The Mission Statement: Creating Organizational Actorhood And Agency
Within And Beyond The Communicatively Constituted Organization

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1. Introduction

Conceptualizing organizations as constituted in communication is relatively new organizational communication meta-theory. The term CCO was coined by Robert D. McPhee whose four-flow structuration approach (McPhee & Zaug, 2000) is seen as one of the three pillars of CCO (Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014). Simultaneously, another school, the Montreal school, emerged with a focus on text and conversation, especially at a situated level (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). A third school of CCO thinking, the Luhmannian approach, is a more recent addition to the CCO theoretical construct, contributing organizational theorizing which has until now predominately existed in German-speaking countries only (Schoeneborn & Sandhu, 2013; Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud, & Taylor, 2014). Fundamental for all three schools is a desire to theorize communication as something that is more than incidental to organization (i.e., the noun) and organizing (i.e., the verb), and to position it in a higher-order role as being constitutive of both organization and organizing and thereby demonstrating "the unique value of communicative explanations" to organization theory (Koschmann, 2010, p. 433).

As a new theory CCO is not without its critics (e.g., Reed, 2010; Bisel, 2010), and CCO scholars who use the CCO approach seem in particular to be fighting two fronts in their quest to legitimize the concept within academia: (1) proving its value to organizational theory subsets such as theories of the firm, stakeholder relationships and decisional theory (e.g., Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Kuhn, 2008; Kuhn, 2012) in order to gain recognition for CCO within those fields, and (2) "materializing" its behavioral theory reach (e.g., Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009), in order to demonstrate the breadth and applicability of the CCO approach. However, it appears that while acknowledging CCO as a unified concept, a division immediately seems to take place:
McPhee and colleagues use the four flows structuration approach, Montreal school adherents use the Montreal school approach, and scholars in the Luhmann tradition follow a Luhmann-inspired approach, though most seem to interweave some insights from the other theoretical pillars as they appear relevant.

At the theoretical level, attempts to look for common ground are simultaneously discouraged as creating over-simplification, reification and a stifling of productive debates (Brummans et al., 2014), moderately encouraged by positioning it meta-theoretically as a bridge between behavioral and organizational theories (Kuhn, 2012), and encouraged as an emerging new paradigm for organizational communication (Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014). Simultaneously, at a communications practitioner's level, the overall CCO concept – with its foregrounding of communication as a constitutive force in organizations – seems powerfully appealing, not least as its overarching communicative-ly-constitutive premise shows potential for bridging the historically separate disciplines of internal and external organizational communication (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). However, the rather heterogeneous theoretical underpinnings of the CCO three-pillar construct make it difficult to grasp how the CCO concept can be used in practice without favoring one school over the others and, by so doing, failing to realize the benefits of the other two schools, indeed, failing to realize the full potential of CCO.

All three schools are united in "the idea that organizations do not predate communication but come into being through attributive relations; that is, via recurrent communicative processes that attribute actorhood to the organizational endeavor (Luhmann, 2000; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Taylor & Van Every, 2000)" (Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014, p. 32). However, although six foundational CCO premises were outlined by Cooren et al. (2011), it seems that to date no empirical analysis of an organization which employs
all three schools has been undertaken. A valid puzzle is therefore whether it is possible to use all three schools simultaneously as a synergistic lens (i.e., "synergism," where the total effect of interaction between the three schools is greater than the sum of each school's individual effect) for the analytical examination of an organization, which would make possible a more complete view of an organization.

As Schoeneborn and Blaschke (2014, p. 30) write, "CCO scholars share the idea that organization and communication is mutually constituted in an attributive relationship" where "communication is performed "in the name of" or "on behalf of" the organization (e.g., Taylor & Cooren, 1997), and, through this attribution, ultimately evokes organization as a processual entity." This, of course, brings into question exactly "who" is the organization that is being attributively communicated, which, in turn, implies its purpose and mission. In this regard, statements of mission "tend to be formally expressed and widely communicated to both internal and external audiences" (Fairhurst, Monroe, & Neuwirth, 1997, p. 243), and, as "a formal document that articulates an organization's distinct and enduring purpose, mission statements have become one of the most popular and widespread management tools" (Desmidt, Prinzie, & Decramer, 2011, p. 469). The juxtaposition of the mission statement and the shared idea among CCO scholars that "communication is performed "in the name of" or "on behalf of" the organization (e.g., Taylor & Cooren, 1997) points to an empirical opportunity to study mission statements in order to develop theory toward a unification of the CCO perspective given the shared interest across all three theory traditions in how organizational actorhood and agency is created through communication (Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014).
1.1 Research question

In sum, the above leads to the following research question for this thesis:

*How does the mission statement create organizational actorhood and gain agency within and beyond the communicative constitution of an organization?*

In order to limit the scope of this thesis, the current ontological debate of whether or not communication is constitutive of an organization or of organizing (e.g., Bisel, 2010; Sillince, 2010; Putnam & Nicotera, 2010) will not be addressed, but instead an explicit ontological assumption that communication does indeed constitute organization, both as a noun and a verb, is employed (cf. premise 6, Cooren et al., 2011). As currently no unified lens exists for analyzing the communicative constitution of organizations, the different epistemological underpinnings of the three schools will be drawn on to broadly inform the approach in addressing the research question from a more holistic perspective (e.g., Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014). At a more specific level, Cooren's (2004) broad definition of agency as the capability to "make a difference" (p. 375) will be used to address the research question through an empirical inquiry into the Danish organization Ældre Sagen, which has a declared mission of "fighting for a society in which all can live a long and good life" (Ældre Sagen annual reports, 2008-2013). As a nonprofit NGO, which primarily relies on membership dues for its financial revenues, Ældre Sagen was formed in 1986 by a small group of individuals within the organization Ensomme Gamles Værn in order to combat the discrimination and marginalization of older people in society, typically identified as those aged 50+. Ældre Sagen is in many ways highly conducive to an inquiry into how the mission statement gains agency within and beyond the communicatively constituted organization as (1) its mission has remained coherent since its formation in 1986 (Nielsen, 1996); (2) with 699,837 subscribing
members, where half of the 5.6 million Danish population over the age of 65 is a member (Ældre Sagen annual report, 2012); the organization has grown to a prominent position in Danish society; and (3) the organization exerts considerable influence within its societal context as evidenced by the organization’s media exposure of 15-16 daily media mentions (Ældre Sagen annual report, 2013).

For data gathering and analysis Charmaz (2006) flexible grounded theory guidelines were used, as this approach explicitly acknowledges the researcher’s interpretive and constructive role in the empirical data gathering and theory building, and also fits well with the social constructionist underpinnings of CCO (Cooren et al., 2011). The data sources were multi-fold, and included observations, video- and audio-recorded participation in meetings and training sessions, interviews with key stakeholders, and archival documentation. A longitudinal stance guided the data gathering, thus it spans 1986-2014, including a glance back to 1910. The data was analyzed with an aim to provide an analytic/narrative account which describes how the Ældre Sagen mission statement has created organizational actorhood and gained agency within and beyond Ældre Sagen as a communicatively constituted organization. It was found that the synergistic use of all three schools of CCO enabled a holistic picture of an organization to emerge, one which also demonstrates how a mission statement can become a powerful managerial tool when allowed agentive powers to guide an emerging organizational structure. The findings in this thesis support recent meta-studies into mission statements where empirical data reinforced the importance of aligning an organization’s management systems and processes with the organization’s mission statement (Braun, Wesche, Frey, Weisweiler, & Peus, 2012; Desmidt et al., 2011). Further, it was found that the structure of Ældre Sagen is guided by the organization’s purpose and mission statement to such an extent.
that a mission-oriented fractal organization has emerged naturally, which has enabled a strong local reach and impact for the organization and the continuous fulfillment of its mission statement, as evidenced by Ældre Sagen's continued growth.

1.2. The case of Ældre Sagen

In 1910, Pastor Herman Koch founded the organization Ensomme Gamles Værn (directly translated: Lonely Older People's Protection) to help alleviate widespread poverty among older people in Denmark. His intent was formulated into one single sentence: "We ask for permission to serve the elderly in those areas where help is especially needed" (Nielsen, 1996, p. 69). For the next sixty years, the organization worked primarily through fund-raising, and provided mainly social-humanitarian aid. In the 1970s the organization began to collaborate with local municipalities and private institutions. However, in 1984 new legislation required that Ensomme Gamles Værn legally restructure as a foundation, partly for reasons of increased transparency in accounting practices. Ensomme Gamles Værn complied, and concurrently also changed its name to EGV-Fonden, but it was faced with a dilemma of how to reignite an interest within the Danish population for the issues facing older citizens. A "foundation" was deemed to be too static of an entity to generate emotional appeal among the population; however, prevailing legislation made it possible for the EGV-Fonden to create a subsidiary; a new, member-based NGO with functional ties to the EGV-Fonden. On November 14, 1986, the member-organization Ældre Sagen (directly translated: The Senior Cause) was officially founded, with an overall mission "to work for the cause of seniors," which encompassed human dignity, quality of life, self-determination, the ability to provide for

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1 From Nielsen (1996) Ældre Sagen – fra Ensomme Gamles Værn til folkelig bevægelse; Ældre Sagen annual reports, 2005-2013; Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg 2014 annual meeting; Erik Kjær interview; and Michael Teit Nielsen interview.
oneself, and assistance for those in need of help. As of September 29, 2014, Ældre Sagen had 699,837 members. While membership is open to everyone over the legal age of 18, and Ældre Sagen's members span all age categories, half of Danes over the age of 65 is a member. Ældre Sagen works at both a macro-level, where the organization works at the public policy level to advocate senior policy, and at a micro-level, where the organization, both through its volunteers and through its main office in Copenhagen, helps individuals navigate the public sector bureaucracy as well as be informed of benefit entitlements. In addition, at the local level, Ældre Sagen works to advocate municipal policy that takes into account senior citizens, and provides platforms for interaction between Ældre Sagen members via lectures, training courses, excursions, outreach to home-bound seniors, and a host of other activities. The main office of Ældre Sagen, located in Copenhagen, employs a professional and salaried staff of approximately 100, and within the 217 local chapters of Ældre Sagen, covering all of Denmark, work is performed by 15,970 volunteers. The local chapters are coordinated through the Ældre Sagen main office in Copenhagen, and receive a percentage of membership revenues, but largely they operate autonomously. In general, the local chapters are focused on the same macro-level areas of concern as the Ældre Sagen main office in Copenhagen, only here at the local level.

The Frederiksberg municipality local chapter of Ældre Sagen, Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg, is one of the largest local chapters of Ældre Sagen in Denmark. It has almost 11,000 members, and half of the 103,000 population of the Frederiksberg municipality over the age of 65 is a member. Coordinated through a managing board, 227 volunteers work to provide information services, outreach to home-bound seniors, training classes, lectures and courses in a variety of areas, including computer training classes. In addi-
tion, they collaborate with the Frederiksberg city municipality, from which they also receive an amount of annual funding, to develop senior policy for Frederiksberg. Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg was one of the first local chapters of Ældre Sagen to offer computer training courses for its members. (Erik Kjær interview, lines 79-85; Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg annual meeting 2014).

On November 1st, 2014 the obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government will take effect. As of that date, most all of communication between Danish state and local authorities and the population will be in a digital format only, and a digital mailbox will be set up for every citizen over the age of 15, accessed via an individualized NemID password and a numerically-based encryption scheme. Most of what was previously in-person interactions between citizens and the authorities will from that date on take place on an internet-based platform. This naturally poses issues for citizens who are not computer- or internet literate, and approximately 320,000 of Danes over the age of 65 have never used the Internet (Ældre Sagen annual report, 2013, p. 2). While dispensation from the November 1st, 2014 requirement is available for those who can claim reasonable grounds for dispensation, the general aim of the Danish government is to henceforth maintain a digital interface with the entire population.

2. Approach to thesis

The following will (1) explain in more detail the reasoning behind using a synergistic CCO lens to address the research question of how the mission statement creates organizational actorhood and gains agency within and beyond the communicative constitution of an organization, including delimitation of this approach; (2) explain the relevance of
the mission statement as a productive point of entry into the analysis of an organization; and (3) address issues of the NGO status of Ældre Sagen as it pertains to this thesis.

2.1. Synergy

The rather heterogeneous theoretical underpinnings of the CCO three-pillar construct make it difficult to grasp how the CCO concept can be in practice without favoring one school over the others and, by so doing, failing to realize the benefits of the two other schools, indeed, failing to realize the full potential of CCO. A valid puzzle is therefore whether it is possible to use all three schools simultaneously as a synergistic lens (i.e., "synergism," where the total effect of interaction between the three schools is greater than the sum of each school's individual effect) for the analytical examination of an organization, which would make possible a more complete view of an organization.

Jointly, the three schools offer a growing reservoir of sophisticated and deeply considered thinking – not least because the schools, individually and collectively, have had to defend their positions and lines of reasoning against an organization theory field that largely regards communication as "immaterial" and "tangential to 'real forces' at work" (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 24), where communication merely "expresses, represents, and transmits already-existing realities" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 547) within organizations that are themselves seen as "containers" (Smith, 1993); simultaneously, each school has had to debate the two other schools as they each seek to explain how communication constitutes organization from within their own theoretical frameworks and beliefs.

It is precisely because the three schools have different, and deeply considered, points of entry into the CCO perspective, that a unified CCO perspective is able to address the organization within a greater societal context, attend to micro and macro organizational
phenomena, including structures, and is able to both scale up and scale down depending on the point of entry, well as account for the myriad symbolic and material considerations in-between. Because of this, the totality of the CCO perspective makes possible a likely unprecedented detailed and holistic communicative approach to organizational analysis; one that seems only fully realizable when all three schools are used simultaneously. Indeed, as Cooren and Fairhurst write, "the [communicative] constitution question should not only be approached deductively by starting from the position of an assumed whole and reasoning downward, but also inductively by starting from the position of a set of component parts and reasoning upward" (2009, p. 129), or else it is "incomplete" (Cooren, 2006, p. 81).

2.1.1. Delimitation of synergistic approach
As "[t]he current theories do not quite match up. Each involves a different set of beliefs" (Taylor, in Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014, p. 311), and "the specific mechanisms and processes by which communication is associated with organization are debated hotly" (Bisel, 2010, p. 124), any elaboration of particular points of divergence or agreement between the three schools as they pertain to the material covered in this thesis is avoided. This is done for two reasons: (1) to facilitate the reading of this document; and (2) as it here would seem counter-productive to the attempt here to create a synergistic approach which uses all three schools to solve a specific research question.

2.2. Relevance of mission statement
The three perspectives under CCO are united in "the idea that organizations do not pre-date communication but come into being through attributive relations; that is, via recurrent communicative processes that attribute actorhood to the organizational endeavor (Luhmann, 2000; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Taylor & Van Every, 2000)" (Schoeneborn &
Blaschke, 2014, p. 32), and "through this attribution, ultimately evokes organization as a processual entity" (Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014, p. 30). This, of course, brings into question exactly "who" is the organization that is being attributively communicated, which, in turn, implies its declared mission, where, indeed, "purpose" "appears to be the most common dimension in mission statements" (Bart & Baetz, 1998, p. 825). As Sillince (2010) writes: "Creating purpose is the process that constructs and enacts something new and increases motivation through a statement of intent, a prediction, or a promise" [...] of which "[a]n example is the mission statement" (Sillince, 2010, p. 136).

In this regard, mission statements "tend to be formally expressed and widely communicated to both internal and external audiences" (Fairhurst et al., 1997, p. 243), and to some authors mission statements appear to have evolved into a ubiquitous prerequisite of doing business (Desmidt et al., 2011; Ireland & Hitt, 1992, Bartkus & Glassman, 2008), and to "exist because they are expected to exist" (Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 458).

Using the mission statement as an entry point into the analysis of an organization parallels Luhmann's suggestion to choose the particular distinction that a system itself draws in order to distinguish itself from the rest of the world. (Seidl & Becker, 2006, p. 14, italics added). That this is an area which seems to merit attention is further evidenced by an appeal by Engeström to refocus discourse studies on the "enduring, constantly-reproduced purpose of a collective activity system that motivates and defines the horizon of possible goals and actions" (1999, p. 170).

Thus, an organization's mission statement – which is based on the organization's purpose and on the distinction the organization wants to create between itself and the rest of the world via this publically declared purpose – embodies powerful dynamics that
can transform a collection of individuals into a collective actor, where the essential medium is language (Taylor, 2000, p. 6 of 29), and, as such, appears to be a promising line of inquiry within CCO research. Further, the juxtaposition of the mission statement and the shared idea among CCO scholars that "communication is performed "in the name of" or "on behalf of" the organization (e.g., Taylor & Cooren, 1997) points to an empirical opportunity to study mission statements in order to develop theory toward a unification of the CCO perspective given the shared interest across all three theory traditions in how organizational agency and actorhood is created through communication (Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014).

2.3. Non-profit organization (NGO)

For non-profit organizations, mission statements are of acknowledged, critical importance: "The mission statement may be one of the most significant devices used by non-profits to communicate their core values and activities to stakeholders" (Kirk & Nolan, 2010, p. 476). Yet, "[f]or these kinds of these kinds of organizations, financial benefits are not the criterion of choice to operationalize mission statement effectiveness (Braun et al., 2012), but instead "the amount of support that can be garnered by non-profit organizations from their members, donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders" (Valentinov, 2010, p. 29). Thus, "the mission statement becomes a critical element in a non-profit's reputation, influencing its perceived effectiveness and legitimacy," and "for most non-profits, legitimacy is a requirement to gain access to various resources within their environments" (Kirk & Nolan, 2010, p. 476).

However, while in some instances NGOs are helpfully theorized as such (e.g., Kosshmann, 2012), the NGO, now "a standardizing term capturing once distinct forms such as schools, hospitals, churches, and voluntary associations" (Meyer & Bromley, 2013,
p. 367), perhaps is not always best theorized as being that much different than other organizations in a 21st century "contemporary expansion of formal organization – in numbers, internal complexity, social domains, and national contexts" (Meyer & Bromley, 2013, p. 367). Larger NGOs are now typically highly professionally staffed, managed, executed, and to lump all NGOs together in an undifferentiated, standardized category when they so clearly display markedly individual differences can hinder their analysis as simply "organizations," on par with for-profit organizations. The difference between NGOs and for-profit organizations seems increasingly hard to pin down, especially as many NGOs now also conduct profit-oriented business (which often helps provide funding for their missions), and the only thing NGOs can be said to not do is to pay out dividends. And even here the difference is elusive, for not all for-profit organizations are dividend-generating constructions. Yes, because NGOs typically have an expressed moral and social motive they are typically under stronger scrutiny (and have different accounting rules and legal monitoring) than for-profit organizations; however, as the rise in corporate social responsibility shows, for-profit organizations now also face demands of moral and social responsibility, which now even applies to government agencies, as is evident from any cursory perusal of the news media. Thus, as Meyer and Bromley summarily write: "The term organization itself now denotes an array of principles that are equally useful if applied to businesses, non-profits, or government agencies" (2013, p. 383).

As such, the perspective taken in this thesis is that Øldre Sagen is first and foremost an organization, on par with every other formal organization. Hence, the NGO status of Øldre Sagen will not be further elucidated here.
3. Methodology

To frame the methodology used in this thesis, two particular considerations merit attention:

First, as Koschmann (2010) cautions, rather than seeing communication as "merely a unit of analysis," communication scholarship will make "much more of a difference" when it sees communication as "a broader explanatory framework" that works to develop "distinctly communicative explanations of human organizing" (p. 433). Further, Koschmann (2012) reminds us of the centrality of "the constitution question" where "organizational forms should not be taken-for-granted entities, but rather be understood as complex social systems of coordination and control that arise and exist within communicative practice" (p. 143). In other words, Koschmann advocates both a top-down and bottom-up approach to data gathering and analysis, and therefore the constitution of particular organizational forms vis-à-vis communication processes merits exploration. This is also supported by Cooren and Fairhurst, who write that "the constitution question should not only be approached deductively by starting from the position of an assumed whole and reasoning downward, but also inductively by starting from the position of a set of component parts and reasoning upward" (Cooren & Fairhurst, 2009, p. 120).

Second, in observing an organization, in this case Ældre Sagen, it is instructive to recognize that the organization is itself also an observer, both of itself, and of its environment, and that these observations have great influence on its decisions and actions; it could be argued that without this fundamental understanding research observations run the risk of reifying existing organizational arrangements as inevitable and normal and not produced under specific historical conditions which are potentially passing (e.g.,
Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008, p. 1341), historical conditions, which the organization observes and to which it responds, and which the researcher needs to understand to make reasonable sense of his or her observations of an organization. The researcher thus becomes a second-order observer, one who observes another observer (Besio & Pronzini, 2010, para 21; Seidl & Becker, 2006, p. 14).

3.1. Data gathering and analysis
For data gathering and analysis flexible grounded theory guidelines (Charmaz, 2006) were used, as this approach explicitly acknowledges the researcher's interpretive and constructive role in the theoretical and empirical data gathering, analysis and drawing of conclusions, and also fits well with the social constructionist underpinnings of CCO (Cooren et al., 2011).

3.2. Theoretical Data
3.2.1. Mission Statement
The research into mission statement literature was conducted via a query of the Web of Science database, predicated on the search term "mission statement," and subsequent retrievals of articles, which were supplemented with further articles referred to in the primary source articles when these were deemed to be of relevance to the research question.

3.2.2. The CCO perspective
The data collection consisted of an iterative retrieval process of articles from the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) collection of scientific databases, followed by the building of a 400-page "master" searchable database of relevant perspectives and quotations. Thereafter, some 30 specific categories of focus were iteratively created, e.g., "co-
orientation," "decision," "environment, "boundary," etc., by which search terms the master database was queried. These specific focus categories were appended perspectives, quotations and statements which were extracted from the master database without author references, which allowed double queries to be conducted, such as "agent" within "co-orientation," etc. Only at the end of the first draft of the thesis were author references appended to the text. The "no author reference" approach enabled a synergistic consideration of CCO thinking as it pertained to the research question in a way that was unencumbered by the ascription of any particular individual school under CCO.

3.3. Empirical data

3.3.1. Ældre Sagen

The empirical data gathered from Ældre Sagen consisted of observations of interactions, texts, and interviews, including:

1) Observations, including video-recording, of the two last computer training courses in NemID and Digital Signature, level 1, held at the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg Betty Nansen location.

2) Eight interviews with Ældre Sagen member participants in the above computer training courses, upon their completion of the abovementioned course. The interviews were video-recorded, and transcripts were subsequently produced.

3) Participation in the formal Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg annual meeting, which reported the stewardship status for the year 2013. Notes were taken for this meeting, and the annual report, which was presented verbatim, was obtained.

4) Participation in an information session for Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg members about NemID and Digital Signature exemption from the November 1st, 2014 obligatory
digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government. This information session was audio-recorded.

5) Interview with Erik Kjær, Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg board member and IT focus leader. This interview doubled as an information-gathering interview, and an interview for the position of IT volunteer. The interview was audio-recorded, and a transcript was subsequently produced.

6) As an accepted IT volunteer, participation in the data stream (email and regular mail) for IT volunteers; access to Frivilligportalen (intranet for volunteers), as well as access to any written material received by Ældre Sagen members.

7) Interview with Michael Teit Nielsen, PhD. Economics; Chief Officer of Advocacy, Strategy and Innovation. Michael Teit Nielsen is a 17-year veteran of Ældre Sagen, and has chief responsibility for the formulation of Ældre Sagen's mission statement. The interview took place via emails and phone conversation.

8) Book published by Ældre Sagen ten years after Ældre Sagen's formation, Ældre Sagen – fra Ensomme Gamles Værn til folkelig bevægelse, written by the lawyer Viggo Nielsen, a 30-year Ensomme Gamles Værn/Ældre Sagen veteran, who is a one of the founders of Ældre Sagen and responsible for the formulation of Ældre Sagen's original statement of purpose.

9) Book written by Bjarne Hastrup, CEO of Ældre Sagen, Social Welfare – the Danish Model, which charts the dynamics between the public sector, the business sector, and the civil sector in Denmark. Bjarne Hastrup was CEO of Ensomme Gamles Værn until the formation of Ældre Sagen, and is one of the founders of Ældre Sagen, where he has
been CEO since 1986. Since 1972 he has also been lecturing and teaching courses at the Copenhagen University Institute of Economics.

10) Ældre Sagen annual reports, 2005-2013, obtained from the Ældre Sagen archieves.

In addition, specific data points have been corroborated with information from the Ældre Sagen and the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg respective websites in order to align any discrepancies between sources.

The data gathering was conducted March – September, 2014.

Note: Participation in an information session for Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg members about NemID and Digital Signature exemption (item #4), upon empirical data review proved to be of lesser respective value to the research question. The meeting was subsequently seen as relevant although of minor importance, and therefore is not directly featured in the analytical/narrative account of Ældre Sagen; however, the meeting provided valuable insights into the general mental apprehension toward the November 1st, 2014 obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government.

4. Mission statement literature review

According to a 2012 meta-study of mission statements, the introduction of the concept of the mission statement as an organizational tool is acknowledged as originating mainly from Peter Drucker's 1973 writings on management (Braun et al., 2012). Drucker held that "a business is not defined by its name, statutes, or articles of incorporation. It is defined by the business mission. Only a clear definition of the mission and purpose of the organization makes possible clear and realistic business objectives" (Drucker, 1973,
As "a formal document that articulates an organization's distinct and enduring purpose, mission statements have become one of the most popular and widespread management tools" (Desmidt et al., 2011, p. 469), where a mission statement refers to "an organization's raison d'etre" (Braun et al., 2012, p. 431), "provides critical direction" (Ireland & Hitt, 1992, p. 41), "defines its central tasks and duties" (Braun et al., 2012, p. 431), and answers some really fundamental questions about an organization, such as, "Why do we exist?", "What is our purpose?", and "What do we want to achieve?" (Desmidt et al., 2011, p. 471).

The mission statement "is therefore rightly understood as an artifact of a broader institutional discussion about [the organization's] purpose" (Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 457), and some authors even state that mission statements appear to have evolved into a ubiquitous prerequisite of doing business (Desmidt et al., 2011; Ireland & Hitt, 1992, Bartkus & Glassman, 2008), and "exist because they are expected to exist" (Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 458). However, while "purpose" appears to be the most common dimension in mission statements (Bart & Baetz, 1998, p. 825), "some academics and practitioners have used the terms mission, vision, philosophy, values, and goals interchangeably" (Bartkus & Glassman, 2008, p. 211), a point also noted by Fairhurst et al. (1997), and Desmidt et al. (2011), and "there appears to be virtually no consensus as to what mission statements should or should not include" (Bart & Baetz, 1998, p. 824, emphasis in the original).

As Bartkus and Glassman write, "Most firms publish their missions. Typically, these statements are now public declarations which suggest that Drucker's (1973) original recommendation that a mission should be a simple statement of purpose has either been supplemented or replaced with the mission as a marketing or public relations tool di-
rected at stakeholders" in an environment where "organizations are expected to have mission statements," although these "may be purely symbolic and be used instead of substantive management" (2008, p. 210, emphasis in the original).

4.1. Critique of mission statements

As many organizations publish purely symbolic mission statements in an effort to "give an impression that the firm has appropriate and publicly acceptable objectives" (Bartkus & Glassman, 2008, p. 210), a "consistent theme running through the organizational development literature on corporate mission statements is an acknowledged widespread failure in their implementation" (Fairhurst et al., 1997, p. 243). Naturally, "organizational scholars and practitioners are left wondering whether mission statements are only 'fashion fads' or serious strategic tools" (Braun et al., 2012, p. 430).

The Braun et al. 2012 meta-study of 98 peer-reviewed empirical studies of mission statements in profit and nonprofit organizations found that the effectiveness of mission statements (typically measured by impact on financial results, and/or individual and collective behavior) depends on different aspects regarding: (1) rationales for mission statement development; (2) methods of mission statement development and implementation; (3) contents and form of the mission statement and (4) individual attitudes toward the mission statement (Braun et al., 2012). Of these, especially item No. 2 "methods of development and implementation" stands out, as it was demonstrated that "the core of effective mission statement development and implementation is its alignment with given organizational structures" (Braun et al., p. 439). This is congruent with Bartkus and Glassman's (2008) observation that an organization's actions are not always aligned with the promises made in mission statements, and that there may be a misalignment between what is "preached" in mission statements and the actions that firms
practice (p. 207). Both of these findings seem to point to a fundamental issue: that some organizations simply are not operationally set up to be able to honor their mission statement, regardless of how well-crafted, meaning-managed, and extensively communicated to internal and external stakeholders these mission statements may be. Indeed, as Bart & Baetz write, "surprising here, is that the relationship between mission and organizational arrangements have been virtually ignored in the historical mission literature" (1998, p. 844), where "most of the previous research on mission statements has been devoted to analyzing their content and characteristics" (p. 824); and, in their exploratory study of 136 large Canadian organizations, Bart & Baetz were able to "reinforce and confirm a huge body of prior [organization and strategy] research which has established that a firm's choice of organizational arrangements represents one of the key tools for implementing mission and for achieving superior financial performance results (Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986)" (Bart & Baetz, 1998, p. 848). These findings are further supported by Desmidt et al.'s 2011 meta-study of mission statement effectiveness, where empirical findings also reinforced the importance of aligning an organization's management systems and processes with the organization's mission statement (Desmidt et al., 2011).

Looking at the absence of a mission statement is thought-provoking: As Kirk and Shabnam write: "Managers and employees may develop a strong sense of mission without a mission statement. This development could be facilitated by non-written means of transmitting the mission statement, or it could be demonstrated through the consistent behavior of the organization" (2010, p. 487, italics added). In other words, the organization's operations and behavior can become the embodiment of an undeclared mission, and its organizational arrangements can become a key tool for implementing this unde-
clared mission, which again underscores the findings of the two previously mentioned meta-studies that provide support for the importance of creating and maintaining alignment between organizational mission and management systems and processes (Braun et al., 2012; Desmidt et al., 2011). At a practitioner’s level, this is further supported by empirical research where nearly all surveyed practitioners at a CEO-level agreed with the logic of aligning their organization's "practices, policies, and procedures” to their organization's mission (Crotts, Dickson, & Ford, 2005, p. 55), "although only a surprisingly few of these managers have spent an equal amount of time and effort in ensuring that their words and actions were actually aligned with their mission” (Crotts et al., 2005, p. 55).

4.2. Summary mission statement literature review

In an academic and practitioner's environment where "[t]here is considerable debate over what would make mission statements and their components something more than an empty set of platitudes" (Fairhurst et al., 1997, p. 244), and where empirical research provides "support for aligning virtually every organizational dimension with the organization’s mission statement" (Desmidt et al., 2011, p. 478), it would seem to make sense to consider the means by which a communicatively constituted organization is able to honor the organizational purpose laid out in its mission statement; in other words, to take a more holistic view of the mission statement within the organization and beyond, a view which includes the macro- and micro-level operationalization of the mission statement toward its stated purpose.
5. The CCO perspective review

Central to the CCO perspective is "the idea that organizational forms should not be taken-for-granted entities, but rather understood as complex social systems of coordination and control that arise and exist within communicative practice" (Koschmann, 2012, p. 143), where "taking communication seriously means seeing organizations not as containers for communication, not merely settings inside of which communication occurs, but intrinsically as communication" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 548, italics in the original). As such, organizations are "fundamentally communicative constructions" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 1231, italics in the original), where "communication acts on the world and is a social practice alive with potential" (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 5). Thus, in CCO, organizations are defined as "ongoing and precarious accomplishments realized, experienced, and identified primarily – if not exclusively – in communication processes" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1150, italics added).

The CCO perspective has gained considerable attention in organizational communication studies (Brummans et al., 2014; Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014); and Ashcraft et al. (2009) posit that "the development of constitutive models of communication – based on the premise that communication generates, not merely expresses, key organizational realities – is among the most significant contributions of organizational communication studies" (p. 2).

In contrast to a previous, although prevailing, view of communication as "immaterial" and "tangential to 'real forces' at work" (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 24), where communication "expresses, represents, and transmits already-existing realities" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 547) within organizations that are themselves seen as "containers" (Smith, 1993), in the CCO perspective communication is not simply one of the many factors in organizing,
and is not merely a vehicle for the transmitted expressions of pre-existing realities. Instead, for CCO, communication is both a process, and a means (i.e., method): "Communication is the process by which organizations (and the motives we attribute to them) are formed, deployed, modified, and achieved – and it therefore must not be rendered epiphenomenal" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 1232), and "[communication] is the means by which organizations are established, composed, designed, and sustained" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1150). This has important implication, because it means that organization "outcomes are determined in communication" and thus "the stakes are far higher than a transmission model allows" (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 5).

CCO is international in scope, driven by three main schools of thought: From Canada, The Montreal School of Organizational Communication, influenced by (among others) John L. Austin, Deidre Boden, Robert T. Craig, Stanley A. Deetz, Harold Garfinkel, Anthony Giddens, Bruno Latour, John Searle, Gabriel Tarde, and Karl Weick; from North America, the McPhee Four Flows Model, influenced by (among others) Deidre Boden, Stanley A. Deetz, Jay Galbraith, Anthony Giddens, John Searle, Max Weber, and Karl Weick; and from Germany (and German-speaking countries) Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems, influenced by (among others) Gregory Bateson, Anthony Giddens, Humberto Manturana, Talcott Parsons, George Spencer-Brown, Fransisco Javier Varela, and Heinz von Foerster. While CCO is far from a unified enterprise (Cooren et al., 2011), and "[t]he current theories do not quite match up. Each involves a different set of beliefs" (Taylor, in Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014, p. 311), in 2011 six premises were set up as a manifesto to future research to help define what the CCO perspective entails in terms of research agenda, methodologies, and epistemologies (Cooren et al., 2011):
Premise 1: CCO scholarship studies communicational events.

Premise 2: CCO scholarship should be as inclusive as possible about what we mean by (organizational) communication.

Premise 3: CCO scholarship acknowledges the co-constructed or co-oriented nature of (organizational) communication.

Premise 4: CCO scholarship holds that who or what is acting always is an open question.

Premise 5: CCO scholarship never leaves the realm of communicational events.

Premise 6: CCO scholarship favors neither organizing nor organization.

5.1. Critique of the CCO perspective

As a new theory, the CCO perspective is not without its critics and cautionary commentators, both outside and within CCO. Bisel writes, "CCO theories may represent conceptual reductionism in that these theories describe the complexity of organization in terms of a single domain" (2010, p. 129), or even employing debilitating ontological conflationism (Reed, 2010, p. 153), which "runs the risk of naïve constructivism" (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 23), and "would amount to neglecting the material conditions of [the organization's] production" (Cooren, 2006, p. 81), as well as the fact that organizations are formal, identifiable units and that this undeniable fact "is a common conception of organization beyond the confines of organizational communication (as well as in many lines of work within it)" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1156).

Further, a problem in making the CCO views amenable to the broader organization studies field is that because of their "sophisticated conceptions of communicative processes" (Coren et al., 2011, p. 1156) they "often become mired in complexity, immersed in abstract language, and unable to articulate similarities and differences among per-
perspectives" (Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009, p. 2), and "[t]he wide array of approaches to understanding the communicative constitution of organization has led to conceptual confusion, challenges in traversing disciplinary boundaries, and difficulties in using communication-based resources in ways that advance organization theory" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1150, c.f. Ashcraft et al., 2009), not least because the "concepts are both rather abstract and are presented in a vocabulary unfamiliar to many" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 1232), and lie within "deep semiotic labyrinths and recesses" (Reed, 2009, p. 155). Overall, "CCO scholars, as well as their critics, often fail to differentiate among the multiple uses of the term organization and thus talk past each other through invoking the same term to refer to all aspects of organization" (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010, p. 159).

The latest addition of system theory to the CCO framework, adds more complexity, as"[w]ithin system theory, theory, methods and empirical reference each have a specific and not the usual meaning" (Besio & Pronzini, 2008, p. 10). The work of Nicklas Luhmann (1927-1998), whose entire oeuvre comprises more than 50 books and several hundred articles (Seidl & Becker, 2006), poses its own issues: It is "considered difficult to apply" (Brier, 2007, p. 53), and comprises "a relatively inaccessible and complex set of terms and relationships" (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1512). In his works, "Luhmann combines a wide variety of (often even conflicting) theoretical traditions, both within and outside sociology" (Seidl & Becker, 2006, p. 10). Although Luhmann "redefined most of the concepts in order to fit them into the context of his other concepts and created a highly consistent theoretical framework" (Seidl & Becker, 2006, p. 10), its accessibility and transferability "tends to be limited due to the hermetic terminology that it employs and the fact that it neglects the role of material agency in the communicative con-
struction of organizations" (Schoeneborn, 2011, p. 682), as well as the fact that most of Luhmann's work has not yet been translated into English.

Thus, "CCO is far from a unified enterprise: approaches differ markedly in the degree to which constitutive claims are explicit, in their meta-theoretical underpinnings, and in their engagement with ‘mainstream’ organization studies literature" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1154), and among the CCO theorists "the specific mechanisms and processes by which communication is associated with organization are debated hotly" (Bisel, 2010, p. 124). It further appears that while acknowledging CCO as a unified concept, a division immediately seems to take place: McPhee and colleagues use the four flows structuration approach, Montreal school adherents use the Montreal school approach, and scholars in the Luhmann tradition follow a Luhmann-inspired approach, though most seem to interweave some insights from the other theoretical pillars as they appear relevant. At the theoretical level, attempts to look for common ground for CCO are simultaneously discouraged as creating over-simplification, reification and a stifling of productive debates (Brummans et al., 2014), moderately encouraged by positioning it meta-theoretically as a bridge between behavioral and organizational theories (Kuhn, 2012), and encouraged as an emerging new paradigm for organizational communication (Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014). Simultaneously, at a communications practitioner's level, the overall CCO concept – with its foregrounding of communication as a constitutive force in organizations – seems powerfully appealing, not least as its overarching communicatively-constitutive premise shows potential for bridging the historically separate disciplines of internal and external organizational communication (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). However, the rather heterogeneous theoretical underpinnings of the CCO three-pillar construct make it difficult to grasp how the CCO concept can be used
in practice without favoring one school over the others and, by so doing, failing to realize the benefits of the other two schools, indeed, failing to realize the full potential of CCO.

5.2. Merits of the CCO perspective

Whether this relatively new way of explaining organizations actually makes a difference to scholars and practitioners is a valid question (Koschmann, 2010). However, the prevailing economic and resource-based view of organizations – with communication as a tangential "transmission of information and orders occurring within an organizational/cultural 'container' constructed by managers," where it is "logical for managers to reduce the cost and variability of communication in the interest of efficiency and control" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 1230) – negates the powers of an inherent and ever-present resource within all organizations, indeed, the "underlying constitutive force behind all organizational activities, structures, and processes" (Koschmann, 2010, p. 433). As Luhmann writes, "[I]t is not action but rather communication that is an unavoidably social operation and at the same time an operation that necessarily comes into play whenever social situations arise" (1992, p. 252). This point parallels Ashcraft et al., who write: "If communication is truly tangential to 'real' forces at work, then the hope of intervening in organizational systems is limited at best. Simply put, if communication is 'immaterial,' then most of what managers do to guide organizations [...] is all but pointless" (2009, p. 24).

By foregrounding communication, and exploring it as a force on par with other organizational realities, CCO has made a difference from a previous state of affairs; a difference where – once more empirical research has been undertaken and perhaps further cohesion in the overall construct has been accomplished, thus facilitating CCO's theo-
tical and not least practical use – CCO may indeed become a paradigmatic change in how both organizations and organizational communication are viewed. From its early origins in performative, interpretive and discursive explanations of the phenomenon of organization, through explanations of patterned flows of communication and the importance of human and non-human agency, to the inclusion of theory that situates the organization as a system onto itself within societal dynamics, CCO now appears able to span the tiniest of micro levels to the most (world-) encompassing macro level and thus has at least the potential to provide novel and distinctively communicative explanations for human organizing in the 21st century.

6. Analytic/narrative account of Ældre Sagen

6.1. Ældre Sagen as a communicatively constituted organization

The following analytic/narrative account explores how the mission statement creates organizational actorhood and gains agency within and beyond the communicative constitution of Ældre Sagen. The account is based on the fundamental assumption that organizations are self-reproducing (i.e., autopoietic) communication systems operating at an interface with an environment (Brier, 2007, p. 40), and that organizations consist of communicative events in which communication can be said to be produced by the system rather than by individual actors (Seidl & Becker, 2006, p. 19); however, as communicative events and individual actors are constructions of communication processes within the system, these are observable by their actions (Brier, 2007, p. 40; Nassehi, 2005, p. 189). This opens up the possibility of observing a "plenum of agencies" (Cooren, 2006; Putnam & Coren, 2004) within Ældre Sagen, supported by structures that emerge from decisions which provide operative closure (Besio & Pronzini, 2010, para
12), which all serve to produce and reproduce Ældre Sagen as a "stable-yet-potentially-dynamic system" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 564); where Ældre Sagen's mission statement, by the manner in which it is operationalized, creates organizational actorhood and gains agency within and beyond the communicative constitution of Ældre Sagen.

In particular, these interrelated areas are elaborated as they pertain to Ældre Sagen: The environment and its influence on the emergence and continuation of an organization; organization name and purpose/mission; co-orientation to accomplish a purpose/mission; reproduction of the original intent for the organization within a fractal reproduction framework where interactive communication episodes encompass conversation and text that concern membership negotiation, reflexive self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning, through which human and non-human agency makes a difference within time/space and decisional contexts, and contribute to the production of actorhood and agency within the organization's environment. The analytic/narrative account encompasses Ældre Sagen's beginnings in 1986 through 2014. The November 1st, 2014 obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government, which in particular concerns NemID, Digital Signature and Digital Self-Service, provides a temporal reference point for explaining the emergence in 2000 of IT as a focus area for Ældre Sagen, expressed through the example of the local chapter of Ældre Sagen in the municipality of Frederiksberg, as this example allows for the tracking of a particular situation in which the Ældre Sagen mission statement can be determined to play or not play a role, and the mission statement can be observed at its farthest reach: the individual at the receiving end.

The November 1st, 2014 obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government has rightly caused additional concern for senior citizens
in Denmark, where perhaps a comment by Flemming, upon completion of his last class in an Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg computer training course in NemID and Digital Signature, is particularly poignant: "You are completely lost in this society if you don't know everything about computers" (Interviews Ældre Sagen members, lines 88-89).

6.1.1. Schematic of approach

![Figure 1. The mission statement in the communicatively constituted organization Ældre Sagen. Note: “Talk” is by various authors also referred to as “live interaction” and “conversation.”]

6.2. The emergence of Ældre Sagen

On November 14, 1986, the Danish nonprofit member-organization Ældre Sagen (directly translated: The Senior Cause) was officially founded by a group of individuals in the humanitarian aid organization Ensomme Gamles Værn (directly translated: Lonely Older People's Protection). The organization Ældre Sagen was formed for two reasons: (1) in response to new legal requirements which made it obligatory that funds-
distributing organizations like Ensomme Gamles Værn recategorize as foundations, and (2) a desire to reignite an interest for older people in Denmark by broadening the organization's reach beyond the most disadvantaged seniors, which had been the focus of the organization Ensomme Gamles Værn (Nielsen, 1996, pp. 214-15). In this way, Ensomme Gamles Værn, now renamed EGV-Fonden, was able to continue its funds-distribution work without mixing public and private funds (the issue of transparency had been one reason which had led to the legal requirement), while the new organization Ældre Sage would become a member organization and thus able to pursue a more direct and active role in addressing the needs of the older segment of Danish society. The new organization had an overall purpose "to work for the cause of seniors," which encompassed human dignity, quality of life, self-determination, the ability to provide for oneself, and assistance for those most vulnerable (Nielsen, 1996, p. 9).

6.3. Ældre Sagen key structural couplings

An "important advantage of systems theory is that it is a theory of society and therefore fully equipped to address issues of the relationship between organizations and their social environment" (Besio & Pronzini, 2010, para 33); indeed, the environment is "no less important for the system than the system itself" (Seidl & Becker, 2006, p. 22), and therefore the organization is "an operation at an interface with an environment" (Brier, 2007, p. 40). The organization and society are structurally coupled in various ways, which explain the relationship between an organization and other systems in its environment, and via these couplings "the structures of the two systems are connected in ways that canalize specific 'irritations' in a highly selective manner between them" (Besio & Pronzini, 2008, p. 15), where they are selected "to have influence only according to the system's own inner world of meaning and survival" (Brier, 2007, p. 35).
In the case of Ældre Sagen, four particular structural couplings are important: (a) state government, (b) local government, (c) other organizations (e.g., firms), and (d) the public (i.e., the population of Denmark) (Teit Nielsen interview, lines 9-12). Thus, as an example of the organization's coupling to the state government system: in response to the government's requirement for Ensomme Gamles Værn to become a foundation, the organization changed its legal status to a foundation, now named EGV-Fonden. Further, as an example of the Ældre Sagens's coupling to the public: when the organization wanted to reignite interest within the Danish population for its seniors by broadening the organization's reach beyond those most disadvantaged, which had been the focus of Ensomme Gamles Værn, it established a new nonprofit and member-based organization, Ældre Sagen, in an attempt to provide this broader reach (Nielsen, 1996).

Besio and Pronzini write, "In the long run, structurally coupled systems evolve in a way which suits the autopoiesis of both systems (otherwise they stop operating, ending their existence)" (2008, p. 15), although the effects on either system are not linear, but adaptive (Nassehi, 2005, p. 180). As one of its first moves as a new organization, which demonstrates Ældre Sagen's structural coupling to the public, Ældre Sagen in 1987 launched a direct mail campaign targeting every household in Denmark. The response greatly exceeded the new organization's expectations: within one month Ældre Sagen had 50,000 new members, and within one year it had 100,000 new members, for which the organization won a Guinness Record for speed of signing up new members (Ældre Sagen annual reports, 2005-2010). As of September 30, 2014, Ældre Sagen has 699,837 members (Teit Nielsen interview, line 44). The organization's structural couplings to state and local government has continued to grow since 1986, and Ældre Sagen participates in state and local government committees (Ældre Sagen annual reports, 2005-
2013; Erik Kjær interview) as well as undertakes primary research and provides documentation to state and local government regarding issues facing seniors. An example of this, with regard to the November 1st, 2014 obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government: Ældre Sagen participated in documenting that approximately 320,000 citizens over the age of 65 had no experience with the Internet, and defended these people's tenuous situation (Ældre Sagen annual report, 2013, p. 2; Ældre Sagen website), which helped lead to the option for exemption from the otherwise obligatory requirement for digitalization. Also, at the local level, Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg collaborates with the Frederiksberg municipality Citizens' Services (Borgerservice) to provide information meetings about NemID, Digital Signature and Digital Self-Service, and Citizens' Services in turn refer citizens to Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg's computer courses (Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg website).

6.4. Ældre Sagen declared difference to the environment

According to Luhmann (2006), social systems such as organizations fundamentally emerge by creating themselves as a distinction between themselves and their environment, and they become self-referential because this distinction needs to be maintained or else they eventually cease to exist. It is this distinction, or the "difference that makes a difference" (Luhmann, 2006, p. 40, c.f. Bateson, 1972, p. 459), both between itself and the environment, and between before and after states, that make self-referential social systems like organizations “constantly scour their environment for impulses” and be “endogenously restless and very sensitive” (Buchinger, 2007, p. 179). Thus, "the historical state of society in this very moment with its specific issues" (Luhmann, 2006, p. 56) is a highly relevant dynamic of reference for understanding how an organization acts within society and with itself within its environment. In 1986, the year Ældre Sagen was
founded, the social welfare state that characterizes modern Denmark had been in operation for several decades and had achieved a number of provisions for seniors (e.g., public pension, free hospitalization, nursing homes, in-home assistance, etc.). However, "not all problems are solved through public social welfare provisions, and there is a large grey area where public care and support ends, which individuals themselves must address – an area that most are not able to address on their own" (Hastrup, 2011, p. 278), neither at their own individual levels (e.g., navigation of the public sector bureaucracy and awareness of benefit entitlements), nor at the public policy level (e.g., senior policy advocacy). This is the gap that Ældre Sagen seeks to fill, and in doing so it actively monitors the changing issues that affect seniors in society as well as the organization's ability to respond to these issues. In effect, in creating itself as an organization, Ældre Sagen also created itself as a distinction or difference to its environment, and it works to maintain this distinction, both between itself and the environment and between before and after states, in order to continue to make a difference and thus continue to have a reason to exist.

6.4.1. Ældre Sagen name

To distinguish themselves from their environment, organizations use self-descriptions, which "guarantees that the self remains identical and substitutes a body, which serves as a referential nexus" (Buchinger, 2007, p. 179). While the main features of an organizational self-description usually can be found in the annual report, the name of the organization is also part of an organization's self-description (Buchinger, 2007, p. 180). The name of Ældre Sagen, registered in 1986 with the Danish Foreningsregistret (i.e., the registrar of organizations), merits attention as it is not merely a name for the organization: While both words in the Ældre Sagen organizational name (Ældre, i.e., "elder,"
"older," or – in a more contemporary vernacular – "senior"; and Sagen, i.e., "the cause") are valid words within the Danish language, the juxtaposition of the two words in 1986 was unusual. By linking the two words, the organization not only created a value-laden mission-explicit name for itself, but also it accomplished the introduction of a new concept within the Danish system of society; one which also succinctly expressed the organization's purpose (i.e., the cause of seniors). Further, when naming the organization, Ældre Sagen became "a 'legal fiction,' that is, a juristic person or artificial entity" (Cooren et al., 2008, p. 1344), and they continue:

"[...] by naming something that initially did not exist (at least officially; hence the term 'fiction') conditions were created that enabled many different human and non-human agents (logos, people, etc.) to represent it, make it present or incarnate it, showing the close connection between the process of incarnating and naming. Naming thus allows a social collectivity to refer to itself through its representatives and enables the experience of being united under the same signifier: it creates a 'we' that allows people to act or speak in the name of the organization" (p. 1344).

In this way an original group of individuals within Ensomme Gamles Værn, who initially had debated how to deal with the dual situation of the foundation legal requirements and a desire to reignite interest within the Danish population for its senior citizens by broadening the organization's reach beyond those most disadvantaged, which had been the focus of the organization Ensomme Gamles Værn (Nielsen, 1996, pp. 214-15), was transformed into a collective actor with the mission-explicit name of Ældre Sagen. As Taylor writes: "In this double translation, of circumstance into a situation and actors into a collective purpose, the essential medium is language, both in the delineation and sharing of perceptions of the situation, and in generating a response" (Taylor, 2000, p. 6 of 29).
6.4.2. Ældre Sagen mission

The original 1986 registered statement of purpose of Ældre Sagen "to work for the cause of seniors," which encompassed human dignity, quality of life, self-determination, the ability to provide for oneself, and assistance for those most fragile (Nielsen, 1996, p. 9), was not only a response to its environment (i.e., a society where seniors were still treated less than optimally), but also the creation of a meaningful distinction between the organization and its environment, "in contrast with what was and what could have been [i.e., if Ældre Sagen did not exist as a difference], and from there to possible connection in the future to other differences and distinctions of meaning" (Brier, 2007, p. 34), where Ældre Sagen, via its statement of purpose, "operates in the medium of meaning" (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1516) of "seniors in society and how they are treated."

In 2007, a sweeping nation-wide administrative reform had merged Denmark's previous 271 local municipalities into 98 municipalities overseen by five regional authorities. This change greatly increased the workload and responsibilities of the 98 municipalities, and it increased the risk of negative consequences for the senior population (Hastrup, 2011, pp. 120-136). Correspondingly, in 2008, Ældre Sagen's original 1986 statement of purpose ("to work for the cause of seniors") changed to a mission statement of "Ældre Sagen is fighting for a society in which everybody can live a long and good life" (Ældre Sagen annual reports, 2008-2013). As a result of this change Ældre Sagen now operates in "the medium of meaning" (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1516) of "an improved society," which has broadened the scope of the organization's original mission. According to Teit Nielsen, the new formulation of Ældre Sagen's mission statement attempts to clarify the organization's intent to further strengthen what Ældre Sagen calls its "dialogue" with state and local government, with other organizations, and with the public, and that
the organization works not only on behalf of the country's current seniors, but toward a better society overall; an improved society which will benefit both the current and future generations of seniors. The use of the stronger modality (i.e., "fighting for" versus "working for") in this context is an effort to provide further emphasis on the importance of the work of Ældre Sagen and the seriousness by which the organization regards its work (Teit Nielsen interview, lines 7-23).

Thus, both the 1986 and the 2008 Ældre Sagen mission statement reflects the organization's environment. Indeed, looking back even further, to 1910, the establishment of Ensomme Gamles Værn, with Herman Koch's intent formulated into one, single sentence: "We ask for permission to serve the elderly in those areas where help is especially needed" (Nielsen, 1996, p. 69), the historical state of society in 1910 is also evident in that statement: there was widespread poverty among older people in Denmark, and private citizens asked for permission to collectively help to alleviate this poverty. These three very different formulations of organizational intent – 1910, 1986, and 2008 – demonstrate that "the historical state of society in this very moment with its specific issues" (Luhmann, 2006, p. 56) is a highly relevant dynamic of reference for understanding how and why an organization acts within a society and with itself within its environment.

However, the fact that Ældre Sagen since 2008 operates in "the medium of meaning" (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1516) of "an improved society," also means that the organization now, via its mission statement, has taken on a responsibility that in truth is the purview of the government of a state; in other words, Ældre Sagen has blurred its distinction vis-à-vis this other organization. This has consequences, and, as Ældre Sagen writes in its 2013 annual report, "Volunteer organizations will be pressured to take on
more and more welfare tasks" (Ældre Sagen annual report 2013, p. 9), however, it can be said that Ældre Sagen, via its 2008 changed mission statement, also has asked for it.

### 6.4.3. Ældre Sagen communication

Starting in 1986, Ældre Sagen's mission-explicit name enabled "a 'we' that allows people to act or speak in the name of the organization" (Cooren, 2008, p. 1344), and the original statement of purpose can be viewed as the organization's very first act of communication, a synthesis of three different selections: information, utterance and understanding (Seidl, in Schoeneborn, 2014, p. 290): The pre-existence-organization had selected information from its environment (i.e., that seniors were treated less than optimally) and had selected the utterance of this information (i.e., its mission-explicit name and statement of purpose). However, only when the third selection of understanding (or misunderstanding) is in place is communication created. As Luhmann writes, "Communication occurs only when a difference of utterance and information is understood," (Luhmann, 1992, p. 252) otherwise the utterance is just perceived as behavior and not communication (Luhmann, 1992, p. 252). This is important, because it highlights that merely stating the organization's purpose/mission is not sufficient for communication to occur:

"Communication leads to a decision whether the uttered and understood information is to be accepted or rejected. A message is believed or not. This is the first alternative created by communication and with it the risk of rejection. It forces a decision that would not have occurred without the communication" (Luhmann, 1992, p. 255).

Thus, in January 1987 Ældre Sagen's first direct mail campaign went out to every household in Denmark. Inside it was an explanation of the organization's purpose and a call to action to become a member of Ældre Sagen (at a low semi-annual fee), "for the
sake of your fellow citizens, yourself, and your loved ones" (Nielsen, 1996, p. 241). The campaign generated 10,000 new members within a month; and 100,000 new members within a year (c.f. Ældre Sagen annual reports, 2005-2010). As not every household in Denmark signed up for membership, Ældre Sagen has since its original direct mail campaign worked in various ways to sign up new members, and this "hard and fixed bifurcation" of "the alternative of acceptance or rejection" in reality "is the self-reproduction of communication itself" (Luhmann, 1992, p. 256) that "leads to a continuous production of communication" (Seidl, in Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014, p. 291), where Ældre Sagen's offers of membership over the years generate separate communications for members and non-members, each with their own inherent dynamic.

6.5. Ældre Sagen co-orientation

The act of jointly focusing on an object enables co-orientation to take place, where "[c]o-orientation (1) is negotiated through dialogue, (2) aims to produce coordination of belief, action, and emotions with some mutually understood object, and (3) is mediated by text" (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, p. 401). As Taylor and Robichaud go on to emphasize, "Co-orientation is not a state but an activity; not a product but a process," and "[i]t does not dissolve differences; it merely serves as a medium to give them expression (or to exclude them from consideration)" (2004, p. 404, italics in the original). An example of this is clearly seen in the very genesis of the computer training courses at the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg: In 2000, a group of three volunteers was working on the development of the local chapter's first website when one of the group members suddenly got the idea to start computer training courses for Ældre Sagen members. The other group members scoffed at the idea, but they decided to give him permission to go ahead on his own and develop a computer training course, with the implicit understanding that
he should "not bother to return to the group if he wasn't successful" (Erik Kjær interview, lines 4-15). The entrepreneurial volunteer went off and developed an initial basic computer training course, and when the course was announced by Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg "people were lining up in the street to sign up for it" (Erik Kjær interview, lines 17-19). There is now a dedicated IT focus at Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg with some 80 volunteer instructors, and in 2014 some 70+ computer courses were held (Erik Kjær interview; information from IT volunteer data stream).

The view that co-orientation, as Taylor & Robichaud (2004) write, "is not a state but an activity; not a product but a process" (p. 404, italics in the original), can be applied to the above account of the start of the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg by now extensive roster of computer training courses: The website development group was mediated by the "text" of the Ældre Sagen mission statement as they wanted to develop a website (i.e., the "mutually understood object") which would facilitate access to Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg via an online platform; however, as one entrepreneurial group member thought his time be better spent developing a computer training course than a website, there was a disagreement of "belief, action, and emotions" (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, p. 401), and although it was decided to give the entrepreneurial group member permission to leave the group to pursue the development of a computer training course, an implicit understanding was that he "not bother to return to the group if he wasn't successful" (Erik Kjær interview, lines 4-15). Thus, the difference was not dissolved, but instead removed (i.e. excluded) from the website development group; however, the difference was permitted to find expression outside the group (c.f. Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, p. 404). The subsequent success of the computer training course allowed a new "mutually understood object" to emerge, in this case the IT focus area of Ældre Sagen Frederiks-
berg, around which further co-orientation could continue to take place, which in 2014 has resulted in some 70+ computer training courses being offered (Erik Kjær interview, lines 42-64).

6.6. Ældre Sagen (re)production

6.6.1. Ældre Sagen: a fractal organization

Taylor (2000) writes that co-orientation occurs when two actors ["at a minimum," c.f. Kuhn, 2008, p. 1233], A and B, relate to one another through the medium of some objective, "X," creating an A-B-X unit. In the case of Ældre Sagen, a group of individuals in 1986 became such a co-oriented A-B-X unit, focused around the "X" (the potential new organization) which was interactively debated and decided on within the group, where the "X" subsequently became the organization's mission-explicit name and purpose. When the organization in 1986 was registered with the Foreningsregistret, the "X" became a "legal fiction" whereby it could begin to be represented (Cooren et al., 2008, p. 1344), but also the newly-minted organization became a new "X" around which new A-B units could start forming in order to jointly accomplish the organization's purpose, such as the establishment of particular focus areas for the Ældre Sagen main office and for the local chapters of Ældre Sagen. Thus, according to Taylor (2000) the A-B-X relationship triad supplies an ongoing communicative structural logic to organization, "one which is fractal in character since whatever the level of analysis, macro or micro, an A-B-X system will be present" (p. 15 of 29). Taylor writes (2000, p. 12 of 29):

"[E]very global structure of agency (management in the large) is composed on closer inspection of multiple local instantiations of agency which are contextualized by the larger system but focused on local objects and set within the constraints of a local system which is part of the larger organization but also distinct from it: This is what I mean when I say that the logic is fractal."
The concept of fractals taps into a relatively recently discovered evolutionary logic occurring in nature, fractal reproduction (Mandelbrot, 1982), an area that is receiving attention in natural sciences and economic theory about emergent complexity, and is also generating interest within organization literature where its role in creating strategic coherence within organizations is explored (see e.g., Thiétart & Forgues, 1995; Black, Hinrichs, & Fabian, 2007). In Ældre Sagen, it was decided to create an organization with local presence, expressed already in the statutes of the organization's inaugural and legally filed documentation which states that Ældre Sagen is permitted establish local chapters to help accomplish the organization's purpose (Nielsen, 1996, p. 229). Within the first year, 13 local chapters had been established (Nielsen, 1996, p. 248), in 1996 there were 173 local chapters (Nielsen, 1996, p. 261), and in 2014 Ældre Sagen had 217 local chapters, covering all of Denmark. One such local chapter is Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg, where the continuation of the fractal principle (Taylor, 2000) is evident. As do most of the local chapters, Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg mirrors – at a local level – much of the work that is done by the Ældre Sagen main office in Copenhagen (which predominantly works at the state level), in a sense providing the original Ældre Sagen "X" with a local orientation, an "X-Frederiksberg" which works with the local Frederiksberg municipality and for local Frederiksberg seniors. The fractal principle can be followed in Ældre Sagen's main office IT focus area, which can be seen as an X-IT, into each of local chapters of Ældre Sagen, where it reproduces Ældre Sagen's mission into particular computer training courses (e.g., X-IT-Local Chapter-IT-NemID), which again reproduces into levels of competence within the courses (e.g., X-IT-Local Chapter-IT-NemID-Level 1, which again reproduces into individual classes (e.g., X-IT-Local Chapter-IT-NemID-Level 1-Class 1). At each level, and at the very end of this fractal process
– at the interface with the individual Ældre Sagen member who receives computer training – the mission of Ældre Sagen is apparent. Video-taped interviews with 8 members, upon their completion of a six-classes NemID computer training program (which, following the fractal principle could be identified as X-IT-Frederiksberg-IT-NemID-Betty Nansen location-Level 1-Class 6) provide revealing evidence that the distinction Ældre Sagen as an organization seeks to make to its environment – the "difference that makes a difference" (Luhmann, 2006, p. 40, c.f. Bateson, 1972, p. 459) at least in this instance did make a difference: When the course participant Solveig was asked what she would have done had this computer training course not been provided by Ældre Sagen, Solveig replied, "Without this, I would have been left high and dry" (Interviews Ældre Sagen members, line 6), a sentiment predominately shared by the other interviewees (transcripts of interviews in appendix).

The above example should be viewed as but one example of the potency of Taylor's (2000) fractal A-B-X model. Black et al. (2007), who are proponents of the fractal logic in organizations, argue that the repeated choice of words (followed by confirming actions), as long as organization members accept this logic, "and if this logic can be replicated across functions and hierarchies in new contexts to guide behavior, then the organization is revealing a level of strategic coherence" (p. 424), which their subsequent empirical study appeared to confirm. The mission-explicit name of Ældre Sagen, which declares its mission without having to also communicate the organization's formal mission statement, can be seen as just such a repeated choice of words that Black et al. (2007) refer to, whose logic has been accepted by organization members, and which is replicated across functions and hierarchies within Ældre Sagen. In this way the specific structure of Ældre Sagen, via its local chapters, and its locally repeated, mission-explicit
organization name "contributes to its reproduction" and practically aids in sustaining its communication (Besio & Pronzini, 2010, para 30) in its "dynamic and operational aspects" Nassehi, 2005, p. 181), where the local chapters are attributed by name and mission to the overall organization Ældre Sagen and simultaneously and collectively contribute to Ældre Sagen as a unified organizational actor.

6.6.2. Ældre Sagen text and conversation

As Brier writes, "systems of communication reproduce by linking communications to one another over time" (2007, p. 40). In co-orientation toward a given X, there are two linked manifestations of communication: conversation and text (Kuhn, 2008; Cooren et al., 2011), where "conversation' (i.e., "live exchanges," Aschraft et al., 2009, p. 21) refers to the process and activity of organization, and 'text' represents the organization as an entity or being" (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010, p. 159). "Together, conversation and text form a self-organizing loop, where text is the product of conversational process, but is also its raw material and principal preoccupation" (Taylor & Van Every, 2000, p. 210). Indeed, that "texts are simultaneously the inputs to, and outcomes of, conversation" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 1233) is evident in the establishment of Ældre Sagen as an organization: Conversation(s) in 1986 between the founders produced the text that became Ældre Sagen's precursor to a mission statement, its legally filed statement of name and purpose with the Foreningsregistret. As such, the production of a name and purpose was initially the founders' raw material and principal occupation vis-à-vis the establishment of Ældre Sagen (Nielsen, 1996, pp. 227-236). The product of the conversation, the organization's mission-explicit name and statement of purpose, in a continuation of the self-organization loop, then became new textual raw material and preoccupation for yet other conversations, which generated and still generate new texts and conversations to
produce and reproduce Ældre Sagen. In 2000, the mission statement was the text that inspired a volunteer working in the local chapter of Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg to develop computer training courses for seniors, which subsequently grew into a dedicated IT focus at Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg with some 80 volunteer instructors and some 70+ computer training courses (Erik Kjær interview, lines 63-64 and lines 43-44); the computer training courses themselves are now generating more texts and conversations via their planning and execution, in this way reproducing themselves by linking "communications to one another over time" (Brier, 2007, p. 40).

6.6.3. Ældre Sagen four flows of communicative structure

The conversation-text loops, or interactive episodes, "are never isolated but are always bound up with other episodes with which they share some sense of continuity" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 559). According to the four flows model (McPhee & Zaug, 2000; McPhee & Iverson, 2009), in organizations the conversation-text loops typically occur within four flows of "assemblages of communication processes" which structure "the reflexive regulation of the conditions of system reproduction" (McPhee, in Schoeneborn & Blaschke, 2014, p. 294):

"(a) membership negotiation, including especially processes that relate individuals to organizations as identifiable systems – such as role learning, power accumulation, identification and disidentification; (b) activity coordination, i.e. especially processes of immediate, contextualized mutual adjustment to the activities of others in ways not totally guided by (c) reflexive self-structuring – the processes of creating a broadly known membership boundary and determining its permeability, and of gathering information about and purposefully designing the relations among members (described just above); and (d) institutional positioning, i.e. especially
processes of individual communication that generate relations between any specified organization and its array of competitors, regulators, etc., and the more extensive institutional system – e.g., capitalism.

While the word "flow" might evoke images of transmission models of communication, they should be seen as "a kind of interactive communication episode, usually amounting to multi-way conversation or text passage, typically involving reproduction as well as resistance to the rules and resources of the organization" (McPhee & Zaug, 2000, para 22). While "analytically distinct" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 559); "as the flows intersect and become resources for one another, they produce and reproduce social structures" and as "particular categories of communication process they are 'central forces' that combine interactive episodes into a social system" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1155), and they "inform, enable, and constrain one another" (McPhee & Zaug, 2009, p. 43). Naturally, neither the conversation-text loops, nor the four interactive flows into which communication can be categorized, operate as anarchic entities in a free-for-all contribution process. As McPhee and Zaug write, "the four flows need to develop and share a realm of mutual topical relevance, within which the relevance of the other flows themselves is also recognized" (2009, p. 42.). This realm of mutual topical relevance can be the organization's purpose, as declared in the organization's mission statement, or the "X" (Taylor, 2000), augmented as necessary and appropriate with qualifiers such as X-Frederiksberg, X-Frederiksberg-IT focus, and so forth. Further, as Schoeneborn argues, "the four flows essentially involve explicit or implicit forms of decision communication. From this point of view, decision communications represent the specific type of communication that holds all four flows together" (2011, p. 674). Thus, organizational purpose such as for instance indicated in an organization's mission statement has the poten-
tial to shape overall topical relevance, and decision communications ("or 'decisions' in short," c.f. Seidl, in Schoeneborn & Blasche, 2014, p. 293) can help guide the content and interaction points of the four entwined flows, depending on the particular situation at hand as it pertains to the organization's "own inner world of meaning and survival" (Brier, 2007, p. 35).

The Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg's IT group has worked to provide computer training courses for Ældre Sagen members since 2000 (Erik Kjær interview, line 20). Within this situation, or the X-Frederiksberg- IT focus, the four flows can be folded out as follows:

(a) **Membership negotiation**, in this case enlisting and enabling IT volunteers, takes place primarily through a non-advertised natural attraction of candidates (Erik Kjær interview, lines 82-98), face-to-face interviews to determine compatibility, approval of candidate, submission of approved-candidate name to the Ældre Sagen main office for the national volunteer database and subsequent centrally-mailed welcome package, inclusion on Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg-IT focus volunteer email list, email introduction to the other IT volunteers, the providing of access to the Ældre Sagen volunteer intranet portal (*Frivilligportalen*), the providing of access to voluntary-participation (Ældre Sagen main office planned, established, coordinated, and sponsored) training courses for volunteers, potential inclusion in local computer course planning sessions, and finally participation in the computer training courses themselves, first as supporting assistant, later as instructor, if desired.

(b) **Activity coordination**, takes place at several levels; the Ældre Sagen main office has a volunteer department (*Frivilligafdelingen*, staffed with salaried personnel) which provides assistance and support to the IT groups in the local chapters, not
least with the planning, establishment, coordination and sponsoring of training courses for the local volunteers. Communication, apart from local day-long face-to-face planning meetings approximately twice a year, when the new season's programs are discussed and agreed on, takes place primarily via interactive emails with attached documentation. Once instructor groups (typically 3-4 dedicated volunteers per course) are established, these take over the activity coordination for their respective courses, including communication with Ældre Sagen members participating in the training course (Erik Kjær interview, lines 123-124). Courses are advertised in Ældre Sagen member magazines and newsletters, and course participation sign-up, payment processing, and welcome letter is handled by Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg.

(c) Reflexive self-structuring uses the above mentioned activities, however, it is also open to the environment, such as the novel inclusion of computer training courses in iPads or Android tablets, and the planning and execution of information meetings for Ældre Sagen members about how to handle the November 1st, 2014 obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government.

(d) Institutional positioning takes place via collaboration with the local Frederiksberg municipality, including collaboration with the Frederiksberg municipality Citizens' Services (Borgerservice) to provide information meetings about NemID, Digital Signature and Digital Self-Service, where Citizens' Services also refer citizens to Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg's computer courses (see Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg website). In addition, partnerships have been formed with organizations to provide turnkey solutions that facilitate the use of computers and internet. These solutions are featured in a publication the members receive, Ældre Sagen Tilbud (directly
translated: Ældre Sagen Offers) and, as is stated in the publication, the featured solutions are "not recommended by Ældre Sagen" but instead should be regarded as a "possible solution" (emphasis in the original).

While the above rendition does not adequately illustrate the myriad interactions between the four flows, as in this case this would not help further the exploration of the research question, it should be apparent that "[t]he four communication flows encompass what are typically seen as internal and external matters that, taken together, perform essential organizational functions" (Kuhn, 2012, p. 558); in fact, and importantly, the example shows how the four flows enable a bridging of the historically separate disciplines of internal and external organizational communication (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011), where the unifying theme for the flows in the example of the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg efforts to provide computer training courses to its members, or the X-Frederiksberg-IT focus, is centered around how to best provide computer training to Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg's members so these are better able to live in and navigate the contemporary computer- and internet-based society (which would help accomplish the "X," the Ældre Sagen mission). While the process is experienced as a collaborative teamwork (Erik Kjær interview, lines 79-85; informal talks with IT volunteers) there are certainly "deciders" who act as accountable addresses (Nassehi, 2005, p. 186), for instance the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg IT leader Erik Kjær, the individual program instructors, and, at the Ældre Sagen main office volunteer department, the IT focus coordinator, although these can also be seen as pure "anchoring" constructions of Ældre Sagen in order to deal with its own condition of providing computer training courses to its members (Nassehi, 2005, p. 186).
However, decisions "remain paradoxical: they are complexity-reducing mechanisms that create greater complexity for organizational decision-making" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1155). Thus the decision in 2000 – to let the entrepreneurial volunteer go ahead on his own and develop a computer training course and "not bother to return to the group if he wasn't successful" (Erik Kjær interview, line 4-15) – rapidly expanded into more decisions about more courses, where now "decisions are stage-managed in meetings, in special rooms, at special times, with special rites, and on special documents" (Nassehi, 2005, p. 186) as is seen in the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg semi-annual local day-long IT course planning meetings (Erik Kjær interview, lines 359-366). Throughout all of the iterations of the IT focus of Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg (i.e., website development, development of the first computer training course, the expansion of the computer training courses, the inclusion of the November 1st, 2014 requirement for digitalization), the mission statement of Ældre Sagen is what appears to provide a continuous programmatic decision premise (i.e., by defining the criteria for correct decision making) for accepting or rejecting environmental factors and for providing an anticipated and generalized uncertainty absorption in regard to decision-making (Seidl & Becker, 2006, p. 28).

6.6.4. Ældre Sagen operative closure

As Besio and Pronzini, write, if "a specific structure is used by an organization, then it contributes to its reproduction. This means that it helps to reduce complexity, without fully eliminating it" (2010, para 29). Thus, the 217 local chapters of Ældre Sagen "reproduce themselves whenever communication of decisions takes place" (Buchinger, 2007, p. 176, c.f. Luhmann, 2000, p. 63), within a locally situated context and the need to "reproduce the distinction between themselves and their environment" (Luhmann, 2006, p. 48). In this way, the 217 local chapters of Ældre Sagen are continuously and
processually demarcating themselves and the distinction they represent, via Ældre Sagen's mission-explicit name and mission statement, each within their respective local environments, and by so doing they also maintain the continued relevance of Ældre Sagen at the aggregate national level in a process that can perhaps be seen as reverse attribution, or a micro-into-macro, of the local chapters into the main organization of Ældre Sagen. Thus, there is a dynamic of both a forward attribution of the Ældre Sagen name and mission to the local chapters of the organization, and a backward attribution of the local chapters' into the main organization.

The previous account of the inauspicious genesis of the IT focus area of Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg, with its decision to let the entrepreneurial volunteer develop a first computer training course, and its subsequent decision to build on the initial success with more courses, is a good demonstration of how the original 1986 Ældre Sagen distinction, based on a mission-explicit name and a statement of purpose, allows for "possible connection in the future to other differences and distinctions of meaning" (Brier, 2007, p. 34), where the distinction now also implicitly includes computer training courses. As Brier (2007) writes, "Communication acts produce new artificial structures that have dynamics of their own and can self-reproduce through autopoiesis" (i.e., self-reproduction) (p. 39); thus, from the initial decision by the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg website development group to let the entrepreneurial volunteer go off on his own to develop a computer training course and "not bother to return to the group if he wasn't successful" (Erik Kjær interview, lines 4-15), the subsequent success of the computer training courses created the new structure of an IT focus at Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg, which self-reproduced and continues to self-reproduce with dynamics of its own, and in this way helps strengthening the distinction of Ældre Sagen by adding new dimensions.
to it which it selects from its environment. Further evidence of this is the recent inclusion of iPad or Android tablet computer training courses, in response to an environment where these are becoming increasingly popular, and the computer training courses in anticipation of the November 1st, 2014 obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government.

The account of the genesis of the IT focus at Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg is an example of operative closure, which "creates a meaning world of its own [i.e., Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg] that does not exclude outside influences [i.e., the growing need for computer training among seniors; the growth of iPads and Android tablets; the November 1st, 2014 digitalization requirement], but selects them to have influence only according to the system’s own inner world of meaning and survival [the mission of Ældre Sagen compels helping seniors, thus the inclusion of computer training courses, iPads and Android tablets, NemID, Digital Signature, and Digital Self-Service were relevant inclusions]" (Brier, 2007, p. 35).

### 6.6.5. Ældre Sagen actorhood and agency

#### 6.6.5.1. Actorhood

When the original founders of Ældre Sagen created a name and a purpose for the organization, Ældre Sagen became "a 'legal fiction,' that is, a juristic person or artificial entity" (Cooren et al., 2008, p. 1344), which enabled a "we" to start operating under the Ældre Sagen name, and to grant signatory powers to commit to legally-binding documents on behalf of the organization. Subsequently, when the name and statement of purpose in 1986 was registered via signed documentation with the Danish Foreningsregistret, Ældre Sagen obtained judicial and legal actorhood, to be both able to act and be held accountable as a bona fide organization within a societal context. This Ældre
Sagen 'we' that started operating in 1986 have spread throughout Denmark in a fractal process which is continuously oriented toward the Ældre Sagen mission-explicit name and mission statement, with appropriate extensions based on decisions made about temporal environmental factors, and through Ældre Sagen's structural couplings with state government, local government, other organizations and the public, the recurring communicative processes of the Ældre Sagen 'we' continue to accomplish the attribution of actorhood to Ældre Sagen.

6.6.5.2. Agency

By creating an organization with a particular purpose, "to work for the cause of seniors," in 2008 changed to "Ældre Sagen is fighting for a society in which everybody can live a long and good life," the founders of Ældre Sagen created a decided difference to its environment, a "difference that makes a difference" (Luhmann, 2006, p. 40, c.f. Bateson, 1972, p. 459), both between itself and the environment and between before and after states. It is this difference that Ældre Sagen, via decisions that are premised in the organization's purpose, as expressed in its mission-explicit name and mission statement, continuously seeks to uphold and renew via monitoring of its environment and selecting which influences in particular have meaning for Ældre Sagen's purpose or else the Ældre Sagen organization will become either lost in pure self-referentiality or become absorbed by its environment (Luhmann, 2000, p. 417).

What, or who, makes a difference can be defined as an "agent"; and "agency" can be defined as "making a difference" (Cooren, 2006, p. 82). Cooren writes, "When something makes a difference, this difference can be accounted for by a verb that describes what the human or the nonhuman happens to do in the present situation" (2006, p. 86),
which also takes into account "how their actions can be appropriated or attributed" (2006, p. 82).

The Ældre Sagen purpose, expressed in its mission-explicit name and statement of purpose or mission, is a statement of intent for action that unless mobilized remains symbols on the piece of paper which was originally filed with the Foreningsregistret. Thus the mission statement can be seen as an agent in and of itself that has the potential to make a difference in a given situation, but "its importance is always relative and never absolute" as the mobilization of the mission statement "is always a matter of appropriation in a given interaction"; it can be bypassed, ignored, and questioned in the "eventful character of life beyond its iterability" (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009, p. 27), where, indeed, a "consistent theme running through the organizational development literature on corporate mission statements is an acknowledged widespread failure in their implementation" (Fairhurst et al., 1997, p. 243). As Giddens (1984), whose definition of agency Cooren (2004, 2006) expanded to include nonhuman agents such as documents, writes: "An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference,' that is, to exercise some sort of power" (1984, p. 14).

The latent agentive powers of the Ældre Sagen mission statement were unleashed by Ældre Sagen's 1986 decision to create an organization with a local presence, expressed already in the statutes of the organization's inaugural and legally filed documentation, which stated that Ældre Sagen would be permitted establish local chapters to help accomplish the organization's purpose (Nielsen, 1996, p. 229). This created a fractal organization centered on an "X," the organization's mission-explicit name and statement of purpose, which in 2014 is expressed through 217 local chapters with almost 17,000 volunteers that are able to work with their local municipalities and local Ældre Sagen
members. The individual focus areas within the local chapters in turn reproduce the "X," such as Åldre Sagen Frederiksberg's focus area of IT which since 2000 has reproduced into numerous computer training courses; and, which, in turn, continue to expand based on influences from the environment, such as the growing popularity of iPads and Android tablets and the November 1st, 2014 obligatory digitalization of communication between citizens and state and local government.

Thus, if we follow Cooren's (2004, 2006) definition of agency as "the ability to make a difference," and this difference can be accounted for by a verb that describes what the human or the nonhuman happens to do in the present situation" (Cooren, 2006, p. 86), Åldre Sagen as an overall organization centered on its mission statement can be seen as making a better society by providing an organizational platform which makes the following possible: the fractal structure of Åldre Sagen as an agent in its own right as it enables local presence via local chapters of Åldre Sagen such as Åldre Sagen Frederiksberg, where the computer training courses take on agentive qualities as they structure and formalize computer training, and the more than 80 Åldre Sagen Frederiksberg IT volunteers help Åldre Sagen members gain assisted hands-on experience, where even the computers in the classroom have agency and make a difference; had they not been present, they would not have been able to provide hands-on experience. Even the acquired knowledge through the computer training courses is agentive because it has made a difference; without it, the course participants would have been left wanting in a society that now wants to interact digitally with its citizens: When the course participant Solveig was asked what she would have done had this computer training course not been provided by Åldre Sagen, Solveig replied, "Without this, I would have been left high and dry" (Interviews Åldre Sagen members, line 6), a sentiment predominately

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shared by the other interviewees (transcripts of interviews in appendix). Indeed, the very act of volunteering is agentive, or at least it is experienced that way, as Erik Kjær expressed: "You feel that you make a difference" (Erik Kjær interview, lines 195-196).

In this way, the latent potential of the Ældre Sagen mission statement as an agentive power to make a difference is realized by a "plenum of agencies" (Cooren, 2006), whose mobilization of the mission statement makes the symbols on the piece of paper filed in 1986 with the Foreningsregistret real and tangible in a way that aligns the purpose of Ældre Sagen with the organization's actions – even at the micro-level, the interaction with the organization's members at a computer training course in NemID at Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg – yet this mobilization in 2014 flexibly extends the mission statement in ways that were not conceivable in 1986, when the obligatory digital communication with state and local government was not an environmental influence that even needed to be considered and decided. Thus, the mission statement of Ældre Sagen – because its latent potential as an agentive power was unleashed by allowing it to align the organization's macro structures and micro actions – can be seen as both translocal and transtemporal; traveling not only in space, but also in time. And, perhaps most importantly, all of these activities emerged in communication (Taylor & Van Every, 2000), and none of these activities ever left the realm of communication (Luhmann, 1992; Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1153) as they built a mission-focused organization that in 2014 has almost 700,000 members, 17,000 volunteers, and 217 local chapters, covering all of Denmark.
7. Conclusion

The analytic/narrative account of Ældre Sagen established how a mission statement can create organizational actorhood and gain agency within and beyond the communicative constitution of an organization. Ældre Sagen's mission-explicit name and mission statement – formulated in 1986 as a declared difference to a particular historical environment – resulted in the legally-recognized organizational actor Ældre Sagen. The mission statement subsequently became the focal point for the co-orientated reproduction of Ældre Sagen's declared difference, and the mission statement gained agency through a fractal reproduction process whereby organizational structures emerged from the mission statement and thereafter supported a plenum of agencies in their latent capacities to "make a difference" that was focused on the Ældre Sagen mission statement. The fractal reproduction of Ældre Sagen naturally emerged through talk/text loops and decisions, which were premised in the mission statement and reflected the environment, from which particular events were selected for inclusion into the operationalization of the mission statement, based on the need to continue to maintain the distinction declared in the Ældre Sagen mission statement, the "difference that makes a difference."

In this way, the specific structure of Ældre Sagen, via its main office, local chapters, and particular areas of focus, contributes to Ældre Sagen's reproduction over time and space in the organization's dynamic and operational aspects, where the local chapters are attributed by their mission-explicit name to the overall organization Ældre Sagen, and simultaneously and collectively contribute to Ældre Sagen as a unified organizational actor with its own powers of agency.
The case of Ældre Sagen shows an example of how a mission statement can create organizational actorhood and gain agency within and beyond the communicative constitution of an organization. The merit of the Ældre Sagen case lies in the fact that the organization can be traced to its original statement of purpose in 1910, through the creation of a new member-based organization in 1986, and to the changing environmental conditions in 2000, 2007, and 2014. Thus this is a longitudinal account of an organization-in-action as opposed to a moment-in time-account, whereby the proposed approach for addressing the research question is greatly enhanced as it is viewed against historical points in time. In addition, two separate emergences were tracked: the emergence of Ældre Sagen as an organization, and the emergence of the IT focus at the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg local chapter of Ældre Sagen, and it was found that the Ældre Sagen mission statement provided an agentive focal point for both instances.

8. Implications

8.1. Theoretical implications

It was found that the synergistic use of all three schools of CCO enabled a holistic picture of an organization to emerge, one in which also the environment was given its appropriate place as a very important dynamic in organizational analysis. The four flows model allowed for important and focused groupings of communication that enabled a comprehensive view of the Ældre Sagen Frederiksberg IT volunteer communication rather than the usual and divisive internal/external split. The notion of agentive powers, at both a micro and a macro level, human and nonhuman, helped explain both Ældre Sagen as an organizational actor with agentive powers to make a difference within a greater society, and also helped explain agency at the very end-point, the individual who
is benefitting from this difference in a computer classroom. The concept of the naturally occurring fractal logic, which so eminently is demonstrated in the case of Ældre Sagen, deserves greater attention on its own, as it implies that man-made constructions such as organizations follow laws that are found to occur in nature. The mission statement can in this perspective be seen as an attempt to impose deterministic measures on a naturally occurring organizing phenomenon, giving further credence to Drucker's (1973) assertion that an organization is defined by its mission, and that, as such, research into mission statements must take into account an organization's ability to operationalize its mission statement (i.e., how it is operationally able to deliver on its mission statement), and research into organizations must take into account the organization's mission (i.e., why the organization exists in the first place), or else these account will be incomplete.

Especially striking in conducting the analysis of Ældre Sagen was the fact that nothing really took place outside of communication. The organization as an actor emerged in communication, its particular form also emerged in communication, and the organization continues to grow via communication, as discussed in the preceding account of Ældre Sagen. This finding supports the CCO definition that organizations are "ongoing and precarious accomplishments realized, experienced, and identified primarily – if not exclusively – in communication processes" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1150, italics added).

8.2. Managerial implications

As evidenced by the case of Ældre Sagen, a mission statement can become a powerful managerial tool when allowed to guide an emerging and growing organizational structure. The findings of this thesis support recent meta-studies into mission statements that reinforce the importance of aligning an organization's management systems and pro-
cesses with the organization's mission statement (Braun et al., 2012; Desmidt et al., 2011). In the words of Giddens (1984): "An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference,' that is, to exercise some sort of power" (p. 14). Thus, when a mission statement is not allowed agentive powers, it remains symbols on a piece of paper, and this, perhaps, can account for the "acknowledged widespread failure in their implementation" (Fairhurst et al., 1997, p. 243).

8.3. Limitations of study

This is a case study, intended to provide an analytic/narrative account of the organization Ældre Sagen in Denmark. As such, it is influenced by the particular characteristics of this organization and its environment, which in this thesis may have provided insights that are not transferable to other organizations, or to other regions. The approach used in this thesis to address the research question of how the mission statement creates organizational actorhood and gains agency within and beyond the communicative constitution of an organization should not be seen as the only approach possible, and further research would be needed into other organizations in order to establish whether the proposed approach has any merit.
9. References


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