LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Is Change Management Consulting becoming a Suicidal Business?

An Analysis of the Consultant's Role in the Relationship with Clients under Influence of current Change Management Trends

by

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May 2019

Master's Programme in Managing People, Knowledge and Change

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Abstract

Title	Is Change Management Consulting becoming a Suicidal Business? An Analysis of the Consultant's Role in the Relationship with Clients under Influence of current Change Management Trends
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Supervisor	Roland Paulsen Lund University, School of Economics and Management, Sweden
Date	May 2019
Aim	The aim of this thesis is to make a valuable contribution to existing literature by examining the altering consultant's role and relationship to clients in response to current change management developments.
Methodology	This research entails a qualitative case study following the theorem of hermeneutics and an interpretative, abductive approach, enabling us to work simultaneously with the theory and our empirical material. This work is based on ten semi-structured single and two group interviews, the application of the sculpture method and a background study complemented by observations, all conducted in our case consultancy Implement Consulting Group.
Theoretical Background	The theoretical background provides a profound knowledge foundation based on previous research on change management and management consulting.
Contributions	This thesis contributes to existing literature by emphasising the effects of current change management trends on the change management consultant's role and client-relationship as well as provides further discussion on repercussions on the change management consulting business potentially becoming a suicidal business.

Keywords: Change Management, Change Management Trends, Change Management Consulting, Consultant's Role, Client-Consultant Relationship

Acknowledgements

Above all, we would like to gratefully thank our supervisor Roland Paulsen for always being there for us, for his valuable tips, the many inspiring ideas and for constantly encouraging us to take a critical perspective on aspects. Thank you for your support, your empathetic words and our very productive meetings!

Furthermore, we would also like to express our gratitude to Jonas Winqvist, Jeanette Ruzicka-Nilsson and Anders Baude, our contact persons at Implement Consulting Group, who made this cooperation possible in the first place and who supported us at all times in organisational as well as content related questions. We would also like to thank the entire Implement Consulting Group team and the clients for their helpfulness, honest answers, participation in the sculpture method and valuable insights. Without all of you our work would not have been possible! We had a great time and take a lot out of the interesting, open and inspiring conversations with you, even beyond our thesis project.

Many thanks to Andrew Chapman for proofreading our work, to Tobias Graaf and Denis Gründler for our inspirational discussions, and to Christopher Röck for his additional support.

Finally, we would also like to thank each other for the trust we always had in another, that we had a lot of fun even in stressful thesis times and that we not only supported and built up our team, but also complemented each other well at any time.

Enjoy reading!

Alexandra Riester-Gnädinger & Nina Griehsel
Lund, 23rd of May 2019

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1 Introduction

Today's world is in a state of constant change induced by globalisation, digitalisation and transformed markets, shaping the economic world and creating new challenges for enterprises (Gairing, 2017). Companies thus need to adapt to these new demands in order to survive in the global competition. To cope with the increasing number and fast-moving nature of these changes, organisations therefore also need a different kind of change management (CM) (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016; Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). As a response to the changing environment, a transformed CM is arising which is constructed of a number of dominant CM trends. These include in particular the movements towards more agility, stronger integration of organisational members, bottom-up change initiatives, digitalisation and increased collaboration across borders (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Even though the contemporary global economy requires a reshaped CM, many companies still follow a rather traditional CM approach, which contrary to the emerging trends, is characterised by a top-down change initiation, a rather hard-side focus and the pursuit of a linear n-step process (Lewin, 1947; Kotter, 1996; Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). It therefore appears that many companies are not yet ready to modify their approach of addressing change, even if they are already aware of the need for reformation (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). If an organisation is not able to adjust its CM to the necessary trends independently, the top management often consults advisors for support (O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013). Since the world has always been changing and companies have asked for help for various reasons, the involvement of consultants for change processes has also been around for decades (Pereira, Jerónimo & Ramos, 2017). However, in order to successfully support organisations in their efforts, it is inevitably indispensable that the consultant keeps pace with current trends and deeply internalises the new CM movements (O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013). Thus, the CM trends also have repercussions on the advisor and influence in particular the role and the relationship to clients in managing change processes. Due to the fact that a role always corresponds in relation to something or someone, it is difficult to differentiate the role of the consultant from the relationship to the client. Rather, both elements ought to be understood as a mutually dependent construct (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). Despite the current relevance of the topic, hardly any literature on how CM has transformed in response to the new business environment and on how the role of advisors in the client-consultant relationship has to change in order to equip companies with the required, reformed CM, exists. Moreover, the long-term effects and significance of a changed role of consultants for the consulting business are equally poorly explored. Furthermore, the scarce research available in this field is mostly conducted by practitioners themselves, such as consultants, rather than by independent scientists, implying that a functional and instrumental character dominates the existing literature (e.g. BCG, 2019; Forbes Insights Team, 2019; Prosci, 2019; Rune, 2005). This renders unbiased research almost impossible and raises questions about the credibility of these studies also because consultants thus act as trendsetters continuously creating their own business.

The aim of this empirical study is therefore to make a valuable contribution to existing literature by examining, as independent researchers, the current development of CM and the need for consultants altering their roles in relation to clients. By pursuing this study approach, we are thereby combining the themes of CM and the role behaviour of advisors, which both have already aroused attention in literature, and are striving to create a novelty value for existing research that goes beyond the purely functionalist point of view. Accordingly, we aspire to address subjects of high topicality as well as to identify areas that will continue to gain importance in the near future and therefore stresses the need for further research. The purpose of this study is thus to provide a precious knowledgeable contribution, to create something that sharpens people's way of thinking, expands their mindsets and allows them to critically reflect on the connections and repercussions of current CM movements. Furthermore, this research could open up interesting implications for practitioners in companies and CM consultancies and could lead to a deeper understanding of the complex nature of the theme.

By drawing on a study conducted in cooperation with a consultancy, along with a number of its clients, we want to take a critical stance on previous research, try to convey a more profound comprehension and create impulses for potential discussions. Thereby we build on the assumption that the current changes in today's business world demand a new nature of CM and that consultants are hired by clients to support the emerging process. This led us to the following research question:

- *How does the consultant's role in relationship with clients adapt in response to the new CM trends?*

In order to adequately address our research question and achieve our outlined aim, we will thus investigate how advisors of our case consultancy, the Implement Consulting Group, and their clients construct the nature and impact of the role of the trend-influenced consultant.

In the course of discussing this question, however, additional thoughts have developed that go beyond answering this research question. Reviewing our findings from the collected empirical material, this study also appears to answer the question of what the revised CM and the resulting impact on the consultant's role in the client relationship actually implies for the CM consulting business. This will be addressed in the subsequent macro-perspectival discussion section (chapter 5).

1.1 Disposition

This master thesis is composed of six chapters: *Introduction, Theoretical Background, Methodology, Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion.* After introducing the topic, embedding the problem statement into context as well as providing an outline on the research aims and questions, chapter two, the *Theoretical Background*, will equip the reader with a theoretical knowledge base covering the two major topics of particular relevance to this study - change management and management consulting. At first, we introduce the CM topic and illustrate its historical development up to current trends. Subsequently, we present the nature of the management consulting field and further describe its practice. Finally, the consultants' role, the consultant-client relationship as well as the area of CM consulting will be addressed. Chapter three, the *Methodology*, describes our methodological foundation underlying this study. Initially, we explain our research approach followed by a presentation of the research design, the case company, the data collection and data analysis. In the end of this section, we critically reflect upon our study and point out its limitations. Thereafter, chapter four, the *Analysis*, forms the core of our thesis and encompasses both the presentation and analysis of the empirical material collected, with reference to our theoretical background. It is thus structured into the three themes of CM trends, the consultant's role and the client-consultant relationship. This is followed by chapter five, the *Discussion*, offering insights into the implications of the transformed CM trends on the CM consulting business and therefore exceeds the aspects reflected in chapter four, on a more macro-level.

Finally, chapter six, the *Conclusion*, summarises our findings and draws inferences with regard to our research purpose. At last we outline our theoretical contribution, practical implications, limitations as well as make suggestions for future research.

2 Theoretical Background

This chapter outlines the theoretical background, consisting of two main areas: change management and management consulting. First of all, we will present the literature on CM, in which we describe the different views and historical developments. Subsequently, current CM trends will be discussed, which are of particular importance for answering our research question. We will then concentrate on the area of management consulting, where we will particularly elaborate on the nature and practice of management consulting. In addition, we will provide insights into the existing literature on the role of the consultant and the consultant-client relationship, and finally focus on the distinctive area of CM consulting.

2.1 Change Management

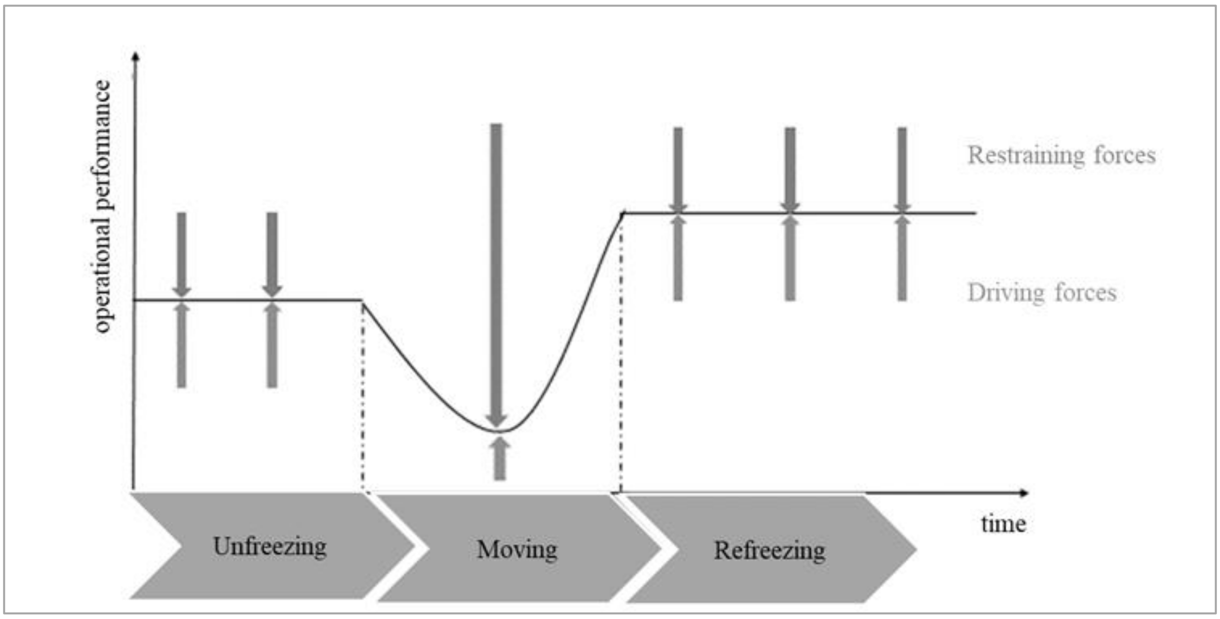
2.1.1 The Nature of Change Management

When reviewing the literature about CM, one comes across a large body of literature from several disciplines, since no independent theory of change exists (Reiß et al. 1997). Instead CM is composed of academic subjects inter alia organisational development, psychology, organisational psychology, social sciences and human resources as well as is complemented by business scholars, leadership trainings and reports of practical business experiences (Reiß et al. 1997). Among various definitions, CM is defined as a “modern umbrella term for everything that is practiced nowadays in terms of changes in organisations, not [as] a term for a particular change strategy” (Doppler & Lauterburg, 2014, p.100). It can more precisely be understood as “the process of continually renewing an organisation's direction, structure and capabilities to serve the ever-changing need of external and internal clients” (Gwaka & Gidion, 2016) which presupposes that “transformation occurs when the organisation recognises that its old way of operating [...] cannot deliver the business strategies required to meet new marketplace requirements for success” (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Thus, the objectives of CM are to increase the competitiveness and survivability of companies (Brown & Harvey, 2006) as well as to further support the enhancement of acceptability, the willingness and the ability among the affected people to change (Schawel & Billing, 2014; Steinle et al. 2008). Further, it is also important to be aware that CM is carried out by change agents. Nowadays, the term ‘change agent’ is often used more loosely to refer to “anyone who has a role in change implementation regardless of job title or seniority” and can thus be embodied by a member of the organisation as well as by an external consultant (Palmer et al. 2017, p.32). Thus, change agents are part of every change approach, regardless of the type of change (e.g. individual, technological, cultural or structural).

2.1.2 A Historical Perspective on Change Management

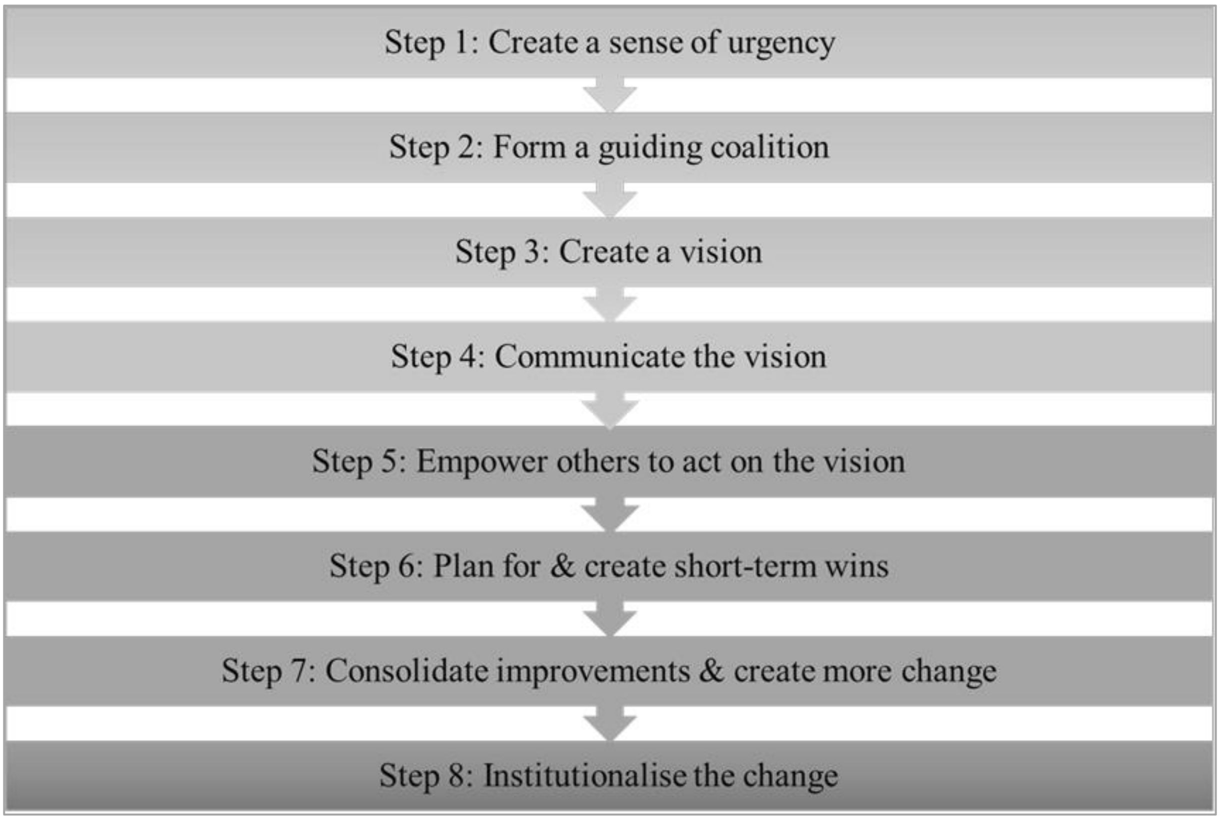
Throughout the years, different perspectives and approaches regarding CM have emerged. One of the dominant approaches to change is Lewin’s (1947) three stage model, which has established as the archetype, illustrated in figure 1. It has been the first model systematically examining change processes in companies (French & Bell, 1990). In addition, Lewin was particularly popular for his field theory, in which he explained that human behaviour is always determined by psychological forces of their environment, similar to exerted physical forces, which can consequently equally be applied to change processes (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2010).

Figure 1: Illustration of Lewin's three-step-model (Own presentation based on Lewin, 1947)



These forces partly contribute positively to change (driving forces), yet also partly inhibit it (restraining forces) (Lewin, 1947). Lewin's (1947) three-step-model assumes that change involves a process of initially unfreezing current behaviour (restraining and driving forces are equalised), then moving to new behaviour (the driving forces significantly exceed the restraining forces) and lastly refreezing the new behaviour (forces are balanced again), with the organisation operating on a higher performance. Building on the work of this early theorist, Kotter (1996) produced an eight-step model pursuing a higher granularity of the phase description, as presented in figure 2. The first four steps are necessary to create a willingness to change. In the steps five to seven the company introduces and tests new methods, by especially focussing on involving affected people. Finally, the last step is crucial for establishing the changes and anchoring the new processes sustainably in the company, with the aim of successfully shaping organisational change.

Figure 2: Illustration of Kotter's eight-step-model (Own presentation based on Kotter, 1996)



Ever since its formulation, the prevailing models as well as underlying beliefs have been reviewed and adapted in a variety of models, approaches and methods, such as in the continuous change process model, the process of action research or approaches to transitional and transformational change (Weick & Quinn, 1999; McShane & von Glinow, 2005; Kuhn, 1970).

2.1.3 Current Influences on Change Management – Time to Rethink?

In addition to the reflection of models and beliefs over time, practitioners have also started to challenge their paradigm towards CM in the context of today's constantly transforming world. Since, organisational change became a continuous phenomenon, practitioners realised the potential need to create organisational agility or organisational resilience (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). However, it is thereby important to highlight that the majority of papers available on novel developments in CM are thus provided by management consultancies and CM practitioners rather than by scientists (e.g. BCG, 2019; Forbes Insights Team, 2019; Creasey, 2019; Prosci, 2019). The alarming number that still one quarter of all change projects fail, prompted the professionals in this field to look back on the core intention of the discipline: generating employees' understanding and commitment to change, concluding that change may need to re-focus primarily on end-user change acceptance (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017).

Nowadays, trends in CM are especially guided by a noticeable paradigm shift in this field (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016), which originates partly from the emerging influence of new academic disciplines, such as digital development, innovation or design thinking, analytics and cognitive computing (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Furthermore, various external pressures oblige a reflection of the deep-rooted assumptions and approaches in CM such as *the necessity of velocity and agility*, *coping with the digital world*, *ensuring simplicity and self-managing tools*, *numerous constituencies and locations as well as the acknowledgement of employee voices* (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017).

The necessity of velocity and agility

Companies do not only face a higher rate and pace of change but also various, simultaneous occurring changes (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Thus, managing several change processes at different stages of progress is not unusual. The coordinated management of those fast pace changes is however rather challenging, especially by only applying simple, static n-step models such as Lewin's three-stage model (Nelson & Aaron, 2013; Jick & Sturtevant). Hence, by reviewing this model , it becomes rather obvious, that Lewins' third stage of "refreezing" is no longer suitable in a fast-changing environment (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Practitioners therefore realise the demand to change their approach to a more fluid way of managing transformations of different sizes, paces and progression-levels by constantly creating new change projects (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; Creasey, 2019). Consequently, it is required to be able to change at any time, as already claimed by Weick and Quinn (1999, p.361) who propose that "continuous change follows the sequence freeze-rebalance-unfreeze". Companies are thus aiming for a state of having the flexibility and agility to transform constantly. Since 'agile' constitutes a currently flourishing buzzword in the business environment, a number of various meanings have emerged (Franklin, 2018). In the following we understand agility as the organisations' capability to change rapidly in order to respond to transforming stakeholder needs, markets, technologies, competitors or other opportunities and thus to enhance their business performance in an innovative and vibrant business context (Conforto et al. 2016). Further, this is accompanied by the increasing importance of agility both in the formulation of change strategies and their implementation (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; Backx et al. 2019).

The demand for more flexible and agile organisational structures and working practices, as well as for agile CM methods, is therefore highly increasing (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Agile CM approaches are the reasonable reaction to uncertainty, following the idea to "start small, don't plan everything at once and expect changes" (Franklin, 2018, p.2). Agile methods follow iterative processes like Scrum, Kanban or agile project management or the use of prototyping whereby the change is rather frequent, in small steps and does not come in "one wave of change management activities" (Franklin, 2018, p.3; Tanvir et al. 2017) thus generating each time just a small transformation to the normal business (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016).

Coping with the digital world

The two trends of agility and velocity form the cornerstones of digital transformations and are thus considered as key success factors for organisations in the digital age (Kramer, 2016; Walker, 2018; Wade & Tarling, 2016). Digitalisation, which is often compared to the fundamental transformations of the industrial revolution, has a far-reaching impact on economy and society (Parviainen et al. 2017; EY, 2011). With regard to CM, digitalisation enables companies through new mobile and social technologies to interact more effectively and directly with all stakeholders in transformation projects (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Especially today's digital generation, also known as generation Z (Dolot, 2018) expects the use of mobile and social media also at work (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Thereby CM undergoes a significant modification with more and more digital change tools finding their way into the market, providing the valuable opportunity to handle change projects faster and more effectively (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Further, they offer new ways of learning with major benefits such as decentralised and personalised learning, adequately adjustable for each individual employee

(Wilson, 2016). These rising digital learning platforms increase the "next generation easy-to-use change tools" (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017, p.54).

Ensuring simplicity and self-managing tools

Over the years, a number of complicated and time-consuming change approaches and methods have developed that are being questioned by more and more practitioners. This is also a result of the higher demand for driving change faster and more effectively (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Further, due to the multitude of often simultaneously occurring change initiatives, affected or involved people need to learn to drive the change more self-reliant which can be supported with easily accessible self-learning change material (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). In result, one can assume that the key players in CM will be those primarily affected by it, such as managers and employees themselves (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017).

Numerous constituencies and locations

CM focuses primarily on the impact of change on individuals, groups or special stakeholder requirements, by assimilating methods and approaches to generate awareness, engagement and acceptance for the change among the people affected (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Since companies today operate globally, employ different generations of employees, and typically consist of multiple business divisions they are more and more operating cross-divisional, cross-boundaries as well as cross-borders (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Thus, traditional CM approaches encounter their limitations, creating a demand for new solutions such as using digital tools or online communities more extensively for cross-collaboration, which is also applicable on a global level (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017).

The acknowledgement of employee voices

The former way of managing change was primarily, as exemplified by Kotter, a leader-dominant approach, rather top-down (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). However, in contrast to the prevailing literature today's transformations are initiated by employees whose collective force is empowered by social media, making their requirements and voices present and crucial, hence driving the change from bottom-up (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). Having a saying and being acknowledged for ideas and contributions, is especially for the generation Z a vital prerequisite at work (Gaidhani, Arora & Sharma, 2019; Schawbel, 2013; Bascha, 2011). Thus, communication became key for change, more transparent, equitably as well as less impacted by leaders (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Scientists these days even claim that organisational change takes place multilaterally, with high involvement of a greater amount of people, as early in the change process as possible (Jorgensen, Bruehl & Franke, 2014; Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). This offers the opportunity of using the collective knowledge and insights and thus the ‘collective intelligence’ of the workforce as well as avoiding or minimising resistance from the beginning (Raford, 2014; Filippi et al. 2013; Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). Thus, CM focuses more on the people involved, the soft-side of transformations, which leads in some companies to a restructure of the organisation towards a ‘humanocracy’ (Payne, 2018). Hamel (2019), defines humanocracy as a collection of various organisational principles and methods intended to enhance people’s ability to develop and apply their unique capabilities. Compared to bureaucracies, aiming to maximise control, humanocracies are built to maximise human contribution, putting the people into the centre, motivating and empowering them to make the most of themselves at work (Payne, 2018). In addition, companies increased their usage of technology for communication since also the number of stakeholders who want to express their voice ascended (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Thus, leaders need to absorb how to react to and incorporate with a multitude of voices.

Consequently, CM is transforming to a more agile, volatile, and digital environment, fostering self-learning as well as emphasising the employee and client voices, cross-collaborations and bottom-up change initiatives. All this indicates a paradigm shift in the CM area and thus demands a new handling of CM (Whitehurst, 2015). In its transition phase CM needs to reflect on common assumptions and steer towards a new path, new frameworks and approaches, new key-actors in the process and new areas of activity. Ultimately, a change agent is able to transform the company’s routines and culture but at the same time needs to adapt to constant trends in CM in order to support successful conversion. In situations where a company lacks expertise or advice, external consultants are usually brought in to plan, implement and supervise change projects (van Benthem, 2011).

2.2 Management Consulting

2.2.1 The Nature of Management Consulting

The practice of management consulting can be traced back to the origins of civilisation (Pereira, Jerónimo & Ramos, 2017). It is delineated as one of the oldest practices on earth, because of its relationship to human nature, while the support and consultation of others is part of human DNA (Lopes da Costa et al. 2014). Nowadays, the management consulting industry is still regarded as big, constantly growing and highly profitable (Kaplan, 2017). The literature on management consulting is however characterised by controversial understandings regarding the nature of consulting, it's value and way of usage. Finding a distinctive explanation for management consulting is by various scholars thus stressed as highly difficult since it encompasses a great number of constituent areas (e.g. Butler, 2009). Nevertheless, numerous researchers and practitioners attempted to define management consulting, including one of the most popular pioneers in management consulting research, Milan Kubr (Kipping & Clark, 2012; Centre for Management Consulting Excellence, 2018). Consequently, a number of concrete definitions have accumulated over time, as some of them are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Definitions of Management Consulting

Source	Definition
Kubr (2002)	Management consulting is an independent professional advisory service assisting managers and organisations to achieve organisational purposes and objectives by solving management and business problems, identifying and seizing new opportunities, enhancing learning and implementing changes.
Management Consultancies Association (2003)	Management consulting is the creation of value for organisations, through the application of knowledge, techniques and assets, to improve business performance. This is achieved through the rendering of objective advice and/or the implementation of business solutions.
Furusten (2009)	Management consultants are independent, objective and specially trained persons who identify problems, suggest solutions and assist in implementation.
Buono (2009)	Management consulting is a service activity performed by persons who are external to, and independent from the client organisation. Management consultants possess appropriate scientific-professional skills and abilities, provide opinions and use rectifying, progressive and/or creative approaches.

The different definitions point to common characteristics of management consulting, such as knowledge transfer, advice and assistance, the consultant's independence, it's temporary nature and consulting as business. Kubr (2002, p.4) emphasises the creation, transferring, sharing and application of knowledge as "quintessential nature" of consulting. Alvesson (2004) accordingly refers to consulting firms as knowledge-intensive firms and thus to organisations disposing their knowledge as capacity to the market. In this context, it is important to mention that knowledge transfer is a two-way process. By increasing the clients' knowledge and actionability, consultants gain valuable experience improving their own knowledge, skills as well as business intuition (Powell & Ambrosini, 2012). Consequently, consultants are enabled to provide their clients with more effective advice in current and future situations (Powell & Ambrosini, 2012). As derived from the previous presented definitions, advice-giving and assistance constitute a major capacity of consultants which implies that consultants have no immediate authority to decide or execute and that hence their responsibility lies rather in guaranteeing the quality and integrity of their given advice (Kubr, 2002). Another characteristic of management consulting concerns its temporality. The consulting process is limited to a certain period of time in which consultants are requested for temporary support (O'Mahoney, 2010). Furthermore, consulting can be regarded as corporate agreement with consultancies as sellers of a specific service and clients constituting their buyers (O'Mahoney, 2010). Consequently, a number of different definitions can be retrieved from the literature on management consulting, which however coincide in some basic characteristics. Nonetheless, there is still no globally accepted definition of management consulting, partly because there is no consensus about what it constitutes and contains (Pereira, Jerónimo & Ramos, 2017).

2.2.2 Purposes of Hiring Consultants

As Grusky (1960) already pointed out, consultants can be regarded as beneficial for clients due to their independency, objectivity, specific knowledge and capacities – "they do things clients can't" (O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013, p.27). Back in 2002, the 'management consulting guru' Milan Kubr further elaborated on the reason why clients hire consultants and thus identified five generic purposes. These included the achievement of organisational objectives, the solving of management and business problems, the identification of new opportunities, learning enhancement in a way that "organisations are helped to help themselves and become learning organisations" as well as the implementation of changes (Kubr, 2002, p.16). Complementing this, Lauer (2014) described a number of reasons why management consultants get involved by clients. First and foremost, clients make use of external consultants because they contribute external knowledge they have gathered in previous projects by ideally adapting the knowledge and experience individual to the client company (Lauer, 2014). Secondly, consultants are hired due to their neutrality, since they can examine the situation and circumstances from an external, unbiased perspective (Lauer, 2014). In some cases, consultants are also engaged because clients hope for greater internal enforcement (Lauer, 2014). Fourthly, management consultants can support the advising process through professional project management, since they can usually rely on many years of experience (Lauer, 2014). As a last purpose, Lauer (2014) refers to the 100 percent commitment of management consultants as they in comparison to organisational members, provide a full-time dedication to the project. In addition to the identified purposes, O'Mahoney (2010) also emphasises that some organisational members are reluctant to admit that they hire consultants because they want to sharpen their own individual profile, dismiss people, justify fashions or have a scapegoat to blame for potential failures. Moreover, recent trends that currently mark the consulting industry can have an impact on the purposes of engaging consultants. They are mainly characterised by increased client requirements and their active integration, IT developments and the fashion towards formations of internal consulting services (O'Mahoney, 2010; Deltek, 2018; Lauer, 2014).

2.2.3 Consultant-Client Relationship

Since the consulting process requires the involvement of consultants and clients, the creation and maintenance of an effective consultant-client relationship is vital to success (Kubr, 2002). Building such a relationship is however not easy. According to Kubr (2002), critical dimensions in the consultant-client relationship are constituted by collaboration, knowledge transfer and trust. Basis of the relationship between clients and consultants is the transfer of knowledge, from the consultant to the client as well as vice versa (Kubr, 2002). Therefore, collaboration is essential since without liaison transferring knowledge or learning are not possible and thus no effective consulting (Kubr, 2002). Moreover, collaboration and knowledge-transferring generate trust (Kubr, 2002). According to Chelliah, D'Netto and Georges (2015), the path towards strong relationships focuses on factors such as trust and honesty, whereby building trust in the "non-routine, high-stake context of consulting" however, is difficult (Nikolova, Möllering & Reihlen, 2015, p.232). Thereby the high institutional uncertainty of the consulting industry and thus the lack of professional certification and accreditation of consultants poses a major challenge as it enhances the uncertainty and risk of clients when selecting consultants

(Glückler & Armbrüster, 2003). Furthermore, as trust is a process which includes three social practices: signalling integrity and ability, demonstrating benevolence and establishing an emotional connection (Nikolova, Möllering & Reihlen, 2015) and as it forces both parties to take risks, it demonstrates a potentially critical dimension in building an effective consultant-client relationship that is crucial to fruitful consulting (Kubr, 2002). As illustrated in table 2, two contrasting perspectives, the functional and the critical position, on the interaction between clients and consultants exist (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). While the functionalist view emphasises the knowledge-based and helpful manner of the relationship, the critical position instead concentrates on the faddish and symbolic character of the consultation (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). A closer examination of these diverse perspectives' points to different associated models. The functionalist position thus contains the expert model as well as the social model, sharing differing views of the consulting interaction (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012).

While the expert model understands the relationship as client-expert interaction and thus considers the consultant as an expert with the necessary knowledge for the successful handling of problems, the social model adopts a more participative approach to the relationship (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). Consultants and clients thus interact in a common learning process, the so-called 'social learning model' assuming that both parties contribute valuable knowledge and ideas to the consultation project (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). Although the expert and the social model differ from each other, both implicitly follow the assumption of clients being convinced of the value consultants offer (Fincham & Clark, 2002). The critical perspective on the consultant-client interaction in contrast, embodying the critical model, "stresses the need for consultants to persuade clients of the value they provide" and rather focuses on the symbolic nature of consulting, referring to consultants as 'impression managers' who attempt to align their clients with the management trends they generate (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012, p. 2; Clark, 1995). Depending on the form of the relationship from client to consultant, different power relations arise which can affect the interaction (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). Since clients and consultants have different personal and organisational motivations and perspectives, they often compete with each other about what should be used as a basis for solving the problem (Nikolova & Devinney, 2009). This kind of competition is perceived positive if resulting in a balanced influence of both parties on the outcome of the consulting project (Schön, 1983). However, an unbalanced influence and thus outweighing impact of the consultant can lead to considerable negative consequences for the client, resulting in the extension of standardised solutions which are not in the best interest of the client (Wong, 2001) or the creation of remedies for “manufactured problems” in the context of the most recent ‘thought leadership’ fashion (Nikolova & Devinney, 2009; Jackall, 1988; Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1996). According to Nikolova and Devinney (2009), the consultant mobilises persuasive forms of power either by building a personal connection with the client or by rational reasoning (Nikolova & Devinney, 2009). While a personal relationship includes a socialisation process and leads to the client’s identification with the advisor, exerting influence through rational reasoning rather points to the use of the consultant’s authority as experts (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2002). Since persuasiveness is a more subtle power than positional superiority, actors may not even be aware of the exercise of that power (Nikolova & Devinney, 2009). Through constant interaction, consultants can smoothly and inconspicuously direct clients into the consultant's way of thinking (Nikolova & Devinney, 2009).

Table 2: Models of the consultant-client relationship (Own presentation based on Nikolova and Devinney, 2012)

	Functional perspective		Critical perspective
	Expert model	Social learning model	Critical model
Metaphors	The consultant as 'seller of expertise' (Aharoni, 1997) and a 'doctor' (Gallessich, 1982)	The consultant as 'helper' (Schein, 1999) and 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1983)	The consultant as rhetorician (Alvesson, 1993); 'impression manager' (Clark, 1995); creator of management fads (Jackson, 2001)
Nature of consulting	Consulting is about solving clients' problems by transferring consultants' knowledge to the client organisation.	Consulting is about assisting clients to solve their own problems by combining consultants' expertise with clients' deep knowledge of their company in a process of framing and negotiating different perspectives and views.	Consulting is about creating the impression that clients are buying something of value; it also involves the creation and dissemination of management fads and fashions.
Nature of interaction	The interaction consists of the transfer of information from client to consultant and the reciprocal transfer of solutions; the nature of communication channels, characteristics of messages, and motivation and absorptive capacity of the involved individuals determine its success.	Consultant-client interaction is a joint learning process: it is the reciprocal exploration, testing, and negotiation of clients' and consultants' positions, interpretations, and experiences.	The interaction consists in consultants creating impressions, images and stories whereas clients act as the audience; rhetorical skills and acts are important aspects of the interaction process.
Power relations	Consultants as experts determine the problem solution on the basis of their expertise and professional judgement. The client is dependent on the knowledge of the expert and accepts consultants' authority (consulting-centric view).	Both the consultant and the client are powerful and interdependent because both parties possess relevant knowledge and make important contributions to the problem-solving process (a balanced relationship).	Consultants are powerful and persuasive actors; they use rhetoric, stories, and symbols to impress clients and sell management fads. The client is dependent on consultants and the management fads they create (consulting-centric view); the consultant's power is seen as an extension of top management's hierarchical power.

In addition to arising power relations, it is equally worth mentioning the importance of the consultant's position beyond the client's corporate entity, generating a status as 'the other' (Alvesson, 2012; Kipping & Armbrüster, 2002; Kitay & Wright, 2004). Establishing an external or outside position can provide "very active symbolic labour" in the consultant-client relationship (Deetz, 1998, p.157). Consequently, the consultant-client relationship can be regarded as a complex assemblage of different factors such as knowledge, trust or power which, depending on the situation, can result in a variety of possible compositions.

2.2.4 Consultant's Role

Over time, various, partly contrasting, role understandings of the management consultant have evolved. According to the role continuum by Lippitt and Lippitt (1979), the consultant's roles are ranging in dimension from a directive extreme in which the consultant takes on the position of leadership, initiates activity or tells clients directly what to do, to a non-directive extreme in which the consultant only provides information for clients without interfering in the decision-making process within the client organisation. Thereby it is important to point out that the roles assumed by the consultant "depend on the situation, the client's preferences and expectations and the consultant's profile" (Kubr, 2002, p. 70). Lippitt and Lippitt (1979) identified eight roles ranging from directive to non-directive, including the role of an advocate, technical expert, trainer, collaborator in problem-solving, identifier of alternatives, fact finder, process specialist and reflector, as described in table 3. Accordingly, the consultant exercises different levels of influence on the client in adopting different roles on the directive and non-directive continuum (Kubr, 2002). The consultant will impact "by his or her presence and by action taken (or not taken)" the behaviour of those concerned in a change process (Kubr, 2002, p. 97).

Table 3: Illustration of the consultant's role on a directive and non-directive continuum (Own presentation based on Lippitt & Lippitt, 1979)

	Role of the Consultant	Role Description
Non-directive	Reflector	Raises questions for reflection
	Process specialist	Focuses on interpersonal dynamics affecting the problem-solving-process and change, develop joint diagnostic skills for addressing problems, mirroring feedback
	Fact finder	Gathers data and stimulates thinking "researcher"
	Identifier of alternatives	Supports in identifying alternatives, helps to assess consequences, not directly participating in decision-making
	Collaborator in problem-solving	Maintains objectivity while offering alternaties, involved in decision-making
	Trainer/educator	Trains the client and designs learning experiences
	Technical expert	Provides information, special knowledge, skills and professional experiences, suggests practical decisions
Directive	Advocate	Proposes guidelines, persuades or directs in the problem-solving process

Although Lippitt and Lippitt developed the role continuum back in 1979, many of the assigned role understandings can still be found in similar or modified forms in recent literature.

Some consulting firms first used doctors as their model of competence, as they considered the diagnosis, treatment and improvement model as functioning well for consulting (O'Mahoney, 2010). However, as McKenna (2006) argues, this metaphor limits the use of consultants to times when the client organisation is "sick", which is mostly contrasting to the consultant's actual intention of also advising "healthy businesses" on improvement motives. A further perspective on the role behaviour of consultants results from the view that consultants are seen as magicians or witch-doctors who, with clever rhetoric, pull the wool over the client's eyes in order to sell their services (Argyris, 2000; Whittle, 2005). In contrast, the understanding supported by Kubr (1982), Armbrüster (2006) and McGonagle and Vella (2001), suggests that the client is in control through the ability to compare different offers as well as to end projects early. This correlates with assigning consultants the role of a coach or facilitator to empower the client to gain a better understanding of the organisation and to take the initiative in diagnosing and resolving organisational problems by themselves (O'Mahoney, 2010). Moreover, advisors are often emphasised as true partners or friends which requires a certain degree of intimacy and mutual development (Day, 2004). According to Sturdy et al. (2008), unlike common belief, consultants rarely bring "expert knowledge" into an organisation, and more frequently take on assignments for which the firm had too few staff to perform and is thus becoming a temporary active part of the client organisation representing an additional resource of the workforce (Olsen & Poulfelt, 2018). Furthermore, the author highlights the paradox that clients often hired advisors for expertise the firm in fact already possessed.

In general, the literature has highlighted some of the main characteristics of consultants: their ability to give managers a sense of control (Ernst & Kieser, 2000; Kipping & Kirkpatrick, 2005), their combination of unusual skills and knowledge which the client does not possess (Corsi, 2010), their distance, which gives them an objective overview of the problems (Drucker, 1979; Corsi, 2010), and their aptitude for taking action (Lopes da Costa et al. 2014). As discussed before, trust is an important and central factor in the consultant-client relationship. Maister, Green and Galford (2000) even consider the ability to gain clients' trust and confidence as the key to professional success. Accordingly, they point to an ideal idea of the consultant as a "trusted advisor" and identified three fundamental skills a trusted consultant needs to possess: (1) building trust, (2) giving effective advice and (3) building relationships. A trusted advisor is thus the person client approach when a problem occurs for the first time, often in moments of great urgency and who can act differently as a mirror, sounding board, confessor, mentor and sometimes even as a scapegoat (Maister, Green & Galford, 2000). Despite the fact that the trusted advisor model was developed in 2000, it is as relevant today as it was back then (Vogel, 2015). In the most profound and completely trustworthy consulting relationships there are few limits regarding the nature of relationship, little distinction between professional and personal issues, and both parties understand each other's roles in their life (Vogel, 2015). Consequently, the understanding of management consultants' roles can vary considerably and take on a wide range of forms.

2.2.5 Change Management Consulting

As previously indicated, consulting firms often play a major role in advising companies on organisational change issues. According to Sorge and van Witteloostuijn (2004, p.1207), organisational change even "has become the raison d'etre of the consultancy and management professions". This form of consulting can be subordinated to a certain type of management consulting, the CM consulting, thus pointing to a rather generalistic advising approach (O'Mahoney, 2010). A generalist consultant provides several services and although he does not compulsorily possess all the requisite skills at project start, he has a well-developed set of core analysis and communication skills, as well as the ability to learn quickly (O'Mahoney, 2010). The clients may benefit from the extensive experience of such consultants (O'Mahoney, 2010) and many successes may arise because generalist consultants take learnings from one industry and apply them in another (Smith, 2002). Moreover, since organisational change is usually accompanied by a strategic reorientation, strategy consultancies are often involved in CM (Lauer, 2014). Sorge and van Witteloostuijn (2004), further point out, that a client organisation is often poorly equipped to design and implement a change initiative without external support, and that an outsider can perform a variety of useful functions while providing new inputs or external experience, offering external legitimacy or assisting in overcoming internal resistance. Consultants can assume the role of a devil's advocate, uncover vulnerabilities or sharpen and elucidate the client's view of utopia (Sorge & van Witteloostuijn, 2004). In addition, the CM consultant may need to serve as bogeyman whenever a change process threatens to fail (Sorge & van Witteloostuijn, 2004). The generalist consultant's role is thus constituted by a combination of "functional, practical, or conceptual inputs with legitimatory effects" (Sorge & van Witteloostuijn, 2004, p.1207).

2.3 Recap: Theoretical Background

Finally, the existing literature provides insights into the two main topics of particular relevance to our study - change management and management consulting. CM can be described as a process of transforming organisations to manage external and internal factors in the best possible way and thus increase the company's competitiveness and its survivability on the market. In addition, CM evolved over time from a process-oriented and a top-down initiated n-step approach, as proposed by CM pioneers Lewin or Kotter, to a more agile concept with a higher emphasis on people. The trends dominating CM today are therefore characterised by agility, digitalisation, high involvement, bottom-up change initiatives and closer cross-boundary or cross-border cooperation. However, since companies often lack the necessary skills to successfully implement CM independently, they hire experts for operational and strategic support as well as for coaching a trend-requested way of thinking. Management consultants can thus be seen as beneficial to clients due to their objectivity, independency, specific knowledge and capacities. In addition, scholars provide insights into different role assignments of consultants and their relationship to the client, including dimensions of power; influence, trust or knowledge transfer. Since CM consulting is an integral part of management consulting, the available literature on management consultants can thus be seen as equally applicable to CM consultants.

3 Methodology

This section provides information about the approach to our study and the methodological considerations. Initially, we present our research approach and describe the research methods we used to gather our empirical material and subsequently guide through the applied analysis process and the associated interpretation of the empirical data. Finally, we will take a critical view on our study by indicating different aspects on reflexivity and limitations.

3.1 A Qualitative Research Approach

Our study can be assigned to the qualitative methodology, aiming for “rich” material and aspiring an in-depth analysis, aligned with the principles of case studies (Bryman & Bell, 2018). On account of our topic and the underlying research questions, examining relationships as well as thoughts and feelings of our interviewees, we followed the ontology of a socially constructed reality which is determined by each individuals’ personal perception of the world (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In consideration of the epistemology, this study is based on interpretive tradition, that are similarly characterised by a social construction of the reality using interpretations (e.g. Prasad, 2017; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). This implies that the world is formed by our aptitude to interconnect subjects, objects or phenomena with meaning (Prasad, 2005). Thus, we are aware of the fact that there is not just one sole reality but rather multiple provided by each respondent, influencing our perception on the topic. In order to be able to conduct valuable interviews and assess the findings, we have followed a dual approach of conducting research drawing on a knowledge base grounded in existing theory, also known as abductive research methodology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Therefore, abduction offered us a better starting position to illuminate the case under investigation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Accordingly, we gathered our empirical material at the same time with an open mindset throughout the study. Subsequently, we sought to fuse the already established theory with our empirical findings to compose the analysis (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p.4)

Since we adhered to the interpretive tradition, this study pursued the theorem of hermeneutics, also known as the thought process of interpretation (Malpas & Gander, 2014), allowing us to grasp the entire mechanism of the phenomenon (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Prasad, 2005). The analysis of the data shifting steadily between theoretical and empirical research, can be regarded as following the circle of hermeneutics, which describes the necessity of understanding the context in order to understand the theory and vice versa (Prasad, 2017). This concept offered us the opportunity to discover hidden meanings, to research in more depth, behind the surface and to scrutinise interpersonal constellations and dynamics (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p.96). This approach further requires empirical data to be composed of the most diverse subjects, as in our case of a manifold group of respondents, providing us with various opinions for a deeper and more comprehensive insight into the topic (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

3.2 Case Study Design

Our study is based on the principles of a case study design (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018) and thus illustrates an in-depth examination of an individual case (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018) in its whole complexity and speciality (Stake, 1995). Using case studies for research is a popular concept especially in the field of business (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The research is therefore conducted in a single organisation, a system with “a purpose and functioning parts”, as in our case consisting of a Swedish management consultancy and complemented by qualitative research with selected clients of the consulting firm (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018, p.63). Case studies further offer the opportunity to combine different qualitative methods which are seen as especially adequate in a case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). Our study therefore used a methodological triangulation by combining interviews, observations and other data sources, such as desktop research, to gain a profound comprehension of how current CM trends influence the CM consultant role within the relationship with clients and the potential effects on the entire CM consulting industry (Carter et al. 2014). Furthermore, triangulation also constitutes a strategy for verifying the validity of data (Carter et al. 2014).

Although case studies have been extensively applied in business research, they have received strong criticism from the research community, particularly from concerns about the generalisation of observed phenomena (Gerring, 2007; Hägg & Hedlund 1979; Sharp, 1998).

Therefore, we do not intent to provide any generalising statements based on our case. Instead, the advantages of using case studies lie in discovering new hypotheses, combining intertwined-influential factors and how they impact the individual case, unveiling underlying mechanisms as well as sculpting complex relationships and interactions (Bennett, 2009). Further, case studies are research strategies useful for assessing contextual phenomena, dealing with 'how' and 'why' questions, with researchers having limited control exertion (Schell, 1992). Since the specificity of case studies stems from their uniqueness and detail, these aspects should be put at the centre, by appreciating the complex nature of each individual case (Lee, Collier & Cullen, 2007).

3.3 Case Consultancy: Implement Consulting Group

Implement Consulting Group is a globally active management consultancy with a Scandinavian heritage, offering advice in a variety of expertise areas, but specialising in CM, leadership and transformation. The service is provided to a broad variety of companies both from the public as well as private sector, originating from different industries. Through concentrating on individual processes within the client organisations, enhancing team efficiency as well as pursuing a people-centred approach, Implement Consulting Group assists companies in getting prepared for big changes and building leaders who drive the company successfully into the future (Implement Consulting Group, 2019). Since its foundation in 1996 in Copenhagen, the consulting group is constantly growing and employs over 900 people in various locations in Scandinavia, Switzerland and Germany today (Implement Consulting Group, 2019). To conduct research on our topic we decided to investigate a unique case study at Implement Consulting Group, using the Stockholm office as a study environment. Throughout our interviews we discovered that even though we interviewed consultants with different genders, ages and educational backgrounds, we could identify some striking similarities - a common way of thinking and working as well as shared underlying values and assumptions. This indicates a strong corporate culture. The founders of Implement Consulting Group envisioned from the very beginning the dream of "help[ing] people and organisations succeed with their most important change initiatives. [...] moving something forward to improve and create impact." (Implement Consulting Group, 2019, n.p.). In addition, consultants follow the underlying approach of reflecting and questioning the "conventional thinking, anecdotal best practice and never put ‘change management’ on autopilot”, allowing themselves to criticise their own CM approach and the total CM consulting business (Implement Consulting Group, 2019, n.p.). Consequently, given the unique and progressive CM approach of Implement Consulting, its research environment provided beneficial circumstances for investigating the impact of current CM trends on CM consultants and the CM consulting business.

3.4 Construction of Empirical Material

In order to give more credibility to our research paper dealing with the influence of current CM trends on the consultant’s role in client change projects, we have drawn on a multitude of sub-disciplines within qualitative research.

3.4.1 Interviews

According to Kvale (1996, p.174) interviews can be defined as “a conversation whose purpose is to collect descriptions of the [world] of the interviewee” regarding the understanding of the meaning on the “phenomena described”. Furthermore, the interview constitutes a conversation among two participants, striving for “in depth information” on a given subject, as well as meanings the respondents convey about a phenomenon (Schostak, 2006, p.54). We thus gathered our empirical data by conducting ten single interviews and two group interviews. Our respondents included consultants as well as clients assigned to the group of large-scale enterprises with over 500 employees. Both the consultants and clients formed a diverse group of gender, age and professional background, with the consultants all being part of the Implement Consulting Group, possessing special expertise in CM, whereas the clients came from heterogeneous companies of diverse industries, with varying corporate cultures and were hence applying differing approaches to managing change. Additionally, all respondents had been identified and proposed by the Implement Consulting Group.

Single interviews

Especially in small-scale studies, interviews are a well-established method (Drever, 1995). Most of the interviews conducted in our study are single interviews, also referred to as in-depth-interviews (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). This type of interviews entails face-to-face engagement, involving the interviewer and the respondent which offered an arena for intimacy crucial for a reciprocal exposure (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). As the term already implies, those interviews allow to gather "deep" knowledge and comprehension (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012), by following a special structure and a defined purpose (Kvale, 1996). It uncovers insights, underlying common sense explanations as well as cultural artefacts and shows actual cultural experiences typically derived from conventional perceptions (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). Furthermore, we got the chance to look into diverse views and implications of a topic, an action or an event. Hence, most questions we asked can be assigned to, what Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) labelled as, 'dynamic questions', focusing on relationships between humans. Additionally, the interviewer has the opportunity to monitor the respondent's reaction to the questions, in particular his behaviour, tone of voice and other factors that can provide non-verbal indicators, underpinning an answer (Kuter & Yilmaz, 2001). The interviews are semi-structured, implying that we used a pre-defined questionnaire (see appendices A and B) to follow throughout the interviews, but at the same time we allowed ourselves the freedom to both give the interview participants time to tell their own stories, to illustrate something more vivid and to add spontaneous and follow-up questions (Drever, 1995). Follow-up questions are particularly interesting for the dynamic questions since they embolden the interviewee to further deepen the response especially by interrogating with 'what' and 'how' questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) therefore advocate the opinion that the analysis starts already while interviewing. Furthermore, applying a supplementary questionnaire assisted us in addressing all significant topics and in focusing on identifying material targeting our study objectives (Berg, 2007). The interviewees had not seen the questions in advance and therefore answered them impartially and spontaneously in the interview-setting.

Group interviews

Another form of interviews we used, were group interviews. More specifically, we opted for focus group interviews, defined by Barbour and Schostak (2005, p.46) as "an interviewing technique in which participants are selected because they are purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being 'focused' on a given topic". In contrast to the single interviews, this type has rather taken the form of a discussion in which we assumed the role of moderators, leading the debate (Silverman, 2016). Moreover, group interviews offer a particularly powerful tool for studying intricate behavioural patterns or dynamics as well as stimulating participants to unravel ideas together by still advocating their own perspective and thus developing theory based on practical experience (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Hence, focus group interviews provide the opportunity to gain several perspectives on a specific topic, to learn about shared understandings of a phenomenon as well as to explore attendants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs and experiences in a more natural way (Gibbs, 1997). In addition, it allows to get insights into the influence and dynamics within interpersonal interactions and is especially useful in the beginning of a study since it helps to develop hypotheses or realise trends (Gibbs, 1997). In order to grasp all the information, the interviews have been recorded and one of the interviewers assumed a more passive role in taking notes on non-verbal expressions that have been important in understanding the answers given that are not voice recordable. Knapp and Daly (2011) explain that the non-verbal communication is evolutionary the primary form of communication, since, already in the past, humans used to communicate non-verbally before being able to express themselves verbally. Thus, non-verbal communication is in fact of high social significance and special relevance and interest, particularly if it contradicts verbal expression (Knapp & Daly, 2011; Birdwhistell, 1952). The researcher needs to be interested in both the content of the empirical material (what?) as well as the integral influence by ethnomethodology and constructionism (how?) (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Gubrium and Holstein (1997) claim that the interconnection of 'what' and 'how' provides the answer to 'why', thus serving as "explanatory power in qualitative studies" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.56). This was particularly instructive for us, as it facilitated the identification of "how do people talk?" and "how do they act?" in sorting and analysing our empirical material (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.72).

3.4.2 Sculpting Method

As part of the interviews, intended to enhance their interactivity and to increase the interviewee's reflectiveness, we used a systemic constellation intervention by applying the so-called sculpture method. The sculpture technique, as part of systemic work, has its origins in family therapy, providing a method to investigate the dynamics of relationship within a system (Sparrer, 2007). As Sparrer (2007) explains, a person is stimulated and instructed to set oneself and people belonging to the same system according to how they perceive the existing relationship patterns (who is close to whom, who looks at whom, who is "above", who is "below", etc.). What is decisive is that this procedure is understood as a heuristic one, as an extension of the scope for reflection and experience, not as an illustration of objectively valid facts (Schlippe et al. 2016). As with a sculptor, the positioning and staging of the system members in relation to one another creates a spatio-temporal analogy that goes beyond the medium of language and offers the possibility of making processes visible and directly perceptible (Wimmer, 2001). In this study we used PLAYMOBIL figures as visualisation symbols for real people, as it can be used in sculpture method (Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2010). Thus, the participants project their internal picture of the relationships within the group externally. Hence, we used this method to trigger a deeper reflection process which might resulted in a more realistic description of the relational constellations and dynamics between clients and consultants. Therefore, we asked both parties to participate separately in the systemic sculpting during the interviews to be ideally able to compare the individual perceptions of the interpersonal dynamics in their cooperation.

3.4.3 Background Study

In order to complement our interview study, we also aimed to take organisational documents into account. Thus, we reviewed documents published online by Implement Consulting Group as well as from their client companies to gather additional data. Since organisational documents such as guidelines, statistics, annual reports and website presentations are a prevailing component of many qualitative research methods (Bowen, 2009), we have used them for our purposes to verify or disprove interview statements and to present an overview of the consultancy. For a comprehensive understanding of the Implement Consulting Group, we have therefore conducted an extensive background research. As an additional source of information about the nature of the consultancy, including its culture with its values, visions and commonalities, we used various public platforms such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor or YouTube on which the consultancy presents itself to the public. Furthermore, published research papers and articles of the Implement Consulting Group have provided us with insights into their approach and methods of CM in CM consulting. Our background study was further complemented by the observation and interaction with Implement at one of Sweden's largest job fairs at Lund University, which gave us another opportunity to get to know the company, gain a better understanding of it, and perceive its presentation to the outside world. Finally, as we were invited to stay at the Stockholm office during our interviews, we got a first-hand insight into the company and thus were able to observe whether the consulting and CM approaches, and primarily the values and corporate culture presented on public platforms and at the fair, were actually lived. These observations provided us with the possibility to recognise the extent to which the external presentation of their working methods, for example in dealing with clients, corresponds to the statements in our empirical material in the later analysis of our findings.

3.5 Analysis

Building on our data collection and research design, we similarly followed an abductive approach in our analysis. In accordance with the hermeneutic principle, we moved thus back and forth between case context and literature when analysing the empirical material, which helped us to better understand the information (Prasad, 2017). We therefore constantly referred back to literature in order to allocate the data within the overall picture that we obtained from interviewing consultants and clients and from the insights gathered in our document analysis. First, we transcribed the single as well as group interviews directly after the interviewing process, whilst the interviews were still “fresh in mind”. Thereby it is important to point out that we believe that the analysis and interpretation of the material already began during the interviews by construe the respondent’s statements, before actually reading the transcripts. In order to cope with the large volumes of data, and to draw conclusions from the empirical material, it is beneficial to follow an analytical track. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) accordingly divide the qualitative analysis process into three phases of sorting, reducing and arguing which served our research as orientation in the complex process of analytical work.

Sorting

According to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018, p. 105), sorting can be described as “spending time with the material - the analyst familiarises him- or herself with the material, ‘hangs out’ with it and gets to know it once again”, and leads thus to a certain type of order and accumulated categories. By drawing attention to topics that were repeatedly highlighted, that we considered to be noteworthy, that were emphasised by interviewees as relevant, or that were related to the scientific literature, we were able to identify and label predominant themes. This process is referred to as coding or indexing and depends heavily on the interpretive skills and personal perceptions of each researcher (Styhre, 2013). We thereby followed open, axial and selective coding techniques to categorise the collected data, meaning that we defined key concepts, developed subcategories, and finally included theory (Styhre, 2013), which were all summarised in an individual interviewee table. In addition to sort the data thus according to themes and content, we also focused on sorting the empirical material according to form. This means, that we additionally emphasised how the interviewee talked and acted nonverbally. Therefore, both the ‘whats’ and ‘hows’ were heeded in our categorising process (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018).

Building on that, we used the mind mapping method for each identified theme and created interconnections between them. This allowed us to present the themes of the interviews visually, provided detailed information, created integrative maps which communicate the findings from various interviewees, go beyond the initial descriptive meaning as well as provide an analytical trail for reducing the empirical material in the next step (Kotob, Styger & Richardson, 2016).

Reducing

After identifying themes and links between them, we decided which categories to prioritise, creating a more manageable and theoretically interesting collection of data. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015) refer to this process as categorical reduction. In addition, it should be emphasised that the decision on what is relevant is a largely unconscious process in the investigator's mind, since relevance in this case does not mean the most frequently appearing categories, but the most fascinating ones (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). In our case, according to our interpretation, we selected those topics, that have either been particularly relevant to answer our research questions, have added a new aspect or perspective to our research focus, and have varied or expanded existing literature. Based on the reduced themes, our next step was to adjust and develop our theoretical foundation to build the most valuable base for addressing our research question of how the role of the CM consultant in the relationship with clients changed, influenced by new CM trends.

Arguing

As Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015, p.143) already stated, “creating order and deciding what to use and not to use is not enough. The analyst also needs to say something”. Arguing is therefore about creating an independent position vis-à-vis the authorities of other researchers and thus establishing a concept that represents the results by using words to describe what the analyst discovered in the field (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). For this purpose, we have given special attention to the constant comparison of client and consultant perspectives and the subsequent interplay with related literature. In our analysis, we also pursued the approach of combining both the presentation of our data and the creation of a direct link between our empirical material and literature, enabling us to avoid repetitive statements and fostering a better understanding of our findings.

Overall the above described framework of sorting, reducing and arguing offered us the guidance in a process from "raw" empirical material to interpreted findings. Although we followed these steps during our data analysis, we were aware and took into consideration that research is not a linear process following steps, but is rather iterative and chaotic (Styhre, 2013). The analysis of our empirical material and the discussion of our findings will be presented in chapter 4 and 5.

3.6 Reflexivity and Limitations

In view of potential limitations in the quality of our empirical data as well as of the generalisability, reliability, and credibility of our study, it is necessary to provide a critical reflection. In order to strengthen the validity of our empirical study, we intend to highlight a number of aspects that might have affected our findings and hence the quality of our study. Overall, we have strived for a self-reflective and mindful study execution and handling of our results.

Since our thesis is based on a qualitative interview study, complemented by a background investigation, it is first important to consider the subjective nature of qualitative research. According to the ontology of a socially constructed reality (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), with a world reality individually created by each human being, it is particularly relevant to pursue a reflective approach. It is therefore crucial to examine the underlying assumptions and attitudes about behaviour and to broaden the perspective chosen (Cunliffe, 2004). Thus, the interviewer evaluates the interviewees' responses, whilst always being influenced by the own intellectual and moral beliefs - shaped by common sense and cultural understanding (Kvale, 1994). Since it is generally accepted that social phenomena are always conditioned by the subjective meaning and prior knowledge of the researcher, we acknowledge that our results cannot be universal or repeatable due to an excessive dependence on context and the associated individual construction of meaning (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Therefore, we have tried to critically question our own attitudes and assumptions both for the conduct of the interviews and for the analysis of the empirical material. Furthermore, we have constantly challenged each other, our thoughts and ideas, to be as reflective and critical as possible. During the interviews we additionally followed a predefined questionnaire to interview respondents based on theoretical frameworks and to minimise the risk of excessive bias. In addition to the subjective character of qualitative methods, the problematic replicability of semi-structured interviews may prove to also be an influential factor (Silverman, 2006). In order to meet the intention of a reliable and credible study, we therefore provided a detailed picture of how we collected, sorted, reduced and analysed the empirical material, and how we drew our conclusions. The authors Marshall and Rossman (2006) emphasised this aspect and justified its necessity as it allows researchers to verify results. Moreover, the conduct of interviews always entails the risk of biased responses. Since an interview inevitably creates an unusual, stressful and perhaps frightening situation for the interviewee as he cannot assess the possible consequences in advance, our conducted interviews may have affected the honesty of the assertions made and thus the quality of our study (Kvale, 2009). It was therefore particularly important for us to ensure a high level of confidentiality for the participants (Kvale, 2009). In addition, since all our interviews with Swedish mother tongue respondents were however conducted in English, the language may have been an obstacle for the consultants and clients interviewed to express exactly what was intended (Dutton & Dukerich, 2006; Kvale, 2009). The potential language barrier could therefore have had a negative impact on the validity of our research. When it comes to the analysis of our results, our own subjectivity as researchers exerts a particular influence on the quality of the thesis. This is mainly due to the fact that we have applied interpretive hermeneutics to our analysis which impacted our outcomes (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). In order to reproduce the interviewee’s expression precisely and avoid confusion and ambiguity in our analysis, we transcribed the interviews after they had been conducted. However, it remains crucial to be aware of the extent to which we construe our empirical findings (Kvale, 1996). Thus, in order to ensure that the interpretations remain as close as possible to the supposed reality, we first studied the material independently before exchanging our results. By starting the analysis with different prior knowledge and assumptions and primarily working on our own, we were able to avoid influencing each other. In addition, we have allowed ourselves to critically shed light on our thoughts and to mutually challenge one another, by requiring material to substantiate the respective findings to strengthen the arguments. Since our thesis is further based on a single case study in cooperation with the Implement Consulting Group, it is additionally necessary to bear in mind that our findings cannot be generalised and are therefore limited in their representativeness (Tsang, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2013). Hence, we are aware that we cannot present a holistic description of the researched topic (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Another aspect that may have limited the findings of our work is the selection of respondents. As both consultants and clients were chosen by our contact persons of the consultancy themselves, it is questionable whether the client projects represent a particularly successful showcase and whether the selection of consultants was made consciously for a specific reason. Finally, reflecting on our chosen research topic, we might be limited in our in-depth examination, since the research areas of CM as well as of the consultant's role and relationship to clients are constituting two broad areas. However, by combining these themes and only focussing on the potential impact of current CM trends on the consultant’s role in the relationship to clients, we have been able to provide narrowed down results to our research question. Despite the limitations outlined above, we sought a reflexive approach that provided comprehensive and trustworthy insights on which we could base our analysis. In accordance with Alvesson’s (2003) understanding of reflexivity, we remained open to unexpected and emerging ideas, rather than relying too much on rigid predefined theoretical assumptions and took varying perspectives and interpretations into account throughout the entire research process.

4 Analysis

In this section, we will present and analyse the collected data. Empirical evidence to our research aim and question is provided by a qualitative interview study with CM consultants from the Implement Consulting Group and a number of their clients. Both offered valuable insights into how the role of the consultant in relation to the client is adapting to the new CM trends and delivered critical thoughts on the impact of the new CM movements. Furthermore, the analysis is supported by the contextualisation of an extensive background study and our observational results, which we gained during the research project. Since the existing literature on our research topic is predominantly provided by practitioners and is therefore rather limited to a positive functional perspective, we aim to go beyond this unilateral view in our analysis and strive to make a theoretical contribution as independent researchers.

Building on this, the analysis is divided into three different parts. The first part comprises the analysis of the CM trends identified by the respondents and thus forms the necessary basis for the following parts. In the second section, we therefore examine the effects of CM trends on the consultant's role understanding and identify five different overarching role concepts. Subsequently the third part, examines the trend impacts on the consultant-client relationship, especially influencing the dimensions of knowledge transfer, collaboration, power, trust and the consultant's position towards the client. Accordingly, this analysis is constituted by the presentation of our empirical material as well as by the connection between this material and the literature presented in the theoretical background (chapter 2). In order to secure the interviewees anonymity and to simplify the understanding of the respondent's role, we use abbreviations indicating their role to distinguish between the different participants, as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Interviewee abbreviation

Interviewee	Abbreviation
Change Management Consultants No. 1-6	CO1, CO2, …, CO6
Client Managers No. 1-5	CL1, CL2, …, CL5

4.1 Change Management Trends

In the light of the powerful trends dominating and shaping today's business world, it seems only natural that CM is equally affected (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Nowadays, organisations particularly have to adapt to digitalisation, globalisation and the concomitant rapid transformations influencing the business environment (Lauer, 2014; Palmer et al. 2017; Backx et al. 2019). At the same time, generation Z is about to enter the labour market, having entirely different ideas and expectations of their employers than previous generations (Gaidhani, Arora & Sharma, 2019). Therefore, companies also need to transform their CM and adjust it to the new market challenges and demands in order to keep up with the times and ensure successful business operations in the future (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). In the following, this will be examined in more detail under the identified CM trends of (1) agility, (2) digitalisation, (3) high involvement and bottom-up as well as (4) cross-border and cross-boundary collaboration.

4.1.1 Agility

Based on the increasing need to transform the CM sector, both the necessity to rethink and innovate CM towards a more agile reality have been recognised especially among practitioners (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; BCG, 2019; Forbes Insights Team, 2019; Creasey, 2019; Prosci, 2019). First and foremost, one of the interviewed consultants, CO5, pointed to the shift from *"a top-down linear approach towards a more bottom-up, more agile way of driving change".* This has also been highlighted by clients, as CL2 emphatically stated:

> *Agility is a trend that is evolving. We have our frameworks we can pick and choose from but there are so many changes in a big organisation, so that facilitating change becomes more and more important for us.*

This client thus emphasised the necessity to build structures, working practices and apply CM methods in accordance to the requirements of agility, a concept which is described in literature as the ability to transform quickly and react to shifting miscellaneous demands from clients, markets, technologies or various other influences in order to foster successful business operations (Conforto et al. 2016; Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). However, it is noteworthy, that many organisations are still in the early stages of becoming agile. One potential explanation might derive from confusion and uncertainty about the meaning of this trend, as agility is a buzzword that has been circulating recently in the organisational context (Franklin, 2018). This indicates that companies still lack the knowledge about necessary agile methods and implies that people have not yet shifted their way of thinking into a more agile mindset. Due to the missing understanding, some managers even perceived the 'agility-movement' as a threat since they fear the risk of losing power to the crowd and hence getting downgraded in their status. Accordingly, CO1 explained:

> *All these agile initiatives are going on in companies with enormous amount of resources that are getting poured into and people are totally confused. Since the power structures are not always in favour, meaning, if there is someone in power, who doesn't like it, it doesn't matter how much the grassroots movements are working on it.*

Missing out on following the agility-trend could lead, in the long-run, to omit future opportunities and the risk of getting outperformed by others, since agile CM approaches are the necessary response to uncertainty (Franklin, 2018). The underlying idea of agile CM is explained in the literature as "start small, don't plan everything at once and expect changes" (Franklin, 2018, p.2). Furthermore, the concept focuses on trying things out, receiving feedback for the first design, adjusting it accordingly and re-testing it - following an iterative way of development, also known as 'prototyping' (Tanvir et al. 2017; Franklin, 2018). CO4 illustrated:

> *I can see that organisations move their focus from having a plan, towards trying, testing, working in a loop way. So, you try out and test in an oscillating or iterative manner, you learn during the process and see where it gets. You are working in smaller steps.*

Building on that, CO4 pointed out, that the old way of following a predefined n-step plan is not helpful in today's fast changing world, since especially in big, long-term projects, "*you cannot foresee the changes and effects in advance".* Consequently, agile CM seems to be an important aspect in rethinking CM, since continuous waves of innovations and disruptions are pushing businesses to change rapidly (Walker, 2018). Closely related to the trends of agility and velocity is digitalisation, with agility being considered as the secret of success in the digital age (Kramer, 2016; Walker, 2018; Wade & Tarling, 2016).

4.1.2 Digitalisation

Due to its far-reaching effects, similar to the fundamental changes recently brought about by the industrial revolution, digitalisation is largely transforming today's economy and society (Parviainen et al. 2017; EY, 2011). Although digitalisation thus seems to be such a revolutionary trend offering great potential for CM, clients did not seem to be aware of such. Accordingly, only consultants have sensed this trend in CM as CO2 highlighted that it enables to *"create digital involvement".* This is in line with literature observing digitalisation as to be an enabler for organisations to have a closer and more efficient interaction with stakeholders, to improve their management of change projects, to offer new learning options as well as to use the capabilities of the entire workforce fostering transformations and involving a greater amount of people (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; Wilson, 2016; Raford, 2014; Estellès-Arolas et al. 2015). Consequently, it can be seen that companies have not yet realised the value and potential of digitalisation for CM, which seems surprising given that the trend and its beneficial applications have already achieved high visibility in literature and the business world.

4.1.3 High Involvement and Bottom-up

Today, change is no longer embraced by a single leader who imposes the top-down transformation on his workforce, as it has often been described in literature such as by Kotter (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). CO3 illustrated the old way as static and almost autocratic and exemplified, *"going back to the church and the military, you had the commander that told you what to do, and you could solidly do your task on your own."* This statement shows strongly the imposing power of leaders. In comparison, power today is clearly shifting away from a single leader and more towards lower hierarchical levels, with changes being initiated from bottom-up (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). This can be traced back to the expectation of today's generation, aiming to have a say, a valued voice as well as striving for self-development and self-determination and thus refusing to be imposed on change. Practitioners, as CO2, recognised and described that the *"trend is bottom- up"* and that they consider people to be at the centre, resulting in "*humanocracy and organisations built for people".* In parallel to the shifting change initiation, scientists perceive organisational transformations as multilateral activities, thus engaging a high number of employees from the very beginning of the change processes (Jorgensen et al. 2014; Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). Consequently, this implies, that it is nowadays not easily possible to manage tasks alone and instead necessary to involve many people. Due to the complexity and rapid changing nature of the business world, the integration of many people is not only a humanistic act, but rather a strategic necessity, which is also essential to close the knowledge gap between strategically oriented management and the operative, in everyday business engaged, employees (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Thus, change is no longer constructed by a single party and better managed in a way, that a lot of people can engage and transform. Accordingly, CO4 explained that *"you have more participation and involvement of almost the whole organisation and not only the management team".* The participation of the entire workforce provides access to a *"diversity of thoughts"* (CL2), creativity and commitment of a multitude of people since *"many competencies already exist and just need to be spread across the organisation"* (CL2), which is labelled by CO1 as *"crowdsourcing"*.

In contrast to the history of CM in which processes, structures and methods, i.e. the hard-side, predominated (Doppler & Lauterburg, 2014) a growing awareness of the essential need for the soft-side in CM arises - pushing the human aspect into the centre of attention (Payne, 2018). Thus, it seems that this people-centred approach gains a greater legitimacy today, so that CL3 emphasised enthusiastic *"it's okay to work with people now, with culture and not just with the hard parts".* Therefore, companies start to restructure their organisation towards a 'humanocracy', aiming for maximising the engagement of a lot of people and supporting employees in developing as well as exercising their special abilities (Payne, 2018).

Accordingly, CL5 summarised:

> *I have noticed a change in change management as such, in the world. It's gone from an almost mechanistic way, like the model from Kotter, towards a more emotional and soft skill based, holistic process, where changes are basically part of everything we do, and people start to understand that change management is maybe also very closely linked to leadership.*

This implies that CM becomes an essential competence of leadership, to the extent that *"when they select leaders today, they also look at what type of change leader are you?"* (CO6).

In parallel, the bottom-up and high involvement movement leads to a constantly disappearing difference between the two disciplines of leadership and CM – evolving into a unified entity, as confirmed insistently by CL5:

> *I see the gap between leadership and change management gets closed and they are becoming more and more the same.*

Finally, by taking the high-involvement and bottom-up trend seriously as well as realising CM and leadership as interwoven concepts, companies are enabled to successfully manage the complexity and challenges of today's business world (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). Furthermore, the transforming business environment does not merely take place on micro-level since due to globalisation many companies hold numerous locations world-wide (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Globally active companies therefore have to consider that collaboration will extent across borders to other locations (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017).

4.1.4 Cross-Border and Cross-Boundary Collaboration

Today, a large number of companies are active all over the globe consisting of several business units, various business departments and unite multiple generations, thus increasing the difficulty to manage transformations by sticking to a top-down, linear change approach (Jick &

Sturtevant, 2017). Therefore, old communication and implementation patterns need to be revised, leading to organisations applying more and more innovative approaches at the same time as digital tools to communicate and engage with the large number of diverse stakeholders (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). This is recognised by CL1, who brought to the point that *"organisational boundaries become less important"*. Furthermore, CL2 explained that companies are often blind for the trend of cross-collaboration and even though they know that they *"have many competencies"* in different departments, they struggle with *"how to spread that across?"*. They have, therefore, not yet detected that the cross-departmental use of resources offers synergy effects, that can be reinforced by the current trends. Consultants, however, support the higher demand for collaboration as CO2 explained:

> *Today, what we see you cannot do your work isolated, you need to work together, that means work cross borders, cross boundaries. When you need to work together, then you need to talk because people need to do stuff for you - more and more activities are interlinked.*

This indicates that the key to successful and efficient collaboration, whether in a team, across departments, inter-organisational or even cross-border, lies ultimately in communication. Due to interdisciplinary collaboration, CM is also increasingly merging with other areas such as innovation and project management which might involve the risk of even getting replaced by such disciplines (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). Building on this, one of the interviewees, CO5, speculated:

> *I think one very relevant question is, will change management as such survive in the future? I'm not sure about that.*

As this question provides an impetus for an interesting discussion, a more detailed analysis of whether CM will change in the future due to the outlined trends and how these developments will affect CM consulting will be given subsequently, in chapter 5.

4.1.5 Recap: Change Management Trends

Ultimately, based on our empirical material, we can identify a number of elementary trends significantly shaping today's CM. Respondents particularly stressed the agility movement, which is considered vital to the nature of the present business world. Additionally, the trend of digitalisation, offers powerful opportunities for CM, especially through its communication and self-learning tools. Furthermore, the increasing complexity, numerous simultaneous challenges and the changing requirements of generation Z are forcing companies to adopt the high involvement and bottom-up approach that is currently being introduced into CM concepts. This is accompanied and reinforced by globalisation, leading to more intensive cross-boundary and even cross-border cooperation to cope with change most successfully. In light of the significant changes in CM, it is questionable whether CM as such will continue to exist in its present form in the future, or whether it will partly or entirely be replaced at all. By following this thought, a further question emerges regarding the associated implications for the entire CM consultant business, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5. To master the challenges of CM in the best possible way, companies often rely on the help of CM consultants, whose approach and thus their role likewise had to adapt to the new developments in CM. Thus, an in-depth analysis of how the consultants' role is shaped by the new CM trends is provided in the following chapter 4.2.

4.2 Consultant's role

4.2.1 General Role Understanding

In the course of the current changes in today's business world and the associated CM trends, the role perception and role behaviour of consultants in their relationship with the clients is equally undergoing a transformation. Therefore, in particular, the intensity of the different roles has changed as well as new roles have been established. While the understanding of consultants as experts is still accorded high priority, the use of consultants as extra resources is barely existent. In contrast, the importance of the coaching, teaching and facilitating roles has risen sharply. Additionally, trends have fostered the creation of a new role, the 'gold-digger', and behavioural patterns such as supporting, driving, process leading or challenging have transformed. In the following, this will be examined in more detail under the identified overarching role concepts of (1) educational, (2) energising, (3) supporting, (4) guarding and (5) discovering role behaviours. In general, clients as well as consultants themselves recognise the need for a shift towards a more flexible, undetermined role understanding. Thus, CL4 described convinced:

> *Important is the 'Fingerspitzengefühl' (sensitivity). The consultant needs to be open for what his or her role is. You can't really say from the beginning which role it's going to be.*

Today's perception is therefore rather determined by becoming a more agile consultant, being flexible and adaptive in work conception and client needs as well as being able to revise initiatives quickly (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Furthermore, consultants increasingly emphasise both the hard-side and the soft-side of the change project, acknowledging more and more the importance of people affected by the change, highlighted by Hamel (2019) as one newly arising focus of CM. Accordingly CO3 states:

> *We combine the soft perspective, the soft skills with the core content of their (the client's) strategic platform, so the hard issues. In the past, I would have just worked with the hard side and presented how the organisation, the roles, the processes should look like. But now we develop it together and I reflect on it and try to involve everybody to bring more acceptance to the solution.*

As the appreciation of human resources and the involvement of organisational members increases, the current role perception of consultants contradicts the n-step doctor approach of diagnosis, treatment and improvement and thus a hard-side strategy (O'Mahoney, 2010) and instead considers soft-side factors to be necessary for today's CM. This shifting valuation has a widespread effect on all presented role models of consultants. A further detailed examination of the rising integration of people will be emphasised in the following relationship analysis. However, since the understanding of roles is difficult to separate from arising relationship patterns, due to its reciprocal composition (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012), an overlap in the presented analysis is inevitable. An additional factor influencing the understanding of the role of CM consultants is their full-time dedication to the change.

As CO2 points out:

> *One of consultant's privilege is focusing on a limited scope and that a lot of internal resources are not relieved of other duties. Clients often cannot keep up the standards because they are not dedicated enough, but consultants will definitely be dedicated.*

This full-time dedication enables the advisor thus to execute roles with a tunnelled focus and increases the commitment while assuming different positions (Lauer, 2014).

4.2.2 Educational Role Behaviour

The educational role behaviour introduced in this section comprises three roles - the expert, the teacher and the coach. While all share the common purpose of the CM consultant to foster the client's development, however, each of the three focuses on a different doctrinal area.

Expert

One of the dominant role assignments of consultants is the expert role. The knowledge and expertise that consultants possess, symbolises one of the most important purposes for clients in deciding for external support (Kubr, 2002; O'Mahoney, 2010; Lauer, 2014). Both consultants and various clients support this view. CL5 hence expressed exemplary:

> *We use consultants to get benchmarks, experiences from other projects, lessons learned and best practices - all that is the consultant's key value for me, that he has been in other environments.*

Since especially CM consultants rely on extensive generalist experiences the clients may benefit from their skills and knowledge (O'Mahoney, 2010; Corsi, 2010). This goes hand in hand with what Lippit & Lippit (1979) refer to as the 'fact finder' who gathers data and stimulates others with gained knowledge. However, there are differences in what kind of expertise is highlighted. Thus, the expert role of consultants includes both the provision and application of a toolbox, as in the past (O'Mahoney, 2010; Lauer, 2014), but also the introduction to current trends, whereby the consultant becomes an ambassador of new CM fashions. This presupposes that the consultant constantly expands knowledge by internalising the current trends to a high extent, which is referred to by O'Mahoney and Markham (2013) as one key characteristic of a CM consultant. Therefore, CL2 emphasised advisors as *"someone who is able to deliver and introduce the latest trends and tools"*.

Teacher

A further component resulting from the new requirements in CM includes, in particular, the actual transfer and not only the dissemination of expert knowledge, increasingly realised by consultants and demanded by clients. As CL1 claimed:

> *We need really skilled people who can drive the change and bring in competence, development and inspiration. I would bring in people to increase our competence within change management.*

The client thus points to a growing demand of learning in the consulting process. Since companies often lack the capacity to deal with and internalise upcoming CM trends, consultants facilitate the transfer of knowledge and, more recently, support the learning process within the organisation by actually teaching and passing on their expertise about the rising trends (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). The process of knowledge transfer thus takes place in two forms - the consultant teaches, and the client internalises and learns. This value-enhancing role behaviour benefits from the latest trends of applying agile and thus iterative processes, enabling a greater learning curve for clients (Franklin, 2018). Moreover, digital tools such as self-learning platforms empower the clients to facilitate the learning process themselves (Kaplan, 2017).

Coach

Closely related with the lecturing role, is the role understanding of the consultant as coach. While the teacher's role is however usually limited to imparting and teaching specific knowledge, the coaching role includes the support, development or change of a particular mindset as well as the training of certain actions. CO3 seemed self-confident in expressing:

> *I will be coaching and facilitating and making them (the client) step into their role. We give energy, trust and we want them to dare to take action. […] So, our job is to strengthen the CEO and strengthen the management team.*

CO5, continued:

> *I do not create followers but rather leaders themselves.*

The consultants thus support clients in optimally executing their own role in the change process and introduce the client through the own agile way of thinking and action to the role of an 'agile manager', demanded by the current trends (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). This is primarily reinforced by a continuous feedback process (see also Dolot, 2018) and the identification of new perspectives. CO5 confirmed exemplary:

> *I bring in energy, new perspectives and feedback.*

Consequently, the consultant becomes very similar to the role of a 'reflector' as identified by Lippitt and Lippitt (1979), who raises questions for reflection and resides at the most non-directive level of the role continuum. Rather than telling the client directly what to do, the client is supported by the consultant, impacted by the latest CM trends, to build an appropriate mindset to implement the change (see also Lippitt & Lippitt, 1979). Furthermore, the advisor thus empowers the client to take the proactive initiative to identify and address organisational problems on their own (O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013). Hence, both clients and consultants emphasise the importance of coaching mindsets and actions, which has strongly increased in comparison to the "old" role understanding of an advisor merely functioning as knowledge provider (Kubr, 2002).

4.2.3 Energising Role Behaviour

In addition and in conjunction with the teaching roles, the following sections indicate that the consultant assumes energising roles of a driver and challenger, i.e. motivates and encourages the client to drive change independently.

Driver

One important role the consultant takes on during the CM consulting process is the role of a driver. Contrary to old ideas of driving, in which the external advisor usually assumed the main leading role (Kubr, 2002), the role understanding today is rather loose due to the emerging agility trend. In accordance with the development of a "no recipe" mentality, the role of advisors today modifies. CO1 used a metaphor to illustrate this:

> *The role alternates. Sometimes they (the client) drive more because they go to their internal networks and sometimes it's you driving, so you kind of do it together. It's like rowing.*

This results in a constantly changing exertion of influence which demands sound coordination and close teamwork in order to successfully move the change, the rowing boat, forward. In addition, the empirical material clearly showed evidence of the consultant driving from a back-seat position. CO1 described this using an example:

> *They (the client) said that they want us to drive all the steps on the way. But we said that we will share our expertise and ideas with them but when it comes to driving, they won't be the ones sitting in the back-seat and watch us driving the project. That is not the way we think it's going to be the most successful, because they know everything within the organisation, so they must be the ones in the front, and we will back them up with everything.*

As a result of the growing appreciation of the soft-side and thus the high level of involvement of organisational members at an early stage of the change process (Conference Board Council on Change, 2014; Wallenholm & Baude, 2016), the advisor drives the process through the client. As already explained, this is increasingly facilitated by the use of coaching. Due to the changing business world, not least driven by the generation Z movement (Gaidhani, Arora & Sharma, 2019; Francis & Hoefel, 2018), the way the consultant exerts influence has been transformed accordingly. The function of the consultant as back-seat driver goes hand in hand with the fact that the advisor does not assume a direct leadership role. This is surprisingly already accepted and promoted by most consultants themselves as CO5 highlighted:

> *I try not to take on a leading role, but I try to be important because if I take on a leading role too much then somebody else will step back.*

In contrast to CO1's previous statement that many clients are looking for direct drivers, the interviewed CL4, has already supported a new understanding:

> *We take ownership of our process but sometimes we need experts to come in and support us in driving the process.*

By making this statement, it is worth noting that the client seemed to be convinced of this role understanding because it is both necessary and required due to changing market conditions and not because of feeling offended in the own leadership position. This role transformation is an interesting and at the same time paradoxical phenomenon, since although the consultants do not assume a direct leading function, they are regarded by clients and themselves as someone with high influence. A comparable, exact assignment of roles on the continuum of Lippitt and Lippitt (1979) is today no longer possible. The consultant takes on significantly more different roles at the same time, marked on the continuum with directive as well as non-directive (Lippitt & Lippitt, 1979). These include most notably the role description of the 'identifier of alternatives', the 'technical expert' and the 'process specialist', which are all, in their true sense, rather contradictory in their function of directing the change (Lippitt & Lippitt, 1979).

Challenger

A further role assignment highlights the consultant as challenger. In this role, the consultant has the possibility to *"push the limits a bit more"* (CO1) and to "*add an external perspective [...] by moving the balance, making it imbalance and challenge it"* (CO5). This correlates with Sorge and van Witteloostuijn (2004) highlighting the advisor's ability to reveal weaknesses or sharpen and influence the client's attitude towards utopia. However, several consultants consistently stressed the condition of client approval and pointed to a reflective approach, as CO5, exemplified:

> *You always have to ask yourself what is good for them (the client)? How much can I challenge them? [...] Be sensitive.*

This reflective approach calls for careful consideration, as it raises the question of to what extent the consultant can really challenge the client and can be connected again with the role descriptions of a 'reflector' and a 'fact finder' identified by Lippitt and Lippitt (1979), asking questions that support a reflection and inspire the client to think. Accordingly, the role understanding of a challenger has already been given importance in past literature. However, the role is now rather used to encourage clients to reflect on their own role and thus to be better suited and equipped to independently address arising problems and transformations.

4.2.4 Supporting Role Behaviour

The generic concept of supporting role behaviours includes the two CM consultant roles of a helper and facilitator which both serve the client as a supporting force in CM.

Helper

The consultant's role attribution of a helper can be understood as a key role in combination with the functions of the expert, coach and driver. Its main goal is to value the clients as principal figures in the transformation project and thus preparing them in various ways to successfully establish and implement change independently in the future. CO5 proudly put it in a nutshell:

> *My job is to make them (the client) shine, stronger and better in what they're doing.*

CO1 added:

> *They (the client) are the star. You are in the background, standing behind them.*

The client thus moves into the focus with the highest importance in the advising process, as it was also emphasised in the previous analysis.

Facilitator

Hand in hand with the consultant's helping purpose goes the role of a facilitator which once again confirms the changing role behaviour of today's advisors due to the more agile, increasingly digital and stronger people-centric CM sector (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). This includes what the consultant CO3 described as:

> *Now I prepare more questions and the analysis and try to facilitate a discussion.*

Likewise, CO2, pointed out:

> *You need to accelerate mental processes, that makes people see opportunities to actually succeed.*

The advisor thus withdraws from a dominant role in the relationship with the client and instead, as a facilitator, offers the stage for the execution of all the previously described roles. However, this transformation is not only emphasised by consultants themselves, but is also increasingly apparent to clients as CL2 put it:

> *The consultant's role is to open doors and new perspectives, but the decision is still part of the organisations' DNA.*

4.2.5 Guarding Role Behaviour

On the basis of the guarding role behaviour, the two roles of the planner and the process leader are described. In both roles, the CM consultant is not actively involved in the CM process but has a monitoring function in which the planner refers to the setup and the process manager to the entire process.

Planner

In addition to the already discussed role concepts, both clients and consultants recognise a further advisory role - the planner. This is based in particular on the perception of consultants as *"generally more structured, able to process more data than a lot of internal resources"* (CO2) or as *"valuable source of information in the set-up of the change or preparation"* (CL5) which is supported by the literature on CM consultants (e.g. Lauer, 2014; O'Mahoney, 2010). Accordingly, consultants are understood by CL5 as:

> *Someone who shows the way of the orchestra.*

Nonetheless, depending on how intensively the consultant is involved as a planner, this perception can lead to a contrary understanding, as emphasised in the above role descriptions, and could instead turn into a directive role in which the consultant, like a conductor, strictly dictates to follow a particular melody. However, this can be juxtaposed with the transformed nature of the consulting process, as described by consultants and clients, based on current CM trends. CO2 therefore recognised a change in the planning behaviour:

> *We are not following or designing linear processes anymore, we do it in a different way because if you follow a linear plan you don't adapt, and people's mental processes don't keep up with the pace.*

The same consultant goes on to explain that the actual process is characterised by *"learning and unlearning"*, with both statements illustrating the effects of current trends towards iterative processes, agility and prototyping (Franklin, 2018; Tanvir et al. 2017; Jick & Sturtevant, 2017).Consequently, although the role assignment of a planner exists as before, the actual planning behaviour of advisors has changed and constitute a modified consulting process as a result of the emphasised CM trends.

Process leader

Beside the planning of the consulting process, our empirical material showed that the consultant often assumes the role of a process leader. Thereby consultants are especially "*important as a sounding board and as a co-creator in delivering the processes"* (CO6). Thus, the already discussed orientation towards a client-centred approach as well as a close collaboration between client and consultant can be recognised, with the latter further elaborated in detail in the subsequent relationship section. Based on the descriptions of interrogated consultants and clients, it is important to emphasise that the "leader" in this role refers more to the coordination than to the direction of the process. CL4 therefore emphasised:

> *We often know why we want to go from point A to point B, but they definitely take on a leading role when it comes to method: How long will this take? What will be necessary? What levels do you have to involve?*

Clients particularly value the fact that the consultant as process leader keeps the overview of the change – *"those people have the entire picture"* (CL4) – and offers structure by *"adding value to a messy situation"* (CL2). The former mentioned characteristic has also been acknowledged in existing literature as the advisor's outsider position may provide him with a more holistic picture than the client is able to develop himself (Drucker, 1979; Corsi, 2010). However, the advisor as process leader has changed especially in response to the high involvement trend since today's consultants create and guide the process in stronger co-creation with the client.

4.2.6 Discovering Role Behaviour

In close connection with the roles of the coach, helper, facilitator and planner, a new role of the CM consultant evolved - the gold-digger.

Gold-digger

Complementary to the role understandings discussed, our empirical material provided evidence to a new consultant function, discovering particularly hidden potentials, resources and knowledge in the client company, hitherto received hardly or no attention in the literature. Due to the current CM movements, this new role is gaining momentum. The trend is continuously moving towards leveraging the collective knowledge of all employees to be able to react better to changes (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016; Raford, 2014; Filippi et al. 2013). As CO2 described, a consultant can help to bring hidden resources within the company to the surface and thus support to develop a company that possesses the ability to address changes with its internal resources as independently as possible:

> *There are so many unused resources in what people know. There are a lot of information in the lower hierarchical levels hidden. So, it's a strategic thing. If you're going to go agile, if you're going to be more flexible, and faster in your responses and you work proactively to actually cope with accelerating markets and hyper competition, you need to use the brain power of the total organisation. But that is really hard when you have those traditional top-down projects. Because if you as an organisation cannot involve more people, you lose out! […] You end up, making the wrong decisions.*

Thus, in particular, the shift towards high integration provides an opportunity for companies to make effective use of their entire knowledge, which, as illustrated, can be supported by consultants in their new role generated by the market trends.

4.2.7 Recap: Consultant's Role

Consequently, our empirical material referred to a number of role assignments for advisors and how they were influenced by current CM movements. Interestingly, many of the roles highlighted in the available literature still exist. However, they have all transformed considerably in their nature or intensity. In most cases, the views of clients and consultants were aligned. Due to the interdependency of roles and relationships, it is moreover important to analyse and discuss not only the role behaviour of consultants, but also their relationship to the client.

4.3 Consultant-Client Relationship

On the basis of and complementary to the role assignments and behaviour discussed, our empirical material provides information on the relationship between the consultant and the client influenced by the current CM transformations. Due to the already mentioned reciprocity between role and relationship, an exact distinction of the two is impossible (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). To achieve a deeper analysis, the relationship, influenced by the outlined role understandings, is examined in the following under the aspects of (1) external vs. part of the team, (2) knowledge transfer, (3) collaboration, (4) power, (5) trust.

4.3.1 External vs. Part of the Team

Particularly striking in our empirical material on the relationship between client and consultant is the general approach about whether advisors take on and hold an external position during the CM consulting process or whether they temporarily become an active part of the client organisation.

External

The external position of the consultant has already been highlighted by many researchers in existing literature, such as Alvesson (2012), Kipping und Armbrüster (2002) or Kitay and Wright (2004), who consider it as essential that the consultant achieves a status of “the other”. This view is also shared by many of the interviewed consultants, with CO5 representatively expressing “*I stick to an outside position and don't become part of the actual organisation. I'm temporarily there. I'm a guest”*. Furthermore, the consultants not only confirmed to be perceived as “outsider”, but also pointed out the various benefits they gain from this position, such as offering the client an overview (see also Corsi, 2010) without being too emotionally involved or influenced by internal politics.

Accordingly, the objectivity of the consultant plays a decisive role as CO2 described:

> *Usually we are not part of the team. I don't want to. I would lose my legitimacy if I would be involved too strongly, emotionally or practical.*

CO5 added further:

> *I'm much better and bring in more value when I'm not one of them (the client) so that I can challenge them, bring in energy, new perspectives and feedback.*

In conjunction with an external position of the consultant, the highlighted objectivity was also recognised in literature as an integral part of the definition of a consultant.

Furusten (2009), for example, described the consultant as independent and objective. In addition, the outsider approach is also valued by clients. CL2 delineated thoughtfully:

> *We definitely have a very close relationship. […] But they (the consultants) are still outside experts. In my understanding, we try to keep a professional distance to the consultants we work with.*

Consequently, the external position of the advisor is not a new feature, but rather a general relationship approach that is also seen as essential for the consulting process under the influence of CM trends.

Part of the team

Although most of the clients and consultants interviewed supported the approach of an external position, few indicated that consultants can become an actual part of the client organisation throughout the process. CO1 explained exemplarily:

> *I get really involved. You can create really strong relationships and you really want to understand what they're struggling with. When you get to be together for a long time, I think that you become a part of their team completely.*

The influence of current CM trends could serve as an explanation for this phenomenon. Since, as discussed earlier, the role of the consultant as coach, facilitator and teacher focuses more on the soft-side of CM, high-involvement and collaborative problem solving the client-consultant relationship is increasing in intensity at both a professional and a personal level. This may lead to the consultant feeling increasingly part of the organisation and being perceived as such by clients. However, this is based solely on our interpretation of the findings.

4.3.2 Knowledge Transfer

As already recognised by Kubr (2002, p.4), knowledge transfer is part of the “quintessential nature” of consultancies. Consultants have extensive expertise in CM, with which they can contribute to client projects in different ways (O’Mahoney, 2010). The main focus for clients is to enter into a knowledge exchange with consultants in order to receive suggestions, inspirations or recommendations on the current trends.

CL4 puts it in a nutshell:

> *The main purpose of hiring consultants is to have an expert at hand you can have a dialogue with.*

As already discussed in the previous part on the expert role of the consultant, knowledge transfer is a mutual process, since even if the client benefits primarily from the consultant's expertise, the consultant also accumulates knowledge in form of experience, which can be incorporated in the next project (see also Powell & Ambrosini, 2012).

Due to the changing form of knowledge transfer between consultant and client, in which the latter is encouraged and coached to be able to address change processes as independently as possible, a mutual learning cycle between clients and consultants arises.

4.3.3 Collaboration

In addition to the desired knowledge transfer, the concept of collaboration in the consultant-client relationship is both transforming and growing in importance. While consultants previously entered the company with a ready-made plan and a concrete idea for the change project (see also O’Mahoney & Markham, 2013), our empirical material shows that based on the latest CM trends, the relationship today is rather constructed by a joint development of the change approach.

Co-creation is moving into the foreground (CL2):

> *We work a lot with consultants more as co-creating together with them. That's also a trend. It's not 'we' or 'them' as it used to be.*

Contrary to our findings, in which both consultants and clients encouraged a high level of collaboration, CO1 however pointed out that some clients are still stuck in "old" ways of thinking and acting:

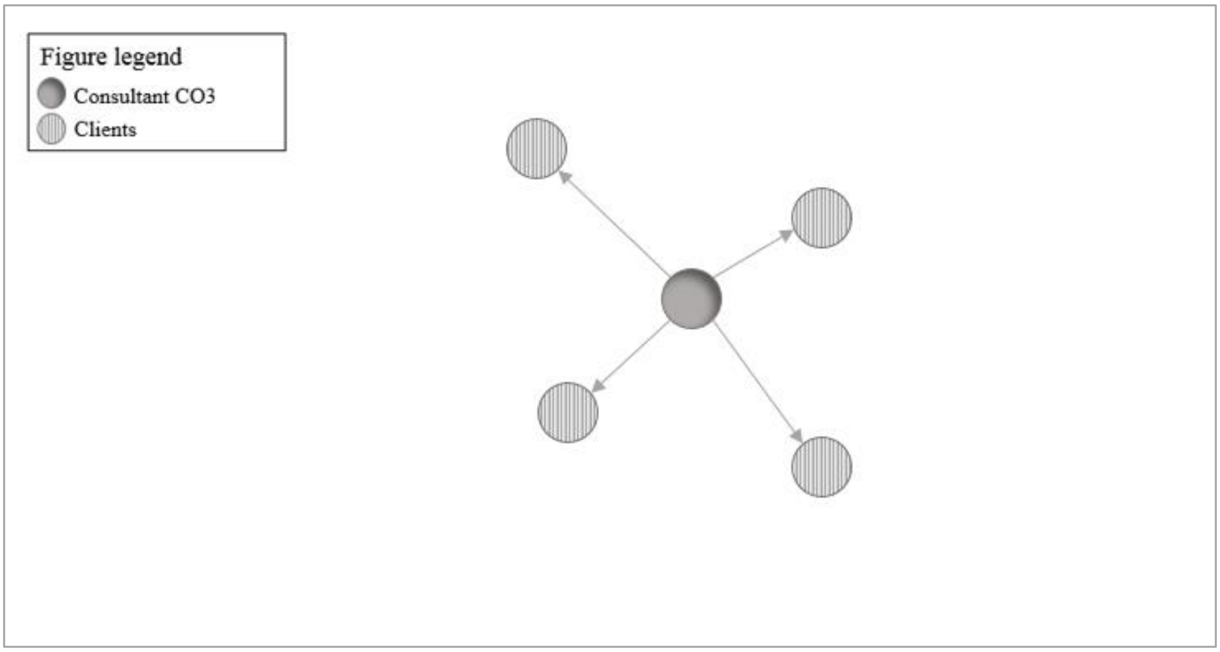
> *All consulting firms talk about collaboration and close cooperation with clients, but even if we want to do that, many clients are not ready yet. They still want you to tell them what to do.*

Influenced by the trends towards agility, greater involvement of employees, iterative processes and digitalisation, the nature of cooperation between consultants and clients is likewise changing. It is characterised by *"continuous dialogue"* (CL4) and close communication as CO2 formulated:

> *Change always needs to be handled in a way that everybody feels they are proud to belong to the company-interaction and conversations are the ultimate thing that makes a difference. Openness is crucial, good habits, good structures and conversational capacity.*

An illustrative example of the significance and character of the collaboration was shown by CO3. Using the sculpture method and the associated physical positioning of the perceived relationship patterns with figures, he exposed the relationship-constellation in one of his current projects (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Sculpture method - collaboration



As can be seen in the figure, the consultant (including his team) is illustrated by the grey filled circle. In order to represent himself, the consultant chose the PLAYMOBIL figure of a knight from a selection of several figures. The client company, here in the form of four managers, is portrayed as striped circles.

CO3, described the project as follows:

> *In the beginning of the project there was a high tension in the group. So, there was basically no group, since they didn't talk to each other, they didn't work as a group and they were all focusing on their own task. We recognised that it was very tensioned, so our knight here was trying to make the people talk and make people understand what we are here for.*

Accordingly, the cooperation between the managers was initially almost non-existent and the consultant was faced with the task of developing it in co-creation with the client from scratch. In contrast to the traditional consulting approach, the consultant hereby instead pursued the integration of all participants in a close dialogue, viewing himself as the honourable, strong knight building the connection and being not afraid of potential confrontations.

The relationship constellation additionally demonstrates that the trend towards greater involvement of organisational members is recognised, internalised and passed on by the consultant. A close collaboration becomes the key to the success of the project. At the same time, it can also be discerned that communication and collaboration are mutually interrelated.

In addition to the outlined knowledge transfer section and emphasised learning cycle, the transformed collaborative relationship points to what is referred to as the 'social learning model' assuming that both the client and the consultant interact in a joint learning process providing valuable knowledge and input to the project (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). Thus, although the importance of cooperation has already been recognised in existing literature (e.g. Kubr, 2002), the current CM transformations have both a reinforcing and a changing effect on collaboration in the consultant-client relationship.

4.3.4 Power

As already stressed by Nikolova and Devinney (2012), the interaction between clients and consultants can lead to different power relations which can also be confirmed by our empirical material. Since power is a complex phenomenon which is difficult to comprehend in its entirety (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012), we will focus explicitly on the power dimensions of responsibility, decision-making and different power distributions.

Responsibility

The allocation of responsibility played a major role among all respondents. Influenced by the new CM movements, the dominant voice developed that the responsibility for the change process and its outcome should mainly lie with the client. CO3 justified:

> *Now I prepare more questions and the analysis and try to facilitate a discussion. So, they (the client) are more responsible for the outcome. In the good old days, I was responsible for the outcome. Now, I'm getting them involved and get them to take ownership and hopefully also to use it.*

Consequently, the allocation of responsibility seems to have changed over time. Whereas the consultant was mainly responsible for the process in the past, today the consciousness of bearing responsibility is more anchored in the client's mind. Nevertheless, due to their role, the consultants retain responsibility for dimensions of "*communication, stakeholder management and education*" (CO4), ensuring the integrity of their advice (see also Kubr, 2002).

CO4 described:

> *My own responsibility was more when it came to communication, stakeholder management and education.*

Thus, a rather shared responsibility develops, with the client however keeping the main responsibility. Additionally, bearing responsibility can have various implications. It describes the status of being responsible for something or being accused of something, the change to make independent decisions, as well as the duty to take care of something or to have control (Kubr, 2002). Responsibility and power are therefore closely interlinked.

Decision-making

Based on the preceding, decision making can be detected as one dimension of exercising power, since the one who makes the decision is exercising power at this moment, for example which path is followed, and which is not. Thus, the one possessing the decision-making power, impacts the consultation process in a certain way depending on the content of the decision, the enforcement of the choice and possible opposing voices (O'Mahoney, 2010). A closer look at our empirical material uncovers that, in addition to bearing the responsibility, the final decision is usually made by the client. CL2 therefore predicated insistently:

> *We never let go of the responsibility of the big decisions. That's not something we delegate easily, and we need to be part of that. I think the major decision points are always kept by the organisation at least.*

This is also supported from a consultant's point of view as exemplified by CO5:

> *I can facilitate, I can question, I can challenge but the client still has to decide.*

Power distribution

When it comes to the distribution of power, we have received a number of different feedbacks from clients and consultants. Complementary to the previous analysis, the client is also assigned a higher degree of authority in the sense of power distribution, especially from their own perspective.

CL3 expressed:

> *Change is mostly driven by us. So, consultants might bring tools and methods but, in the end, change needs to be driven internally.*

Once again, this perception can be attributed to the influence of the CM trends previously discussed in detail, but it is interesting that this view of the distribution of power is already recognised by clients themselves, which contradicts the earlier statement of CO1 who pointed out that the current CM movements have not yet reached the client and that they are often not ready yet for such changes. Thus, it seems that there is a discrepancy between the expectations and viewpoints of consultants and clients regarding the current status of CM development in organisations, at least when the factor of impact is considered.

In contrast to the distribution of power in favour of clients, some consultants instead described their own influence as dominant. CO5 pictured:

> *I determine the process to more than 50%. But then you should remember that I worked with the project leader previously, so she already built up trust.*

Considering the previously discussed role of consultants towards a new driving role, stronger coach, teacher and facilitator embodiment as well as appreciation as expert, a connection can be created to the form of the consultant's persuasive exercise of power, as highlighted in the literature by Nikolova and Devinney (2009).

The researchers emphasise two ways of exercising power – power through the establishment of a personal relationship and power through rational argumentation, in which the former can be achieved through a process of socialisation and the latter through authority as experts (Nikolova & Devinney, 2009; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2002). The establishment of a personal relationship seems to be particularly sought after by advisors who also described themselves as part of the client organisation's team, as well as by those who built a large basis of trust during their projects with the client. However, this was rather expressed by just a few interviewees and does not correspond to the general picture among the respondents. This instead includes much more the view of the consultant as an external back-seat driver who uses expert knowledge to support the client in the change process, which goes thus hand in hand with what Nikolova and Devinney (2009) describe as constant interaction through which advisors smoothly steer the client into a certain direction. On the basis of this, it appears that the consultant's exercise of power originates rather from the second form, the rational resonance. Nevertheless, the advisor's new way of influence is rather appreciated by clients and seen as positive impact which contradicts with how the exertion of persuasive power is presented by Nikolova and Devinney (2009) in existing literature.

While both, the exercise of power in favour of the client or in favour of the consultant in each case causes an unbalanced power relation (see also Nikolova & Devinney, 2009), the respondents also referred to an equal distribution of power between the two parties. According to CL2, a balanced power relationship is emphasised by a partnership, even if the client points out that such a relationship cannot always be achieved:

> *How you think about them (the consultants), and this is becoming more and more clear to me in the last couple of years, is more like partnerships we strive for. However, we perhaps don't succeed all the time.*

Building on this, CO5 expanded even further with explaining:

> *I would describe our relationship as working relationship, like colleagues, which is closer than a partnership because a partnership from my understanding is that we are partners, but we are an external partner. Of course, it should be external, but when we are working together, I think they (the client) perceive me as a colleague.*

This once again reflects the importance of an external position of the consultant, but also highlights the simultaneous close relationship with the client. Paradoxically, this indicates that influenced by current CM movements, the consultant may be able to build an external and close relationship with the client at the same time.

Consequently, different views about the power dynamics between advisors and clients exist. By moving towards a fully agile, self-learning, people-centred and independently transforming organisation, CM trends are driving a dominant power exertion on the part of the client. However, our empirical material also shows that the influence of consultants is needed to introduce the trends, enable the necessary mindset-change and coach the client to the new understanding. Therefore, a combined power dynamic emerges in which the exercise of power by client and consultant is mutually interconnected.

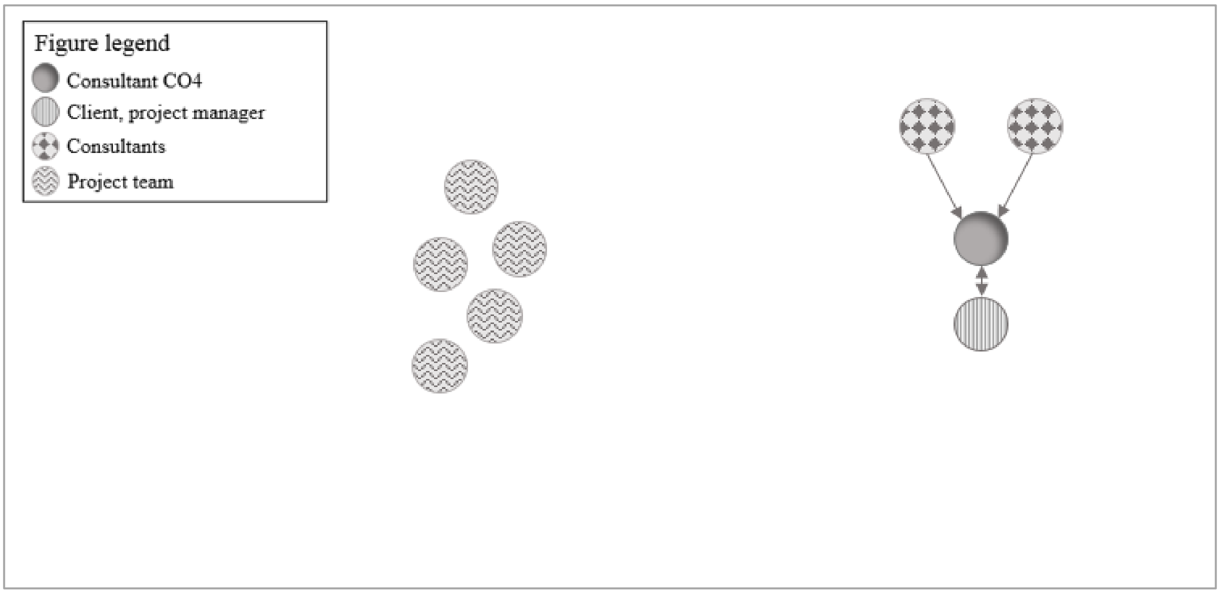
4.3.5 Trust

In addition to the relationship dimensions already discussed, current CM trends also place great importance on trust in the relationship between clients and consultants. Maister, Green and Galford (2000) see the capacity to earn the trust of clients as the essential key to success. According to Kubr (2002), in particular collaboration and knowledge transfer generate a trusting relationship. CO5 therefore described how he became a 'trusted advisor' during the process (see also Maister, Green & Galford, 2002; Vogel, 2015):

> *It could be possible that my role changes during the process. One project I worked a lot with hands on and helped designing the process in the early phases and then I gave support and training to managers and helped deciding on involvement methods. After one, two, three months I moved more into a trusted advisor role.*

Another illustrative example, as shown in figure 4, was given by CO4 using the sculpture method.

Figure 4: Sculpture method - trust



The consultant used the available PLAYMOBIL figures to set up relationships between the client's organisational members and consultants in a large IT project. The interviewed consultant is depicted in figure 4 as a grey filled circle, with her consultant team behind her (checkerboard pattern). While the consultant set up the rest of the project team, consisting of other client organisational members and other consulting firms (wave pattern) far away, the consultant placed the project manager (striped pattern) close to her.

Accordingly, the consultant CO4 described her relationship with the project manager as follows:

> *We had a tight relationship. [...] She had a lot of trust in me and she thought that change management was really important. So, she appreciated very much what we did. [...] And I think that's why I got part of the team and I think that the project leader thought about me in a way with a high degree of respect.*

Based on the previous analysis one can thus conclude that the advisor CO4 was able to build a trusted relationship with the project leader symbolised by appreciation, respect and closeness. However, since building trust involves "(1) signalling ability and integrity; (2) demonstrating benevolence; and (3) establishing an emotional connection" (Nikolova, Möllering & Reihlen, 2015, p.232) and both the consultant and the client have to be willing to take a certain risk, trust represents a critical dimension in the relationship (Kubr, 2002).

4.3.6 Recap: Consultant-Client Relationship

In the course of analysing and discussing the relationship between consultants and clients, we have encountered a series of dimensions that have changed under the influence of current CM movements. Our empirical material shows that most consultants and clients agree with a relationship approach of the consultant in an external position and only a few see the consultant as part of the actual client organisation. Nevertheless, the respondents pointed out that the relationship is usually rather close due to mutual knowledge transfer, strong collaboration and trust, which is both triggered and supported by today's CM trends. Paradoxically, this allows the consultant to have a close relationship while being in an external position.

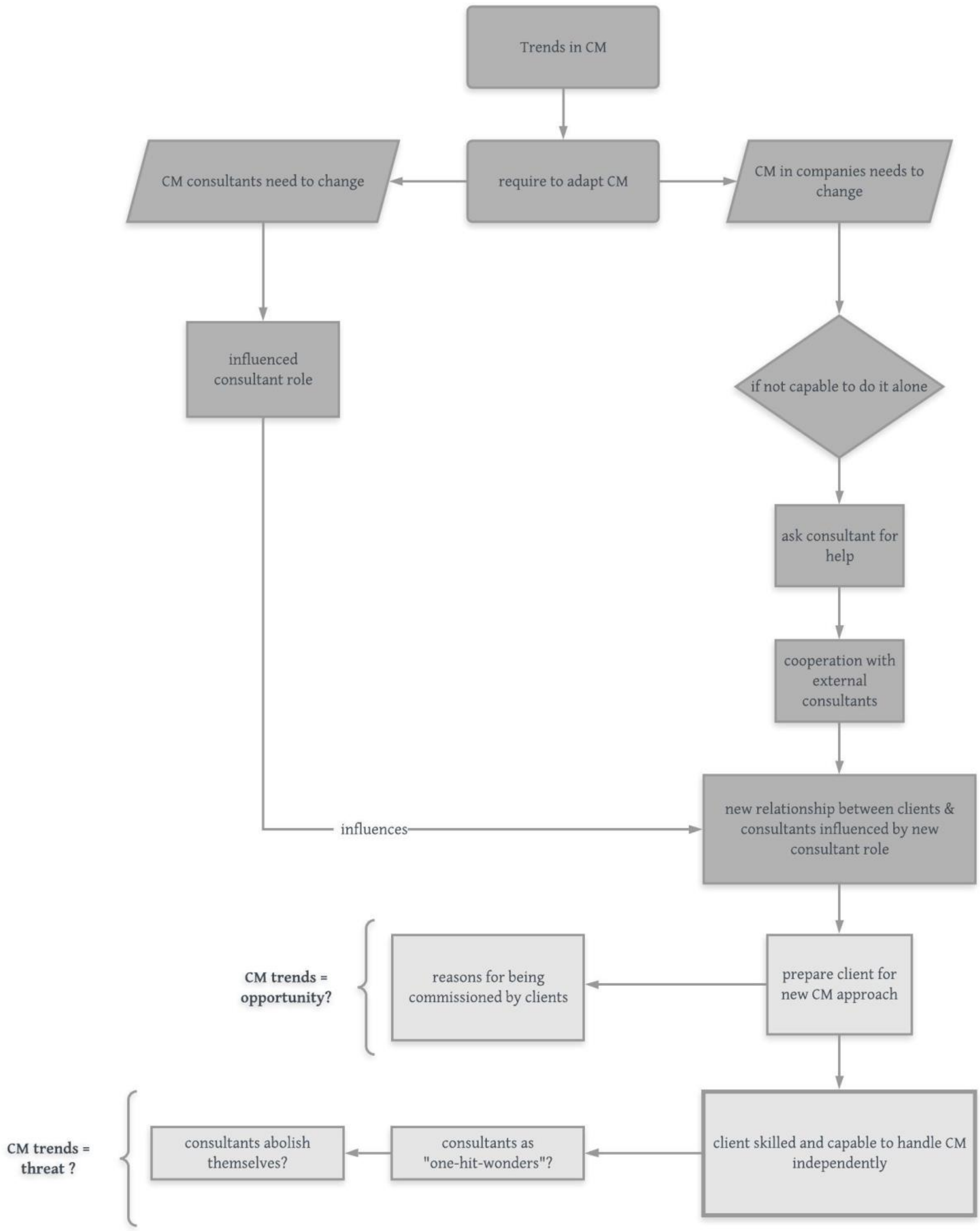
4.4 Recap: Analysis

To summarise our findings of the analysis, it first becomes apparent that both the consultants and clients interviewed mostly agreed in their viewpoints. In the context of the current movements in the business world, our empirical material indicates that CM today is particularly dominated by the trends agility, high-involvement and the bottom-up approach, as well as cross-departmental and cross-country cooperation. With regard to the digitalisation trend, it seems that clients, unlike consultants, have not yet realised its benefits for CM. Under the strong influence of these trends stands in particular the role of the consultants. Although the existence of numerous roles that have already been described in the literature, can still be confirmed today, all of them have transformed as a result of the CM trends. In addition, also the significance of these roles has shifted and entirely new ones, such as the 'gold digger', have evolved. Along with the changing roles, also the consultant-client relationship has modified including its various dimensions. Particularly striking was the statement of the CM consultants assuming a clearly external position in the client relationship and indeed rarely being perceived as an active member of the client team. Nevertheless, the relationship is described as rather close and relies on mutual exchange of knowledge, trust and collaboration. Through the trends, however, the responsibility and decision-making powers and thus the leading role for the CM process shifted from the consultant towards the client. As a result of the altered consultant's role in the consultant-client relationship, the CM advisors can thus ideally prepare clients to cope with upcoming changes independently.

5 Discussion

The analysis of our empirical material presented in the previous chapter is based on our initial interest in the necessary changes and implications of current CM trends for consultants. The increasing number and velocity of today's transformations in the business world requires an adaptation of a new CM approach by companies. When organisations are unable to address these CM challenges on their own, they often seek advice and support from consultants. However, in order to successfully help companies to meet these challenges, the consultant’s own role and their relationship with clients also needs to be adjusted to current CM trends. Against this backdrop, the previous analysis of our empirical material, as additionally illustrated in dark grey in figure 5, provided an insight into our research question as to how the role of CM consultants in their relationship with clients develops under the influence of current CM trends. Since our empirical data also seem to shed light on possible implications of CM trends for the consulting business, our study, building on our previous findings, provides the basis for a macro-perspective discussion about the effects of the new role and the modified consultant-client relationship on the CM advisory business. Thus, the following question comes to the fore: How do the new CM movements constitute a threat or rather an opportunity for the CM consultant?

Figure 5: Implications of the change management trends on the change management consulting business



CM trends as an opportunity for the CM consulting business?

Based on the background of the current state of the business world, including its uncertainty and complexity, as well as new disruptive trends with their sustainable and significant impact on CM (Gairing, 2017), both clients and consultants in our study described that many companies are not yet able to manage the required CM developments independently and that thus the involvement of consultants in building the required capacity can be of great help (see also O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013). In line with the described roles and relationship progression, the consultant thereby act primarily as fashion ambassador who introduce the new CM trends into the company. Since new management fashions are often generated by management consultants themselves, the advisor has the unique advantage of always being up to date with the latest developments and thus being equipped with the necessary expert knowledge (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012). Nevertheless, the demand for CM support goes beyond the mere introduction of new management fashions and instead also asks for a new way of thinking about CM. Especially today, companies need to change their mental attitude to survive in a competitive environment (Lauer, 2014) and gain the insight that CM constitutes the prerequisite of companies' success (Palmer et al. 2017). The required mind-shift is particularly supported by the consultant assuming the role of a coach, teacher, facilitator and gold-digger and is further enhanced by the new relationship approach of co-creation, close collaboration and high trust. Interestingly, the fifteen-year-old assumption of Sorge and Witteloostujin (2004) that companies are poorly equipped for changes, thus appears to be still applicable in today's business environment. From a business perspective, the altered role and relationship with the client can therefore be regarded as having a positive impact on the consultant, as these behavioural developments enable him to be commissioned for compensating the inability of companies, in particular of the top management. In other words, the client's suffering becomes the consultant's business opportunity. From a macro-perspective, as also illustrated in figure 5 (light grey), it can consequently be argued that the current CM trends constitute a possibility for the consultant's business.

CM trends as a threat for the CM consulting business?

In contrast to a potential business opportunity, the changed role of consultants and the resulting new relationship patterns can equally entail negative implications for the CM consultant business. Due to the altered role understanding of consultants, illustrated in the analysis, the clients will be prepared so well with the required CM approach that one can assume that the clients are in a position to independently tackle any occurring changes. This is particularly accomplished through the educational, supporting and energising role behaviours of advisors. In their expert role, the consultants are thus able to introduce the company to the required trend developments and can familiarise the client with methods and tools that assist an independent change. As coach and facilitator, the advisor further enables the anchoring of a new CM thinking and thus strengthens in particular leader in the optimal execution of their autonomous role in the change process. Through the consultant, the leader becomes aware that the integration of internal resources as well as the transformation towards an agile and digital organisation is necessary for a successful coping with changes and that the handling of changes is thus constructed by co-creation with the entire workforce. In addition, the independence of clients, while addressing change, can be supported by the advisor's back-seat driving role as well as by the transformation towards a trusted and collaborative relationship which is constituted by mutual knowledge transfer, learning and dominant power exertion on the part of the client. By using external CM consultants, clients can thus achieve the "ideal organisation" which is, in line with the demands of current trends, distinguished by its agile, digital, self-learning and people-centric character (e.g. Jick & Sturtevant, 2017; Backx et al. 2019). If consultants succeed in preparing the client through their new role and co-shaped relationship as described, they will only be needed once by the client - as a "one-hit-wonder". Sooner or later, however, this leads to the consultant abolishing himself and thus destroying his own business. Hence, it can be concluded that the role and relationship transformations, caused by the required CM trends, could potentially lead to the CM consulting becoming a suicidal business (see figure 5, light grey).

This thought is reinforced by the fact that the majority of our respondents have noted that the number of consultants needed for a CM consulting process is decreasing and thus reacting in a negative correlation to the altering consultant role. The consultant is no longer the main driver and owner of the entire process from beginning to end, but rather creates the process in close dialogue with the clients in order to "equip" them to carry out the change process as independently as possible. This leads to less dependence on advisors and reduces the need of external support throughout the advising process. From a business perspective, this development thus tends to have a rather negative impact on CM consultants and reinforces the tendency towards a self-destructive consulting business. Furthermore, the CM consulting business seems to be threatened by the growing management consultancy trend of inhouse consulting (Lauer, 2014; O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013). Either external consultants are not engaged at all, since inhouse consultants or company-owned 'excellence centres' (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017) take over their role or internal consultants make use of the external advisors

as fashion ambassadors to adapt their role and are thus able to support the company internally in future changes - without the necessity of using external consultants again (see also O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013). This further supports the idea of CM trends becoming a potential threat to the CM consultant's business.
However, this view is limited by a number of counterarguments. First, it is questionable whether the CM consulting business will turn into a suicidal business in the near future, since even by pursuing the "one-hit-wonder" principle, there will still be a large number of companies seeking help of advisors. Therefore, the CM consultant would still benefit from a variety of one-time business opportunities, at least in the short run. Furthermore, the concept of an ideal self-learning and fully agile, constantly adaptable organisation seems more like a desirable idea or even utopia than a realistic organisational blueprint, actually threatening the CM consulting market (see also Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Building on this and in the face of the fact that there will always be new challenges upcoming, triggering transformations and shifting requirements (Gairing, 2017), it remains questionable whether a company can always successfully cope with challenges itself, even if it possesses an idealistic structure, way of working and necessary mindset. Another key aspect in this discussion is the fact that consulting firms usually create most business and management fashions themselves leading to the consultants constantly building their own business (Nikolova & Devinney, 2012), which are then popular for a certain period of time, but slowly lose their importance in the business world and will be replaced by something novel (O'Mahoney, 2010). One could therefore assume that the latest CM trends are just a new, intelligent move on the part of the consulting industry, by constantly making the clients feel the need to always hop on the next 'trend-train'. Thus, by the time the trends turn into a threat for CM consultants, they will simply be newly developed by the consultants themselves, suggesting that CM trends are simply a fashion and not a realistic threat for the consulting world. Although one can therefore argue that the transformed consultant's role and altered consultant-client relationship may result in CM consulting becoming a suicidal business, the view is rather limited in its actual probability due to a number of the above outlined aspects.

Finally, it can be concluded that the new role as well as the modified consultant-client relationship have both positive and negative implications for the consulting business of CM consultants. On the one hand the macro-perspective discussion showed that the modified role of the consultants represents the reason for companies to engage consultants. On the other hand, the same altered role, however, leads to companies not needing CM consultants sooner or later and thus transforming CM consulting into a suicidal business.

The CM trends can therefore be understood as a double-edged sword that opens up both a business opportunity and a threat for the CM consulting business. Although the previous discussion is based on the analysis of our empirical material, it remains a speculative debate about the potential impact of the CM trend-influenced role of consultants in the relationship to clients on the CM consulting business. It is therefore not possible to draw a definitive conclusion on the economic effects. Nevertheless, our discussion provides implications that expand the functionalistic knowledge base of the research field and offers a forum for dialogue between practitioners and scientists about further research.

6 Conclusion

Today's business world is in a constant state of transformation and seems to be changing ever faster (Gairing, 2017). Major trends of an almost disruptive nature, constituted by globalisation, digitalisation as well as the new requirements of generation Z, pose enormous challenges to companies, which are therefore confronted with growing complexity (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). The key for companies to cope with these frequent changes, occurring with higher intensity and velocity lies for many experts in performing successful CM (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). Despite this awareness, almost a quarter of all change projects are still failing today (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). This may be due to the fact that the old way of managing transformations, as was common in the past, is no longer sufficient given the trends dominating the contemporary economy. CM therefore needs to adapt in order to enable companies to survive, remain competitive and "be fit" for the future (Wallenholm & Baude, 2016). With the adjustment of CM, new trends within this field have emerged that are characterised by agility, digitalisation, and a stronger people-centric approach (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). First and foremost, the agility movement in particular has become one of the most important trends in CM due to the unstable and rapidly changing world - a more fluid way of managing transformations is needed to adapt to changing markets, requirements or other opportunities at any time (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). This can be achieved by building agile organisational structures, working methods, following iterative processes, and internalising an agile mindset (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). In close connection with agility is the trend of digitalisation, which offers great added value in CM, especially through new communication possibilities, digital learning or internal knowledge exchange platforms (Parviainen et al. 2017; Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Furthermore, since companies are increasingly operating on a global scale and encompassing multiple business units and departments, collaboration needs to take place also across borders and boundaries (Jick & Sturtevant, 2017). Ultimately, an essential necessity in CM is constituted by the greater involvement of as many employees as possible, since today, challenges, complexity and constant change can only be tackled by integrating the entire range of internal resources (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). However, it is not only the active participation of people in the CM process that is decisive, but also that change is co-designed, initiated and driven from bottom-up, i.e. by the employees and not by the top management (Wallenholm & Baude, 2017). Since companies nevertheless often lack the necessary capabilities to cope with the new CM requirements themselves, they frequently engage advisors for support (O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013). In order to successfully assist companies in transforming their CM, consultants first need to adjust their own role and CM approach in line with the latest CM trends (O'Mahoney & Markham, 2013).

Therefore, we have sought to enrich the existing literature by investigating the recent dynamics of CM and the need for consultants to alter their role accordingly. Although the two concepts of current CM trends and the role of CM consultants have already been discussed separately in literature, a combined research of both topics, emphasising the effects of CM trends on the CM consultant's role and client-relationship have not yet gained scientific attention. Consequently, we aimed to close this literature gap and generate a novel value for contemporary research. Moreover, since the present literature is particularly shaped by practitioners and thus depicts a purely functional perspective (e.g. BCG, 2019; Forbes Insights Team, 2019; Prosci, 2019; Rune, 2005), we additionally aspired to go beyond this dominance of instrumental research and make a scientific contribution as independent researchers. Furthermore, we intended to stimulate minds, expand ways of thinking and encourage critical reflection on the interrelations and implications of current developments and CM consulting. Given the assumption that current trends in global business also require a new nature of CM, and that consultants are brought into the client company to help them accomplish it, this has led to the emergence of our research question of how the role of CM consultants is changing in relation to clients responding to the new CM trends. Due to the reciprocal connection between the consultant's role and the associated relationship with the client, a transformation of the consultant's role inevitably affects the consultant-client relationship.

In order to scientifically investigate our research question, we conducted a single case study in collaboration with the Implement Consulting Group and relied on a triangulation of research methods to acquire a deep understanding of the topic and to verify the validity of our results. Thus, we conducted a series of single and group interviews as well as a detailed background investigation, supplemented by observations. Since our research question particularly revolves around the role of CM consultants and thus the interaction with the client, we have applied an additional method that provides a suitable medium for assessing interpersonal dynamics, the sculpting method (Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2010). Combining these methods has enabled us to collect extensive empirical material of a coherent nature, providing us with the following interesting results.

Initially, given the nature of the transformations in the business world and the corresponding need to revise CM, the clients and consultants we interviewed confirmed dominant CM trends that have already gained a foothold in the literature. The interviewees particularly acknowledged the agility movement, the high-involvement and bottom-up trend, as well as the increasing importance of cross-border and cross-boundary cooperation. Surprisingly, clients have so far attributed little potential for CM to the digitalisation trend, while consultants have valued the benefits of digital communication tools and self-learning opportunities.

Against the background of the necessary adaptation of CM, our findings also showed how the role of consultants is changing in response to current CM trends. From a more general perspective, it could therefore be argued, on the basis of our empirical material, that the consultant has to adopt a considerably more flexible and indeterminate role understanding and thus perform an agile, flexible and continuously adjustable way of working in order to be able to react adequately to the ever faster and intensively altering challenges. Furthermore, in view of the growing complexity in which companies have become entangled, as well as the demands and values of today's generation Z, entering the labour market as new workers, it is particularly vital to involve many people in the change process and empower them to be a driving force, so that, in contrast to the past, besides the hard-side of CM, the soft-side also takes centre stage. The people-focus therefore gains tremendously in significance and in particular the appreciation and engagement of a multitude of employees becomes essential. Beyond the general perspective, we were able to divide the ten different consultant roles, which have proven to be particularly dominant in our empirical material, into five categories: educational, energising, supporting, guarding and discovering role behaviour. By assuming and performing these roles, the consultant always pursues a major, overriding goal: to equip clients with specific knowledge, method and tools, build their confidence and stimulate essential mental transformations, so that the client is enabled to undertake CM processes independently and autonomously in accordance with today's requirements and thus becoming not only viable but also competitive. This is achieved by providing expertise and coaching the right mindset for a cultural journey, by supporting the client from a "back-seat" position to drive change as well as through inspiration and energisation, yet also by challenging and stimulating the client to reflect on own approaches, behaviours and ways of thinking. Additionally, advisors help clients to set up and plan the change process and impart confidence in taking on a leading role, while always supporting and facilitating discussions, communication, mental and physical processes. Eventually, assuming the role of a 'gold-digger', the consultant constantly strives to uncover hidden resources, potentials, knowledge and pitfalls of the client company. Thus, in comparison to existing literature, one can infer that the existence of many of the roles described in previous research can still be confirmed today, but they have altered in their nature and represent a rather passive, supportive and from the background operating position. Moreover, our findings also revealed that some of the roles portrayed in the literature are barely persist under the influence of today's CM trends, and that new roles such as the one of a 'gold digger' have emerged.

In addition, due to the close liaison and mutual dependence of role and relationship, it can be assumed that a transformation in the CM consultant role inevitably implies a modification in the dynamics of the consultant-client relationship. In this context it becomes apparent that the responsibility for the change process and important decisions has shifted from the consultant to the client. Furthermore, we have empirically observed that the consultant in the relationship with the client is predominantly perceived in an external position and hence does not become an active member of the client team. However, the relationship is still portrayed as heavily based on trust, which seems paradoxical. Besides trust, it is especially the mutual exchange of knowledge and close cooperation that characterises the relationship between the two parties. Consequently, the analysis of our results successfully answers the leading research question of our thesis.

Beyond that, the investigation of our empirical material in the context of our research question has sparked a number of further reflections that exceed the scope of scientific research. Indeed, we have discovered that our empirical results also point to possible implications of what the modified CM and the related transformed consulting role in the consultant-client relationship could actually entail for the entire business of the CM consulting industry, leading us thus to a macro-perspectival discussion of imaginable repercussions of potential opportunities and threats. The discussion highlighted that the altered role of consultants and the transformed consultant-client relationship have both positive and negative implications for the CM consulting business. Thus, the changed roles and relationship behaviour can on the one hand serve as a reason for consulting advisors, and on the other hand have a negative effect by shaping companies into organisations that ideally correspond to the CM trends and thus sooner or later no longer need the support of consultants. It can therefore be concluded that CM trends both open up a business opportunity for consultants and represent a threat in which the CM consulting business eventually abolishes itself and transforms seamlessly into a suicidal business. Although our discussion thus provides an insight into the possible effects of the analysed consultant role and consultant-client relationship under the influence of today's CM, it is limited by the fact that the argumentation is based on empirical material, but discusses future, potentially occurring scenarios about which no definitive statement can be made at the present time.

Although our work provides interesting insights and thought-provoking impulses for both researchers and practitioners, our thesis is subject to a number of limitations due to our research design and method. Thus, our empirical material offers an answer to our research question, but since it combines the two broad subject areas of CM and management consulting, our work is limited in its in-depth examination. Furthermore, the results depend strongly on the contextual framework constructed by our case consultancy, the selected respondents and our knowledge and subjectivity as researchers. Therefore, our thesis bears the risk of deviating results in other national, subjective and organisational contexts. The transferability of our conclusions to other contexts is additionally limited by the subjective character of our qualitative research approaches. According to the ontology of a socially constructed reality (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), with a world reality created individually by each human being, semi-structured interviews, the sculpting method and a background study supported by observations hold the danger of a purely subjective construction of meaning and non-reproducible insights. Due to a possible language barrier, caused by the interviews conducted in English with Swedish native speakers, and the study participants selected exclusively by our case consultancy, our thesis could also be influenced by potential misinterpretations and biased answers. Ultimately, our thesis findings are limited in their generalisability, as our research comprises only a single case study. On the basis of and in spite of these limitations, our work offers an interesting added value to existing literature and provides the impetus for further research.

Regarding the theoretical scope of our research contribution, we suggest that it can be extended by further research on the implications of the current CM movements on the consulting business as well as through scrutinising other impacts of the altered role of CM consultants and the trend-influenced consultant-client relationship. Following our discussion, it seems conclusive to pursue the idea of CM consulting business as a possible suicidal business in scientific research and thus to establish possible operational implications for consulting practitioners. In line with the scenario of CM trends as a threat to consultants, we suggest that there is relevance in further research on the risks that the inhouse consulting concept can pose for CM consultants. In addition, it also appears reasonable to question how realistic a construct of an ideally agile, digital and people-centric organisation is and whether the CM trends are not just another “fashion”, possibly initiated by consultants themselves, only bearing witness to relevance in the business world for a certain period of time. With this in mind, we argue that future research could usefully complement and expand our thesis by adding value to the impact of current CM trends on the consultant role and consultant-client relationship as well as their subsequent repercussions on the CM consulting business. Perhaps scientists or practitioners may consequently be able to find an answer to the futuristic question of whether the success of CM consulting paradoxically leads to advisors shovelling their own grave - the demise of the external CM consultant.

7 Reference list

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Consultants

First of all, we would like to get to know you a bit better:

1. Could you please first of all introduce and tell us a bit about yourself?
    a. What kind of educational and professional background do you have?
    b. How would you describe your role/what you are doing in your job?
    c. How would you describe your responsibilities at work?
    d. What are your biggest challenges in your job?
    e. What do you like most about your job?

2. What drives you to do this job?

Cooperation with Clients

3. As a consultant you are working with clients on different kind of change projects. Do you have a fixed framework or process you follow for client projects?
    a. If yes: how does this process look like?
    b. If no: how do you then lead through change? Do you identify milestones or other methods for consulting the project?
    c. Do you adjust the process according to the type of change (e.g. cultural, strategic etc.)?

4. Do you recognise any current trends in CM? How would you describe these?
    a. In which way do you think the consultants' change management has to adapt to current trends of CM/working e.g paradigm shift (top-down → bottom-up), digitalisation, agile way of working, more self-determined work, increased self-responsibility?
    b. In what sense do you actually involve and communicate trends in your change work with clients?
    c. Concentrating on the current paradigm shift in CM, in what way do you think the paradigm shift influences your change management work?

   d. (How) Is the paradigm shift in change management rather a threat or possibility for consultants/consulting industry?

5. Which role do you take on in this process? How would you describe those roles? Can you give examples?
   a. How do you perceive your role?
   b. How involved are you within the process? (more advice-giving, actively conducting trainings etc.)
   c. Do you perceive yourself taken over a leadership role during the change process?
   d. As a consultant entering the client company, do you then perceive yourself in an external position/outsider role?
   e. Do you have a concrete example? (in which you assume a certain role)
   f. Does your role change during the project and if so, in which way?
   g. Do you perceive your role changing according to the current paradigm shift?

6. How would you describe your relationship with the client? *→ **systemic sculpting: Please place the figures according to the relationships you perceived during the change process with the clients/one client OR place the figures according to the relationships you perceived in a particular situation with the clients/one client (may be a critical situation, a particular change phase, a situation that went particularly well).***
   a. How would you describe the relationship you now physically placed, in words?
   b. Where did you place yourself in the relationship to the client?
   c. How did you feel in the position you placed yourself in? (welcomed, as part of the team, dis-/respected, hero, criminal, scapegoat etc.)
   d. Where did you place the client?
   e. if close/not close: What do you presume is the reason for that?
   f. How many people and who are involved in your constellation? How would you describe your relationship to them? Who is the most important one for you? What do you think is the reason for that? (informal/formal position, top management/partners/employees)
   g. To what percentage do you determine the change process in the relationship you have placed here? How do you perceive your influence?

h. How do your feelings change depending on the reactions you receive from your client throughout the change? (e.g. resistance)
i. What do you think, how does the client feel according to the relationship you placed in front of us?
j. What do you think does the client expect from your relationship to each other? How do you think the expectations have been fulfilled?
k. What do you think, how do people in the client company perceive you? Which reactions does your presence in the client company provoke? (please give examples)

7. Did you experience relationship related problem during the change project? Which problems/conflicts? What would have to happen for a failure/failed project?
    a. Please can you give us some examples.
    b. Do you perceive any problems resulting from current CM/working trends such as the paradigm shift in your relationship with the client?
    c. What did not work well?
    d. How do you tackle/deal with these problems/conflicts? What is your recipe? (e.g. resistance)
    e. Who was the driving force in tackling the problem?
    f. How would you change the position of the figures when reflecting on the problem situation? How does the relationship now look like?
    g. How did your role and the client's role change in this critical situation?
    h. How did you feel during this conflict situation?
    i. Did the problem/crisis change your actions and/or mental attitude in any way? If so, in what way?

Concluding Questions

8. Generally spoken: In your opinion, what characterises a good consultant?
9. In conclusion, based on your experience, would you say it's worth working with consultancies for a company's change management (sustainable success)?
    a. Were you satisfied with the result?
    b. Did you experience a cooperation that was not worth it? Why was it not worth it?
    c. What is according to your opinion especially important for the cooperation with clients in change processes?
    d. What is, in your opinion, the major advantage of working with the consultant?

Appendix B: Questionnaire Clients

1. First of all, we want to start off with getting to know you a little bit better:
    a. Could you please briefly introduce yourself to us?
    b. What is your background? (educational, professional)
    c. How would you describe your responsibilities at work?

Cooperation with Consultants

2. How would you describe the change management within your company?
    a. Do you recognise any current trends in CM? How would you describe these?

3. In which case do you corporate with consultants for change processes? (for which purpose)
    a. Who decides to corporate with consultants?
    a. How do you make the decision to include a consultancy in your change process? (Why do you contact consultants)
    b. Please think about the last change-project you cooperated with a consultancy: What kind of change was it? (example)

4. In which way do you think the consultants' change management has to adapt to current trends of working e.g Digitalisation, agile way of working, more self-determined work, increased self-responsibility?
    a. In what sense do the consultants actually involve and communicate trends in their change work with you?

5. What characterises a good consultant in change processes?

6. How do you perceive the <u>role of the consultants</u> in the change process?
    a. Did you perceive different roles?
    b. Can you describe some sample situations?
    c. Would you say the consultants' role and his/her position within your company changed throughout the project? In which way?

d. Do you perceive any differences how different consultants from Implement lead through the change process? In which way? (role differences within the consultant team)
e. In which way does the consultant's role change according to current CM/working trends?

7. How would you describe <u>your role</u> in a change process with consultants?
   a. Do you take over a leading role during the change project?
   b. How is that visible?
   c. Do you have a concrete example (of a situation in which you perceive yourself as a guide/driver/leader)?
   d. How do you evaluate your influence/impact in this project?
   e. How do you introduce the consultants to the company/employees?

8. How would you describe your relationship to the consultants? ***→ Systemic Sculpting (Please place the figures according to the relationships you perceived during the change process with the Implement consultants OR place the figures according to the relationships you perceived in a particular situation with the Implement consultants (may be a critical situation, a particular change phase, a situation that went particularly well).*** (is it changing during the project/different stages)
   a. How would you describe the relationship you now physically placed, in words?
   b. Where did you place yourself in the relationship to the consultant?
   c. How did you feel in the position you placed yourself in? (welcomed, as part of the team, dis-/respected, exploited/used, patronised etc.)
   d. Where did you place the consultant?
   e. if close/not close: What do you presume is the reason for that?
   f. How many people and who are involved in your constellation? How would you describe your relationship to them? Who is the most important one for you? what do you think is the reason for that? (consultant contractor, a particular consultant, other org. members)
   g. Are there any other organisational members involved which are in a rather critical relationship with the consultant?
   h. To what percentage do you think the consultant determines the change process in the relationship you have placed here? How do you perceive his/her

influence?(How does the consultant influence you personally?) Did you experienced any negative impact the consultant had/have?

i. How do your feelings change depending on the consultant's behaviour throughout the change? (gives security, support, pressure etc.)
j. What do you think, how does the consultant feel according to the relationship you placed in front of us?
k. What do you think does the consultant expect from your relationship to each other? How do you think the expectations have been fulfilled?

9. Did you experience relationship related problem during the change project? Which problems/conflicts? What would have to happen for a failure/failed project? (Please can you give us some examples).
    a. Do you perceive any problems resulting from current CM/working trends such as the paradigm shift in your relationship with the consultant?
    b. What did not work well?
    c. How did the consultant in your view tackle/deal with these problems/conflicts? (e.g. resistance) Would you have done something different? What and how?
    d. Who was the driving force in tackling the problem?
    e. How would you change the position of the figures when reflecting on the problem situation? How does the relationship now look like?
    f. How did your role and the consultant's role change in this critical situation?
    g. How did you feel during this conflict situation?
    h. Did the problem/crisis change your actions and/or mental attitude in any way? If so, in what way?
    i. if no problems/critical situations experienced him-/herself: Did you experience problems/conflicts between the consultants and other organisational members involved? How did this situation look like - why was it a conflict? How has this situation been tackled? How did you perceive the consultant's role in this situation?

Concluding questions

10. Did the cooperation with the consultants changed the employees' reaction towards the change project? (gain credibility? provoke more resistance?)
11. In conclusion, based on your experience, would you say it's worth working with consultancies for the company's change management (sustainable success)?
    a. Were you satisfied with the result?
    b. Did you experience a cooperation that was not worth it? Why was it not worth it?
    c. What is according to your opinion especially important for the cooperation with consultants in change processes?
    d. What is, in your opinion, the major advantage of working with the consultant? (name 3)