can I know what I think until I see what I say?’ (p. 133), would become, ‘How can I know what they think until I see what they say/do?’ (p. 134, emphasis added). The organisation’s members need to make and give sense of what others have said or done so that they can position themselves or, as Weick (1979) says, so that they know what they think.

When we first got here, there was a lot of negativity about some changes that, some decision that had been made, that [the CEO] inherited. And we sort of had to work through. Some decisions were made without any communication, without any consultation. They were just made (Grace, 30 November 2017).

Third, given that sensemaking can be focused on what others have said and/or done, it creates two possible situations – seeing what others have said, and seeing what others have done. However, seeing what others have said may not be the same as seeing what they have done. Others’ saying may not provide the same clues and cues as their doing.

What an organisation DOES will have a larger impact than what it SAYS it will do. If the actions and language reinforce each other the changes will be more successful (Anna, 17 June 2018).

Anna was indirectly cautioning against the drawbacks and risks associated with a possible discrepancy between what the organisation was doing and what it was saying. The comment shows that for sensemaking purposes, seeing what others were doing and seeing what others were saying were not leading to the same outcome. Some organisational members were blunt about the difference between what they were seeing others say and what they wanted to see them do. Salma was complaining about a lack of clear understanding of the structural changes. According to her, though they had been told about the overall changes and their stages, they were not clear about what the changes
would exactly involve. With reference to Weick’s (1979) recipe of sensemaking, ‘saying’ is not always enough or the same as ‘doing’ for making sense of happenings.

And we are, to be honest, we are in the dark as staff. We sort of, we know that it is stage one, stage two, stage three. And, hmmm, yeah, so we’ve been told that we need to tell the clients about the changes and I said I am not telling my clients anything because I don’t understand what the changes are (Salma, 15 September 2016).

Anna’s comment (above) suggests that the organisation’s saying was not providing the same clues and cues for the sensemaker as the organisation’s doing was. In Salma’s comment, she had seen MCCI’s leadership and management say something about the changes, but it could not enact a sensible environment (Weick 1995) for sensemaking. Therefore, Salma and Anna were either interpreting the saying and doing differently and, as a result, were facing conflicting sensemaking situations or they could not make sense of the changes based only on what the management and leadership had told them. Further, seeing what others do does not necessarily help with knowing about their thinking. If the focus of retrospection is on the doing, without relating it to the context, the occurring of a happening does not guarantee the enactment of sensible environment (Weick 1995); as a result, it may not help in sensemaking. In the following comment, Rachel is talking about a tension or conflicting priorities of two teams. Though she sees what her colleague does – he creates more work for her team members – she cannot make sense of why he does so.

[…] Even though he is aware that we are not happy about these things, they still seem to come through, on a daily basis, sometimes hourly, sometime every half hour, something coming out of that office (Rachel, 9 November 2017).

Fourth, saying that a retrospective focus on saying and doing, both of one’s own and that of others, satisfies the condition for sensemaking poses an important challenge, especially from a strong process perspective, including that of Weick (1969, 1974, 1979). As discussed in chapter five, sensemaking and sensegiving are not limited to the use of
language. Based on that discussion and with reference to Weick’s (1979) recipe of sensemaking, it is argued here that sensemaking can be triggered without a focus on saying and doing – both verbs are used in the sense of subject-object dichotomy. For example, the change of MCCI’s logo was a goal-oriented happening. It was part of the new strategic direction and its high-visibility marketing campaign and it was intended to influence organisational members and other stakeholders’ sensemaking. The use of colour coding in the new logo, as in the 2016-2017 annual report, could be as important as the figures in the logo. The triggering of sensemaking could happen by seeing the colours and figures, rather than seeing the changing and using of the colours and figures. While the happening – changing and using – is still significant and sensemaking happens after something has been done, the triggering of sensemaking and sensegiving happens in this case by the potential happenings – temporarily hardened processes (Kristensen et al. 2014) – rather than the actual happenings. Further, sensemaking can also be triggered by the lack of doing something or the lack of a happening. When some of the staff do not attend a Christmas party, it triggers others’ sensemaking (Grace, 30 November 2017). The point is that a mere retrospective attention on saying and doing to make sense of it cannot be supported by a strong process view. It does not indicate an appreciation of subjectless processes (Seibt 2009) and temporarily hardened processes (Kristensen et al. 2014), which can be equally significant in sensemaking process.

Nonetheless, the past plays a significant role in the sensemaking and sensegiving of organisational change. The impact of the past is through the happenings that have contributed to the larger cluster of the present happenings in a context. As discussed in this thesis, the past happenings have contributed to the present becoming of MCCI, including the becoming of its members – that is, who they are and who they become. The past does not have to be a shared or common past. Organisational members’ separate
pasts, which may be different from that of MCCI, still play a role in shaping their sensemaking and sensegiving. Among others, the way organisational members see change in general (based on their past experiences), the way organisational change (in different contexts) has affected their lives in the past, the way they relate to MCCI and the current changes, and the way they see and relate to the sector – the two latter themselves being influenced by the past – influence what cues they focus on, which relationships in the network of entangled relationships (Hernes 2008) come to the fore, who they become in this network, and what sensible environment these factors help to enact for sensemaking. Together with similar effects from the future, the past happenings shape organisational members’ sensemaking. Therefore, labelling sensemaking as past-oriented and future-oriented is not the same as referring to it as retrospective sensemaking and prospective sensemaking, respectively. The past and future orientation of sensemaking is not an innate characteristic of this process. It only shows its temporal focus on the meaning-making of a past or future process, rather than sensemaking being shaped by the past or future. On the other hand, referring to sensemaking as retrospective or prospective acknowledges the role of one of the temporal dimensions, in denial of the others, in shaping sensemaking. Regardless of the past or future orientation of sensemaking, it is shaped by all the temporal dimensions. Its unfolding in the present is a matter of the holistic effect of both the past and future happenings.

Given these examples and the discussion so far, several points need to be reiterated with respect to retrospection. First, sensemaking is not necessarily triggered by or focused on an action that has taken place, nor does an action become the object of attention only after it has occurred as argued by Weick (1969). Sensemaking can also be focused on and triggered by future happenings. Second, the role of the past in sensemaking comes from its holistic effect on the happenings that shape sensemaking –
by way of the contributions of the past to the becoming of the present processes, including the sensemaker. The holistic approach to the past reaffirms the inseparability of individuals from their experiences and experiencing, including the time and space (Dawson 2014; Purser & Petranker 2005) that contribute to the experiences. Individuals cannot step outside their experiences as their experiences (their past) are part of who they are and who they become. Rather than treating sensemaking as a task or project detached from the sensemaker, it should be seen as a process that contributes to and is entangled with individuals’ becoming. Third, conceptualising sensemaking from a process perspective requires developing an appreciation of temporal merging, rather than treating time as linear, distinct and separate episodes. Temporal merging accommodates ‘the way that the past and prospective futures shape human experience of the ongoing present’ (Dawson & Sykes 2016, p. 12). Conceptualising sensemaking as a mere retrospective or prospective process denies an appreciation of the temporal merging and the role of all the temporal dimensions in the unfolding of sensemaking. The following sub-section discusses the role of the future on the unfolding of sensemaking in the present.

6.3.2 Sensemaking and Sensegiving Are Influenced by the Future

MCCI’s anticipated future stands in contrast to its past. As a peak community organisation with a strong advocacy and lobbying focus on behalf of its members (MCCI 2018), the organisation’s past does not seem to belong to the new context. Though the influence of neo-liberal policies and the subsequent marketisation of social services have been felt in the sector for at least three decades (Green 2002; Keevers et al. 2008), for MCCI, it has never felt so close. However, not only can the organisation not separate itself from its past, but parts of the past also seem to be useful in the present. At the same time, the future drives most of the present happenings in MCCI. It strongly influences
the way organisational members see the happenings and sell the ideas within the organising context.

So we asked her [the consultant] to come in and have a look at our workforce, and have a look at the changes that the Government, the Commonwealth, has made […]. And she said to us, ‘Look, you know, you need to do A, B, C, D’, and one of the biggest changes was that MCCI was always a sort of flat structure […] So one of the biggest change was, in those recommendations, was to have another layer of managers underneath the general manager […] (Khaled, 22 June 2017).

Khaled was explaining how and why the major structural changes in MCCI had begun. However, the structural changes that started unfolding by August 2016 (Organisational Artefact) were only one of the recommendations the consultant had made. Though details of those recommendations were not available for this research, the available data give an indication of the future that had been anticipated as part of the assessment and other processes that followed it. As a first major step following the recommendations, MCCI’s management committee selected and recruited a new general manager (the title was later changed to chief executive officer), a manager for the corporate services and a manager for the care services. The three newly recruited managers, along with the youth services manager and PICAC NSW & ACT manager, would make MCCI’s management team. The finance manager was later added to this team. As Bolander and Sandberg (2013) argue, these recruitments and those that followed were ‘not only retrospective writing of history but also prospective forming of the future’ (p. 306). Recruitments were to respond to the challenges of the anticipated future. In Grace’s (30 November 2017) words, the new team members were ‘not fearful of change’ as they had gone through similar situations. The structural changes, in the form of the new recruitment, promotions, demotions and changing of internal positions, continued well beyond the recruitment of the new middle managers. The future, which was signalling competition, need for collaboration and accountability and focus on sustainability, besides the shift to consumer-directed care and transportable funding (Organisational Artefacts), was
playing a key role in shaping these changes. Not only was the future influencing their experiences and interpretation of their ongoing present, organisational members were also actively trying to shape the future.

So now we are thinking, in the future, of investing in private sector, like whether it is investment in houses, whether it is investment in [a] café or in [a] restaurant to be able to bring more income into the organisation to sustain the organisation. So this is our business plan for the future looking is to invest in [the] private sector, whether restaurant, whether hotel, motel, ah, boarding houses. We are trying to look anywhere and everywhere to try and build into this not-for-profit organisation something else to be able to sustain the organisation (Khaled, 22 June 2017).

These comments were made nearly one year after the initial structural changes. The argument for survival and financial viability had its strong proponents. The term business, which had entered MCCI’s lexicon, was not only a discursive change, albeit, in a narrow definition of the term. The organisation was becoming a business. At the general meeting in July 2018, there was ‘a new investment for MCCI’ – purchasing a building – to report the members (Organisational Artefact). Measures, such as centralising the communication and marketing functions, creating the role of business development officer, actively seeking media coverage for organisational events, increasing a visible social media presence, rebranding the organisation and changing the general manager’s title, were all future-oriented happenings. Though some of these happenings were in apparent contrast to the organisation’s past, the future was justifying them. For example, the dominant argument was that engaging in for-profit activities would not have any impacts on MCCI’s traditionally close connections with the community, its advocacy and peak-body role and its overall identity.

I don’t see operating a non-profit organisation as a business as being mutually exclusive from staying connected to the community because the business model is around, is underpinned by certain values about who we are and the things that we stand for, and the whole ideas of working very purposefully about what we do. It is not just about working purposefully with the community. It is, as [Khaled] says, working purposefully in how we manage an organisation that has now about three millions turnover. That is not a little cottage-industry
organisation anymore. So the thing that is important to me is that whilst we have introduced a set of new systems, processes, ways of thinking that are more business-like and more commercial-like in the way that the organisation is structured, managed and run, that is still very much underpinned by set of values and a very clear vision and purpose statement as to who we are, what we do [...] (Brandon, 7 June 2018).

At times, the past, or part of it, was disowned or described in less celebratory words although the organisation’s history is part of its pride and has contributed to the more than three-million-dollar organisation it is today.

The organisation is running more professionally now than it ever did right through the years, right from the very beginning. Although there were people, they were professionals, but they were not really involved in what we wanted to do with the organisation, what the organisation was there, was there for (Elias, 7 June 2018).

The future would put the concepts, such as professionalism, in the foreground of interpreting, understanding, sensemaking and sensegiving of the recent changes in MCCI. Though these concepts, and the discourses that give meaning to these concepts, are not new in the sector (Keever et al. 2008), MCCI uses this discursive strategy – managerial postalgia – in its ‘longing for a bright future’ (Ybema 2004, p. 832). Staff’s formal qualifications and professional background gain importance for leading into such a future, as Khaled points out (below). Once this way of thinking is established, it determines organisational norms and beliefs and dictates its practices. In this context, the replacement of a board member, after four decades of work with MCCI but without a formal qualification, by people with business and managerial backgrounds makes sense.

We have employed in the last like two-and-a-half years or three years, we have employed professional people. We have employed professional people, like we have employed a CPA to be a finance manager. We have employed a lawyer to be a CEO. We have employed, you know, the right people to the right position. And this was I think the major positive way for the organisation. We did not have professional people in the right positions. Now, we have. And this I think was the biggest change ever (Khaled, 7 June 2018).
The future does not have the same effect on all organisational members’ experiencing of the present. Not unlike the past, it brings some relationships to the foreground and takes others to the background.

We had a meeting once. And he [the CEO] is lovely, so far, we think he is positive and he knows what he is doing. And he was talking about, and when he started talking about the changes, the whole staff went quiet and depressed. Yeah. And that due to the unknown. The fear of the unknown (Salma, 15 September 2016).

Nearly three months into the launch of the structural changes, Salma was highlighting the staff members’ lack of information about the modalities of the changes and their fear of the unknown. Around the same time, Rachel expressed the same concern when her views were sought in relation to the anxiety and sense of suspicion among staff.

I think it is more to do with the unknown of the future. They do know that things have to change. The general manager has been very clear in that. They don’t know exactly what that is going to look like. I don’t even know what it is going to look like. Yeah, I guess that will come from the management committee when they meet later on this month (Rachel, 9 September 2016).

The fear of the unknown, the possibility of some happenings unfolding and others not unfolding in the future and the fear of future happenings being different to the present pattern of happenings were dominant in shaping some organisational members’ experiencing of the present and the way they were attempting to influence others’ experiences. This was even more the case for those members who did not have a clear picture of MCCI’s future, who anticipated the organisation’ future to be in contrast to their future and/or who felt they could not influence the organisational intra-actions and relations as they wanted to. This study shows that for those who could not reconcile the differences in the anticipated futures and, as a result, could not reconcile the difference between the collective sensemaking and their own sensemaking, the fear would translate into actions, such as accepting job redundancy and leaving MCCI, or affect their performance and morale, at least in the early days of the major structural changes as shown in the following comment.
Because the people that were here, two of the people that actually had left here, they had been with the organisation for many many years and I think for them it was a bit of a struggle with what was happening and with the change. So that was one of the reasons (Ivana, 5 December 2016).

As previously discussed, the jobs of a number of organisational members who left MCCI during this research were not made redundant, nor were their positions under review. The common explanation for those resignations was a change in their circumstances outside MCCI’s context. Nonetheless, a few of them did mention a higher position, better pay and secure job as the reasons for accepting jobs with other organisations. The impact of the future, both anticipated and unknown, on these decisions was undeniable. Further, the clear inference made based on these data is that such decisions are not made randomly. They follow, among others, sensemaking of the present happenings in light of the past and the future. What is more than an inference is that in all these instances, sensemaking was happening in the present. Though it was influenced by both the past and future and it was directed toward either the past or future, its unfolding was in the present. Resonating with Wiebe’s (2010) argument, sensemaking is a process, which like any other process, unfolds in the present and draws on all dimensions of temporality (past, present and future). Providing more examples for the latter argument, the following section draws a conclusion on the temporal unfolding of sensemaking.

6.3.3 Sensemaking and Sensegiving Unfold in the Present

In the discussion on retrospective and prospective sensemaking, the present dimension of temporality in the unfolding of sensemaking is the least appreciated. Appreciating the temporality of sensemaking, with all the dimensions of temporality (present, past and future), as emphasised by Wiebe (2010), is critical in understanding how sensemaking happens. While the preceding sub-sections underlined the role of the
past and future on sensemaking, the making of sense, which is at the core of sensemaking (Weick 1995), is always an unfolding in the present. Oriented toward and triggered by either the past, present or future, the continuous interplay between the past and the future (Simpson 2009, 2014) constitutes the ongoing present, as emphasised by Mead (cited in, Aboulafia 2016). The present continually becomes the past (Dawson & Sykes 2016) and the future merges into the present, where the becoming unfolds. Organisational members are always in the middle of a flow of happenings. They continually bracket the flow to make meaning of it and influence others’ meaning-making; hence, there is no time out from sensemaking (Gephart et al. 2010).

One of the drivers that is happening externally with the consumer-directed work is that it is introducing high levels of competition into the provision of human services. From early next year, a big part of the aged care service delivery becomes completely open, an open market where consumers can choose where they get their service from. And so my experience in the non-for-profit world where this is happening that is a kind of mixed myriad in the NDIS and disability services provisions as well as that organisations will tend to take one of two routes with that. They will tend to either pull the shutters down and focus on their own business and act in that ultra-competitive way because they are threatened or protective of their organisation. Or the alternative approach, which is my approach, is to say that competition provides an opportunity for improvement, and [that] collaborating with others is a better business model because it keeps you connected with leading practice (Brandon, 26 October 2016).

The above comment was Brandon’s response to the question on MCCI’s current position in relation to its sister organisations in the region, four months after the major structural changes had been implemented in the organisation. Among other things, Brandon was focusing on the current drivers of change – what was happening outside the organising context that was driving the changes within the context – drawing on his experiences from the nonprofit sector and focusing on what would possibly happen in the future (the opening up of the aged care service for competition, for instance). His aim was to give sense of MCCI’s current position and his approach to the situation and to indicate the organisation’s possible future direction. His approach, which was influencing the
organisation’s future direction, was based on his sensemaking of the situation. His sensemaking of the situation was an ongoing happening, which, as discussed previously, could not have been the only sensemaking process for Brandon as it could not have been the only situation he was facing or the only happening he was linked to at the time. When exactly he began and finished his sensemaking and sensegiving of that competitive environment and MCCI’s new direction could only be marked by bracketing, at best. As the future was merging into the present and the present was becoming part of the past, there was still the presence of a challenging future that would require some hard decisions to be made in MCCI.

The emphasis on the present unfolding of sensemaking does not mean that as the temporal dimensions merge its focus remains on the same happening or cluster of happenings. The focus of sensemaking, including its temporal focus, may shift rapidly depending on the unfolding of other organisational happenings and the dynamics of organisational intra-actions. In such situations, though organisational members’ subjective time may not necessarily parallel their objective time, the two interweave (Dawson & Sykes 2016). The following is Rachel’s response to the question on how she saw her role in the progress made by MCCI.

I really don’t know because it is a day-by-day thing at the moment. I seem to be just working day by day. it is a bit [...] because there is so much going on at this point in time. I would like to think that I might say again in twelve-month’s time that everything will be in place. And everything will be running smoothly and, the services will be growing and building. So I guess that is probably what I see myself is just working towards continually growing those services and evolving as the government keeps changing the goal-post lines. Just making sure that all the services are still complying with the requirements (Rachel, 9 November 2017).

Twelve months earlier, she was confident that some of the processes had ‘sort of settled down’ (Rachel, 9 November 2017). However, though twelve months had passed, some organisational happenings, such as moving the team members internally and recruiting
new staff, both planned and unplanned, was taking her subjective time backward. She had to repeat some of the processes which she wanted to be parts of the past.

So we recruited six, I think, in the last lot, which was probably about two months ago. But again what people say when, you know, these are casual staff. But when you interview staff, they say they are available all the time, but when you employ them, they are not. So we still got a lot of limitations, I guess, on what we can provide actually, services we can provide because of the staff availability or their unwillingness to work. It has been a little bit of an issue […] (Rachel, 9 November 2017).

Though sensemaking and sensegiving unfold in the present, prioritising the temporal dimensions is deeply political. One of the factors that influence what past and/or future happenings and relationships are brought to the fore and whether the focus is shifted to the past, present or future for enacting sensible environments (Weick 1995) in the present is the political dynamics of the present happenings. It is the political dynamics of the present happenings that justify prioritising one temporal dimension over the others, facilitate the co-existence of a nostalgic and postalgic view of the past and future, respectively (Ybema 2004) or hold all the dimensions together to make and give sense of organisational happenings. The following conversation unveils two parallel views of the past and the shift from one to the other.

And we have never looked back to be honest with you. I mean, now the staff are happy, the management committee happy, I mean about 96 percent of the staff are happy now. Back then, we probably had only about 20 or 25 percent of the staff were happy (Khaled, 7 June 2018).

Can I ask what wasn’t working? (Aylin, 7 June 2018)

Look, like I said there was not really a teamwork back then. But now it is definitely a teamwork (Khaled, 7 June 2018).

Khaled was giving sense of the restructuring of MCCI and presenting an assessment of the outcome of the overall changes that the organisation had gone through in the preceding two years. To highlight the effectiveness of the initiatives, he was frequently referring to the failures and challenges of the past. According to him, the past was to be
blamed for all the issues that MCCI was facing. Though the available data suggest that
the restructuring was more of a reflection of the anticipated future, rather than an
assessment of the past, for many of the research participants it seemed necessary to put
MCCI’s present and future in direct contrast to its past. According to them, what the
organisation was doing in the present and where it was heading would insure it against
the mistakes of the past. However, when Ingrid challenged Khaled’s views on MCCI’s
past – ‘I think you are undervaluing the history of the organisation’ (Ingrid, 7 June 2018)
– he had the following response.

No, no. I mean, you know, we are talking about fifty-eight staff. And I mean you
know the new ones may be about twelve in the fifty-eight. We do still have forty
odd people from the old brigade and they obviously have a lot of experience with
community. And we cannot run the organisation without them. But the
improvement has happened dramatically with the new team, and the old team
experience to go in with it. But the hardest thing, for not only our organisation any
not-for-profit organisation...now it is harder to get money. And there is a lot of
competitors out there as well looking [for] anything and everything they can grab
of you, the organisation, they would be happy to do it (Khaled, 7 June 2018).

The argument in these comments was that not only would the restructuring and other
recent changes safeguard MCCI against the issues it was facing in the past, but also as a
result of the changes the organisation would be well positioned in the highly competitive
environment. Similar references were made to the future. While the future was seen to be
void of chances for inefficiencies of the past, it was anticipated to be ‘ultra-competitive’
(Brandon, 26 October 2016) and more challenging for organisations like MCCI. The role
of MCCI’s past and future in shaping and reshaping it and influencing the organisational
members’ sensemaking and sensegiving has been discussed previously, what is important
to reiterate here is the interaction between the temporal dimensions and political dynamics
of organisational happenings. This interaction, which resonates with the politics of time
in organising (Sykes & Dawson, forthcoming), places organisational members in a
position where they have to ‘please the god and the devil’ (Elias, 7 June 2018). The shift
between the temporal orientations and having contrasting views of the temporal dimensions, as shown in the above conversation, are influenced by political dynamics.

Based on the discussion so far, the following conclusions can be drawn on the temporal dimensions of sensemaking. First, sensemaking as a process can be past-, present- or future-oriented. Its orientation toward the past, present and future, which shows its focus, is not a defining characteristic of this process but a matter of the temporal-relational context in which sensemaking unfolds. The orientation is influenced, among other things, by the political dynamics of the present happenings. Second, sensemaking can be triggered by past, present and future happenings. Any disruption or change in the pattern of change, caused by either the past, present or future, can trigger sensemaking. Third, sensemaking is shaped by both past and future happenings. The influence can be assessed on both the micro-process of sensemaking and the macro-processes of which sensemaking is only one part. Therefore, using the terms retrospective and prospective in the sense that sensemaking is shaped by either the past or future fails to acknowledge the temporal unfolding of the sensemaking process. In this sense, sensemaking is both retrospective and prospective at the same time. Fourth, the unfolding of sensemaking is always in the present. In the flow of organisational happenings, of which the organisational members are a part and from which there is no time out, organisational members bracket part of the flow, relate it to other processes, including themselves, extract cues from the flow, interpret it and make meaning of it. As this process unfolds, the present becomes the past, the future flows into the present and there is always a new future. Further, the present political dynamics also influence what parts of the past come to the fore and what part(s) of the future gain more significance in interpreting and meaning making of the happenings. Therefore, sensemaking as a sub-
process of the becoming of both the organisation and the sensemaker is a present happening, which is shaped by both the past and future.

6.4 Conclusion

Sensemaking is a process; it unfolds processually. In the ongoing present unfolding of organisational becoming, which is characterised by the flow of happenings, organisational members, being part of the flow, bracket the flow to make meaning of it and influence others’ meaning-making of it. This process can be triggered by any disruptions in the pattern of flow. The disruption can be in the form of a happening or potential happening – hardened processes – from the past or the future. Similarly, the focus of sensemaking can be on past or the future processes. These features of sensemaking depend on the unfolding of happenings and political dynamics in the present. Given that organisational becoming is not a chronology of orderly processes, but a flux of them, organisational members face multiple sensemaking situations simultaneously. This flow and flux of happenings warrants the processual happening of sensemaking.

The processual happening of organisational sensemaking is shaped by all the temporal dimensions. Influenced by the past and the future, sensemaking unfolds in the present. The influence of the temporal dimensions on sensemaking goes beyond its triggering and focus. The past and the future influence sensemaking by shaping all the processes that contribute to sensemaking. Therefore, while sensemaking can be triggered by and focused on the past or future, it is both retrospective and prospective at the same time; however, it unfolds in the present. Its unfolding in the present also plays a role in how it is triggered, what it is focused on and what part(s) of the past and future gain importance in sensemaking. From a strong process view, saying that sensemaking is an ongoing process, which is shaped by all the temporal dimensions, is a tautology as a
process cannot be episodic; nor can a process be appreciated as such without appreciating all its temporal dimensions.
Chapter 7: Conclusion: Making Sense of MCCI’s Becoming

Chapter Structure

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7.1 Introduction

This doctoral study set out to investigate whether and to what extent organisational flux, ongoing change, becoming and organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to these processes can be demonstrated empirically. This purpose was set based on the limitations in the existing body of literature in organisation studies. Drawing on the discussion in the three preceding chapters, this chapter draws a three-part conclusion. In the first part, the conclusion returns to the key issues and limitations highlighted in chapter one. Those issues and limitations are revisited in light of the discussion in this thesis. It, then, summarises the responses to the two research questions. In the second part, the contributions of this study are highlighted under the three sub-headings of theoretical, methodological and practical contributions. Part three identifies the limitations of this study and highlights the areas that could benefit from further research.

7.2 How Organisational Becoming Unfolds and How Organisational Members Make and Give Sense of It

In summary, this study demonstrates empirically that the conception of organisations as stable entities that oscillate between stable states (Blau & Scott 1963; Gould 1989; Gersick 1991; Silverman 1970) has some serious limitations. As the case study shows, conceptualising permanent and fixed boundaries for organisations (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008), seeing their change as a transition from one equilibrium to another in a linear fashion (Romanelli & Tushman 1994) and viewing stability as the default explanation for organisations (Bickhard 2008) do not reflect how an organisation is made and remade. Like MCCI, all organisations are always in the making. They are the productive aggregate of ongoing change of the past and the future. In Mead’s notion of the present, organisations represent the continuous interplay between the past and the future.
future (Simpson 2009, 2014). An organisation’s history – how it has emerged, what macro and micro-happenings have contributed to its emergence and contributed to it along the way, how it has been purposefully and politically shaped and reshaped – and its anticipated future merge in the present to shape and reshape an organisation. Further, contrary to the equilibrium approaches to organisation and organisational change and in contrast to the substance views of reality, which underpin them, the shaping of an organisation is not a once-and-for-all event. This study reaffirms the argument that organisations are always in the making and in a state of becoming (Tsoukas & Chia 2002).

The term ‘organisational stability’ is an oxymoron as stability in the sense of denial of change means the death of an organisation. As long as an organisation is alive and functioning, it is in constant change and in a state of flux. This study demonstrates empirically that constant change comes from the happenings that make an organisation. Congruent with Deleuze’s (1994) notion of difference, the examples in chapter four through chapter six illustrate that every organisational happening marks a change from another happening in terms of its temporal unfolding, even when these happenings unfold as organisational routines (Feldman 2000). Further, the discussion shows that it is these happenings, unfolding at multiple layers, that constitute an organisation. An organisation’s substantial parts, such as its members and material components, can also be conceptualised as gradually hardened happenings (Kristensen et al. 2014). For example, what makes and remakes MCCI is the micro-level happenings, which cluster together to form activities, events, daily routines, projects, and programs, and produce substantial things. For instance, the steps that go into planning a beach-safety event include determining the date and time, designing and distributing a notice, coordinating with the local life-saving club, inviting the media, and preparing refreshments for
participants. Each of these happenings consists of many micro-happenings. They combine with the participation of the community members, attendance by and coverage from the media, demonstration by the life-saving club members, the participants’ walk on the beach and so on to make an event of the Multicultural Youth Development Project. It is important to note that MCCI does not perform these activities separate from its becoming. These happenings constitute the organisation. As these clusters are formed, they do not remain static. They fuse with each other as they flow. Events of the Multicultural Youth Development Project fuse into those of the Meals on Wheels, In-Home Social Support, administration, staff development and so on to contribute to the making of MCCI. More often than not, these non-homogenous happenings and clusters of happenings fuse into those that do not come within the temporary boundaries of MCCI. The beach-safety event fuses into the becoming of the life-saving club, participating communities and media outlets that give coverage to the event. Moreover, organisational happenings and their cluster formation do not occur in a chronological order. As the beach-safety event unfolds, other teams and projects are doing their own work, at multiple layers, with crossovers, conflicts or tensions and push and pull. These happenings, therefore, are ongoing changes that come in the form of constant flux. The unfolding of MCCI’s becoming is contrary to the arguments presented by the equilibrium approaches to organisations and organisational change (Bittner 1965; Romanelli & Tushman 1994). MCCI has never been stable or the same, nor should it be. Its journey of change, which makes it, is a constant flow, rather than transitioning or oscillating between periods of stability as argued by the traditional approaches to organisational change (Gersick 1991; Gould 1989). An organisation, therefore, can be conceptualised as a ‘temporally stabilized event clusters abstracted from a sea of constant flux and change’ (Nayak & Chia 2011, p. 281). Whilst these findings contradict the substance
views of reality and the equilibrium approaches to organisation and organisational change, they underline the affordance of process views for explaining organisational becoming and constant change.

In reaffirming the affordance of process views for organisation studies, the findings of this study show that the empirical process studies of organisations, such as those of Dawson (1994, 2003a, 2003b) and Pettigrew (1973, 1985), offer invaluable lessons and an appropriate lens for investigating organisations and organisational change. This research shows that these longitudinal, empirical studies offer opportunities for capturing the flow of organisational becoming or, in Pettigrew’s (1990, p. 268) words, for ‘catching reality in flight’. Similarly, as pointed out throughout the discussion in this thesis, appreciating and understanding the context in which these processes unfold is significant for understanding organisational becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving. In this regard, Dawson (1994) and Pettigrew’s (1990) pioneering emphasis on adopting a contextualist approach to process organisation studies offers important lessons. Further, this study has underlined the political characteristics of organisational becoming and sensemaking and sensegiving. Data show that the abstraction of clusters of happenings from a sea of organisational flow (Nayak & Chia 2011) is not an innocent or apolitical process. It involves the use of power, resistance and politics. It has been shown that not only are these factors omnipresent in organisational becoming, but they are also important and necessary for its unfolding, including for making and giving sense of the unfolding. Again, the findings show that Dawson (1994, 2019, in press) and Pettigrew’s (1973, 1985) pioneering use of a political lens for studying organisational change and the works of other scholars (for example, Balogun et al. 2011; Fleming & Spicer 2008; Hardy & Thomas 2014; Mumby et al. 2017) on power, resistance and politics offer
important grounds for furthering the study of organisational becoming, sensemaking and sensegiving.

This research shows that on the one hand those organisation studies that come from the so-called weak process views (Chia & Langley 2004) can contribute to the strong process views of organisations in terms of their empirically grounded works and bringing power, resistance and politics to the fore of organisation studies. On the other hand, organisation studies coming from strong process views offer richer theoretical explanations for organisational becoming and sensemaking and sensegiving as an inseparable part of that becoming. This finding goes to the heart of the first research question in that, despite the challenges associated with representing and capturing organisational flow and flux, organisational becoming can be demonstrated empirically. It shows that strong process views of organisation, which stress the becoming of organisations (Tsoukas & Chia 2002) and their relationality and flow (Hernes 2008; Weick 1974), are not mere theoretical explanations; they are equally practical. Marrying the theoretical explanations from strong process views of organisations and the empirical works from less radical process views of organisations provides an important opportunity for furthering process organisation studies. In this sense, where works, such as those of Helin and colleagues (2014), Hernes (2014a), Hernes and Maitlis (2010) and Langley and Tsoukas (2017) provide appropriate and robust theoretical explanations for studying organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming, Dawson (1994, 2003a, 2003b) and Pettigrew’s (1973, 1985) works, among others, provide strong empirical grounds and an appropriate lens for appreciating the key characteristics of organisational becoming. The study acknowledges that recently there has been a promising interest in empirical work from a process perspective (for example, Carroll & Simpson 2012, Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff 2010; Crevani 2018; McDonald & Simpson 2014; Sergi & Hellin 2011;
Simpson & Marshall 2010; Simpson, Buchan & Sillince 2018; Simpson, Tracey & Weston 2018; Vásquez, Brummans & Groleau 2012). However, there is much room for empirical work in this area. Empirical investigation grounded in strong process views has a lot to offer for organisation studies.

This study also highlights an important limitation and two areas of tension in the literature on organisational sensemaking and sensegiving. The limitation is argued to be around the link between sensemaking, sensegiving and organisational becoming. It has been underlined that despite a strong link between process organisation studies and sensemaking and the significant contributions of studies of sensemaking to process organisation studies (Bakken & Heres 2006; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Weick 1979, 1995), there has been only limited empirical investigation of sensemaking and sensegiving in relation to organisational becoming. Broadly, in process studies of sensemaking and sensegiving, organisational becoming as the flux and flow of happenings, and the link between organisational sensemaking, sensegiving and becoming have not received due empirical attention. However, this study shows that organisational sensemaking and sensegiving cannot be separated from organisational becoming. Evidence indicates that organisational members’ contribution to organisational becoming and their role in streamlining and influencing the flow of happenings depend on their sensemaking and sensegiving of organisational happenings and vice versa. Whilst organisational happenings continually trigger sensemaking and sensegiving, the latter also contribute to organisational happenings. Therefore, process studies of sensemaking and sensegiving offer an important area for contribution to process organisation studies.

The two areas of tension in the literature on organisational sensemaking and sensegiving concern the temporality of sensemaking and sensegiving. This study shows
that whilst the literature has a binarised position on the ongoingness of sensemaking and sensegiving (Weick 2011; Maitlis & Christianson 2014), sensemaking as an inseparable sub-process of organisational becoming is always ongoing. It has been shown that as parts of organisational becoming, rather than bystanders to the flow (Purser & Petranker 2005), organisational members are always in the middle of something (Mintzberg 1973); in other words, in the middle of a happening. By virtue of organisational happenings and their patterns being continually disrupted by organisational happenings, simultaneous sensemaking and sensegiving of multiple happenings and the fusing of sensemaking of one happening into the sensemaking of other happening, there is no time out from sensemaking (Gephart et al. 2010). Therefore, sensemaking and sensegiving as a process cannot be conceptualised as episodic. The episodic view of sensemaking (Maitlis & Lawrence 2007; Mills et al. 2010; Starbuck & Milliken 1988; Weick 1995, 2011) contradicts the temporal characteristic of processes.

On the question of whether sensemaking and sensegiving are retrospective or prospective, the research findings show that the unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving occurs contrary to the dominant view in the literature. Whilst, broadly speaking, the literature emphasises that sensemaking is retrospective (Gioia et al. 2002; Maitlis 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010; Sonenshein 2010; Weick 1995), this study shows that sensemaking and sensegiving are simultaneously retrospectively and prospective. Where the literature sees the retrospective characteristic of sensemaking through bracketing past happenings and focusing on cues from the past (Weick 1979), this study underlines the retrospective and prospective characteristics of sensemaking and sensegiving through the role of the past and the future in shaping the present unfolding of processes in the first place. As pointed out earlier, the present unfolding of processes, including the sensemakers, is determined by the past and the future (Dawson
& Sykes 2016). The discussion indicates that the way organisational members bracket the flow of organisational happenings, relate the happenings and themselves to the multitude of other processes, and focus on and interpret cues are influenced by both the past and future. At the same time, sensemaking and sensegiving can be oriented toward the past, present or future. They can also be triggered by past, present or possible future happenings. How sensemaking and sensegiving are triggered and what their focus is do not deny their temporal unfolding (Wiebe 2010).

In light of these findings, following is a brief reiteration of some of these points under the two research questions.

1. How can organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming be demonstrated empirically?

This study reaffirms that process thinking is as much practical as it is theoretical. Organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming are not only theoretical conceptions; they can be shown empirically as they reflect the unfolding of organisational becoming. At the practice level, the empirical demonstration of organisational becoming requires a focus on the happenings that constitute the organisation, including its material bodies and other substantial things. It starts with appreciating the multitude of organisational happenings in their temporal-relational contexts. It requires capturing the organisational happenings at multiple layers, analysing the happenings, exploring the influence of the past and the future on them, and representing the temporal flow in words. However, there is a limit to the empirical demonstration of organisational becoming. The limit comes from two major challenges. First, capturing the entirety of an organisational becoming, as flux and flow at multiple layers and over time, demands significant time and resources. Second, as Elliot Jaques (1982, p. 9) rightly points out, ‘[words] make things still’. In Jaques’ words, representing the flow and flux of organisational becoming in words ruins
its time and temporal characteristics and pins it down. Demonstrating the flow in words is like showing a river through a diagram or photograph. This challenge puts the biggest limitation on empirical demonstrations of organisational becoming.

2. How do sensemaking and sensegiving temporally unfold in relation to organisational becoming?

This study shows that as an inseparable sub-process of organisational becoming, organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving of the becoming unfold continually. As with organisational becoming, there is no time out from sensemaking (Gephart et al. 2010); it is ongoing. Further, given the mutually constitutive relation between sensemaking and sensegiving – sensegiving is a construct of sensemaking (Rouleau 2005) and vice versa – sensegiving cannot be an exception to the ongoingness of a process. The ongoingness of sensemaking and sensegiving can be supported by a number of other characteristics of this process. First, organisational happenings are continually disrupted by happenings, both within and outside the organising context. The continuous disruption provides the ground for ongoing sensemaking and sensegiving. Second, organisational members simultaneously make and give sense of multiple happenings. Third, simultaneous sensemaking and sensegiving of multiple happenings fuse into each other. In light of these characteristics, the conceptualisation of sensemaking and sensegiving as episodes has limitations.

Another important characteristic of sensemaking and sensegiving is their temporal dimensions. Sensemaking and sensegiving unfold in the present but are shaped by both the past and the future, that is, they are both retrospective and prospective. A process view of sensemaking and sensegiving requires appreciating their temporal unfolding, with their complementary dimensions of the past, present and future (Dawson & Sykes 2016).
7.3 Contributions of the Research

This research makes a number of contributions to process studies of organisations. These contributions are theoretical, methodological and practical.

7.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

Building on the existing body of research on process studies of organisations, this study indicates the possibility of empirically demonstrating organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming. It contributes to the understanding that despite the challenges associated with capturing the entirety of organisational becoming at multiple layers and over time, and representing the flow in words, empirical investigation of organisational becoming is a feasible and practical endeavour. Appreciating the practicality of such an investigation and highlighting the challenges and limitations in this area is a modest contribution to the nascent body of empirical research from a strong process view of organisation. It also underlines the affinity between process philosophy and organisation studies by showing the practicality of strong process thinking.

The second contribution of this study is to the processual understanding of organisational change by reaffirming the non-linearity, complexity and chaotic characteristics of organisational change (Dawson 1994; Pettigrew 1973). This study contributes to the process organisation studies by underlining the possibility of marrying the empirical works of early process studies, the recent works in this area, and the strongly theoretical explanations of process studies from a strong perspective. It draws attention to the importance of a contextualist approach (Dawson 1994; Pettigrew 1990) and political perspective to process studies of organisational change (Dawson 1994, 2003a, 2003b; Pettigrew 1973, 1985), the significance of a broader view of organisational power, resistance and politics (Fleming & Spicer 2008; Hardy & Thomas 2014; Thomas & Hardy 2011) and the affordance of strong process views (Helin et al.
2014; Hernes 2014a; Langley & Tsoukas 2017) for furthering studies of organisational becoming, constant change and flux.

A third theoretical contribution of this study is to the political understanding of organisational becoming (Dawson 1994). The study reaffirms the pervasiveness and inextricability of power, resistance and politics in organisational becoming (Balogun et al. 2011; Fleming & Spicer 2008; Thomas & Hardy 2011). It empirically shows both the celebratory and demonising forms of resistance (Thomas & Hardy 2011) and the use of power and political manoeuvres at micro- and macro-levels and at backstage and front stage (Mumby et al. 2017). It contributes to broadening the conception of organisational politics and the recognition of the interplay between various forms of power, resistance and political behaviours that keeps the organisation moving and gives it the intended shape.

A fourth theoretical contribution of this study is to the process studies of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving. The study draws attention to the role of sensemaking and sensegiving as an inseparable sub-process of organisational becoming. Earlier studies on sensemaking (for example, Hernes & Maitlis 2010; Maitlis 2005; Weick 1979, 1995, 2001) have laid some solid grounds for investigating organisational sensemaking from a process perspective. However, on the processual characteristic of sensemaking, there has often been misplaced emphasis on what sensemaking should be, rather than how it unfolds as an indispensable sub-process of organisational becoming. This study shows that the recognition of the processuality and temporality of sensemaking requires an appreciation of both how sensemaking unfolds and what it does. The temporal unfolding of sensemaking cannot be fully conceptualised without conceptualising it as a process in the first place. Its significance to organisational
becoming transcends the managerial discourse and practices. It happens at every level of organisational becoming.

This research contributes to the understanding of temporal organisational sensemaking (Wiebe 2010) and sensegiving. It underlines the need for an appreciation of all the temporal dimensions in their unfolding. The study highlights the need for moving away from the ‘either retrospective or prospective’ argument and the dominant retrospective view of sensemaking in the literature (Holt & Cornelissen 2014; Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Weick 1993, 1995, 2001). The empirical demonstration of the influence of the past and the future on the present unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving contributes to the recognition of sensemaking and sensegiving as the two aspects of a process. Their recognition as a process highlights all their temporal dimensions as the necessary aspects of the same temporal unfolding (Dawson & Sykes 2016).

A sixth contribution of this study also relates to the temporal unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving. The empirical demonstration of sensemaking and sensegiving as an ongoing process with no time out (Gephart et al. 2010) highlights the limitations of the binarised view of sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson 2014; Weick 2011) and supports the conception of sensemaking and sensegiving as an ongoing process (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2015; Weick 1995).

The study contributes to understanding organisational management, especially with respect to change. It highlights the need for revisiting the conception of a manager as someone who is expected to impose stability on organisational becoming or, at least, restore stability during organising. A change of perspective in this area has implications for the deployment of time, energy and resources in organisations. It also has
implications for creativity and novelty (Tsoukas 2005) and the risk of familiarity trap in organisations.

7.3.2 Methodological Contributions

The principal methodological contribution of this study is the attempt to investigate the possibility of the empirical demonstration of organisational becoming. By focusing on the principal categories of processes, such as happenings and events (Rescher 1996, 2000), rather than only on individuals and their narratives, the study contributes to empirical organisation studies from a process perspective. It underlines the methodological feasibility of demonstrating the ongoing change and flux that constitute an organisation. Adopting a participatory methodology and incorporating reflexivity into the study accommodate the temporal, relational and contextual characteristics of organisational becoming.

This research contributes to participatory research methodology by highlighting the strengths that a collaborative-participatory methodology offers for process organisation studies. As a strength, the methodology places the organisation’s constitutive practices and performances at the centre of the study. Rather than merely depending on the narratives and artefacts and creating knowledge about the temporal unfolding of political behaviours and practices, those behaviours and practices themselves become part of the study and shape the study. The study shows that by overcoming the limitations of time and resources and the challenges associated with contextual factors, the methodology offers the opportunity for capturing the multi-layer unfolding of organisational happenings, their temporal and contextual flux and political characteristics. More time and resources, which are limited for a PhD project, broader participation of organisational members and access to organisational happenings at
multiple levels, which were limited due to the contextual factors, came to the fore as important elements of the methodology.

A methodological contribution of this study is identifying the limitations of the methodology in representing organisational becoming as the flux and flow of happenings. This study reaffirms the philosophical view that words ‘make things still’ (Jaques 1982, p. 9). They have significant limitations in demonstrating flow and flux. While this study highlights the need for alternative methods and methodologies for representing organisational becoming, it underlines the suitability of a collaborative-participatory methodology for capturing the flux and flow of happenings as a prerequisite for their representation.

The study underlines the importance of contextual understanding in process organisation studies (Dawson 1994; Pettigrew 1990). The researcher’s knowledge of the micro- and macro-contextual factors is paramount in a participatory methodology. Such knowledge influences the shaping and reshaping of the research and determining the level of collaboration between and participation of the researcher and research participants. It also affects the focus of the research on particular aspects of organisational becoming.

7.3.3 Practical Contributions

This research partnership has been mutually beneficial for the researcher and the organisation. Though it is not the first partnership between the MCCI and the University of Wollongong, this partnership has been reported to the participants of the organisation’s annual general meeting as its achievement in establishing partnership with a wider network of stakeholders. Further, this study has also conducted an analysis of the role of the organisation’s management team and new staff in the process of change. The
analysis, which was requested by the organisation, produced a report to its senior management.

The study has a number of practical recommendations for the organisation. The recommendations include drawing management’s attention to the link between organisational members’ sensemaking and sensegiving of change and the possible gap between individuals and collectives’ sensemaking and the organisationally sanctioned sensegiving. The long-term impacts of this gap on organisational members’ commitment and contributions to organisational becoming demand timely attention to these processes, including their non-discursive forms.

7.4 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This study has a number of limitations. First, the study has limitations in capturing the entirety of organisational becoming even over a certain period of time. Despite focusing on the happenings, what the study has been able to capture makes a small part of the flow and flux over a short period of time. Second, and related to the preceding limitation, capturing the flow and flux and representing them as such is beyond the limits of any study. The choice of certain words in this study is intended to overcome some of the challenges that come from this limitation. Third, the study has focused on organisational becoming over a relatively short period of time. A longer time period would have provided a better and clearer image of the becoming. Fourth, given the limited resources and limited access to organisational happenings, the study has focused on small segments of the becoming. A wider coverage of the happenings, at multiple layers and across time would have enriched the research findings.

Considering the above limitations, any future investigation of organisational becoming would benefit from overcoming one or more of these limitations. More specifically, future research could benefit from investigating the processuality of
organisational becoming in its entirety over a period of time. Capturing the processual unfolding of organisational happenings requires both longitudinal and cross-sectional study of an organisation’s constitutive processes. While it is important to capture the flow of organisational happenings in their temporal-relational context over a period of time, it is equally important to investigate organisational happenings at multiple levels at the same time. Potential questions that can be explored include: How do the multilayered unfolding of happenings productively fuse into each other? How do the multilayered unfolding of happenings generate more happenings and create the substantial components of an organisation? How does the fusing of happenings or their intra-action intensify the happening of power and politics and use of resistance? Such a longitudinal and cross-sectional dissection of an organisation can also help in a better understanding of the link between organisational happenings and change, their ongoingness, the notion of organisational stability and organisational members’ efforts to impose stability on the flow and streamlining the flow. Questions that can be further explored on these aspects of organisational becoming include: What is the relation between organisational happening, organisational change and organisational becoming? How can a process view of organising and organisational change accommodate the concept of stability? How can a process view of organising and organisational change conceptualise the notion of change management? Further, the temporal characteristic of organisational becoming and the way its temporality and temporal dimensions interact with each other warrant empirical investigation in their own right. However, such studies would have to overcome two major challenges, logistical and methodological challenges, which are discussed later in this section.

Further empirical investigation of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving, that is, the role of sensemaking and sensegiving in organisational becoming, their
unfolding at micro-level, and how sensemaking and sensegiving mutually affect other organising processes, could make significant contributions to the existing body of the literature on process study of organisations. Investigation of sensemaking and sensegiving at micro-level, in the context of multilayered unfolding of organisational happenings, can throw more light on the debate on continuous versus episodic characteristic of sensemaking and sensegiving. Potential questions that can direct future research in this area include what role do sensemaking and sensegiving play in the unfolding of organisational happenings and, subsequently, organisational becoming? How do sensemaking and sensegiving of micro organisational happenings interact with sensemaking and sensegiving of macro happenings? How do sensemaking and sensegiving mutually affect the unfolding of organisational happenings? Further, the temporal unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving, their temporal orientation, their political characteristic, and the interaction between temporal orientation and political dynamics are some of the topics that merit further empirical study. Nonetheless, any investigation of the political dynamics of organising and sensemaking and sensegiving needs to look beyond the often-demonising conception of power, resistance and politics (Thomas & Hardy 2011).

Future research in the area of organisational sensemaking and sensegiving could also benefit from empirical investigation around questions, such as: What is the relationship between sensemaking and sensegiving? How do sensemaking and sensegiving temporally and structurally unfold? What does a possible gap between them demonstrate? How do sensemaking and sensegiving unfold non-verbally? How do non-verbal sensemaking and sensegiving differ from sensemaking and sensegiving based on verbal behaviours? Nonetheless, a future research in any of these areas would have to meet a number of pre-requisites or challenges. As previously pointed out, the logistical
challenge of conducting a longitudinal and cross-sectional process study around any of the above topics would be considerable. It needs significant amount of time and resources. Further, having full access to organisational happenings at multiple levels and over some time may not match the realities of organisational becoming, especially when an organisation is undergoing a robust change. Therefore, any future research would have to take these challenges into consideration.

A process study of any of the above topics would have to deal with the challenge of capturing and representing processes. While research methods, such as observation and shadowing, including the use of video recording, have the potential to capture organisational flow and flux (McDonald & Simpson 2014), they are not the perfect methods for this purpose. Over an extended period of time, capturing organisational flow and flux with their depth and width becomes a slippery practice. Further, the challenge of representing organisational flow and flux remains the most significant challenge. Therefore, future research would benefit from adding all these challenges into the equation.

To conclude, despite its limitations, this study highlights the flow and flux of organisational becoming. It draws attention to the need for appreciating what happens and how the happenings unfold in an organising context. It attempts to shift the focus from individuals, materials and substances in general to the processes that constitute them and, subsequently, make and remake an organisation and give it its distinctive characteristics. The study underlines the entangledness of organisational relations. However, the relations and their entangledness bear meaning only in the ongoing becoming of organisations, in what the entangled relations do, and in how they unfold. Such a conceptualisation of organisations, which may not fit our stability-seeking psyche, questions the conceptions of organisational stability and immutability through time.
Focusing on organisational becoming is an attempt to refocus on becoming in general. It is an attempt to shift the focus onto processes, either small or large, which deserve the primary attention. Appreciating and understanding those processes help to refocus resources, time and efforts on the processes that underpin the issues and challenges in a context.
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Appendix 1: Observing Participation of Organisational Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Contextual Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station (working in a single desk office and sharing office with one more staff); having been with MCCI for four weeks as of her first observation session; observed during different office hours; observed over an extended period of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salma</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station (sharing office with another staff member); having been with MCCI for approximately twelve years as of her observation session; observed over a few hours, single session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station (sharing office with another staff member); having been with MCCI for approximately ten years as of her observation session; observed over a few hours, single session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station (changing offices/rooms, working out of a single desk office, and sharing office with another staff member); having been with MCCI for approximately eighteen months as of her first observation session; observed over an extended period of time; observed during different office hours, multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivana</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station (sharing office with one-three other staff members); having been with MCCI for approximately two years as of her first observation session; observed over an extended period of time; observed during different office hours, multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Observed at his normal work station (working out of a single desk office); followed at the office building while he was doing his normal work; having been with MCCI for approximately two and a half years as of his observation session; single session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Observed at his normal work station (working out of a single desk office); followed around the office and at organisational events; having been with MCCI for approximately six weeks as of his first observation session; observed over an extended period of time; observed during different office hours; multiple random sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station (sharing office with other staff members); having been with MCCI for over one year as of her first observation session; observed over a short period of time; multiple random sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>Observed at organisational events; having been with MCCI for approximately one month as of her first observation session; observed over an extended period of time; multiple random sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Observational Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled</td>
<td>Observed at organisational events; having been with MCCI for approximately fifteen years as of his first observation session; observed at random times over an extended period of time, multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>Observed at organisational events; having been with MCCI for approximately forty-one years as of his first observation session; observed at random times over an extended period of time, multiple sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station; having been with MCCI for approximately six months as of her first observation session; observed over a few sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylin</td>
<td>Observed over at her normal work station and at organisational event; observed over a few sessions; having been with MCCI for approximately six months as of her first observation session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>Observed at organisational events; observed for a few sessions; having been with MCCI for approximately five months as of her first observation session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Observed at her normal work station and at organisational events; observed over a few sessions; having been with MCCI for approximately one week as of her first observation session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2: Observing Organisational Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Type of Event</th>
<th>Contextual Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event 1</td>
<td>Hang out</td>
<td>Within two months of the research project (ethics approval); meeting and greeting MCCI staff; hanging out at the central office; engaging in short conversation with random staff members; getting to know them; having coffee at the kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 2</td>
<td>Hanging out</td>
<td>Within three months of the research project (ethics approval); meeting and greeting organisational members; engaging in short conversations with them; hanging out at MCCI’s central office to get familiar with the research site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 3</td>
<td>Annual General Meeting 2016</td>
<td>Within five months of the research project; observing meeting proceedings; financial members, staff and general public in attendance; outside the normal office hours and MCCI’s office building; Chairperson and CEO presenting annual operational and financial reports; electing six members of the management committee; guest speakers; included entertainment; provided refreshment at the conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 4</td>
<td>Staff Development Day</td>
<td>Within nine months of the research project; one day event; away from the office; CEO’s presentation; staff meeting each other; facilitated sessions of teamwork; facilitated entertainment; drumbeat exercise; lunch and coffee served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 5</td>
<td>Volunteers’ Lunch</td>
<td>Within eleven months of the research project; event outside MCCI’s office to acknowledge volunteers’ service to community/organisation during National Volunteer Week; certificates of appreciation given to volunteers; live music and entertainment; guest speakers; food served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 6</td>
<td>Cook-off Event</td>
<td>Within twelve months of the research project; one day event at a local high school; final part of months-long preparation of staff, volunteers and a group of high school students; community members (MCCI volunteers/staff) transferring their cooking skills to school students; students doing it as part of their Food Technology/Home Economics subject; MCCI’s senior staff and board members at the closing session; school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Event 7 | Hanging out  
Within thirteen months of the research project; hanging out at MCCI’s sub-office; engaging in short conversation with random staff members; getting to know staff and volunteers at the sub-office; having finding out on organisational events |
| Event 8 | General Meeting 2017  
Within fourteen months of the research project; half yearly meeting; financial members, staff and general public in attendance; guest speakers; Chairperson’s speech and CEO’s report to members; entertainment; refreshment at the end |
| Event 9 | Beach and Water Safety  
Within sixteen months of the research project; a joint event with the local city council at the beach side and local life-saving club building; for community members, especially the youth and new arrivals to Australia; presentation on beach-safety by life-saving club members; demonstration at the beach; media coverage; only a few MCCI staff at the event |
| Event 10 | Gala Dinner  
Within seventeen months of the research project; community for Respect Gala Dinner; black tie event; attendance by ticket at a venue outside the office; months of preparation has gone into it; community members, members of other sister organisations, MCCI staff and volunteers in attendance; recognition awards given to community members for their contribution to the community and multiculturalism; MCCI launching its new logo; entertainment; food and drink served |
| Event 11 | Annual General Meeting 2017  
Within eighteen months of the research project; observing meeting proceedings; financial members, staff and general public in attendance; outside the normal office hours and office building; Chairperson and CEO presenting annual operations and financial reports; electing six members of the management committee; guest speakers; included entertainment; provided refreshment at the conclusion |
| Event 12 | Beach and Water Safety  
Within eighteen months of the research project; half a day beach-safety event organised by MCCI and local life-saving club; organised on the weekend; community members, especially new arrivals to Australia in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Saver Plus</strong>&lt;br&gt;Within nineteen months of the research project; organised at MCCI office building; in collaboration with another NGO; designed for members of multicultural communities, especially the new arrivals to Australia; tips on how save money; prepare family budget and seek help when in need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>FECCA Roundtable</strong>&lt;br&gt;Within twenty months of the research project; a roundtable with the national peak organisation, FECCA, and representatives from MCCI’s member organisations; targeted at the ‘emerging community leaders’; guest speakers, including the local members of state parliament; speech by officials of MCCI and FECCA; open discussion and questions and answers; refreshment served.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Staff Dinner</strong>&lt;br&gt;Within twenty months of the research project; an informal dinner by MCCI staff; at the end of a full day staff development day; about a dozen of MCCI staff in attendance at a local restaurant; event also intended to be an opportunity to say goodbye to a manager who is leaving MCCI after working for the organisation for nearly one year; he did not attend the dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Lunch and Reflexive Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;Within twenty-four months of the research project; lunch prepared for MCCI staff; served at MCCI central office before a reflexive discussion on the findings of data analysis; discussion attended by some of the research participants, researcher and his PhD supervisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><strong>General Meeting 2018</strong>&lt;br&gt;Within twenty-five months of the research project; half yearly meeting at the hall of a local hotel; guest speakers; report to members; acknowledging the service of a senior member of the management committee who was retiring; introducing two new members of the committee who had come on board since the last meeting; refreshment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3: Interviewing Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational Position</th>
<th>Contextual Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance Administrator</td>
<td>Interviewed in the afternoon of 11 October 2016; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face, one-on-one interview; part of the middle management tier but not given the title of manager; having been with MCCI for approximately eighteen months at the time of interview; not recruited as part of the recent restructuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Services Manager</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 9 September 2016 and morning of 9 November 2017; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face, one-on-one interview; part of the newly added middle management tier and recruited after the recent restructuring; having been with MCCI for approximately five weeks at the time of her first interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager/Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 26 October 2016; interviewed at her desk (MCCI office); face-to-face, one-on-one interview; recruited as part of the recent restructuring though the position not new; from late 2017, the title changed from General Manager to Chief Executive Officer; having been with MCCI for approximately four months at the time of his interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICAC NSW &amp; ACT Manager</td>
<td>Interviewed in the afternoon of 5 December 2016 and afternoon of 12 January 2018; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face and one-on-one interview; part of the middle management tier but the position not new; having been with MCCI for approximately two years at the time of her first interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support Group Coordinator</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 15 September 2016; interviewed at MCCI’s sub-office but not at her desk; interviewed in group, face-to-face; her position affected by restructuring, reporting to Care Services Manager rather than the GM/CEO; having been with MCCI for approximately twelve years at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia Group Coordinator</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 15 September 2016; interviewed at MCCI’s sub-office but not at her desk; interviewed in group, face-to-face; her position affected by restructuring, reporting to Care Services Manager rather than the GM/CEO; having been with MCCI for approximately twelve years at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Interviewed in the afternoon of 22 June 2017; face-to-face, group interview; interviewed at MCCI office but not at his desk; having</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Interview Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Vice-Chairman</td>
<td>Interviewed in the afternoon of 22 June 2017; face-to-face, group interview; interviewed at MCCI office but not at his desk; having been with MCCI for approximately forty-two years at the time of his interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 28 July 2017; interviewed at his desk (MCCI sub-office); face-to-face, one-on-one interview; having been with MCCI for approximately two and a half years at the time of his interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Service Manager</td>
<td>Interviewed in the afternoon of 30 November 2017; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face, one-on-one interview; part of the newly created middle management tier; recruited after the recent restructuring; having been with MCCI for one and a half years at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Project Officer</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 9 November 2017; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face, one-on-one interview; having been with MCCI for approximately six months at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Youth Development Project Coordinator</td>
<td>Interviewed in the afternoon of 10 October 2017; interviewed at her desk (MCCI office); face-to-face, one-on-one interview; having been with MCCI for approximately five months at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Marketing Officer</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 24 October 2017; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face, one-on-one interview; her role more prominent as a result of the restructuring; having with MCCI for approximately seven months at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Development Officer</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 24 October 2017; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face, one-on-one interview; her role created after the recent restructuring and after the review of strategic and business plans; having been with MCCI for approximately two weeks at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Member</td>
<td>Interviewed in the morning of 17 October 2017; interviewed at MCCI office but not at her desk; face-to-face, one-on-one interview; recruited after the restructuring; having been with MCCI for approximately one year at the time of her interview.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4: Data Analysis: Sample of Initial Coding

#### Extract of Interview Transcript

**Key Question:** ‘What is happening in the data?’ (Charmaz & Belgrave 2012, p. 355).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Codes</th>
<th>Extract of Interview Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating the need for change</td>
<td>Researcher: How did you find the changes going on here, in MCCI?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlighting the messiness of change</td>
<td>Rachel: Yeah. They are necessary. Hmmm. I think that everybody is a sort of […] There is a lot of new stuff here. The management team is quite new. And the structure of that is very new as well, with the General Manager being new to the position. He only started a couple of weeks before me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing at individuals’ temporal positioning compared to that of happenings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underlining the temporal differences</td>
<td>Researcher: He started before you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rachel: Yeah, just a couple of weeks before. So us all being new, we are looking at it with very fresh eyes and, hmmm, yeah, I think [a bit of hesitation was felt], yeah, it is going ok, ah, hmmm, for me, I haven’t really got into that, hmmm, changing the services just yet. I have just been doing a bit of research on one particular group of staff […] outside of here. So I have just been analyzing that and looking at ways we can improve, and providing that service a bit more cost effectively, yeah, so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasising objective or clock time</td>
<td>Researcher: You mentioned your previous experience. Did you find your new job as changing more rapidly or less compared to what you were doing before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying new staff as better-suited for implementing change</td>
<td>Rachel: Ah, I guess, my previous job, hmmm, it was in care services as well but it was disabilities. So that was, there was a major huge big change going through the disability sector as well, preparing for the individualization of funding and all that sort of stuff. So, there I actually was working, probably the last six years, in change management and changing the way we operated our services, hmmm, so, this,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating her dissatisfaction with the (pace) of change process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinting at targeted change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying her temporal position versus the rest of change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlighting the need for change from typical managerial perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing change processes in different contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing and contrasting contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressing the extent of change and her familiarity with it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing at the drivers of change in the sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| Indicating her experience and suitability for implementing change | yeah, this is a sort of coming in at the beginning of it. Hmmm, yeah, there seemed to be a little bit behind in getting that structure ready for the individualization of funding for clients and all sort of stuff, and like starting all that again [laughter] that process, yeah. |
| Indicating subjective time |
| Showing similarities between change drivers |
| Stressing subjective time |
### Appendix 5: Data Analysis: Major Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Processuality of research</td>
<td>Identifying the temporal-relational and, subsequently, political characteristics of processes, including this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processuality of organisation</td>
<td>Demonstrating organisational flux, ongoing change and becoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processuality of change</td>
<td>Demonstrating the ongoing nature of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change and organisational becoming</td>
<td>Establishing the link between ongoing change and organisational becoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising and stability</td>
<td>Analysing the notion of stability in relation to organising characterised by flux and ongoing change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamlining attempts</td>
<td>Assessing organisational members’ attempts, at different levels, to organise and impose stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
<td>Showing temporal dimensions of sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
<td>Showing the unfolding of sensemaking and sensegiving at micro-level, highlighting the insider position of organisational members in relational to organisational becoming, the flux of happenings and, subsequently, the flux and ongoingness of sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensemaking and sensegiving beyond</td>
<td>Demonstrating various sensemaking and sensegiving attempts by organisational members that are not necessarily using language but other behaviours and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensemaking and sensegiving of sub-</td>
<td>Showing the mutually constitutive relation between sensemaking and sensegiving and, at the same time, the possible difference in how and they unfold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processes of organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap between sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics of sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
<td>Demonstrating the political characteristic of sensemaking and sensegiving as a sub-process of organisational becoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links between sensemaking, sensegiving</td>
<td>Demonstrating the inseparability of sensemaking, sensegiving and organisational becoming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: Support Letter from MCCI

Chairperson: Ken Habak QAM
Secretary: Sabine Hauth

29 June 2016

The Ethics Committee
Research Services Office
Building 20, Level 1
University of Wollongong
Northfields Ave
Wollongong NSW 2522
Email: [redacted]

Dear Ethics Committee,

Re: Project titled “Process Study of Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Organisational Change”

I am writing regarding the proposed research project titled “Process study of sensemaking and sensegiving in organisational change” to be conducted by Dr Christopher Sykes, Dr Lynne Keevers, Prof Patrick Dawson and Mr Nabi Zaher.

Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI) is fully supportive of the proposed project and sees that it would be a benefit to our organisation. We have been discussing the directions and content of the project with Mr Zaher. In order for the project to proceed, we hereby authorise the conduct of interviews, observation of participating organisational members during their normal work, correspondence with organisational members, and the use of organisational artefacts, such as reports and photos, with appropriate identifiers removed.

The key MCCI contact for the project is Cecilia Milani; email address, [redacted]. Please feel free to contact me with any further inquiries.

Yours faithfully,

Cecilia Milani
PICAC NSW & ACT Manager and Acting General Manager
Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra

[Contact information redacted]
Appendix 7: Participation Information Sheet

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET FOR MEMBERS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS OF MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF ILLAWARRA

Research Title: A Process Study of Sensemaking and Sensegiving during Organisational Change

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Changes in the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra’s (MCCI) environment, namely, policy changes in the community sector, have triggered more changes within the organisation. What sense organisational members make and give of the recent changes within MCCI is the subject of this longitudinal study. Whilst the research focuses on the meaning making process during organisational change in MCCI, it investigates how organisational members influence each other’s sensemaking and how these processes are affected by major situational factors. Though change as a process that constitutes an organisation is a familiar experience for organisations across sectors, change in an organisation’s external environment makes the internal changes more tangible and appreciable. Further, not all members make the same sense of changes happening within an organisation. Sensemaking process may be affected and determined by different factors. However, the way organisational members influence each other’s sensemaking – that is, they give sense of change – plays a significant role in the meaning making process.

The study will be conducted by the following researchers.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR
Dr Christopher Sykes
Faculty of Business
University of Wollongong

CO-INVESTIGATOR
Dr Lynne Keevers
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Wollongong

CO-INVESTIGATOR
Professor Patrick Dawson
School of Management and Marketing

CO-INVESTIGATOR
Mr Nabi Zaher
Faculty of Business (PhD Candidate)
METHOD AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS

The research will use a participatory/collaborative methodology, which will include interviews, observations, follow up discussions and study of organisational artefacts, such as reports and photos, available through MCCI’s website. You are being invited to participate in this research project. Each research participant will be requested to allow one of the researchers to undertake a 60-minute semi-structured interview about the process of change in the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra. Following are a few samples of the interview questions.

What sort of change(s) do you see happening within MCCI?

If this change takes place, how will it affect your role within the organisation?

How will this change impact on MCCI’s relationships with its key stakeholders?

The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed and notes will be taken to gain knowledge of how staff and members of MCCI make and give sense of the change process. The interviews will be de-identified and transcripts will be made available to you to check accuracy and to ensure that you approve the use of your de-identified comments in the research publication if needed. The research will also involve one of the researchers observing you during your normal work in the organisation. The overall observation will take place over the period of six months, with approximately twenty participants. This timeframe will allow one of the researchers to spend a total of roughly six days – six hours each day – observing you. In collaboration with you, these six days will be distributed over the period of six months. During the observation, the researcher will be located near your desk or workstation, taking notes, engaging in short conversations and asking questions for clarification. Further, the researcher may follow you while you perform your normal organisation role, and observe more than one participant at a time should the type of work allow us to do so. Nonetheless, these arrangements will be made in close collaboration with you.

Follow up discussions and correspondence, either over the phone/Skype, or through emails and/or the use of other electronic tools, will continue throughout the research project. However, you may choose to participate in some parts of the research study but not in others (see the Consent Form).

Interview transcripts will be provided to you to ensure accuracy. If you want any sections omitted from the transcripts, you will have the opportunity to do so. Further, the researchers will co-analyse the data with you. The co-analysis component will take place in a number of steps. First, in addition to providing you with the interview transcripts for ensuring accuracy, the researchers will analyse your interview transcripts and notes taken during observation. Results of the analyses will be shared with you to comment on them and add your own analysis. Then, the common themes that emerge from all the interviews, observations and analyses of organisational artefacts will be de-identified. The de-identified information and analyses will be shared with all the participants to comment on and add their views. It is important to note that your identifiable information (for example, interview transcripts, observation notes, electronic correspondence, follow-up discussions and analysis) will be available to you and the researchers only. The de-
identified information will be shared with all the research participants. Following is a summary of the major steps in the study.

1. You will be interviewed. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed.
2. Interview transcripts will be shared with you to ensure accuracy.
3. You will be observed over a period of time. Notes will be taken during the observations.
4. Researchers will analyse interview transcripts and observation notes.
5. The outcome of the analyses will be shared with you to comment on them – that is, you add your analysis of the data.
6. Organisational artefacts will be analysed.
7. The de-identified data will be analysed collectively, the outcome of which will be shared with you and other research participants to comment on.
8. During the research process, researchers will have follow-up discussions (verbal and electronic) with you as needed.

Each method used in the research project will remain focused on how organisational members make meaning of change and make sense of their experiences during the process of change. None will reflect on your performance as a member, staff, or volunteer of the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra. Further, while the identifiable information and observation will not be shared with other research participants, nor with the organisation’s management/leadership, the researchers will work in close collaboration with you to carry out the research in a way that does not interfere with the normal organisational operations.

POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVENIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS

Besides participating in the semi-structured interview(s), electronic correspondence with the research team and allowing the researchers to observe you during your normal organisational operations, the research project does not foresee any risks for you and the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra. Nor do the researchers foresee any risks, as a result of this research, that can jeopardize the organisation’s working relationships with its stakeholders. Further, your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation including interview transcripts from the study at any time. Refusal to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with MCCI and the University of Wollongong.

Nonetheless, the researchers appreciate the discomfort that may be caused by participating in the interview, follow up discussion and electronic correspondence and being observed while performing your normal organisational role. Therefore, the research team will work closely with you to minimise the possible discomfort. Regardless of whether or not commitment is made to participate, your relationship with the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra and the University Wollongong will not be affected.

FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

This study is part of a Higher Degree Research (HDR) program (Doctor of Philosophy) run by the Faculty of Business in the University of Wollongong. Apart from the normal study expenses, the research project is not expected to incur additional expenses.
Therefore, no funding from external sources is involved in the research project. Participants will not be remunerated for their participation in the research process.

ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Business) of the University of Wollongong (UOW). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UOW Ethics Officer on [redacted].

Thank you for your interest in this research study.

Nabi Zaher on behalf of the Research Team.
Appendix 8: Invitation Letter

University of Wollongong

July 2016

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is an invitation for you to participate in the following research project:

| Research Title: A Process Study of Sensemaking and Sensegiving during Organisational Change |

**Principal Investigator:** Dr Christopher Sykes  
**Co-Investigator:** Dr Lynne Keevers  
**Co-Investigator:** Prof. Patrick Dawson  
**Co-Investigator:** Mr Nabi Zaher

The purpose of this research project is to investigate how organisational members make sense of their experiences during the process of organisational change. With the view that organisations are constantly changing and change and events constitute an organisation, the study will focus on how constructing meaning around the experiences of organisational change unfolds as a social process, how this meaning making process is influenced and how major situational factors affect these processes (Participation Information Sheet enclosed).

Should you choose to participate in this research study, your involvement will include talking to the researchers in an interview(s) about your experience of change in the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI). Each interview will be audio-taped, transcribed and will take approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted at a place most convenient for you. No identifiable transcripts will be read or seen by anyone other than the researchers. The interview transcript will be de-identified and the transcript will be made available to you to check accuracy and to ensure that you approve the use of your de-identified comments in the research publication if needed. The researchers will also request you to allow them to observe you, over an extended period of time, during your normal course of business, engage in electronic correspondence and/or telephonic/Skype conversations, and follow up discussions.

Apart from the time involved in the aforesaid methods of data collection, the researchers do not foresee any risks for you and MCCI. Nor do the researchers foresee any risks, as a result of this research, that can jeopardize MCCI’s working relationships with its stakeholders. Nonetheless, your involvement in this project is totally voluntary and you can withdraw from the research project at any time without explanation.

The project is significant in terms of understanding how organisational members make and give sense of organisational change, which, in turn, has significant implications for management of organisational change.
This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UOW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Nabi Zaher on behalf of the Research Team.
CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

**Research Title:** A Process Study of Sensemaking and Sensegiving during Organisational Change

**Research Team:**

*Dr Christopher Sykes; Dr Lynne Keevers  
Prof. Patrick Dawson; Mr Nabi Zaher*

I have been given information about the research project, titled above, and discussed its methodology with Nabi Zaher, who is conducting this research in the Faculty of Business, University of Wollongong, Australia.

**Agree □  Disagree □**

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include consenting to participate in one 60 minute, face-to-face interview, verbal and electronic communication with the researcher, being observed while performing my normal organisational role and taking part in follow up discussion(s). I have had the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions I had about the research and my participation.

**Agree □  Disagree □**

I understand that the interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. I also understand that my de-identified comments and findings of the observation may be used in a dissertation and/or presentations and/or journal articles if I grant my permission.

**Agree □  Disagree □**

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and I am free to refuse participation and to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the Faculty, the University of Wollongong and Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra.

**Agree □  Disagree □**

I consent to be interviewed, which will be audiotaped and transcribed.

**Agree □  Disagree □**
I consent to be observed, over a number of days at different intervals, while I am performing my normal organisational role. I understand that during the observation process the researcher will be located near my desk, ask questions to clarify anything he does not understand, and engage in conversation with me. I also understand that the researcher and I will make the arrangements for observation process collaboratively.

Agree ☐ Disagree ☐

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used within said publications, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Agree ☐ Disagree ☐

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Dr Christopher Sykes (+61 2 4221 4507) or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human

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Name (please print)

Signed Date

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