From Good Work to Sustainable Development

Mari Kira

– Human Resources Consumption and Regeneration in the Post-Bureaucratic Working Life
Mari Kira

From Good Work to Sustainable Development
– Human Resources Consumption and Regeneration in the Post-Bureaucratic Working Life

A dissertation submitted to the Royal Institute of Technology (Kungl Tekniska Högskolan, KTH) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Royal Institute of Technology
Department of Industrial Economics and Management
Work Group of Industrial Work Science
Stockholm, Sweden
February, 2003
Mari Kira

From Good Work to Sustainable Development
– Human Resources Consumption and Regeneration in the Post-Bureaucratic Working Life
The thesis concentrates on the psychological consequences of the contemporary work. Two focal questions of the thesis are, first, why do employees’ psychological resources become consumed in the contemporary working life? Second, how to create regenerative work enabling employees’ development in the present situation? The latter question aims to distinguish the conditions for sustainable individual and collective development at work. The empirical research consists of two studies; the Empirical Study I with explorative case studies in two »new economy« companies and the Empirical Study II with action research case studies in a public hospital and a tenants’ union. In the Empirical Study II, the case organizations defined their problems relating to human resources consumption. The subsequent action research projects aimed to work on these problems and to generate ideas for regenerative work.

The case studies indicate that many contemporary working life problems relate to fundamental changes at work. Confined bureaucratic work is gradually changing into more complex and boundaryless work. Instead of bureaucratic impersonality, such work requires comprehensive personal presence from employees. However, organizational arrangements have not followed the development. Organizational structures and practices are still aimed at controlling and guiding compartmentalized, stable work. Consequently, post-bureaucratic work realities exist in bureaucratic work organizations; the clashes between the two operation logics lead to negative consequences at individual and organizational levels.

The thesis studies the reasons for the gap between bureaucratic organi-
zational logic and post-bureaucratic work logic. Furthermore, organizational and individual approaches leading to more comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work are explored. When it comes to organizational approaches, there does not seem to exist a certain structure for a post-bureaucratic organization; such an organization is a state of collective and individual mind rather than a fixed solution. At individual level, bureaucratic thinking has to grow into post-bureaucratic thinking at all hierarchical levels. Responsibility taking and complex thinking are needed. Mental models enabling versatile functioning within an organization are required.

**KEY WORDS:** good work, personal development, professional development, stress, human resources, regenerative work, consuming work, bureaucracy, post-bureaucracy, action research.
One starting point for this thesis work was the increasing worry in the Swedish society for people losing their energy and vitality because of work. Something had gone badly wrong; work with variability and autonomy, challenge and independence seemed to make employees sick in the new economy sectors. At the same time, in more traditional industries and in the public sector situation was equally worrisome; operational outcomes were not impressive despite the individual and collective sacrifices made. Scattered reports on increasing stress related sick-leaves and tiredness grew into a flood that eventually boiled over the brims and made the whole issue flat and stale. In the popular media stress became a fashion word, burnout the reason for all humane problems. But there were also the underlying questions, too important to be ignored. Why do people lose their energy at work? How can we create better workplaces? How to make work more meaningful? How can we be happy at work? This is what I am writing about in my thesis; this is a thesis about work, its psychological and social meanings and consequences.

Acknowledgments
I would like to thank my supervisor, Jan Forslin, for inviting me to participate in a fascinating research project, offering me an opportunity for truly meaningful work, and supporting me on the way. I would like to thank all the »Arbetsvetenskapare« at INDEK, past and present, for the journey made together, for the rare feeling of belonging. I would especially like to thank Kristina Palm for sharing the experience of writing a thesis and for her friendship. Lena Mårtensson has encouraged me in my work during its
different phases and I would like to thank her for that. I also cherish the memories of my collaboration with Kristin Örnulf. I am grateful to INDEK’s administrative staff for their support with many practical questions. Conversations with INDEK’s dean Claes Gustafsson always gave me something fruitful to think about.

I would like to thank my SALUT-colleagues at National Institute for Working Life – Tomas Backström, Monica Bjerlöv, Peter Docherty, and Inger Söderberg – for the collaboration in the network. Especially, I would like to thank Inger Söderberg for the work done together at Tenants’ Union and for supporting me in many different ways in my work. Lena Wilhelmsen (NIWL) made a valuable contribution to the Norrtälje Hospital SALUT-project; warm thanks for that! I would like to thank also the personnel at the NIWL library (Arbetslivsbiblioteket) – the best working life library in the world!

The SALTSA/Work Organization-program gave me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with researchers from all over Europe and the USA, all sharing the interest in Sustainable Work Systems. The whole Sustain-group contributed to the eventful network experience and, especially, I would like to thank Frans van Eijnatten (The Technische Universiteit Eindhoven) for his support and champagne in Paris.

The SALUT-network was an important part of my thesis work and I would like to thank all its members for sharing so openly their thoughts on work and working. Especially I would like to thank the SALUT-project group at Norrtälje Hospital – Karin Barsk-Carlsson, Bengt-Åke Hoverhjelm, Inger Jansson, Hjördis Mellberg, Margareta Söderman, and Mia Österberg – for sharing their insights on what it is like to work as a manager in the hospital. Mia Österberg’s support was indispensable when writing the project reports and I truly enjoyed our long, long discussions on telephone. Bengt-Åke Hoverhjelm I would like to thank for the opportunity to follow his work in making the hospital a better place to work. I would also like to thank Dirk Müller for supporting our SALUT-effort all along, all the members in the hospital’s management group in 2001/2002 for their dedication to the project, as well as the whole 40-group and employee interviewees for their valuable contribution to my thesis study.

I would like to thank the whole Negotiations unit at the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region, and I would like to express my respect for the work done at the Negotiations unit in difficult circumstances and still with so much joy, warmth, and caring. Especially I would like to thank
Björn Raemklang and Jan-Erik Andersson for their diligent work as SALUT-project leaders as well as Lena Ridemar and Gullvi Wargh for inviting me to be the fly on the wall during many challenging work and collaboration situations. Ewa Frisk supported our SALUT-project through her interest towards its both practical and more scientific aspects.

I would also like to thank the two organizations addressed in the thesis by cover names NewMedia and TeleCom as well as their employees for their valuable contribution to my thesis work.

I would like to thank Gunnela Westlander for her candid comments on an earlier version of this thesis work. I would like to thank Matti Vartiainen (Helsinki University of Technology) for having patience with me although I keep on vanishing. I would like to thank Stephan Koch (University of Marburg) for his thoughtful support for and interest towards my work. I would like to gratefully acknowledge here Arbetslivsinstitutet, Rådet för Arbetslivsforskning, Svenska Institutet, as well as VINNOVA for the financial support.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents Seija and Pauli as well as my parents-in-law Tuula and Raimo, once again, for continuous support and for those precious moments when together again. The largest thank-you goes to my dear husband Mackillo with whom I have shared all the happiest moments and who has taken me through also the bad days by trying to teach me how to let things be.

In Bauerbach,

Mari Kira
ABSTRACT

FOREWORD

1. INTRODUCTION
   1.1 The background of the thesis
      1.1.1 Human resources consumption in the popular media and research
      1.1.2 Human resources consumption in statistics
   1.2 The research questions, goals, and some conceptual aspects of the thesis
   1.3 Research approach and methodology
      1.3.1 The philosophical approach of the thesis work
      The ontology and epistemology of stress
      1.3.2 The empirical studies; From the work plan to research results
         The Empirical Study I and some basic approaches to the empirical research
         The Empirical Study II
         The SALUT-network
         Research methods in the Empirical Study II
         Differences between the two empirical studies
         The quality of a qualitative study – Reliability and validity

CONTENTS
1.4 The structure of the thesis

2. CONSUMING AND REGENERATIVE WORK – THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Why do people become consumed by their work?
   2.1.1 Cognitive appraisal
   2.1.2 Imbalance models
   2.1.3 Conservation of resources – A socioenvironmental stress model
   2.1.4 Discussion – How human resources consumption is understood in this thesis

2.2 Good work – Growth and development at work
   2.2.1 Some organizational and individual aspects of good work
   2.2.2 A historical review on good work - From shoveling pig iron to fantasy factories
      Taylorism and good work
      From Human Relations movement to Sociotechnical Systems and Job Characteristic Model
   2.2.3 The processes of building resources; Regenerative work
      Optimal work experiences leading to the growth of Self
      Sense of Coherence – Ariadne’s thread in the labyrinth of life
      Flow – Living in this moment
      But is it possible for a mature adult to change?
   2.2.4 Discussion – How good work is understood in this thesis

2.3 A note on changes – why not go from consuming to regenerative work?
   2.3.1 The interplay between institutional and activity level aspects – Renewal and stability
   2.3.2 Participation and disregard for human nature at work
   2.3.3 Asking the wrong question
   2.3.4 So why is change so difficult?
3. LITERATURE RESEARCH ON THE CHANGING WORKING LIFE

3.1 What happens to work; Upskilling or deskilling? 115
  3.1.1 The deskilling and upskilling hypothesis 116
  3.1.2 Is upskilled work »good work«? 118
  3.1.3 Labor political view to the quality of work in the contemporary society

3.2 From bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic working life 121
  3.2.1 Bureaucracy – The power vested on a role 124
  3.2.2 The characteristics of the post-bureaucratic working life, organizations, and work
  3.2.3 Boundaries and leadership in the post-bureaucratic realm
  3.2.4 The post-bureaucratic ideal type 132
  3.2.5 How do post-bureaucratic work and organizations influence people?
      The post-bureaucratic working life and coping with it

3.3 Summary of the literature on the post-bureaucratic working life 141

4. THE NEWMEDIA CASE - THE HEARTLAND OF POST-BUREAUCRACY?

4.1 The characteristics of work and coping with work 147
  4.1.1 Changing work and ways to cope with it 148
  4.1.2 Creativity and encouraging it 150
  4.1.3 The balance of resources and requirements at work 154
  4.1.4 Uncertainty 155
  4.1.5 Work and private life balance 156

4.2 Personality as a resource 157

4.3 Becoming a manager while being a manager 158

4.4 Work organizational development through emergence 161
  4.4.1 The history – Collaboration translates into organizational structures
  4.4.2 The emergence of Content Production and the »internality« of the other departments
  4.4.3 The future of NewMedia 164
5.8.1 The employees’ ideas on the development possibilities in their work 204
5.8.2 The managers’ experiences on the negative consequences of work 205
5.9 Discussion on the case 206
5.9.1 The special features of work at TeleCom 207
5.9.2 Dealing with work from an individual’s point of view 210
5.9.3 Dealing with work from the collective point of view; Putting the boundaries back to work 211
5.9.4 Towards a post-bureaucratic organization? 213
5.10 From the Empirical Study I to the Empirical Study II 214

6. THE HOSPITAL CASE - MANAGING A BUREAUCRACY IN THE CHANGING WORLD 217
6.1 Norrtälje Hospital 222
6.1.1 Organizational structures, roles, and official collaboration forums 223
6.2 Working in the hospital 226
6.2.1 The employees’ work 227
Routine tasks and variable work situations 229
Meeting leadership with »employeeship« 229
Climate within the departments 230
Coping with demanding work 231
Organizational and departmental rules and tools 231
To summarize 232
6.2.2 The department managers’ work – 233
The department managers’ perspective
Responsibility for the personnel and daily operations 234
Economic responsibility 237
Losing control – Adaptation as the best alternative 237
Positive things at work 239
The department managers’ ideas on coping with demanding work 240
To summarize 241
6.2.3 The department managers’ work from the employees’ perspective 242

CONTENTS 15
6.7.2 The visions and first steps of the clinics 277
Information spreading and communication 277
Decision-making and participation 278
Time to be a leader 278

6.7.3 In practice, how to go forth? 279

6.8 Discussion on the case 279
6.8.1 The department managers’ role and tasks 279
6.8.2 The line organization and difficulties 286
in collaborating within it
6.8.3 Developing the department manager role 290
and the management of the hospital in general
6.8.4 Participation and decision-making 293
6.8.5 The difficulty of being a hospital – 296
The consequences of the institutional setting

6.8.6 In the end 299

7. THE TENANTS’ UNION CASE – PROFESSIONALISM 301
IN A PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT
7.1 The Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region 304
7.2 The SALUT-project at Tenants’ Union 305
7.3 The initial organization at Tenants’ Union and work in it 308
7.3.1 The initial organizational structure 308
7.3.2 The municipal and private negotiation processes 309
7.3.3 Administration supporting the negotiations 313
7.3.4 Quantitative and qualitative workload – 314
The employees’ many demanding tasks
7.3.5 Negotiations competencies – Professional 316
and personal
7.3.6 Social connections and support within 317
the organization
7.3.7 Culture and climate 318
7.3.8 Positive things at work 319
7.3.9 Physical working space and its influence on work 320
7.3.10 Thoughts on the new work organization 321
The employees’ expectations for the reorganization 323
The new work organization – 324
Questions, challenges, and ideas
7.8.5 The interviewees’ evaluation on the collaboration with the unit’s managers
7.8.6 The interviewees’ evaluation on meetings and development work in general
7.9 Discussion on the case and some suggestions for further development work
  7.9.1 On collaboration
  7.9.2 Being a part of the change effort
  7.9.3 From flexible collaboration to formal groups
  7.9.4 What is missing from the development work?
  7.9.5 The development in the Negotiations unit from the Porras and Robertson perspective
  7.9.6 Persisting stress levels – Which burnout factors exist?
  7.9.7 How to go further?

8. DISCUSSION – FROM GOOD WORK TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
  8.1 The changing world of work
    8.1.1 Comprehensive personal presence at a workplace What leads to a more comprehensive personal presence at a workplace? On putting one’s Self on the line and on becoming whole
    8.1.2 The expanding boundaries of work
    8.1.3 The extending competence needs – From professional skills to personal maturity
    8.1.4 Consuming or regenerative post-bureaucratic work? Comprehensibility Manageability Meaningfulness Values and needs To summarize
  8.2 Changing work and backward organizations – When work and an organization do not meet
    8.2.1 The mismatch between post-bureaucratic daily work activities and a bureaucratic organizational setting
8.2.2 The emergence of the mismatch and its consequences
8.2.3 A formal bureaucratic organization and an informal post-bureaucratic organization?
8.2.4 To summarize
8.3 Post-bureaucratic organization – How to coordinate collective actions in the post-bureaucratic working life?
8.3.1 Organizational values as a basis for employees’ well-being and development
8.3.2 Organizational structures supporting post-bureaucratic work activities
From boxes to »hula-hoop« organizations – What it is and how we understand it to be Boundaries confining work Learning from the past? – Professional organizations
8.3.3 Autonomy and interconnectedness – An interactive organization Role negotiations in principle and in practice
8.3.4 Leadership and employeeship
8.3.5 Summary – Sustainable development at individual and organizational levels
8.4 Paradigm shifts and division of work
8.4.1 Earlier paradigm shifts in the European working life – The changing conceptions on manual and mental work
8.4.2 The miniature cases of the working life history – Paradigm changes within organizations
8.4.3 The purpose of one’s work as the new base for the division of labor?
8.5 A critical evaluation of this thesis study and future research questions
8.5.1 The research questions and results
8.5.2 Methodology – Strengths and weaknesses My role as an action researcher – To be seen, but not heard? Carrying out action research – Or did I? Learning in action – Or did they?
Leo Tolstoy\(^1\) wrote that:

»All happy families resemble one another; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.«

This thesis takes the aphorism, applies it to work organizations – and ends up turning it around. The research carried out for the thesis concentrates on two important questions. First, why do employees’ psychological resources become consumed in the contemporary working life to such an extent that stress and burnout have become household words and recent stress statistics present sad stories all over the western world? Second, how to create regenerative work in the present situation, work that enables the growth and development of employees’ resources? The latter question aims to distinguish the underlying conditions for sustainable individual and collective development at work.

An exploration on these two questions together with practitioners from several Swedish organizations as well as an international group of researcher colleagues\(^2\), made it obvious to me that many current working life

---


2 Here I am referring to the international Sustain-network in which researchers from several different European countries as well as from the USA collaborate on issues relating to Sustainable Work Systems. The network has published an anthology based on it collaboration (see Docherty et al., 2002b).
problems are shared in even very different kinds of organizations. However, finding an answer to the second question is much more difficult. Single development steps towards regenerative work can be shared but, eventually, each organization seems to have its own best way, the solution most suitable for it. Consequently,

All unhappy organizations resemble one another;
every happy organization is happy in its own way.

1.1 The background of the thesis

The late 20th and early 21st century have witnessed profound and intertwined changes in the society, technology, economy, and, consequently, at work. New kinds of jobs have been created and, at the same time, traditional occupations have been transformed. Even though the aim has often been to create both organizational competitiveness and better working life, the problems seem to be mounting. Rather than growth and regeneration of human resources in the post-bureaucratic working life, we witness developments leading to human resources consumption at cognitive, emotional, and physical levels. Recent stress and burnout statistics (see e.g. Wingborg, 2000) indicate that we are creating a world, where quite a few of us will not be able to live happy, productive lives.

Unlike for instance in Germany (Buch, 2002; personal communication and Kuhlmann, 2001; personal communication), human resources consumption in the working life is a common topic for the public discussion in Sweden. Both researchers and practitioners are participating in the discussion staged in the popular media and research reports alike. Below, some of the main working life problems and their symptoms brought up in two Swedish newspapers, Dagens Nyheter and Computer Sweden, are summarized and the raised issues are discussed in the light of the current working life research (for the list of newspaper articles analyzed, see the references).

3 The post-bureaucratic working life refers to working life influenced by recent ideological, economic, social, technological, and political developments, and differs profoundly from the working life governed by bureaucracy and bureaucratic thinking, see chapter 3. In my research, I have encountered elements of post-bureaucracy in the telecommunications and new media branches as well as in the health care sector and a non-profit organization.
The aim is to set the stage here for the urgency of the research on human consequences of the contemporary working life. Furthermore, even though the newspaper articles reviewed below probably present partial truths, black-and-white ideas, and lack political sensitivity (see e.g. Silverman, 1993), it is important to describe the public discussion going on in Sweden. It presents some of the reality in which the case study organizations of this thesis exist and try to find their way to a more sustainable work situation. The statistics reviewed later in this chapter present a more overarching picture of contemporary working life problems.

1.1.1 Human resources consumption in the popular media and research

According to the public discussion in Sweden, increased and – above all - more versatile demands at work belong to the most important reasons for the increasing working life problems and stress. Employees are expected to stay on top of the continuous changes, be creative, and act as entrepreneurs. For instance Kaluzniacky⁴ notes in an article in Computer Sweden (November 11th, 1999) that when computers become more powerful and efficient, also more is expected from employees. Research has, however, shown that high demands are not a problem on their own; problems emerge if employees do not have corresponding amount of control to deal with the demands. Karasek and Theorell’s (1990, see chapter 2) job demand/control-model predicts high strain for those employees who have to face high demands without autonomy and skill discretion to deal with the demands. Based on the newspaper articles and also research reports (see e.g. Allvin et al., 1998), high demands are in many contemporary workplaces accompanied with higher control over work than before. Why does not the higher control then seem to balance the high demands anymore? Maybe it is a question of the elusive nature of control; control rendered by an organization may be taken away by its internal and external pressures that employees just cannot leave unnoticed. Even if they had more immediate control over their work and permission to make their own decisions, their hands are still tied. Time pressure, amount of work, and competition situation, among other things, make only certain kinds of deci-

⁴ Eugen Kaluzniacky is the developer of the »Perspectives on Personal Wellness for IS Professionals«-workshop.
sions possible. And too often the decision can only be: to work harder, to work more (see also Altmann & Deiß, 1998).

Another important issue coming up in the newspaper articles and Swedish research reports is that employees are working long hours. Most are working overtime and some seem to be working basically all the time. Allvin et al. (1998) report the disappearance of the traditional boundaries of work - work becomes boundaryless, never ending. Communication and information technologies make it possible for employees to always be reachable; e-mail and mobile phone make the workplace not a place, but rather a continuum. A further point, relating to the boundaryless work, is that when people work all the time, or much at least, the balance between private life and work becomes problematic. Harmonizing the requirements of family and work becomes truly a balancing act. Furthermore, the pressures of work may spill over to private life, and vice versa (see e.g. Kinman & Jones, 2001).

Employees’ own attitudes also contribute to the problematic situation. For many, especially in the high technology sectors, work is challenging and increasing responsibilities make it easy to identify closer and closer with one’s work. It is easy to »get hooked up« when challenging tasks and extensive possibilities are being offered. It is equally easy to forget to maintain the balance between work and recuperation. For instance Björg Aase Sörensen from Work Research Institute in Oslo calls this »the honey trap« - an employee is trapped by interesting work and fails to take time for recuperation (see e.g. Computer Sweden, January 11th, 2000). Maybe related to the honey trap is the hero-cult that Gunnar Aronsson from National Institute for Working Life in Stockholm discusses in the same article. Some think that few year’s hard work in the ICT-sector will be compensated by a big pile of money in the future and that is why it pays to push oneself as hard as one can – after all, one has to endure the pressure only for few years. In reality, the developments in the ICT-sector show that it is maturing, and hitting the gold stone is becoming as difficult and rare as in any other branch. That may require years of enduring work rather than few years of toiling.

The public discussion on the contemporary working life problems shortly reviewed above is interesting not only because it reveals a kaleidoscope of complex problems, but also since it is shaped and, in turn, it shapes shared understandings and meanings in our society. The public discussion creates the image of a stressed subject which each of us has to either adopt
or discard in the daily working life (see e.g. Newton, 1995). Thus, the public discussion is created by existing problems, but it also creates a culture of stress. Stress and burnout become more than household words; they become fashion words. Being happy, balanced, and satisfied at work becomes more and more demanding as we all are supposed to be working ourselves to death in order to be important and accepted.

1.1.2 Human resources consumption in statistics
Consuming work has not, however, been only detected in Sweden; both the Second and Third European Survey on Working Conditions (from 1995 and 2000, respectively) also indicate serious development trends. According to the surveys carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 28 percent of the employees in the European Union region are exposed to stress (see European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2000; Merllié & Paoli, 2000). This figure is easy to understand in the light of the results from the Third European Survey on Working Conditions; 56 percent of employees are exposed to the high speed of work, 67 percent to work pace dictated by clients, and 40 percent to monotonous work. The Third European Survey of Working Conditions by the European Foundation (Merllié & Paoli, ibid.), furthermore, clearly indicates that experienced working conditions are not improving and, in some cases, they are deteriorating.

Raymond-Pierre Bodin, the director of the European Foundation, commenting the results of the surveys states (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions Press Release; December 14th, 2000):

> It is not encouraging to see that there has been no real improvement in working conditions at a time when the workforce is coping with changing job patterns, job autonomy and job content.

This quotation captures one of the paradoxical trends in the working life. The traditional drudgeries of work, such as high physical and psychological load, physical health hazards and monotonous work, are still there. For

---

5 It should be noted that the response rates from some countries are quite low in these surveys (see Paoli & Merllié, 2000)
instance, in The Third European Survey on Working Conditions (2000), 47 percent of employees interviewed report working in painful or tiring positions and 37 percent that they have to handle heavy loads. Both of these figures have increased (from 43 percent and 31 percent, respectively) when compared to the year 1990 survey results, i.e. to the first wave of the European working condition surveys. However, at the same time, new types of problems are emerging in the changing workplaces. People become consumed by work that was thought to be good for them; burnout and stress emerge also in the nice offices and jobs with extensive degrees of freedom and variety. The Second European Survey on Working Conditions (1995) reports that the occupation group most exposed to stress is »professionals« with 39 percent reporting being exposed to stress. Also in the »new economy«, work in the fast lane seems to be leading not only to stress problems, but to more general mental and social problems: to the Silicon Valley Syndrome as Krantlzer and Krantzlzer (2002) call it. Consequently, we have to continue to improve work with traditional problems and begin to improve work with new, yet poorly explored and understood, problems. This thesis aims to contribute to the latter issue.

In short, the brave new world of work envisaged to emerge from the ashes of taylorism has not, in some cases, arrived yet and, where it has arrived, it has not been what it was expected to be. On the one hand, the researchers have witnessed the persistence of tayloristic organizations (see e.g. Schumann et al., 1995) and even the emergence of neo-tayloristic organizations (see e.g. Landsbergis et al., 1999; Taylor & Bain, 1999; Babson, 1995) with their traditional problems. On the other hand, the emerging post-tayloristic, post-industrial, or post-bureaucratic organizations have not automatically created possibilities for mature adults to grow and develop even though some authors have predicted that an alternative for bureaucracy would lead to such results (see e.g. Argyris, 1964). As the bureaucratic structures and rules have become outdated, the mature adult has been left lost, lonely, and increasingly stressed (see chapter 3 and Ciulla, 2000).

1.2 The research questions, goals, and some conceptual aspects of the thesis

In this thesis, light is shed on the working life as it is now; the existing problems and paradoxes shortly outlined above are explored in more detail. Furthermore, the aim is to illuminate the existing possibilities and emerging solutions, to paint impressions on a better working life.
The two main concepts of the thesis are consuming work and regenerative work. Consuming work refers to the consumption of human resources – physical, cognitive, social, and emotional – in work organizations. The aim is here to understand better the current developments in the working life and, more specifically, why these developments lead to human resources consumption. In regenerative work, in its turn, human resources become regenerated; they are allowed to grow. The thesis is founded on the idea that regenerative work creates a foundation for both sustainable individual development as well as sustainable organizational development and, in that way, for Sustainable Work Systems (see Docherty et al., 2002b). With a Sustainable Work System I mean, consequently, a work system which allows employees’ both personal and professional development, and which builds its development on the sustainable development of its human resources.

The research questions of this thesis changed and developed during the time I was carrying out the research. Therefore, instead of just listing the eventual research questions here, I shall discuss shortly how the questions evolved. In the beginning, I had two major questions:

1. Why do human resources become consumed in the working life?
2. What is regenerative work like?

The first case studies I carried out (i.e. the case studies now forming the Empirical Study I of the thesis, see below) and the interview studies within them were founded on these two questions. The findings from these first case studies, however, helped me to reformulate my research questions. I became more and more interested in certain peculiar characteristics of work and working life that I was able to see in my case studies: tensions relating to the emerging challenges at work as well as individual and collective failures and successes when trying to cope with these challenges. The first case studies gave me an impression that we were on a new terrain where old maps would not anymore see us through. Consequently, understanding human resources consumption and regeneration in the contemporary context became a very important factor; instead of addressing these issues at general level, I decided to try and find out what in the working life as it is now leads to human resources consumption and regeneration. At that point, after having carried out the first case studies of the thesis, I carried out also some literature studies (now reported in chapter 3) that made me convinced that the tensions I saw in my empirical material related to the transi-
tion from bureaucratic way of working to post-bureaucracy. Therefore, these two concepts – bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy – formed an important undertone for my further studies.

Furthermore, the first case studies attached my attention to a *how* question: how to individually and collectively create regenerative work? The literature studies I had carried out by this time (see section 2.2), indicated that much is already known about *good*, regenerative work. The question that seemed to be more difficult was how to create and achieve such work? What needs to be done in a work organization? Consequently, eventually I ended up with the following four research questions, to which I set out to look for answers in the Empirical Study II of this thesis and its two in-depth case studies (see section 1.3.2).

**Research Question 1:**
What characterizes post-bureaucratic working life?

**Research Question 2:**
Why and how do human resources become consumed in the contemporary working life?

**Research Question 3:**
What does regenerative work supporting employees’ personal and professional growth as well as well-being mean in the contemporary working life?

**Research Question 4:**
How to create such regenerative work in the present situation?

The research questions above are founded on several goals; the aim of the thesis is both to make a conceptual contribution as well as to generate research results with practical benefits for contemporary organizations. The prospective benefits from the thesis work are:

- A better understanding is created on the contemporary work; the thesis aims to contribute to the understanding on the emerging era after bureaucracy as well as its both negative and positive potentials. In other words, the thesis contributes to the understanding of post-bureaucracy and its consequences.
• The thesis contributes to the creation of organizational innovations that support employees in the evolving work. Organizational approaches required for successful individual and collective coping in the contemporary society and, in particular, working life are explored.
• A better understanding on the competencies needed in the contemporary work is formed.
• The thesis contributes to the important movement within the organizational science from the »one-size-fits-all« design approach to more proactive, unique, and organic organizational designs.
• During the past few decades, neo-liberal values leading to the one-sided emphasis on profits and the »survival of the fittest« seem to have overshadowed the social and communal values emphasizing the importance of each individual’s well-being, health, and opportunities for pursuing happiness. In such a climate, it is important to try to balance the development by bringing forth also these alternative values that the concept of sustainability actually stands for.

Even though the approach in this thesis is quite »humanistic« and human resources consumption and regeneration are in the focus, also organizational competitiveness is of interest and, in a sense, represents an important framework for the search of regenerative work. Incontextualized work without any reference to an organization’s economic goals could probably be designed to be pleasant, but not in the current situation of ever increasing competition probable or sustainable in the long run. Maybe such work would not even be regenerative, i.e. contributing to the growth and development of employees. As will be seen in chapter 2, the regenerative potential of work depends strongly on how our work touches others - whether we are able to provide something valuable for them or not. Thus, also economic variables influence the consuming or regenerative potential of work. This thesis, consequently, concentrates on contextualized work, work carried out in organizations aiming to sustain their meaning and existence. Thus, the search for regenerative work has to be also a search for organizational competitiveness.

Regenerative work has to, consequently, be meaningful also economically, but does work allowing personal and professional growth contribute to business results and organizational competitiveness? To be quite frank, one could say, it inevitably does not do that. The work and organizational science has tried through decades to achieve this dual goal of well-being and
development as well as competitiveness (see e.g. Kompier & Cooper, 1999), but the task is not easy. Maybe this is because organizational competitiveness is not only the sum of the potential of its members; there are simply too many intervening factors. The best efforts within organizations can be undermined by one mistake in the stock or product markets or simply by an economic recession. The potential from the growth and development of a thousand employees may not become translated into organizational success, but rather be wasted through one erratic investment decision or a failed business deal. The concepts of regenerative work and organizational competitiveness move at different levels; personal development and competitiveness cannot be equated to each other. Nevertheless, I think that it is justifiable to hope that regenerative work has a positive effect on productivity or competitiveness in the context that is directly affected by employees and work groups «enjoying» the good, regenerative work. Through an individual’s behavior, what is individual rises to the social level; individual ideas become shared and individual emotions become commonly experienced as, for instance, Maslach and Leiter (1997) suggest. Senge (1990), in his turn, explains how through dialogue and interaction individual potential may become organizational potential. Consequently, I believe that regenerative work creates potential for competitiveness as it creates personal and social potential; another question is how this potential is realized or wasted.

1.3 Research approach and methodology
Having now defined my research interest areas and questions, in this section I shall describe how I went about my research. Both the philosophical and practical aspects of the research work are outlined here.

1.3.1 The philosophical approach of the thesis work
This thesis and its interpretation, as all scientific work, exist and are influenced by their ideological and cultural context; moreover, my way of seeing the world influences the way I see my empirical material and, in that way, also my eventual research results. In this section, the aim is to provide the reader some glimpses on how I understand the world and my empirical material, in order to outline some of the foundations for the interpretations I have made. Stress is an important concept in the thesis; human resources consumption – the consumption of physiological and psychological resources – has traditionally been studied within the stress research. There-
fore, I will describe here how, at philosophical level, I understand stress; section 2.1 explains in its turn how stress is understood at the theoretical level in the thesis.

Furthermore, I will try and explain where among the mounting amount of research paradigms I feel at home. The main message I wish to put forward here is that I do not want to categorize myself as a positivist or social constructionist. I believe that the most fruitful ground for interpretation can be found not in such categories but in openness to many different kinds of ideas. Rather than a paradigm, I prefer to use my own common sense with its limitations as my guiding light; at least the limitations of my common sense are my limitations in relation to the world, not my limitations in understanding and internalizing a formalized way of thinking. Furthermore, the limitations of my common sense are my limitations, not limitations of a paradigm formulated by someone else.

The ontology and epistemology of stress

Hobfoll (1998) when discussing stress suggests that we live in the »age of stress« in which stress is individualized (see also chapter 2). Objective stress does not exist, but researchers try to access stress within the individuals (»why and how do they appraise this event stressfull?«) and physicians try to cure stress by changing the individual appraisal rather than »reality«. Hobfoll, however, advocates an alternative socio-historical approach that understands stress existing in a certain socio-historical environment and calls attention to the fact that people from the same socio-historical environment do experience many life events in the same way; they are socially and culturally conditioned to value certain things, the loss of which is generally experienced to be stressful. Thus, both subjective and objective elements of stress exist and should be studied and intervened in. This thesis aims to respond to this call. Stress is understood as a psycho-physiological process that, however, is both rooted in and takes place in a socio-historical context. What people consider stressful depends not only on subjective appraisals; there are objective stressors that everyone would experience as stressful. Researchers may access these shared, objective stressors through research and have also a responsibility to try and generate ideas on how to counteract them in order to alleviate human suffering originating from psychological stress.

This thesis is, thus, founded on the ideas that there are currently and locally existing stressors and that a researcher can together with local actors
access these objective stressors. How do such ideas then relate to the research philosophy? The philosophical grounding of this thesis could be defined to be ontologically pluralistic in territorial sense and epistemologically weakly pluralistic (see Lewis & Kelemen, 2002; Noon & Blyton, 1997). The thesis accepts the pluralistic view to ontology, to the nature of reality. There are many different simultaneously existing realities (territorial realities) and people often live in different realities. The idea of pluralistic ontology means also that both stable entities as well as dynamic processes are perceived to exist, at the same time. As Lewis and Kelemen (2002, p. 258) formulate it:

Reality is at once »made« and »in the making« [...].

When looking at an organization, current and stable entities can be seen (i.e. an »objective« reality), but simultaneously it is also possible to see how these entities are »in the making«, constructed through social interaction. Objective stressors do exist, but they may be more or less local and in continuous transformation.

Epistemological pluralism means in its turn that for a researcher there are many different ways of knowing, different lenses available. An organization can be looked at through different lenses, always learning something more. However, my epistemological pluralism is quite weak. Even though I accept the idea that there are many ways of knowing, I also think that there are more and less proficient ways of knowing. One can use many different lenses, but for a certain research question there may be lenses that fit better than some others. For instance, a car crash is better explained with the help of classical physics than quantum physics. Similarly, when one wants to develop an organization, more »normative« approach with a strong flavor of positivism may be more useful than an extremely post-modernist stance. In line with this, in the case studies of the thesis, where improvements in the working conditions are sought (see chapters 6 and 7), stressors and possibilities for development are looked for from the objective reality that the employees in question describe to exist and I, with them, have come to understand to exist.

Consequently, this research project does not recognize positivism or social constructionism as its home, but exists somewhere between the positivistic and interpretive social science traditions (for the traditional contro-
versies between the two, see e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As Silverman states (1993, p. 22):

"...one of the least fruitful questions one can ask a social scientist is: »To what school of social sciences do you belong?«.

Positivism, in its extreme form, looks for truths and laws that apply universally. I do not expect such truths and laws to exist in social settings; there are simply too many different worlds for ultimate truths to exist and so many things are created and recreated continuously. Interpretive social science or constructionism, at its extreme edge, instead perceives everything to be socially constructed within the social interaction between people. Thus, there is no objective reality to be accessed, but only what has been and is constructed by people. Furthermore, such methods as interviews are not applicable; they only generate a representation of the interview situation, not of the reality that is tried to be captured through the interview. In this thesis both reality and interpretation are important concepts; it is acknowledged that there is a reality - people living within the same world are within the same reality and this reality can be accessed by these people and the researcher. However, there are many worlds continuously in the making, each with different realities. So, for example, the project is based on the idea, that by interviewing people working in the same organization and doing about the same type of work together, it is possible to find out about the »reality« of their work even though this reality is local and in continuous gradual transformation. Therefore, for instance in one of the case studies (i.e. the Norrtälje Hospital case study, chapter 6), different hierarchical groups were interviewed on similar issues in order to access all the different, but closely connecting, realities these groups experienced to exist.

1.3.2 The empirical studies;

From the work plan to research results

In a more practical note, the research strategies applied in this thesis are literature research and case study. Literature research was carried out on the changes taking place in the contemporary working life. Conceptual and, also to some extent, empirical work was reviewed and the review as well as my conclusions based on it are presented in chapter 3. The aim of the literature study was to create a broader foundation for, for instance, the under-
standing of the post-bureaucratic working life and its consequences on individuals and organizations. The literature research, thus, made it eventually possible to generalize the results from my case studies to theory (a process described by Yin, 1984).

The empirical research was carried out through the case study strategy (see Yin, ibid.). Several case studies were conducted in two phases of the research project; there were two separate empirical studies, the Empirical Study I and Empirical Study II. The Empirical Study I contained two case studies carried out in companies operating in the »new economy« sectors, while the Empirical Study II concentrated on two case organizations from more traditional fields, i.e. on a hospital and a people’s movement organization. Multiple cases were needed in order to, first, develop the focus of research questions and, secondly, to collect empirical material in order to provide answers to the research questions. Thus, the research strategy used could be further labeled as a collective case study (Stake, 1994); multiple cases were studied in order to formulate and gain a more profound understanding of the research questions stated above. More precisely, the Empirical Study I with its two cases (carried out in parallel during 1999 and 2000) enabled me to reformulate my research questions as noted above as well as already provided some tentative ideas for why human resources become consumed at work and how to create regenerative work. The two case studies of the Empirical Study II (likewise carried out in parallel from 2000 to 2002) enabled me to collect more empirical material on human resources consumption and regeneration in the contemporary working life in quite different types of organizations and operation areas than in the Empirical Study I. Furthermore, these two case studies also provided opportunities for collecting material on how to move from consuming to regenerative work.

The analysis of the empirical material from the Empirical Study I and Empirical Study II can be seen as two mainly separate but eventually converging paths (see figure 1.1). The cases of the Empirical Study I were carried out and analyzed first; some interesting notions on human resources consumption and regeneration were gained. As noted above, a major discovery at this point was that something in our time, something in the contemporary working life was creating new threats for individuals and organizations to cope with and, at the same time, new opportunities as well. The cases of the Empirical Study II were then carried out with slightly more focus on this aspect. The Empirical Study I did, however, result also in more
detailed questions revolving around the idea of post-bureaucracy (see section 5.10). However, since the Empirical Study I had quite small interviewee samples and concentrated on case organizations from quite »exotic« new economy branches, I did not want to confine the further studies to too tightly defined questions or assumptions. Instead, I founded the Empirical Study II on the four, still quite broad, research questions (see above) in order to be able to explore the reasons for consuming work and opportunities for human resources regeneration in the contemporary working life as broadly as possible. Maybe the post-bureaucratic notions detected in the Empirical Study I would not be confirmed in the Empirical Study II, but would lead to a blind alley, I reasoned. Furthermore, the action research approach adopted in the Empirical Study II (see below) favored a more open research agenda as the interests of the case companies, my own research interests, and the research interests of other researchers involved had to be fitted together.

Therefore, it is important to note here that even though the Empirical Study I and the Empirical Study II were carried out consecutively and the Empirical Study I helped me to reformulate the research questions (as described above), the Empirical Study II is not directly designed to study detailed research questions or test hypotheses derived from the Empirical Study I. The two studies are to a great extent independent and converge only in the final analysis and discussion in chapter 8. At the end of chapter 7, after having carried out all the four case studies, I had ideas from the »new economy« as well as from the »old economy« on human resources consumption and regeneration. The next step was then the final, converging phase of the analysis; it took place when writing chapter 8. All the empirical material was analyzed and discussed together as well as reflected in the light of the existing theories and conceptual models (see chapters 2 and

6 Discussions in the Sustain-network meeting in Eindhoven in September 2001 put me on the track of the post-bureaucracy concept. Until then, I had been lost in the post-fordist, post-industrialist, and new economy ideas. Suggestions from other Sustain-network members, however, encouraged me to look into post-bureaucracy and by using this concept I was able to find relevant literature and also organize my own observations on the characteristics of the contemporary working life more precisely. Thus, post-bureaucracy as a concept became the center around which my studies and analysis started to rotate.
3) in order to conceptualize some reasons for human resources consumption and possibilities for regenerative work in the contemporary working life. Figure 1.1 depicts this process.

The Empirical Study I and some basic approaches to the empirical research
The main aim of the Empirical Study I was to create a basic understanding on the relevant research issues areas, i.e. on the human resources consumption and regeneration. Empirical data was collected in order to map reasons for human resources consumption and, above all, to identify not only single problems but, rather, underlying patterns. Also, some preliminary ideas on human resources regeneration were collected. In the beginning of the Empirical Study I, I was interested to find out about consuming and regenerative work in general. For my study, I therefore chose companies in sectors that in the public media had become famous for their more relaxed, human centered, and inspiring work opportunities and, at the same time, infamous for stress problems and 35-year-old executives having heart attacks due to intensive working. The sectors I focused on were new media and telecommunications, branches within the »new economy«. Furthermore, for my sample, I wanted to include companies that had detected the existing threats and had as an aim to create »good work« and good working conditions for their employees. The case companies fulfill-
ing these criteria were reached in different ways. NewMedia had appeared in the public media and discussed the improvement of working conditions in the new economy; I contacted the company to find out more about their ideas. TeleCom had an earlier contact to my supervisor, who suggested that I should look into that company.

The case studies of the Empirical Study I are founded on semi-structured interviews carried out in the case organizations. Certain theory based questions relating to human resources consumption and regeneration were posed (see Appendix 4); these interview questions were founded on the theories discussed in section 2.1.4 (how stress is understood in this thesis) as well as in section 2.2.4 (how good work is understood in this thesis). Consequently, questions relating to, for instance, work and work content related stressors, Maslach and Leiter (1997) burnout dimensions as well as Antonovsky’s (1987a) ideas on comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of work were concentrated on. Nevertheless, extensive room was also given in each interview for free discussion around the research interest areas. The aim of the interviews was, as stated above, to explore and exploration necessitates certain amount of open-endedness. All the time, however, I tried to take the interviewees closer to their daily work experiences or the daily work in their organizations. For instance, if an interviewee noted a high workload due to many contacts in the organization as a problem, I tried to focus on this reply, to ask in more concrete terms the conditions and reasons for the contacts, the thoughts and emotions resulting from them. In short, the aim was to be concrete and close to the daily work experiences.

For the Empirical Study I, the following persons were interviewed (for a summary of all the persons interviewed for the thesis, see Appendix 1):

- In a new media company (NewMedia), two persons - the consecutive Human Resources-managers - were interviewed. Both HR-managers were interviewed twice. Even though I expressed a wish, it was not possible to interview employees or other managers in this company. The workload was all the time too high, the HR-managers evaluated, to allow further interviews to be carried out.
- In a telecommunications company (TeleCom), nine persons - five employees and four managers (i.e. having personnel responsibility or working in the company management) – were interviewed.
The interviews were always carried out at the case companies, on the location. If a person had his or her own room, the interview was carried out in it. If not, I asked in advance the interviewee to reserve for instance a meeting room where we would be able to discuss freely. During all the interviews I took notes on what the interviewees were saying. Two of the interviews in the telecommunications company I also recorded on a MiniDisk. Earlier, I was not used to recording the interviews, but encouragement from researcher colleagues made me decide to use the recordings as a support in documenting the interviews. From there on, also in the Empirical Study II, I recorded the interviews on a MiniDisk. None of the interviewees objected the recording.

The interview data analysis proceeded in several steps. First, a report was written on each interview separately (based on the hand taken notes and, in two interviews, on a MiniDisk recording). In each report, I summarized the issues that came forth in the interview. The structure of these reports, thus, followed the structure of the interview question list (see Appendix 4); however, some questions did not really «catch on» in some interviews that, instead, concentrated on a limited set of questions. When this happened, the interview report similarly contained material only relating to those questions that actually were discussed. For instance, when interviewing one of the HR-managers in the new media company, we mainly concentrated on the question «Which work organizational development projects have taken place in your organization recently?», since the interviewee pointed out this to explain a major part of the employees' development opportunities in the company.

The interview report was sent to the interviewee to give her/him an opportunity to check, correct, and add to it. The comments from the interviewees on the reports were received via e-mail or telephone, and the reports were then revised as needed. Then, all the interview reports relating to the same company were read through, all the issues emerging in the interviews were listed and, eventually, the listed issues were arranged in issue groups through a «cut and paste» process on the list. Here, I was still very close to the «raw» material, i.e. the interviewees' responses to the interview questions. That is why the issue groups ended up mainly corresponding to the interview questions and their groupings presented in Appendix 4: work, work organization, burnout dimensions, negative and positive elements at work, coping resources, etc. Some issue groups became, however, more focused here. For instance, in the new media company case study, the inter-
view questions on recent organizational developments (already mentioned above) became refined into an issue group relating to the history of the company’s organizational development (see section 4.4).

Separate issue lists and groups were generated for the employees and managers in the telecommunications case study where these different hierarchical levels were included to the sample. This was done, as to me it seems that often employees and managers may look at the same issue but from different perspectives. For instance, employees speak about support they need from managers, managers speak about the support they give to employees. Employees speak about their work as they experience it, managers speak about employees’ work as they see it or as it should be, and so forth.

Once having created groups out of the issue lists, I read through each group and, when necessary, created subgroups within the groups. Then, I chose clarifying titles for the issue groups and subgroups. For instance, a major issue group in the new media case study »the characteristics of work and coping with it« ended up containing such subgroups as »boundaryless work and ways to cope with it« and »creativity and encouraging it«. The issue subgroup »boundaryless work and ways to cope with it« contained, in its turn, subgroups »job descriptions«, »goals«, and »organizational tools for supporting employees with boundaryless work - development discussions and feedback«.

The analysis process described so far can be seen as a »vertical« analysis; the interview material was analyzed descriptively - the focus was simply on what the interviewees said in relation to different clear issue groups, such as work characteristics and psychosocial factors at work. The results from the vertical analyses are presented in sections 4.1 through 4.4 (for the new media company) and sections 5.1 through 5.8 (for the telecommunication company). After this vertical analysis also a »horizontal« analysis was carried out. The overarching themes that are common to the different issue groups of the vertical analysis were uncovered here. For instance, the post-bureaucratic characteristics of work emerged as a theme. Also, bureaucratic ways to control and guide work clashing with post-bureaucratic characteristics of work, as well as new kinds of strategies for individually and collectively coping with post-bureaucratic work emerged as themes. The preliminary results of the horizontal analysis of the new media case are presented in section 4.5 and the results of the horizontal analysis of the telecommunications case are presented in section 5.9. These results were
then returned to in chapter 8 (see above) where the empirical material from all the case studies is analyzed and discussed in order to come to the conclusive conceptual results. Consequently, the level of abstraction in the analysis can be seen to become gradually elevated; the results from both the vertical and horizontal analyses presented in chapters 4 and 5 are still very close to the »raw« material and mainly aim to provide interesting insights on each particular case to the reader as well as the case organizations themselves. The discussion in chapter 8 then approaches more general and conceptual level. The ideas of vertical and horizontal analysis are illustrated in figure 1.2.

**Figure 1.2. The vertical and horizontal analysis.**

The Empirical Study II
While the case studies of the Empirical Study I were carried out in a loose contact with the case companies, the Empirical Study II was in its turn carried out in a close collaboration with the case study organizations - i.e. Norrtälje Hospital and the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region. The case studies of the Empirical Study II aimed to have an action research approach (see e.g. Reason & Bradbury, 2001, Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Cunningham, 1993). Yin (1984) notes that in case studies, the researcher cannot influence (or manipulate, as he puts it) the research object and this would seem to indicate the impossibility to combine the action research and case study approaches. However, I do not perceive a contradic-
tion here; the case studies of the Empirical Study II can be perceived as two cases in the overall multiple case study design of this research and these case studies were carried out with an action research approach - with an attempt to influence the development of the case study organizations and generate theoretical knowledge through action (see e.g. Vartiainen, 1994).

Action research can formally be defined as (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; p. 1):

…participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment.

Greenwood and Levin (1998), in their turn, note that action research refers to the union of action, research, and participation. If one of these elements is missing, the research effort cannot be defined anymore as action research.

In line with these definitions, the Empirical Study II has a participatory approach; during the case studies, different actors from Norrtälje Hospital and the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region were involved in a process that aimed to create more regenerative work in these organizations. Thus, the Empirical Study II complies with Reason and Bradbury’s idea on »the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes« as well. The participatory process of the action research approach also falls in line with the philosophical orientation of the thesis. Reason and Bradbury namely state that the participatory view integrates both the idea of »reality« inherent for positivism and the idea of interpretation inherent for constructionist approaches.

Chein et al. (1948) list different varieties of action research. First, action research may be diagnostic; a researcher carries out a research effort (an analysis), the results of which can then function as a starting point for an action within the system to be studied and analyzed. This is the »weakest« form of action research, since it leaves out the researcher’s responsibility for seeing to that the research results are properly applied (see e.g. Foster, 1972; Chein et al., 1948). The second variety of action research is participant action research which reminds the diagnostic variant, but involves the local actors to the analysis process thus strengthening their motivation for action when its time comes. Also Schein (2001) emphasizes the relevance
of this kind of action research; both the researcher and local actors should actively involve one another to the process. The local actors should invite the researcher to all the relevant data for her research and the researcher should, in her turn, involve the local actors to the research process in order to improve its outcomes. The third variety of action research is empirical. Chein et al. (1948, p. 47) define empirical action research in the following way:

...to do something and keep a record of what is done and what happens.

Thus, observing actions as they unfold is in focus here. Finally, the fourth variant is experimental action research in which in a relatively controlled setting different actions are taken and their consequences evaluated. In the beginning of the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union case studies, the aim was to carry out research together with the organizations’ members which could then lead to an action, to movement from consuming to regenerative work. Also, the aim was »to do something and keep a record«. Consequently, the projects aimed to correspond to the participant and empirical action research as defined above. In section 8.5, it will be evaluated whether this aim was realized or not.

Cunningham (1993) defines action research as a research approach attempting to solve problems in applied settings as well as focusing on discovery. This was also the aim in the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union case studies. Both organizations initially had concrete and real problems with human resources consumption and the case study projects focused on discovering alternative ways to work, organize, manage, and collaborate in order to create regenerative work. At Norrtälje Hospital, the case study focused on creating more sustainable department manager roles. The whole hospital was worried for its department managers; they seemed to be losing their energy and enthusiasm at work. This was a problem overaching the whole hospital since the department managers are working all over the hospital as the first-line managers with different employee groups, such as nurses and assistant nurses, as their subordinates. The case study focused, thus, on department managers as well as eventually ended up looking at the managerial structures and processes more broadly in the organization. At Tenants’ Union, the project dealt with an organizational change in which the aim was to create a more sustainable work situation for employees with
temporarily high and fluctuating workloads. This case study focused on an organizational unit representing the union’s members in negotiations with both private and public counterparts. Ombudsmen (negotiators), negotiations assistants, and managers work in the unit. The organizations themselves had the responsibility for the initial formulation of the project issue area as well as the selection of the project focus groups. The cases belonging to the Empirical Study II are discussed in detail in chapters 6 and 7; below the methodological approaches of these case studies are explained. The project phases, different activities, and research interventions of both case projects are listed in Appendixes 2 (Norrtälje Hospital) and 3 (Tenants’ Union).

**The SALUT network**

The Empirical Study II belonged to a larger research and development project called SALUT; SALUT standing for Samarbete (Collaboration) – Action Learning – Utveckling (Development). In short, SALUT was an action-learning network operating during 2001 and 2002, and concentrating on sustainability questions. The organizations involved in the network (including Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union) engaged in exchanging experiences and learning from each other’s experiences.

Action learning means a cycle in which actions turn into experiences that are reflected upon and, consequently, new concepts are created and used in the future actions (for this experiential learning or action learning approach, see Kolb, 1984). The SALUT-network aimed, thus, to provide opportunities for the participating organizations to share and reflect on their experiences as well as to create together new conceptual ideas that could help them in their search for sustainability. The common action learning cycle of the SALUT-network is depicted in figure 1.3. This cycle was outlined in the beginning of the SALUT-project by the project’s researcher group as a prediction for how the SALUT-project might proceed.

The SALUT-network had participants from two research institutes and six case organizations. The researchers represented The Program for Organizational Learning and Development at National Institute for Working Life (Arbetslivsinstitutet) and Department of Industrial Economics and Management at Royal Institute of Technology (Kungl Tekniska Högskolan) both located in Stockholm, Sweden. The case organizations, in their turn, had earlier had contacts to researchers and actively sought to participate in the project. We SALUT-researchers had as our criteria for se-
lecting the case organizations to the network that each organization should be committed to work for two years within the network with the questions relating to sustainability as well as that the organizations should represent different branches. The research group considered having different branches represented in the network as an advantage; that would enable the exchange of ideas and experiences between organizations operating in different environments. Such constellation would prevent the network from becoming overwhelmed by branch specific problems; fresh insights from organizations operating in totally different types of branches would support in questioning the seemingly inevitable problems of one’s branch. The participants of the SALUT-network and their relations to each other are depicted in figure 1.4. The case companies of the Empirical Study I of this thesis were also offered an opportunity to participate in the SALUT-network, but they had to turn down the offer since they experienced that they did not have the time or could not dedicate the time of their employees for the project. Also the two year commitment was experienced to be too much by these organizations.
Each SALUT-organization had its own research and development project relating to some aspect of Sustainable Work Systems; for instance, as noted above, Norrtälje Hospital decided to concentrate on creating a more sustainable department manager role and Tenants’ Union wanted to increase the regenerative potential of the negotiations work. In the beginning of the SALUT-project, the case organizations made their own project plans with the support of the researchers. Each SALUT-organization also had a unique project organization, but there were certain common features in the project organization structures. Each SALUT-organization for instance pointed out a project leader responsible for the organization’s SALUT-project. The project leaders formed a project group and other necessary structures within their organizations for the realization of the project. Furthermore, there were always two researchers engaged in each case organization’s SALUT-project. The project issues (in more detail) as well as the project groups and actors of Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union are presented in chapters 6 and 7, respectively.

The SALUT-project leaders met each others and all the researchers regularly in SALUT-network meetings. In the meetings, the organizations’
SALUT-projects were discussed and, in each meeting, there were also some special themes for which the researchers prepared lectures, discussions, group work, and/or invited external speakers. For the special themes discussed in the network, see table 1.1. Each SALUT-organization also had a vision owner. The vision owners were senior managers; they authorized the project and supported it at its different stages. The vision owners also met each others and the researchers regularly, twice a year.

Table 1.1. The timeline of the SALUT-network, meetings and special themes. Work intensity refers here to the quantitative and qualitative features of work leading to human resources consumption. In this thesis the concept of work intensity is not used but rather replaced by traditional stress research concepts such as stressors and psychosocial factors. Also the concept of consuming work is used in the thesis to refer to work that potentially consumes employees’ resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.1.2001</td>
<td>meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. &amp;</td>
<td>SALUT I</td>
<td>The concepts of sustainability and work intensity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.1.2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.2001</td>
<td>SALUT II</td>
<td>Performance measurement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.5.2001</td>
<td>SALUT IV</td>
<td>Leadership and employeeship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10.2001</td>
<td>SALUT VI</td>
<td>Evaluation of the network so far: What is work intensity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.12.2001</td>
<td>SALUT VIII</td>
<td>First glimpses towards competitiveness and regenerative work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2.2002</td>
<td>SALUT IX</td>
<td>What is competitiveness and regenerative work? Focus on Norrtälje Hospital.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case study organizations of my Empirical Study II were, consequently, also SALUT-network members and that is why I had the opportunity to work with them both in their »home field« and within the network. From Norrtälje Hospital, the project leader and also one project group member (a hospital psychologist, who initiated the hospital’s participation to the SALUT-project and supported the project leader all through
the project) actively participated in the network meetings, as did the two SALUT-project leaders from Tenants’ Union. The network meetings enabled me and these actors to discuss our experiences from the home field and our ideas with other network members and, especially, present our projects and project results to them. The network meetings, thus, offered opportunities for us to receive comments, questions, and suggestions from other network members on our projects.

I have used the discussions on the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union case studies that were carried out in the network meetings also as research material for my case studies; consequently, I do not analyze the events in the network meetings separately but rather in synthesis with all the other (interview and observation) material from the case studies gathered in the home field. This has two reasons; first, analyzing the network – its development, its discussions – would be a research task on its own and, therefore, not possible within the scope of this thesis. Second, the discussions in the network meetings on »my« case study organizations ended up mainly confirming and supporting the material gathered from and at the home field. Therefore I decided to use the network material in synthesis with all the other material and, in practice, use it in the case descriptions to complement and support material collected through interviews and observations.

Furthermore, the network meetings also played an important role relating to the conceptual work carried out for this thesis. As a researcher, I had the opportunity to present my more conceptual conclusions and ideas for the whole network and, in that way, receive feedback both from the other researchers and the participating companies. This helped me, for instance, to develop further the issues discussed in chapter 8.

**Research methods in the Empirical Study II**

My role in the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union SALUT-projects was to work on the organizations’ project issues together with the organizations’ members. Furthermore, I had the special responsibility for carrying out research and providing research input to both projects. In the Norrtälje Hospital project, I mainly carried this responsibility on my own; the other researcher was appointed to the project but, due to his other engagements, was not able to dedicate much time for the Norrtälje Hospital project. However, the hospital psychologist, who initiated the whole Norrtälje Hospital SALUT-project and who also acted as an important support for the hospital’s SALUT project leader, supported my research work by, for
instance, commenting the interview and research report drafts and helping me to develop them in that way. In the Tenants’ Union project I shared the research responsibility with a researcher from National Institute for Working Life. We carried out all the interviews together and also made observations together (see below). However, I took the main responsibility for documenting and analyzing the research material; after I had written the first draft on an interview or observation material, we discussed the draft and after that I was able to work further on it.

In both case studies of the Empirical Study II, three major research methods were used: interviews, participative observation, and analysis on existing relevant material. At Norrtälje Hospital, several interview studies were made in order to collect together different perspectives on the department manager work and the management of the hospital. The hospital’s SALUT-project group considered having all these different perspectives available important when creating an understanding on the department manager work (more on this in chapter 6). First, the members of the project group (four department managers and the project leader) were interviewed in order to create an understanding of the consuming aspects of the department manager work as well as the current situation - change trends and developments - in the hospital and its environment. Later, this interview sample was increased by one person; one further department manager was interviewed as she was distinguished by the project group to have interesting perspectives on the department manager work.

The second interview study concentrated on the employees and their perceptions on the department manager work, their collaboration with the department managers (who are their closest supervisors), and on the organization’s management structures in general. All in all, 17 employees from six clinics (from total of eight) were interviewed. Most of these interviews (as all the other interviews carried out for the thesis) were interviews with one person. However, there were also in total four employee interviewees here who preferred to be interviewed together with a colleague. I would judge that this did not harm the interview procedure, rather quite the contrary. In these pair interviews, open and lively discussions ensued. One member of the SALUT-project group (a department manager) coordinat-

---

7 Due to practical problems no interviews were made at Special physician group and Paramedical clinic (for a complete list of the clinics, see chapter 6).
ed the selection of interviewees. She contacted other department managers who then asked volunteers for the interviews. All in all, this process was very flexible and almost accidental. For instance, on one occasion two persons to be interviewed could not participate after all due to sudden changes in working schedules. Since I was already present at the department, the department manager quickly asked her employees whether someone would have time for an interview, and in this way new interviewees came up. The third interview study at Norrtälje Hospital concentrated on department managers’ supervisors – the clinic heads – and their ideas on the department manager role as well as management questions in general. Seven clinic heads were interviewed, as were the hospital’s personnel and economics managers. Also the hospital’s director was interviewed in order to include his ideas on the department manager work and role to the working material of the hospital. The clinic heads, the economy and personnel managers as well as the hospital’s director formed at that time the hospital’s management group; therefore, these interviews collected together the thoughts of the hospital’s management group on the department manager role as well as the overall management and leadership in the hospital.

All the interview studies carried out were semi-structured; the lists of questions used as support in the interviews are presented in Appendixes 4, 5, and 6. The questions for the department manager interviews were basically identical to the interview questions used in the Empirical Study I. Also here the underlying theories on human resources consumption and regeneration drove the selection of the questions to be asked. Using the same questions in all these interview studies enabled me eventually to create a common discussion on, for instance, the post-bureaucratic characteristics of work in chapter 8. The employee and hospital’s management group interviews were also founded on the theory chapter but, furthermore, the findings from the department manager interviews as well as the discussions in the hospital’s SALUT-project group led to the inclusion of certain questions that were hoped to clarify the other professional groups’ perspectives on the department manager work. For instance, the employees were asked about their practical possibilities to collaborate with the depart-

---

8 There are eight clinics or operation areas in the hospital, but at the time of the interviews one clinic head was leading two operation areas.
ment managers, since the project group experienced that they, as department managers, did not have enough time for their employees. The clinic heads were, for instance, asked about the employees’ participation opportunities as the department managers and employees identified problems in participation. I had the main responsibility for formulating the interview questions; the project group members did, however, comment my preliminary questions so that I was able to formulate them better. The other researcher participating in the Norrtälje Hospital SALUT-project helped me with the questions for the employee interviews by commenting their content as well as language.

Each interview lasted for about an hour and the interviews were carried out in a room where it was possible to speak in peace; sometimes this meant an interviewee’s office, a meeting room, or even a treatment room (not in use at that particular time!). The analysis of the interview material proceeded through several steps. In practice, all the interviews were recorded on a MiniDisk as well as handwritten notes were taken during the interviews. Then, an interview report was written on each interview. The recordings were used to check and complement the handwritten notes. The following step was to write a summary report for each interview study separately. Here again all the issues emerging in an interview study were listed and grouped. Being still close to the interviewees’ responses, the groups ended up being very close to the interview questions and issue areas. Sometimes emerging groups were very small – for instance, only one interviewee mentioning an issue. However, if such an issue exemplified what came up elsewhere in the interview study or seemed very important, I included the issue to the case description. Otherwise, the case studies were written based on issue groups containing ideas from several interviewees.

The next step was to read through the groups and, when needed, create subgroups. For example, since the concept of »employeeship« (see section 6.2.1) proved to be an important and interesting topic relating to the work content in the employee interviews, a category was formed for it. Furthermore, for each interview study’s summary report, I also wrote a discussion; the discussion concentrated on the overarching themes for the issue groups and my elaboration on these overarching themes. Consequently, both vertical and horizontal analyses (see figure 1.2) were included to the summary reports. The summary reports were then sent to the interviewees for a check-up and commenting. While the employee interviewees did not comment on their summary report, the hospital’s management group members
sent their comments via e-mail and I adjusted the report based on these comments. The interview report on the interviews with the department managers was furthermore checked in the project group during several discussions on the department manager tasks and role. The results from the vertical analyses of the interview studies are presented in the »body« of the Norrtälje Hospital case description (sections 6.2 - 6.6), while the results from the horizontal analyses are presented and elaborated in section 6.8 (discussion on the case).

The participative observation took place in the Norrtälje Hospital case study mainly at the project group meetings. The project group discussed the department manager role as well as the hospital’s management based on the interview studies I had made or based on the daily events in the project group members’ work (for the discussion issues in the project group meetings, see Appendix 2). All the project group members brought up issues to be discussed; during the meetings the project leader and his support person (mentioned above) coordinated the discussion and summarized what was said. I was often asked to bring forth relevant theories: »what does the work science say about this?«. All in all, the meetings seemed to offer the project group members opportunities to speak about problems in their work, ask the other’s advice, and receive support. Since the project leader was a clinic head and a member in the hospital’s management group, the other project group members often asked him to explain decisions or plans made in the hospital’s management group or in the regional health care administration. Furthermore, I also observed the meetings of the hospital’s managerial group (consisting of all the hospital’s managers and called the 40-group) in which I had an opportunity both to observe the collaboration between the managers as well as to participate in the development activities.

The analysis of the observation material was carried out much the same way as the analysis of the interview material; during the observations, I made notes. Later on, as notes accumulated, I read through my notes and listed single events, remarks, or discussions that, according to my theoretical framework (see section 2.1.4 on stress and section 2.2.4 on »good work«), were relevant for understanding human resources consumption and regeneration at work. In practice, issues on what consumes the department managers’ energy and what revitalizes them at work surfaced. Then I grouped the listed items to categories (for instance, work content consuming energy or problems in the collaboration between the department man-
agers and other employees) and, finally, sought the important common
nominators for the categories (e.g. issues relating to the unclearness of the
department manager role leading to the loss of energy at work). The results
from such vertical and horizontal analyses of the observation material are
integrated in the case description to the corresponding results from the in-
terview studies; in other words, the interview studies provided the main
material for the case description and the observation material was used to
complement and exemplify it.

The analysis of the existing material meant analyzing already existing
studies on the department manager work as well as written material on the
organization’s current development and change projects. In practice, I ana-
yzed this material by collecting information from it that could either ex-
emplify or complement my other material.

In Tenants’ Union, two interview studies were carried out. The first in-
terview study (in early spring 2001) was an explorative study into the con-
suming and regenerating aspects of work in the Negotiations unit. All in all,
six ombudsmen and three negotiation assistants were interviewed on the
consuming and regenerative elements they experienced in their work. The
SALUT-project leader was responsible for gathering the interviewees. The
interviews were semi-structured and the list of questions used as a support
in the interviews is presented in Appendix 7. I wrote the interview ques-
tions in collaboration with the other researcher involved; the aim was to in-
clude questions relating to both mine and her research interest areas and
theoretical starting points. We also carried out all the interviews together in
a meeting room reserved for the interviews. However, as noted above, I
took the »leading role« in analyzing the material; the other researcher gave
valuable comments and made suggestion on my analysis drafts.

When it comes to the first interview study, the first step in the material
analysis was as above; separate interview reports were written for each in-
terview based on the handwritten notes and recordings. Then, I wrote a
summary report on the interviews including the results both from the verti-
cal and horizontal analyses (as above). This summary report is presented in
sections 7.3 (the vertical analysis) and 7.4 (the horizontal analysis). The
other researcher involved checked that report and, after some discussions
with her, I finalized the report. The report was not, however, sent to the in-
terviewees for a check-up but rather a feedback session to which all the em-
ployees from the Negotiations unit were invited was arranged. Both we as
researchers and the project leaders considered this the best way to check
and discuss the interview study results with the employees. The feedback session was namely also used in making the SALUT-ideas and -project better known among all the employees of the Negotiations unit. In the feedback session, interview findings were reported in detail, the findings were discussed, and the employees carried out a group work relating to the SALUT-ideas (see section 7.5).

The second interview study was carried out in spring 2002 with an aim to see where the development work carried out in the Negotiations unit thus far had taken it. For the interview questions, see Appendix 8. For this study, the interview questions were formulated together with the other researcher based on our first interview study as well as the observations we had made in the unit. In this second interview study, seven of the employees interviewed for the first interview study were interviewed again and one employee (an ombudsman), who was supposed to be interviewed for the first interview study but due to illness was not eventually interviewed, was also included to this study. One of the 2001 interviewees (an ombudsman) had retired and one interviewee (an assistant) did not work in the Union anymore; these employees were therefore not included to the second interview study. The second interview study with, thus, eight interviewees (six ombudsmen and two assistants) concentrated on the employees’ experiences on the development work carried out during the previous year. The realization of the interviews and the analysis of the interview material followed similar pattern as in the first interview study. However, the feedback session on the interview material was not arranged in the time frame of this thesis; a meeting time suitable for all involved was unfortunately not found on time. The results from the vertical analysis of this second interview study are presented in sections 7.7 and 7.8; the results from the horizontal analysis are included to section 7.9.

The participative observation in this case study related to the development and regular meetings at the unit. In autumn 2001, regular meetings were initiated in the Negotiations unit. In practice, the ombudsmen negotiating with the municipal counterparts and the ombudsmen negotiating with the private counterparts had separate meetings, to which also representatives of the negotiations assistants participated. Each subgroup of the unit had its meetings every other week. Once a month the whole unit was gathered to a meeting in which issues relating to both municipal and private negotiations were discussed. In all these different meetings, either I or the other researcher or both of us were present (for the issues discussed in
the meetings, see Appendix 3). I prioritized these meetings and, therefore, during autumn 2001, winter 2001/2002, and spring 2002 was basically every Friday morning present at Tenants’ Union.

The observation material gained in the meetings was analyzed in the same way as in the Norrtälje Hospital case study (see above). However, the respective roles of the observation and interview material in the Tenants’ Union case description ended up being just the opposite to the roles of the observation and interview material in the Norrtälje Hospital case. In the Norrtälje Hospital case, the interviews form the «ground» material for the case description and the observations enrich it; in the Tenants’ Union case study, and especially during its second half (i.e. during the time after the first interview study and feedback session, see section 7.8), the observations form the major material for the case description to which the interview material is synthesized as a complementing and exemplifying material. This is because in the Tenants’ Union case study, the weekly observations provided a richer and more colorful description on what happened in the unit than the interview material. The analysis on existing material meant analyzing the already existing studies on work and work organization in the Negotiations unit. Also here, explaining and complementing information for the observations and interviews were sought from this material.

The Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union case studies are reported in chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis. The chapters, as noted above, contain both the vertical analyses on the case material («what did the interviewees say relating to main interview areas?») and some findings from the horizontal analysis, i.e. from the analysis distinguishing more overarching issues. Both chapters conclude with a discussion in which the results of the horizontal analysis are presented and in which, consequently, themes at higher abstraction level are presented and discussed. My own ideas on the cases; my messages to the case organizations on the development work so far and further on are brought forth. Both case organizations were encouraged to comment the completed case descriptions or corresponding material written in Swedish. The comments from Norrtälje Hospital only confirmed that the case description and discussion on it were experienced to be correct. No further comments were received from Tenants’ Union. When it comes to the Norrtälje Hospital case study, the project group’s psychologist supported me writing it by commenting a corresponding report I wrote in Swedish for the use of the hospital. The other researcher involved in the Tenants’ Union case study in her turn commented the case study while I
was writing it. In both cases, these collaborators did not request or suggest any major changes to the text but rather encouraged me to formulate some issues more clearly, sensitively, or shortly.

In the end, a note on the concepts to be used; in chapters 6 and 7 where these two extensive case studies are presented as well as in chapters 4 and 5 (with the shorter case studies of the Empirical Study I), only the female pronouns are used. This is done for the sake of simplicity, but also to secure the anonymity of the interviewees. In many interview studies of the thesis the samples were small and using the correct gender pronoun might reveal too much of who said what of whom. Consequently, only forms »she« and »her« are used.

**Differences between the two empirical studies**

As can be seen in the description above, the Empirical Study I and Empirical Study II are very different from each other. While the Empirical Study I is more open, explorative, and carried out in a loose contact to the organizations involved, the Empirical Study II is an action research study carried out in a close collaboration with the organizations involved. Also the Empirical Study II has an explorative approach; the aim is still to understand better the contemporary work and its consequences on employees and organizations. However, a more focused agenda is also in play here. Since the Empirical Study I indicated how difficult it is collectively and individually cope with the contemporary work; in the Empirical Study II, I set out to find ideas on »how to create regenerative work in the present situation«.

The case organizations of the Empirical Study I and II are also very different from each other. After the Empirical Study I, I wished to be able to continue with »new economy« companies and to go deeper into the post-bureaucratic characteristics of work and working life I had already detected. However, this was not possible as the companies from the Empirical Study I evaluated that they could not make the long-term commitment needed in the SALUT-network and as the internal division of labor in the SALUT-researcher group allocated Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants' Union projects to me. This was a natural allocation and also the one I preferred. These two organizations had had close preliminary contacts to my supervisor and, in that way, to me. These preliminary contacts were important for the organizations; they expressed a wish to continue their collaboration with us. I too was interested in collaborating with them, since for me the research questions are more important than doing research in some particu-
lar branch or sector. I became curious to see whether the post-bureaucratic elements of work would be present also in these more traditional organizations. And, indeed, in the end I have been very happy for receiving the opportunity to work with these two organizations from more »traditional« sectors. First of all, that has allowed me to detect that the post-bureaucratic characteristics of work and problems relating to bureaucratic machinery exist also here, in the traditional workplaces and occupations! Second, the case organizations proved to be extremely fascinating organizations with a long-term commitment to work on the issue areas relating to human resources consumption and regeneration.

The quality of a qualitative study – Reliability and validity

Above, the actual research and analysis methods used in the case studies have been discussed in some detail. It is easy to see that the qualitative approach resulted in quite a »messy« empirical data as well as to challenging analysis and interpretation tasks. How to make sure that the research carried out is of good quality – reliable and valid? Even though the traditional notions of reliability and validity (see e.g. Trochim, 2000) are problematic in qualitative research (see e.g. Koskinen, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), it nevertheless is important to set some clear quality criteria for any research work – to consider at least what the different categories of reliability and validity mean in the work in question and which categories are important for it. I have relied on, for instance, Yin’s (1984) quality criteria for case studies when trying to ensure the quality of my own work. In this section, I shall shortly discuss these criteria and how I tried to ensure the quality of my work.

This research, as noted above, is founded on the idea that it is possible to interview people on their work reality. Thus, when it comes to reliability, another researcher with the same interview questions should find out the same »truth« about the work reality in question. In other words, there is a requirement for reliability for interviews as a research method. Also the case descriptions generated should correspond to the »reality« of the case organizations such that the employees in these organizations recognize them. Furthermore, the way I have studied human resources consumption and regeneration should really capture these phenomena in the case organizations. In other words, there is a requirement for construct validity. As can be seen above, the reliability of interviews and the construct validity of the studies were aimed to be ensured by continuous collaboration and in-
teraction with the case organizations as well as by reporting the research process and submitting the reports for discussions in the case organization. Also, I gathered material from different sources (through, for instance, interviews and observations) in order to cross-check and complement my data. Furthermore, this chapter has aimed to provide the reader a detailed explanation on how I went about collecting and analyzing my empirical material; this should support the reader in assessing the quality of my work.

Also the question of external validity is relevant; even if it were possible to capture in a reliable way the reality of work in the case organizations, to which population – if to any – is it possible to generalize the findings? The reasons for consuming work experiences and the possibilities for creating regenerative work distinguished in this thesis should be generalizable to other organizations struggling to come to grips with the post-bureaucratic working life. In the thesis, this type of validity was established through multiple case design as well as through discussions with other organizations (for instance, within the SALUT-network, see section 1.3.2). The fact that the other SALUT-organizations (besides of my case study organizations) recognized many of the findings from this study (see chapter 8) relevant also in their case, indicates that the findings are not only limited to the case study organizations. It is also important to note that, in Yin’s words, analytical generalization is of interest here rather than statistical generalization. The literature research provides, for instance, ideas on what post-bureaucratic work and working life as well as their consequences may be like. The research results of this thesis can be considered in the light of these results from other researchers. Indeed, in chapter 8, I try to make my conclusions and results discuss with the already existing and published research results and conceptual ideas.

A final note on the generalizability of this study (and organizational research in general) is that generalization of a study does not depend only on the researcher. Generalization is a process between many people and the research report (see e.g. Stake, 1994). Another researcher or practitioner may, more or less well informed, generalize the research results: »this reminds me of…« or »we can benefit from this idea presented in this report by…«. Consequently, as a researcher and author, I cannot absolutely claim generalizability. I can only offer my analysis and conclusions for the readers for their generalization processes. The journey starts from here.
1.4 The structure of the thesis

This thesis work consists of five major parts: the introduction, the literature studies, the Empirical Study I, the Empirical Study II, and the discussion. This section shortly outlines the contents of these parts and chapters belonging to them. Furthermore, my publications relating to the different parts of the thesis are presented below.

**The introduction – Chapter 1**

Chapter 1 forms on its own the first part of the thesis, the introduction. The introduction contains the description of the research interest areas and definition of research questions. Furthermore, the philosophical grounding as well as the research approach of the thesis are discussed. The research strategies and analysis procedures used are presented. Furthermore, the reader is provided information on where in the thesis the results of different analyses can be found.

The following publication contains, for instance, some definitions on the concepts relevant also for this thesis work as well as some background ideas on Sustainable Work Systems:


**The literature studies - Chapters 2 and 3**

Chapter 2 is the main theory chapter of this thesis; general theories relating to stress, good work, as well as organizational change and development are reviewed. The aim is here to describe the theoretical foundation for my study. Chapter 3 is a literature study on the changing world of work and, especially, post-bureaucracy in the working life. The aim is here to present what other researchers have said relating to these issue areas so that this information can be used for supporting my own research results presented in chapter 8.

The following publications relate to chapters 2 and 3, and contain ideas on my theoretical framework:


The Empirical Study I – Chapters 4 and 5

Here the two case studies carried out as the Empirical Study I of this thesis are presented. The aim is here to explore the human resources consumption and regeneration in two companies operating in »new economy« branches. Both chapters have the same structure; first, the »body« of the case description contains the results from the vertical interview analyses. The aim is here to present what the interviewees responded to the interview questions and what they talked about during the interviews. The chapters conclude with the discussion sections in which I present the results of my horizontal analyses; i.e. the issues overarching the responses to different interview questions. In the discussion sections, I also present my ideas on the cases and my suggestions for the case companies. The discussion sections also contain those issues that I wanted to study further with the help of the empirical material from the Empirical Study II.

These case studies have also been presented and discussed in the following publication:

The Empirical Study II – Chapters 6 and 7
The in-depth case studies on Norrtälje Hospital and the Tenants’ Union of Greater-Stockholm Region are presented here. The aim is to explore further why human resources become consumed in the contemporary working life and, especially, what is needed to create regenerative work experiences. The structure of these chapters is as above; the body of the case description contains the results from the vertical analyses on the interview material as well as (unlike above) the results from my observations and analysis on already existing material. The discussion sections contain my major conclusions on the cases: the overarching emerging issues and my suggestions to the case companies.

The discussion - Chapter 8
The aim of chapter 8 is to put it all together, to provide some answers to the research questions outlined in chapter 1. My conceptual findings are reflected in the light of existing theories and literature. The chapter also contains my own evaluation on the work I have done as well as some questions for further research.
Writing a theory chapter for a thesis work means, inevitably, reviewing the existing state of the art or classical theoretical work. Making a good review on a controversial and much written about subject such as stress (see section 2.1) is not easy, since the body of literature to be reviewed is both extensive and contradictory. What are the areas to focus on? What to include and what to leave out? When taking into account such difficulties, one may of course ask whether a theory chapter is needed at all (Silverman, 1997). This thesis needs, nevertheless, a theory chapter; it provides the theoretical underpinnings for the collection and analysis of the empirical material as well as sets a stage for what is already known; what can be benefited from in the case studies, analysis, and discussion. The chapter provides a theoretical framework for understanding the human resources consumption and regeneration processes in general.

The very basic definitions of the concept »work« contain an idea of work requiring a mental and/or physical exertion. For instance, work (in our contemporary culture) can be understood as (Ransome, 1996):

- a purposeful expedient and public activity,
- that requires mental and/or physical exertion, and
- is carried out for wages or salary, as well as
- is recognized officially as work by e.g. tax officials and insurance providers.

Furthermore, Ransome understands work as a special category of activity.
Work manifests the fundamental human need for expression through action and, consequently, for using one’s mental and/or physical resources. Thus, by definition, a working individual invests her mental and/or physical resources and those resources are transformed in the work process to work results. For an individual, the investment of personal resources may have two consequences; first, the investment may lead to an experienced loss of personal resources (see section 2.1) or, second, the investment of resources, in the long run, leads to the growth of further personal resources (see section 2.2). Consequently, in this thesis, people are perceived to possess certain personal resources, such as competencies, world-view, self-image, and energy for action, and different life experiences either contribute to the growth of these resources or their diminishing. With «growth» I mean here that the resources become more varied, rich, and readily available for an individual thus enabling more successful social, psychological, and physical adaptation. Diminishing resources, in their turn, reduce the potential of successful adaptation. In this chapter, the aim is to see why and how people lose their personal resources at work as well as what work regenerating the invested resources is like.

Systems thinking (see e.g. Flood, 1999) underlies this chapter and the whole thesis work. A work organization and its surroundings are perceived as a system consisting of various closely intertwined and interacting elements. Open systems thinking inherent for the Sociotechnical Systems-thinking (see e.g. de Sitter et al., 1997, van Eijnatten, 1993; Pasmore & Sherwood, 1978; Thorsrud & Emery, 1969) is also important here. An organization is a system consisting of several interacting and intertwined system elements, open to its environment, interacting with the environment, changing it, and being changed by it. However, the thesis is also founded on the idea that conscious system design is possible and desirable (cf. Marion, 1999). Even though it is not possible for any single person to control as complex a system as an organization, there should be a conscious effort in each organization to recreate itself and to develop towards the goals the organization’s stakeholders deem important.

Another related underlying idea of the thesis is the contingency theory (see e.g. Miles & Snow, 1990; Tosi & Hamner, 1982); behavior at individual, group and organization levels is perceived to depend strongly on their larger contexts. Thus, an individual’s behavior (and its predecessors, such as cognitions and emotions) is strongly influenced by the characteristics and events in the larger contexts; the groups, organizations, and socio-cul-
tural environment the individual belongs to. A further implication of the contingency approach is that the human and social outcomes of a work system, e.g. human resources consumption and regeneration, are understood to originate from the interaction of a system’s elements. If the different system elements are not in »fit« or balance with each other, dysfunctional results ensue. For instance, if technology used in a work system is in conflict with organizational arrangements, such as the organization’s goals, strategy, and structure, both ineffectiveness and stress probably result - the whole potential of technology cannot be utilized and people trying to use the technology are likely to get frustrated by the conflict between what they should do (the organization’s goal and strategy) and what they can do (depending on the characteristics of the technology). Another good example of missing fit between work system elements is physical working space not allowing the collaboration between employees needed to carry out shared tasks; the collaboration may be hampered by a long physical distance between colleagues (see e.g. Krackhardt, 1994).

Figure 2.1 indicates the interaction of the different work system elements as well as the (also interacting!) human and business outcomes originating from the interaction within the larger context. The model in the figure distinguishes individual development originating from the elements and the interaction of the elements in a work system through individual cognitions and the resulting on-the-job behavior. These processes will be addressed in section 2.2 on »good work«. However, individual development may also be negative; people do not only gain new resources through their work (i.e. develop), they also lose their resources. Such processes are discussed below from the stress research perspective.
2.1 Why do people become consumed by their work?

The processes through which people become consumed by their work have been studied within the stress research. This research has been, mildly put, an extremely vast and versatile effort; almost all negative feelings, symptoms, and behavior processes have been at one point or another addressed within the stress research. Nevertheless, the stress research offers many theories and constructs that help us to understand why people
may become consumed by their work. For a reviews on the stress research see, for instance, Stellman (1998); Newton (1995); Landy (1992); Lazarus and Folkman (1984); Antonovsky (1979) as well as Hobfoll (1998) who states that the vast amount of stress literature actually makes a review impossible.

The stress theories have made an interesting historical journey; each theory has been strongly influenced by its intellectual and paradigmatic context (see the references listed above and Bartlett, 1998). Initially, stress was formulated to be something external to a person. In line with the classical physics, stress was understood as a force influencing an organism and causing strain. The question at this point was, consequently, what are the environmental factors that cause strain. Later on the same question has prevailed and (endless) lists of what became later known as psychosocial stressors or psychosocial stress factors (such as factors relating to work content, interpersonal relations at work, and organizational factors) have been developed by many researchers, as examples see Stellman (1998) and Lindström (1994).

Walter Cannon’s idea on the flight or fight syndrome from 1920s (see Bartlett, 1998) was an important step in the history of the stress research; it provided an answer to the question of why people experience stress and how stress can be useful. For Cannon, stress was a disturbance in a »normal« condition and a consequent homeostatic process to return back to the normal state. Such physiological processes would activate an organism and better prepare it for a fight or flight reaction. In this sense, stress could be beneficial when allowing for a better adaptation to the environment. However, continuous negative arousal was understood to be harmful for an organism; a continuous state of tension could destroy it.

By the 1950s, the physiological side of stress processes was well understood and stress had also been individualized; stress was perceived as a set of physiological reactions caused by an external threat rather than the external threat itself. Hans Seyle’s work on »General Adaptation Syndrome« explained the phases of physiological stress as an individual after an initial shock tries to adapt to the noxious external factor causing it, succeeds and returns to the original state or fails and becomes destroyed (see Bartlett, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Gradually, stress became also a psychological concept, separate from other forms of psychopathology. For instance, the stress and performance studies in the US army during the World War II and early Cold War shifted the focus to the psychology of
stress and, especially, to individual differences in stress tolerance. Also the
general development in psychology from behaviorism to cognition
contributed to more psychological and individual oriented approaches to
the stress research (Bartlett, 1998). For instance, it is easy to see the kinship
between cognitive appraisal models of stress (see below) and the concept of
perception (see e.g. Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991).

Thus, the history of the stress research has been marked by the organ-
ism-environment duality; whether it is possible to understand stress as an
existence of certain, noxious, environmental factors or as something that
happens within an organism/individual. Eventually, as with so many other
scientific phenomena, the »either-or« question was answered by saying
»both«. Currently, stress is more or less understood as a relational con-
cept, something that depends both on an individual and environment, and
emerges from their interaction. One way to understand this interaction is to
perceive an environment to pose stressors on an individual. The personal
factors of the individual then mediate the influence of the stressors (see e.g.
Kostama et al., 1992). Another way to understand the interaction is to per-
ceive an environment to contain potential stressors that an individual may
or may not appraise as stressors. Along this latter line, Lazarus & Folkman
(1984, p. 19) ended up defining stress in the following way:

Psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person
and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or ex-
ceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.

Thus, important in the definition above is:

• Stress has to do with the relationship between a person and environ-
  ment (»both«).
• Stress is an interaction process.
• A person has to appraise an environment to be somehow in imbalance
  with her resources.

1 Other good examples of a scientific »either-or« duality converging into »both« are
the understanding of light both as a particle and a wave (see e.g. Gasiorowicz,
1974) as well as the understanding of both the Earth and Sun moving instead of
one of them being immobile (see e.g. Sobel, 1999).
• Or a person has to appraise an environment to pose a threat to her.

In this section, I shall review a limited set of stress theories. The main goal of the review is to create a thorough understanding on why people become consumed at work in general. Furthermore, the theories I have picked contain more information on both, process, appraisal, imbalance, resources, and threat.

2.1.1 Cognitive appraisal
The cognitive appraisal model explains stress and its resolution as a process of appraisals and consequent actions and emotions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The model contains two types of consecutive appraisals; a primary and a secondary appraisal. During the primary appraisal, an individual appraises an environmental stimulus to be irrelevant, benign-positive, or stressful for her. An irrelevant stimulus causes no further cognitive processes; something exists or happens in the environment that simply has no bearing for the individual. A benign-positive stimulus only brings good news; it messages solely of joy and enjoyment, of possibilities for increased well-being. A stressful stimulus is, instead, more complex; it may contain information of an actual harm or loss happening to the individual or a threat of harm/loss probably taking place in the future. Furthermore, a stimulus appraised to be stressful may also contain a challenge and, thus, a possibility for future gain rather than loss.

The secondary appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, ibid.) takes place when the stimulus has been appraised to be stressful. An individual then engages in a complex evaluative process on whether she will be able to cope with the stressor. Coping options available are assessed and whether these coping options will accomplish what one wants them to accomplish is considered. The secondary appraisal results in an emotion. If, for instance, an individual appraises something to be stressful (the primary appraisal) and concludes that there are no effective coping options available (the secondary appraisal), she will experience helplessness. If the secondary appraisal results in conclusion that there would be coping options available, but for some reason one cannot use them (e.g. relying on the coping option is not possible in one’s social situation), a likely emotion to ensue is anger. Besides of the emotion, the secondary appraisal can also lead to an action; for Lazarus and Folkman coping means an action process – what a person actually does mentally and/or physically to deal with the stressor. In broad
categories, coping can be divided into emotion and problem focused coping. When relying on an emotion focused coping strategy, an individual tries to regulate her distress, to change how she feels. Problem focused coping strategies aim instead at changing the actual problem causing stress. Resources are important here; people draw on different resources to carry out successfully their coping processes be they emotion or problem focused. The secondary appraisal and subsequent coping affect an individual’s adaptation to internal and external conditions. Lazarus and Folkman (ibid.) define successful coping leading to social, psychological, and physical adaptation and, consequently, to health in all these areas. Thus, stress as such is not only a harmful experience, but when faced with adaptation, it can actually increase an individual’s social, psychological, and physical health.

The cognitive appraisal model of stress does wake the critique already shortly raised in chapter 1 of this thesis (see also Hobfoll, 1998). Is it all then »within the head«? Does stress exist only when the cognitive appraisal process has given birth to it? Are there no objective stressors? Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 47) are quite clear about the phenomenological side of their model:

…to say that the reaction to demanding or hostile environments is mediated by cognitive processes is not to say that inner promptings alone shape appraisal, but that such promptings interact with the objective environment in generating cognitive appraisal.

»The objective environment«; stress is not only within the head. Appraisals do function out of sync with the environment to some degree (and, consequently, individual differences in stress processes emerge, see e.g. Payne, 1988), but appraisals still emerge from the interaction between an individual and environment, not only from the individual.

2.1.2 Imbalance models
Another stress model »genre« is formed by stress models treating stress as a consequence of an imbalance between an individual and her work or work environment. This imbalance may exist at several different levels and in several different dimensions. For instance, Karasek and Theorell (1990; Karasek, 1998) have indicated an imbalance between work demands and an employee’s control as a major reason for stress related illnesses. The
main variables in Karasek and Theorell’s model are job demands and job control. Job demands incorporate several issues; for instance, deadlines, personal conflicts, and fear of losing job all contribute to job demands. Job control (or decisions latitude) may, in its turn, be divided into two facets: task authority or autonomy and skill discretion or variety. But how does an individual determine a balance or an imbalance existing between job demands and control? Karasek and Theorell (1990) seem to rely on Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model; first, a person appraises a situation and its demands. Then, if able to cope with the demands, the initial tension disappears. If coping is not successful due to lacking control, experienced strain results.

What is interesting in the model is that high demands do not cause strain *per se*. High demands lead to strain only if an employee cannot control the work situation; if she does not have the autonomy to react to demands and a possibility to use different skills to counteract them. High demands combined with adequate control lead instead to an active state in which an employee is experiencing mastery over the situation. If an employee is able to face high demands with corresponding job control, she ends up being activated rather than strained. In this optimal state, an employee is facing challenges and learning new things. Thus, the model shows that, depending on the level of job control, high psychological demands result either in an active, learning-oriented state or a high strain state.

The job demand/control-model has been developed to contain also the dynamic interaction between an employee and her work (Karasek, 1998). In the dynamic version of the model, learning and long-time strain modify an individual’s responses to temporary demand/control-states. If an individual has worked in an active learning situation (i.e. among high job demands with sufficient control over the situation), she has developed a sense of mastery and confidence. Mastery and confidence enable the individual’s coping when she temporarily faces too high demands for her control level. Thus, feelings of mastery inhibit strain perceptions. On the other hand, an individual who has suffered of a high strain level for a long time is in a state of accumulated strain. Accumulated strain may prevent the individual from experiencing mastery and learning at work. Even when an individual finds herself in a situation where she has control to match the high demands, she is not able to feel active and learn.

Many studies have verified that Karasek and Theorell’s model predicts well the health consequences of a work situation (for a review, see e.g. The-
orell, 1999), but is stress only a question of control? Other research has taken into account that stress is not only a quantitative matter, but rather a consequence of many, subtle imbalances between an individual and environment. Christine Maslach and Peter Leiter, famous for their empirical and theoretical work on burnout, define imbalances or (what they call) mismatches between people and work in several areas of organizational life. They agree with Karasek and Theorell’s idea on the dire consequences of a mismatch between control and demands, but distinguish also several other types of mismatches that may lead to stress and burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997):

- **Workload**: Employees have too high workload in relation to available resources.
- **Control**: Employees do not have control over their work.
- **Rewards**: Employees are not properly rewarded for their work, this applying to both internal (psychological) and external (monetary) rewards.
- **Breakdown of community**: Employees lose positive, supporting connections to each other at work.
- **Unfairness**: Employees are not shown respect, but treated unfairly.
- **Conflicting values**: Employees face conflicts in their own and organization’s values or within the organization’s value system.

When compared to the cognitive appraisal model discussed above, Maslach and Leiter’s mismatch-model focuses much more on the environment. Individuals in general have certain needs and resources, and when the working environment does not correspond to these needs and resources, all individuals experience stress. Thus, environment rather than appraisal is the cause of stress, and everyone will experience stress in a given environment. Burnout, as a severe case of stress (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; p. 18):

...is not a problem of the people themselves but of the social environment in which people work.

The mismatch between an individual and work can also relate to such fundamental psychological constructs as the Self and world-image. When an employee’s understanding of herself and work are in disarray, a feeling of simply being in the wrong shoes or in the wrong workplace ensues. Studies
have shown (see e.g. Aronsson et al., 2000) that such a mismatch between a person and her work leads to negative health outcomes both in physical and psychological sense, while - on the other hand - personal values, preferences, commitments, and ideals can «motivate, sustain, and guide» us at work, as Martin (2000, p. 4) puts it. In short, then, human resources become consumed not only because of time pressure and workload; much more divers reasons underlie the process. Actually, Martin (ibid., p. 11) speaks about work «that always keeps us busy and always bored». Busy work can be consuming not only because of the heavy load, but because of its experienced empty content and meaninglessness.

Mismatches between an individual and her work may have dire consequences; Maslach and Leiter (1997) predict that initial stress builds up to burnout which can be diagnosed as an apparent «erosion of the soul». Such erosion has three dimensions. First, the erosion of the soul means both physical and emotional exhaustion. There is no energy to engage in new activities. Thus, in the dialect of this thesis, work has been consuming. The second dimension of burnout is cynicism; a person builds distance between herself and environment. Indifference is safer than involvement. Finally, ineffectiveness ensues. There is neither energy nor involvement left to be invested anymore. Thus, Maslach and Leiter share Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) idea of negative stress leading to a lowered ability to function productively and socially.

But how to mend or prevent mismatches between people and their work? Maslach and Leiter separate mending and preventing from each other, but state that in both cases the question is of continuous problem-solving processes. When mismatches already exist, the question is of mending them. According to Maslach and Leiter this process usually starts from the individual experiencing the existing mismatch who then engages colleagues, peers, and superiors to mend it. The shared understanding of mismatches, collaboration to mend them, and commitment to keep the change process going on eventually should result in the reduced experience of imbalance and mismatch. Maslach and Leiter underline the fact that also the outcome of such a process is a process (1997, p. 83):

…the important outcome is not a «happy ending» but an ongoing process of successful adaptation to an ever-evolving workplace.

Furthermore, Maslach and Leiter perceive mending only as a secondary...
process for reducing mismatches between people and their work. More important is prevention, which as a process starts usually from the management. The management processes and structures (such as supervision, communication, and performance appraisal) should be designed such that no mismatches in the six areas – workload, control, rewards, community, fairness, and values – are created. Maslach and Leiter, consequently, join the voices calling for actual, concrete workplace changes to prevent stress instead of stress management interventions only at individual level (see Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Elkin & Rosch, 1990). An underlying requirement for prevention is, thus, an organizational value base including social responsibility besides of fiscal responsibility, a conscious effort to build social and human capital besides of corporate capital (see e.g. Prusak & Cohen, 2001). There has to be a clear aim to create balances between people and their work, and consequently create energy instead of exhaustion, involvement instead of cynicism, and effectiveness instead of ineffectiveness. The balances cannot be created once and for all or through a managerial command, but preventing mismatches has to rather be a continuous process involving all the employees. Thus, in tradition with Seyle and Cannon (see above), Maslach and Leiter perceive coping (both mending and preventing) as an individual’s or group’s a continuous, dynamic adaptation to the demands of environment.

A third type of a balance related stress model has been developed by Smith and Sainfort (1989). Their balance model recognizes the fact that stressors cannot ever be totally removed from work - each job has some negative psychosocial factors that relate to what the work is like rather than how it has been designed or organized (see also Antonovsky, 1979). In order to minimize the harmful effects of unavoidable negative psychosocial factors, Smith and Sainfort propose a holistic view to job stress and job design. All the different psychosocial factors at a workplace – i.e. factors relating to technology, organization, environment, task, and people – should be addressed simultaneously so that a balanced situation between negative psychosocial factors and supportive, positive psychosocial factors could be found. Job stress results from either an imbalance between the system elements or from one negative element, which is not balanced by other potentially positive elements. Employees’ well-being is, in its turn, secured through a job design balancing the work system elements or providing positive compensating elements for those negative elements that cannot be avoided. This principle is important also in a change situation.
When a change is required in some element of an organization, other elements should be addressed simultaneously in order to guarantee that different organizational elements are in balance. Consequently, technological change in an organization necessitates re-evaluation of job contents, organizational structure, work environment, etc. (Smith & Carayon, 1995). The model has, thus, a close resemblance to the Porras and Robertson-model (see above) and builds on the contingency thinking; system elements have to be in fit with each other in order to render optimal organizational and humane outcomes.

2.1.3 Conservation of resources - A socioenvironmental stress model

The stress theories reviewed so far concentrate on two levels of analysis; individual and her immediate working environment. The final stress model to be reviewed here extends the analysis to society and culture, and sets resources to the focus. Hobfoll (1998; 1988) has developed a stress model with resource dynamics as the focal question in stress and coping processes. In a nutshell, Hobfoll’s theory states that stress is (1988, p. 25):

...a reaction to the environment, in which there is either (a) the threat of a net loss of resources, (b) the net loss of resources, or (c) the lack of resource gain following investment of resources.

In other words, people strive in all situations to limit the possibility of losing something valuable for them. A threat or actual loss of something valuable is considered stressful, as is a lack of gain when something valuable has been invested. Hobfoll calls these valuable assets resources, and categorizes resources in four groups; object resources (e.g. a house), personal resources (e.g. Sense of Coherence, see below), condition resources (e.g. employment; i.e. resources conductive to achieving other resources), and energy resources (e.g. knowledge, i.e. resources that can be exchanged to other resources). Thus, Hobfoll’s discussion on resources enables us to understand what is actually consumed in a stress process; consuming work poses a threat to or causes an actual loss of personal, energy, condition, and (maybe even eventually) object resources.

All the different resource categories are valued for their ability to contribute to the survival of an individual or her group. The contribution of a resource to survival may be direct or more indirect; thus, employment is
valued as a resource because it indirectly, through salary, may contribute to getting food, shelter, and other things important for survival. Similarly, mental health and active mind are valued resources, since they enable an individual to lead a balanced life. Also, in the modern societies, status has become a resource securing survival – survival in the social ladder one has been able to climb on.

Placing the actual or threat of resource loss to the center of the theory makes it possible to understand stress as a less individualistic process when compared to, for instance, the cognitive appraisal model. The cognitive theories emphasize the individual aspects of stress. Stress is a consequence of an appraisal that is strongly dependent on the individual. Hobfoll (1998) states, however, that an individual’s appraisal is important, but cannot be understood detached from the socio-historical context. In other words, stress always has an objective rooting in a certain socio-historical reality (ibid., p. 29):

If we know what is valued for people in general and in a given culture in particular, we can predict what will be stressful in most circumstances.

It is important to note that this discussion relates to stressors and stress, not coping. Individual cognitive differences become important in coping with daily stress factors. Similarly, there are obvious differences in how people cope with major stressful situations (Antonovsky, 1987a). However, the fact remains that people sharing the same socio-historical context are very likely to value same things and experience their loss initially stressful.

A stressful situation, a threat or actual loss of resources, activates a cycle of resource investment. In order to prevent future resource losses, to react to an emerging loss threat, or to cover for an actual loss happened, people invest resources. Hobfoll (1998) describes this as a complicated process. Often existing resources do not directly fit the situation, they have to be actively fitted and a complex adaptation process ensues. The person tries to position herself so as to benefit from the existing resources and she may also try to compensate a missing resource with other, available, resources. Thus, an inexperienced employee positions herself to work with more experienced employees to learn from them and may try to compensate missing experience by book-knowledge.

Also other stress theories (see above) have distinguished the existence of resources as a decisive factor in coping with stressful situations, but Hobfoll
(ibid.) both emphasizes the centrality of resources in the whole stress experience and also questions the often made direct connection between the existence of resources and their investment. Even if a person has a certain resource, she may not be able to use it. The investment of resources is restricted by the context and the prevailing social values and norms. Gender, ethnicity, or a position in the hierarchical level in an organization may clearly influence resource investment. For instance, a woman employee possessing self-confidence may not be able to rely on that self-confidence when arguing with a male manager. In many workplace cultures, she is not »allowed« to override the male manager, but she may only meekly submit her ideas to his consideration (see e.g. Lindgren, 1999). Thus, Hobfoll’s theory, also when it comes to coping, is socioenvironmental rather than purely cognitive. People are nested in families and cultures; what they consider stressful and their coping possibilities depend on the environment.

2.1.4 Discussion - How human resources consumption is understood in this thesis

Stress is a very broad area of inquiry; at individual level it reaches from the reactions of autonomic nervous system to complex cognitive-affective processes. All these individual processes interact. Cognitive overload and breakdown, for instance, leads to emotional exhaustion and, consequently, a person feels so »overloaded« that a tearful feeling results. Similarly, emotional exhaustion leads to a situation where it is difficult to think or act; cognitive functioning becomes hindered. As Maslach and Leiter (1997) note, emotional and physical exhaustion leads eventually to ineffectiveness. Furthermore, stress becomes a social phenomenon through the behavior of a stressed individual and, thus, potentially feeds back new negative aspects of psychosocial environment to the individual’s work experience. A stressed person is, for instance, short-tempered and angry (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and an angry remark to a colleague (often equally stressed) may set off »social stress reactions«, e.g. conflicts. Sparks et al. (2001) note that stress at the managerial level is extremely dangerous for this particular reason; a manager interacts and influences many employees in an organization and, if stressed, can spread stress also to others. Thus, stress becomes an organizational problem due to the »stressed« individuals and their social behavior, but also due to physical stress reactions causing, for instance, sick-leaves and turnover. Figure 2.2 represents these complex and dynamic sides of stress.
Even though the stress theories reviewed above all emphasize different aspects of stress, all of them have two things in common; i.e. the importance of initial appraisal of the stimulus and the centrality of resources. First, of all, the initial appraisal is important, since it starts the stress process; an individual perceives something as a stressor, for instance, based on the cultural values (Hobfoll, 1998) or personal expectations, values, resources, etc. and their mismatch with the world (Maslach & Leiter, 1997)

The importance of resources is also clear in the stress models. For instance,

- Hobfoll (1998) as well as Lazarus and Folkman (1984) state that stress is caused by a loss or threat of loss of resources.
- The appraisal model by Lazarus and Folkman (ibid.) states that stress will eventually ensue if an individual appraises that she does not have necessary resources to deal with a potential stressor.
- Karasek and Theorell (1990) state that stress is a consequence of not having job control (a resource) to correspond the job demands.
- Maslach and Leiter (1997) distinguish many stress inducing imbalances between a person and environment, and many of the imbalances relate to a mismatch between environmental demands and resources (e.g. workload and control related mismatches).
Thus, stress takes place since an individual does not have necessary material, personal, condition, and energy resources to deal with environmental demands she perceives to exist. Second, stress takes place since an individual experiences an actual loss of resources or threat of loss. And, third, stress leads to either growth (a person taps on unexpected resources and conquers the stressful situation) or to »negative« growth - her social functioning, affective state, and somatic health are delimited, decreased (Nevander Friström, 1999; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, the idea of »consuming work« is well supported by the stress literature.

The review above on the stress research indicates that there are several different ways to capture the stress phenomena. Drawing somehow together all the research is impossible; there exist so many different perspectives. However, figure 2.3 below is an attempt to summarize the review presented above.

Figure 2.3. An individual and environment as well as cognitive appraisals, imbalance experiences, and learned socio-cultural values all contributing to stress.
Consequently, in this thesis stress is understood as:

- A result of an interaction between an individual and her environment. An individual enters this interaction with all her earlier experiences as well as with those social norms and valuations she has learned in her socio-cultural surroundings.
- Stress results from appraisals or an experience of imbalance between oneself, one’s resources, and the environment’s demands.
- An appraisal may lead to a feeling of loss or threat of loss of valued resources.
- The process has various results relating to emotions, cognitions, behavior, and physiology. All these different results have in common a sense of something negative, of something being lost, maybe one can say - of dying a little bit. An individual’s personal resources have been diminished, consumed. It becomes more difficult to adapt and respond to the world’s demands.

All the stress theories reviewed above also present ideas on coping - how to overcome the stressful situation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) concentrate on individual choices of action when trying to reduce the imbalance between a person and the environmental condition or demand. Others, such as Karasek and Theorell (1990), Maslach and Leiter (1997), and Smith and Sainfort (1989), underline the necessity of prevention. The psychological and physical «dimensions» of people are known; a work system should be proactively designed to accommodate these dimensions. Furthermore, work systems are in continuous flux and that is why the prevention of stress should be a continuous, participative adaptation process in which stressful situations are either not allowed to emerge or should be directly compensated by the positive aspects of work. Above, thus, stress and its prevention have been outlined and understood as processes; in the following section, similarly, regenerative and «good work» is understood as a process rather than a state of affairs. Below, I shall discuss theories on such regenerative work experiences, i.e. work experiences that not only are in balance with an individual, but also contribute to the growth of resources to be used in the future coping.

2.2 Good work – Growth and development at work

Human resources regeneration can be approached from two different perspectives. First, one can look at an individual and try to understand why she
copes successfully with the challenges of work and, consequently, prospers at work. Second, one can look at an organization - a work system and work - and try to understand how its characteristics contribute to its employees' growth and development. This area has been traditionally discussed in »good work« or »good jobs« literature (see e.g. Altmann & Deiß, 1998, Durand, 1998; Dore, 1997) or as humanization of work (mostly in Germany), and recently also in the literature discussing »healthy work organizations« or »healthy companies« (see e.g. Murphy & Cooper, 2000). In this section both perspectives are taken and, eventually, combined by discussing how the characteristics of work and work system can help making an individual stronger so that she can better cope with the inevitable challenges of life; how work may be regenerative.

2.2.1 Some organizational and individual aspects of good work

When discussing »good work«, an obvious question is »from whose point of view?«. What is good work for an individual is not necessarily good work for an organization employing the individual. Nowadays, the organizational and occupational science defines good work as work leading to good results both from an individual's point of view and from an organization's point of view. For instance, Murphy and Cooper (2000, p. 1) state that the term »healthy work organization« refers to:

...a notion that worker well-being and organizational effectiveness can be fostered by a common set of job and organizational design characteristics.

This is the vision. Nevertheless, we are moving on a contested terrain – if it were easy to define in practice what good work is in this dual sense, work probably would not have to be studied at all. The unity of individual and organizational needs, values, and priorities would have already been achieved. As it is now, there only is the vision, and individuals and organizations in practice build their understandings of good work from different points of view. Even when these points of view have come close together, there are practical problems in creating good work within the complex environment of different priorities.

At organizational level, the concept of good work may have two different meanings. First, good work may be defined based on organizational results – good work leads to business success. This is an interesting area in
itself; how should a company organize its work, what kind of jobs have to be created, and what kind of connections between these jobs have to be established to respond to the prevailing competition situation? Good work from an organization’s point of view can also be understood as the ideal work the organization aims to provide for its members. When approached from this perspective, the criteria for good work depend on the prevailing image of a man (see e.g. McGregor, 1960); the way people are perceived to be influences the ideas of what is good for them and what is fair. This value base of good work has changed throughout the history of occupational science and practice. What has been considered good work has changed as generic values and perceptions on people have changed. Thus, when discussing good work from a company’s (or an organization’s) point of view, I shall especially focus on the human-perceptions that have prevailed at different times and the way they have affected the understanding of good work.

For an individual, work has a profound meaning since it can be understood as a specific category of action (Ransome, 1996). An individual has an innate need for action and, thus, also an innate need for work. It is through action, through work, that an individual exists and perceives herself to exist. Consequently, the very basic criterion for good work is an opportunity to act. However, the need to act is not the only need that people aim to satisfy through work. Maslow’s (see Maslow, 1998) need hierarchy recognizes different needs people have and these needs also exist in relation to work. Maslow’s need hierarchy has been criticized for its insensitivity for individual and cultural variations (Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991), but nevertheless it points out an important fact explored also in the works of Marx and Engels as well as Herzberg (see Ransome, 1996; Herzberg, 1990); there are fundamental survival needs as well as psychological needs for which work should provide some kind of a fulfillment. Through work, people aim to satisfy their needs for physical well-being (or at least survival), safety, social contacts, esteem, and self-actualization (see figure 2.4).

Furthermore, Maslow argued that if the fulfillment of the »lower« level needs is for some reason blocked, the higher level needs do not appear. A hungry person prioritizes her need for nourishment and is less concerned about the »higher« level needs such as the need for social belonging or esteem. As the lower level needs become satisfied, a person moves »upwards« in the need hierarchy; the higher level needs start to motivate her behavior.
Besides of needs, work also has a close connection to an individual’s values. Ciulla (2000) points out that people choose their jobs based on also values, not only based on needs. When choosing a job, values relating to the job’s meaningfulness, security, and remuneration as well as the relative importance of private life when compared to work all come into play. One person may prioritize meaningful work to high remuneration, security, and extensive leisure. Someone else may value more security and choose a boring, low-paid job with long-hours with a promise for a life-long employment. Consequently, work should not only be designed to provide a fulfillment for some generally presumed existing needs but, instead, the fact that people place different priorities for their needs should be remembered. Nevertheless, the recent decades have witnessed quite an uniform movement towards decreasing job security, increasing wage differentials between managers and employees, increasing working hours (for those who have jobs), but — at
least seemingly – more opportunities for self-actualization at work. A shared understanding of self-actualization as the primary need has emerged and prevailed. Ciulla (ibid.) questions this uniform movement towards self-actualization and states that people make choices based on what they consider to be important, and what is considered to be important varies from one person to another. This is not to say that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is »wrong«; this is to say that values are not identical with needs. Even an »enlightened« person may prioritize her social needs to self-actualization opportunities or, vise versa, an everyday hero may leave her family and friends, even economic security, for self-actualization opportunities when working as a volunteer in a natural catastrophe area. Thus, put together, from an individual’s point of view good work should fulfill the basic physiological and security needs as well as more complex psychological needs. At the same time, what is considered to be good work varies from person to another based on their values, based on what they consider to be important.

Below, I shall present a historical review of »good work«-concepts. In other words, I will define what different organizational paradigms have understood good work to be. When reading this review, it is important to remember Ciulla’s critique on good work simply fulfilling certain universally applying needs. The idea of good work within the industrial society seems to have always been connected to the fulfillment of an individual’s needs and, as shall be seen, each new organizational paradigm has tried to create good work by changing the focus of the need it is trying to satisfy. This is also depicted in figure 2.4. Ciulla instead wants to remind of the fact, that all the time, all the needs exist and individuals place different values on different needs. Not all of us are »self-actualizators«, nor is anyone of us that for any price.

This historical review is in order here also due to the interest of this thesis in the transition from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy (i.e. a transition from one era to another). How was good work understood during the bureaucratic era? Does the potential emergence of post-bureaucracy mean a transition in the understanding of good work?

2.2.2 A historical review on good work - From shoveling pig iron to fantasy factories

In the western industrial countries, the meaning of »good work« concept has changed over time. The approach to the creation of good work has,
however, been more or less the same. Work and organizational design has been developed and changed to correspond to the prevailing idea of good work. In this section, I shall present a short historical review on different work and organizational design approaches aimed at creating good work. In order to delimit the discussion to some extent, I will concentrate on certain historical paradigms and discuss good work from an individual’s and organization’s point of view relating to:

- **Taylorsim (or Scientific Management), ca. 1900 – .**
- **Human Relations-movement, ca. 1920 – .**
- **Sociotechnical Systems-thinking, ca. 1940 – .**
- **Job Characteristics Model, ca. 1970 – .**
- **The emerging paradigms of Learning Organization, Self-Organizing Systems, and Complex Systems, ca. 1980 – .**

I have only marked the approximate beginnings of the paradigms, since it seems that all of these paradigms begun and none of them has ever ceased to exist. Today, it is possible to find Tayloristic and Sociotechnical Systems, Learning Organizations as well as Self-Organizing and Complex Systems. Furthermore, now and probably before, most work systems have been mixtures of these paradigms rather than ideal types. All these different paradigms do, however, contain different possibilities for an individual and organizational strive for good work. My aim is to detect both similarities and differences between the paradigms and, eventually, conclude where the development has taken us - what does good work mean for today’s people and organizations. Furthermore, the section also has a practical aim: to discuss how good work could be created in the present situation.

**Taylorism and good work**

In the early industrial systems work had almost a biblical meaning from an individual’s point of view; it was »painful toil« (as the Bible says), considered good when it provided livelihood and bad if it killed you. From an individual’s point of view, it seems, good work was defined by its material consequences. A person could endure any working conditions, do any kind of work, as long as it provided money for the basic needs. Of course, it is difficult to say what kind of work people considered good at that time; there are not many studies on individual needs and attitudes at work in the early 20th century. It is plausible, however, that the same type of needs and dreams as people have today for their work existed also a hundred years
ago. But the strict class society imprisoned people to their »lot«, poverty was too tangible for any other than most basic needs to be nurtured. Applebaum defines »the modern man« in the beginning of the last century by writing (1992, p. 460):

The goal of work is the wealth which it creates [...]. For modern men, the pursuit of wealth is entirely different from the pursuit of pleasure.

Taylor (see Taylor, 1998) began his search for the better way of working driven by worry for his native land; he called for a more rational and better way to work in order to increase productivity and prosperity of the country. From simple experiments on pig iron shoveling, he was sure to find a more efficient way to work and increase national prosperity. Furthermore, Taylor did set also individual well-being (in the sense of physical security and income) high on his agenda. Good work, for Taylor, was maximal prosperity gained through maximal productivity, and productivity was achieved with the help of the scientifically defined best way to carry out each work task. This type of work was defined to be good (not dangerous) also for an employee, since she was scientifically selected for her task. She matched the task; she was created to carry it out. Additionally, the fruits of efficient working should be shared with employees in terms of decent salaries. When looking at Maslow’s need hierarchy, the era of early taylorism is clearly connected to the basic needs of survival and physical well-being as well as safety. The reciprocal contract between an employee and employer was founded on the exchange of manual labor to the satisfaction of basic needs.

Now, in retrospect, the problem with Taylor’s ideas was the one-dimensional understanding of the worker. Taylor lived, as a highly educated person, in a society with strong class differences and deep gaps between subcultures. For him, the worker was a noble creature, but nevertheless savage. Taylor did not perceive the worker as an equal; instead, as more fortunate ones he and likes of him (engineers and other professionals) should take care of the worker. This meant scientifically selecting the worker based on her physical characteristics to a predetermined slot in the machinery and explaining to her what she was supposed to do. It is easy to say that such an approach to a human being is inhumane but, it must be remembered, in Taylor’s day there were not many voices for the equality of all mankind and the equal value of each human being.
Taylorism, or rather its practical applications Fordism and Sloanism (see e.g. Womack et al., 1990), received a counter movement from the Human Relations school of thought (see e.g. Gillespie, 1991). The HR-movement recognized the fact that workers are not machines, but rather social beings who react to social stimulus in their environment. This led to the concentration on the social needs and behavior of people. In other words, the management science moved upwards in Maslow’s need hierarchy; employees were now perceived to be motivated to work by the promise of social connections and esteem.

In Europe, Sociotechnical Systems-thinking enriched this picture with yet another level of analysis and concentrated on the psychological needs of people at work (see e.g. Emery & Thorsrud, 1969; for a review van Eijnatten, 1993). It was recognized that, besides the physical needs, people have psychological needs at work. Furthermore, these needs are not only social needs, such as a need for friendship or a need for recognition, but psychological needs relating to the content of work. There is an intimate connection between an individual and her work; an individual interacts not only with other people, but with her work also. In the USA, similar paradigm shift took place through the emphasis on organizational cultures, empowerment, Total Quality Management (see Ciulla, 2000), as well as with the help of Job Characteristics Model (see below). Ciulla states that these developments built up the promising workplace in which people want to work hard. Taylor had tamed the »ghost in the machine« by buying it. The latter developments relating to Human Relations-movement, Sociotechnical Systems, Empowerment, and TQM enchanted the ghost in the machine by promising to make it the hero of daily corporate adventures, people would work since working would be intrinsically rewarding, rewarding in itself. The progress had now taken the working life to the highest level of Maslow’s pyramid.

It is interesting to note, how the Sociotechnical Systems-thinking aimed to, and still aims to, truly combine the good for employees with the good for the company. In the 60s and 70s, many industrialized countries were facing a situation where industrial work did not attract employees; new ways to work had to be developed in order to keep the factories staffed (see e.g. Forslin, 1990). The global competition situation soon started to support this development; the fastness of changes and production flexibility
needed was not possible to achieve through managerial commands. If a company wanted to move fast, it had to move fast as a whole, every single employee moving in the same direction as single fish in a flock of fish. All this led to a situation, where the mechanistic approach to human resources was not anymore in the best interest of a company. Success had to be built on people.

The Sociotechnical Systems-thinking is based on the image of an organization as an intertwined social and technical system. The technical system should not dominate the human labor, but instead, the two sub-systems should be optimized to each other (see e.g. Cherns, 1987). But what would be a good technical, structural system from an individual’s point of view? The answer to this was found from the psychological needs. If the psychological needs of individuals were understood, a work system could be designed to correspond to these needs and, thus, to create optimal motivators for employees as well as secure their psychological well-being and development at the same time. Thorsrud and Emery (1969) define the following psychological needs at work:

- A need for work content that requires something more than simply endurance from an employee, variation at least to some degree.
- A need for opportunities to learn at work and to keep on learning.
- A need to make decisions at least in the limited area that an employee can call her own.
- A need for respect, at least to some degree humane understanding and esteem.
- A need to see a connection between one’s work and the surrounding world; a need to see that one’s work is of value to others.
- A need to be able to connect work with hopes for the future; this does not necessarily mean opportunities for promotion.

The psychological needs listed above may not always be so obvious in an individual’s behavior or even in her consciousness. In a way, Maslowian hierarchy applies also here; for instance, if a person has not been given chances to learn at work, she »forgets« this need and does not expect to learn at work. However, these basic needs can and should, according to Thorsrud and Emery, be taken into account when improving work. In practice, they set the following guidelines for the improvement of work; by following these guidelines, it would be possible to create a work system corresponding to individuals' needs:
• Optimal variation at work. When work is optimally variable, a period of high activity is accompanied by time for recuperation and regeneration.

• A collection of sub-tasks that, together, form a meaningful whole work content. Such design of work enables the use of several different types of skills.

• An optimal length of a work cycle.

• A possibility to set goals and standards for production quality and quantity, and an opportunity to get information on the results achieved. In other words, the employees should be able to participate in goal setting and goal achievement evaluation.

• »Marginal« tasks, such as preparation and maintenance tasks, should be built into work, so that the employees can have control over those things they are responsible for.

• Work tasks should demand at least certain level of carefulness, skills, knowledge, and input that is respected at the workplace.

• Work should make a useful contribution to the production or service – useful from a customer’s point of view.

Hackman et al.’s (1982) Job Characteristics Model can be seen as an American equivalent for the Sociotechnical-thinking; the both approaches share a very similar perspective on good work. Even the structure of the two models is the same; they both start from human psychology (needs or critical states leading to motivation and satisfaction), distinguish job design characteristics that respond and fulfill the needs of psyche, and end up predicting good organizational and individual results from such a work design. Hackman et al. state that in case an employee has a high growth need (in other words, she wants to learn new things and develop), certain job characteristics can increase internal work motivation, quality of performance as well as satisfaction with work. Job characteristics leading to such positive results are: skill variety, task identity, and task significance all contributing to the experienced meaningfulness of work, autonomy contributing to the experienced responsibility of the work outcome, as well as feedback contributing to the knowledge of the results. Thus, by designing jobs with these characteristics (e.g. by combining tasks and forming natural work units; by establishing client relationships and opening feedback channels), it would be possible to increase experienced meaningfulness and responsibility at work as well as the knowledge on the results. Such »critical psychological
states, as Hackman et al. call them, would then – in the presence of an individual’s growth need – lead to both high satisfaction and performance. Good work, for Hackman et al., is therefore enriched work with whole, autonomous job contents.

The practical applications of Sociotechnical Systems-thinking and Job Characteristics Model have initially focused mainly on creating whole job contents, with autonomy, variety and optimal use of skills. The Finnish Sociotechnical Systems Design, for instance, ended up pointing out autonomy as the main criterion for good work (see e.g. Vartiainen, 1994). Autonomy was equaled to good work with only the exception that individual level differences were taken into account in some models (see e.g. Sparks et al., 2001). For instance, Hackman et al. (1982) treated an individual’s growth need as a moderator between autonomy and satisfaction with work. In other words, it was understood that not everyone prospers when autonomous. However, more general and individual independent complexities relating to autonomy were not widely considered. One reason for this might be that Sociotechnical Systems Designers and Job Characteristics Model-users were fighting the monotony and physical pressure of poorly designed industrial work; the most pressing problem in the 60s and 70s was the poor, repetitive and alienating job content of industrial employees. The question was simply and straightforwardly of a need for job enrichment and autonomy. Manageability and balance between demands and resources became relevant for good work-definitions only when the problem had become “too much”; when job content became too versatile for anyone to master and when the possibility to influence one’s work turned into a concern for “why am I doing this? Is my work of use to anyone?”.

Furthermore, the concentration on the psychological needs and on self-actualization at work, important as they are, seems to have overshadowed the other, more “primitive” needs (see Ciulla, 2000). It seems that the theory on good work headed after psychological well-being and development with such a hurry that more fundamental needs became more or less disregarded. In the next section, some further ideas on good work are presented, and these ideas do take into account in a more comprehensive way all the needs at work.

2.2.3 The processes of building resources; Regenerative work

For the recent definitions of good work, an individual is still an important starting point in the sense that organizational success is perceived to be
derived only from individual well-being and development. The literature on learning organizations is a good example of this perspective. Peter Senge (as one of the most well-known authors on the subject) states (1990, p.4):

As the world becomes more interconnected and business becomes more complex and dynamic, work must become more »learningful.« It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organization, a Ford or a Sloan or a Watson. It's just not possible any longer to »figure it out« from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the »grand strategist.« The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.

The question is, thus, what characterizes work that both enables individual development and leads to an improvement of collective performance building on individual performance? Furthermore, besides psychological development, work should also contribute in the long run to the health of an employee. For instance Levi (1987) writes that health does not only mean the absence of disease or infirmity, but also a state of physical, mental and social well-being. But what is, in practice, such regenerative work providing foundations for continuous development and health like?

As noted above, Sociotechnical Systems and Job Characteristics Model ended up offering autonomy as almost an unconditional answer to this question. Also Karasek and Theorell (1990) say the same; equipped with control corresponding to work demands, an employee is able to experience positive activation leading to well-being and sense of mastery. The problem with these models is, however, the ambiguity of the concept »control«; we are stuck here with the demands for absolute autonomy. In flexible, flat organizations, the work area of an employee has grown enormously (see e.g. Allvin et al., 1998). For instance, the work of a nurse in a hospital is affected strongly by political decisions on the health care priorities, and a programmer in a Swedish IT-company may find her work altered because of a new product developed in China. How can one then have control over the demands of such work? One probably cannot and, as a consequence, the meaning of control and autonomy at work has to be revised. Furthermore, do employees know what is best for them in the long term? If autonomous, are they able to maintain the balance and create regenerative work experiences? It seems that for instance in the »new economy« an op-
portunity to choose and decide lead to the consumption of one’s resources (see e.g. Krantzler & Krantzler, 2002) rather than to personal development; people may push themselves too hard. Therefore, if autonomy and control do not anymore single handedly define good work, what does?

In this section, I shall explore the idea that good work can be defined by its consequences, it is work that leads to the comprehensive personal and professional development of an individual and, also, increases potential for successful organizational performance. Good work, understand in this way, can also be called regenerative; it regenerates an individual’s resources and revitalizes her. Autonomy, for example, is good only when it allows an individual to grow and develop in her work as well as creates such resources that she can use in future when facing a demanding situation. Autonomy turns into a problem when its long-term consequence is a consumed employee. What kind of work, what kinds of work experiences then increase personal resources that enable coping with the future challenges?

**Optimal work experiences leading to the growth of Self**

A person’s understanding of the world has been distinguished as an important psychological resource for coping with it (see e.g. Murphy & Hurell, 1998; Ouellette, 1998). The way a person perceives herself to be as well as the way she perceives the world to be (i.e. the world-image including self-image), affect the way the person is able to deal with the world. Interesting concepts, when considering such world-image related coping, are Antonovsky’s (1987a, 1987b, 1979) Sense of Coherence and Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) Flow. They both contain a similar kind of an idea. A good, optimal experience can lead to a growth in an individual’s personal resources, in her Self (see figure 2.5) and in her way to perceive the world. That will eventually affect the way the person is able to deal with the world. As such, this idea is not new. The stress research has pointed out that individual differences, the personal resources, do influence decisively stress process outcomes (see e.g. Payne, 1988; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Whether our emotional and cognitive luggage is a burden or a resource makes a difference. However, what is interesting in Antonovsky’s and Csikszentmihalyi’s theories is their salutogenic approach. They both address directly the kind of conditions and experiences that increase an individual’s resources. They do not merely state that personal resources matter, they ask »What can we do about that? How can we increase these resources«.

92

CHAPTER 2
An individual enters a situation with her currently existing personal resources. Both Antonovsky (ibid.) and Csikszentmihalyi (ibid.) state that such personal resources depend on earlier experiences; on whether experiences have made an individual stronger or weaker. An individual also may have certain external resources in her disposal, such as social support, money, or the safety of home all influencing an individual’s coping opportunities. A new experience results from the interaction between a person (her personal and external resources) and a situation, and also this new experience of successful adaptive coping or a sad failure influences an individual’s personal resources. Furthermore, the characteristics of the experience influence its salutary or harmful influence. Antonovsky’s (1987a, 1987b, 1979) and Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) aim has been to determine the characteristics of optimal, salutary experiences that in the cycle of continuous life experiences contribute to the resource growth; these characteristics shall be discussed in detail below.

But what are the personal resources that grow in an optimal experience? Csikszentmihalyi (ibid.) proclaims that it is an individual’s Self that develops – it becomes more integrated, more whole yet more unique and differentiated after each optimal experience. According to Antonovsky, an optimal experience instead changes an individual’s disposition, her characteristic way of perceiving the world. Antonovsky calls such dispositional way of perceiving the world Sense of Coherence.
Sense of Coherence – Ariadne’s thread in the labyrinth of life

The growth of Sense of Coherence starts with psychosocial resources; an optimal experience depends on the availability of different kinds of individual, material, social, and cultural resources. The availability of such resources enables a person to make sense of the world. While potentially negative factors in the environment increase the disorder in a person’s existence; different psychosocial resources instead create experiences characterized by consistency, participation in shaping the outcome, and underload-overload balance. The world starts to seem more and more comprehensible along with an experience of consistency and manageable along with underload-overload balance. Also the sense of meaningfulness of one’s efforts in relation to the world increases due to the experienced participation in shaping the outcomes. Such experiences, little by little, create a new personal resource – Sense of Coherence (Antonovsky, 1987a; p. 19):

The sense of coherence is a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring yet dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one’s internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement.

An individual’s Sense of Coherence can, thus, be understood as a dispositional orientation, as a characteristic way of perceiving the world (at least to some degree) as a comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful place. A person with a high Sense of Coherence is able to mobilize different external, psychosocial resources as needed and is able to experience in each new situation something comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. To put it in another way, Sense of Coherence is like a psychological equivalent for Ariadne’s thread – it can provide the guidance through the complex and

---

2 Antonovsky (1979) more precisely defines the following categories of resources influencing the quality of an experience: 1) material; 2) knowledge, intelligence; 3) ego identity; 4) coping strategy: rational, flexible, farsighted; 5) social support, ties; 6) commitment: continuance, cohesion, control; 7) cultural stability; 8) magic; 9) religion, philosophy, art: a stable set of answers; 10) preventive health orientation; 11) genetics and constitution.
dangerous labyrinths of our lives. Antonovsky’s idea has generated a lot of research and studies (see e.g. Johansson Hanse & Engström, 1999; Kalimo & Vuori, 1990; Antonovsky, 1987a) have indicated clearly that higher Sense of Coherence, as a personal resource, increases the potential for successful tension management (i.e. coping) and eventually to health.

Thus, for Antonovsky, an optimal experience is characterized by the availability of different psychosocial resources leading to the experienced consistency (or comprehensibility), participation in shaping the outcome (or meaningfulness) as well as underload-overload balance (or manageability). Consequently, an organization consciously aiming to create comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work experiences supports its employees. This kind of support relates to the work situation at hand, but expands also to the future. Resources and »coherent« work experiences, in the long-term, contribute to the development of Sense of Coherence. The hypothesis presented here implies an interesting practical and research problem; how is it possible for an organization to contribute to the emergence of comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work through the resources it offers to its employees? What does comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work mean and how can it be created?

In a comprehensible situation, employees perceive that they receive ordered, consistent, structured, and clear information on the work situation and, consequently, can predict the way things proceed (Antonovsky, 1987a; 1987b). When a work situation is comprehensible, it makes sense both emotionally and cognitively, and an employee understands the connections of her work to the whole work process. In other words, employees receive enough information on the work situation to understand their role in it as well as to understand the context of their work and relationships between their work and the work of others. The need to comprehend one’s situation and surroundings was recognized already by Maslow (see e.g. Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991), who mentioned a need to know and understand as a fundamental need underlying the other needs in his need hierarchy (see above).

Manageability relates to the resources available for coping with work situations (Antonovsky, 1987a; 1987b). The resources available for employees should be in balance with the demands set by the situation: besides of overload, also underload creates feelings of low manageability. Employees with monotonous jobs start to feel over time that they will not be able to manage disruptions of even the most basic kind. Continuous un-
derload, thus, causes a sort of mental paralysis in which employees’ potential for complex task performance has been lost. Also formal and informal social structures at workplaces relate to the manageableability of a situation. Employees should be able to trust that the formal social structure provides them with an appropriate environment and equipment to carry out their work well. For instance, the knowledge that other employees are also doing their work well creates a necessary condition for individual manageableability. Furthermore, it is important for the employees to know that the informal social structure supports them when something goes wrong, that there is always help available.

When an individual finds her work meaningful, she feels that demands encountered are worth an investment in energy, commitment, and engagement, and as a consequence, will exert an effort to carry out her work (Antonovsky, ibid.). Sense of meaningfulness requires that an employee can perceive the whole work process and her connections to it as meaningful. Furthermore, meaningfulness relates to the feelings of joy and pride at work. Joy and pride at work depend on employees’ own valuations of work, but also on the way society in general evaluates their work and work organization. Also intrinsic and instrumental gratifications from work (e.g. internal work motivation and monetary rewards) increase the joy, pride, and meaningfulness of work. Drawing together relevant literature (see e.g. Martin, 2000; Hofstede, 1994; Hirschhorn, 1988) following elements seem to contribute to the experienced meaningfulness of work:

• An individual experiences her work meaningful when work itself is intrinsically rewarding.
• An individual experiences her work meaningful when she herself and society in general value work and the organization in which work is carried out.
• An individual experiences her work meaningful when she has the opportunity to »stand on the boundary«; to produce something or provide a service such that she can directly see the value of her actions to others. Even though people are »predominately egoistic« (Martin, 2000), moral concerns of providing value to others and being respected when doing so are important elements in creating meaning in life.

Flow – Living in this moment
Antonovsky, thus, indicates that the quality of an experience depends, first, on the characteristics of the experience; whether or not it contains such
psychosocial resources that enable the experiences of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness to grow. Second, the quality of experience depends on an individual’s experience history and her consequent Sense of Coherence. For Csikszentmihalyi (1990) an optimal experience depends also on the characteristics of the experience as well as an individual’s reaction to the situation. First, according to Csikszentmihalyi, the quality of an experience depends on an individual’s mastery of her consciousness. Often, numerous and simultaneous stimuli from the environment lead to a situation where, rather than concentrating on those issues that at the time are important, consciousness is filled with unrelated, threatening thoughts. However, a person who is in control of her consciousness has the ability to focus it at will. The person’s attention is not diffused into following contradictory and chaotic stimuli, but instead she can intentionally allocate attention to those stimuli that are relevant for her. Thus, the mastery of consciousness enables a person to concentrate, rather than consume psychological resources in dealing with the entropic reality of life. Csikszentmihalyi (ibid.) calls these moments of optimal experience and concentration Flow. Furthermore, also the characteristics of the experience matter. The state of Flow is often achieved when engaged in hobbies. Activities like mountain climbing may lead to Flow; to order in consciousness and enjoyable concentration in the activity. Also work can be a source of Flow experiences. According to Csikszentmihalyi, work that is like a game - variable, clear, and goal-oriented - is experienced enjoyable. A further important characteristic of a Flow activity is the balance between the demands of the situation and the person’s resources. Thus, Csikszentmihalyi’s »recipe« for regenerative work leading to the growth of the Self is variable, clear, and goal-oriented work that, furthermore, is in balance with an employee’s resources.

So far, thus, Csikszentmihalyi’s idea of Flow corresponds to Antonovsky’s Sense of Coherence-theory; it contains both elements of comprehensibility (the clear, goal-oriented activity) and manageability (the balance between the situation’s demands and the person’s resources). However, also the element of meaningfulness plays an important part in Csikszentmihalyi’s Flow-concept. When studying experiences of people at work and at leisure, Csikszentmihalyi distinguished a paradox in the way people relate to their work. People tend to report relatively more Flow experiences when they are working than when they are doing other things. When work is at its best, people feel skillful and challenged and, consequently, happier and more
satisfied. They focus and concentrate. During the free time, challenges are fewer and skills are not used. There are feelings of sadness, weakness, and dissatisfaction. Despite the difference of the quality of experience at work and during free time, working people reported that they would rather not be working. Also most would like to have more free time, even though it contains such negative feelings.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, one reason for this paradox may be that people disregard their immediate experiences and, instead, perceive work situations based on the stereotypical images of work. Consequently, work is perceived as a »have to«, a constraint of freedom and not related to the overall goals of life. Instead of reaching for their own goals, employees have to toil to make somebody else’s goals come true. When the goals at work do not relate to employees’ personal goals, employees tend to disregard their moments of Flow at work, the optimal experiences. Consequently, enjoyment at work and the development of the Self seems to be closely connected to the relation between personal and work goals.

But is it possible for a mature adult to change?
Both Sense of Coherence and Flow-models suggest that an optimal experience leads to the growth of an individual in a deep, psychological sense. However, traditionally psychology has perceived the Self and personality related constructs quite stable (see e.g. Antonovsky, 1979). Is it, thus, possible for a mature adult to change and develop? In current literature, the static model of the Self seems to be gradually making room for more dynamic understanding of the Self also during the adult life. For instance, Boeree (2000) notes that personality can be understood both in terms of things remaining the same after early childhood (e.g. temperament) and in terms of things changing (e.g. beliefs, opinions, habits); in this sense, personality is both stable and changing. Hirschhorn (1997) states that the Self is an evolving Self, shaped by its own discoveries. Each experience creates a hypothesis, something to be learned or forgotten. Each experience, thus, shapes the Self. As Fontana (2000, p. 14) writes:

The capacity to change during adult life seems to depend on great deal of the conscious effort we make to work on ourselves…

Also Antonovsky perceives Sense of Coherence as an »enduring yet dynamic« (see above) dispositional orientation; a person’s quite stable, but never-
theless flexible way to see the world. Thus, development is possible; expe-
riences and reflections enable an individual to learn to know herself and,
eventually, to change and develop. Sense of Coherence is, consequently, an
existing psychological resource, but also a resource that may grow and de-
velop (see e.g. Feldt et al., 2000) during the adult life through experiences
and reflection - through learning. This provides the grounds for the usefull-
ness of the Sense of Coherence-concept. The patterns of life experiences –
whether characterized by a lack or abundance of resources, coherence or
incoherence – may in the long-term lead to gradual personal growth or
deterioration. Furthermore, the possibility to reflect on the experiences, to
learn from them is important. Antonovsky also encourages the research on
working conditions’ influence on the employees’ Sense of Coherence
(1987b, p. 159) 3:

By asking individual workers […] how working conditions con-
tribute to their feelings in regard to comprehensibility, manageabili-
ty, and meaningfulness, a better understanding can be gained of the
health consequences of work.

Also Csikszentmihalyi (1990) states clearly that an optimal experience can
change an individual’s Self. On the one hand, the Self becomes more differ-
etiated since an optimal experience, Flow, allows experiences of being
capable and skillful. A person’s Self becomes more unique after each such
experience. On the other hand, in an optimal experience consciousness
becomes more ordered and internal harmony in a person grows. In this
sense, the integration of the Self takes place. An optimal experience can be
understood as a regenerative experience increasing individual sustainability.

2.2.4 Discussion – How good work is understood in this thesis
The journey through organizational paradigms has led us to a situation
where »either – or« thinking has been replaced by »both – and« thinking

3 When considering the ways for an organisation to support its employees’ Sense of
Coherence, two issues of caution are in order. First, an individual’s Sense of Coher-
ence is quite stable. An organisation cannot »improve« its employees, but work can
support the existing Sense of Coherence and - in the long term - also contribute in
either positive or negative shifts in it. Second, employees are not only employees,
but individuals who are affected both by their private lives and socio-cultural situ-
ation in which they live.
when it comes to the good work-concept. If taylorism mainly concentrated on effectiveness and business results and if Human Relations-movement wanted to understand the social side of the equation, the Sociotechnical Systems thinking started to concentrate on both and also understood the psychological relation between work and an individual. At this point it had become clear that work is important for a person not only because of its instrumental gratification or social connections it provides, but also because of its intrinsic value.

The emerging understanding of good work, illustrated in this section with the help of Aaron Antonovsky’s and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s theories, follows closely this tradition, but there are also two important emphasis differences when one compares these two theories to the Sociotechnical Systems and Job Characteristics Model. First, good work is no longer defined only as predetermined characteristics of the current work system (i.e. job design parameters), but the fundamental principles underlying the job and organizational design (e.g. the comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of work) are emphasized instead. If the Sociotechnical Systems-thinking and Job Characteristic Model explained what a job or a work system should be like, Antonovsky’s and Csikszentmihalyi’s theories start from explaining how work should be experienced in order to lead to positive individual and collective outcomes. For instance, both Antonovsky and Csikszentmihalyi emphasize the comprehensibility of work; how comprehensibility is achieved remains to be solved in each and every situation separately. It may mean creating the Sociotechnical »collections of sub-tasks that form a meaningful whole«, it may mean Job Characteristic Model’s feedback-dimension.

Furthermore, the usual critique towards the Sociotechnical Systems-thinking as well as the Job Characteristics Model is that, despite their aims and claims, they both are expert oriented. Job enrichments and improvements have usually been done by organizations’ external and internal experts; solutions have been standard solutions without sensitivity to local conditions (see de Sitter et al. (1997) on critique on STS-thinking and Parker et al. (2001) on critique on Job Characteristics Model-approach). For instance, the practical applications of Sociotechnical Systems-thinking led to the absolute search for autonomy of employees as well as enlarging job contents. The developments in the current working life have clearly shown that enlarging job contents can become unmanageable and increasing autonomy a cause for stress (Hatchuel, 2002; Kira, 2002). This is also why
the thesis has the title: »From Good Work to Sustainable Development«. The aim is to move forward from the earlier good work-ideas towards work, in which employees and organizations can develop in a sustainable way and which creates resources for employees and organizations to deal with future challenges better. The process of development is emphasized instead of predetermined job design parameters. However, this does not mean that »old« truths would be forgotten, quite the contrary. The aim is instead to use these truths in less normative and more dynamic way. Moreover, in this thesis, the concept »regenerative work« is used as a synonym for good work to emphasize the fact that good work (as it is understood here) does not only provide pleasant or meaningful moments, but builds continuously personal resources that increase an individual’s ability to deal with the inevitable challenges of work and the world in general.

The »both-and« thinking in relation to good work also means taking into account all different values of individuals. Especially Antonovsky’s ideas respond to Ciulla’s (2000) plea for values instead of needs as the profound determinants of working life improvements. Ciulla criticizes the way the management theories and practices have at different times in a one-sided way aimed at satisfying those humane needs that the prevailing »zeitgeist« prioritizes. The assumption seems to have been that everyone values certain things and the aim has been to satisfy these generally prevailing values. Consequently, we have witnessed the tayloristic focus on wages, the Human Relations-movement focus on social connections, and the Sociotechnical Systems-thinking and Job Characteristics Model emphasis on self-actualization. Ciulla and Antonovsky both state that more important is to understand the versatility of different needs people have at work; the importance of these needs changes all the time based on what people value. Thus, it is not a good strategy to create self-actualization oriented work at the expense of job security or fair pay. These other, more fundamental and »primitive« values, do exist all the time and should also be respected. Furthermore, as already Maslow realized, if disregarded these values are apt to influence profoundly the well-being, development, and performance potential of employees. Thus, self-actualization at work should not be bought at the expense of job security; disrespectful salary should not be excused by psychologically good work.

According to the Antonovsky’s and Csikszentmihalyi’s models reviewed above good work, or work that contributes to an individual’s psychological growth and strength, is characterized by comprehensibility, manageability,
and meaningfulness. Interestingly, if one compares these characteristics to the psychological needs underlying Sociotechnical good work (Thorsrud & Emery, 1969) and Job Characteristics Model (Hackman et al., 1982); the parallels are obvious. Thorsrud and Emery underline the importance of meaningfulness in their list of psychological needs at work (e.g. a need to see a connection between one’s work and the surrounding world as well as a need to connect work with hopes of future) and also comprehensibility in terms of, for instance, variable work content and decision-making opportunities. However, manageability is not a key consideration on their list (even though more present in their guidelines for job design, for instance an optimal length of a work cycle); in the late 1960 the problem was not unmanageable work content, but rather unmanageable boredom. Also Hackman et al. (1982) recognize meaningfulness and comprehensibility (in terms of knowledge of the actual results) as critical psychological states in their Job Characteristics Model. As in the Thorsrud and Emery’s psychological needs list, manageability is not as strongly present in the Job Characteristics Model, but can be sensed in the autonomy and the consequent experienced responsibility for work outcomes. Antonovsky (1987b) perceives a connection between control and manageability, but notes that knowing that some legitimate other is in control may increase the sense of manageability as well.

Thus, Antonovsky’s and Csikszentmihalyi’s ideas on optimal, regenerative experiences more or less share the ideas underlying the earlier attempts to create good, developmental and satisfying, work leading to good organizational outcomes (increased ability to take on work challenges, lower turnover, etc.) even though they do move more at the level of principles rather than guidelines, as noted above. However, the question of manageability has appeared mainly in the stress theories where the balance between existing resources and environmental demands has a long history. The stress and coping theories reviewed above revolve strongly around manageability; demands being or not being met by different resources. Maslach and Leiter’s (1997) burnout-model as well as Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) cognitive appraisal model do also bring forth meaningfulness; for instance, Maslach and Leiter distinguish unfairness and conflicting values contributing to burnout and Lazarus and Folkman regard the meaning of a stimulus/demand as an important determinant in the primary appraisal (whether it is something negative, a threat, or not). But still, manageability has been the focal area of the stress research. Antonovsky’s
and Csikszentmihalyi’s contribution, I think, is to bring all these different elements together and create a comprehensive understanding of work experiences that regenerate human resources and vitalize human energy. The stress research has pointed out that resources-demand balance is extremely important for an individual’s well-being and development (see e.g. Karasek & Theorell, 1990), while good work and job enrichment literature has brought forth the ideas of meaningfulness and comprehensibility. As stated, Antonovsky and Csikszentmihalyi bring this all together. All in all, based on the review above, it seems safe to say that comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work taking into account both an employee’s values and needs is good work contributing to an individual’s personal development and health. This is the working definition for regenerative work applied in this thesis work; it provides a foundation for studying the cases.

Maslow (see Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991) noted that people have a fundamental need to comprehend (see section 2.2.1); meaningfulness was in its turn connected to individual and social values in section 2.2.3. Thus, there are close connections between Antonovsky’s Sense of Coherence-dimensions as well as an individual’s values and needs. However, I have chosen to maintain both the Sense of Coherence-dimensions as well as values/needs in the definition of regenerative work outlined above. Even though people have a need for comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, and their values influence what they consider as such; there are also other needs and values not so apparent in the Sense of Coherence-dimensions (for instance, the need for self-actualization). Furthermore, since I have not studied (neither am I aware of anyone else having studied) whether the Sense of Coherence-dimensions and values/needs totally converge as concepts, it is safer to maintain them separately in the definition and, in practice, look at work through both Sense of Coherence and values/needs lenses when determining its regenerative potential.

The case studies below are discussed from this perspective in chapter 8. Interesting questions are:

- What is work like initially in the case organizations; which problems there are relating to comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of work?
- How do the organizations try to create comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work for their employees?
• What is the relation between employees’ values and needs as well as the demands and opportunities of post-bureaucratic work?

2.3 A note on changes – Why not go from consuming to regenerative work?

Above, processes relating to both human resources consumption and regeneration at work have been reviewed. In the review, it is easy to see that reasons for human resources consumption and regeneration are varied, but both clearly depend on the design of a work system (i.e. what the work system looks like) as well as on the »identity« of a work system (i.e. what the work system is like). Even though each job may have negative elements that cannot be »designed away« (as Smith and Sainfort (1989) suggest), much can be achieved through work system design aiming to contribute to employees’ well-being and growth. For instance, Smith and Sainfort (ibid.) suggest a work system design in which the inevitable negative factors are compensated by positive factors. The theories on coping and Sense of Coherence, in their turn, indicate that »better« work experiences can be achieved through job and organizational design aimed at corresponding to the various individual needs and values of people at work. Thus, movement from human resources consumption to their regeneration means changing the work system design (see e.g. Cooper & Cartwright, 1994), changing what the work system looks like. However, changing only what the work system looks like – its structural and procedural elements – is often not enough, since human resources consumption and regeneration also depend on what the work system is like or feels like. Consequently, changes in a work system design have to reach also to the intangible and invisible areas of organizational life, such as the way people act and interact within the work system.

Despite the fact that change is often referred to as the only stable thing, change is not easy and development is even harder. There are various organizational and individual factors that make changes difficult. Very often organizational change is perceived as a transformation from situation A to situation B and, since so many negative things are wished to be mended with the help of the change effort, the situations A and B end up being quite far from each other. Consequently, the road is long. According to Kurt Lewin (see e.g. Lewin, 1997) change contains several phases; unfreezing phase in which the existing situation is destabilized, after that the actual change can be carried out (people are not stuck with the old situation any-
more), and eventually the new situation will be refrozen so that it becomes established. Already classic organizational development (OD) literature did, however, recognize that the road is not only long, but never-ending. For instance, French and Bell write in their influential book (1973, p. 46):

…the process of improving organizations may be a process of »becoming« – of approaching some end state, […] without ever reaching it in the usual sense of ‘arriving’.

Thus, organizational change is often understood as a continuous, incremental process with an aim to achieve dynamic stability (Abrahmson, 2000) rather than one-time transformation. However, problems still exist. Organizational development efforts lead to a sensation that much happens, but nothing really changes. In this section, the reasons for the difficulty of development are discussed. The aim here is to describe why organizational movement from consuming to regenerative work can be quite difficult. What is learned here shall later be used to describe some of the reasons for the human resources consumption in the present situation as well as the difficulties when trying to move towards a better situation (see e.g. section 8.2).

Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) connect the small amount of actual improvement and change in work organizations to the fact that very often people do know what should be done or what would be the best possible state of affairs, but turning this knowledge into »doing« is difficult. According to Pfeffer and Sutton (ibid.) this »knowing-doing gap« (as they call it) has several reasons. First, too often organizations do not even start to think what would be the best thing for them to do, but they instead rely on their memory on how things have been done in the past. A Finnish proverb says that a person’s habits are her second nature and this is what Pfeffer and Sutton are referring to here; an organization may get trapped by its »second nature«, its traditions and its culture, and rather repeats its old mistakes than ventures on new ways of knowing and doing.

The second reason for why organizations find it hard to change relates, according to Pfeffer and Sutton, to fear the members of an organization may experience; fear of losing their jobs, fear of being ridiculed, fear of making a mistake. Pfeffer and Sutton state that there still are plenty of managers voting for the theory X (see McGregor, 1960); they think that people are lazy and should be kept on their toes to keep them focused. Consequently,
fear is used as a management tool and employees rather than encouraged to innovate are subdued to comply. A less extreme example of fear driving out action relates to quite a common fear of making mistakes. In many organizations, mistakes are not accepted. Employees are held accountable for their results and, similarly, for their mistakes. Thus, it is natural that they want to avoid mistakes and easiest way to do that is to do nothing or to do what one has done before. However, this hardly leads to development.

The third reason that Pfeffer and Sutton distinguish leading to knowing but not doing, is the widely shared misconception of talking about something being the same as doing that something. Too often speaking about the change is mixed up with actually carrying out the change. Furthermore, the way people speak about things may build blockades for actually doing those things; for instance, abstract and complex talk may distance people from the core of the matter – Pfeffer and Sutton (ibid.) note concepts such as »learning organization« and »Balanced Scorecard« as examples of management jargon that everybody uses and nobody really understands. Furthermore, also negative talk – sounding critical or questioning everything - may kill all »doing«; being critical may sound profound (»she must have given this a lot of thought, since she presents such comprehensive critique«), but may leave little grounds for further action (»so this will not work; what shall we do then?«).

These three factors preventing knowledge from turning into an action and real change are further discussed in this section. The problem of memory substituting thinking - of following one’s second nature rather than one’s thoughts – is further illuminated by explaining how the organizational trains often travel steadily on their tracks even though their crews may try to steer them on new tracks (section 2.3.1). The problem of fear driving out action can be seen to relate to a poor understanding of people and how the human side of organizational change functions. Vansina’s (1998) and Argyris’ (1998) notions on how change efforts often actually forget to involve people explain this further; too often the change ships sail before the passengers have embarked (section 2.3.2). Finally, the idea of talk substituting for doing is illuminated by discussing how the language and guiding questions of a change process may fail to create energy and enthusiasm among people participating in the change work (section 2.3.3). In sum, the section aims to provide several perspectives for understanding why it is so difficult to move from consuming to regenerative work and, as
noted above, these perspectives will be benefited from in section 8.2 and also in section 8.5.

### 2.3.1 The interplay between institutional and activity level aspects – Renewal and stability

Change in an organization may be difficult since the history of an organization, its culture, norms, values, traditions, and so forth, prevent new ideas from being implemented. Old work and collaboration patterns have become institutionalized and any other kind of a pattern either is not understood or is rejected as «impossible to implement here». In Pfeffer and Sutton’s words; memory drives out thinking and acting. Barley and Tolbert’s (1997) model on the links between actions and institutions provides a detailed view on why change is so difficult in this respect. The model discusses the emerging and existing discrepancies between the concrete activity level and the more abstract institutional level. At the activity level all the daily activities – work, collaboration, decision-making, dialogue, participation, eating lunch together, etc. – take place, while at the institutional level exist (Barley & Tolbert, ibid.; p. 96):

…shared rules and typifications that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships [...].

The institutional level, thus, represents the dominating logic («memory»); values and normative ideas on how things are and how they should be. In this sense, organizational logic that directs collaboration patterns, official structures and rules, etc. can be understood to correspond to Barley and Tolbert’s institutional level and daily work to correspond to the activity level. Barley and Tolbert state that the institutional level both constraints the action and arises from it. Prevailing institutional logic constraints activities; the shared considerations on how things are and how they should be delimit what people choose to do and what they, on the whole, come around to do. The institutional level is encoded into «scripts» that determine the «correct» way of doing things; people enact these scripts in their activities. However, the activity level may also change the institutional level, if people involved in action consciously and consistently choose different ways of acting than the ways stipulated by the existing institutional logic (see figure 2.6). When people choose a different way of acting, a way differing from
the existing scripts, they revise the script (rather than simply replicate it) and potentially change the shared assumption on how things should be done. In such case, people have thought rather than followed their second nature (see above); new thinking has resulted in new action which in its turn may become »institutionalized« as a part of the organization’s memory.

Crossan et al. (1999) offer a further explanation on how daily activities may impose a change on institutionalized practices. Strategic change and renewal in an organization, according to them, is founded on organizational learning. In practice, this means a dynamic process, in which individual intuiting becomes gradually shared and refined at the group level. An individual may reconstruct past experiences in a new way or build new insights by, for instance, detecting new connections between things or new opportunities that no-one else has realized before; she learns. The individual then transmits these new intuitions to others and aims to interpret her ideas to them. The intuitions often become transformed and refined in this phase; conversations and dialogue develop the new intuitions further into a shared cognition. In the next phase, integration takes place. A shared understanding of a new way of doing things emerges and a new type of
concrete collective action is carried out; a change in the ways to work and collaborate may be detected and, in terms of Barley and Tolbert, a new script is being born. However, in order not to vanish, the new shared understandings have to become institutionalized. The new learning is captured into tasks, routines, and structures when, through dialogue and also silent practice, new institutionalized ways to work and collaborate are formed. From this point on, the new institutionalized »truths« start to steer and guide the operation of an organization and affect what people do and how they do it. (Crossan et al., ibid.)

According to Barley and Tolbert (1997) an important generator for these kinds of change processes are changes in an organization’s external factors. External changes may encourage individuals and groups to consider alternative ways to act; the external changes may even make changes in their actions necessary. Barley and Tolbert also note that scripts may be revised as actors want to create a new way for the social life, new ways to act and interact. However, they also state that usually if the revision of scripts relates only to these kinds of new societal ideas and visions, creating a true change in the institutional logic is difficult, as others may not share the ideas and visions but rather continue to replicate the existing scripts.

Thus, organizational learning as a dynamic process extending from individual intuitions to group-level interpretation and integration and yet still to organizational institutionalization can be seen as a generator of small and big organizational changes. However, organizational changes do not happen frequently, while individual intuition and group-level interpretation and integration may happen basically continuously (Crossan et al., 1999). That is why organizational change may sometimes feel well overdue for its members; even though their ideas and perspectives have changed, the institutional setting still corresponds to much earlier organizational learning processes. Similarly, organizational changes where institutionalized factors such as strategies, structures, and processes are changed may be experienced to transform »everything« since the change process aims to bridge the quietly and gradually grown gap between earlier institutionalized ideas as well as individuals’ and groups’ current ideas on how things should be. Furthermore, organizational changes that fail to take into account the work reality of employees, their continuously on-going collective learning processes on how things are and how they should be, and instead impose a new institutional reality on them is sure to run into a trouble. Pfef-fer and Sutton (2000) remind us also of an important issue; often the insti-
tutionalized organizational memory is so strong that it prevents a new kind of thinking and doing from emerging at the activity level; the old scripts keep on steering the daily activities regardless of how well suited they are to the current situation. Change is not only well overdue, but non-existent as an organization’s members cannot envisage new things. All these aspects of organizational change and renewal will be discussed further in section 8.2 where the case studies bring practical illumination on the issue.

2.3.2 Participation and disregard for human nature at work

An organizational change process or an organizational innovation is likely to fail, if it disregards employees working in the organization, their aspirations and ideals. The failures become even more likely and more disastrous, if the aim is not only to change minor routines but actually to change the way employees work and collaborate in an organization. For instance, many change programs such Total Quality Management and Business Process Re-engineering aim to create internal commitment and empowerment at the employee level; to advocate more extensive responsibility taking and commitment to an organization’s goals. However, the problem with such programs according to Argyris (1998) is that they are rife with inner contradictions; they call for empowerment, but do not leave room for the development of internal commitment. As the first principle of Sociotechnical design states (see Cherns, 1987); means should fit ends, and if participation and internal commitment are to be gained, organizational change efforts aiming to create them should be founded on the idea of participation. Nevertheless, the change processes are often painstakingly externally defined: step by step, what to do, how to proceed, there is a rule and guidance for everything. Employees and managers orient themselves towards empowerment in the beginning of a change process, but end up disappointed. The change program has not increased the empowerment, since it has not truly been founded on employees’ own responsibility taking, problem solving, mistake making, and involvement. In short, the sense of empowerment, for managers or employees, is not innate. Empowerment has to be learned, and if a change program does not allow for empowerment learning experiences, it will not result in increased empowerment.

A further reason for the failure of management textbook organizational innovations is the poor understanding of an employee as a human being with all the psychological structures of a human (Vansina, 1998). Failing to
understand the psychological character of individuals leads to simplistic approaches to organizational research and development. The way people are is not understood and, consequently, organizations are directed and transformed based on superficial and stereotypical ideas. As an example, Vansina points out the current participation practices. Participation in modern management literature is often addressed as something that needs to be done in order to inform and convince people on decision-making as well as to prevent resistance. The psychological meaning of participation is forgotten; the fact that people join an organization to be actively part of its operation is not taken into account. There is no continuous, reliable approach to participation, but it is used as a management tool when deemed necessary by managers. Employees cannot count on the opportunity to participate, and the influence of their participation remains insignificant for the directions and essence of the organization. This kind of an approach to participation may well lead to the low level of success in intended changes. Participation, as described above, does not reach people, does not allow them time to live through the change and deal with their emotions towards it and eventually be prepared for the change and to change also themselves. Instead, participation that allows employees time and space to discuss and think makes it possible for them to truly internalize the change. Vansina calls this time and space in a change situation the *transitional space*. The transitional space is provided for employees to work through the change, to personally move from one state of affairs to the next. When participation aims to provide a transitional space for employees, rather than extract information from them or overcome resistance, the employees have the chance to work through their relations with work, colleagues, and organization, and truly be part of the change.

### 2.3.3 Asking the wrong question

Yet another reason for the little amount of actual positive change and development in organizations may simply be that a wrong question is asked in the beginning of a change process; the wrong question being »what is the problem with this organization?«. As noted above, such a negative question may well destroy any possibilities for development, since the question concentrates the whole effort from the start to the existing problems rather than the existing possibilities. Ludema et al. (2001) argue that such a negative question more or less blocks any possibilities for development since looking only at the problems of an organization, employees surely learn its
weaknesses and deficiencies, but they fail to learn how to envisage and create better futures. Ludema et al. (2001, p.189) write:

If we devote our attention to what is wrong with organizations and communities, we lose the ability to see and understand what gives life to organizations and discover ways to sustain and enhance that life-giving potential.

Consequently, Ludema et al. (ibid.) agree with Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) on the destructive influence of critique when not used constructively to enhance development but rather to single out problems and failures. Furthermore, the negative question creates a binary discursive structure for the change process, i.e. a structure in which one thing is opposed to another. Everything in the organization is located on this binary of a problem and a solution, right and wrong, good and evil, wise and stupid. A black and white picture of the organization emerges. Individual employees and groups are located on this binary and division between people takes place as sides are taken. Thus, people retreat deeper to their trenches, and any positive development towards new innovative ways of working and existing together is lost.

Also the action research approach has been accused of its inability to create generative theories, i.e. theories that enable organizations to question their taken for granted beliefs and travel towards transformed future (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Action research has often a problem-solving approach or, indeed, has been by some researchers defined as a practical problem solving process (see e.g. section 1.3.2). Action research consequently may end up being a conservative effort of fixing what is wrong and concentrating on things that can be fixed rather than creating new platforms for transformational organizational change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, ibid.). In section 8.5, the thesis is evaluated from this point of view; did the action research approach lead to conservative problem solving in the case studies or was something transformational, new truly achieved?

If the question »what is the problem with this organization?« is a wrong question, which question should we ask instead? Maybe rather than focusing on problems, we should embrace the possibilities! Cooperrider and Srivastva (ibid.) define such research perspective as an Appreciative Inquiry; a collaborative, dialogue based inquiry that aims to discover, understand, and
promote innovations in social-organizational arrangements and processes. Instead of asking what is the problem, the Appreciative Inquiry starts with the scientific/theoretical question of »best of what is«. In other words, an unconditional positive question is asked; the positive experiences and successes are looked at and wondered – how did we do that (Ludema et al., 2001). The second, metaphysical, step of the Appreciative Inquiry is to create ideals of »what might be« – according to Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) the miracle of organizing is explored here. Ludema et al. (2001) state that a vocabulary is created for what the organization is at its best. Then follows a normative phase of creating consent on »what should be« and, finally, comes the pragmatic phase of collective experimentation and experiencing »what can be«. In short, then, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) and Ludema et al. (2001) suggest miracles instead of problems, unconditionally positive questions instead of unconditionally negative questions. They state that by creating a vocabulary and visions of social innovation, of beauty and wonder of organizing, organizations can transform themselves, truly change rather than – at most – solve their problems.

2.3.4 So why is change so difficult?
It seems, thus, that change in an organization – a transformation from a work system consuming its employees’ resources to a work systems where the employees have opportunities for growth – is difficult both because people think and act in ways that do not allow them to move collectively towards the vision of a better working situation. When it comes to thinking, it is very easy to rely on the »second nature«, on habits and usual ways of functioning, rather than think in new ways – to question the usual and try to create new solutions for new situations. Consequently, creating a better workplace may be hampered by old bureaucratic ways of operating, old status differences, and other relics of earlier ways to function. Another »thinking problem« relates to the limited understanding of how people function at a workplace; for instance, to the disregard of the need for a transitional space. In order to really internalize something and experience a close connection to something, people usually have to think and do that something on their own. A manager or a consultant cannot live through the change for the others; their task should rather be to create possibilities for the others to live through the change. Finally, the third »thinking problem« relates to the seductive side of negative thinking; it is always easier to see why something is wrong than to imagine how something could be made better.
When it comes to acting problems preventing true development, each of the thinking problems leads to acting problems. For instance, both relying only on what has been done before as well as disregarding the human side of the change may lead to a situation where people attempting to make a change do things, but do the wrong things – old mistakes are repeated or a consultant keeps on lecturing on her change model rather than allows the employees build their own model. But organizations do not only fail to change simply because people think or act in wrong ways, change problems may also relate to the fact that social systems do have their inertia and are very heavy to steer on a new track. The institutionalized factors and scripts that they spell out are difficult to change and, naturally, it is difficult to say which changes should be carried out – when has a script truly outlived its possibilities?

Consequently, the difficulty to change a work system relates both to the inherent nature of social systems, but also to more »technical« problems; people thinking and doing wrong things and, therefore, failing to carry out improvement work. Furthermore, this short review on some reasons for change pains indicates that change cannot only be a Lewinian three-step process from one stable situation to another one. Instead, change is happening all the time; actions and institutions are interacting continuously and people are moving from one shared understanding towards the next. Change is happening all the time in a social system and that is also why it is so difficult; it cannot be captured into a project, it cannot be completed, and it cannot be carried out by a consultant. It is a process that everybody in an organization has to be aware of and has to be able to participate in. Creating a work system in which employees are able to grow and develop is a never ending path (a process of becoming without arriving as French and Bell (1973) put it), and the only way to stay on the path and enjoy the journey, is to have the goal clear and master the technicalities of continuous change work. There probably are others, but the technicalities discussed in this section will probably help already much on the way. The difficulties for organizational change and improvement reviewed in this section will, as we go further, help to understand why the case organizations had such a hard time to move from consuming to regenerative work. Furthermore, some of the ideas lifted up here will be revisited in chapter 8 in order to explain in more general terms why human resources become consumed in the contemporary working life.
As noted in chapter 1, this thesis will end up dealing with the changing working life realities; the aim is to understand why people become consumed in the post-bureaucratic work and, equally importantly, to understand how work, in the present situation, can be regenerative. This chapter presents a literature study on the contemporary characteristics of work. The aim is to outline these characteristics and probe the changes taking place. Furthermore, the consequences of the conceptualized developments on employees are illuminated. Consequently, the literature study documented in this chapter provides important complementing material for the case studies. While the case studies contain my observations on the contemporary working life developments, the literature review here contains the observations of others on the same issue.

### 3.1 What happens to work; Upskilling or deskilling?

A central question in the changing working life discussions has been whether more or less skills are demanded from employees in the future workplaces. Deskilling has been perceived as an inhumane development and upskilling as the right of employees. In this section, the upskilling/deskilling debate is shortly reviewed and critique is presented on both perspectives. Then, perspectives combining upskilling/deskilling hypotheses are discussed and, eventually, the question whether upskilled work is good work, as usually assumed, is addressed. In section 3.1.3, some perspectives on whether good work is likely to emerge in the present situation are also presented.
3.1.1 The deskilling and upskilling hypothesis

The deskilling hypothesis was made popular by Braverman (1974), whose basic idea is that deskilling is the consequence of capitalists’ search for profits in more and more competitive economic environments. The managers try to control the organization of work as well as its pace and duration, since all these factors affect profitability. The consequence of such control is deskilling both in organizational sense and in technological sense. Organizational deskilling follows from the application of Taylor’s principles (see Taylor, 1998) and, effectively, from the separation of thinking and doing. Technological deskilling follows from the application of automation which helps in moving decision-making from the »shop-floor« employees to managers and experts.

Noon and Blyton (1997) have reviewed the critique towards Braverman’s deskilling thesis, and state that it is too deterministic. The thesis ignores alternative managerial strategies for achieving profitability; also participation and upskilling may be understood to lead to higher profits. Furthermore, managers may concentrate on other, less sensitive areas than labor force issues to increase profits; the main leverage of profits may be perceived to be product and service development or marketing instead. Furthermore, the thesis treats labor as a very passive element. Deskilling may not be a viable strategy due to both trade union and individual actions against it.

Recent empirical research does, however, support to some extent Braverman’s thesis. For instance:

- Research on Lean Production-paradigm (see e.g. Womack et al., 1990) has revealed that Lean Production applications in practice lead to lower skill demands and opportunities to use skills. (see e.g. Kira, 2000a; Landsbergis et al., 1999; Delbridge, 1998; Niepece & Molleman, 1998; Babson, 1995; Jacobs, 1995; Delbridge et al., 1992; Turnbull, 1988; or Womack et al. (1990) as well as Adler (1995) for counteracting views)

- Also the trend studies on European manufacturing industries by Schumann et al. (1995; Schumann, 1998) and Huys et al. (1999) point out to prevailing taylorism. In other words, they argue that skill levels needed at work are still low in many manufacturing environments; if the question is not about deskilling, at least it is about lacking upskilling.

The upskilling hypothesis states that changes in, for instance, competition, markets, and technology lead organizations to realize that employees truly
are their most valuable asset and means for competitiveness. The increasing complexity of work increases the need for highly educated and trained workforce (see Noon & Blyton, 1997). Thus, companies move from complex organizations with simple jobs to simple organizations with complex jobs (de Sitter et al., 1997). The upskilling hypothesis seems to be well supported by for instance the management literature as well as more empirical work (see e.g. Allvin et al., 1998; O’Donnel et al., 1998); the discussion in section 3.2 below on post-bureaucratic work also relates to the upskilling hypothesis. All in all, also this thesis is based on the idea that, at least in some organizations and some occupations, work is turning out to be »too much« rather than »too little« from employees’ point of view.

Noon and Blyton (1997) summarize critique also towards the upskilling thesis. The thesis suffers from determinism; technical change, advanced technology and the growth of the service sector are deterministically perceived to contribute to upskilling. Furthermore, the thesis fails to take into account the global effects; upskilling in the industrialized countries may take place at the expense of deskilling of work in the developing countries where low skill jobs are outsourced to.

Noon and Blyton (ibid.) state that the unidirectional upskilling and deskilling hypotheses are problematic; both hypotheses seem to be founded on deterministic thinking on the connections between technological and work changes. At micro level, within companies, there is always a possibility for choosing and companies are far too versatile and complex in their needs to always choose alike. Thus, a multidirectional hypothesis might explain the situation better; an overarching trend seems to be the polarization of skills, a situation where some win and some lose (see also Atkinson, 1985). Researchers have reported polarization of skills at least depending on:

- **Professional status;** Gallie (1991) states that polarization may take place as existing skill differentials grow or, in other words, those having high skill jobs meet new possibilities to use their skills and those having low skill jobs lose the possibility to use even those few skills. Karasek and Theorell (1990) and Theorell (1997) instead note that both white and blue-collar employees are facing high skill demands in the contemporary working life. However, blue-collar employees are considerably worse off than white-collar employees since, unlike white-collar employees, they are increasingly missing control opportunities at work (see chapter 2 on the consequences of high demand/low control jobs).
The influence of technology; those using advanced technology may use many skills in their work, while those left out from the technological development have to settle for simple jobs with low skill demands (see e.g. Dore, 1997). Technological development may also have two opposing trends affecting the polarization of skills. Zuboff’s (1988) empirical observations led her to conclude that automating technology, aimed at replacing living labor, leads likely to deskilling. Informating technology, in its turn, provides more information on the work processes to employees and enables them to make interpretations on the data; a highly cognitive task. This kind of development does not necessary lead only to polarization between different employee groups, but may create upskilled and deskill areas of work in a single employee’s work.

An organization’s position in a value chain; Altmann and Deiß (1998) argue that in certain parts of value chains – in technologically sophisticated dominating companies – versatile and challenging tasks are performed, while in some other parts of value chains – in small subcontractors with intensive national and foreign competition – only simple manual tasks exist.

3.1.2 Is upskilled work “good work”?

The review above clearly points out that upskilling and deskilling are both current realities; a multidirectional model understanding the simultaneous different development trends seems to fit the situation best. The history of the western industrialism proves that deskill work is not humane work; the trade unions have fought all through their existence against the treatment of people as parts of a machine (see e.g. Ciulla, 2000). But the question remains, is upskilled job necessarily “good work” offering meaning and fulfillment (see chapter 2), as often has been assumed (by e.g. Argyris, 1964).

Maybe a fair assumption is that upskilled work may be “good work”, but it is not that automatically. For instance, O’Donnel et al.’s (1998) conclusion on their study with over 11 000 respondents from different sectors in the Australian economy is that upskilling leads to stress when it is accompanied by other types of changes, such as increasing workload and/or job insecurity. Altmann and Deiß (1998) observe that pressures in a value chain also influence work in those companies where complex and versatile (i.e. upskilled) tasks exist. Outside pressures may turn potentially good work into work with stress problems stemming from the limited controla-
bility of technical solutions, too tight staffing, and too tight schedules. Furthermore, the psychological reactions of employees may lead to negative results. The awareness of tight scheduling, just-in-time principles, and competition between companies within the value chain (resulting from the fact that the high performance of one company may lead to job losses in others) as well as wage policy mechanisms lead to »self-intensification of work« and »self-rationalization« as Altmann and Deiß (ibid.) put it. The employees end up pushing themselves too hard.

Upskilled work may turn out to be a problematic concept also if work is too upskilled. Technological developments in industrial production as well as in some service sectors (such as banking) have made it possible to replace low-skill employees with machines, and employees have either faced unemployment or requirements to learn new skills. Dore (1997) is skeptical of the possibilities offered by learning in these cases. The problem is that the polarization of jobs to low-skill and high-skills jobs as well as the disappearance of low-skills jobs leads to a situation where many of the remaining jobs are complex high-skill jobs. Not only higher cognitive skills are required in these jobs, but also skills like caring and social skills, cooperativeness and energy are demanded. For anyone with the background of low-skill jobs, learning these versatile and complex skills and reaching a skill mastery level where being competitive in labor markets (which also have fewer jobs to offer), is not very likely.

### 3.1.3 Labor political view to the quality of work in the contemporary society

Braverman’s (1974) original thesis was that capitalists, in their search for profits, tend to favor de-skilling with an aim to create easily controllable work processes, in which human labor has been degenerated to complement machine labor in a predictable way. Thus, the quality of work is, at most, secondary concern for employers; they do not aim to create upskilled work with potential for good work, since it does not add value to production processes. An interesting question is, thus, whether such negative approach to good work still prevails or whether the contemporary working life contains real incentives for employers to create better, upskilled work. In this section, the question is approached from the perspective of labor political debate and in section 3.2 from the perspective of the post-bureaucratic transition. It is interesting to see how different conclusions are reached by these two approaches; the labor political debate sees no future
for good work while the advocates of the post-bureaucratic models see no other way for competitiveness.

Based on a comparative analysis on the historical situations, where good work has been created, and the situation in the contemporary milieu, Durand (1998) argues that the creation of better work is very unlikely. Employers’ initiatives have been essential in the creation of good work. Earlier, managers have concentrated on the creation of better work especially when there has been a shortage of labor force. Good work has been developed in order to attract potential employees to jobs that previously have not been in favor among job seekers due to their monotony or machine induced pressure. Trade unions and employee representatives close to the shop floor have instead traditionally paid more attention to the improvements in physical working conditions and the terms of employment. In the current situation of high unemployment (in Europe), management will not face the necessity for the creation of better work and the trade union movement will be – even more than before – interested in securing jobs and creating employment rather than demanding improvements in the quality of work. In short, there will be very few voices demanding better work.

Also Springer (1999) writing about the German automobile industry maintains that an organization’s possibilities to create good work are restricted by its environment. According to Springer, the competition situation in the labor and product markets determines the way work organizations are rationalized and how work is developed. When competition is strong in the labor markets, companies have to offer attractive work contents and conditions in order to be able to recruit and retain employees of high quality. Similarly, when competition is strong in the product markets, companies have to concentrate on producing high quality products with lower prices than the competitors. In other words, productivity becomes the priority. The Swedish Sociotechnical approaches to work organizations (stressing the quality of work) in the 1970s and the 1980s were meant to respond to the strong competition in labor markets (see e.g. Forslin, 1990). Similar development took place also in Germany in the 1970s and early 1980s, and new post-tayloristic forms of work organization were discussed. The current priority of companies in Germany and elsewhere according to Springer (1999) is productivity rather than the quality of work, since there is a surplus of labor force and possibility for companies to export their operations to low labor cost countries. The qual-
ity of work is not, consequently, an issue on its own, but rather in the context of productivity: whether participative organizational forms or non-participative organizational forms should be used in achieving higher productivity.

Furthermore, according to some researchers the change from the mass production dominance to the information technology dominance may actually create dynamics opposing work improvements. First of all, capital accumulation is very different in the information technology society from the capital accumulation of the mass production society. According to Durand (1998), information technology related production does not lead to similar investments (and, consequently, job creation) as the mass production of durable goods. Secondly, information technologies lead to productivity increases and new possibilities for work organizational rationalizations. All in all, these developments lead to labor surplus. This surplus might be leveled through work sharing, but Durand argues that since the legislative and political systems do not encourage work sharing, it will not take place. As a consequence, the groups of unemployed and overemployed are created. While some find it difficult to find any job, those who have jobs suffer from too high amount of work and too high pace of work.

3.2 From bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic working life

In this section, a more complex perspective on the changing world of work is explored. This perspective does not only try to capture the change in the work reality of single individuals and their opportunities at work, but speaks more broadly of a paradigmatic change – a change from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic working life. The aim of this section is to discuss the movement from the bureaucratic logic to the post-bureaucratic one and to collect together researchers’ ideas on how the post-bureaucratic working life affects employees. Consequently, this chapter provides a »state of the art« image of a paradigm change scene that also I am trying to illuminate. The other chapters of this thesis, when discussing the post-bureaucratic features of work and working life, shall often refer to this section.

Changes at work and work organizations do not take place in a vacuum, but both influence and are influenced by larger societal changes. In the current situation, the question hardly is whether the societies have changed from those of the recent past, but rather how to capture all intertwined changes? Heckscher and Applegate (1994) review the societal changes from the American perspective and figure 3.1 presents the issue areas of
their review; issue areas that many other researchers also share (see e.g. Patterson, 2001; Sparks et al., 2001; Noon & Blyton, 1997; Emery, 1977). The arrows in the figure connecting the change patterns demonstrate both causal and influence linkages. For instance, organizational restructuring has partly been caused by foreign competition; a good example is the spread of Total Quality Management-ideas from Japan to the US along with the increasing competition between the two countries, see e.g. Deming (1986). The opportunities created by ICT and diverse workforce available also contribute to organizational restructuring. Deregulation has, in its turn, made organizational restructuring an imperative; the old structures have not corresponded to the new opportunities in the deregulated markets. Similar »stories« could be built between all the different elements in figure 3.1.

![Diagram](image.png)

*Figure 3.1. Societal and economic changes building pressure on bureaucracy.*

All the changes identified, Heckscher and Applegate (1994) claim, create a pressure for the bureaucratic organizational logic which runs into trouble when trying to respond to challenges presented by deregulation, new technology, extending geographic competition area, etc. Consequently, organizations find themselves in a situation where the logic of their operation (i.e. bureaucracy) does not anymore correspond to the logic of their operation environment and, gradually, organizations start to change to correspond to their surroundings. Forslin (1996) has identified a consequent paradigm
shift in which the characteristics of a mass production system transform into the characteristics of an IT-system. Centralization and bureaucratization turn into decentralization and de-bureaucratization; standardization and collectivism turn into diversity and individualism; the focus of technology applications change from automating work to informing an employee, and fragmentation and specialization of work (taylorism) is replaced by the integration of tasks and holistic approach to organizing.

Figure 3.2. The paradigm shift from the mass production logic (left) to the IT-logic (right) according to Forslin (1996).

However, when speaking about post-bureaucratic organizations and working life, the problem is that one is speaking about something that does not exist yet. The bureaucratic form and logic exist; it is complex but, at least to some degree, what it is and how it works is known. This cannot be said about post-bureaucracy. Heckscher (1994) notes that a true change from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy means that many things have to change. Just as the western societies have recently been in their every detail characterized by the bureaucratic, mass production logic; similarly, a post-bureaucratic society should be defined by post-bureaucracy. Even though such societal and economic changes as described in figure 3.1 are taking place, much of the current society is nevertheless still built on the bureaucratic ideal. Just as a simple example, take the idea of housing in the western society. The bureaucratic logic has made it possible for young people to buy a house with borrowed money – it has been a fair assumption that work in the bureaucratic realm is for a long term, long enough to make it
possible to reduce a housing loan steadily year after year. The early indications of the turbulent post-bureaucratic world show that such prospects do not exist anymore. Thus, if we are moving from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy, the logic of housing will also have to change. Within society and organizations the change is clearly only on its way. Heckscher and Applegate (1994) predict that in the current, transitional situation many different kinds of problems can be detected as post-bureaucratic problems emerge and bureaucratic solutions are applied to them, and vice versa.

### 3.2.1 Bureaucracy - The power vested on a role

The bureaucratic ideal type was initially conceptualized by Max Weber (1864–1920). Weber captured the bureaucratic ideal in words and, in the real world, by that time the bureaucratic approach had already taken hold of the western society. Bureaucracy did not only become to define the way the economic production functions; it defined and still defines much of the society in general, its customs and opportunities.

The etymology of work »bureaucracy« is revealing. If translated word-for-word, »bureaucracy« means power (cratia) originating from an office or a desk (bureau). In this sense, bureaucracy is often explained to mean the use of power from offices (by white-collar employees) with the help of »red-tape«, i.e. written papers containing rules. Another way to understand the word »bureaucracy« is to refer to the other meaning of word »office«. Office also means an employee’s position in an organization. Understood in this way, in a bureaucratic system each person has the power vested on her office. In other words, the basis of power is the office (the official position or role) not the person or her personal attributes. Thus, power can be seen to be distributed within an organization, but in very different measures; certain positions carry much power, while in others power is only marginal mostly influencing an organization’s operations when gathered for a collective action. Furthermore, power is depersonalized; the office has the power, not the person.

Weber defined bureaucracy, as an ideal type, to have the following characteristics (see e.g. Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991; Weber in Gerth & Mills, 1958):

- **Hierarchy**: An order system of superiors and subordinates in which the former supervise the latter.
- **Rules**: The behavior of superiors and subordinates is regulated by written rules which are quite stable and hard to change. In order to be
able to function in a certain bureaucratic role, a person has to master the relevant rules. Consequently, she needs the necessary professional training.

- **Impersonality:** Huczynski and Buchanan (1991) use the Latin proverb »Sine ira et studio« – without hatred or passion – to describe this characteristic of bureaucracy. The superiors and subordinates behave according to their bureaucratic roles, not as individual persons.

- **Appointed Officials:** Employees at all the levels are appointed based on their technical, professional qualifications.

- **Full-time Officials:** The office a person is occupying means usually a full time job.

- **Career Officials:** Persons aim to move through different positions in the organization towards the »higher« levels of bureaucratic power. This movement creates a career.

- **Private/Public Split:** The person has different resources at her disposal at work and at home. Thus, official resources are separate from private resources. Weber writes (in Gerth & Mills, 1985, p. 197): »...the executive office is separated from the household, business from private correspondence, and business assets from private fortunes.«

All in all, bureaucracy relies on the idea that everything can be rationally predefined and planned. The human sides of the equation – the messy feelings, aspirations, and abilities as well as individual personalities and variances – are either understood to have unwanted influences on work processes or swept under the carpet as non-relevant. A person and an office are strictly separated from each other and, consequently, each job can be predefined without any reference to the person who will occupy the job. Salary or wage is paid for the office, not for the person; in other words, the overalls are rewarded, not the person inside of them (Kira, 2000b).

The benefits of bureaucracy are obvious. If the aim of the 20th century industrialized world was to create economic and social systems founded on mass production and consumption; bureaucracy provided the map and vehicle for that. However, already Weber was very critical of bureaucracy and, later on, for instance Heckscher (1994) has listed several fundamental problems in the ideal type bureaucracy. All these problems, more or less, relate to the fact that most people within bureaucracies are only present there, not truly engaged in their operations and development. Obviously, such design wastes intelligence; only few in the organization are supposed
to use their intelligence and creativity and even these few “lucky ones”
within their clearly defined bureaucratic boxes. Also, bureaucratic or-
organizations change despite the people instead of with them causing change
pains (Vansina, 1998). The “lower” levels of an organization have no
opportunities to adapt to gradually piling change demands within the or-
ganization and its surroundings, since information on the need for and
urgency of a change is not transmitted to them. Consequently, the only way
to make a change is through top-down directed re-structuring that catches
most of the organization’s employees by surprise. Restructuring is also
inevitable and the only way to change a bureaucracy, since structure is the
determining factor of an organization’s operation. If things do not work, the
structure is wrong and it has to be changed. Finally, Heckscher (1994)
notes that bureaucracies due to their logic seem to have a build-in tenen-
cy to deteriorate. For instance, in a bureaucracy there has to be a rule for
everything. Consequently, as years go by, rules accumulate and become im-
possible for anyone to master anymore. Many of the rules also become
“sanctified”; in other words, they have always been there, so they have to be
applied regardless of their purposefulness, legitimacy, or effectiveness.
Thus, celebrated rationality is gradually replaced by irrational traditions.
Also, if a mistake is made in the lower levels of a bureaucracy, the logical re-
sponse is to move responsibility to a higher level. Over time, the opera-
tional responsibility migrates higher and higher in the organization.
Heckscher (ibid.) calls this deteriorating bureaucracy.

As stated above, the logic, the benefits, and downsides of bureaucracy are
well known, but the post-bureaucratic model is only gradually taking its
shape. We still do not know what it is, whether it will ever become as pow-
eerful as bureaucracy, and how it will change the working life. In this section,
however, some existing conceptual approaches to post-bureaucratic para-
digm are reviewed. Most of the references used below are only indirectly
related to empirical observations; since the ideal type post-bureaucracy
does not exist, it is not possible to study it comprehensively and exhaus-
tively. The references used here are instead more conceptual in their
nature; the authors discuss their notions on post-bureaucracy originating
from many, various research projects. In the case studies of this thesis, how-
ever, empirical evidence on the post-bureaucratic working life is explored
and evaluated further.
3.2.2 The characteristics of the post-bureaucratic working life, organizations, and work

According to Heckscher (1994), the carrying idea of a post-bureaucratic organization is shared responsibility; in a post-bureaucratic organization, everyone takes responsibility for the success of the whole. In terms of Mohrman and Cohen (1995), people have come out of their boxes. The bureaucratic idea of "that is not my job" is replaced by the post-bureaucratic idea "we are in this together, we all have to do all we can". Thus, the post-bureaucratic organizations seem to differ from the traditional, bureaucratic organizations from their spirit and structure. The prescribed "boxes" for employees are replaced with more and more flexible structures in which hierarchy does exist, but has a different role when compared to the bureaucratic organizations; it has been opened up for continuous discussions between different parties. As predefined structures and role scripts do not anymore function flexibly enough in the complex situation, structures and roles have to be left "open" and people within structures and roles need to engage in continuous negotiations on how things are done – what are the goals, tasks, and roles (Hage, 1995; Heckscher, 1994).

According to Howard (1995), organizations that will prosper in the post-bureaucratic milieu know how to find the edge of chaos. Howard relies on the Complexity theory (see e.g. Marion, 1999) and states that a successful system exists at the edge of chaos or, in other words, in the balance point between differentiation and integration. In this state, the parts of the system are maximally differentiated (there are no general rules or bureaucratic boxes that bind them), but at the same time, these differentiated parts are optimally integrated to support each other. Mohrman and Cohen (1995), though more concrete, share Howard’s stance and state that a lateral, team-based organization (corresponding to Howard’s successful post-bureaucratic organization) is characterized by, for instance, great interdependency of highly skilled employees - people depend on people all over the organization, not just on those whose professional code and background they share. Howard (1995) further characterizes a post-bureaucratic organization by empowerment. Empowerment has often been emphasized, Howard argues, because of its motivational consequences.

1 Hage (1995), Howard (1995), and Mohrman & Cohen (1995) all use concept "post-industrial". For the sake of uniformity, in this chapter (and in the thesis in general) the concept "post-bureaucratic" is used.
The aim has been to improve performance through empowerment and motivation it creates with employees. Empowerment may, however, have beneficial effects also since it enables learning – empowered job design increases potential for learning. Referring to the demand/control-model (discussed in chapter 2), Howard also argues that empowered work may lead in the long-term to stress tolerance. Karasek and Theorell (1990) namely predict that a continuous high demand – high control state leads to feelings of mastery and buffers the experienced stress.

The move from bureaucratic paradigm to post-bureaucracy has also clear effects on the nature of work. Howard (1995) states that the post-bureaucratic work is characterized by totally new set of demands when compared to the bureaucratic work. She proposes following characteristics for post-bureaucratic work, clearly »upskilled« work as discussed above:

- **Work is cognitive.** Knowledge work will increase and, soon, most of the work will be cognitive in its nature. Furthermore, the knowledge content of work expands from simple cognitive tasks (e.g. correcting variances) to complex cognitive tasks (e.g. preventing variances).

- **Work is complex.** As the environment gets more and more complex, also work has to become complex to correspond to it. For instance, the earlier one-size-fits-all solutions of job descriptions will not do anymore in the future. Instead, each and every person has to negotiate her role in the workplace. Each job has to be defined and re-defined separately and by the persons having that job.

- **Work is fluid.** The boundaries of work disappear to accommodate the need for rapid changes in production/service processes.

- **Work is uncertain.** Everything in an organization has to be on the move, from its structure to single jobs and tasks. Structures and designs have to be continuously changed in order to respond to customers’ demands and developments in production/service opportunities. At task level, the cognitive nature of work makes it unpredictable as problems to be solved become less and less predictable.

- **Work is interconnected.** Information technology has made it possible for employees to create networks within and external to the organization. Within an organization, the output of a single individual is not so important anymore, but rather the output of groups and teams determines the success. Consequently, an individual’s job becomes less important, more important are the potential roles an employee may take to function within different teams and networks. Mohrman and
Cohen (1995) take this point even further and underline the importance of commitment to work and co-workers. Only such commitment takes employees through the special efforts needed to succeed in complex, interconnected work. Hage (1995) emphasizes the impossibility to predefine these interconnected relations. Instead of relying on predefined role scripts, people will have to engage in continuous negotiations on their roles.

- **Work is invisible.** A transition is taking place from visible manual labor to invisible cognitive performance. Also other characteristics listed above, such as the fluidity and uncertainty of work, make it harder to predict, see, and capture.

### 3.2.3 Boundaries and leadership in the post-bureaucratic realm

The disappearance of bureaucratic boundaries does not mean that differences in people’s skills and competencies, authorities, and perspectives vanish. All these differences still exist in organizations and if they are not managed somehow, organizations probably will find it very difficult to function. Employees will get lost in their boundaryless organization and fail to combine their collective efforts into productive work. Consequently, employees will have to try and figure out their differing roles and relationships in the boundaryless organizations, when these roles and relationships are no longer pre-defined. Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1993) suggest that new boundaries depicting different roles and relationships in post-bureaucratic organizations should be recognized, and these boundaries are more psychological than organizational in their nature. Each day, employees and managers meet at these boundaries and their ability to manage them determines how well an organization is able to function. Hirschhorn and Gilmore (ibid.) distinguish the following four types of boundaries, each of which defines some aspect of employees’ roles and relationships:

- **Authority boundary.** At the authority boundary, managers and employees clarify their respective authorities. In flexible, post-bureaucratic organizations authority boundary is difficult since it is not fixed. Sometimes, an employee may have to challenge managers and, equally often, managers have to be able to lead and still leave the door open for equal two-way communication.

- **Task boundary.** Employees meet at task boundaries when they have to divide up work and coordinate their efforts. In flexible organizations, this has to be done continuously and the challenge is the growing
amount of contacts to others whose work and resources one cannot control in anyway.

- **Political boundary.** The differences in interests and perspectives do not disappear in post-bureaucratic organizations, but rather it becomes increasingly important that all the different interests are allowed to come forth in negotiations for the best possible result. The challenge for employees is to defend their own interests in these continuous negotiations without compromising the coherence and effectiveness of the organization.

- **Identity boundary.** Even in post-bureaucratic organizations, employees belong to groups and meet people who are members of other groups created based on occupational, functional, geographical, and other such factors. At the identity boundary, the challenge is to belong to a group without underestimating others and while staying open to them.

In other words, Hirschhorn and Gilmore (ibid.) state that in post-bureaucratic, boundaryless and box-less organizations, employees drift daily to these four types of boundaries. They have to continuously enact authority, task, political, and identity relationships in order to be able to understand their own work and the structure of the whole organization. The new boundaries are also highly interdependent. Problems at one boundary may lead to an over-emphasis of some other boundary. For instance, a group that is empowered and left then without any external authority (i.e. a case of lacking authority boundary) may turn inwards; enact high identity boundaries around it in order to contain the anxieties caused by the overly open situation.

The question of authority or power is by definition extremely important in the post-bureaucratic systems. As was discussed above, bureaucracy refers to a certain type of division of power within an organization, i.e. power is vested on an office. Movement from bureaucratic systems to post-bureaucratic ones should mean a change in organizational power relations and transform the basis of power, at least to some degree. According to Hirschhorn (1997), the two-way nature of the leadership process becomes emphasized in the post-bureaucratic organizations as the psychodynamics of leadership change. In the post-bureaucratic situation, no-one has the right answers. Consequently, managers cannot symbolize certainty, confidence, and power anymore as they interact with other employees in mak-
ing sense of the turbulent work reality. In this situation, all the employees have to rely in greater extent on their own personal authority and, thus, employees’ role transforms from submission to authority into a greater psychological presence at workplace in an open interaction with their peers and superiors. Thus, Hirschhorn (ibid.) describes the leadership process in a post-bureaucratic organization as a process in which balance between person and role is of importance. In a post-bureaucratic organization, a leader may not anymore hide behind her role. In order to get employees involved and to create trust in the organization, she has to share her passion and enthusiasm, show openly what she thinks and feels (to involve her person). On the other hand, more than ever, leaders have the responsibility for creating such structures, rules, and procedures that create a clear and safe framework for employees to openly participate in the activities of the organization.

Relating to the questions of authority, Hirschhorn (ibid.) makes a clear distinction between hierarchy and bureaucracy in the current transition away from the bureaucratic model. Hierarchy was above defined as one characteristic of bureaucracy but the two concepts, according to Hirschhorn, are not synonymous to each other. Hierarchy stands for a structure, division of labor and authority between different positions and levels in hierarchy. The positive side of hierarchy is the clarity of authority relations; a person in an authority position has also the authority to relinquish her authority to someone else. Thus, hierarchy, at best, makes it possible for everyone to participate in one way or another to the leadership process. Bureaucracy, as stated above, means a certain form of using power – the power is based on a person’s position. Hirschhorn perceives this leading in practice to a situation where a person does not have the power, but her role/position has it. At worse, this leads to totally depersonalized decision-making; rules govern, not people. Hirschhorn (ibid, p. 58) writes:

Authority is now vested in rules rather than relationships…

In the current transition, there is a danger that irrational bureaucracies replace well-functioning hierarchies. Risks and dangers of operation grow as turbulence increases at the boundaries of organizations. For a manager it may be tempting to, instead of starting to build an organization based on trust and openness, tighten the grip and raise new rules and procedures to get things under control. In this sense, bureaucracy can be seen as »a
regressed form of hierarchy«, a power structure where rules govern instead of people and where relations based participative and clear hierarchy do not exist (Hirschhorn, ibid.).

3.2.4 The post-bureaucratic ideal type
Above, some scattered notions on post-bureaucratic organizations and working life in general have been reviewed, but these notions create a sense of post-bureaucracy rather than an ideal type. Heckscher (1994) aims to present an ideal type for a post-bureaucratic organization (in the spirit of weberian ideal type bureaucracy), and his ideal type nicely binds together also the discussion above. Heckscher distinguishes several characteristics of an ideal type post-bureaucracy, something that he calls »an interactive organization«. First, in a post-bureaucratic organization interaction is founded on an institutionalized dialogue. The authorities, rules, and traditions of bureaucracies are replaced by institutionalized dialogue, the aim of which is to create a consensus. Institutionalized dialogue is based on trust and influence, not on power. Thus, everyone with an argument has a right to participate in the dialogue. In a bureaucratic organization, many employees do not have arguments; how could they make reasonable arguments, when they can at most understand what is inside their »box«? Thus, a post-bureaucratic organization has to contain also means that enable its every member to possess such information and resources as to be able to make an argument. There has to be, for instance, a shared understanding of the organization’s direction and information on the current situation available for all, this information also including others’ competencies and clear performance standards. Heckscher (ibid.) holds institutionalized dialogue as an uncompromising characteristic of the post-bureaucratic model and warns against »false« post-bureaucratic models in which empowerment or de-bureaucratization is used only to widen the operational boxes of people, not to create dialogue between them.

The bureaucratic rules are replaced by principles as guidelines in a post-bureaucratic organization (Heckscher, ibid.). Bureaucratic rules tell employees what to do; post-bureaucratic principles instead state the reasons that underlie the rules. Furthermore, there are also guidelines for how to make decisions. In bureaucracies, the ways to make decisions are dictated by structures; only individuals in certain positions in the hierarchy have a right to make a decision. In a post-bureaucratic organization, this is not so clear cut anymore. Employees engage in institutionalized dialogue and
have to be able to make decisions within it. Thus, Heckscher calls for »meta-decision-making mechanisms«, each organization has to decide how it will decide! He also perceives these meta-decision-making mechanisms to be processes rather than structures; the process involves all the important stakeholders, creates a dialogue between them and, eventually, aims to find a consensus on a path forward. A post-bureaucratic organization is also characterized by boundarylessness – dialogue extends outside the organization involving those stakeholders that are relevant for the dialogue at hand. Finally, the interactive post-bureaucratic organizations are dynamic creatures; a post-bureaucratic organization is always changing and aware of that. There is no useless and energy consuming strive for stability which never would be achieved anyway in a living and interacting organization.

3.2.5 How do post-bureaucratic work and organizations influence people?

Some authors (e.g. Hirschhorn, 1997) commenting on the post-bureaucratic working life perceive the increasing personalization as the main reward for the post-bureaucratic work. In the post-bureaucratic working life, employees do not anymore have to submit themselves to the strict rules and role prescriptions. Instead, they have an opportunity for a greater and more extensive psychological presence at work, as whole human beings with feelings, ideas, creativity, and preferences. But even if this all holds true, it seems that there also are either inherent problems in the post-bureaucratic working life or temporary problems that emerge in the current transition from the bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic working life (see Casey, 1996). Post-bureaucratic work and work organizations are characterized by employees’ possibilities to both participate in negotiations at work (and, thus, control it) and to develop at work (this is the corner stone of organizational success). Earlier research has identified precisely these elements to characterize good work (see e.g. Vartiainen, 1994; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Emery & Thorsrud, 1969). But still people burn out. Why is that? In this section, some conceptual ideas from other researchers are presented on the consequences of post-bureaucratic working life on individuals.

Hage (1995) suggests that in post-bureaucratic organizations characterized by complexity and rapid changes, people cannot rely anymore on predefined role scripts. Actually, he postulates that this characterizes the
whole post-industrial society and its different institutions. For instance, also in families, people have to commonly create their role scripts that suit the unique situation of the family. There are no standard families, no standard-mothers and – fathers, and that is why these roles have to be created within each family. Hage believes that most of the social and personal problems in the contemporary societies are due to role failures; people are incapable of creating their own, unique role scripts and get lost when there are no ready-made scripts available. He writes (ibid., p. 510):

The shift from an industrial to a post-industrial society has been too quick to allow many people to adjust to the new demands for rapid flexibility and continuous negotiation about role expectations.

Thus, one reason for burnout and stress may be role failures due to missing understanding of the need to actively engage in defining and negotiating one’s multiple work and private life roles. However, Hage perceives a possibility for emotional exhaustion also in situations where people have realized the importance of role negotiations. Continuous role re-definition demands emotional energy. The initial detection of burnout took place in the care sector (see e.g. Maslach & Leiter, 1997), where employees are engaged in continuous interaction with patients, relatives, and other care personnel. Such sensitive, sometimes vital, interaction cannot be carried out purely through prescribed roles and that, the early research on burnout pointed out, leads to exhaustion. Now, in the society moving towards post-bureaucracy, most of the people are facing the same challenge. Furthermore, Hage states that solving un-predefined daily problems without pre-existing scripts and models to help in that demands creativity and creativity is hard work; it demands energy. Thus, people may burn out or become stressed due to the relentless demands to be creative and solve one untrivial situation after another as well as due to the lack of easy answers.

Also changes in leadership and authority issues when moving from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic systems challenge individuals alone and collectively. Some researchers perceive that post-bureaucratic systems create a leadership vacuum. For instance, Krackhardt (1994) points out that people do need leaders and in post-bureaucratic organizations leaders are missing. Thus, people more than before face the demanding situations alone without formal support. Be as it may, the nature of leadership is sure to change along with the post-bureaucratic transition. Both leaders and the
led will have to demonstrate a greater degree of openness even with the threat of seeming incompetent - and ashamed of it - when not having all the answers. Hirschhorn (1997) perceives a complex psychodynamics to emerge in a post-bureaucratic organization mainly due to the fact that, more than before, employees and their managers have to be psychologically present in the organization. They cannot hide behind roles, but have to engage their whole person to open dialogue within the organization. In table below, Hirschhorn’s predictions for some affective aspects in social systems are summarized. As can be seen in the table, the affective states between people become more exposed and, potentially, more demanding for all involved in a post-bureaucratic system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective state</th>
<th>Bureaucracy</th>
<th>Post-bureaucracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependency</td>
<td>Dependency between managers and employees is depersonalized, everyone acts according to their role.</td>
<td>Both employees and managers depend on each other and the dependencies relate to persons, not roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envy</td>
<td>The allocation of resources in an organization depends on positions and envy can be projected to the positions, not to people.</td>
<td>The allocation of resources depends on what is prioritized by the management. If the management does not share openly their passions and priorities, envious relations may emerge directly between people. Favoritism is a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdication of authority</td>
<td>Authority rests on bureaucratic rules. In a way, managers have abdicated their authority to rules and cannot anymore share their leadership through relationships.</td>
<td>Managers contain the potential conflicts between departments and represent interests and goals of the whole organization. The authority is not abdicated but shared in relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above Hage’s (1995) worry for the difficulty of role negotiations needed in the post-bureaucratic realm was discussed. Hirschhorn (1997) agrees with Hage and states that the increasing needs for openness and integration at workplaces may backfire and lead to the rise of anxious feelings rather than openness. It is not easy to be close to each other and openly vulnerable. An essential factor, according to Hirschhorn, in creating post-bureaucratic
communities is a wider cultural setting considering interdependence as morally meaningful. Hirschhorn also argues that such a cultural setting is emerging. The fixation to authority structures, so characteristic for the bureaucratic society, is gradually giving way to another type of society in which, as Hage (1995) writes, social roles are negotiated, not predetermined by existing social models. From these negotiations rises the clearer understanding of one's own authority and the authority of others, the respective roles. People become more aware of the complex relations around themselves, less fixated to deserve the approval of an authority, and more open for integration. Thus, Hage warns for the difficulty of role negotiations, while Hirschhorn states that a new open culture will rise from these negotiations and, eventually, also spread to workplaces. The negotiations take place and that is why they become possible.

While Hirschhorn (1997) concentrates on the psychodynamic aspects of post-bureaucratic working life, Gordon (1994) looks at post-bureaucracy from psychosocial perspective. Gordon's (ibid.) main worry for the post-bureaucratic organization is the fact that such organizations have a danger of becoming a battle ground for conflicts raising from quite natural psychosocial and social processes. In a post-bureaucratic organization, everything is founded on interaction – the organization is created, controlled, and led through interaction. However, in an organization it is impossible for everyone to interact with everyone else; consequently, subgroups start to form and more or less informal leaders for these groups also. These two elements, subgroups and their leaders, lead to the emergence of counteractive processes. Leaders will strengthen groups' identities and strong identities lead to competition; an »us – they« setting has become formed. The competition between groups also strengthens leaders' identity further as the group members rely on their leaders in »winning the competition«. The leaders become all more concerned of maintaining the group. The competition between groups leads to inefficiencies, since the question is not only about »which is the best group«, but also who gets the resources and whose needs a prioritized. Gordon (ibid.) writes that often organizations try to circumvent this problem by allocating resources equally between groups, but this leads to inefficiencies since groups have different resource needs and operating opportunities. Dividing resources equally only leads to wasting some of them; who would not be aware of the »We have to invest on something before the end of the fiscal year; if we have any money left, they will cut our budget for the next year«-syndrome. Both dysfunctionalities of
post-bureaucratic organizations identified by Gordon - competition between sub-groups and inefficient use of resources - may be perceived leading to imbalances between people and their work and, thus, potentially consuming their resources (see chapter 2).

Krackhardt (1994) also notes that post-bureaucratic organizations (as defined by, for instance, Heckscher above) fall prey to their inherent impossibility; it simply is not possible for a relatively large social system to be founded on dialogue and interaction - the amount of possible contacts is simply too high. Furthermore, if it is left for individual employees to decide whom to contact, will they know who actually is the right person for them to interact with? Also, if a person has gained a role as an expert on something in an organization, it is very likely that such person will receive a large amount of contacts from all over the organization; the challenge is to deal with the concurrent contacts. Krackhardt also questions the possibility for boundaryless interaction in an organization and cites research showing how people find it difficult to interact with others physically remote from them. This seems to be the case even when collaboration between these people would be vital for the successful completion of a task.

Hirschhorn (1997) and Mohrman and Cohen (1995) raise an extremely relevant point relating to the relationship between employees and post-bureaucratic organizations. The post-bureaucratic work, as defined above, demands much from employees. They have to be committed and multi-skilled, carry a larger responsibility for collective work and work for the best of the whole organization. At the same time, job security and possibilities for career development offered by organizations may be diminishing. Career development becomes difficult since, hierarchically, there are not so many ladders to climb. Job security does not necessarily deteriorate, but fast speed of industries and rapid changes in the ownership relations of companies make it hard for many companies to promise their existence or stability of their business areas. On the other hand, the large amount of downsized people indicates that job security is also undermined by employers’ conscious decisions (see e.g. Ciulla, 2000). The question is, thus, how it is possible for employees to become committed and loyal, when organizations - in the long run - seem to have so little to offer. The psychological contract between an employer and employee seems to be in transition also.

Finally, the discussion on the human and social consequences of post-bureaucratic working life above is based on the idea that post-bureaucratic working life is somehow emerging spontaneously and inevitably rather
than through conscious planning from employers’ part. Ciulla (ibid.) ques-
tions the inevitability of contemporary working life and perceives some in-
dications of very traditional management control attempts over employees
also in the developments during the past decades. She traces the develop-
ment from Scientific Management to Human Relations movement and
»well-fare capitalism« and to the »enchanted organizations« with team-
work, culture, and consultants. According to her, this development has
aimed at securing employees’ behavior that in the best possible way fulfills
the business objectives of employers. On the way, the understanding of
people has changed and, thus, also the »tools« to ensure desired behaviors
from employees have changed, but the aim has been the same - to get the
correct effort and input from employees with as little payback in return as
possible. Ciulla (ibid.) states that the contemporary working life with con-
tradictory trends of, on the one hand, enriched jobs, flat hierarchies, and
empowerment, and on the other hand, downsizing and increasing salary
differentials between managers and employees, may indicate that employ-
ees are being manipulated once again. She writes (ibid., p. 157):

By making people »feel good« about their work, employers may
have wittingly or unwittingly distracted workers from the what’s-in-
it-for-me question.

The post-bureaucratic working life and coping with it
The post-bureaucratic organizations, thus, pose challenges to the skills and
personal attributes of people involved. A person prospering in the post-
bureaucratic working life is very different from a person prospering in the
bureaucratic working life. As work changes, also workers change and have
to change to be able to deal with the new demands of work. Hage (1995)
postulates that as institutions, e.g. work organizations, become more com-
plex, also individuals have to possess more complex minds and selves in
order to be able to deal with the demands set by the institutions. Further-
more, as the institutions change rapidly, the individuals in them need to be
creative and flexible. Mohrman and Cohen (1995) list the following factors
that underpin the ability of people to work in the emerging organizations:

• competencies: Technical competencies become more and more im-
portant, but also other competence areas gain in importance. The
whole notion of job competence expands to include planning and set-
ting goals as well as negotiating one’s tasks and goals with co-workers
Hage (1995) also underlines the need to master symbolic communication. Interaction with others, the subtle negotiations on tasks, roles, and goals necessitates the understanding of non-verbal, emotional messages sent by the other party.

- **Cognition:** Cognitive demands will expand in the emerging organizations beyond special knowledge; people have to learn to understand the ideas and intellectual frameworks of others as well. Furthermore, Hage (1995) suggests that, as pre-defined role scripts do not exist anymore, each person will have to create creative and flexible solutions to unique daily problems. Thus, creative minds and flexibility are needed.

- **Caring and Commitment:** In order to be internally motivated, employees have to be committed to their work. The personal goals and sense of Self become intertwined with work role. Caring for other employees and being committed to working together with them goes hand in hand with work commitment, since so much of work is interdependent.

The authors referred to above also present some suggestions for collective coping with the post-bureaucratic work in the post-bureaucratic setting. For instance, Gordon (1994) responds to his own question »Bureaucracy: can we do better?« by stating, »We can do worse.« In other words, he questions the necessity to create post-bureaucratic systems. Krackhardt (1994) instead is convinced that both highly bureaucratic and highly post-bureaucratic organizations are inherently ineffective. Instead, he states (ibid., p. 221):

> Perhaps, then, there is a curvilinear relation between the degree of interaction of an organization and the organization’s effectiveness.

In other words, the relation between the degree of interaction (from little interaction in a bureaucratic system to a high degree of interaction in a post-bureaucratic system) and organizational effectiveness could be described with a curve depicted in figure 3.3. Even though Krackhardt uses organizational effectiveness as a dependent variable here, such connection may also exist between the degree of interaction and human resources regeneration since, according to Krackhardt, interaction sets high demands on all involved. Thus, one collective way to cope with the current situation is not to pursue the post-bureaucratic ideal defined by Heckscher (see
above), but rather to delimit the degree of interaction within an organization both for the sake of organizational effectiveness and employees' well-being.

Besides of the interaction related demands of the post-bureaucratic working life, such working life also challenges employees with clearly higher risks than the bureaucratic working life. Hirschhorn (1997) as well as Mohrman and Cohen (1995) state that the post-bureaucratic working life is characterized by a difficult balance. On the one hand, companies have to be »nimble and flexible« and they can offer less job security for their employees. At the same time, companies must build their success on creativity and interaction of employees. The question is, thus, how to support openness and commitment needed for creativity and interaction at the face of degreasing job security? Hirschhorn (1997) states that companies probably cannot do this on their own, but support is needed from wider political and social policies. Consequently, Hirschhorn calls for a new social safety net aimed at catching all the employees, not only the weakest and poorest ones as usually thought in relation to governmental safety nets. The psychological contract between an employee and a company needs,
thus, a third party; society and government designed to protect employees from the dark sides and risks of the post-bureaucratic working life. I would like to point out, however, that there are at least two problems relating to this approach. First, in some countries, such as for example Germany (see e.g. Kira, 2000b), the collective bargaining contracts between employers and employees are just that – the governmental labor politics is detached from them. Thus, the new three-party approach for contracts would necessitate change in the whole bargaining and governmental systems. Second, the worry of management control through «good work» (see Ciulla (2000) above) would become even more serious as the companies would be able to lawfully externalize their responsibility for labor force.

Hage’s (1995) worry for the post-bureaucratic society and workplaces relates to the challenges of continuous negotiations; people consume their energy when faced by continuous demands to define each new role relating to such institutions as family and work. Hage’s prescription to the existing situation is leisure time; people should have leisure time away from work, even away from family and other situations in which roles need to be creatively negotiated. The aim of this thesis, however, is to see how emotional energy could be replenished already at work. Leisure time as a solution is not sustainable; also experiences at work and within families should make life worth living.

3.3 Summary of the literature on the post-bureaucratic working life

The literature review above predicts a gradual movement from the Weberian bureaucracy to a new social and organizational logic still only known as a descendant of bureaucracy rather than by its own name. Intertwined changes in society and markets are foreseen to cause inevitable orchestrated changes also at workplaces. Many authors propose that the emerging post-bureaucratic organizations differ profoundly from bureaucratic organizations in their logic. Instead of bureaucratic rules and «offices», these emerging organizations are characterized by shared operational principles and interaction as the main steering mechanisms. Managers and employees redefine their respective roles, authorities, and tasks flexibly and continuously through dialogue, and everyone has the opportunity for a greater psychological presence at a workplace.

These characteristics of the post-bureaucratic type offer both positive and negative visions. For instance, Hirschhorn (1997) perceives the
greater psychological presence of employees as the major gain from the transition, while Hage (1994) suggests that precisely this need for personal role choices and negotiations is the source of so many current societal problems. Thus, for good or worse, it seems that the researchers agree on the fact that individuals will have to make greater efforts in the future on finding their own place and their own solutions in life. Many researchers also perceive the growing demand for cognitive skills – as work becomes more complex, more personal, more changing, people have to learn cognitively to deal with such work. Consequently, the post-bureaucratic (working) life seems to offer new possibilities for a greater personal growth and development, but whether we are able to reap these benefits is not self-evident. Basic and professional training systems, parental and societal upbringing face new challenges, as they should try and provide each individual with resources that enable prospering in such a changed world. At workplace level, many researchers seem to turn their eyes to managers who will have a decisive role in making sense of the complex working life within and outside an organization.

The review above also indicates that the emergence of post-bureaucratic interactive type may contain totally different kinds of developments than envisaged by the most positive observers, or it may not happen at all. For instance, Ciulla (2000) acknowledges the recent workplace developments towards intrinsically rewarding work, but includes them to the list of earlier management practices aimed at manipulating the best possible performance with lowest possible cost (see also chapter 2). Gordon (1994) and Krackhardt (1994) instead question the possibility of post-bureaucratic types; according to them, the interactive organizational type is fundamentally impossible, since it disregards many things known about the behavior of small or bigger groups or individuals. Individual and organizational level problems start to emerge, for instance, as people enter this unnatural environment demanding interaction with and commitment to a large number of people they never have met and maybe never will.

Researchers are also interpreting the development trends in very different ways. For instance, the Lean Production-paradigm envisaged being a virtual take off from taylorism by its advocates and the best possible development for both employees and organizations (see e.g. Adler, 1995; Womack et al., 1990), has according to its critics only intensified tayloristic pressures at workplace (see e.g. Delbridge, 1998; Parker & Slaughter, 1995) and continues to do so. Maybe this intense and well-known debate
between the proponents and opponents of Lean Production can be seen to predict the future debates between the proponents and opponents of post-bureaucracy as well. The review above indicates how positive and negative perspectives on post-bureaucracy are gradually emerging and the more wider spread the working life change on this dimension becomes, more intense the debate probably will get. However, already at this point, one can draw one lesson from the Lean Production debate; it probably does not matter what you have, but how you do it. In other words, post-bureaucracy as such cannot be either good or bad; how it will affect workplaces and societies depends totally on the way it becomes reality, in the nature of the total design rather than the name on the label.
This and the following chapter, two case studies carried out during 1999 - 2000 are described. The case studies form together the Empirical Study I of the thesis; i.e. the first stage empirical study carried out in order to explore the relevant research issue areas. Consequently, the aim of this and the next chapter is as openly as possible to explore work and work organizations as well as employees' and managers’ experiences on their work in order to gain ideas on consuming and regenerative aspects of work. The case studies of this Empirical Study I concentrate on companies operating in the »new economy«; in other words, the cases represent the new media and telecommunications sectors. This chapter presents the case in the new media company; the following chapter concentrates on the telecommunications company case.

The case study addressed in this chapter focuses on a Swedish new media company. Due to the wishes of the company, it will be kept anonymous and addressed by a cover name NewMedia. The company was established in mid-1990s, has now several subsidiaries in Europe, and is a part of an even larger media corporation. By the end of 2000 (the time of this case study), the whole corporation had several hundred employees. Initially, NewMedia contained both technical, the Internet oriented, departments as well as content production departments in Sweden. However, the company was eventually divided into two parts, one part concentrating on the content production and the other part on technical solutions. This case study concentrates on the former part, i.e. on the media content production. The employees of the content production are very young – the average age is in the mid-20s. About a half of the employees have a university
degree or a diploma from a professional school. The other half of the employees has started in the company right after the high-school.

On paper NewMedia’s organizational structure looks quite traditional; there are the traditional functional boxes and lines connecting these boxes. The main elements of the organizational chart are CEO and business control (directly »beneath« the CEO). Then there are the departments: Marketing, Sales, Customer Support, and Content Production. These departments have the following tasks:

- **Marketing** – This department is responsible for marketing the NewMedia-brand. The image of the company is created here. The employees of the department plan and realize different marketing campaigns as well as create and maintain the NewMedia-image.

- **Sales** – Most of the company’s income is generated here. The sales department sells advertisement space in the company’s media products to other companies.

- **Customer Support** – This department receives and responds to customer inquiries that come via telephone and e-mail; in other words, this department functions as a help desk towards the company’s customers.

- **Content Production** – This is the heart of NewMedia, the department where content production takes place. Various content products relating to for instance news and entertainment are created for the Internet.

Besides of these departments, there are also support functions at NewMedia, such as the technical services (to support the employees with technical questions) and the Human Resources Department.

The case study was carried out by interviewing two consecutive Human Resources managers. Both persons were interviewed twice. The first HR manager was interviewed in the early 2000 and the second HR manager in the late 2000. It was not possible to include employee interviewees to the study since the HR managers estimated that the employees had far too much to do to allow them to participate in interviews. For the interview questions posed to the HR managers, see Appendix 4; as noted in chapter 1, I formulated the interview subject areas based on my theoretical interest areas summarized especially in sections 2.1.4 and 2.2.4. For instance, the Maslach and Leiter (1997) burnout dimensions and how they look like at NewMedia were discussed in the interviews. Similarly I aimed to »probe« issues relating to comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of
work (Antonovsky, 1987b) at NewMedia. The interviews with the first HR manager concentrated quite broadly on the characteristics of work as well as organizational, managerial, and individual ways to cope with it. The interviews with the second HR manager focused more on the interesting organizational development of the company; in this case study the development is described and eventually compared to Larry Greiner’s model on organizational evolution (see Greiner, 1998). Also questions relating to the characteristics of work and coping with it as well as developing in it were discussed with the second interviewee. The interview results are presented in sections 4.1 through 4.4; i.e. these are the results from the vertical analysis. The vertical analysis on the interview material led to the following issue areas:
• The characteristics of work and coping with it (section 4.1).
• Personality as a resource at work (section 4.2).
• Managers’ role in the organization (section 4.3)
• The work organizational development at NewMedia (section 4.4).

Section 4.5 contains a discussion on the case. In other words, in that section I shall present the results from the horizontal analysis: the more overarching themes and my thoughts on them.

4.1 The characteristics of work and coping with work
Work at NewMedia is strongly affected by the markets in which the company operates. As the markets change, work changes also. The European markets in NewMedia’s main business area are very competitive. There is no clear market leader, but there are many companies fighting for the title. In this game very few medals are distributed; one has to become either the market leader or the flexible second in order to survive, one of the interviewees says. In this kind of competition, creativity is an extremely important

1 These questions are formulated to discuss an interviewee’s work situation. However, since the interviews with the NewMedia HR-managers concentrated on how they perceive the employees’ work to be in general at NewMedia (rather than how they experience their own work), I reformulated the questions during the interviews from this point of view. For instance, we discussed during the interviews not the negative and positive factors in the HR-managers’ work, but negative and positive factors in the employees’ work as the HR-managers perceive them to be.
asset for a company; even the most unlikely idea may prove to be the most successful one.

4.1.1 Changing work and ways to cope with it

The employees at NewMedia do not have job descriptions. It is not possible to write down job descriptions as the employees’ tasks keep on changing and developing. The company is changing the course all the time, and all its elements have to be extremely flexible. However, one of the interviewees says that at NewMedia the employees’ roles do not change that much over time, even though their tasks are in constant change. Initially, the roles did change as the company was going through its most rapid growth period. The employees took on new responsibilities as the company grew and enlarged its operation. Now, the role of a person - her contribution and meaning to the organization – stays much the same, but her tasks change as things in and around the organization change. The changing tasks pose challenges for the employees. The changes may for instance mean that a task or a project one has worked on may not be needed after all. For instance, the employees may have been working with the marketing campaign of a product that after all is not launched and the whole marketing effort is discarded. Something else has to be worked on instead. One of the interviewees says that an employee has to be a certain type of a person for not being destroyed by such changes (see below). The managers also have an important role in justifying the changes and helping the employees to see that the work they have done may be utilized in some other way later.

Non-predefined jobs mean that the employees have a lot of freedom in their work, which also means that there are very few boundaries that structure their work. According to the interviewees, such a lack of boundaries is the downside for not having formalized jobs. When there are certain boundaries in work and work is clearly defined, it is possible to say »I did my work today«. For instance, if work were clearly defined, an employee would know how many telephone calls she should make, how many emails she should write, etc. The problem with this kind of work is, however, that it does not allow the employees to be creative, to do more than what has been described. At NewMedia, work now allows decision-making and creativity, but the employees may find it hard to decide what tools and methods to use in their work and how to proceed. Also determining when a goal is reached is not easy. An interviewee says that some employees are able to deal with such uncertainties. For some, the open situation is frus-
trating and they need support. It is an important task for the managers to help those who have problems in setting their own boundaries. One of the interviewees also suggests that experience may help here. When a person becomes more experienced, she will be able to see that everything does not have to be done at the same time, things will clarify eventually.

For the employees working in such a changing work environment, it is important to have a clear goal – the employees should know where they are heading to and when they should be ready with their task. With the knowledge of a goal, the employees have a possibility to understand what is important and prioritize their work. But even if the goals were clear, there may be situations where an employee simply has too much to do. In that kind of a situation it is easy to get stuck and become paralyzed; the person just sits and does not know where to start. In such a situation, the leadership support or help from others is extremely important. The person should have an opportunity to sit down with someone and discuss the situation. With the help of that other, the situation could be made clearer – what are the priorities, where to start from.

One way to help the employees to deal with the lack of job definitions and externally set boundaries is to have development discussions. At NewMedia, the development discussions between an employee and a manager are carried out twice a year. In these discussions tools, methods, work tasks, and priorities are talked about as well as any other issues relating to work. A discussion should last at least an hour and a half. In the discussion, it is possible also to talk about the things an employee finds frustrating. The manager has a possibility to try to clarify the issues causing frustration and help the employee.

A further essential issue in helping the employees to cope with their work is feedback. Feedback can be given by someone else or one can receive feedback directly from one’s work. An interviewee says that at NewMedia the rapid speed of operation supports getting feedback directly from work: it is very gratifying to see one’s ideas becoming reality, media products, in a very short time. The interviewee suspects that in some other branches the direct feedback from work is much slower – for instance, a car designer has to wait a long time before she can see her design on the road. Also, if something with NewMedia’s products does not work, it is easy just to try again – to modify the product and see almost directly whether the second try is better.

When it comes to feedback from others, an interviewee notes that giving
feedback is not very easy – people are somehow afraid of giving too much credit to others. It is, however, important to give both positive and negative feedback to the employees and feedback should be given continuously, not just twice a year in the development discussions. The managers should be both situation and individual sensitive: sometimes more feedback is needed to support the employees and some need more feedback than others. An interviewee says that feedback is quite underestimated but, actually, by giving feedback the managers get back so much – the employees grow and develop with the help of feedback. The interviewee notes that feedback is like fertilizer to flowers! Giving feedback is, however, difficult since things are changing all the time and often nobody knows where the organization is heading to, what is and has been the right thing to do. Nevertheless, feedback is also important because it reduces the uncertainty the employees may feel, an interviewee notes. Feedback helps to know whether one did well or not. In a way, a manager giving feedback takes responsibility from the employees – she approves what they are doing and the employees know that they are on the right track. The employees can then continue to focus further on their tasks.

4.1.2 Creativity and encouraging it
An interviewee underlines that work at NewMedia should, first and foremost, be designed to encourage, give room to, and support the employees’ creativity. Creativity is an essential ingredient of the company’s success, since all the aspects of its products are based on ideas and only good ideas make good products. For creativity to exist, it is important to make it possible for the employees to learn and develop in their work. The employees should also have time to reflect upon their work and their own development. All in all, the aim is that the employees have the feeling that NewMedia is a different kind of company, a company that supports creativity and allows the employees to use it in their daily work. Creativity, nevertheless, means different things for different employee groups in the company. There are some whose job deals mostly with creativity and having creative ideas. These ideas are then made into the products as the more practically oriented »doers« take over from the creative »thinkers«. Another side of creativity is the general creative atmosphere in the company that also the »doers« can benefit from - whatever they do, the employees are allowed to try different things. Meetings are not strict, but also provide room for creativity. The creative atmosphere »rubs on« to everybody and persons
whose work does not directly relate to creativeness may, hopefully, be more creative at NewMedia than they could be when doing the same job somewhere else. However, for most creativity is not the main thing at work, for many »doers« work is »just work«, the interviewee says.

There are, thus, different kinds of employees working at NewMedia: the creative thinkers and practical doers. What keeps the departments and these different employee groups together is that all the departments depend on each other; the need for the unity is clear, an interviewee says. If the thinkers, for instance, do not have creative and good ideas, the doers have nothing to produce. If the doers do not produce anything, the sellers do not have anything to sell. If the sellers cannot sell, the thinkers will not have resources for their work. The connections between different departments are supported with meetings, where the employees are able to hear what is going on in different parts of the organization. As the company has become quite large, it may be difficult for the newcomers to see the connections between the departments. The interviewees say that it is the management’s responsibility to keep the common spirit alive and prevent the boundaries between the groups and departments from emerging.

The interviewees note several ways for the company to foster creativity. First of all, there has to be enough human resources – enough people to carry out work. Attracting enough people with the right talents is, however, difficult since the demand for employees in the ICT-branches is much larger than the supply\(^2\). Furthermore, an interviewee says that the education system has not responded fast enough to the changes in economy and the right kind of talent is hard to find also for that reason. As a consequence, the employees at NewMedia end up taking on too many projects and too many tasks; high workload compromises the possibilities for creativity.

Providing adequate staffing levels is a key question, but it is also a very difficult question. A company can, of course, adopt a »tayloristic« approach to the question, an interviewee notes: to take measurements on the work processes and determine the human resources based on these measurements. But the interviewee says that at NewMedia this would lead to losing the idea of how things are done in the company. Instead, another kind of process for determining the adequate level of human resources has to be

---

\(^2\) This was the situation during the time of the interviews, i.e. in 2000.
adopted. First of all, the adequacy of human resources has to be determined continuously – the situations change all the time and so does the adequate staffing level. The interviewees say that a company is always a step behind in optimizing the human resources. Once a group has been designed, it starts to work. As initial goals are reached, new goals are set higher and the group is back in the square one – maybe new employees are needed to reach the new goals. In this sense, optimizing the human resources is an ongoing process and it is important that it is done continuously.

Moreover, a manager has to know the goals of her part of the organization and also has to have a clear idea on how the goals can be reached. A manager has to consider whom she has in her group, what kind of human resources there are, and she has to see to that each employee has enough work. In this she has to take into account that the meaning of »enough work« varies from one person to another; someone can easily carry a heavy workload, while someone else can deal with only much smaller amount of work. Furthermore, staffing is not so much about getting a lot of people to the organization, but rather about optimizing and connecting different kinds of contributions to each other. The problem is not necessarily the amount of people, but the quality of human resources available – who the members in a group are and what kind of competencies they have. The situation can also be improved by simply optimizing and prioritizing work differently: no further employees are necessarily required. Finally, a manager has to consider how the groups are working and whether they are achieving as good results as they potentially could. The adequacy of human resources has to be checked if there are obvious problems. For instance, if a manager can see that someone is working far too long days, she should try to find out what is the problem. Does the employee's workgroup have too few members for what it is supposed to do? If that is the case, it should be clarified what kind of help and further resources are needed.

When considering fostering creativity, the second important thing is that an organization has to be able to give responsibility to its employees and trust them. Responsibility and trust support the employees’ confidence in themselves and confidence supports creativity. Confident employees feel that they can take on new responsibilities and carry out their work. Giving responsibility in an organization that is constantly changing and growing is, however, quite difficult. This requires much from the managers; they have to see the importance of giving responsibility and not just push through the issues they consider important. The managers have to also know how to
follow the employees’ advancement and, in case they get stuck with carrying out their responsibility, support them to go further.

The third factor influencing creativity is the employees’ awareness of what is happening in the organization. They should understand what happens and why, what is required of them and for what reasons. Without this understanding, it would be very difficult to be creative; all the work tasks would seem to be arbitrarily »thrown on the table«. In other words, an employee would have difficulties to see why she should do a certain thing. Information and communication instead enable the employees to see the big picture and their own important role in it, an interviewee emphasizes. To achieve good communication, the CEO of the company arranges meetings for all the employees to discuss the issues affecting NewMedia, and the organizational communication is also supported with the help of inter-departmental meetings. All in all, the rapid growth in the organization makes keeping the communication connections active across different organizational units difficult. As the organization grows, there is a danger of clustering; the departments lose the contact to each other and sensitivity to other’s situations and needs is diminished. To prevent the isolation of the departments, »mingle meetings« or inter-departmental meetings are arranged. In these meetings the employees get an idea of what goes on in other parts of the organization. A further essential factor in supporting the employees’ awareness on the organization’s current situation and also their sense of belonging to the NewMedia-culture is the introduction of a new employee to the organization. Earlier there was no introduction program for the newcomers and getting to know the organization proceeded in an unstructured way. Now an introductory program for the first day at work is being developed. An interviewee says that during the introductory day, it is important that those who founded NewMedia and initiated its culture are there to convey the culture also to the new employees.

Frequent informal meetings are one of the most important ways to keep everybody informed and help the employees to know what is happening at NewMedia’s different parts. For instance, once a week there is an informal get-together arranged by some of the employees. Usually these parties have a theme, and the whole workplace is decorated according to the theme. The get-together parties give the employees an opportunity to speak to each other and spend time together. The parties support, thus, both communication in the organization and the feeling of belonging together. The informal happenings are important, but it is also important to
keep the balance between work and fun or structures and freedom. The
managers at NewMedia encourage the employees to have a bit of fun at
work, since creativity, unity, and belonging grow from having fun together.
This adds an additional aspect to the leadership in the organization, the
interviewees say; the managers should be able to see when to support order
and structures and when to support informality and having fun.

4.1.3 The balance of resources and requirements at work
Creativity at work also grows from the balance between the requirements
of work and available resources. The employees themselves have an essen-
tial role in finding or losing this balance, an interviewee says. The problem
at NewMedia is that the employees are very young and inexperienced, and
they have not had the time to learn how to structure their work, how to
prioritize and organize different tasks. The young employees may not be
aware of their own limits, of what they are able to do and when they should
slow the pace. Since all the employees are young, there are no experienced
employees to stand as models for how to handle the scarce resources or
cope with overlapping demands. An interviewee notes, however, that even
if there were more experienced role models for the younger employees,
finding the balance between resources and requirements would not be
solved, since the balance is a very individual issue. Some employees work
without problems 90 hours a week while for some the normal 40-hour-a-
week is simply too much. The question is thus, how to find an individual
balance at work between the requirements and resources. At NewMedia,
this balance is looked for everyday and the managers have an important
role in following how the employees are doing: whether someone is taking
on too much work or needs further challenges. The managers are, howev-
er, young themselves and may find it difficult to see whether the balance is
there or not.

Experiencing a balance between the requirements of work and available
resources demands also that an employee knows the goals of her work,
knows where she should be heading to and understands why. For an
employee, her tasks should be clear, she should know what she is doing and
how she should do it. This kind of clarity is, however, quite difficult to
achieve, since the organization and work tasks are changing all the time, as
was discussed above. No-one knows what NewMedia will look like in six
months from now. Since long-term goals are hard to set, short-term goals
are needed to structure the employees’ work.
One of the aspects in the balance between resources and requirements at work relates to technical tools at work: to computers, e-mail, mobile phones, etc. The technical advancements are not necessarily threatening to the employees; the question is whether the employees are able to control these tools and whether they know how to use them in a beneficial way. For some this is a problem. For instance, an employee may spend much time in mornings for reading her e-mails and answers consciously to all the messages. In the afternoon, she realizes that all the other tasks are still to be done. An employee has over-prioritized the e-mail and pushed herself on a too tight schedule with other tasks. The managers and the HR-department have to support these kinds of employees, so that they learn to see the priorities in their work. An interviewee says that this could mean quite tayloristic approach to work design in an organization – »do first this, second this, and only then this« – but in a company like NewMedia the solution has to be found in some other way. The balance in work is searched continuously together; the employees are supported to structure their work such that they are able to cope with it. Regarding the e-mail, for instance, etiquette can be agreed upon. Everybody uses e-mail sparingly and does not disturb the others with unnecessary e-mails.

A further aspect of balance is – quite simply – a realistic approach to failures. Things do go wrong occasionally, but life goes on anyway. When work piles up, one has to simply prioritize and leave some things to be done later. Quite soon one realizes that – even without reaching the perfection - work goes on. Experiences is, consequently, very important also here; it helps the employees to be realistic concerning the demands they set on themselves and also helps them to say »no, this I will do only later«. One can learn to reach the balance only through one’s or others’ mistakes and experiences. Also here the more experienced people would be an important asset for the company, an interviewee says.

4.1.4 Uncertainty

In the new economy sectors, things are changing rapidly and no-one knows what the competition and working situations will be like in the future: what the company will look like, who are the competitors, what happens in the labor markets. The interviewees think that the uncertainty may make the employees frustrated. The employees are uncertain of whether they are doing a good job, they also may be uncertain of the company’s goals. The reasons for the changes in the organization may be
difficult to understand. This is why the company should try to explain the
situation to the employees, even when there are no certainties. Somehow,
the managers should be able to describe why the company is doing what it
does, why this and that is changed. Uncertainty also causes a problem, as
the employees end up working too much, when they cannot be certain of
the priorities, what is important when thinking about the future.

One of the interviewees appraises that the experienced uncertainty does
not relate to the fears of losing one's job. Fundamental security exists and
frustration comes from other sources. The interviewee notes that people
have moved up the Maslowian hierarchy of needs and are motivated by
other factors than food and shelter. Instead of worrying about these basic
needs, people worry about finding the balance at work: »what should be
prioritized, when we do not know where we are going to«.

In reducing the uncertainty, organizational communication is very
important. If a person has others around her saying »yes, the future is
uncertain« she feels safer, an interviewee believes. For instance, at NewMe-
dia the CEO holds regular meetings for all the employees, where she
discusses what is going on: the changes and uncertainties within and
around the company. This way, she takes the responsibility for what is go-
ing to happen. Others can relax and concentrate on their own jobs; it is the
CEO's job to find out and clarify the situation to others. The interviewees
evaluate that it really helps the employees to be uncertain together (the sit-
tuation is really, objectively uncertain) and to have the CEO there to make
the uncertain visible.

4.1.5 Work and private life balance
When it comes to the work and private life balance, the interviewees esti-
mate that this balance is different for the younger and older employees at
NewMedia. For the younger ones, work is pretty much the life. They are
energetic and like to work much - work is almost like a hobby. The work-
place is also the place where the friends are. The younger ones, conse-
quently, do not only work at the workplace - they see their friends and have
fun. For the organization, it is difficult to demand this kind of employees to
go home; even if they stay many extra hours at work, they are just where
they want to be! An interviewee says that in the Swedish media, the IT-
companies are accused of »over-working« their young employees, but the
question is not always of over-working. The young employees like to spend
time at work. NewMedia takes this into account and is just building
facilities for the spear-time activities of the employees. There also will be a laundry room with washers and dryers for the use of the employees.

Usually the need for the balance between work and private life becomes an issue, when a person establishes a steady relationship or a family, an interviewee says. This is why the employees have to carry the responsibility themselves; they have to consider the demands from both their work and private life. An interviewee says, however, that the organization may support its employees in this. Furthermore, the question of balance between work and private life is very individual; the amount of time needed for recuperation varies from one person to another. In short, finding the balance between work and private life is a two-way responsibility of an employee and an organization. An organization should be able to identify those who work too much and have a problem with the balance. But also the employees themselves should carry the responsibility for finding the balance. An employee has to be able to see what she needs, and age and experience probably help in that. An interviewee says, however, that unfortunately there are many who will have to come very close to the limit to learn where it is.

4.2 Personality as a resource
Individual characteristics influence strongly dealing with and succeeding in work; one of the interviewees says that the most important characteristic in determining how a person is able to deal with work at NewMedia is flexibility. The company is put together by many different kinds of persons and everybody has to be able to work together. The best work result can be achieved in many different ways and everyone should be flexible in considering and adapting other’s views. An organization can – even must – support its employees in becoming flexible. The most important way for this is to provide employees with enough information on the company’s requirements and situation. This way the employees are able to understand why they should be flexible. Some are by their nature more flexible than others. A manager has to understand this in order to support the employees in different ways. Of course, when the organization is growing, it is not possible to design individual development programs for everybody to support their flexibility. What can be done at all the different levels – individual, manager, and organization – is to be aware of the need for flexibility and work to achieve it.

Work with continuous changes sets demands on the employees. In gen-
eral, people may be frustrated by the changes and not knowing how things will be like in six months. One of the interviewees says that even if the NewMedia-employees sometimes get frustrated, they still can live with the changes and enjoy their work. In recruitment, it is important to try to evaluate a candidate from this point of view – whether the person is able to cope with the changes and whether the person is the type of a person who can find this kind of work inspiring. In short, persons who will prosper when working at NewMedia have to have both certain type of a personality and experiences that enable them to deal with the changes. Open-mindedness is needed and understanding that this is what work is like, it is constantly changing.

Self-esteem also helps a person to deal with work in NewMedia, an interviewee says. It is important that self-esteem is realistic – having a good self-esteem should not mean walking over other people. A person with a realistic self-esteem is more likely to find the right situations and tools to carry out her work. Furthermore a person with a realistic self-esteem probably finds the decision-making easier. What can an organization then do to support its employees’ self-esteem? If an employee has a low self-esteem an organization can try to support the person to become stronger, an interviewee notes. An employee with weak self-esteem should not receive too unfocused or unclear goals, but her work should be planned with taking into account her low self-esteem and problems that relate to it. The employee should be given responsibility and the managers should be there to support her. This is important, since self-esteem grows from small success experiences – when a person can think: »I had a good meeting« or »In that situation, I said the right thing«. Consequently, it is the company’s and its managers’ responsibility to see which employees need special help. The interviewee returns to the flower metaphors (see above) and says that people are like flowers – some need more attention than others. Furthermore, each person’s need for support varies across time.

4.3 Becoming a manager while being a manager

The managers have an important role at NewMedia in supporting the employees. Above, the interviewees have, for instance, noted that it is the manager’s task to explain why things change – why direction has to be changed sometimes »in midair«. The managers also have to be very attentive to their employees in order to support them in their complex work situations. Initially, the manager role at NewMedia emerged as a response
for the need to communicate and distribute information. In order to free others from extensive communication responsibilities, the managers were appointed to function at the boundaries of workgroups - as their connections to the other groups. Obviously, information and communication tasks are still an integral part of being a manager at NewMedia. The managers try and make it clear for the employees why sometimes the progress is not straightforward and also their responsibility is to make the existing goals clear. Furthermore, the managers have to collect information that allows them to have a clear idea on the reasons for changes, overall company goals, etc. Currently, there are very few managers at NewMedia. Besides of the CEO, there are only the department heads, i.e. the head of the Sales, the head of the Content Production, etc. Consequently, at NewMedia there are all in all about 10 managers. Within the departments there are, however, team coaches and group leaders. Their role is to support the teams, they do not have financial or personnel responsibilities. The team coaches and leaders are appointed by the department managers; there are no specific criteria for the role, it is simply important that the candidate can successfully fit to a role with much communication and a need for social skills.

The interviewees estimate the management culture and structures being very informal at NewMedia. In an organization, whose success depends on the creativity of each of its employees, it is not possible to have rigid hierarchical differences and it is not possible for anyone to be a »big boss«. At NewMedia, decisions are made in consensus; a manager has the decision-making authority, but decisions are reached in collaboration. An interviewee says that a good manager is like a coach in a sports team. The employees, in their turn, are like the sports team; they all are individuals and have different roles. The manager should be able to see this; the employees have different meanings in carrying out the team’s work. The manager should know her team and see when something special is going on in it. She also should have a strategy for the whole game; she should be able to support the employees to do all the little things on the way to their goals. Furthermore, the continuous change in the company creates a challenge for the managers to keep up with their work. As things change, the manager and her job may not fit each other anymore; the emerging demands in the job have outgrown the person. It is important for the company to be aware of this possibility and connect the organizational development to individual development. For instance, a manager’s goals should be designed to enable her to gradually develop and face the new situations in her work.
One of the interviewees perceives a discrepancy between the importance of managerial roles and the way a person usually becomes a manager in many companies. Often managers are initially good professionals and they are rewarded for their technical and professional skills with a promotion to a managerial position. Consequently, the organization may lose valuable operational skills, while not necessarily gaining a good manager. At NewMedia the managers have both been hired from outside and promoted from other tasks within the company. All the managers are quite young. Many of the managers have not had personnel responsibility before and this makes their work very demanding. Currently, there are several plans for management development. First, a management training program is being developed. The program would convey management approaches suitable for NewMedia to the managers and, thus, address the vision of a NewMedia-manager. Each of the managers needs also individual support, since the requirements and resources of individual managers vary. Individual support to the managers is achieved with the help of external coaches. Each manager can discuss with her personal coach those issues that are important for her. External coaches are needed, since the company does not have experienced managers who could act as examples and advisors to other managers. External coaches can share their experiences with the managers, who then do not have to learn everything the hard way through trial and error.

The interviewees suspect that one reason for the much-talked-about management burnout are the requirements that exceed means (e.g. money, time, or knowledge) a manager has in her possession. A manager may end up doing too much, if she does not know how to solve different problems or how to function in a certain situation. Especially when a person is promoted to a manager position from other tasks, learning to become a manager may be difficult – a good professional is not necessarily a good manager. Also here the interviewees perceive the importance of support and role examples from more experienced managers.

According to the interviewees, to be successful a manager at NewMedia should, first and foremost, be flexible. Openness to others and new ideas is important and, relating to this, a manager should not be after prestige, but rather be a collaborator and to trust others. A manager who tries to control everything would not succeed at NewMedia, since if the manager does not trust her employees, she is very likely to kill their creativity. The interviewees summarize that a good manager is able to work with her heart as
much as with her brains, to be a leader rather than a supervisor, and have visions for the future that she is able to translate into concrete entrepreneurial actions with her employees.

4.4 Work organizational development through emergence

Above work and its consequences on the employees and managers at NewMedia have been discussed; in this section, the analysis is moved to the organizational level. The history of NewMedia as an organization as well as its current situation is described below. Looking at the development of NewMedia as an organization helps in understanding what the organization and work in it are like currently. Furthermore, NewMedia’s development provides an interesting example on how companies may develop in the »new economy«.

4.4.1 The history – Collaboration translates into organizational structures

NewMedia started out in a very small scale. In the beginning there were just few persons, who perceived the potential importance of the Internet for companies. The product ideas grew and developed, the company merged with some other small companies and, eventually, the different operation areas were separated from each other and NewMedia became what it is now – a content provider in the new media sector. At that time, there were only 30 – 40 employees and everyone worked pretty much with everything. When the products developed and became more widely known, customers started to phone the company. Initially, the calls were simply distributed around in the company to the employees who might be able to help the callers. But as more and more questions came in, it became increasingly important to actually focus on the questions and try to provide as good replies to them as possible. It became clear that a new interface between NewMedia and its customers was needed and, consequently, the Customer Support department was established. As the Sales department was established, more income was generated and the company started to grow very rapidly. Similarly, marketing efforts increased the number of customers and advertisers. In a short time, the company grew from less than 100 employees to 300 employees.

In the beginning of the company’s history, the ways to work and collaborate were very unofficial - everybody was working on everything. Meetings were held as needed and there was no clear strategic business plan.
The need for different products was not really considered, but the employees were working on what they found interesting. As NewMedia truly became a company, a phase of rapid growth followed as described above. More and more employees were engaged, but the way to work did not change. Meetings remained uncontrolled and unplanned. Soon, it became obvious that more structures and formalism would be needed. The existing way of working meant that the responsibilities were not really clear. Decisions were not made effectively and it was not clear who was really in charge of what. There were many meetings in which decisions were not made; same things were discussed over and over again without anybody truly venturing to make the decision. This led to oligarchy rather than freedom, an interviewee says. As the employees were not sure whether they can make the decisions, few ventured to make them.

The goal was, consequently, to create an organization where employees could be aware of their responsibilities and rights as well as make their own decisions. One of the interviewees emphasizes that it is always more important to make a decision, to do something rather than to do nothing. If a wrong decision has been made, it can always be corrected afterwards. However, when both an organization and its employees are very young, it is very easy to »mushroom« – to have new ideas, to engage new people to the activities, etc. Structured decision-making and operation methods are not priorities then.

The more formal organizational structure at NewMedia eventually emerged rather than was created. The structure began to evolve from the local needs for collaboration. There were single programmers, content producers, etc. who started to collaborate with each other. The contacts were taken informally and meetings were held between individuals who needed others in carrying out their work. So, for instance, the programmers started to interact and formed their own group. When the formal organizational structure was established, the informal group became a formal group. Similarly, the other formal organizational structures were built based on the existing collaboration patterns. An interviewee notes that people are different from one another; not everyone wants to sit in meetings, to interact with others constantly, etc. Consequently, a manager role was created to take care of the communication flow between the emerging groups.
4.4.2 The emergence of Content Production and the »internality« of the other departments

In the Content Production, the department in which the content production takes place, the organizational structure evolved as the employees sensed what was expected of them – what markets and customers (rather than managers) expected of them – and, consequently, formed groups to fulfill these expectations. In the beginning, the employees figured out on their own what was expected of them and what NewMedia was supposed to be. The founders did not communicate such ideas to the employees in detail, but rather the whole operation was vision oriented. It was possible for the employee to see how the goals of the whole NewMedia translated into personal goals and expectations as well as into concrete tasks and collaboration needs. Only as the company kept on growing, as new employees came along, a more structured approach for communicating the goals and structuring the operation was needed.

Each organizational department (e.g. Content Production, Sales, etc.) is now formed by different kinds of groups. In the Content Production, there are various groups. First, there is a team creating media products relating to current, daily needs of the customers. Second, there are the work groups relating to more long-term media-production; for instance, certain electronic magazines are created by these groups. All the groups operate in very informal ways, there are chief editors as team leaders but otherwise there are no formal differences between the employees. Everyone is working together and collaboration also extends to inter-group level. New employees are hired to the groups as needs arise.

To an outsider, the Content Production-department seems quite unique both in what it does (i.e. creative media content production) as well as in the ways it has developed to what it is now. Are the other departments of NewMedia, for instance the Sales and Marketing, different from corresponding departments in other companies? One of the interviewees says that if studied only »externally«, these departments are quite similar to corresponding departments in other companies. If one were to write job descriptions for the employees working in these departments, the descriptions would not differ from those of others working in similar departments in other companies. However, internally there is a big difference. The interviewee says that the employees working at NewMedia are not like people working elsewhere and people do make the organization to what it is. The biggest difference between NewMedia and other companies is that
at NewMedia, the word »no« is used seldom. Nobody says »no« automatically, since it is always possible to discuss, to start from one idea and then, let it evolve in the discussion. The reason why the word »no« is not used that much in the discussion is that the company and its employees are young - there are many things that no-one has tried before. Consequently, there are no grounds for saying »no, you cannot do that« or »no, that will not work«. Every new idea can be given the benefit of the doubt. The interviewee suspects that after 15 years there can be much more »no«-saying at NewMedia. However, the markets are changing all the time, and flexibility and initiatives will be needed also in the future. At the moment, the culture in the company allows the employees to try and also to fail or be wrong at times. It is just important that wheels keep on rolling and it is good enough if one gets things right most of the time. If the company demanded total perfection, nothing would ever be done. The acceptance of failures makes progress instead possible.

4.4.3 The future of NewMedia

Earlier, all the different operation areas of NewMedia were in the same big bundle – the Sales, the Content Production, and everything else was in one big department. Adaptation to new demands was not very efficient in that kind of a structure; what had been created before was not truly benefited from as new structures were established for new situations. The current structure (described in the beginning of chapter 4) has, however, those departments that NewMedia is going to need in the future, an interviewee evaluates. Some new product based departments may come up in the future, but otherwise, the structure will probably hold. Furthermore, the main business areas are now clear for everyone. NewMedia is what it is and it will not suddenly turn into a clothes company or a newspaper. The interviewee evaluates that for this reason the organizational structure will not change in the future much; growth may happen, but it will happen within this framework. Furthermore, the growth will not probably be as fast as it has been. Also the employees within the existing structure have their roles now. Everyone is aware what they can decide and whom they are reporting to.

But as such stability sets in, one can ask whether there is a danger of becoming stale? How can a company be flexible, creative, innovative – and stable? One of the interviewees thinks that an important factor in keeping the operation virile is the market. Markets will still be changing and flexible.
By now, the general audience has learned that, for instance, the Internet is both easy and free – the challenge is to keep on providing them with Internet services and content on these terms in the future. However, becoming more stable is not that bad either. Also the employees appreciate more stability as they grow older. This presents a big challenge for NewMedia in the future: how to remain competitive in the markets, be flexible, and still offer required stability to the employees. The interviewee does not really feel that the solution to this paradox has been found yet.

4.5 Discussion on the case
In this section the horizontal analysis is presented; I try to recognize some important overarching themes emerging from the interviews. Furthermore, above what the interviewees said is presented, while in this section my reflections on the case will take the main role. The discussion will especially concentrate on describing the demands of work at NewMedia as well as collective ways to deal with such work. Furthermore, the organizational evolution in the »new economy« is discussed and compared to a conceptual model on organizational evolution in the »old economy«. All along, the aim is to learn why and how work is or can be consuming or regenerative at NewMedia.

4.5.1 The demands of work and organizational measures to make it manageable
The interviews at NewMedia reveal work that is cognitive, complex, fluid, uncertain, interconnected, and invisible. Consequently, it corresponds to the descriptions of post-bureaucratic work in chapter 3 (see especially Howard, 1995). Also, work could be described to be boundaryless; the boundaries of tasks and responsibilities are in continuous flux. Furthermore, changes in such factors as competitors’ products, market conditions, or technological developments directly influence the daily work of the employees; there are no boundaries that would protect the employees from these changes. Such expanding and free job contents create preconditions for creativity and autonomous decision-making, but also pose new challenges both for the employees and the company as whole. When there are no boundaries, it is difficult for the employees to see when they have done enough or whether they have succeeded in their work. The interviewees emphasize that the organization should recognize those employees who
have problems in dealing with boundaryless work and support them; they also imply that in such work everybody needs support sometimes.

The ways for the organization to support its members emerging in the interviews are very interactive. Rather than strict rules and regulations or predefined job descriptions, the interviewees suggest interaction between the managers and employees as a tool for support and guidance. This interaction may take the form of, for instance, development discussions or simply daily discussions on work priorities and demands.

But as jobs and tasks emerge rather than are pre-defined, something is needed to define and delimit them. The interviewees indicate that an operational vision has been an important factor in both generating organizational growth and creating organizational structures; maybe then one can take this idea a step further – maybe the shared vision can also help in structuring single jobs? The current problems in the new economy in general may relate to the uncertainty of jobs. As jobs cannot be predefined, each employee has to face the uncertain questions of »what are my priorities?«, »what should I do now?«, »did I do well?«, etc. The uncertainty and endless search lead to frustration and stress. Things get even more difficult with constant changes within and outside the companies. Can, then, a vision and personal priorities derived from it replace a job description? Based on the interviews, it also seems that a person’s role in a work organization might function as a guiding light in the difficult work environment. The interviewees indicate that the employees’ roles now remain the same - their meaning and contribution to NewMedia and its operation is quite stable. Would it thus be possible and beneficial to define work as roles rather than as jobs? Could a role help in determining what are the priorities in one’s work or criteria for a good performance?

The managers seem to have an essential role in creating more comprehensible and manageable work at NewMedia. As things cannot be predefined, they have to be defined on the way, continuously. The managers have the responsibility to recognize the instances where tasks and work processes should be clarified and re-evaluated. Furthermore, the managers have the responsibility to orchestrate such processes, to engage the employees according to their needs in making sense and structuring work. Thus, at least at NewMedia, the emerging post-bureaucratic work sets high demands on the managers. The highest management at NewMedia also carries its responsibility in making the organization and work in it comprehensible and manageable. Its task seems to be to send messages in many dif-
ferent ways to the employees on the organization’s direction and on what is expected from the employees. For instance, the CEO comes in front of all the employees to say that the future is uncertain, but that it is her responsibility to deal with the uncertainty. Also, the management signals the appreciation towards action-orientation by, for instance, saying that it is better to make a mistake than not to do anything at all. Put together, these messages do clearly indicate that the highest management will carry responsibility for guiding the company in its volatile environment and that they trust the employees to carry the responsibility for their tasks. The management is not out to steer details, but to show the direction; the employees are authorized to take care of the details and even, sometimes, to make mistakes when doing so.

Consequently, the NewMedia case study reveals work that is not longer predefined and confined in a bureaucratic box and indicates also that such work contains quite interesting new demands. The employees have to struggle to comprehend what their work is all about, to set priorities in it, and to manage with it. Furthermore, NewMedia has clearly decided to deal with these emerging demands not through bureaucratic control but through interaction and communication. The aim is not to re-confine work in a bureaucratic way, but to collectively and individually master it through continuous discussions at the workplace. It shall be interesting to see in the Empirical Study II whether the post-bureaucratic characteristics of work also exist there, whether they exist in the more traditional organizations! Furthermore, if work also in more mature organizations proves to contain elements of complexity, fluidity, uncertainty, invisibility, and so forth, how do these established organizations deal with such characteristics?

4.5.2 Work organizational development – Emergence from interaction

NewMedia, as an organization, seems to have emerged and evolved rather than has been designed and planned. The interaction between the initial employees and the interaction between the employees and the market led to the gradual development. As the markets embraced the company's products, the company grew and started to offer the products in a more coherent manner. In order to be able to create new products and improve the existing ones as well as service the existing customers, new employees were needed. More employees meant a need for more income. Thus, enter the sales activities. In order to attract advertisers, NewMedia had to become
more visible: enter the marketing activities. The company grew rapidly and, eventually, reached a point where it could not be run in an uncoordinated and unstructured way. An organizational structure was needed. The current organizational structure emerged then from the internal interaction within the company. The employees formed groups around products, held meetings in small groups whose members could help each other. Consequently, interaction patterns began to emerge. The formal organizational structure was created based on these interaction patterns. One thing that catches the eye in the otherwise naturally emerging development of the organizational structure and responsibilities is the way to appoint the team coaches. The team coaches are appointed by the department managers; the team coach role does not consequently emerge from the group but it is externally fixed. Here it almost seems that the bureaucratic mentality is coming through. The interactive way to steer the organization is suddenly changed to more directive, top-down decision-making.

What is interesting is that »externally«, by its looks, the emerging organizational structure resembles the structure of traditional functional organizations. There are the main »production« departments (for example Content Production) with their »production groups«. Then, there are the expert departments (for example Sales and Marketing) as well as the supporting functions. It seems that a natural organizational structure at NewMedia is functional – those people who work on same things form a department or a group. This kind of a structure is familiar from traditional industries and seems to have worked well in many situations. The major drawback has been, however, that the different departments may lose contact to each other. Sales does not understand Production, Production cannot deliver what Marketing is promising, etc. A challenge for NewMedia may, thus, be to maintain the focus on the common goals and the feeling of »us« rather than »us and they«. At NewMedia the managers seem to have a vital role also in maintaining this unity and connectedness between groups and departments.

Since the functional organizational structure evolved naturally at NewMedia, maybe the external presentation of a work organization in the new economy is not that different from the »old economy«. It still makes sense to work in functional units. This would seem to imply that the differences between these two »economies« can be found at micro-organizational level rather than at macro-organizational level, in communication patterns and, above all, in »internalities« – in what things are like rather than in what
they look like. Similar structures and external presentations can be found in both economies, but how people function within these structures and how the structures are utilized is profoundly different. For instance, teams or work groups at NewMedia seem to correspond to the traditional descriptions of "true" teams. For instance, Huczynski and Buchanan (1991) define a true, psychological team as a team with a clear internal structure and communication connections, collective identity, and a common goal. According to the interviewees, these characteristics do apply to work within and between the teams at NewMedia. Maybe then teamwork has a greater potential in the new economy than in the old one where creating true teams has been an enormous challenge within bureaucratic organizations (see e.g. Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Similarly, the communication structures in NewMedia seem to correspond to those that have been the hard-to-achieve dream in the old economy. The old economy is infamous for its centralized communication structures in functional organizations. Information runs along tightly regulated paths and often reaches only the "important" employees. The interviewees at NewMedia state that information runs freely; everyone is talking with everyone as needed. Finally (and connecting to the issues raised above), what could be making the greatest difference is the way people relate to each other and to the company, how they collaborate, how they treat each other and how they are treated as members of a work community. In other words, such internalities as shared values and culture make a big difference; if they relate to collaborative, mutual respect, and other things alike, honest and open communication, teamwork, and collaboration between the teams become possible. The organizational structures come to life.

The NewMedia case, therefore, indicates how post-bureaucratic work can and does exist in seemingly bureaucratic structures. What really seems to make the difference is not the organization's formal structure, but rather how people function within this structure. This leads to an important question: what kind of an organizational structure and organizational practices are needed to support the emerging post-bureaucratic work? This question shall be addressed again in chapter 8 with some further empirical material from the other case studies.

4.5.3 Development phases so far and from now on
An interesting issue in the interviews is also the current development phase of NewMedia; it is approaching a more stable phase. Its main business areas
have now been established. Also, the organizational structure is now more stable. This transition toward more stable situation is interesting since it seems to indicate that - just as in the currently mature industries - also in the new economy, companies might actually go through life phases from the initial turbulence to a more stable situation and, maybe, back again. Larry Greiner in his Harvard Business Review article (from 1972, republished in HBR May-June, 1998) distinguishes phases of creativity, direction, delegation, coordination, and collaboration in growing companies. Each phase contains the consecutive periods of evolutionary steady growth, as well as a crisis and turmoil that take the company to the next phase of development. Each development phase is characterized by a dominant management style and each crisis is characterized by a dominant management problem - a problem that actually originates from the management style of the previous steady growth phase. Thus, each company develops logically from a phase of steady growth through crisis to the next steadier phase. In this process, the solutions of each phase create problems that become obvious and have to be solved in the following crisis phase.

The phases that Greiner describes may also shed light on the emergence of a functional organizational structure at NewMedia. Greiner states namely that the first phase of a company is characterized by creativity and technical and/or entrepreneurial orientation of the company’s founders. Communication and work structures in the organization are informal and interest to the product is obvious in everything the company does. The company follows closely its markets; the management reacts rapidly to the customers’ reactions. But as the company grows, a need for more structured way to operate grows also. Furthermore, new employees do not share the same vision oriented dedication to the product and the company. Thus, a crisis of leadership emerges - a way out of the confusion has to be found. After this crisis the company finds itself (hopefully!) in the phase characterized by a clearer direction. More formal structures are created and usually this means the adaptation of a functional organizational structure. Manufacturing is separated from marketing, job assignments become more specialized.

There are, however, also differences between Greiner’s model and NewMedia’s development that become very obvious if one looks at table 4.1 (below) in which the model’s development and crisis phases have been summarized. Even though the functional organizational structure emerged at NewMedia, the kind of centralization and directive approach to opera-
tion as suggested by Greiner for the second phase seems to be missing; the »internalities« emphasize openness, consensus seeking, dialogues, etc. Instead of centralization and centralized control, the top-management style and control systems seem to correspond to the phase five of Greiner's model (participation and mutual goal setting). Thus, the development model does not seem to match as such. What have been called »internalities« above are not explained by the model which seems to automatically connect the functional organizational structure to centralization and control (as the organizational theory quite often does).

Greiner states in the 1998 comment to his original article that – even though some retrospective changes to the model are needed – he doubts whether (1998, p. 65):

> the advancement of information technology has made much of a difference in the basic aspects of model.

Based on this case study on NewMedia's organization and operation, this can be challenged. Or maybe Greiner's original model suffers from cultural biases - the new economy does seem to provide centralized and controlled work realities at least in the USA (for an artistic expression of this, see the motion picture *Office Space*; FOX Movies, 1999). It also may be that NewMedia is still in the first phase of the Greiner's model; its structure has been changed, but maybe the more directive management style will emerge only little later. However, looking at the organization, as it is now, it would be very difficult to see how the *conscious efforts* to build the operations on openness and trust could turn into closed standards and detail management. Nevertheless, Greiner's model does offer a warning to NewMedia; many traditional »old economy« organizations have walked down that road and have changed from creative, informal organizations to centralized and standardized before they have been able to regain participative and collaborative cultures. Only time will tell whether NewMedia and other new economy companies will follow their predecessors on such development paths or whether the »internalities« of the organizational operation discussed above are enough to sustain a less-bureaucratic way for collective action.
Table 4.1. Phases of steady growth and crisis according to Larry Greiner (developed from Greiner, 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase Category</th>
<th>Phase 1 Creativity</th>
<th>Phase 2 Direction</th>
<th>Phase 3 Delegation</th>
<th>Phase 4 Coordination</th>
<th>Phase 5 Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management focus</td>
<td>Make and sell</td>
<td>Efficiency of operations</td>
<td>Expansion of market</td>
<td>Consolidation of organization</td>
<td>Problem solving and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational structure</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Centralized and functionalized</td>
<td>Decentralized and geographical</td>
<td>Line staff and product group</td>
<td>Matrix of teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-management style</td>
<td>Individualistic and entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Delegative</td>
<td>Watchdog</td>
<td>Participative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control system</td>
<td>Market results</td>
<td>Standards and cost centers</td>
<td>Reports and profit centers</td>
<td>Plans and investment centers</td>
<td>Mutual goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management reward emphasis</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Salary and merit increases</td>
<td>Individual bonus</td>
<td>Profit-sharing and stock options</td>
<td>Team bonus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter continues the exploration on consuming and regenerative work in new economy companies; the case study presented here concentrates on a telecommunications company that shall be called TeleCom (the company wished to remain anonymous). For the case study, four managers and five employees working in the company’s Stockholm division were interviewed. As noted in chapter 1, at NewMedia I did not have an opportunity to interview employees (in addition to the HR managers), but at TeleCom it was possible to gather both managers’ and employees’ ideas on work, its demands, and coping with these demands. The aim is here, however, not to compare managers’ and employees’ answers to each other, but rather to use them in synthesis when creating an understanding on consuming and regenerative aspects of work. This is done, because this is not a case on TeleCom, its work system, or conflicting ideas existing it, but rather a case on the TeleCom employees’ and managers’ experiences on the consuming and regenerative aspects of work. This is also why I judged that a sample of managers and employees working in different departments of the company, scattered in different parts of the company’s Stockholm division, would do well for this study. The aim is not to describe what the work and work organization look like or how work processes run and the organization functions, but rather to collect together the interviewees’ experiences on the interest areas of this thesis.

The results from the employee and manager interviewees are presented such that the vertical analyses are described in sections 5.1 through 5.8. The vertical analyses resulted in the following issue areas:

Chapter 5
The TeleCom case – Boundaryless work within the organizational boundaries
• The managers’ visions for the quality of work (section 5.1) as well as the policies and procedures aimed at promoting the employees’ development in TeleCom (section 5.2).
• Work at the employee level in TeleCom, both the employees’ and managers’ ideas (section 5.2).
• The managers’ experiences on their work in TeleCom (section 5.4).
• The experienced social support and organizational support for work, both the employees’ and managers’ ideas (section 5.5).
• Dealing with continuous changes at work, both the employees’ and managers’ experiences (section 5.6).
• Ideas on personal strategies and characteristics that help in coping with work (as it has been described in the earlier sections) (section 5.7).
• The employees’ and managers’ evaluations on how work affects the employees in TeleCom (section 5.8).

Consequently, first the experiences on work are discussed, then individual and collective ways to cope with work, and finally the interviewees evaluate the consequences work has on them. Section 5.9 (Discussion on the case) contains the horizontal analysis on the interview material; overarching themes are explored. The chapter concludes with some notes at the end of the Empirical Study I (section 5.10).

TeleCom provides to its customers telecommunication services, i.e. telephone and the Internet connections. The company was established in the mid 1990s and its main owners are certain other European telecommunications companies. The company employs several hundred employees in its offices in Sweden. The TeleCom organization consists of several »layers«; the company is divided into divisions in which departments, groups, and teams exist, see figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. TeleCom’s organizational structure within its divisions. This study concentrates on the Stockholm division of the company; interviews were carried out in several departments.
The employees of the company work with, for instance, technical systems and/or collaborate with the customers and suppliers of the company when creating, operating, or changing the technical systems. When it comes to working with the technical systems, the employees may for instance have a responsibility for maintaining and developing a technical network or a system that transfers or protects data relating to telephone and the Internet services. In such work, the employees have to both understand the technical systems as well as communicate with the system suppliers and internal or external customers using the system. Consequently, the employees have to understand both the technology as well as the human interaction with it. Critical phases at work relate to situations, where there is a problem in the system. The employees have to locate the problem and correct the system as fast as possible. Another critical phase relates to changes, additions, and upgrades to the systems; the employees have to both individually and collectively learn to understand the new parts of the system. For this case study, interviews were also made with employees working in the company’s help desk. There the employees receive customer inquiries mainly via telephone but also via email and fax. The employees use different databases to find the answer to the customers’ inquiries or contact others in the company who may know the answer. Several managers were also interviewed for this study. All of the manager interviewees note that their task is to support the operation and development of their department, groups, or teams rather than work with the technical questions.

5.1 The visions for the quality of work
In the interviews, the managers were asked to define the characteristics and elements of work and work environment at TeleCom that contribute positively or should contribute to the quality of work. The aim was here, at the policy level, to explore the management’s ideas on regenerative work. One quite simple and still so difficult aspect that came up relating to this is, that the employees should feel good about working at TeleCom and they should feel good about coming to work each day. Several things were noted to influence the existence of that kind of good feeling about work. First, it is important that at TeleCom, there are always things happening. Besides of the eventful work and industry, also social events arranged at the company contribute to the feeling of activity and eventfulness. For instance, a »personnel pub« is arranged every now and then; there is both an official
and unofficial part in these events - information is spread, but there is also a possibility for the employees to »mingle« socially and learn to know each other. Also different events, such as summer parties or skiing-trips, are arranged. Second factor influencing the good feeling about work is the enjoyable and successful working environment at TeleCom. The managers say that the groups that the employees like to work in are groups that are doing a good job. The possibility to do a good job increases the employees’ commitment to their group and creativity at work. One of the managers notes, that the positive environment is created by all the employees, by technology, and by competencies. These all influence the employees’ possibilities to make results and for the employees, it is important that they can feel that they really are contributing to good results. The same manager notes that the employees usually have the hunch whether they have done a good or poor job. It is, however, more difficult to track one’s contribution to the organizational results. Initially it was easy to estimate also this success, since the main criteria for success was just to get the telecommunication systems up and running. Now, the performance criteria are more varied, and detailed measurements would be needed.

A further good characteristic in the employees’ work at TeleCom is the possibility for development. The managers consider the employees’ possibility to develop at work important, and one manager notes that the employees should be able to develop in their work both as professionals and persons, individuals. The managers connect personal and professional development to changes and to responsibility at work. The managers perceive that change is a good characteristic of the branch and work at TeleCom. Change would be a negative thing, if it were a change for worse. So far, changes at TeleCom have been for the better and related to positive opportunities and growth of the company and its employees. Being in charge of one’s work and contributing to good results in the organization also make work good. There are, of course, some boundary conditions for responsibility and control at work (such as requirement for collaboration with others as well as the necessity to be cost-effective), but the employees still can decide much for themselves.

5.2 Promoting the employees’ development and advancement at TeleCom

The employees’ possibilities for personal and professional development are supported by two policy level decisions; namely, by the existence of spe-
cialist career path along with the management career path and the internal recruitment rather than external recruitment. The existence of the specialist career besides of the management career means that the employees wanting to advance in their work do not necessarily have to become managers; they should be able to continue to be technical experts and new career challenges should be offered to them in that role. A specialist career program was established at TeleCom quite recently. The company has indicated the need to retain its qualified and valuable technical staff as a reason for the establishment of the specialist career track. The employees perceive the specialist career track very positively and, for instance, one employee interviewee notes that at least so far, she has been able to advance as a technical specialist. The program is, however, so new that it is difficult to say, how far one is able to advance as a specialist and whether there really are equal possibilities for a career as a manager and a technical specialist.

The advancement both in the specialist and management career can take place within TeleCom since vacant positions are preferably filled with an internal candidate rather than with an applicant coming from outside the company. Thus, the employees have an opportunity to look for new challenges and keep on developing when working at TeleCom. The company, in its turn, does not lose employees to other companies when the TeleCom-employees can change jobs within the company rather than move to another company. All in all, the practice of internal recruitment makes it possible for many employees to move and develop. When one person changes a job, her »old« job becomes vacant and someone else can take it over. This creates another vacancy in the company and someone else can fill that vacancy and create another vacant position, etc. If the vacant position were filled with an external applicant, the learning effect would instead be very small; only some new competence would be hired, but no-one else would have the possibility to change a job and learn new things. Also the managers are nowadays mainly promoted from within the company. This practice makes it possible for the company to be aware of the suitability of the candidate for a management position. The problem with external management candidates is that their papers may seem terrific, even when they actually are not good at leading other people. In the case of an internal candidate, the organization has had the opportunity to see how the candidate works with people and whether she has leadership skills.

TeleCom also employs several practical tools that aim to support the employees’ development. Some of such tools are:
- **Development Discussions.** A development discussion is held between a manager and an employee twice a year. In the discussions, past results, future goals as well as individual development needs are discussed. These discussions both help the employees to understand their current work better as well as make the possible change trends clearer. Also the managers and the whole organization benefit from these discussions; the managers hear what the employees think about their work and work environment. The problem with the development discussions is that they take time and even the employees themselves sometimes tend to give the precedence to daily work.

- **Meetings** help people to grasp their own and their colleagues’ work better. One manager notes that meetings are not only venues for information exchange, but also for learning. For instance, in interdepartmental meetings, the employees have the possibility to listen to the employees working in different departments and broaden their technical knowledge when learning from these other employees.

- **Formal Courses** can also be used in developing one’s technical knowledge. Such courses have, however, several problems. For instance, courses take a lot of time and are quite expensive.

The manager interviewees also outline the directions to which the TeleCom-employees should develop. First, the employees should develop to take the responsibility for their own development. Personal and professional development takes place in the long-term, but the tempo of the industry is very fast and things change rapidly. In other words, the managers say that the company cannot create long-term development plans for its employees when no-one can predict what they should know and be capable of in the years to come. That is why it is important that the employees carry the responsibility for their own, continuous development. Second, the managers note that the nature of the needed technical knowledge is changing, and that affects the professional development of the employees. Earlier, narrow expertise was enough, but now the employees must learn more and master larger areas. However, specialist skills should not be lost either and the employees should be able to change their specialist areas as things change in the industry; a simple example of this could be that there is no need for specialists on old computer systems, but specialists are needed on the latest systems and computer programs. One of the managers says that it may be quite threatening for the employees to leave their expertise areas.
and »jump« into new ones but, on the other hand, many of the employees actually experience this positively; they are interested in learning new things. Finally, the third direction mentioned for the employees' development is the way to think about things and the way to solve problems. Rather than thinking about things narrowly, the employees should be able to see the issues in their entirety. This becomes more and more important as things get more complicated and the way things affect one another becomes more complex. In this kind of a situation, it is important to see the questions and problems in their entirety, rather than split them into small units and only think one or few of these units. Only when an employee is able to understand the complex issues in their entirety, can she make decisions that take into account various consequences that her decisions may have.

5.3 The employees' work at TeleCom

Above work organization and work at TeleCom are described at idea- and policy-levels: what they should be like and what kind of aims there are for them. In this section, the employees' own description of their work and its demands is presented. Furthermore, the demands that the managers think are the most crucial in the employees' work are reviewed.

5.3.1 The characteristics of work – What do the employees say?

The content of work at TeleCom is person dependent and precise job descriptions cannot be made since even though »what« can be defined to some extent, »how« and »when« depend on the person engaged in the job. The employees do have an official working time, but since the 37.5 hours a week usually is not enough for carrying out the tasks, nobody counts their hours. The employees in general seem to enjoy their freedom in deciding their working time, since it makes it possible for them to allocate their working hours the way they find suitable. For instance, one employee interviewee notes that instead of working during the week-ends, she works longer days during weeks. Another interviewee works late, since she likes to work in the quiet and empty office, when the others have gone home.

A further common characteristic of work emerging from the interviews is the complexity of work and the existence of several simultaneous demands. Many of the interviewees work in positions where they receive many inquiries from other parts of the organization or from outside the organization. The inquiries are of various kinds; for some inquiries the em-
employees can provide an answer quite rapidly, while others demand more work and time. As the amount of inquiries is usually quite high, it is demanding to keep track of and provide an answer to them all. Furthermore, the goals of work are complex. Some goals are set to the employees, some goals they set to themselves. The complexity of work is also added by the fact that the content of work is not homogenous; some parts of work are clearly structured and others are diffuse, unstructured. For instance, when dealing with familiar and well-established technical systems, work proceeds in a structured manner, but when an employee has to work with (and simultaneously learn) a new system, work becomes often diffuse and hard to predict. Technical systems also present two kinds of complexity factors to the employees’ work; the employees both work with many different kinds of systems and also many of the systems are very complex. Finally, rapid changes at work and having to take into account other employees and customers in one’s decisions also add to the complexity.

One further common characteristic of work is that the plans that the individual employees or groups have made cannot always be carried out due to rapid external changes, time pressure, etc. For instance, in one work group a working plan designed earlier had to be abandoned as the lack of manpower created a need to direct all the efforts to one, important task. The employees experienced this very frustrating; work became monotonously consuming and, as other tasks were neglected, they felt they never could succeed in their work. An interviewee working in another department also states that interesting and inspiring work becomes stressing when there is no time to do things properly as planned. Furthermore, sometimes the employees accept occasionally tedious tasks and work situations to be able in that way to gain something positive in return. For instance, one employee notes that when her managers perceive that she is putting a lot of effort in her work, they are willing to give her interesting, high priority projects also in the future. Occasional stress is for her a price for interesting work. Another interviewee says that she enjoys being involved in many different things in the organization. But when she participates in many things, others also learn to know her and easily contact her when they need help or something needs to be done. Thus, sometimes she receives an overwhelming amount of contacts from different parts of the organization; something that she experiences stressful. But for her, the occasional strain caused by the many inquiries and contacts is a price for being able to be involved in different things.
The complexity and variability of work makes it thus versatile in positive sense; however, sometimes such work is hard to handle. The same characteristics of work may, thus, be the most profound sources of enjoyment, but also at some other times, the sources of stress. Actually, the »good« characteristics of work that the employees mention are, in fact, just the same characteristics that they also consider as demands and potential sources of stress. Besides of the complexity and variability of work, facing and solving problems at work and learning new things are also described both as possible stressors and as the sources of enjoyment at work.

5.3.2 The demands in the employees' work – What do the managers say?

According to the managers, the greatest demands in the employees' work are caused by the fast changes and developments in the ICT-sector as well as - in generally - rapid speed of the industry. The employees have to be fast and flexible in order to accommodate all these demands from the markets and the employees have to be able to prioritize their work according to the market’s demands. Since the markets change so rapidly, this means that the employees also have to be prepared to change their priorities as needed. This may be very taxing; one is oriented to do something, then things change and one has to reconsider all the priorities. In this sense quick changes cause frustration when the employees must put aside what they consider important. The TeleCom employees also have high workloads. One of the managers notes that TeleCom’s internal development is one reason for the employees’ high workloads. So far, the company has developed, grown, and changed. The employees have carried the »growth pains« in terms of large workloads. Now it is time to fine-tune the organization and see to that nobody has too high a workload.

The managers also perceive that work at TeleCom is setting high demands on the employees in terms of learning. First, work itself requires high level of technical knowledge and the existing technical knowledge has to be continuously refreshed and updated. Second, the employees have possibilities to make decisions in their work and participate in the organizational decision-making. Consequently, they have to have the adequate knowledge to make the decisions. Participating in decision-making means, thus, a need to study and adopt a lot of information. Furthermore, learning and knowledge building requires much from the employees, since the daily
work hardly leaves any time for studying. Even when the employees are working overtime, they still should find some time for learning.

The autonomy of the employees’ work does not only mean freedom, but also responsibility, the managers say. Consequently, the employees will have to be able to live with the responsibility for their work and decisions they make. Autonomy challenges the employees also because, having the freedom to do what they consider necessary, the employees have to see to that they do not overwork themselves. The managers consequently perceive that it is important that the employees are able to set limits and, at the right time, say ˝no˝ in order not to work too much. For good reasons, the employees have to be able to turn down new projects or tasks suggested to them; they also have to know how to do this. Being able to say ˝no˝ at the right time relates to the employees’ understanding of their role in the organization. When an employee is certain of her role, she knows also her responsibilities and where they end, as well as which priorities the different responsibilities and tasks have. Clarity about the role is, however, threatened by the fact that the organization cannot provide detailed job descriptions to the employees – the job and the way it is carried out depend on the person in the job. The employees cannot find their answers on a paper, but they have to seek for the answers on their own or find the people who can help them in finding the answers. Such lack of definitions can be seen both as a good and a bad thing, the managers say. On the one hand, the employees can decide for themselves and, on the other hand, if one does not know what to do or whom to turn to, work can be quite stressing. All this makes social networks important. With the help of their social network, the employees may receive information and be able to solve their problems.

Setting limits to work and saying ˝no˝ to tasks beyond one’s working capacity and responsibilities would not necessarily be such a demand for the employees, if only they did not also put pressures on themselves. The managers perceive that the employees are very committed to their work and motivated – they want to do a good job and they enjoy their work. Even though all this is good, the employees may also lose the balance and push themselves too hard. Losing the balance is all more easier as there is no whistleblow at the end of the working days; the employees have to decide for themselves what is enough when there are no external or objective measures for work well done and completed.

Responsibility for work means also carrying responsibility for failures. As things change all the time and as the employees must continuously make
decisions, they also sometimes make wrong decisions and fail. The managers perceive that the culture at TeleCom does not condemn failures – it is just important to learn from the failures and not to repeat them. One manager says that the employees are capable of dealing with failures; they can accept it that they have made a mistake and, furthermore, they know that they have to make the decisions – even if there is the risk for a failure – since there is no-one else who could make them. Furthermore, one manager states that failures at work often relate to the complexity of tasks. The tasks are so complex, that one is tempted to think only one or few aspects of the task, rather than to think the task in its entirety. Failures could be prevented by more comprehensive thinking and time for a little deeper thinking. Often there is no time for deep analysis, but it would help if the employees could take just a little time to consider the effects of their decisions. The lack of time is an essential element here. Sometimes the employees fail in their work just because they do not have time for thorough thinking. Also, as things happen so fast, sometimes it is not possible to do everything the »right« way but, rather, things are done »quick and dirty«. For the employees it is demanding to go out on a limb like this, to do things even when they cannot choose the optimal way to do them. In many change situations, there is also a pressure to pay attention to several product and production parameters simultaneously. One has to provide new, high quality services with low cost. It is easy to inadvertently disregard some parameters in such a situation.

5.3.3 Balance at work

Above, both the employees’ and managers’ ideas on the employees’ work have been discussed. Many of the issues above point out to the duality of work - work is interesting and stimulating, but there is the danger of working too much, burning the candle from the both ends. An important question is, thus, how to find the balance at work - balance between much work and not working too much, balance between stimulating work and recuperation.

One manager notes that the lack of balance in the working life is a big problem; people are not looking for the balance and, if they are looking for it, they may not find it. Often the need for the balance, the need to slow down and recuperate, is not discussed before the problems surface. The employees themselves are aware of their responsibilities, and for them it is very difficult to see when they would have a good reason to say »stop« and
start to look for the balance. Furthermore, one manager states that the more competent a person is, the more «ways of escape» she can see. She can always see what else, what more she could do. That is why it is very difficult not to push oneself too hard.

Furthermore, achieving the balance or creating a balanced situation at the workplace is not easy even if one understood the need for it, the manager interviewees say. For instance, it is difficult to determine the adequate staffing levels for different tasks and projects. There is no absolutely correct figures, since people involved – their way of working, their personal choices, etc. – affect how work proceeds and the need for people in the project. Things can be done in so many different ways and how much people can comfortably do also varies. Thus, for an organization it is difficult to guarantee adequate staffing levels for each task.

5.4 The managers’ work at TeleCom

The managers interviewed for this study say that they are supporters and coaches for the employees. The job of the closest managers (group or team leaders) is to optimize the output of the employees’ work, enable individual growth at work, and to create work climate where the employees feel that they can take responsibilities and also make mistakes without losing their jobs or faces. The employees are the experts in their own work and that leaves the coordination and development responsibility rather than decision-making for the managers. Often there are also things that the managers can do to keep the wheels rolling, but they mainly just give a spark for the fire, while the employees make the fire flame. One of the managers says that the job of a group/team leader is simply to create possibilities for the employees to do a good job. However, being a manager is difficult since it is difficult to say what success means in managerial work. How can one measure management and leadership and how can one determine what constitutes good leadership?

This kind of a role places many demands on the managers. They have to understand the most urgent issues in a group’s or team’s operation and help its members to work with these issues. For instance, in one group the initial task of the group leader was to improve the quality of the group’s service. After the quality problems had been solved, the role of the group leader changed - she had to adopt a new kind of way to support the group in its daily work. Also finding the right focuses for managerial work may be difficult. One of the managers notes that it is easier to concentrate only on the
technical, task related, matters in the group and spend much less time on administration and leadership issues. Many managers have earlier worked with technical and business questions, and have very little experience on leading people. This makes it very difficult to become a manager. As one manager says, some managers still like more the work with bits and bytes than with people.

Furthermore, being there for the employees and providing constant support for them means often long days for the managers. If the manager wants to be there for all the employees, she should be able to come early to meet those employees who come early to the office and stay late for those who work in the evenings. Finally, gaining the respect from the employees is also very important – for a manager it is hard to offer support and coaching for the employees if they do not respect her. Gaining this respect is all more challenging, when the managers are sometimes promoted to the management position without any previous experience on being a manager and when they have very different kinds of backgrounds from the group members. The managers can demonstrate their ability to be managers only through their actions in the group. One of the group managers interviewed says, that constant dialogue within the group has helped her to establish trusting and respecting relationship to her group. Also, by trusting the members in her group, she has gained their trust. Furthermore, the manager feels that the changes she has made – for instance, establishing regular meetings and reporting practices in the group as well as clarifying the roles of the individuals and the teams – have been experienced in a positive way in the group.

A further challenge in the managers’ job is that they always have to be able to detect the possibly existing threats for the group’s or team’s performance and the employees’ well-being as well as they have to be able to see ahead, to think about what is going to happen in the future. An example of detecting threats is that the managers should be able to see when somebody is working too much. In such a situation, the manager should also be able to interfere: to talk to the employee in question about how much she is working and whether the situation is becoming unbearable. Similarly, a manager should be able to evaluate the adequacy of staffing in the on-going and starting projects. One manager notes that initially she tended to underestimate the need for people in the projects, but with growing experience she is now able to more realistically evaluate the possible obstacles and time-drains in the projects. Furthermore, there is a need for the man-
agers to evaluate costs and benefits not only as they seem in the short-term, but also to be able to see that sometimes an additional investment is needed now in order to secure good results in the future. For instance, one manager notes that this applies to planning and decision-making. The employees have to be involved in such activities, even though it takes time and sometimes it would seem easier just to push the decision through. If the employees do not have a possibility to be involved, they do not necessarily commit themselves to the decision and, in the long run, this may have very adverse influence on work. Similarly, it is important to invest in face-to-face communication, even if it takes more time than sending an e-mail. E-mail is a one-way communication tool and it does not allow for equal interaction. Also, it is much easier to misinterpret an e-mail message than face-to-face dialogue. Therefore, in order to create good relations between persons and good group climate, face-to-face communication has to be prioritized.

5.5 Support from the others
In this section, formal and informal social support at TeleCom is discussed. The aim is to see how the employees think the others (colleagues and managers) influence their work. Consequently, here the aim is to see how social support functions as a factor affecting human resources consumption and regeneration at TeleCom. Also the managers’ perspective on how they think they and the organization as whole can support the employees at work is described.

5.5.1 The employee interviewees on their colleagues
The employee interviewees say that contacts to colleagues are formed spontaneously and as needs arise. Thus, closest contacts to colleagues may be contacts to other departments rather than to one’s own department. Furthermore, the employees establish personal contact networks offering secure information sources and support for work. The contact network is not confined to the members of the TeleCom organization but also, for instance, previous colleagues now working in other companies may be important sources of information.

The contacts in the organization are also free in the sense that the employees feel that they can contact anyone they need to contact. The employees interviewed in general regard it an advantage that they can go directly to the sources of information rather than »run up and down« in the hierarchy. Also those employees who due to this informality are contacted
by many and often, feel that it is a good thing to be able to contact others as one pleases - even if it causes »traffic jam« in their own e-mail boxes and telephone answering machines. Nevertheless, also sensitiveness from others is called for. For instance, an employee who previously worked in a landscape office says that after having moved into a smaller room (with a door!), others started to respect her privacy. In a landscape office it is easier to consider others available (even when they are not), since they cannot close their door and indicate in that way that they are in the middle of something.

The interviewees working in different departments share the feeling that they often are alone responsible for their work. However, the possibility to talk about work with others helps them in carrying out their tasks. Thus, the colleagues are not actually working together and sometimes cannot even in detail understand each other’s work, but still their conversations are a source of support. One interviewee notes that there is a feeling of security to know that the colleagues are there. They do not have to directly contribute to solving a problem - just listen.

The colleague contacts support the employees in many ways in their work. First, as noted above, contacts provide informal social support: a possibility to speak about one’s problems at work. Second, the interviewees experience that their contact networks provide »a way out« if they encounter a problem that they cannot solve on their own. They can trust their personal network to help them. Also professional development is closely connected to colleague contacts. For instance, one interviewee notes that rather than taking part in a course, she can talk to and learn from the employees who already have the expertise she needs. Furthermore, when instructing and advising others, one learns also self. When one instructs others, one has to look at things in a new way and that makes learning possible.

The negative sides of colleague contacts relate to situations where the employees do not receive correct or adequate information from others. As the employees from different departments are interconnected to each other, they find it important that they receive clear messages from other parts of the organization. In order to be able to take others into account in decision-making, the employees need to know what the others need in their work. However, the employees do report inadequate understanding between the departments. Sometimes other departments do not understand the importance of them providing clear and correct information and, con-
sequently, fail to do so. This is especially the case if there are status differences between the departments. The «higher status» departments fail to see the needs of the «lower status» departments. Furthermore, hurry and time pressure seem to turn the colleague contacts sour; for instance, in a department where time pressure was extremely high, the employees set high demands on each other without really wanting to do so. One employee says that when one really is in a hurry and there is a high pressure, one almost gets mad at people who take a break to go to the bathroom. Also sick leaves cause problems in such a situation. One of the interviewees says that she felt very guilty when she had to take a sick leave when her group had a lot to do. Furthermore, it is not only the quantitative amount of work that strains the relations at work; the interviewees also experience it important to be able to trust that others are doing a good job. Knowing that others are doing a good job and what they are supposed to do, makes also one’s working efforts more meaningful. The colleague contacts also suffer when the colleagues change too often. The interviewees say that when a department or a group has a high turnover, one does not feel up to learning new faces again and again.

5.5.2 The employees’ perspectives on the managerial support

In the middle of complex work, the employees look at their closest managers as people who can help in finding some structure and clarity in work. The interviewees consider it extremely important that the managers are there for them and are also able to see when someone is working too much. One of the interviewees says that the employees easily become «speed blind» and cannot see when they are working too much. In this situation, a manager can support in finding healthier limits for work. The managers are also perceived to establish important structures that help in work; for instance, a manager can establish work schedules or meeting and reporting practices that help the employees to work alone and together. Even though the managers’ role is perceived essential in initiating such structures as well as seeing to that the structures are maintained, it is also noted that the whole group has to participate in the process of deciding the details; improvements should be made together. Furthermore, a common characteristic for good leadership mentioned by many employee interviewees is the possibility to speak about everything with the manager. The employees also experience this as an existing possibility; the interviewees describe open and collaborative relations to their managers.
The employees also list other things (besides of structuring and clarifying work) as things the managers can do to help them. For instance, opportunities for professional development and allocation of work tasks are related to the interaction between the employees and their closest managers. The employees make personal development plans and discuss possible courses with their managers. One interviewee also notes that since the manager has broader contacts to the other departments, feedback from them on the employees’ work comes via the manager. This feedback, in its turn, helps the employees when they develop their competencies and ways to work further. Concerning the allocation of work, the manager submits some tasks to the employees and also if the employees feel that work is not evenly divided in the group, they can talk to their managers about it.

The employee interviewees say that the role of the highest management is to provide a good framework for work - a framework that leaves the possibility for local development to the departments and groups. The highest management sees to, thus, the underlying »big picture«-issues and removes greatest obstacles from the organization’s way. It is important for the employees to be to some extent aware of the plans of the highest management. For instance, if it is clear for the employees to which direction the company is moving, they do not have to worry about it. There are some differences between the departments on how they perceive their awareness of the plans of the highest management. For instance, in one department there is a feeling that when the department went through a big organizational change, the contact to the highest management was weak. The employees felt that they had not been provided the best possible framework to carry out their work during the change or opportunities to influence the new emerging organization. There are interviewees in other departments, however, who feel that they are aware of what the highest management is planning.

5.5.3 The managers’ perspectives on their support for the employees

The managers themselves perceive that one of the most important ways for them to support the employees is to help in setting boundaries for work and to clarify the work situation for the employees. These things can be achieved both through spontaneous, unofficial help as well as by establishing rules and structures for the employees’ work. The »unofficial« help means, for instance, that the managers have to be able to see when some-
one is working too much. They also have to be able to interfere in such a situation: to encourage the person to take it easier. This makes it necessary for the managers to be both open and sensitive – sensitive in the sense that they can see when there is a problem emerging and open to be able to speak about it with the employee. The managers should be also able to see when someone has a problem in organizing her work and, for instance, finds it difficult to prioritize things.

Even though the employees at TeleCom work much, their working hours should apply to the existing laws and regulations. Also the company tries to limit the amount of extra hours; the company is aware that it has to take care of the existing resources and not to consume them or let them be consumed, as one of the managers puts it. In order to find the balance between much work and not working too much, the managers have to be continuously aware of the need for this balance. The managers should see that no-one is working too much and that tasks are equally distributed in the groups. Planning ahead the optimal workload is not easy, since it cannot be seen beforehand how many people are needed in different tasks. A constant dialogue is needed between the employees and their managers – the dialogue on whether group’s or individual’s workload is too heavy and whether enough people are currently engaged in a task.

However, despite the laws and organization’s own attempts to limit the workload, the employees do work much. Working time is not followed in any way in the company (there is no working time surveillance systems or paid overtime), and that makes it quite difficult for the managers to see how much the employees actually are working. One of the managers says that since working time is not followed in any way, she feels that she has to be there to see how people work. Furthermore, it is not only a question of how much the employees work, but also why they work the way they do. Long working days or late nights at the office may be a sign of a problem, but it also may be that someone is working much just to carry out some single task for a customer or maybe somebody enjoys working late in the evenings when it is quiet in the office. The manager should know the employees and know why they work the way they do.

In short, then, one way for a manager to support her group is to be a brake pedal, as one of the managers says. A manager has to help the group to slow down when things are going too fast. Also a manager has to try to see which emerging projects should be taken on and which should be passed. In a way, the manager has to be able to question the decisions made
elsewhere: is it reasonable to take this new task or a project or make a change in working methods? What are the consequences of the change? But it is also important that the manager acts as an »accelerator«: motivates and inspires the group in its work. In practice this means things like helping the group to prioritize its work and helping the employees to work together by bringing in all the different competencies needed in a task. Usually, the managers have a broader sight to the organization and can see who should be involved in a project. Finally, the manager can support the employees in their decision-making. This can be done, for instance, by asking clarifying questions: if you make this decision, what will be the consequences, have you considered this and that?

As was noted above, besides of all such spontaneous, »unofficial«, and interactive help, the managers can also support the boundary setting by creating formal rules, tools, and structures. Formal tools that the managers can use in supporting the employees to see their responsibilities and the limits of them are, for instance, job descriptions, development discussions, and group meetings. Even though detailed job descriptions cannot often be made, the group’s responsibilities can be outlined in a group job description. The job descriptions at group level can then be cascaded downwards into the individual job descriptions. The job description can, thus, provide rough framework for what should be achieved and where. Development discussions are also a good way to help the employees to understand their work. In the development discussions, goals and responsibilities, achievements and development plans are discussed. Finally, the group meetings can be held to follow the progression of different tasks and help the group members to see what is going on in the different parts of their group. Furthermore, in some departments where there is a direct customer contact or other need for the constant availability of the employees to the external or internal customers, the managers can support the group by making a guiding work schedule that helps the employees to see when they should be working in order to keep the group continuously occupied in such a way that no-one has to work too much.

A further way for the managers to support the employees in their work is to try and influence positively the culture at work. The managers themselves think, for instance, that they can contribute to a working climate that supports the employees in taking initiatives and in realizing their ideas. The managers also can improve the working climate by supporting the employees in taking time for studying and also by being there for them when they...
have made a mistake. The managers can also try to contribute to the development of caring, friendly atmosphere at work. For instance, in a group that has gone through a big change, both the managers and the employees feel that it is important that the managers (and also the Human Resources department) have time to listen to the employees and discuss the change with them. In such a situation, the managers also say, it is important that they can keep up optimism in a group.

5.5.4 The managers’ perspectives on the organizational support for the employees

The organizational measures to support the employees resemble the support measures available for the individual managers, even though at the organizational level the measures naturally take much more the form of policies and advocated practices. The managers and the Human Resources department consider it important that the employer communicates clearly the changes and market requirements to the employees. Without knowing what is happening and what demands the organization as whole is facing, the employees may fail to be fast and flexible enough in their daily work. At TeleCom, for instance, an internal magazine as well as, more informally, e-mail messages are used in informing the employees of different topical things. As noted above, also interdepartmental meetings are arranged in order to improve the information flow from one department to another.

The managers say that another way for the organization to support its employees is to establish necessary rules and structures for the employees’ work. Even though the employees are autonomous and can decide how they organize their work, they still need rules and structures that help them in planning their work. The managers think that having the necessary rules and policies helps in getting the job done – the employees do not have to invent the wheel over and over again, but may benefit from what has been decided and tried earlier. One of the managers notes that TeleCom has earlier invested a lot of work in creating the necessary rules and procedures, and now the benefits are starting to show; »work proceeds now more smoothly through the factory«, as she says. Only when the tools and operation methods in the organization have been trimmed, the company has a possibility to operate with a larger operation radius. However, there has to be a balance between the structures and the employees’ autonomy. This balance has been achieved, when the employees truly are able to consider all the structures benefiting them rather than creating unnecessary »red tape«.
One of the managers notes that this kind of a balance cannot be designed on a paper, but it only can be created by the organization’s members through dialogue. Some people can act as »accelerators« advocating freedom and choice at work, while some can be the »break pedals« and call for structures and rules. Thus, different kinds of people are needed to create the »marriage« between bureaucracy and freedom, the manager says. Above all, the employees themselves have to be engaged and involved in creating the »marriage« - as with many other things, only participation makes it possible for the employees to understand and internalize the decisions made. Finally, one of the managers also notes that maybe more structures would be needed in relation to working time; if there were some kind of a working time surveillance system, it would be easier for the managers to see how much the employees are actually working. Now the only way for them to follow the working time is to concretely see how much people work.

Just like the closest managers (the group and team leaders), the organization as whole can also strive to create a supporting and caring working climate. The working culture should be such that the employees can feel safe in their environment: to feel confident to take initiatives and realize their ideas. Furthermore, the employees’ unique needs should be taken into account in the organization. For instance, one of the managers notes that when designing framework for working time schedules in her group (this group has to be available for the customers all through the day), the needs and preferences of the employees where consciously taken into account. This made the employees feel that they really are treated as individuals and that they have a right for their own preferences and needs. The working climate in a company like TeleCom should also be such that it accepts failures. The employees are bound to fail sometimes as they make many independent and difficult decisions. That is why the managers think that it is important that TeleCom does not condemn failures, but CEO has directly said that it is all right to fail sometimes, it is more important to get the things done than to worry about what can go and what went wrong. With this kind of culture, the organization can minimize the employees’ personal risks; professional risks are not accompanied by personal risk, failing in a work task does not mean being a failure. This kind of culture is important also since the employees who are afraid of failing, are more likely to fail, one manager says.

Finally, the organization as whole can try to support the balance between work and private life. The Human Resources department thinks
that the organization can directly communicate the importance of this balance and also have the policy of not scheduling meetings to evenings or week-ends. The employees can also be supported to do some physical training or to have other hobbies that balance work and recuperation. One of the managers notes, however, that maintaining the balance between work and private life is very difficult when working hours are unregulated.

5.5.5 Informal social support
Both the employees and managers emphasize the importance of informal social support and personal networks. The employees and managers at TeleCom establish informal networks that are not defined in the organizational charts and would not exist without the free choice of the persons involved. These networks are very important for the employees and managers as a source of information – if there is something one does not know or a problem one cannot solve, one can always ask the people in the informal network. One of the interviewees notes that situations where she cannot solve a problem and her network cannot help her are the most difficult ones in her work.

Informal personal contacts support also more formal collaboration. For instance, the interdepartmental meetings are considered important by some managers, since they enable employees from different departments to learn to know each other. When there is a personal contact between the employees, they tend to take each other much more into account and pay attention to each other. When the employees have had the chance to learn to know each other, they find it much more difficult to disregard or answer bluntly to each other’s inquiries and requests. Also, one manager notes that, within a work group, personal contacts and face-to-face dialogue are important – communicating only through e-mail may lead to a situation where group members misunderstand each other and when there is no personal contact, the misunderstandings start to cascade. Often it is easier to communicate via e-mail than to take the personal contact, but if one wants to develop and maintain good collaboration within a group, one has to invest extra-resources on the face-to-face communications. The investment will pay itself back in good collaboration within the group. Some interviewees also emphasize the meaning of the physical working space on collaboration and interaction. In one group, the employees are located close to each other and the employees feel that even for the tasks they work on by themselves, they can get support from the others – it is easy to go and ex-
change few words with colleagues if one feels like it. In another group, the employees are distributed to several different locations. The manager of this group says that this makes communication within the group very difficult.

5.6 Dealing with the changes
The interviewees say that in the ICT-sector change is constant. As the branch keeps on changing, also the employees have to change their work and the organization has to transform itself continuously. In this section, changes and the ways to cope with them are discussed.

5.6.1 Uncertainty
The interviewees do not consider uncertainty in their work only as a negative factor. First of all, things change so rapidly and so profoundly, that no one can possibly be certain about the future. For instance, some interviews were carried out during the time when one of TeleCom’s owners was considering a merger with one of TeleCom’s competitors. The future of TeleCom was very uncertain at that time. The interviewees note, however, that one has to concentrate on one’s own job and not to worry about the ownership questions too much. Some interviewees also say that dealing with the uncertainty of such big questions as the ownership becomes easier if one has a clear idea of where the highest management is leading the company.

The second important point in facing the uncertainty of the changing branch is the trust in one’s abilities, skills, and possibilities. The employees are able to see their fate independent from the fate of the company; they can rely on their skills and development as professionals. Regardless of what happens to the company, they – as young, highly educated, and talented people – are able to find another job. Third, the interviewees experience that changes are not only leading to uncertainty, changes actually make work fun and interesting. There are always new technologies coming up and new things to learn. This is experienced as a possibility, a good thing about the job, rather than a threat. The employees, however, say that changes become negative, if one has to learn new things that are not, for some reason, very interesting.
5.6.2 Organizational change

In one of the work groups engaged in this interview study, an extensive reorganization project was carried out just during the interviews. This made it possible to discuss the organizational change process both with the managers and employees of the group in question. The organizational change process was carried out in order to relocate the group’s tasks into another work group and to form a new work group that would provide service to an important customer group. Even though the employees and managers of the group think that for many the change has eventually been for the best (in terms of, for instance, more interesting work tasks), there were many problems in carrying out the organizational change. These problems are shortly described here, as are the group’s strategies to cope with the change.

Initially, the group members realized that something was going to change when vacant positions in the group were not filled. The group inquired the reason for this from the department’s management, but did not receive any explanation on what was happening. The employees experienced this uncertainty difficult. After the decision on the organizational change had been made and communicated to the employees, the department management said, that they could not have told the group earlier about the change, since there was no decision on the matter until then. The management did not want to make the employees worried by telling them uncertain plans. As the change was announced, it was also promised that no-one would lose their jobs because of the change. Some of the group members were hired to the new group (concentrating on certain important customers) and for some, other work possibilities within the organization were found. There were, however, eventually few employees who could not find new tasks in the organization. All this was quite taxing for everyone involved; there was sadness because the existing group was terminated and grief for losing colleagues as well.

During the change period there was a high workload for everyone in the group. As leaving employees were not replaced, the workload of the remaining employees grew. Some extra help was obtained from staffing companies, but the group members say that it was not enough and workload was very high. Some of the group members also started to study the tasks to be performed in the new work group and some were instructing those employees who would take over the group’s tasks after the group had been terminated. Also these learning and teaching requirements added to the work-
load. The change took place quite rapidly. On the one hand, the group members think that it is good that the change did not linger on. On the other hand, they say that the hurry with the change made it impossible to do the existing work well and also to learn the new tasks. The group had two kinds of tasks: a telephone service for the customers (the customers call to ask for advice) and work to be done off-line (away from the telephones). As there were too few people in the group, everyone was needed to work on the telephones and the off-line work suffered. Even when the off-line work was sacrificed to keep the telephones occupied, the group thinks that they were not able to service enough people via telephones; the telephone queues grew and the customers had to wait for a long time in the queue. Thus, one further worry for the employees was the quality of their work. They say they could not do their work well. The group members also worried about how the other group would take care of their old tasks and the operation of the new key customer service group was also a cause for worry: what if everything would not work as planned. The group members interviewed say that the temporarily high workload and pressure during the change had negative effects on them. They felt stressed, and it was difficult to relax during the spear-time. The group members say that even at home they just kept on thinking, whether they had remembered to do everything.

The group, its employees and managers, also distinguish several things that helped them in dealing with the change process. First, after the situation had been clarified to the group, it took a little while to start to see the positive sides of the change. Only as the group had had time to think and live through the change, also the good things about the change started to surface. The group says that it was important to accept the situation – then it was possible to start to work towards the new situation. Social support, both formal and informal, was very important for the group members. They had the opportunity to discuss the change and its consequences with the management and the Human Resources department. In these discussions, the group members could bring forth their feelings about the change and also the critique they had on the process. The group members also say that their group leader was very committed to the well-being of the employees. The group leader did not only help with the work tasks, but also encouraged the employees to take a break if they were working too much and the group leader also arranged possibilities for the group to laugh together, for instance, by sending around a funny e-mail note. Furthermore,
informal talks within the group helped; it was easier to evaluate one’s situation in the change process, when one had the opportunity to talk with the others involved. Also having some group members who had experience on similar change processes was valuable. For instance, the group leader had gone through similar kinds of changes before, and was able to clarify the process to the group members. All in all, the group thinks that coping with the change was easier, since they had a good group and colleagues around them. The group tried to take some time for doing nice things together: having common coffee breaks and cake for the Friday coffee. The group members also distinguish personal characteristics that helped them. It helped, for instance, to have a persistent character. When one is persistent, one wants to see the change through and does not give up, but always waits for the better times to come. In short, then, it seems that dealing with the change is nothing »big«. The small things that the group did together helped most in dealing with the change.

When the change had been carried out, the old tasks transferred to another group, and the new key customer group established, the work situation improved - the workload decreased. The group leader describes the situation by saying that during the change period, the group was like a balloon that was continuously filled with more and more air and, when the change was over, the air came slowly out. Initially, in the new group, there was a feeling of being lost. The employees knew what their new tasks were but, nevertheless, it took a little time to wheel down and »find oneself« in the new situation.

5.6.3 The managers’ thoughts on dealing with changes
The managers also listed certain issues relating to successful coping with changes. First of all, the availability of information is important for the employees; without information, it is not possible to go through the mental process of change. The importance of available information is even more profound as changes have to be carried out fast – so fast, that there is no time to head for the best possible state of the affairs. Changes simply have to be made and, often, the state to which the change takes the employees is not perfect. However, when the employees have the necessary information they can see that they have moved to the right direction and, as time allows, will improve the situation to be closer to the optimal, desired state. Consequently, information is not important only because it allows the employees to operate correctly; information is also important since it makes it possible
for the employees to mentally deal with and orient themselves to the change. Some managers underline the need for the employees to be there to plan the change from the beginning – as they can live through the change from its initiation, it does not seem so profound and overwhelming anymore. Instead, if the employees are engaged to the change process only after everything has been decided, they can only see the gap between now and then, and it may seem very wide a gap for them. The »living through the change« process should also include possibilities for the employees to talk about the change; simply speaking out what one feels and thinks about change, makes it easier to cope with it. One of the managers underlines also that it is important for the employees to be aware of the emotional side of the change process. For instance, when change is accompanied by losing colleagues, it helps the employees to be aware how the grieving process usually proceeds and what kind of feelings they are likely to go through.

Besides of the availability of information, also other factors helping in dealing with changes emerge from the managers’ interviews. A manager says that even though rapid change is demanding, it is also good if the change period does not last for too long. For instance, it is better if an organizational change process has a clear deadline – a goal when everything should be over. Finally, the managers identify several factors in dealing with change and work in general that relate to the person involved. For instance, having some »personal mental space« helps in dealing with work and its changes. Even when there is a lot to do, one should be able to take some time also for oneself. It also may help, if the person does not take everything personally – it does not help to carry the world on one’s shoulders.

5.7 Why do I cope with work?
In this section, the individual strategies and characteristics that help in dealing with work at TeleCom are discussed. Both the employees’ and the managers’ ideas on personal strategies and characteristics that help in »surviving« the ICT-sector are presented.

5.7.1 Personal strategies in dealing with work
Work at TeleCom is quite autonomous; the employees can decide how, where, and when they work. Even though this kind of autonomy and freedom is usually considered as an advantage, it also poses new kinds of demands on the employees. The employees have to be able to define and
construct their work on their own. Many of the interviewees perceive the capability to structure one’s work pivotal in dealing with it. In order to structure and master one’s work an employee should be able to say »no« in the right places. Those employees who take on all tasks and projects offered to them (or coming in their way) become easier stressed than those employees who can say »no«, when they have a good reason for rejecting a project or a task. One of the interviewees specifically states that her working situation has improved when she has learned to set limits and say »stop« when too many projects are vested on her. Relating to the capability to say »no«, an employee should be able to estimate what she can manage. Understanding one’s capacity to manage with work helps in setting limits to it; one does not take too full a plate then.

It is important to say »no« only in the proper situations in order to gain others’ respect for the refusal and not to lose their appreciation despite the fact that one will not do what they are asking for. One employee interviewee describes this as a process of making clear why one says »no«. When the others know the work situation the person is in and know also that the person is usually doing much more than the 37.5 hours/week, it is more probable that they understand the refusal. The interviewees also state that one has to be able to set demands on others (e.g. when one needs help from them) and also not to accept unreasonable demands. If one accepts unreasonable demands, one has the responsibility to carry them out. Furthermore, it is not only the amount of tasks and projects, but one should be able to set limits also within those tasks that one is carrying out. For instance, an interviewee notes that – even though she may not always succeed in it – she is trying to worry only about those things that she can influence. Often she can see problems that should be solved or issues to be taken care of, but if those problems and issues are not within her reach, she will have to leave them to others and not to worry about them.

But how is it possible to set limits, to say »no« to interesting projects or say »stop« when challenging tasks are piling up? One of the interviewees underlines the need to accept the fact that one cannot possibly do everything. There is always work to be done, but one still has to be able to set limits to what one does and leave time also for recuperation. According to this interviewee realizing and becoming aware of the threat of stress and burnout helped her to accept the fact that there is always more she could do and be engaged in. In creating this understanding, the interviewee thinks that the possibility to talk about workload related issues with her managers
helped a lot; just by talking about such issues, they truly surfaced in the consciousness and made her think about the consequences of working too much. Even though the employees are aware of the need to set limits to their work and to say »no« at times, they also recognize the difficulty of actually doing that. For instance, wanting to be involved in many different projects and activities within the organization, finding work interesting and enjoying the quiet evening hours at the office make it difficult to set limits to one’s work.

In short, then, the interviewees perceive the employees able to say »no« more successful in dealing with work. The interviewees also state quite often that the ability to say »no« can be learned. Experience, thus, helps in dealing with work both because an experienced employee knows more in professional sense about her work, but also because an experienced employee may know herself better as an employee (and a person) and is, consequently, more aware of what she can manage and has also learned to set limits to her work. One problem is, however, that along with the experience also knowledge about possibilities at work increases. An experienced employee can, for instance, in a problem situation see many different possibilities to solve the problem. For an experienced employee then, it may also be harder to set limits to work and say »no«.

The interviewees also underline the need to structure one’s working time; one has to be able to benefit from the opportunities offered by time. First, one has to be able to schedule one’s work such that also non-urgent, but still important, issues will not end up in a never revisited waiting list. For instance, the employees emphasize the need to put learning on the agenda - to concretely reserve time for studying. Second, the interviewees say that one should try and benefit from those times when there is not such a big hurry. Quite a many interviewees perceive some cyclicity in their work and consciously aim to »wheel down« when pressure decreases or take some time for learning during the quieter times.

5.7.2 Personal characteristics and personality helping in dealing with work

Regardless of the department in which the interviewees work, they note that certain kind of determination is an important personal characteristic helping them in dealing with their work. This may relate to the fact that (again - regardless of the department) work that the interviewees do consists of problems to be solved; a problem in a technical system emerges and
needs to be solved, a customer calls and points out a problem that has to be solved. Being determined to solve such problems helps the employees in their work. It is also better if one really wants to solve problems one sees at work rather than thinks »this does not concern me«. One interviewee notes that it helps her that she is persistent, even stubborn, when she has to mobilize others to support her in tackling a problem.

Another personal characteristic that helps in dealing with work mentioned by the interviewees from different departments is the ability to work with others or, in other words, social skills. The interviewees think that the social networks that they are a part of are very important for them and their work. Thus, social skills are needed, not only in direct customer contacts, but also in dealing with colleagues within the company. Finally, the employee interviewees say that being interested in the industry in general as well as in one’s job helps in doing a good job. This issue – the interest towards one’s work – is considered important also by the Human Resources department; in recruitment a candidate’s commitment and integrity to do a good job are evaluated.

Also the managers point out certain personal characteristics that help the employees to cope with their work at TeleCom. The main emerging characteristic is self-awareness. Self-awareness means knowing oneself and understanding one’s worth. When an employee knows herself, appreciates her strengths and is aware of her weaknesses, she can better cope with her work. When one knows oneself, it is easier to choose the right missions and avoid struggling with tasks and projects that are beyond one’s competencies. To know what one can do and learn is even more important, since other’s skills and abilities are often exaggerated. Colleagues and managers compliment someone for things she really cannot do. They want to be nice and encouraging, but may in reality end up obscuring the person’s understanding of her abilities. Despite what others say, everyone should be able to realistically evaluate her strengths and weaknesses. Self-awareness also makes it easier to be realistic about the work situation and have realistic expectations for one’s performance. When one knows oneself, it is possible to honestly see when one has done one’s best and could not have done more. Furthermore, also the managers note the need for employees to set the limits for their work. They say that being able to say »no« in the right place necessitates that the employee knows her role in the organization and can be realistic about what can be expected of her. Thus, knowing one-
One’s worth and one’s role in the organization are essential resources in dealing with work, setting limits to it, and facing the challenges.

Finally, the interviewees also talk about the ability to maintain certain kind of detachment as an important factor in dealing with work. For instance, one should not take failures personally – each failure should not be a personal failure. Here again, self-awareness helps; when one can honestly know that one has tried one’s best and, still the attempt failed, one could not have done more. It is possible to think then »I failed, but I am not a failure«. Also one of the managers interviewed notes that as a manager, it is important no to take things too much on oneself and try to carry all the worries of the employees.

5.7.3 The ICT-hero cult
The objective characteristics of work, organization, and branch are not the only factors affecting the employees working at TeleCom, but also the myths and cults of the branch affect them. This is noted by one of the managers, who considers the »ICT-hero cult« as an important factor affecting the way people work in the ICT-sector and how they conceive their work. The ICT-sector is not characterized only by interesting work, but also by true possibilities to become rich. Everyone is aware of the ICT-millionaire heroes; becoming rich is possible for everyone, since the stock markets are not only tied to Return on Investment anymore but also potential may make people rich. Furthermore, there are lucrative job offers with high salaries in the sector; the companies are ready to pay high prices for talent. Many people, thus, identify with these hero stories and dream of becoming rich and successfully. The failures, companies that did not make it and people who burned out, are not discussed that much and it is easy to get caught in the web of the possibilities. Consequently, many drive themselves hard, work with high intensity, thinking that it takes just a couple of years to make a fortune. In reality, people should think in more long-term – it is much more reasonable to orient to a long career in the ICT-sector than to imagine leaving the working life as a millionaire in a couple of years.

5.8 The consequences of work - Development and stress
One of the aims of the interviews reported here was to map the effects the employees think their work has on them, both positive and negative. The positive effects of work that emerge from the interviews relate to individual
development possibilities, while the negative consequences relate to the experiences of stress.

5.8.1 The employees’ ideas on the development possibilities in their work

The employees perceive their development possibilities at TeleCom positively. The employees both experience that they learn new professional skills as well as that their worth in the labor market increases due to the work they do at TeleCom. Besides of their increasing worth in the external labor markets, the employees also think that their value for the company is increasing. An employee notes, that since introducing new employees to the organization does not take place very effectively, everyone who masters a certain job is very important for the company. The employees think that it is very positive that they can do different things at TeleCom and move from one job or task to another; this way they learn many different things. Also the possibility to advance on a specialist career in the company is considered very positive; one can keep on developing as a technical specialist also in the future. The employees experience that the current development possibilities at TeleCom create a platform for future learning and development, and they say that their current work experiences make it easier to deal with work in the future.

Much of the professional development takes place at the workplace rather than in training courses. The courses are generally considered quite expensive and time consuming, and many interviewees also feel that the available course are not suitable – they are either too specific or at too general level. Thus, independent learning and learning with others at work are considered important ways for professional development. One of the interviewees notes, that the fact that learning is continuous – learning today builds on learning yesterday and tomorrow’s learning will be built on what was learned today – makes learning easier. However, finding time for learning is problematic. Several strategies emerge in the interviews. As noted above, one has to benefit from the cyclicity of work - when there is a calmer period, one should invest more time on learning. An employee notes, however, that after a hectic work period, it is difficult to sit down and start to read. One does not feel very effective and there is the nagging feeling of »I should be doing something more important«. One truly has to put studying on the agenda: plan when to study, reserve time for it, talk about it with the managers. One employee says that she reserves time for studying in her
personal agenda (»next week, I will take time on Thursday and Friday to read«), another employee says that she discussed the need for learning with her manager in a development discussion and with the help of that discussion, decided to stay at home one day or a half day every other week just to read and study.

There are, however, things that really make taking time for learning difficult. If there are direct customer contacts, it is not possible to prioritize learning and, similarly, if one has to take care of technical systems in real time, it is very difficult to take time for studying. A further hindrance in learning is that learning should take place at different levels – there are different kinds of things to be learned. This makes learning both time consuming and the content of the material to be learned complex and versatile. The employees have to learn to know the existing products and service, as well as learn to know the possible future products and services (when, for instance, testing them). Furthermore, the employees have to be able to master the underlying technology and keep up with its development. This means studying fundamental technological issues and following their continuous development.

The most negative work situation for the employees seems to be a situation where there simply is too much to do. Some of the interviewees have just dealt with a high workload situation and they still experience its negative effects. When there is too much work, stress stretches beyond work, also at home one thinks about work: what was left do be done, what one forgot to do, etc. Recuperation, when it is needed most, becomes very difficult. Similarly, one of the employees notes that when she had a high workload at work, she started to limit her free-time activities. She did not want to go out and do anything during the weekdays, because she just wanted to rest to be alert and brisk at work the next day.

5.8.2 The managers’ experiences on the negative consequences of work

Also the managers discuss the negative consequences of work – stress and burnout. Two managers interviewed connect the general stress problems not only to the work situation within different companies, but also to the general industrial development in Sweden. The latest recession has strongly influenced the working life in Sweden. When the recession was very deep, those who still had a job felt that they had to do anything for their work to keep it. As a result, unhealthy working-around-the-clock-culture
was created and people still, in a better economic situation, work too much. The current economic recovery (i.e. the economic situation in 2000) is creating also further problems; now, interesting and stimulating jobs are emerging, but there are still those who do not have jobs or work in »less fashionable« branches and have less interesting jobs. This means polarization in the work force, and even those who have interesting jobs are facing the risk of working too hard.

Burnout is often discussed as a problem in the ICT-branch, but one of the managers points out that burnout affects all different sectors. Furthermore, stress and burnout are discussed so much nowadays, that people easily use them as fashion-words without really understanding what they mean. Stress and other problems are mixed up, and employers are accused of something that is out of their control: depression relating to other factors besides of work. Another manager interviewee notes that usually it is not only work that is the cause for burnout. In her previous jobs, she witnessed few burnout-processes and they always had more complicated reasons than problems at work.

5.9 Discussion on the case
In this section, the main points from the case study are summarized and discussed. Here again I shall move from the vertical analyses to the horizontal analysis; overarching themes from the employee and manager interviews are sought. Furthermore, I present my reflections on those issues here and identify some issues that I wish to return to after having collected more empirical material in the Empirical Study II. The discussion here will center around the following issues:

1. Special features of work at TeleCom such as work characterized by »invisible work reality«, the importance of social relations, as well as the elements of work that are both the best and worst at work at the same time.

2. Dealing with work from an individual’s point of view – understanding one’s role at work, self-awareness, and the consequent ability to set limits to work.

3. Dealing with work from the collective point of view: putting the boundaries back to work.

All in all, a picture of complex, fast paced work emerges in the interviews. Work is hard to capture in exact descriptions and difficult to define; it does
not render itself to working time limitations or job descriptions. There are many invisible elements in work (see Howard, 1995; chapter 3), invisible in the sense that they have not been predefined or they emerge at work rather than are intentionally part of it. For instance, there are no pre-defined job descriptions or working time rules. The employees can, consequently, decide when and how to work, as well as to some extent what they work on. Autonomy to design one’s work and decide on how and when one works as well as what one does means not only that the employees should be able to take into account business results, but also their own well-being. They should be able to work in such ways that they do not consume their resources in the long-term. To some extent, thus, the eternal question of work and organizational psychology – how to achieve good operational results and employees’ well-being at the same time – seems to have been delegated to the employees. Indeed the managers, when discussing the employees’ work, note that the employees have to face the demands, for instance, to structure their work, to even say no to some projects and tasks offered to them, as well as to carry responsibility for their work, even for the failures. Consequently, the employees need to take a very active role in defining and delimiting their work. In the Empirical Study II, it shall be interesting to see whether this is the case also more broadly, also in other companies.

5.9.1 The special features of work at TeleCom

The special features of work at TeleCom are discussed here. The features of work I shall concentrate on are special in the sense that they strongly influence consuming and regenerative potential of work and underlie many issues brought forth in the vertical analysis above. As the aim of this case study is to explore, here the work at TeleCom is explored.

Invisibility is one of Howard’s (1995; see chapter 3) criteria for post-bureaucratic work and the TeleCom case study clearly points out many invisible elements at work. For instance, both the employees and managers face »invisible« demands in their decision-making: things that are not easily seen, but profoundly affect the quality of decisions. Many of these demands are »invisible« because they do not preside within the immediate work, but rather are further away either in time or space. Nevertheless, such demands directly influence work, the employees and managers have to take them into account and, in that way, such demands may limit autonomy by making only certain types of decisions possible. The employees, for instance,
have to make their decisions such that they take into account the consequences of the decisions to others working in the different parts of the organization. For the managers, future is such an invisible boundary condition for decision-making. The managers have to be able to anticipate what will happen in the future, to see the potential threats and pitfalls, and work to eliminate them. For both the managers and employees, an important »invisible« factor at work is the change within technology, competition, and other such factors beyond the control of the organization. Such changes have to be taken into account at work, but there is no way the employees or managers can directly control or even influence them.

Another special characteristic of work at TeleCom is the importance of social relations. The importance of social relations and networks relates partly to the fact that work is not precisely defined, the employees have to steer their work. For this, they need help from others. Furthermore, even when the employees work alone and are responsible for their work alone, they find it a great support to talk to others. The others can help just by listening. The social relations and collaborative relations at work are also becoming more informal. The organization is encouraging the employees to take contacts freely: to contact directly anyone in the organization. The employees are establishing informal networks that can support them in their work. This naturally sets a demand to the employees to be »social«, to know how to create contacts to others and how to maintain them (e.g. how to enact social support). Also formal social relations at work are founded on »informal feelings« in the sense that, for instance, it would not be possible for the managers to be supporters or coaches, if there were no trusting, friendly relationships between them and the employees. Similarly, interdepartmental relations are facilitated by informal connections between the employees. As the employees learn to know each other, they are much more likely to go »the extra mile« for each other or, quite simply, take each other into account.

A further special characteristic of work is that an investment of both material and immaterial resources at work seems to be a process rather than one-time decision. For instance, in order to ensure the sufficient amount of employees in different tasks and projects, one manager notes that she – together with the employees – carries out a continuous follow-up to evaluate whether there is enough people and resources in each project. Investments cannot be, thus, pre-defined for undefined work processes. Furthermore, when it comes to resources investment, the minimum investment today
does not seem to be necessarily a wise option. Sometimes, one has to invest more than the minimum to reap benefits in the future. For instance, in order to create a good collaboration within a work group, the group may have to invest on face-to-face communication, even when using e-mail might be an easier way to communicate. Only through face-to-face communication are the group members able to have a dialogue and learn to understand each other.

Finally, work at TeleCom is characterized by elements that can be both good and bad. The work science has already earlier recognized that so-called psychosocial factors at work (such factors as social relations, job content, skill demands, etc.) can be both the sources of enjoyment or stress (see chapter 2). This seems to be the case at TeleCom, and even so profoundly that the same element of work maybe one of the best things in it and, at some other time, the most important source of stress. For instance, the complexity of work and changes are experienced as good things in the sector and in the company; they give possibilities for development and learning new things. However, complexity and change become negative things when the change is for the worse, if changes are carried out with too much time and workload pressure, or if the complexity of work prevents understanding it or carrying it out in the best possible way. The employees experience it frustrating when they have to abandon their plans and disregard the correct ways to do things, when something changes and they just have to react as fast as possible. Similarly, the employees enjoy their autonomy, responsibility for their work and possibility to make independent decisions. Autonomy becomes a negative issue, however, if one is left too alone and one does not get enough support or information from others. Besides of this kind of duality of good and bad at work, duality can also be seen in the way the employees deal with the negative elements of their work. Sometimes, rather than fighting the negative aspects, they accept them as a price for something good at work in the future. For instance, the employees may agree to a temporarily high stress and hectic work, because they know that that is the only way to be active and visible in the organization and have the opportunity to be engaged in interesting work projects also in the future.

The special characteristics of work at TeleCom discussed here provide an important foundation for the further exploration in the contemporary working life in the Empirical Study II. When looking at the case organizations of the Empirical Study II, the organizations operating in more tradi-
tional branches, can similar characteristics be detected? Does the Janus-kind of work also exist there: work in which the same factor is both the best and the worst part of job? Are the resources investments also there processes? Are there invisible elements of work there too and, if so, how do they affect the employees? These questions are returned to in chapter 8, where all the cases are discussed in synthesis.

5.9.2 Dealing with work from an individual’s point of view

The characteristics of work at TeleCom all contribute to the same need: the need for an individual to be »a master of her work«, to actively define her work and make personal decisions in it. It seems that at TeleCom, the employees and managers find this difficult, but not impossible. The case provides many ideas on what an individual employee can do to master her work. First, an employee should understand the organization’s goals and her role in achieving them and, second, an employee should have a clear understanding of her strengths and weaknesses – what she can do and what she can learn. Understanding one’s role in an organization and understanding the direction and current situation of the company go hand in hand. An employee can understand what she should do only when she knows where the company is heading. An aspect of understanding one’s role and responsibilities in the organization is to be able to see the consequences of one’s actions and decisions in other parts of the organization. Understanding one’s role requires, thus, quite complex thinking. It is not enough to see only the immediate work reality, but the employees should also be able to know how different things are connected to each other in the organization. The managers can help the employees to see what their roles and responsibilities are as well as how their actions affect the others in the organization. In the interviews, both »formal« tools (such as group job descriptions, development discussions, and group meetings) and »informal« communicative methods for clarifying roles, tasks, and goals were identified. However, the complexity of work and the organization as well as the fast changes at work make it more difficult to understand one’s tasks and responsibilities. The employees need to continuously learn new things as well as also adopt new areas of expertise and let go of their earlier expertise areas. In short, then, the employees’ tasks and responsibilities are continuously in flux, changing. The question remains: what could then be the common denominator that could help the employees to maintain their »work identity« – what
they are as employees and what they should contribute to the common enterprise?

An ability to set limits at work seems to require also self-awareness and a realistic understanding of oneself. As the employees decide many things in their work, they have to be able to estimate what those decisions mean to them personally. Knowing oneself helps, consequently, in choosing the right missions (or tasks) and the right ways to work. That is why one can say that as the employees are learning how to work, they should also learn to know themselves both as persons and as professionals.

A further individual level factor affecting dealing with work is goal orientation. In general, people act often in a quite goal-oriented manner. When they internalize a goal, giving up the achievement of the goal may be very frustrating. Such frustration relating to interrupted work emerges both in the employees’ and managers’ interviews. As things change rapidly, the employees have to be able to give up their earlier goals and priorities, and head towards new goals, give the things new priorities. Furthermore, in a change situation, the employees cannot always proceed directly towards the new, optimal state of affairs. Often the change has to be made so fast, that initially only the new direction can be taken. The employees have to be able to deal with not doing the »proper« thing, but just doing something to get started. Also, even when things do not change, the need to operate fast makes it sometimes necessary for the employees just to muddle through, rather than to do things properly. All these situations are potentially frustrating for the employees; they cannot fulfill the goals they have set for themselves and they cannot do as good a job as they know they could do.

In sum then, as the formal boundaries of work are disappearing, the employees should learn to set their own boundaries to their work. The possibility for autonomy is, thus, accompanied by a need to structure one’s work and mentally master it. This is also one conclusion from this case study to be carried over to the Empirical Study II; what further can be learned from the case studies in chapters 6 and 7 on the need and practice of mentally mastering one’s work?

5.9.3 Dealing with work from the collective point of view; Putting the boundaries back to work

When the formal definitions and boundaries of work disappear, the employees’ and their managers’ active search for comprehensibility and manageability of work (see Antonovsky, 1987a; chapter 2) becomes im-
important. In traditional bureaucracies, formal rules and structures provide the boundary conditions for work, but in the ICT-sector bureaucratic structures seem to have been replaced by flexibility and formal rules by individual discretion. This situation offers obvious benefits in terms of a possibility to learn and develop at work as well as to do meaningful and challenging work, but – as obviously – the situation also contains possibilities for stress and conflicts as people are independently and autonomously, but nevertheless interdependently, trying to achieve their goals. As was stated above, for an individual dealing with this situation means learning to know oneself both as a professional and as a person as well as understanding the meaning and goals of the organization as whole. For an organization, this situation seems to mean a need to create new framework for work: guidelines and procedures that help the employees and do not constrain them too much. Below some aspects of TeleCom’s »new« framework are discussed. When it comes to the Empirical Study II, it shall be interesting to see whether the empirical material collected there provides more insights for this need for a »new« framework for work!

At TeleCom, the organizational support for the employees’ understanding and dealing with work has at least two different sources. First, the closest manager and the interaction within an employee’s group are important - supporting measures are defined within the group as local decisions. These kinds of locally defined supporting measures may, on the one hand, relate to rules and structures; the group and its manager may decide on, for instance, group meetings and development discussion during which collectively and individually roles are clarified, task progression is followed and the employees, in general, have opportunities to try and grasp their work and work goals better. On the other hand, at the group level, the employees and managers may work to build a collaborative and supporting culture. The managers’ role as »accelerators« and »break pedals« relates also to the supporting group culture. Both the employees and managers think that it is important for the managers to continuously and informally help the employees to structure and control their work both by motivating them (by being »accelerators«) and by slowing them down (by being »break pedals«) if the employees work too much, get speed blind.

The second source of organizational support for the employees is provided by the organization wide measures that can help the employees to better comprehend and manage with their work. In the beginning of its existence, TeleCom grew very rapidly and the growth led to quite unstruc-
tured existence; the employees did what had to be done to get the telecommunication systems up and running. There was no time for refining the organizational structures and setting common operation policies and principles. As TeleCom grew, the need for these kinds of organizational measures became obvious. Now, there seems to be a shared understanding in the organization, that common structures, rules, and procedures are needed in order to reach a large scale operation radius, in order to be able to function as a reliable service provider for many customers. However, there is also the feeling in the organization that such structures, rules, and procedures cannot be set bureaucratically. Different people, »accelerators« and »break pedals« have to be involved, a marriage has to be created between flexibility and bureaucracy. Thus, also at organizational level concrete support measures are accompanied by a supporting culture that invites the employees to participate and influence their organization.

5.9.4 Towards a post-bureaucratic organization?

Work at TeleCom resembles for instance Howard’s description on post-bureaucratic work; consequently, this case study supports the idea that such work is emerging. However, when it comes to the work organization at TeleCom, its »post-bureaucracy« is not equally obvious. It is indeed interesting that despite the aims for an advanced, flexible, and open ways to work, the organizational structure depicted in figure 5.1 is very traditional. As in the case of NewMedia (see chapter 4), a functional organizational structure has been adopted within the divisions of TeleCom. Thus, work that can be characterized post-bureaucratic exists in a traditionally structured organization. Furthermore, similarly as in NewMedia, the traditional organizational structure has been adopted to make the organization more effective as well as to enable the employees to better understand their role and tasks in the organization. Thus, based on these two case studies it seems that post-bureaucratic work can exist and exists within very traditional organizational structures. The question, thus, is whether such structures support post-bureaucratic work in the best possible way or, in the long run, transform such work to more traditional, tayloristically divided work. The both organizations do fight this eventuality by emphasizing »internalities« – the culture and climate allowing flexibility, autonomy, choice, and participation, but will this be sustainable?

There is, as a matter of fact, one factor in the TeleCom-case that does set the power of the »internalities« into a dubious light: namely, the way the or-
ganization dealt with the organizational change taking place in one of the work groups (see section 5.6.2). In precisely such a situation important signals on an organization’s values and desired operation methods are sent; during a difficult change period, an organization’s true colors show. The change process documented in section 5.6.2 curiously falls short on the company’s espoused values; rather than engaging the employees to change from the beginning and allowing them to participate in decision-making on the change, the change process was totally steered from above. The employees report that they did not receive information on the change and, eventually, had to more or less adapt to the change. Later on in the change process, the employees did experience that they received support from the management but, all the same, one has to wonder what the employees did learn from the process. It probably at least caused a serious threat on the values relating to participation, responsibility taking, and openness since these values were not followed in the most difficult situation of the organizational life, in a situation when the organization was going through a profound change.

Therefore, in the following studies this area - the harmony between daily work and the organizational processes – shall be an important underlying idea; how do the nature of work and the nature of organization «collaborate» in all the case studies? This will be discussed further in chapter 8.

5.10 From the Empirical Study I to the Empirical Study II

We have now reached the end of the Empirical Study I which, as noted in chapter 1, both aimed to provide some answers to my initial research questions and, at the same time, helped me to reformulate my research questions in more detail. The NewMedia and TeleCom case studies, above all, attached my attention to the emerging post-bureaucratic features of work as well as the simultaneous persistence of bureaucratic organizational structures and the creation of alternative «frameworks» for work (i.e. the aim to achieve the «marriage» between bureaucracy and flexibility, as an interviewee puts it). Consequently, the case studies of the Empirical Study II shall be founded on the idea that we may be living in an era that is especially challenging for employees and organizations; there are emerging characteristics of work that demand individually and collectively much from us and may require us to refigure the ways organizations are structured and steered, the ways the collective efforts in work organizations are coordinated. Furthermore, in the present situation rather than asking
what regenerative work is, it is more challenging to ask how individually and collectively such work can be created. How can we create work that is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful, if the working life really contains the challenges revealed in this Empirical Study I? Many detailed questions relating to these issues have been outlined in sections 4.5 and 5.9, for instance:

- Is work transforming from predefined and confined work to more post-bureaucratic in its nature? If so, are the challenges of this changing work the reason for the general stress problems documented in section 1.1.2?
- What kind of an organizational structure and organizational practices are needed to support employees in coping with their post-bureaucratic work? How do work organizations have to develop to correspond to the emerging post-bureaucratic work?
- Based on the Empirical Study I, work post-bureaucratic in its nature is very demanding for individuals. How is it possible to mentally master one’s invisible, complex work?
- At NewMedia and TeleCom the employees seem to have to carry active and broad responsibility for their work to perform it successfully and to make the whole production system function. What does such broader responsibility taking mean and how can it be achieved?

These questions should not be considered as additional research questions to be directly studied in the Empirical Study II, but rather as outcomes from the Empirical Study I that will be benefited from when both the Empirical Study I and II are conclusively discussed in chapter 8 (see also chapter 1). The Empirical Study I both led to the questions listed above and also provided some answers to them. However, the case study organizations of the Empirical Study I are quite unique and unusual. When starting the case studies at Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union (in much more mature companies in mature operation areas), I could not be sure if I were able to study emerging post-bureaucracy and its implications in these organizations. Therefore, I could not design these studies based on the questions listed above. Instead, the case studies of the Empirical Study II had to be founded on much less focused research questions: the four research questions listed in section 1.2. By studying openly and broadly human resources consumption and regeneration at Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union, it would be more likely to spot the reasons for these phenomena in the organizations. Maybe the questions relating to post-bureaucracy would prove
to be relevant also in more mature sectors... The questions listed above will, consequently, be used as a support when analyzing further all the case studies in chapter 8, when going deeper into the consuming and regenerative work.
Chapters 6 and 7 take us to the Empirical Study II and the in-depth case studies carried out within the SALUT-network on human resources consumption and possibilities for regenerative work. Chapter 6 documents and discusses the case study at Norrtälje Hospital, while chapter 7 presents the case study carried out at Tenants’ Union. The methodology relating to these cases was presented already in chapter 1; in chapters 6 and 7, the case studies and their outcomes are discussed.

The SALUT-project at Norrtälje Hospital concentrated initially on the department manager role at the hospital with the fundamental question »why do the department managers lose energy at work?«. This focus was chosen due to some earlier studies indicating that the department managers experience problems in their role and find their work consuming rather than regenerative. For instance, RIKON Development consultant company carried out a study on the department manager work in the autumn of 2000. The study showed that the department managers are in a danger of losing their motivation in fragmented work in which there is no time to do the things they consider important. The department managers themselves distinguished following problem areas in their work in advance to the SALUT-project1:

1 These ideas were collected by the hospital’s personnel manager and the SALUT-project group’s psychologist by discussing the department manager work together with a few department managers.
• The department managers are not always considered as managers in the hospital. Therefore, their legitimacy at the hospital is weak, trust and communication are missing between them and some other groups.
• The department managers do not receive enough support from their managers; there is no time for this and sometimes it is very hard to even reach one’s supervisor.
• There is a high work pressure: too many tasks of different sort.
• There are several factors in the work environment that make the department managers’ work more difficult; there are, for instance, problems with the administrative computer systems, lack of personnel, etc.

All the hospital’s management levels agreed that SALUT should concentrate on the department manager work.

However, early on in the SALUT-project, it became obvious both to me and to the SALUT-project group (see below) that it would not be possible to improve the department managers’ role only by looking at it alone. The department managers’ work is closely connected to that of other employee groups and patients as well as factors within and external to the hospital (see figure 6.1). Therefore, gradually in the project, the focus on the department manager work was broadened to the overall management structures and leadership processes in the hospital. The project question »how to create sustainable department manager work« was extended to a question »how to create sustainable managerial work and leadership in the hospital«. More concretely, in order to truly understand what the department managers’ work is currently like and how it should be developed, it was important to speak with some employees, the clinic heads, personnel manager, economics manager as well as the hospital’s director on their ideas relating to the department manager work as well as management structures and processes in general. Consequently, I carried out interview studies with these other personnel groups and the SALUT-ideas were also eventually worked on, not only among the department managers, but in a group consisting of all the hospital’s managers (see section 6.7).
A SALUT-project group was formed at the hospital to work on the questions relating to the department manager role and it consisted of the following persons:

- A clinic head of the Specialist physician clinic (also the project leader).
- The department manager of the Maintenance department in the Administrative services.
- The department manager of the ward department 1 G in the Medicine-geriatric clinic.
- The department manager of the ward department 4 in the Medicine-geriatric clinic.
- The department manager of the X-ray clinic (this clinic consists of only one department).
- A psychologist from the hospital’s psychiatric clinic, who during the project was on maternity leave, but nevertheless participated in all the project group meetings, SALUT-network meetings, and other activities relating to the project. She also coordinated the Archipelago meeting (see section 6.7) in which the SALUT-ideas formulated by the pro-

**Figure 6.1. The social and organizational connections at the department manager work; internal and external factors influencing it. NTH = Norrtälje Hospital.**
ject group were eventually discussed in the group of all the hospital’s managers. Furthermore, all through the project, she offered valuable support to the project leader, me, and the whole project group.

- The author of this thesis as a researcher.

The idea was to delegate the preliminary work to the project group; the group would analyze the department manager work and create suggestions on how to develop it in practice. The other managers would then participate in the development work based on the findings and conclusions of the project group. This process was carried out during 2001 and 2002; the project group working actively first and the project culminating in May 2002 to the so-called Archipelago meeting with all the hospital’s managers concentrating on the SALUT-ideas.

The activities in the SALUT-project group and relating to the hospital’s SALUT-project are summarized in Appendix 2. The main activity methods in the project were the project group meetings, my research activities, and activities together with all the managers of the hospital. As can be seen in Appendix 2, the project group met regularly to discuss the department manager work as well as the management and leadership questions. All the managers from the hospital were, in their turn, engaged in the SALUT-activities in two occasions; in October 2001 SALUT was one of the program points in the manager group meeting and the Archipelago meeting mentioned above in this same group was dedicated solely to the SALUT-ideas.

I carried out the following research activities in the hospital’s SALUT-project:

- Participant observations in the project group meetings.
- Three interview studies aimed at collecting different perspectives on the department manager role in the hospital (see chapter 1). The results from the different departments and clinics within each interview study are not compared to each other, since there was such a small sample of interviewees from each department or clinic that making any comparisons might jeopardize the anonymity of the interviewees. However, the results from the interview studies carried out at different hierarchical levels are compared to each other in order to map the differences and similarities in the perceptions of, for instance, employees and their managers.
- Analyses of written material, e.g. relating to the change on the hospital’s company form and already existing material on the department
manager work, for instance the RIKON-study carried out in autumn 2000. The RIKON-study consists of preliminary interviews with five clinic heads and five persons from the hospital’s administration as well as workshops for the department managers in which 15 department managers created a collective picture of the department manager work.

- Participation in various management meetings at the hospital in order to observe collaboration between the managers as well as to present and discuss the findings from the SALUT-work.

This chapter presents my analysis on all the material gained through these research interventions; the vertical analysis on the empirical material is presented in sections 6.1 through 6.6. First, Norrtälje Hospital is presented in section 6.1. Then, work at different hierarchical levels in the hospital is described. The employees’, department managers’, and clinic heads’ work is discussed based on the interviews carried out with representatives from these personnel groups (when it comes to the clinic heads’ work, all the clinic heads were interviewed). Furthermore, since the focus of the SALUT-project was on the department managers and their role, the other personnel groups - the employees and the hospital’s highest management - were interviewed on how they perceive the department manager role. All this is presented in section 6.2. Since collaboration between different personnel groups and problems in it were distinguished by the SALUT-project group as an important theme affecting the department manager work, all the interviews gathered also ideas on collaborative relations in the hospital. The analysis on this material is presented in section 6.3. The project group considered also the hospital’s decision-making processes problematic and, consequently, decision-making in the hospital’s management group was included as an issue area in the interviews with the clinic heads, the hospital’s director, as well as the economics and personnel manager: the persons forming the hospital’s management group at that time. The analysis on this is presented in section 6.4. Section 6.5 contains a description on a reorganization process that went on in the hospital during the SALUT-project; this reorganization created conflicts and friction in the hospital and, therefore, affected strongly the department managers’ work. Finally, the development ideas that surfaced in the interview studies on the hospital’s management questions are shortly summarized in section 6.6. Sections 6.1 through 6.6 contain the results from the vertical analyses (see chapter 1); what the hospital’s personnel said relating to the interview issue areas is
described here. However, since the case study is quite long, I have also included short mid-summaries to the text (i.e. sections with the title »To summarize«); in these sections, I summarize shortly the main points from the preceding section with an aim to help the reader to see the red thread all through the case study.

The sections 6.1 through 6.6 also form the basic analysis material on the department manager work and the management questions in general in the hospital. The project group offered this analysis as a material for all the hospital’s managers to work on in order to improve the department managers’ work situation and, also, to develop the hospital’s management and leadership processes. The hospital’s management group decided to dedicate a lunch-to-lunch meeting with all the hospital’s managers on these questions; the Archipelago meeting reported in section 6.7 was arranged. In this meeting, each clinic decided on its first steps towards a more sustainable managerial work. Section 6.8 contains my discussion on this extensive case study; this is the horizontal analysis on the material in which I try and distinguish the overarching themes relating to human resources consumption and regeneration at Norrtälje Hospital.

6.1 Norrtälje Hospital

The health care system within the Stockholm County has two parties: the purchasers and the providers. The purchasers of the County Council represent the County’s political decision-makers and negotiate annual contracts with the health care providers both for elective and acute care. The work of the health care providers (such as Norrtälje Hospital) is, consequently, regulated by the annual contracts\(^2\). During the time of the SALUT-project, Norrtälje Hospital was turned from one of the county’s district hospitals into a company owned by the County Council. Even though this change did not affect the purchaser-provider processes, it did render the hospital a more autonomous role than it used to have as a district hospital. The hospital received a board and, after a transitional period, a CEO replaced the hospital’s director\(^3\). These new roles in the hospital would add to its deci-

---

2 For a description on the so-called Stockholm model (i.e. the Stockholm County health care system) see for instance Anell (1996).
3 This took place in summer 2002, after the main parts of the SALUT-project had been carried out in the hospital.
sion-making and influence opportunities within the health care sector. During 2001 and 2002, nine development projects were carried out to prepare the hospital for the change in its company form. The projects dealt with, for instance, the structure of the highest management in the hospital, economic controlling, and the use of information technology. The projects were carried out by employee representatives, managers, consultants, as well as the hospital’s director and his staff.

The managers at all levels had great hopes for the change in the company form mainly because the hospital would be able to act more independently and autonomously as a company. Earlier, many things decided by the County Council based on (changing) political preferences were experienced to influence the hospital negatively; the priorities of the hospital and politicians do not always meet. In October 2001, in a meeting for all the hospital’s managers, a group work was carried out on the expectations relating to the change. The task of the groups was to formulate the threats they perceived in the new company form for working conditions as well as the opportunities the new company form could offer for a more regenerative work. The most important issues that emerged in the group work related to the clarity of management; the managers hoped that the change would mean, for instance, quicker decisions as many issues could be now decided within the hospital (instead of in the County Council). Also clearer mandates for the managers were hoped to result; maybe the increased autonomy of the hospital would help in creating clearer manager roles and decision-making structures.

6.1.1 Organizational structures, roles, and official collaboration forums

Norrtälje Hospital is the smallest hospital within the Stockholm County with 669 employees, as well as more than 68 000 outpatient visits and 40 000 inpatient days in the year 1999. The hospital organization consists of clinics. There are seven medical clinics: Medicine-geriatric, Surgical-orthopedic, Anesthesia, Psychiatry, X-ray, Specialist physician group, and Paramedics. Furthermore, there is the Administrative service unit, as well as the hospital’s management, the hospital staff (who works as a support for the hospital’s director), and the hospital’s employer-union committee (in which the employer and employee representatives meet to prepare issues requiring co-determination).

A clinic head, who often is also a practicing physician, leads a clinic. The
clinics are divided into departments (except for the X-ray that consists of one department) that are led by the department managers, who usually are originally nurses or have some other kind of a background as health care professionals. A department manager is the supervisor of the other employee groups in her department except for the physicians whose closest supervisor is the clinic head. Many clinics also have head physicians, but they only have medical authority and are not supervisors to other physicians. In this sense, the physicians form their own line in the line organizational structure of the hospital (from the hospital’s director to the clinic head to the head and other physicians), while the hospital’s director, clinic heads, department managers, and employees (excluding physicians) form their own line. The line-staff organizational structure, different roles as well as different regular meetings in the organization are presented in figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2. The line-staff organizational structure, different roles as well as different meetings in the organization. The main personnel groups in each clinic are, thus, the clinic head, the head and other physicians, the department managers as well as the employees.
The respective positions of the department managers and the head physicians are not totally clear and predetermined in the clinics’ hierarchy; each clinic may decide for itself. The hospital’s director has only decided that head physicians may not create an additional hierarchical level between the department managers and clinic heads. In one clinic, for instance, the head physicians are often also department managers and, in some other clinics, there are no head physicians at all either since there are no physicians working in the clinic or the head physician position has not been filled. In two clinics, the clinic heads say that a department manager and a head physician are of equal ranking, neither one is positioned above the other in the hierarchy. In one clinic, the clinic head says that a head physician and a department manager form in principle a pair with equal authority in the hierarchy, but that in practice the head physicians do not have enough time to collaborate with the department managers.

Within the clinics, there sometimes also are substituting clinic heads and assisting department managers. The role of the substituting clinic head is, where it exists, to literally substitute the clinic head when she is away in order to have the clinic head’s authority present in the clinic at all times. In this sense the substituting clinic head does not form a new level in the hierarchy. The assisting department managers have instead more versatile roles. In some departments, the assisting department manager role is very active and the assisting managers reduce the department managers’ workload as well as step in to replace them when they are away. For instance, in one clinic the clinic head states that an active assisting department manager role is an »absolute must« since the department manager role has become so heavy with many different tasks. In some other departments, an assisting department manager only steps in when the department manager is away; the high workload in these departments enables them to do little more.

There are several important meetings in the hospital in which the subsequent hierarchical levels have an opportunity to meet. First, each department has its regular workplace meetings in which the department manager and the employees discuss the department related issues and the department manager informs the employees on wider developments in the hospital. Each clinic should also have its management group in which the clinic head and the department managers discuss issues relating to the clinic. In these meetings, the clinic heads inform the department managers on the hospital’s management group meetings and the department managers
bring forth information from their departments. Sometimes the head physicians also participate in a clinic’s management group. The clinic heads, the personnel manager, and the economics manager as well as the hospital’s director form the hospital’s management group. The hospital’s management group has an advisory role towards the hospital’s director who has the authority to make decisions concerning the hospital. Furthermore, the department managers have their own meetings to discuss issues affecting their work as department heads. There is also the so-called 40-group with about 40 members; the hospital’s director, the economics and personnel managers, the clinic heads, and the department managers belong to this group and meet a couple of times a year in order to discuss the current important and overarching issues in the hospital’s operation and environment.

6.2 Working in the hospital

In this section, daily work at different hierarchical levels – at the employee, department manager, and clinic head levels – is described (in this order). Since the case study focuses on the department manager work, special attention is paid to it also here and, besides of the department managers’ own perspectives, perspectives from the employees and clinic heads on the department manager work are provided. The descriptions of the employees’ and clinic heads’ work complete the understanding of general work and organizational problems in the hospital and also explain further the working environment of the department managers.

Norrtälje Hospital is a unique hospital in the Stockholm region due to its small size. All the hierarchical levels note that the small size adds both positive and negative elements to work. Positive is that everybody knows each other: if not by name, at least by face. Due to the small size, the hospital employees may also easier have contacts with each other and perceive themselves as a part of a health care chain. Furthermore, an employee interviewee notes also that the employees get their voices easier heard by the hospital’s management in such a small hospital and the structure of the hospital is also very clear when it is so small. For many elderly patients, the small hospital may also feel safer and more homely. The employees and patients are less anonymous to each other. It may, however, be psychologically more demanding for the employees to work in a small hospital, in a small town. Patients may be friends, neighbors, acquaintances, or friends of
A friend. Especially the employees note that the fact that people know each other can also be a negative thing; it is difficult to maintain one’s privacy. Also rumors run freely, when everyone knows everything about all the others. Furthermore, when the hospital is so small there is no immediate pressure to create clear rules and guidelines, and three employee interviewees actually mention this as a special problem. The departments may end up doing things differently without common guidelines and this may create inequality. A few employees also say that new ideas are not easily accepted in the small hospital.

6.2.1 The employees’ work
In the hospital, all work relates directly or indirectly to providing care for patients. The employees are nurses, assistant nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, or maintenance and administrative employees such as, for instance, janitors, cleaners, economists, secretaries, and gardeners. There are, of course, also physicians working in the hospital; however, here the focus is on the other employee groups – those who work as a department manager as their supervisor.

Work in most of the departments has been organized into teams or pairs. The constellation of a team is always the same, but persons within the team change according to working schedules that the employees may decide for themselves. In some departments, there is an aim to keep the same persons in a team, and to move them to other teams only when the staffing does not work in any other way. Both the employees working in changing teams and in more stable teams prefer their systems; the former appreciate the possibility to do different things in different teams and the latter say that it is good to have one’s own team. In all the teams a certain kind of continuity is sought; for example, in the ward departments it is good for the patients, if the same nurses are working during an evening shift and a morning shift. In the mornings, there is so much hurry that the employees would not have time to learn to know their new patients.

Daily work is planned flexibly within the departments. Usually either the department manager or employees chosen by her plan the allocation of the employees into teams. Within the teams, a team leader (e.g. a nurse in a group consisting of her and some assistant nurses) distributes the tasks. When a physician decides on a medical procedure, it always creates new tasks to be planned and distributed. All this is done flexibly within the
teams. There are also departments, where each person has her own tasks (e.g. at the Economics department each employee has her own responsibility area) and are able to plan their work quite autonomously.

The employees experience the existing staffing adequate – the problem is only to get all the positions occupied during each shift (more on this below). However, the greatest problem relating to the workload is the occasional over-crowding of the departments; the departments may have too many patients for the existing patient seats. This is a problem in the ward departments especially. The hospital building has simply too few patient seats and sometimes patients have to be accommodated to corridors when rooms run out. The current hospital building was taken into use in 1996 and, at that time, the number of seats was reduced. The aim was to release patients not needing medical care as soon as possible and in this way reduce the number of seats needed. In practice, this has not worked as planned; there are patients who do not need medical care but still need basic care and have no place to go from the hospital. For instance, releasing elderly patients living in retirement homes is difficult, as these homes do not want to receive their inhabitants when only on their way to recovery. The problem with over-crowded departments is made worse by the fact that the employees experience that they cannot influence the situation in any way. The patient amounts depend on the decisions made all the way up in the County Council and there is also a feeling that the hospital management does not understand how difficult it is to handle these situations. For instance, some employees note that they did oppose the reduction in the patient seats when the new hospital building was planned, but they were not listened to. Also, employees sometimes experience that the patient load is not equally distributed, and some departments have a more difficult situation than others.

Also, the working times are quite demanding. In certain departments, such as the X-ray and operations, the employees have to be on-call; certain nights they stay in the hospital and are called to work when needed. During the holiday seasons, each employee is on-call quite often, which is experienced taxing. Compensation for the on-call duty is not high; salary is paid for the hours actually worked and for other (waiting) hours, the employees get an on-call compensation which they experience to be very low. The working time is planned with the help of the Time Care computer system that allows the employees to plan their own working time. The employees think that it is good to be able to influence one’s working time, but maybe
for the patients it can be confusing when the schedules change all the time. In some departments, the Time Care system has not functioned well; taking into account everybody’s working time wishes has not worked out. At least one department is planning to create a new approach for working time planning. Many departments are, however, happy with the system.

**Routine tasks and variable work situations**

The work in the hospital seems to be a mixture of routines and variability. Many things have been planned beforehand, there are routines relating to the daily care as well as to all kinds of medical procedures. It is possible to revise some of the work routines by, for instance, bringing up the need to revise the routine in a department meeting. However, one employee interviewee also says that it is very difficult to remove or change routines – employees who have worked according to the same routine for decades find it hard to do things in a new way.

Working with people makes work also very variable. Different kinds of patients come in and go out, tempo can be high at times. It seems that many employees enjoy the variable work and also experience autonomy in the daily work. Nevertheless, work is not always easy, there are difficult medical cases that demand much from the employees and sometimes when patients die or have a very difficult situation, it is difficult also for the employees. Also, the employees experience that the lack of overall control at work is sometimes difficult. Something is decided in the County Council and this leads to a high patient load or, the employees feel, threatens patients’ well-being. The employees have to live and deal with such decisions without a possibility to influence the decision-making.

Many employees also have certain special tasks, such as being responsible for pain relief or environmental issues. The employees have meetings with employees from other departments having the same responsibility area. They also inform their colleagues on issues related to their special responsibility. The employees get their responsibility areas flexibly; if some area needs to be staffed, it is discussed in the department – the employees may offer to take on the new tasks or the department manager may suggest that »maybe you could do this«.

**Meeting leadership with »employeeship«**

Being an employee also means certain responsibilities in making the department operate as well as possible. For instance, four employee intervie-
wees emphasize the fact that they too have to be active in communication; they have to search information, read what has been provided for them (especially minutes from the meetings they have missed), they have to inform the department manager on things that happen at the department and that she should know, etc. One interviewee notes that one should also remember to tell positive things in the department work to the department manager, so that she does not always only hear »bad news«. Five employees also state that they help the department manager with administrative tasks. They help with Palett (the computerized salary system), Time Care (the computerized working time system), and staffing (i.e. calling in substitutes if there are not enough regular employees to staff a shift). Especially during the week-ends and shifts when the department manager is not working, the employees have to take bigger responsibility for such tasks. During these times, the employees solve any emerging problems on their own.

Some interviewees say that meeting leadership with such »employeeship« requires collaboration skills and sensitivity from the employees. Two interviewees note that it has required a change in thinking to be able to act with the broader responsibility. It is still possible to stick to one’s tasks, but all in all the trend is moving towards broader responsibility taking; there are so many things happening besides one’s work. One interviewee notes that dealing with the increased responsibility is possible, since one has little by little learned to think in a new, much broader way – »we are not the same people anymore«, she says. However, two interviewees also note that many important things concerning their work, they cannot influence. So, it is better to concentrate on one’s daily tasks rather than bother about the overall organization.

**Climate within the departments**

Four of the employee interviewees say spontaneously that the climate in their department is good. The employees have worked together for a long time and know each other well. It is possible to get support and help from others. Only in two departments, the employees experience that the collaboration between different employee groups could be better. Also two interviewees state that they feel they can influence the decisions made within the department.

The strains of work and reorganizations do, however, sometimes cause a negative climate. Especially, the reorganization of ward departments belonging to two clinics (see section 6.5) has made people irritated. However,
the aim is not to pass the irritation on to the patients, who should not notice that the employees are irritated or sad. Sometimes there is also so much to do that the employees get stressed, intolerant towards each other, and even do not have really time to speak to or see each other. Nevertheless, one of the interviewees emphasizes the importance of having time to meet the next shift employees when the shifts are changing. Oral reporting is very important. When reporting, one mentally hands over the patients to the others and can make sure that they get all the information and understand it correctly. Then one can go home and put the working day behind oneself.

Coping with demanding work
As stated above, work in the hospital is not always easy. The employees say that it takes a certain type of a personality to be able to cope with the work; one has to be creative and flexible. Also, one has to have versatile professional competencies to be able to deal with all the things that happen.

The employee interviewees experience that there are also important things that the hospital, as a workplace, can do to support coping with work. First, there has to be opportunities to speak about bad things that have happened, such as patient deaths. Some prefer a possibility to speak within the care team or department; some would also like to have an external group or a person to turn to. Those who currently have an opportunity for such debriefing, experience it very helpful. Also, having opportunities to learn from other’s and one’s own work experiences is important! There needs to be time to exchange and reflect on experiences. Furthermore, certain kinds of gestures from the hospital’s management are hoped for by an interviewee to communicate their interest towards the employees’ well-being. For instance, there used to be a certain amount of time in a week reserved for personal health care. Now such things have disappeared. Many also say that they work part-time, 80-90% of the full time. This opportunity is considered very good; it makes easier to combine home life and work.

Organizational and departmental rules and tools
Some interviewees note, that further organizational rules would be needed to ensure equity and continuity in the departments and between them. For instance, the employees think that there are no common rules for dealing with the over-crowded patient seats (mentioned above) and, consequently,
departments are hit by this problem in different ways. Also, there are different ideas on what work should be like in the hospital; some want to concentrate on their small professional part of the operation, some want to take broader responsibilities and participate. Clearer directions from the management might help to clarify the kind of role the employees should take. An interviewee says that creating a more participative and open organization does not happen over night; also this development should be somehow structured at the organizational level. Finally, organizational rules might support maintaining changes made, now people just fall back to their old way of working too easily.

There are also many important tools that are used in supporting the employees’ work and development. For instance, the departments are experimenting with the Competence Step-method and some interviewees experience that it is a very good method for following the employees’ competence development and setting new development goals. Some interviewees say that the method allows an employee to be appreciated for doing the traditional work of an assistant nurse/nurse/physician, but in practice the tool encourages wider responsibility taking. Also development discussions between the department manager and employees have been initiated. The development discussion is considered to be a good tool, but a few interviewees also say that it should be developed further.

To summarize

The work of the hospital’s employees is demanding in itself, and there are also organizational problems that add to the work demands. For instance, the employees experience the lack of patient seats taxing and it creates friction; the employees wonder why nothing is done about it. Why do some departments have a more difficult situation than others? The employees experience that they cannot influence the situation; the decision-makers in the County Council and in the hospital do not listen to them. Many interviewees also express that they carry responsibility not only for their own work, but more broadly for the whole department’s operation. However, there is also a sense of uncertainty of the kind of a role the employees should take. Should everybody exercise »employeeship«? The employees, thus, seem to be throwing the ball on these questions to the hospital’s managers. Directions and decisions are needed!

Somehow, quite an unbalanced picture of the employees’ work emerges. As noted, the employees experience their work versatile and demanding,
they experience that a limited concentration on one’s immediate tasks is not enough. Simultaneously, they also experience that the hospital’s management does not listen to them or take into account their ideas when it comes to the development of the hospital and its operation (more on this in sections 6.3.2 and 6.8.4). Thus, the employees have many degrees of freedom when it comes to the daily work, but experience only limited opportunities when it comes to development work. Is employeeship possible, if it relates only to daily tasks and not to development work?

6.2.2 The department managers’ work –
The department managers’ perspective
The department managers’ perspective on their work presented in this section have come forth in the five department manager interviews, the discussions in the project group, as well as an earlier study (the RIKON-study) on the department managers’ work. Where the RIKON-study has been used as a material in this case description, it is specifically mentioned to point out the use of »second hand« data from a study not carried out by me.

The department manager role is quite a new role in the hospital organization, established only in the mid 1990s. Earlier, the departments had for instance head nurses, who were responsible for nursing provided at the department, as well as department representatives, who had a more administrative role. In a way, the department manager role was created to replace the earlier managerial roles at the department level as well as to unify the titles of persons working as the heads of a department. A department manager was planned to have a comprehensive responsibility for the daily operations of her department as well as see to its development in the developing health care sector.

The department managers have many responsibility areas: the personnel issues (relating to for instance nurses, assistant nurses, and medical secretaries), the daily operation of the departments as well as the economy or, more precisely, the costs of their departments. The RIKON-study indicates that the department managers evaluate their total working time adding up to 58 hours a week, see table 6.1; personnel administration and information tasks alone take 40 hours a week. The department managers experience that they do not invest any time at all in their own development.
Responsibility for the personnel and daily operations

The department managers supervise different employee groups depending on the type of the department. For instance, in the ward departments, the department managers supervise nurses, assistant nurses, and medical secretaries. In other departments, employee groups such as psychologist and maintenance/administrative personnel work with a department manager as their supervisor. All the department managers interviewed have between 20 and 30 employees working in their departments, but they do have, however, different resources at their disposal to deal with the personnel responsibility. For instance, some department managers have assistant managers who may take on part of the personnel responsibilities (such as to carry out development discussions with the employees), while some do not. Some department managers get help from department secretaries, while some have no such help.

The department managers experience that administrative tasks and meetings take too much of their time, and many feel that they really do not have time to support their employees and participate in the daily operation of the departments. Some department managers say that there is no time for planning training or other personnel development initiatives; one department manager says also that development visions vanish beneath the daily work. According to the RIKON-study, the department managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Estimated investment of time (hours/week)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel administration</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department and operations planning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for working environment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1. The department managers’ tasks. The department managers’ estimate on the time used for different tasks; the figures are yearly averages (RIKON Utveckling, 2000).
would like to reduce the time spent on administrative tasks and, instead, increase time spent on planning the operations at the department, work environment questions, quality work as well as their own and employees’ development. The SALUT-project group says the same.

For many department managers the most time consuming administrative tasks are, first, taking care of the computerized salary administration system Palett and, second, contacting hourly paid employees to ensure staffing in each shift. Earlier, the salary administration was both more standardized and centralized. In practice, there used to be a working schedule done for the employees and a form in which the employees wrote the changes to their schedules. The department managers’ task was to check the forms and register the changes. Now, there are no such schedules and forms, but the department managers collect information on the individual schedules of employees, the changes in schedules, overtime, etc. and are responsible for feeding all that information to the Palett-system. According to the RIKON-study, Palett is generally perceived as one of the most crucial problems in the department manager work. In the hindsight, the department managers say that the Palett-system was implemented too rapidly without enough consideration on how and with what competencies the system should be used in the departments.

Also staffing takes a lot of time. When there are not enough employees for the next work shifts (due to e.g. sick-leaves), the department managers have to phone to the hourly employees that have been listed as potential support. This may take a whole day. It is also taxing to make these phone calls; the department manager may feel very stressed and frustrated and still she should be friendly towards the person in the other end of the line. The department managers interviewed say that anybody could do the tasks described above - to take care of Palett and staffing. It is waste of resources to use the department managers to do such tasks. One of the interviewees says:

And this work that you actually are trained for…you should develop the nursing work, you should support the personnel…that you don’t have time to do. So, that does not make sense.

In consequence, some department managers feel that they do not have time for their employees. The department managers say that they do not need to be there to control the employees and follow their daily work, in-
stead they would like to be more out in the departments in order to support their employees. In the current state, the department managers receive only »second hand« information on what is going on in the department from the employees. The department managers also point out that the employees are not as aware of the whole operation as they should be. For instance, one department manager says that the nurses and assistant nurses only concentrate on their own small reality and fail to see the big picture. The department managers would be needed to convey this big picture to them. Also some department managers feel that the employees are not »professional« enough, but sometimes seek for unnecessary confirmation for their actions from the department manager.

The department managers do have opportunities to speak with their employees in meetings. All the departments have regular meetings (the weekly meetings) and also un-official *extempore* meetings are used for communication. In one department, an official reflection break is used when something important comes up. Such meetings provide an opportunity for the department manager to collect ideas from the employees and for the employees to get information from the department manager rapidly.

What could then be done to the problem with the time consuming administrative tasks? Those department managers who do not have continuous help from an assistant manager or secretaries say that such supporting roles should be established to their departments or clinics. Also, organizational changes that would allow for better use of a department’s resources (people and physical space) might help. For instance, one department manager says that in her clinic the secretaries of different departments might collaborate better and be more productive if they were seated closer to each other. Furthermore, all the department managers seem to delegate work to their employees. However, sometimes the employees are not ready to take on the delegated tasks. They may feel that this is not my job! One department manager says that delegation cannot be done just like that; it takes time and has to be planned and learned. In general, the department managers feel that nowadays their employees are more ready to take on new tasks than before, but they also evaluate that the nurses and assistant nurses still feel uncertainty in their role - what are they actually paid for: caring for the patients or sitting in meetings and planning the operation?

Personnel responsibility is also a heavy responsibility when the work situation of the employees is difficult. For instance, dealing with on-call
duties is very taxing for the employees. One department manager says, that it is not possible to release any employees from the on-call duty; if one were released, the others would demand release also! So what can a department manager do? Also, the employees may encounter other kinds of difficult demands in their work that are beyond the department manager’s control. For instance, in one department the employees received a new technical tool that was very difficult to use and caused a lot of stress among the employees.

**Economic responsibility**

The department managers also have a responsibility for certain economic issues. In principle, the clinic head carries the economic responsibility, but the department managers also have to follow the costs and, as one of the interviewees puts it, there are carrots for keeping the costs down. The department managers say, that the contact between a department manager and a clinic head strongly influences how well a department manager’s authority and responsibility in the economic issues meet. A clinic head may delegate tasks to the department managers, trust them to sign certain papers, and give more room for the department managers in the economic issues.

There are some problems in monitoring the costs. Some of the department managers experience that the Economics department does not provide necessary information and reports on time. Also many department managers feel that, when it comes to economical issues, the responsibilities are greater than the authorities. Sometimes one has to be responsible for such costs that are not caused by one’s department or clinic, but rather are caused by other departments or clinics operating close by or having a close connection to one’s department in the care chain.

**Losing control – Adaptation as the best alternative**

The department managers experience that sometimes, they have to accommodate their own work and work at their departments to decisions made by the clinic heads or by the hospital’s director without any opportunity to influence the decision. For instance, at certain clinics the clinic heads and the hospital’s director decided to solve a troublesome staffing situation by creating a »nurse pool« common to many clinics. The departments could hire nurses from the »pool« when they have problems in staffing a shift. According to the department managers, this was not the best possible
way to solve the situation, since in practice some departments ended up better off than some others. However, the department managers experienced that they could not influence the decision. Also, not getting a needed decision from the highest levels of the management can be a problem. In one clinic, the department manager and employees worked to introduce a new treatment in the clinic, but eventually the whole thing just dried up, when the highest management did not make the necessary final decisions. In both cases, the department managers ended up being totally surprised - how did this go like this? - without clear explanation from the highest management.

There are also developments outside the hospital that affect the department managers’ work. For instance, the purchaser-provider split (see section 6.1) in the health care sector affects the department managers. If a department receives more patients than negotiated in the annual care contracts - what should be done then? Of course, the hospital will provide health care for everyone who needs it, so the situation ends up being economically difficult. Patients are cared for with no funding from the existing contracts. The department managers also experience that the purchaser’s view on the health care is different from the view of the hospital; the purchaser is always looking for savings when, for the hospital, the well-being of a patient is always in the forefront. There are also many different compensation systems between the purchasers and providers in use; that makes the economic control in the hospital very cumbersome. Furthermore, the purchaser may decide on organizational changes (e.g. outsourcing some part of the operation) that influence indirectly the remaining departments and clinics working at the hospital.

Also the troublesome staffing situation described above is due to factors external to the hospital; it originates from the lack of personnel. This shortage is not so much due to lacking resources to hire new employees, but rather to the difficulty to attract new employees. There simply are no available applicants in the labor market and the hospital may announce a certain position vacant many times and still not get a single application. And sometimes, if there are applicants, the housing situation in Norrtälje creates the problem. The potential new employees cannot find nice houses or apartments. Thus, the labor market and housing situation extend the staffing problem beyond the department managers’, even the hospital’s, control.

Finally Norrtälje, as a part of the Roslagen summer haven, becomes crowded by tourists during the summer time. There is much to be done in
the hospital at that time! But the employees would also like to have their holidays during the summer and this causes a serious staffing problem. There are now new rules for summer holidays that aim at maintaining an adequate staffing level during the summer. The employees do not, however, like the new schedules and the holiday planning is causing a lot of problems for the department managers. The department managers are delegating the responsibility for the holiday planning to the employees as much as they can. One of the department managers says that earlier she tried to do it on her own, but that almost killed her. Now, the department managers are asking their employees, as a group, to solve the problem. If that does not work, they will then have to step in. The hospital is offering »carrots« to get substituting employees for summers, but this does not always help. The problem is that there are no applicants!

**Positive things at work**

The department managers identify also many positive things in their work. For instance collaboration with the personnel is often a source of joy and sometimes there are interesting projects the employees and the department managers can do together. Also, there are many positive characteristics in the department manager work. Work is independent, variable, and challenging at its best. To have visions and to be able to work to make them come true is very positive. Furthermore, the department managers point out that their own training opportunities and possibilities to offer training to their employees are good. Also the existing collaboration practices within and outside of the hospital are experienced as positive factors at work. The possibility to participate in the meetings of the department manager group and the 40-group has extended the department managers’ horizon; the meetings have helped to better understand the different situations within the hospital. These positive aspects at work were discussed in the SALUT-project group and the discussion led to quite a depressing conclusion. There are positive sides at work, but no time to concentrate on them. Instead, the negative sides of work – the lonely hours by the computer or long hours on the telephone when taking care of staffing – take the upper hand.

The department managers think that their idea of good health care corresponds to that of the hospital. However, even though they think that the outcome of the health care process is good – the patients are treated well - they also think that improvements could be made in the care processes and
working conditions in order to reduce the effort and sacrifices needed to achieve the good treatment. For instance, the department managers have to stretch to maintain the adequate staffing level (see above) and, in general, the organizational structures of the departments are not always optimal. Nevertheless, the patients get good treatment.

The department managers’ ideas on coping with demanding work

The department managers say that their work is often quite lonely. Many things one has to, as a manager, carry alone and not to share with the employees. Also, some department managers experience that they cannot share difficult things with their closest supervisor, the clinic head, either. One’s prestige is at stake and one does not want to show that one needs support. Consequently, the department managers say that they would maybe need an external speaking partner, someone to talk to about difficult things in one’s work as a manager. Such mentoring or »coaching« would also support in learning how to cope with the complexity of managerial work. These wishes are well known by the hospital’s management group and that is why a voluntary mentor program with external, personal mentors for the hospital’s managers is planned in collaboration with another hospital with a longer experience on mentor programs. The department managers also perceive a need for less formal conversations at local level, within the departments. Each department has its own problems that need to be solved locally. Local conversations are valuable also since many departments have stayed together for a long time; the employees and department managers know each other well and are often able to discuss difficult things together.

At individual level, the department managers express that an important coping resource is an ability to take some distance to work: not to take everything so personally. Instead of relying only on one’s feelings, one has to also rely on experience! In other words, there has to be a balance between empathy and task-orientation. Another important resource mentioned in most department manager interviews is maturity. One has to be quite certain of oneself, secure, and know oneself. Finally, many of the department managers experience that they as persons are able to face conflicts; they can stay calm in such situations and they are not afraid of conflicts. An important factor in achieving the ability to keep distance to work, to know oneself as well as to stand conflicts is experience. Many of the interviewees say that earlier they wasted themselves more at work; now
they can rely on their work experience that helps them not to invest all their emotions in work as well as to understand themselves in different work situations.

What kind of actual strategies the department managers then use in coping with work; what do they do in a difficult situation? Maybe the most important strategy is to prioritize; the department managers try and see what they can do later, what can wait. It takes courage to leave some things until later or even not to do them, but experience helps also here. There are also issues that influence the department managers’ work, but which they cannot influence or change (see above) and also here, being able to simply let them be, is important.

The department managers feel to some extent neglected, when it comes to organizational tools and practices that aim to enhance an individual’s ability to cope with work. The department managers carry out development discussions with the employees, but do not always have their own discussions with their supervisors. Also, when a new nurse or an assistant nurse is hired, they go through an introductory training on Norrtälje Hospital. The department managers have not received such an introduction. However, the department managers are able to take part in many different courses that relate to leadership issues, group work, etc. However, as RIKON-study shows, the department managers experience that they are able to invest very little time for personal development.

To summarize
The department managers perceive their role as supporters of the employees and leaders of their departments. However, the mundane and time-consuming administrative tasks take most of their time and leave little room for the presence at the departments, for collaboration with the employees, for visions. The dreams and reality of the department manager work do not meet.

The department managers also express being quite alone and coping alone with demands stemming from the department, hospital, health care system, and environment. The connection to the highest management of the hospital does not seem to provide support in these issues. Consequently, the department managers work detached from their employees and also from their own superiors. In section 6.3.1 the collaboration between the department managers, clinic heads, and head physicians is looked into in more detail in order to understand how the collaboration with others in the
hospital may create problems in the department managers’ work or support them.

6.2.3 The department managers’ work from the employees’ perspective

In this section, the employees’ ideas on the department managers’ work are discussed. Furthermore, the employees describe here how, in practice, they collaborate with their department managers. The aim is, as noted in the beginning of this chapter, to understand how the employees experience the department manager work and how they experience it to affect their own work.

The department managers’ role and tasks

The employees define the department managers’ role as a middle manager role. Consequently, the department manager is often between a rock and a hard place; there are different contradictory demands on her. Some interviewees also state, that the department managers always have to fight for everything, they cannot just decide and carry out, but they need OK from others. This probably has killed the enthusiasm of many new department managers, the interviewees ponder. The employees also think that the department managers should stand on the employees’ side, to promote their interest when discussing with higher organizational levels and other departments. However, as it is now, a few interviewees state that the department managers cannot whole-heartedly be on the side of the employees. They have to consider also the demands of the clinic heads and hospital’s director.

One of the main questions in the employee interviews was, which are the most important tasks of a department manager when thinking about the department’s operation. Most of the interviewees state that they think the department managers’ most important task is to support the personnel. Most also share the feeling that the department managers should have time to be in the department, as a part of the daily work, in order to be able to understand what work is like and what is happening in the department. This would enable the department managers to support their employees even better. It is a commonly shared feeling that the department managers, as it is now, do not have enough time to be at the departments to see how things are. The employees note that other things, such as meetings and administration, take the department managers’ time. When the department man-
The support needed from the department managers does not relate to actual daily tasks, even though the employees do say that the managers are ultimately responsible for the daily operation. Also the employees carry responsibility for their daily tasks and experience that to be good. However, support is needed relating to more profound things affecting the daily work - the department manager should encourage, motivate, and coach her employees. Some interviewees also state that it is good for the department manager at times to »do the normal work« (i.e. care for the patients) in order to stay in touch with what it is like. There are also sometimes difficult things at work, patients may die or have a very sad situation. Many of the interviewees experience, that the department manager cannot currently support dealing with such things, either she has not been there and experienced the event herself or the employees feel that they do not want to bother the department manager who is very busy with other things. It is also important that the department manager treats the employees as whole persons, understands that they also have a private life. Sometimes the employees may have difficulties in fitting work and private life together; for instance, shift work may clash with children’s day care. It would be important for the department manager to support the employees also in such situations.

The interviewees perceive problem-solving as an important department manager task. The employees themselves solve most daily problems, but if they for some reason cannot solve a problem, help from the department manager is needed. Sometimes there are also more serious problems relating to, for instance, staffing, the collaboration within the department, problems with patients and their relatives, and complaints made against the employees. The department managers are needed to solve these kinds of problems.
Many employees note that the administration and, especially, salary administration takes far too much time from the department managers. Administration is the wrong focus for the department managers’ work; there are many administrative tasks that someone else, a secretary, could do, the employees say. When carrying out the »paper work«, the department managers are in the department, and many say that one can knock on their door, if one wants to talk with them. There is, however, self-censorship; the employees know that the department manager is busy and think that they do not want to bother her. Furthermore, the employees themselves are busy and do not always have time to go to the department manager. Staffing is also an important part of the department managers’ work. Especially in the departments that function 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, providing enough staff for the shifts is extremely important. But, the interviewees think that staffing should not take so much of the department managers’ time as it does now. Four employees also state that, despite the administrative tasks, the department manager has time for the employees. Especially coffee and lunch breaks seem to offer important opportunities for meeting the department manager. Moreover, some interviewees note that the administration is a common responsibility, and the employees help in taking care of it. There are, for instance, special groups to work with the Time Care-system and, during the evenings and week-ends, staffing is done by the employees.

The employee interviewees say that there is very little time to be used for development work. Six interviewees perceive a need for development, but also say that there is really no time for it. At two departments, the interviewees give a more positive picture and say that the department manager takes time for the development work, that development in ways to work is really happening. All in all, the development of daily small things is experienced as a responsibility for all, in these smaller things development happens naturally - suggestions are made and discussed in the weekly meetings. The department manager’s role is to initiate and support the development work; she organizes the development work and, as much as possible, tries to maintain the changes and prevent the employees from slipping back to old ways of working. However, the problem is that there is not enough time for the development work; as one interviewee puts it, the development work is done during the coffee breaks. Some also note that as the department manager is not part of the daily work process, she cannot really inspire its development.
The interviewees also say that the department manager functions between the department and other organizational levels/departments. The manager brings information from the meetings she has attended; all the information from, for instance, the hospital’s management group comes via the department manager. Some interviewees do, however, suspect whether the department manager gets enough information from these other levels and departments, so that she can inform the department in the best way. The employees also perceive the department manager as the mediator between the department employees and their clinic head.

The department manager is also responsible for training issues in the department. She knows which courses there are available and sees to that the employees get the training they need. The employee interviewees think, that it is very easy to have training, if one wants to. There are plenty of courses available and if one wants to take a course, it is always possible. Few employees say, however, that it is not easy to bring new information and skills from the courses into the hospital. There is not enough time to discuss the courses and what one has learned with others, and sometimes new ideas are not accepted. In one department, the department manager has initiated regular meetings in which the only aim is to exchange ideas from courses.

In the interviews also positive things relating to the department managers' work came up. For instance, three employees say that it is very good that the department manager always tells where she is when she is away. For the employees it is important to know where the department manager is and when she will be back. Four interviewees express spontaneously their satisfaction with the work of their department manager and say that things have moved better in the department due to the department manager. However, the lacking resources are a problem here…“she would be a really good boss, if she only had time or got some help…“. In only two departments the department manager's role is experienced to be somewhat problematic; the employees do not really know what the role is supposed to contribute to the department’s work. The interviewees also note small inventions by the department manager that really have helped work. For instance, one department manager sends every week a letter via e-mail to all the employees. This way she has the opportunity to inform all the employees on the important things that have happened during the week. In other departments, the department managers have improved meetings and established new meetings that support the department work. In one
The collaboration with the department manager in practice

In many departments, the employees have an opportunity to meet their department manager in the mornings. The employees and the department manager get together, check the work situation and staffing situation. The department manager informs the employees on any acute issues. In one of the departments the problem is that the department does not have its own break room, so there is no place for these morning »briefings«. The employees also share the experience that it is easy to contact the department manager during the day; whenever she is in her room, one can go and talk to her.

The departments have regular meetings between the employees and their manager, but the meeting frequency and duration vary from department to another, from having a meeting each week to having a meeting once a month. Those having the meeting only once a month experience that to be too seldom. Information does not spread and, instead, rumors start to circulate. The employees say that they can suggest issues to be discussed in the meetings.

What do the employees and the department managers then talk about together? The employees say that usually, the collaboration relates to small administrative things - holidays and days off, working time in general, training, small purchases, etc. If an employee wants to suggest a change to working methods or routines that would affect the whole department, she contacts the department manager also in that matter.

The department managers’ competence needs

The employee interviewees perceive the department manager role as a demanding role with many competence needs. The department manager role also necessitates certain personality characteristics. The interviewees mention, for instance, the following competencies and characteristics that the department managers should have:

• A department manager should not be authoritarian, but she should listen to the employees as well. However, she also should be tough...
sometimes: not to accommodate unreasonable demands from the employees either.

- A department manager should be neutral and guard the employees’ privacy. It is not necessary that the employees know each other’s private lives through and through. A department manager should speak about the employees in a neutral manner, so that unnecessary behind-the-back talk does not emerge.
- A department manager should be clear and, if she does not know something, be clear about that too and try to find out.
- A department manager should be a strong person and determined, but also humble. This is needed when making difficult decisions and solving conflicts.
- A department manager should be empathic.
- A department manager should have a psychological eye – to understand »how people function«.
- Health care training, some sort, is important for a department manager, so that she can understand work in the departments.
- A department manager should be able to clarify to the employees her own role and tasks. Not all the employees understand what the department managers do.

To summarize
When discussing the employees’ work in section 6.2.1, it became obvious that the employees wish the managers to provide them with clearer guidance; for instance, the employees say that the managers should explain what kind of »employeeship« is expected of them. The lack of daily guidance and also support from the closest managers, from the department managers, comes across as well when the employee interviewees describe the department managers’ role and tasks. The employees wish to be supported by their department managers; this is their most important task, the employees say. However, instead, the employees experience a lack of contact and collaboration with the department managers who have to concentrate on administration instead of personnel issues, meetings away from the department instead of being at the department. When the employees list issues that they experience positive in relation to their department managers, they list issues relating to managerial and leadership initiatives that the department managers have taken.
In sum, the employees share the department managers’ experience of too little time and opportunities for the management and leadership at the departments. An employee’s statement: *“She would be a really good boss, if she only had time or got some help…”* truly summarizes the frustration of lost opportunities at the departments. These issues were discussed further in a 40-group meeting on the SALUT-issues, i.e. on the so-called Archipelago meeting, see section 6.7.

6.2.4 The department managers’ work from the clinic head perspective

The clinic heads perceive a department manager to be an employer’s representative. Many department managers come originally from those professional groups that they now manage, and this may make it more difficult for a department manager to be a supervisor and representative of the employer. Despite the possible collegial feelings towards the employees, the department managers should be able to adopt their role as the employer’s representatives, the clinic head says. The department managers have an important role in informing the clinic heads on what is going on in the departments.

According to the clinic heads, the department managers have many responsibility areas. They are the managers of their departments and they should ensure the best possible working conditions in them. The department managers’ responsibilities relate, thus, to personnel administration, environmental issues, working environmental improvements, economy relating to personnel, and daily operations. The clinic heads underline that some of the department managers’ responsibility areas are very close to the head physicians’ responsibilities and, consequently, co-ordination and continuous collaboration is required between the two.

The department managers’ personnel administrative responsibility means ensuring sufficient staffing and using different personnel administrative computer systems. Several clinic heads perceive that the administrative tasks take much of the department managers’ time, and they emphasize that these tasks should not bury leadership tasks beneath them. The department managers should also act as supporters and coaches for their personnel. One clinic head emphasizes strongly the need for the department managers to be visible in the departments, close to their employees. The department managers have to have time to have a cup of coffee with their employees, to give support and encouragement. That is what being a
manager is all about! One clinic head also says that it is important for the department managers to carry out »normal« care work in their departments every now and then to stay in touch with it. In some clinics, this happens already now.

Problems in the department managers’ work
Many clinic heads say that the department managers simply have too high a workload. New tasks are piling up on their desks all the time. The administration takes a lot of time, many administrative tasks have been decentralized and the department managers have to try to cope with administrative computer programs as well as day-to-day staffing of their departments. A few clinic heads note that maybe the decentralization has gone too far in the hospital when it comes to these administrative tasks. The clinic heads also agree that in the current situation the department managers have too little time to be out in the departments. New demands on the department managers are also coming from outside the hospital, from the work environmental authorities and from the National Board of Health and Welfare, just to give few examples. One clinic head summarizes that because of all these different demands, the department manager role is a very vulnerable role. Furthermore, several clinic heads note that the lack of physicians creates pressures also on the department managers, since the whole department will not function well if there are not enough physicians and, especially, if the head physician is missing. In some clinics, long change processes have caused conflicts and tiredness among the employees. The department managers have experienced a lot of pressure due to this. All in all, if the employees’ working situation is for some reason difficult, it has direct negative consequences on the department managers’ work, the clinic heads say.

The clinic heads say that a department manager should work as an employer’s representative, but they do understand that this can be difficult. Sometimes the hospital’s management group may make decisions that the department managers object. Nevertheless, the department managers should be loyal to the decision. Of course, the department managers may try to influence the decision made by speaking with their clinic heads. It is possible that the decision made is wrong, so it is important that the department managers try to influence it. However, some clinic heads also experience that such processes, feedback and discussion on decisions made, are not functioning well. One clinic head says that it can be very trying for a de-
partment manager, if there is no trust between herself and her boss. In such a situation, the department manager only has to accept the decisions made that she cannot always understand. Another clinic head says, that even if the department manager experiences that she does not receive support from her clinic head, she still should try to carry out her tasks. There is much a department manager can do on her own also.

The clinic heads also say that sometimes it is difficult to see what actually are the department managers’ responsibilities and authorities. As noted above, the borderline between head physicians and department managers is not clear, and in the departments where there are no head physicians the situation is equally difficult. Who has the medical responsibility now? The department managers and clinic heads end up carrying the medical responsibility even when they should not. Also such things as the Palett-implementation have caused role uncertainty for the department managers – suddenly they have a lot of administrative computer work to be carried out. It is natural that they wonder if sitting behind the computer really is what they should be doing. Finally, the department manager role is very different from its predecessors – for instance, the head nurse role. The clinic heads suspect that for many it may be difficult to switch the head nurse mentality to the department manager mentality.

Support for the department managers
Many clinic heads underline the need for support in a department manager role. The role is overloaded as it is, there is too much to do. Consequently, the department managers need additional resources to cope with their work. They should have, for instance, an active assistant department manager who can help, or they should have secretarial help to deal with the routine administration. In several clinics, such support personnel has already been appointed. One clinic head notes that it is, nevertheless, important to remember that the department manager cannot delegate her responsibility. She still has the responsibility for that everything gets done. She does not have to be, however, the one carrying out all the tasks! One clinic head also notes that the department managers have to be active themselves in trying to figure out the need for additional resources. If a department manager feels that she needs an assisting department manager or a secretary, she should actively bring it up with her clinic head.

The department managers should receive continuous training in their work. One clinic head says that continuous training in small doses is much
better than big training efforts taking place very seldom. The department managers need to work on their role all the time. Another clinic head underlines the need for a mentor, who can support in this kind of continuous work on the department manager role. The department managers can also learn from each other and discuss their role in their own meetings. Some clinic heads also note that in some cases, they have been very strongly involved in defining the department manager role. When there have been, for instance, problems between a department manager and her employees, a clinic head has worked with the department manager to solve the situation. A clinic head notes that things are not that clear to her either, so she does not wonder that the department managers have sometimes difficulties in understanding their role.

The hospital has provided management training for the department managers. The clinic heads evaluate that some of the department managers have experienced this training very positive. However, the training has not necessarily resulted in concrete efforts to develop managerial roles and work at the clinic level. For instance, each clinic should have development discussions between clinic heads and department managers to clarify the respective roles, but in reality such regular discussions have not been developed in every clinic. The hospital has some guidelines for management roles. However, some clinic heads say that these papers cannot replace the local work to clarify and define the roles, since the roles will differ from clinic to clinic based on the needs of the operation.

To summarize
The clinic heads’ perceptions on the department manager work do not differ much from the department managers’ and employees’ perceptions. Also the clinic heads note the high workload, especially the high administrative load, as a major problem in the department manager work hindering effective managerial and leadership activities. As a solution, the clinic heads suggest employing support personnel - having for instance assistant department managers or secretaries helping with the administrative routine tasks.

The clinic heads also perceive the problem mentioned by both the employees and department managers; the department managers cannot influence many important decisions affecting their work, but have to simply adapt to these decisions. The clinic heads underline that it is important that the department managers receive training that may help them to cope also with such aspects of their work, that the department managers
have opportunities to continuously work and reflect on their role to cope with their work better. The clinic heads, like the department managers, note that these problematic issues should be worked on in each department.

In these aspects, the clinic heads’ ideas on the department manager role and work coincide with those of the employees and department managers. The clinic heads also, however, call for a managerial attitude from the department managers. If there are problems in the department managers’ work, they should try to solve them actively. The department managers have, thus, a responsibility to proactively seek ways to cope with their demanding work.

Consequently, the sections above contain three perspectives on the department manager work and role: those of the employees, department managers, and clinic heads. All in all, these perspectives do not fall too far from each other; there seems to be a shared understanding on the main problems that tax the department managers’ energy. So why is not development happening; why is not the working situation of the department managers improving? Both the Archipelago meeting and discussion section 6.8 return to that question.

6.2.5 The clinic heads’ account on working as a clinic head

So far this section has discussed the employees’ work as well as the department managers’ work from their own, their employees’, and the clinic heads’ perspective. Below the clinic heads’ experiences in their own work are described. Work at the third level in a clinic hierarchy (see figure 6.2) is discussed.

A clinic head is the highest manager in a clinic. Consequently, she has the ultimate responsibility for the personnel, economy, and operation of the clinic. She also has the responsibility for its development. The health care work is very regulated, and a clinic head has to be aware of all laws and regulations related to the clinic’s operation and see to that they are followed. Many clinic heads also have additional tasks besides of their work as clinic heads. Many function as practicing physicians in their clinics and some have also other special expert tasks either in the hospital organization or within the Stockholm County Council.

Each clinic head has one or several department managers working for her. The clinic heads have to make sure that the department managers receive all the necessary information and also support them in their work (i.e.
to »coach« them, to create dialogue in strategic issues, help in solving emerging problems, etc.). The problem in many clinics is, however, according to the clinic heads that there is a lack of personnel, either physicians or nurses. The lack of qualified staff causes a high workload for the clinic heads and also all the other employee groups, and collaboration between the department managers and clinic heads suffers.

The clinic heads’ work, and the operation of the clinics in general, is strongly affected by the decisions made in the Stockholm County Council. The health care work stays the same, but organizational issues change due to the decisions made in the Council. One clinic head says that, in a way, one has already become accustomed to changes, but frequent changes can also be frustrating. It is also very frustrating if the Council’s decisions end up steering a clinic’s operation in a wrong direction, a direction that the clinic head would not choose. For instance, a few clinic heads note that the Council’s decisions and its strategy towards their clinics have been harmful.

It seems that the Council is trying to reduce the clinics’ operations; for instance certain care forms have been removed from the clinics. It is very hard to try and manage a clinic with decreasing opportunities and no way to influence the situation and, furthermore, try to deal with the personnel’s anxiety and frustration in such a situation. Yet another clinic head says that the economic policies of the Council are very demoralizing. For instance, even if the hospital makes a negative result, nothing happens. The minuses are just crossed over and the Council says that the following year they will be stricter. This has never happened, however. There is, thus, little incentive to achieve and maintain a sound economy. Some clinic heads note that the current situation, where only the hospital’s director and economic controller talk with the Council’s »purchasers« (i.e. those who negotiate the annual health care contracts with the hospital), is not working well. The clinic heads have knowledge in their respective fields and can best foresee future developments. That is why it would be good for them to have a direct connection to the negotiation process. Now, the clinic heads can comment on the contract drafts, but that is not the same as actually being present in the discussions and influencing the negotiations.

To summarize
The clinic heads, when discussing their work, concentrate much on the general problems relating to the health care sector and, especially, the political decision-making in it. The clinic heads have the responsibility for
their clinics, but cannot always manage and develop them as they would prefer. The decisions from the County Council may hamper their ideas and visions. Consequently, also in the clinic head interviews a similar pattern as in the employee and department manager interviews emerges. All these levels are looking »above« in the hierarchy with wishes for deeper collaboration, influence opportunities, and rational decision-making. The pattern shall be picked up again in several places of section 6.8 where the whole case study is discussed.

6.3 Collaboration within the organization
A hospital is a complex social system in which employees and managers from different professions and backgrounds come together to provide health care services to many different kinds of patients. This section looks at the collaboration within the hospital as a determining factor for the work experiences of the hospital’s managers and employees. As could be seen above, the lack of collaboration or problems in it both »upwards« and »downwards« in the hierarchy influence strongly the department managers and their opportunity to cope with their work. Furthermore, the department managers and also the employee interviewees and clinic heads believe that a well-functioning collaboration can be an important resource in their work, see below.

6.3.1 Collaboration between the department managers, clinic heads, and head physicians
All the clinics have management groups (see figure 6.2), some established quite recently. A clinic’s management group usually consists of the clinic head, department managers, head physicians, and sometimes clinic secretaries. One clinic head notes that having the head physicians in the clinic’s management group is very important; it integrates the physicians better to the clinic’s overall organization. The frequency and duration of the clinics’ management groups’ meetings varies. Such issues have been decided separately in each clinic. The management group meetings are in general considered as important events for information spreading. Some clinic heads also note that a common framework for operation, clarity of the clinic’s purpose and vision, is created in the management group. Two clinic heads say that the department managers and head physicians may then make decisions locally in their own departments, based on the common framework defined in the clinic’s management group.
Collaboration between the clinic heads and the department managers
The department managers perceive their relation to the clinic heads extremely important; not only is the clinic head their closest supervisor, but the department managers and their clinic heads should together see to that everything functions well in the departments. The department managers experience it extremely difficult, when the clinic head is not available for a longer period of time due to, for instance, medical responsibilities (inside or outside the hospital) or training. The department managers cannot proceed with certain issues without having first discussed them with their clinic heads. Consequently, the department managers wish that the clinic heads were available; that they could reach them when they need their help or permission. The department managers also say that they need their clinic heads to provide honest, fast, and direct information. The clinic heads should be able to »filter« information, to make sure that the department managers get the information they need to have. The clinic heads should be able to understand the department managers’ work situation, to put themselves in the department managers’ shoes to see what they need in their work. The department managers state that the clinic heads should create guidelines, visions, and framework for work. They should be able to clarify the existing goals and visions, to make them alive! They should discuss these goals and visions with the department managers.

Also the clinic heads are dependent on a well-functioning collaboration with their department managers and the head physicians. For instance, one clinic head says that if she did not have competent head physicians and managers working for her and a mutual trust, she would not be able to carry out her work well. She does not have to follow everything in detail in the clinic, since she can trust that both the department managers and head physicians do their best and carry out things as agreed.

Both the department managers and clinic heads, nevertheless, also experience that the mutual communication and collaboration does not always work well. The department managers say that the old »sister« and »doctor« culture is still around. Gender and professional differences do feed such culture; most clinic heads are male physicians while most department managers are female nurses. The department managers also wonder whether the clinic heads do really understand what the department managers do, what their work is like, and what they need in order to do their job proper-
ly. A shared understanding of the department managers’ tasks and role would be very important, the department managers say. Also in the RIKON-study, the department managers express a wish that the clinic heads would clearly indicate what kind of a role the department managers should take, for instance, in development work and in creating visions and strategy for their departments.

Another problem relating to the department manager-clinic head collaboration according to the department managers is that the clinic heads can single-handedly decide how the management processes and tasks are to be carried out in the clinics. For instance, in certain clinics there have not been well-functioning management groups. Even though the department managers would consider this as a big problem and message that to the clinic head, they cannot change the situation; only the clinic head can decide on the change. This problem applies also more widely. The department managers experience that many – for them – important development processes in the hospital have slowed down or terminated at the end of the analysis phase. Problems and development needs have been located, but then nothing has happened for concrete development. The department managers have only been left to wonder, why did the process stop without having the authority to see to that the process would live further. This has happened, for instance, with the RIKON-study that concentrated on the department managers’ working situation. An extensive analysis was carried out by a consultant, but its results were never used or discussed. The department managers perceive that the clinic heads should have been more active and used their authorities in making the process live on.

Furthermore, the department managers note that the clinic heads probably do not always have time or administrative support to cope with all the existing communication needs or have to prioritize something else instead of communication within their clinics; they do also have medical responsibilities. The clinic heads, in their turn, perceive problems to emerge when a department manager does not do what she should do, or if the communication does not work well between the clinic head and department managers. The clinic heads underline that the department managers and the departments as whole also have to take a responsibility for making the communication function properly.

Also some employees interviewed point out problems in the collaboration between the department managers and clinic heads. Some of the problems mentioned are:
• The clinic head does not always react to the information the department manager conveys from the department.
• Communication along the line does not always work and information gets stuck somewhere.
• It seems sometimes that the clinic head and the department manager do not share the same perspective and for the employees it is not possible to perceive them as a management group. Sometimes the question does not seem to be of collaboration between them, but of delegation and control.
• The line organization is not clear and the department manager and the clinic head end up treading on each other’s areas.

Observations on collaboration between the management levels – A case of a management theme day

The 40-group mentioned in section 6.1.1 has certain theme days a few times a year in which leadership questions as well as overall questions relating to the hospital’s management are discussed. I, as a SALUT-researcher, participated in one such theme day in order to report on the SALUT-project and to observe the collaboration within the group. The theme day was also discussed afterwards in the SALUT-project group in order to distinguish the repeating patterns in the collaboration between the management levels as well as to generate ideas on improving the collaboration.

All in all, the SALUT-project group members experienced such days to be used mostly for information spreading rather than for dialogue and collaboration between the managers. During the theme day observed, the program consisted mainly of presentations with short discussions. The discussions had two repeating patterns. First, they were like tennis games of questions and answers. The audience posed questions to the speaker who then tried to answer the best she could. Especially, the hospital’s director received a lot of questions. The »tennis games« very seldom developed to longer discussions. The project group recognized this pattern from other meetings; maybe the group of 40 people is too big for real discussions? The second recurring pattern was that the group is clearly divided into those who are active and those who just listen. The project group noted afterwards, that usually this is so; the same persons are active and also the same persons are selected to make presentations.

However, the climate in the 40-group is in general good. Especially
during coffee breaks and lunch, active discussions emerged between the participants. At the end of the day, a small-group work was carried out. It was very late in the day and otherwise the whole day had been spent in the big group. Nevertheless, the 40-group expressed a wish to do the group work and very lively discussions within the small groups formed by people sitting close to each other ensued. When reporting on the group work results, many groups said “we ended up speaking also about other things besides of the task given; we spoke more generally…” It seemed that there was a lot of energy in the group and a need to speak, to do something, to let it out.

The SALUT-project group also recognized the lack of goals as a general problem in the 40-group. For all the participants it is not clear why – for what purpose – the group meets. Why are certain things presented in the meetings; what should the participants do about them? For instance during the meeting observed, the economy of the hospital was discussed, but the project group members were left to wonder what should they do about the economic situation; what does the presentation mean for their daily work and what is expected of them? Which concrete measures will be taken?

The hospital’s director did present a goal for the theme day in his introductory presentation:

• To discuss the demands from the environment.
• To outline structures and methods to cope with these demands in the future.

The project group members experienced, however, that these goals were only presented, not discussed. During the day, no reference to them was made and, furthermore, no check-ups were made on whether the goals were achieved or what was decided relating to them. The SALUT-project group experienced the two problems noted here, the lack of dialogue and ambiguity on the goal of the day, as quite serious problems. More concrete and consistent goal-orientation as well as more innovative approaches in creating dialogue in the group would improve the meetings. These project group reflections on this particular meeting and the usual ways to communicate in the 40-group were used when planning another meeting in the 40-group, i.e. the Archipelago meeting (see section 6.7).
The department managers and clinic heads; Mutual competence expectations

The department managers set high demands on their clinic heads, as can be seen from the description above. The department managers underline that besides of managerial competencies, the clinic heads should possess certain personal characteristics that would help them to work as leaders of their clinics. The department managers wish that the clinic heads were sensitive, but also capable of making difficult decisions. The clinic head should be »socially« competent and be able to work in a structured manner. A department manager quite simply summarizes all these personal characteristics by saying that it is important that the clinic head is a mature person.

The clinic heads’ expectations on the department manager competencies are important, since the clinic heads eventually select and appoint the department managers (after having consulted the hospital’s director and the department’s employees). The clinic heads consider leadership and management competencies more important for the department managers than technical or professional competencies. Some clinic heads say that the department managers should understand at some level the medical care provided in the clinic, but they do not have to be highly competent professionals in it. More important is the ability to be a leader and a manager. For instance, following leadership and management competencies needed from a department manager come up in the clinic head interviews:

- social competence.
- sensitivity and loyalty to both employees and the clinic head.
- trustworthiness.
- flexibility.
- ability to motivate and inspire.
- ability to understand the hospital as a whole.

The clinic heads note that things like knowledge on laws and budgeting are important, but they also say that these things can be learned on the job. Leadership and management demand certain type of a personality – and according to the clinic heads more attention should be paid on personalities when recruiting and training the department managers.

What is then a good department manager (or a manager in general) like? Some clinic heads say that a good department manager tries to figure out her role and can accept it as well as the roles of the other managers and head physicians. Another important characteristics of a good manager is
clarity. For instance, a manager should not »make decisions in the corridors«, but instead follow a structured decision-making process involving all the relevant persons (not only those happening to be around, for instance). One clinic head notes that a good manager is secure, clear, and allowing towards her employees. She has to help the employees to understand their work and its context. Also, it was noted that a good manager is close to her employees. One clinic head summarizes the characteristics of a good department manager in the following list:

- A good department manager has courage to be independent. Sometimes she should be even too independent! If a department manager is not independent, she will lose time when trying to get acceptance from everyone. However, there has to be support and understanding for the department manager’s work from the surrounding organization as well.
- There has to be clarity in a department manager’s work - she should not send mixed messages.
- A good department manager knows how to prioritize and say »no«. One will not have time for everything; that is why it is also important to try and delegate.
- There has to be engagement to one’s work and love for one’s department.

6.3.2 Collaboration between the members of the hospital’s management group and employees

Having now discussed the collaboration between the managerial levels, I will focus on the collaboration between the employees and the hospital’s highest management. Furthermore, collaboration more broadly shall be discussed below; for instance, the collaboration between the line and staff as well as between different departments is addressed.

Many employees have the feeling that things are often decided »from above« in the hospital. Four employees state in the interviews that they cannot influence decisions affecting their work. Even when they have been interviewed by consultants for different development efforts, the questions have related to work realities – what is actually being done – rather than to the employees’ perceptions on what should be done or to their input for the development process. The employees say that they do not directly collaborate with the highest management, i.e. the clinic heads and the hospital’s director. In some departments, the employees do not miss the contact to the highest management; the department gets along just fine as it is now. In
other departments, instead, there are certain problems that the employees think might be easier to solve, if there were a direct contact between the employees and the highest management. In each department, where there is some profound problem to be solved and no connection to the highest management, the employees seem to think that the highest management cannot understand their situation.

The collaboration between the employees and their clinic heads is carried out via the line organization, i.e. through the department managers who convey information from the employees to the clinic heads and the other way around. As with the highest management in general, many employees doubt whether their clinic heads really understand their work. Some interviewees are not even sure whether the clinic head knows the employees working in her clinic by name. Many employee interviewees would like to have more frequent contacts to the clinic heads, because the clinic heads make decisions that directly affect their work. Also, when there are big changes taking place, the employees would like to discuss them with the clinic heads. Many interviewees think that the collaboration with the clinic head is too rigid; following the line in each and every question should not be the most important thing. Sometimes it would be good to be able to speak with the clinic head about things that the employees find important, but that is not possible if there is too strong an emphasis on the »line«. When the clinic head is very distant to the employees, some experience that she becomes »too big«, too big an authority figure, and it becomes harder to approach her.

There are also departments, where the employees experience the collaboration with the clinic head to be more active. The clinic head may, for instance, take part in the department meetings or participate in the special festivities in the department. It seems that in those departments, where the employees experience a closer contact with the clinic head, the employees also think that she is able to understand their work and work situation and take that into account in the decision-making. Most of the employees state that they receive information from the highest management; the minutes of certain meetings are available, also the department managers and employee representatives bring information from the meetings they have had with the hospital management. Furthermore, the employees do understand that the clinic heads have a heavy workload and that can make collaboration with them more difficult.

Most clinic heads say, in their turn, that they are available for their clinics
– for instance, one says that her door is open. Another states that after
having worked for so long in the hospital, she knows the employees and
they know her. Yet another says that by being available to her employees,
she can gain a lot. Availability ensures better collaboration and work in the
clinic. Many clinic heads note that collaboration between the different
managers and employees also sets demands on the employees. One clinic
head says that she demands presence in the department meetings from the
employees; these meetings have to be prioritized. Another says, that she
can understand that not all want to participate and be active, but neverthe-
less, these people should not try to sabotage the work of others trying to do
things together. A third clinic head expresses as her dream independent de-
partments that can take care of themselves. The collaboration between the
departments and the clinic head could then rise to a higher level – to strate-
gic issues - rather than be limited only to daily worries.

Some clinic heads say that they are present in the department’s regular
meetings (i.e. workplace meetings), some just for the sake of communica-
tion with employees, others as physicians of the department. Participation
in the department meetings necessitates sensitivity from a clinic head; she
should not override the department manager, whose task it is to coordinate
the meetings. Also most clinic heads are present in certain departments as
physicians and have in this way a direct contact to the employees. The
clinics’ trade union-employer committees are also an important place for
the clinic heads and employee representatives to meet.

Some clinic heads do, however, feel that there is room for improvement
in their contacts to employees. When they meet employees, they usually
have the role to inform, and communication ends up being a monologue.
The clinic head does not really get any information from the employees.
Some clinic heads also express feelings that the departments should con-
act them more actively to benefit from their competencies, and not to
leave them out of their operation. Furthermore, many clinic heads say that
their collaboration with the employees is made more difficult by the fact
that the employees tend to concentrate on details; they do not see the »big
picture«. One clinic head finds this natural; it is somehow safer to look at
only the details. The employees have demanding jobs that are made even
more demanding by the fact that there is a lack of physicians and the other
employees have to carry high responsibility. Thus, trying to see the big
picture may be experienced very demanding.

A few clinic heads bring forth problems relating to the way participation
is understood within the hospital. They say that participation does not mean democracy, and the employees have sometimes difficulties in understanding this. According to the clinic heads, participation can sometimes mean a right to know, not necessarily a right to influence. Furthermore, when there is a right for the employees to influence decision-making, their opinion is not necessarily the one eventually chosen as the final decision. Some employees instead note that participation, as it is carried out in the hospital, allows collaboration and dialogue mainly within one’s group or one’s hierarchical level. Thus, participation gives an opportunity, at most, to discuss the issues with those who probably already from the beginning share the same priorities and perspectives. There are not enough opportunities to meet others with different priorities and perspectives in cross-departmental or cross-hierarchical groups. This is why participation does not lead to learning – the big picture does not become any clearer. Instead, one only has an opportunity to complain about things within one’s group.

The department managers say, in their turn, that the organization is usually developed in a participative way within the clinics and also the employees receive a lot of information on the developments. Nevertheless, the department managers also perceive problems in collaboration between the different hierarchical levels and participation in the hospital. Sometimes, the employees plan changes only to hear afterwards, that such changes are not possible due to lacking resources or other such things. The department managers say that it would be better to give all the boundary conditions to the employees before they start to plan new things.

6.3.3 Collaboration within and outside the line
Many interviewees – the department managers, clinic heads, and employees - say that the line organizational structure is a good idea. Most say that the line is clear. It is easy to understand who is one’s boss, who are one’s employees, where decisions are made, etc. However, many employees experience the line to be too inflexible when communication always has to run along the line (see above), while many clinic heads also say that the line organization does not always function as it should or, to be more precise, people within the line do not always function as they should. They contact others in different parts of the hospital without »going through the line« as they should. Employees may, for instance, contact the hospital’s director directly with their problems rather than their department managers or clinic heads. However, also some hospital’s management group members say
that line is not flexible; with certain issues it is cumbersome to go through the line rather than contact directly the persons relating to the issue. Also, the clinic heads may receive many contacts and end up having much to do, since many things have to go via them.

The employees organized in the line (e.g. nurses and assistant nurses) do not perceive any major problems in the collaboration with the physicians not included to the line; they state that the collaboration with the physicians works well. Especially new physicians need support from nurses and assistant nurses. Also, the nurses and assistant nurses often have closer contacts to the patients and know their conditions and moods. For instance in the ward departments’ morning rounds, the physicians ask the nurses and assistant nurses questions concerning the patients. All in all, the employees interviewed experience a mutual dependence between the nurses/assistant nurses and the physicians. All the employee groups have their unique tasks and need other’s input in their work. One employee interviewee notes that the care team thinking, i.e. understanding different employee groups to form a team around certain patients, has supported the collaboration in the hospital. The employees, however, also have feelings that the health care sector in general is too hierarchical and all the employee groups do not really meet. The hierarchy is good neither for patients nor employees. The different employee groups are good at different things and this should be benefited from.

The hospital’s director is supported by certain specialist functions, such as the Economics department and the Personnel department. It seems that the respective roles and connections between the clinics (the line) and the specialist functions are to some degree unclear. The specialist functions express, for instance, a wish for more flexible collaboration relations with the line and more sustained focus from the clinic heads on the economical and personnel questions. The clinic heads in their turn are not sure of the roles of the specialist functions’ managers in relation to the line and their influence opportunities in the hospital hierarchy and decision-making.
6.3.4 Interdepartmental collaboration

The clinics also have contacts to each other in the care work. Some clinics work very closely to each other when treating the patients. For instance, the Medicine and Surgical clinics are closely connected due to the fact that they both have ward departments that are also located close to each other. Also, the Surgical clinic and the Anesthesia clinic employees work together in the operation rooms. Some clinics also provide training on their specific competence areas for the other clinics. However, one clinic head notes that work processes in the hospitals are usually designed as tubes going side by side (each operational area forming its own tube) rather than as processes following a patient’s «journey» through the hospital. This makes it hard for the employees and managers to understand the hospital as one unit, and one clinic head says that at Norrtälje Hospital not enough has been done so far to create a comprehensive understanding of the hospital’s operations. The problem is maybe the clinic heads’ short-term perspective; everyone is mostly looking at the processes from their profession’s point of view. One clinic head also notes that the negative side of the change in the juridical form (i.e. becoming a company, see above) is that it may cut the health care processes between the hospital and the other, external, health care providers within the county.

The department managers experience the collaboration within and between the departments to be quite open. There are many different kinds of contacts between the departments. However, the department managers also state that coordination between the departments and different project groups is missing. For instance, there may be many people and groups around the hospital thinking about the same thing without any connection to each other. The RIKON-study indicates that the department managers would like to have more extensive authorities in negotiating routines for collaboration with other departments. This would clarify the tasks of different parties in collaboration.

The employee interviews indicate, in their turn, that there is not much collaboration between the departments at the employee level. Some departments have connecting work tasks and this has led to collaboration, but it seems that the tasks have to be very much intertwined before collaboration emerges (as is the case with, for instance, the anesthesia and operation room nurses). Sometimes also seemingly close departments are, at the employee level, quite detached from each other. For instance, the problems in the ward department reorganization discussed in section 6.5 relate
strongly to the ward department employees’ unawareness of each other’s working situations. Certain wards had operational problems stemming from, for instance, mismatches between the physical working space and work organization. The employees working in other ward departments were not aware of these problems, could not understand the need for reorganization, and vehemently objected it. Recently, however, there have been certain special projects in the hospital that have led the departments to work together also at the employee level. For instance, searching the solution for the on call-problems or the reorganization of ward departments has led to the establishment of cross-departmental groups. Three employees do indeed note that closer collaboration between the departments might be useful; working routines are different in different departments, collaborating with others might enable learning from them.

6.3.5 To summarize
Both the department managers and clinic heads state that the collaboration between them is vital; they cannot carry out their work well without a good collaboration relation to each other. The department managers need their clinic head’s »blessing« on their ideas and decisions; for a clinic head, a department manager is her eyes and ears in a department. Even though collaboration is vital, there are some fundamental problems in it. Often, there is no time for collaboration and, what little time there is, it is used for information spreading rather than for dialogues benefiting of the department managers’ and clinic heads’ different competencies, roles, and perspectives. This problem was, eventually, extensively discussed in the Archipelago meeting reported in section 6.7. The clinic heads and department managers came up there with some practical improvements that might move the communication culture from one-way monologues to two-party dialogues. In this same meeting, also some opportunities for the cross-departmental and cross-clinic collaboration were spotted (see section 6.7) – an area also distinguished problematic above.

The monologue quality of communication applies to the interaction between the clinic heads and employees as well. Especially, the clinic heads note that they do not receive information from the employees. The few contacts between the clinic heads and employees end up being information monologues from the clinic heads to the employees. Correspondingly, many employees suspect that their clinic heads do not understand their working situation. The employees also describe a lack of contact to their
clinic head when, in each question, the aim is to follow the line structure. Even in very fundamental development and change situations, communication should run along the line: from the employees through the department managers to the clinic heads and vice versa. In some clinics, there are very few direct contacts between the employees and the head of their clinic in consequence. I shall return to the line structure and difficulties in collaborating within it in section 6.8.2. The collaboration between the clinic heads and employees may also be problematic due to the different ideas on what participation means in the hospital. Participation, as an important factor affecting the employees’ and managers’ work experiences, is further discussed in section 6.8.4.

6.4 The hospital’s management group on decision-making in the hospital

Above it was explained that some department managers experience problems in the hospital’s decision-making. Sometimes there are no decisions on important issues or the decision-making may take a long time. Moreover, the employee interviewees note that directions and guidelines would be needed from the highest management. This section looks into the decision-making in the hospital the way the hospital’s management group members perceive it.

The hospital’s director has the ultimate decision-making authority when it comes to issues that can be decided within the hospital (rather than in the County Council, for example). The hospital’s management group (see section 6.1) operates as an advisory group to the director and does not, consequently, make decisions. The management group consists of all the clinic heads, the hospital’s director, and the vice director (who is also a clinic head at the moment), as well as the economics and personnel managers. Several clinic heads say that they represent their operational areas in the hospital’s management group, but that they also have to take into account what is good for the whole hospital. Some issues cannot be decided by the hospital’s director without presenting them to the employer-union committee first. Consequently, these two groups (i.e. the hospital’s management group and the employer-union committee) have the opportunity to present their ideas on the issues to be decided and in this way support and influence the decision-making of the hospital’s director.

The clinic heads experience that the hospital’s director listens to the management group members when he makes a decision – he makes his
decisions based on the collective signals coming from the group. However, the fact that decision-making authority rests solely on one person has also caused problems sometimes. For instance, if the hospital’s director is not personally interested in some issue, the decision-making may not be prioritized and may take a long time, the clinic heads experience. Also, as the hospital’s director makes his decisions based on other’s advice and by listening different persons and groups in the hospital, sometimes the hospital’s management group members feel that he listens to some more than others.

6.4.1 Problems in the operation of the hospital’s management group

The management group members point out improvement needs in the group’s operation. One problem is that it is not totally clear which decisions should be discussed within the group and which could be left to the authority of a single clinic head or to be made in collaboration between the clinic head in question and the hospital’s director. For instance, sometimes the hospital’s director and the management group have made decisions on issues relating only to one clinic’s operation thus preventing autonomous decision-making within the clinics.

Also, many clinic heads share the feeling that the hospital’s management group concentrates too much on detail questions instead of talking about more overarching, strategic issues. One clinic head notes that creating a better and more purposeful dialogue in the group is everybody’s responsibility, but somehow the group has not succeeded in it. Some clinic heads also note that these issues – the role and constellation of the hospital’s management group were discussed during an earlier management training program. Good plans were made, but never carried out. One clinic head notes that one cannot blame problems in »personal chemistry« here; somehow more fundamental problems are involved. Several clinic heads note that there should be clearer rules for the hospital’s management group concerning, for instance, the following issues:

• For what reason am I a member in the management group? Whom do I represent? Whom do the others represent?
• For how long will I be a member of the management group?
• What does an advisory group really mean? Can we make some decisions together or just give advice to the hospital’s director?
Some clinic heads also think that the current hospital’s management group is far too big. Much time is spent just keeping everyone informed. But changing the constellation of the hospital’s management group might also lead to changes in the current clinic divisions; some clinic heads wonder whether there should be fewer clinics in the hospital.

Furthermore, many clinic heads experience that they do not receive collegial support from the hospital’s management group. Some experience status differences in the group that influence its members and the mutual support they are able to provide for each other. The clinic heads do not exchange ideas on their leadership and management solutions; different ways to manage and organize a clinic are not profoundly discussed. That is why the clinic heads know quite little about how the others are dealing with their tasks, what they prioritize, how they manage and lead their clinics. Many clinic heads do, however, say that such information is not crucial for them, solutions to organizational and management questions have to be found locally. There is no one best way. Many clinic heads also consider their clinic to be the »strange bird« in the hospital – some clinics are smaller than others; some have no nurses, but other professional groups instead; some have only day time operation, etc. Also this affects the collaboration in the management group; when the starting points are experienced to be different, it seems to be harder for the clinic heads to find the common ground for collaboration.

All in all, the clinic heads experience much to be improved in the hospital’s management group work. Some note that recently they have only been waiting for the new CEO and board to start their work as the hospital becomes a company. Things will change anyway when the CEO and board take over, until then there is no use trying to improve the management group’s work.

6.5 The reorganization of the ward departments
- A case on participation and decision-making in the hospital

Many problems discussed above relating to participation and decision-making in the hospital can concretely be seen in the reorganization process of the ward departments. This reorganization was carried out during the SALUT-project and in this section different perspectives on it are summarized.

The ward departments of the Medicine-geriatric and Surgical-orthopedic clinic were reorganized due to a problematic mismatch between the
work organization and physical working space. The ward departments were initially located on two floors of the hospital building; parts of the Medicine clinic and parts of the Surgical clinic were mixed up in different ways on the two floors. For practical reasons having the ward departments of each clinic on the same floor would make more sense; it would allow the departments of the same clinic to share resources and collaborate better. Initially the departments were divided on the two floors as follows:

- **higher floor:** Department 4 (Medicine) and Department 3 (Surgical)
- **lower floor:** Department 1 G (Medicine), 1 M (Medicine), and 1 O (Surgical).

The division of the working space worked better on the upper floor; both departments 4 and 3 had patient seats for 24 patients and the physical working space is designed for 24 patients in each department. Departments 1 G, 1 M and 1 O did not render themselves so clearly to the groups of 24 patients; department 1 M (stroke and internal medicine) had 16 patients, 1 O (orthopedic) 16 patients, and 1 G (geriatric and oncology) also 16 patients. The main problem on the lower floor was that there were three departments in the working space designed for two departments, also equipment and medicine storage were designed only for two departments. As everything had to be shared, no department had control over its own costs and resources. For instance, if one department ordered expensive medicine, the other departments had to share the costs also. There were also only two break rooms, and that caused continuous friction between the departments as department-wise meetings were difficult to arrange.

The department managers say that the initial situation in these ward departments was mapped with the help of an employee survey which gave indications on the directions to which the employees would like to develop the organization. All the employees were somehow involved in the reorganization process and, for instance, the heads of the clinics in question encouraged the employees to give suggestions. Nevertheless, the employees experience that they could not influence the process and all of them did not even know what was going to happen and why. The employees say that the decisions relating to the reorganization came »from above«. They asked the hospital’s director to come and speak with them on the reorganization, but he refused – the department managers explain this with the line structure; the line should be followed also in this situation and communica-
tion should proceed in the line. The employees also tried to influence the process via the department managers and the department managers were eventually able to arrange meetings between the employees and the clinic heads. The employees were very frustrated about the whole process, since for many it seemed like a re-run of a reorganization process at the ward departments only few years earlier. The employees experienced also then that a solution that they did not like was chosen.

This time, however, the employees were able to influence the process via the department managers. Furthermore, eventually they were able to form an inter-departmental group to prepare the employees’ suggestion for the reorganization. The trade union was also involved. However, there were lots of negative feelings in the departments. Some employees were not even sure why such reorganization was needed. The problems leading to the reorganization were experienced only in certain departments, and even the knowledge on the problems did not spread to all the ward departments. The reorganization and the idea of moving some of the employees and patient groups created uncertainty and fears: Who will have to move? Will departments merge? Will some departments be destroyed? Will there be lay-offs?

Eventually a new organizational structure was established after for about a year in the change process. The clinics received their own floors and one part of the operations, the care for the patients not anymore in need of acute medical care, was externalized to a nursing home owned by the Norrtälje town. Some employees and also one department manager moved voluntarily to this nursing home. Another department manager took an important initiative to form a cross-professional and cross-departmental group (consisting of e.g. nurses and physicians from different departments) to plan the care for the stroke patients. The stroke patient care was all along a problematic area in the reorganization process and this new cross-professional/departmental group was perceived as a good initiative; it provided a new forum for collaborative operations development and enabled the participants to learn why »the others« have different preferences and think in different ways. Little by little, the dust started to settle, but the process had been tough. One clinic head, for instance, suspects that the main pressure on the department managers involved during the previous year related to the reorganization as well as the anxieties and conflicts it created in the departments.
6.6 Development suggestions relating to the management

The interviewees at all hierarchical levels were encouraged to make development suggestions relating to management questions. This section summarizes these suggestions and, in a way, the suggestions summarize what has been stated above in this chapter.

The most often stated wish by the employees is that their department manager should have the opportunity to concentrate on the personnel issues in her work instead of the administrative tasks. The department manager should have more time to "see the whole group" (the employees say) and to concentrate on supporting it. If the department manager had time to be present at the department, she would be able to influence the department's operation in a positive way. One employee says that the department manager can do so much by doing just something little; her actions and the messages she sends really influence the employees and the way they work. If the department manager had time to be present at the department, she could instruct new employees and "acclimatize" them to the department and its working methods. She would also be able to give feedback to the employees when she would see how they are working and support them when something sad or difficult happens.

Both the SALUT-project group and the members of the hospital’s management group perceive, instead, the need to work on the management roles and structures as whole. The project group ended up pointing out the uncleanness and immaturity of the management structures and processes as one of the main problems relating to the department manager work. Consequently, the project group formulated as its main goal to clarify the department manager role and, for that end, to create dialogue between the department managers and the clinic heads. Clarifying the department manager role would mean in practice reviewing and clarifying the whole management structure within the clinics and departments. The relevant questions would be: what kind of roles should the clinic heads and department managers have and how should they collaborate in order to create an effective management group? The Archipelago meeting discussed in section 6.7 was an important step towards providing some answers to these questions.

The hospital’s management group members also say that the confusion on the managerial roles should be reduced by arranging more training in management and leadership. The recruitment of managers should also be improved. Now, too often, the candidate available is chosen for a manager
post instead of looking for the most suitable one. The management group members also underline the need to work on very basic work environmental issues. For instance, optimal staffing both for the long- and short-term should be achieved. Working time solutions should be reviewed and overtime reduced. Some management group members also emphasize the need to more actively make sure that plans and decisions relating to organizational and working environment improvements are followed.

6.7 The Archipelago meeting –
   The 40-group on the SALUT-ideas
The analysis phase of Norrtälje Hospital’s SALUT-project was completed in early 2002 when the SALUT-project group reported its work on the department manager work and role as well as the leadership and management questions in general in the hospital. The report was written based on the interview studies and the project group work reported above in this chapter. Many of the observations documented also in this chapter were included to the report and discussed. The report aimed, however, only to point out the necessary areas for development rather than to provide solutions and action plans. This kind of strategy was adopted in order to allow each clinic and the hospital’s managers to discuss the factors that consume the resources of the employees and managers as well as to plan their own action plans to deal with these problematic factors. The report was in the first phase distributed to all the managers as well as presented and discussed in the hospital’s management group. The report received an overall positive reception; it was experienced to describe the management and leadership problems and, especially, problems in the department manager work accurately. Consequently, the hospital’s director with the help of the hospital’s management group decided to dedicate the hospital’s traditional annual management training day in the 40-group (see section 6.1.1) to the SALUT-work. Consequently, some members of the SALUT-project group planned a lunch-to-lunch meeting in which each clinic and the whole 40-group would have an opportunity to work on the questions:

• Why do the managers and employees lose their energy at work?
• What kind of a working situation would offer opportunities for energy generation rather than consumption?
• How shall we move from the current situation towards our visions on work that offers opportunities for energy regeneration?
The program for the lunch-to-lunch meeting arranged in a conference center in the Stockholm archipelago is presented in Appendix 9; from hereon the meeting is referred to as the Archipelago meeting. All in all, the meeting was planned to support dialogue between the members in the 40-group, especially between the department managers and their clinic heads. The program contained both sessions in the clinic groups as well as sessions in groups consisting of managers working in different clinics in order to both enable clinic internal and cross-clinic communication and shared learning. The group work tasks were formulated such that they would not lead the managers to search for scapegoats or to blame each other for things gone wrong; rather than composing the questions in »what is the problem«-formulation, questions like »what is needed to create a better situation«, »what is my personal and our shared vision« and »how shall we get to our vision« were chosen instead. The SALUT-project group considered such formulations important, since everyone in the 40-group is aware of the existing problems; shared concrete efforts to create a better working situation for all the managers are, however, still missing.

6.7.1 Group work on the priority areas
The 40-group members were asked in advance to the meeting to read the SALUT-report and to send (in a written form) their thoughts on the most important things in the report to the meeting’s arrangers. Based on the replies sent in by about half of the 40-group members, it was easy to see five essential issue areas emerging. The members were obviously interested in discussing participation in the hospital, decision-making processes, dialogue between different actors in the hospital, the relation between management and leadership roles, and what meaningful managerial tasks are like. In the beginning of the 40-group meeting, the first group work session concentrated on discussing these five issues. Each person was able to choose the topic he or she wanted to discuss and form a group with others interested in the same issue.

---

4 The 40-group members were asked to submit their thoughts by email to the other SALUT-researcher who in the beginning of the hospital’s SALUT-project took part in it (see chapter 1). This researcher then made a list on the issues submitted without any reference to who had written a certain comment. This list was given for further analysis to me and the psychologist of the SALUT-project group. This process was adopted in order to allow the managers to respond to the report anonymously.
The group discussing participation concluded that participation should be perceived as an opportunity rather than an obligation or a privilege. Both the responses sent in on the SALUT-report relating to participation as well as the group work on participation clearly brought forth, however, that many managers experience that not all the human potential present in the hospital is used. The traditional division of labor and hierarchical power structures seem to influence the hospital such that it is not always easy for the higher hierarchical levels and professional groups with higher status to see the potential that exists in each employee. The group work on participation resulted in, for instance, a statement: »all can – trust that!«. The group on participation also identified the managers as key persons creating participation; a manager should have the courage to let go of control to allow participation to happen and all the managers should be supported in finding this courage.

The group work and the responses to the SALUT-report relating to decision-making all identified lacking strategic decision-making and non-existent decision-making routines as a major problem in the hospital. Furthermore, the group work on decision-making concentrated on the relationship between participation and decision-making; it was generally experienced that in a certain sense there is practically too much participation in decision-making processes. For instance, certain clinic internal decisions are not made in collaboration between the clinic and the hospital’s director (as might be sensible), but rather the whole hospital’s management group is involved and in that way all the clinics become involved in the decision-making. Somehow, there is an experienced need to check everything with everyone else. The group suggested that decisions should rather be made locally based on a common strategic foundation as well as a »we-feelings« and mutual trust. When there is the »we-feelings« and trust, there is no need to look for an approval from all the others for each question.

Dialogue became an important underlying theme for all work during the meeting. An external researcher was present during the first day of the meeting to provide the group with theoretical perspectives on dialogue and dialogue competencies (see Wilhelmson & Döös, 2002). The group work and general discussion on dialogue during the meeting concentrated much on the unbalanced relationship between information spreading and communication/dialogue between different actors in the hospital. It was generally experienced that information spreading takes far too much time; in the meetings people do not really speak with each other, but the managers are
speaking to the employees – informing them. Even though information is important, it does not make sense to spend each meeting, those valuable moments when people actually meet each other, on monologues. Thus, information should be spread in several ways so that when coming to a meeting, everyone would be already informed and dialogue on important issues could begin. The group working on dialogue issues noted that this necessitates that the employees and managers alike receive information and, furthermore, are active in finding out about things. The quality of meetings should, consequently, be developed but equally important is that everybody takes the responsibility for being informed. Also more opportunities should be provided for the employees and managers to meet. The problem is that sometimes the managers do not have enough time for their employees and, if they do not meet each other, communication and dialogue will not develop.

So many of the 4o-group’s members were interested in discussing the relation between management and leadership roles that two groups were formed for this topic. All in all, the groups agreed with what has already been stated in this chapter; the daily work makes the managers literally managers, there is little room and time for being a leader. At the same time, however, there is a shared vision in the hospital that each manager should also be a leader: to support and coach her personnel, to develop the operations, etc. One of the groups working on this topic noted that by delegating certain tasks both upwards and downwards, a manager can gain more time for being a leader. In the same vein, the other group noted that an opportunity to delegate administrative routine tasks would release a manager’s time for leadership tasks and having an opportunity to take a coffee break with the employees enables a manager to practice daily leadership within her group. The two groups also identified how the hospital as an organization should support leadership roles; for instance, the highest management should clearly signal whether it wants the managers to act also as leaders and vision-makers or whether it wants the managers to stick to managerial tasks. When discussing this issue in the whole group, one manager noted that what the managers want themselves is also important – the managers in the 4o-group are the management of the hospital!

The group working on meaningful managerial tasks concentrated much on the department managers’ need to have support personnel who can carry out certain administrative routine tasks. The group also called for clarity in the managerial roles; on the one hand, job descriptions and necessary
training would be needed and, on the other hand, the managers themselves should also try to prioritize and delegate their work in order not to get stuck with less meaningful tasks. The group also came up with a statement »take away the extras«, meaning that the highest management should not pile up new, unclear, and often unimportant tasks on the managers. The highest managers should be critical about new processes and tasks that they want to implement; they should not just pile new tasks on, for instance, the department managers without reflecting whether the new task or process really adds value to the operations.

6.7.2 The visions and first steps of the clinics
Several group work sessions during the Archipelago meeting were dedicated for the clinic internal work. First, the clinic heads and their department managers discussed their vision for a good working situation somewhere in the future. Second, the clinic groups defined a concrete plan for the first step in their way towards that vision. The clinics’ visions and first steps are described in detail in Appendix 10. Here only a summary on the main issues emerging in the clinics’ plans is made; quite similar issues as described above resulted from the clinic sessions. Probably the three most important and intertwined issue areas emerging are information spreading and communication, decision-making and participation, and time to be a leader.

Information spreading and communication
Too much time is spent for informing the employees and managers in the hospital. Information spreading practices and meeting structures have to be developed further to enable communication and dialogue instead of information monologues. In more practical terms, many clinics decided to try and circulate information better in advance to meetings; meetings could then be dedicated for communication and dialogue. Several department managers, for instance, decided to start to write weekly letters to their employees with all the important information. Equipped with this information, the employees could then in the workplace meetings start to discuss the issues; they would not need to be informed anymore. Therefore, it is also necessary that everybody takes the responsibility for being informed. It was noted that there should be different types of meetings; some meetings may be »information meetings«, but it is also important to dedicate time for »dialogue meetings« a couple of times a year.
Furthermore, many clinics decided that the interaction between the clinic head and department managers should be increased and improved. These two management levels should collaborate more actively to improve the operations in the clinic, to solve emerging problems, and also to work on their respective roles. Some clinics set as they vision »visible managers« with an aim to make both the clinic head and department managers visible actors in the clinic’s daily work.

**Decision-making and participation**

Many managers experience the lack of strategic directions in the hospital. Local decisions are not possible as there is no shared foundation on which decisions could be built on. Consequently, each decision has to be made by checking approval of different relevant and irrelevant actors. Even though there is frustration for crowded and complicated decision-making processes, the managers also perceive that participation is not actually used enough in steering and developing the hospital’s operations. Some of the managers noted that the employees have many yet untapped resources. Thus, it seems that at higher organizational levels participation is almost too excessive; it is not used based on rational considerations but based on attempts to not overlook someone or step on someone’s toes in a decision-making process. At the lower organizational levels participation is not used enough as an opportunity for the hospital.

It was also noted that the division between staff and line may not be fruitful. Currently, there is too much confusion on how the staff and line can collaborate and who has authorities. The staff decided to try to find a new name for it – a name that would emphasize collaboration rather than separation.

**Time to be a leader**

Many of the clinics decided to reconsider the managers’ tasks to free more time for them to act as leaders. Support personnel would be allocated to the department managers lacking administrative support. However, it was also noted that hiring support personnel is difficult since there are very few resources available for it. The budgets are always tight. The discussion on this question led to an innovation; there are often employees in the hospital who would like to for a change carry out other tasks besides of their usual work. Sometimes finding alternative tasks for certain employees is imperative, since their usual work has caused physical or psychological »wear«. A
change in tasks might help in recuperation. Such situations should be benefited from; administrative support personnel may be found among the existing employees and there is no need for external recruitment.

6.7.3 In practice, how to go forth?
As noted already earlier in the case study, the hospital has had problems in realizing its internal development work. Fine plans have been made, but then the plans have fallen apart; nothing has been done. This is naturally also a threat for the SALUT-work. The knowing-doing gap (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; see chapter 2) – the difficulty to transfer knowing something into doing something – was discussed in the meeting to offer some conceptual ideas on why development work so easily stops in organizations. One of the clinic heads noted that maybe taking organizational actions is so difficult, since the medical mentality of only using »experimentally proven procedures« also spreads to organizational and leadership development. Maybe this mentality makes it difficult for the managers to venture into often unpredictable development processes. To reduce the knowing-doing gap further, concrete »first steps« described in Appendix 10 were intended to get the development on the road. The SALUT-researchers and the psychologist of the SALUT-project group, who chaired and coordinated the whole lunch-to-lunch meeting in the 40-group, offered themselves as support persons for the clinic internal work. Finally, it was agreed that the hospital’s management group follows up the development steps taken in the clinics.

6.8 Discussion on the case
In this section, the whole Norrtälje Hospital case presented above is discussed. The department managers’ role, the line organizational structure and its consequences, the development of management and leadership processes in the hospital, participation and decision-making, as well as the implications of the hospital’s institutional setting are discussed; the overarching themes from the vertical analysis presented above are distinguished and elaborated. The aim is both to highlight interesting issues from the research point of view and, at the same time, to offer ideas for the hospital for its further development work.

6.8.1 The department managers’ role and tasks
The main message from the interviews with both the department man-
agers and employees is that the department managers’ role should be that of a supporter; they should support the employees and concentrate on leading the department, developing its operations and working methods, working to improve the physical and psychosocial working environment, and representing the department’s needs to the other organizational units. The administrative tasks, that now take much of the department managers’ time, should be organized in some other way; for the employees it does not make sense that the department managers spend most of their time doing things that a secretary could take care of instead. The department managers experience frustration because of the wrong focus in their work. Also the clinic heads note that the administrative tasks take too much time from the department managers and cause a high workload; some of them wonder whether the decentralization of administrative tasks has gone too far. In the Archipelago meeting, many of the clinics discussed this problematic relation between leadership, managerial, and purely administrative tasks. In order to improve the balance between these different task areas, the clinics decided to delegate some of the routine administrative tasks to, for instance, clinic secretaries or assistant department managers. Due to the lack of resources it is, however, difficult to hire new employees or load new tasks to the existing secretaries or assistant department managers. A major innovation in this issue was thus that the clinics decided to collaborate in »spotting« employees already working in the hospital and having problems in carrying out their usual care work. These employees might be re-located to administrative positions in which they could truly benefit the hospital and probably also feel better themselves.

Both the department managers and the clinic heads state that the department manager role is not totally clear. For instance, the clinic heads emphasize the blurred authority boundary between the department manager and the head physician roles and say that it increases the unclearness of the department managers’ work when responsibilities and authorities reside between these two separate roles. Also, the department managers must implement decisions that have been made in the hospital’s management group without the department managers’ direct influence. Sometimes the department managers may feel that the decision is wrong, but still have to justify it to their employees. The department managers experience such situations very difficult; for them the situation does not feel right. One can guess that such a situation also undermines their identity as managers. Maybe one can also hypothesize that the high workload relating to the ad-
Administrative tasks may create feelings of unclearness – what really is a department manager’s job: to lead a department or to act as an administrator? And also vise versa; it may also be that the high workload is only a symptom of the department manager role's unclearness – the department managers end up doing too much when it is not clear what they actually should be doing.

Many of the employee interviewees say that it would be important for the department managers to be present in the departments and to see the employees at work, as individuals and as groups. The RIKON-study shows that the department managers would like to invest more time on, for instance, department and operations planning, working environment improvement, and quality questions at the expense of administrative tasks. The employees perceive the same need for the change in the department managers’ work and time allocation. Furthermore, the employees point out that in order to be able to carry out these important development tasks, the department managers should spend more time in the department and with the employees. The change in the department managers’ work should bring them closer to the employees. The Archipelago meeting concentrated also on this; many clinics tried during the meeting to identify possibilities to make the department managers and also the clinic heads more visible in the clinics. For instance, solving the problem of excessive administrative routine tasks goes hand in hand with this question; if a department manager does not have to work most of the day between a computer and a telephone, she can dedicate more time for supporting her employees and being present in the department.

Some of the employees also say that the department manager should stand on their side against the rest of the organization. The clinic heads instead say that a department manager is and should act as the employer’s representative; she should support her personnel but as a member of the hospital's management. In this sense, the clinic heads do not perceive any contradiction in being an employer’s representative and supporting the personnel. The employees, instead, do seem to somehow need «protection» against the rest of the organization and hope that the department manager clearly takes their side. The department managers, in their turn, are closer to the clinic heads in this respect and say that, despite the collegial sympathies towards the employees, they support them as managers and as the employer’s representatives. It is, nevertheless, worth thinking about why the employees seek for protection. Would it not be possible to
create a sense of togetherness between all the managerial levels and employees?

One indication of the ambiguity in the department manager role is, furthermore, that their role in the hospital is often called a »middle manager« role, when – in reality – it is a first-line manager role; there are no managers working »beneath« the department managers. Nevertheless, in the hospital’s lingo, the department managers are perceived to be sandwiched between the demands coming from beneath and above. Maybe this error is quite revealing; the department managers are seen to be between the different hierarchical actors and they are not truly perceived to be members either in the »lower« or »upper« hierarchical level. They are not employees, but maybe they are not perceived to belong to the hospital’s management structure either. Maybe one way to clarify the department managers’ role is to create a shared understanding of them as the first-line managers. Perceiving the department managers as first-line managers might make it easier for the different management levels to clarify their respective authorities and responsibilities and, for the employees, it might make it easier to understand the department managers as management members rather than »protectors«. Of course, such change in the employees’ perceptions would be beneficial for them only if they were able to perceive the whole management structure to be on their side.

From the clinic head, department manager, and employee interviews, thus, comes clearly across a shared understanding that the department manager role is unclear and overloaded. All also perceive the need for the department managers to concentrate on personnel and departmental development issues in their work. Consequently, the problem in the department manager work does not seem to reside in conflicting perceptions on the department manager role, but rather in the difficulty to create such a working situation for them that corresponds to the shared idea of what the department manager work should be like. The question to be asked is: why is there such a big discrepancy between the ideal of department managers’ work and its reality? Furthermore, what could be done to take the department manager role closer to its ideal? Above some ideas on improving the situation that came up in the Archipelago meeting are described. Furthermore, in the interviews, some additional ideas on how to take the department manager work reality closer to its ideal came up. The department managers seem to believe that possibilities to negotiate and discuss their role with the clinic heads and other interfacing organizational
groups might help the situation. Many clinic heads also indicate that they should be active in supporting the department managers in defining their role. The clinic heads, however, also call for proactiveness from the department managers - if they have a problem, they should try and find a solution for it, not only expect that the clinic head solves the problem for them. All of these ideas would surely move the department managers’ work to the right direction and it probably would be most effective to concentrate on all of them – to develop through dialogue and collaboration the department managers’ work by systematically looking at the different elements affecting it from the department managers’ own work attitudes to the existing personnel resources and technology.

It is quite interesting to note that the ideal of the department manager work is very close to the leadership-definitions, while its reality resembles the definitions on management-roles (see e.g. Kotter, 2001). Table 6.2 summarizes the tasks relating to these two roles. Kotter states that both leadership and management roles contain concrete tasks but the content of these tasks varies profoundly. For instance, while a manager searches for staff and organizes employees to get a job done, a leader – for the same purpose – concentrates on directing employees towards the same goals. Thus, somehow in the hospital the aim has been to create a department leader role, but instead a department manager role has emerged. Maybe the long tradition of nurses’ subordination to the direction and leadership of physicians comes across here. It is a big shift from such a tradition to start to consider a nurse, often a woman, as a leader in the hospital organization. Or maybe the department manager role is only a consequence of acute administrative pressures.

Table 6.2. Management and leadership tasks (according to Kotter, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To decide what needs to be done</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>To plan and set budgets</td>
<td>To create direction and vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work with human resources to get the job done</td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>To organize and staff</td>
<td>To direct employees towards the same goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To control that the employees actually do what they are supposed to do</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>To control and solve problems</td>
<td>To motivate and inspire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The department managers and clinic heads themselves experience the balance between management and leadership roles important; in the Archipelago meeting two big groups were formed by managers prioritizing this issue as an important aspect affecting their work and well-being. Besides of the practical problems («I do not have time to be a leader.»), the groups also noted that the highest management of the hospital should clearly signal whether the managers are expected to take on a leadership role and – if so – trust, respect, and training needed in this role should be provided to them. But who are »the highest managers« that should signal these values and priorities? In the Archipelago meeting all the managers of the hospital were present; a position on this issue could have been formed within that group. Somehow, instead, it seems that there is an »invisible« highest management in the hospital; the group of managers is waiting for a decision, guidance, and pressure from someone else. In the meeting, one of the managers did say that what we want, whether we want us to be managers or leaders, is important. This idea, that it is us who decide, might be very useful when discussing the management-leadership questions in the hospital.

Even though the idea of what the department manager work should be like is in general shared by the different hierarchical levels in the hospital, it is also interesting to see that there are things that only one hierarchical level emphasizes when discussing the department manager role, while the others do not mention it at all. For instance, only the department managers themselves underline the loneliness of their work - the lack of someone to talk to about the difficulties to be a manager. The department managers say that many things they cannot share with their employees or with their closest supervisors. To both directions, there is a need to maintain one's »face« and not to show the need for support. Consequently, it is no wonder that the department managers end up feeling lonely in their work! The clinic heads, in their turn, are quite surprisingly the only ones to emphasize the unclear boundary between the department managers’ and the head physicians’ responsibilities. This issue did not surface, for instance, in the SALUT-project group at all. The department managers seem to concentrate on their relation to the clinic heads as a key in solving their problems and seem to perceive the collaboration relation to the head physician only of secondary importance. It would be important to study this further. Would it make the department manager role easier, if they built it up more actively in relation to the head physicians’ role, as the clinic heads suggest? In the Archipelago meeting, some of the clinics did consider improving the
collaboration between the managerial line as a whole and the head physicians an important development area. Finally, the employees emphasize very strongly the need for the department manager to be present at the department; when the department manager now is not enough present in the department, she quite simply does not share the experiences of her employees and cannot support and steer the operations as well as she probably could if she worked side by side with the employees. The employees are also the only ones to perceive a need for the department manager to act as their protector. As noted above, it would be interesting to study further why the employees seem to need a »protector« and also envisage how the department managers’ presence in the departments might improve the operations and their development.

The multiple, partly unclear, demands in the department managers’ work influence also the perceived requirements for the department manager competencies. All the hierarchical levels express that a department manager’s personality is more important than her professional competencies; personality should help a department manager to deal with her demanding work. In a way, »mental taylorism« applies here – it is thought that a department manager’s personality should fit the mental demands of her work. When work is unclear, she should be the kind of a person to see clarity in it; when workload mounts, she should be able to prioritize and even have courage to leave less important tasks to be done much later. The danger in such thinking is that instead of creating good – developmental and salutary – work, the focus is put on finding a person to a department manager position who is able, with the help of her personality and personal strengths, to endure the negative aspects of work. Even though the fit between an individual’s personality and work is important (see section 2.1.2), so is also designing work such that it does not pose a threat to the department managers’ well-being. One could say that when the forest is thick, a person who can find a path through the thicket can proceed faster and better than a person who just tries to climb over each branch and bush. But of course, the needed competencies are only one side of the story – the person in the thick forest can also do well if provided with a good map or guidance on where to find the path. It seems that when it comes to the department manager work, collaboration on map making and path finding is still needed and, as this case study and also the Archipelago meeting have indicated, this map making and path finding should extent to the whole management structure as well as the hospital’s managerial and leadership processes.
6.8.2 The line organization and difficulties in collaborating within it

The organizational structure at Norrtälje Hospital presents many interesting questions. The clinic heads, department managers, and employees experience in general the line structure to function well since it is clear – it is easy to understand where one is located in the hierarchy. However, there are also unclear issues in the hospital’s organization. For instance, the physicians do not belong to the line and especially the status of the head physicians is unclear. Some clinic heads perceive the head physicians to be at the equal level with the department managers, but in practice there are problems; the clinic heads state that it is sometimes difficult to judge who has the authority and responsibility, a department manager or a head physician.

Also the role of the specialist functions (the Personnel and Economics departments) is not clear. For instance, the clinic heads experience some uncertainty on the special functions’ authorities and possibilities to influence the decision-making in the hospital. Also whom from the line should collaborate with the specialist functions does not seem to be clear in every case. In the Archipelago meeting also these issues were approached, and it seems that the specialist functions have an honest and genuine will to support the line in the best possible way. They perceive the division to »line« and »staff« disturbing the collaboration between the two to the extent that they do not want to be called staff anymore, but hope to find a better name for themselves reflecting the support and collaboration they offer to the organization in their respective specialty areas. Also some of the clinics want to clarify their collaboration with the specialist functions; for instance, since in the company form the economic follow-up becomes more and more important, some clinics initiated a close collaboration with the Economics department. Nevertheless, one can say that the roles of those not included to the line structure are still not clear and cause frustration at least to some degree. Furthermore, it is possible that uncertainty of other’s authorities and roles spreads also to uncertainty on one’s own authorities and roles.

Even though some interviewees say that the line organization is clear, there are also many who state that it functions very inflexibly. The highest management considers it very important that »the line is followed«, but especially at the employee level and in the staff more flexible, issue dependent approaches are hoped for. According to them, collaboration and communication should not be determined by the structure, but by issue specific
needs. And indeed, for instance the problems relating to the ward department reorganization may, at least partly, be traced back to the inflexibility of the line. Even this, quite profound, issue was tried to be dealt with within the line, by communicating from one level to next. The employees ended up experiencing a lack of trust in the highest management, since it did not discuss the changes directly with them. A more flexible approach would probably have been possible, since the reorganization directly affected only two clinics; one could envisage rapid actions and communication rounds mobilizing the hospital manager, the two clinic heads and their department managers to collaborate with the employees instead of the inflexible “marching order” along the line.

One further problem with the line organization seems to be that layers that are separated from each other by other layers lose touch with each other. For instance, few contacts between the hospital’s highest management and the employees have led to a situation where some of the employees do not trust the highest management (their clinic head included) to understand what their work is like; what kind of working situation they have and what they would need in their work. Thus, information may be transmitted by the intermediate levels, but communication and dialogue are not only about information. In true communication also emotions, non-verbal messages are transmitted. It is very difficult to transmit this “sense” of things, feelings, between organizational layers. However without it, messages become flat and may be interpreted in a totally different way by the receiver. Thus, the layers lose touch with each other, trust and collaboration suffer. As can be seen in the description of the ward departments’ reorganization, the employees (having experienced earlier top-down steered changes and detachment form their managers) do enter a change situation with many frustrations, doubts, and fears. From the beginning, they do not trust the process and its potential to create a better working environment for them. Consequently, at department level, the change processes are very painful. These change pains hit very hard the department managers as the first-line managers. They end up in the cross-fire of the employees’ frustration as well as the decision-making problems of the hospital’s management group. Such negative situation lasting for a year during the ward department reorganization was sure to drain the department managers’ energy.

One possibility to improve the employees’ and managers’ work situation would be to let go of the “box”-thinking. The organizational chart, as it is now and as it is depicted in figure 6.2, consists of people in boxes. All of
them have very traditional roles except for the department managers, who do not anymore fit in the traditional head-nurse box, but represent a glimpse of less bureaucratic working life in which a manager is working (or at least meant to work) as a coach and supporter of her personnel. Thus, post-bureaucracy is slowly creeping into the hospital (see chapter 3). Maybe this trend should be embraced more fully, boxes discarded (see Mohrman & Cohen, 1995) and more flexible collaboration patterns created. Maybe the structures do not have to be changed that much, but rather the way the organization is understood. Figure 6.3 presents my suggestion for an alternative to figure 6.2: a team-based organization with a team-based management structure - a hula-hoop organization. The managers form teams which then flexibly, depending on the issue, collaborate with the employees forming also many different teams.

Figure 6.3. An alternative way to understand the clinic organization. CH = a clinic head, DM = a department manager, HP = a head physician.
One of the corner stones in the organizational design at the hospital is the autonomy of clinics. The clinics may decide for themselves what kinds of management processes are established. The line structure is required and also the clinics are encouraged to create management groups, but within this broad framework the clinics may make their own decisions. Consequently, issues such as the physicians’ role in the hierarchy, the existence and roles of clinic secretaries or substituting clinic heads and department managers, as well as the collaborative relations between the clinic head and employees look very different in different clinics. Furthermore, the clinic heads say that they do not exchange information on their respective solutions. Here lies a danger of, at worst, unequal development in different clinics and, at least, of missed opportunities to learn different ways to manage, lead, and structure a clinic. These dangers are even more tangible as also the employees and department managers describe the lack of collaboration and experience exchange between the departments and clinics. Based on the interviews, it seems that at the employee level, even departments working very close to each other are almost totally ignorant about each other’s working situations and working methods. The working conditions in each clinic are, thus, almost a question of luck; they do not depend on the hospital’s collective competencies in designing work, work organization, and management processes, but rather on whether the clinic has been lucky to receive managers who, as a group, prioritize these questions. One danger with “each department for itself” is also that the development may stop, for one reason or another, in some departments and the working conditions may end up being worse in such departments than in others. When speaking with the employees, they were able to give past examples of departments where precisely such a situation had occurred. The Archipelago meeting did open up a dialogue on respective development needs, ways to work, and also experienced successes in the managerial work. The dialogue did seem to be open and effortless; the managers listened to each other attentively and were willing to learn from other’s experiences. Thus, the possibility for inter-clinic learning is there; it only should be utilized more systematically.

The facts that the clinic heads are not used to sharing ideas on managerial, leadership, and organizational innovations and that the role of the specialist functions is still unclear may indicate that the hospital’s management group is not working as efficiently as it could. Most of the clinic heads note that somehow the plans made for the hospital’s management group have
not been carried out. Instead of working on strategic issues, the group concentrates on detail questions. It is also quite interesting that many clinic heads note that in the management group they represent a clinic that is a »strange bird« – somehow different from the others. It seems that there is a conscious or unconscious ideal of what a standard clinic should be like and in such a small, versatile hospital as Norrtälje Hospital, there are quite many who do no fit this ideal. It might be interesting to study further how such conscious or unconscious standards affect the collaboration between the clinics and the clinic heads.

6.8.3 Developing the department manager role and the management of the hospital in general

As noted above, there is a shared understanding on what the department manager role should be like and which tasks the department managers should be able to concentrate on but, nevertheless, development does not take place in that direction. Thus, the department managers witness development efforts on their work situation (such as the RIKON-study referred to above), but end up being disappointed. The processes always stop after the analysis phase; when it is time for the action - for carrying out improvements and changes - almost nothing happens. Even though the Archipelago meeting was a good meeting in itself, »nothing happens« is still a real threat for the subsequent development in the hospital; the meeting was simply a beginning!

One reason for the »nothing happens« problem may be that the culture of health care procedures spreads to the organizational and managerial procedures. As one of the clinic heads put it in the Archipelago meeting, only »experimentally proven practices« can be applied in the health care. However, aiming to implement only experimentally proven practices in questions relating to organizing, managing, and leading a hospital, a clinic, or a department may not be possible. Experimentally proven practices do not reach the whole way through in these questions; even when it comes to so-called »best practices« (i.e. organizational and leadership practices that have been verifiably used successfully in other organizations), there is always a need for local solutions and local innovations, improvisation: quite simply tinkering and kludging (Abrahamson, 2000). Thus, if the managers only look for 100 percent foolproof nothing-can-go-wrong solutions for how to organize, lead, and manage, they probably do not find them and fail thus to find a ground for the development work. Furthermore, looking crit-
ically at the change and development work within the hospital, not only experimentally proven practices have been used. For instance, the Palett-introduction and ward department reorganization were done in a way that was not experimentally proven - there does not seem to have been strong underlying principles or models for these change and development processes at all. Thus, it would be useful to really reflect on the ideals and foundations of development work in the hospital; how do we carry out change and development work? Is it all right to tinker and kludge, to try locally created innovations? Or is there an unstated requirement to do only things that others have done before? If so, what happens to development when no precedents are to be found?

Another reason for the »nothing happens« problem may be the tendency to mix up a decision or a consensus with an action (see Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). In the training sessions and consultant studies a consensus has been reached on the main problem areas in the department managers’ work. Indeed, as can be seen above, all the hierarchical levels are more than unanimous on the major problems in the department managers’ work and the direction to which it should be developed. However, somehow the step from the consensus to the actual concrete development work within the hospital and the clinics to improve the department managers’ work remains to be taken. But why is this? Maybe one of the reasons is that the clinic heads and department managers experience the need for the development in different ways. For the clinic heads, the need for change in the department managers’ work is not so acute. For them, already the consensus on problems and improvement direction is an important achievement. The actual changes can be carried out within a longer period, as time allows. For the department managers the need for the development is instead acute; they want to improve their working situation already »yesterday«. In their work, without medical tasks, the department managers may also set higher demands on the management processes and quality of organization. One can naturally ask why do not the department managers then take the active role in realizing the needed changes? One reason, at least, may be the line organizational thinking. The clinic heads do have the final authority, and if they do not clearly delegate organizational development work to the department managers, the department managers may experience, more or less, their hands to be tied.

A further problem may be the idea of »an invisible highest management« referred to already above. The managers seem to somehow wait for the
decisions and implementation plans on leadership and management improvements from the highest management. In the health care sector, strongly steered by the political decision-making and traditional hierarchy, it may be quite natural to think that someone else, an authority figure, should show the direction and determine the pace. However, when it comes to questions such as managerial and leadership roles or how managers work and collaborate, much could be decided within the hospital by the managers themselves. But «nothing happens» as the department managers often say - or maybe more correct way to put this would be: «nothing is done». This might imply also that the existing highest management as a group (i.e. the hospital’s director, the clinic heads, and others in the management group) is not providing enough leadership for the hospital. This probably is the case as the hospital’s management group readily admits that the group is not functioning as it should (see section 6.4). The strategic leadership vacuum created in this way may not be possible for the clinic heads and department managers (when functioning within their clinics) to bridge; it may be hard to take an initiative if not explicitly authorized by the hospital’s management group or director. A problematic situation ensues where the managers end up setting demands for the »highest management« that they really are a part of themselves – an invisible management group becomes formed.

Yet another problem relating to improving the department manager role seems to be that there does not exist a well-functioning approach for the overall change and development work in the hospital; very often change processes, such as the implementation of Palett-system and the reorganization of the ward departments, have created a big workload on the department managers as well as mental strain due to many conflicts and dissatisfaction emerging in the organization. Consequently, it seems that organizational changes are carried out in an un-sustainable way; human resources are consumed to make it over the change period. Indeed, the changes seem to be carried out at the expense of the department managers’ resources with an unstated expectation that change is only a short phase, after it the organization will function as it should, by taking into account working environment issues and managers’ well-being. However, changes seem to take place more or less continuously, and that is why it would be extremely important to plan changes such that they will not consume the department managers’ resources.
6.8.4 Participation and decision-making

An important problem area emerging from the project group’s work, different interview studies, and the Archipelago meeting is participation and, relating to it, sense of control. All the hierarchical levels, even the hospital’s management group, experience at times that decisions come «from above» with adaptation to the decision as the only option. The stress theories reviewed in chapter 2 indicate clearly the high stress potential of such a situation.

At the employee level, participation in organizational development and decision-making seems to be quite problematic and contradictory. In their daily work, many employees experience that their work area has been extended; they have demanding, complex tasks and they have to flexibly adapt to versatile situations that relate to the unpredictability of working with people. Some also say that it is not possible anymore to concentrate only on one’s immediate tasks, but there is a need to understand work and operations in a much broader way. Even though there are also employees who still prefer to and do concentrate purely on their own tasks, it seems that in daily work participation and activity is expected from the employees. The RIKON-study, in its turn, shows that the department managers consider the greatest challenges in their work relating to the other people in the organization and, for instance, to the employees and their goal directedness, activity, growth, and collaboration at work. Consequently, creating «employeeship» in the hospital seems to be a central question both for the employees and the department managers. The department managers experience it as a challenge; the employees – if not all, at least many of them – are opening to the new, broader way to work. The hospital in general seems to perceive employeeship as a valuable thing when it comes to daily work; the employees have been delegated a lot of responsibility and autonomy in carrying out their work. The question is, why organizational development seems to run in a different way: despite the employees rather than with them?

Also, the different hierarchical levels seem to have, at the surface, different ideas on what participation actually means, but with a closer look these different ideas do share something in common. The clinic heads say that the employees should understand that sometimes participation means simply a right to know and, more extensively, a right to contribute to the decision-making by being able to say one’s opinion. The employees instead point out that participation should help the highest management to under-
stand what the employees feel and think as well as to react to that. Consequently, there are differences in the perceptions on the extent and purpose of participation. Both sides, however, share the same fundamental idea on participation; namely, participation should be used to make »the others« to understand »how we really have it« or »how things really are«. This is not a very positive approach to participation; it does not contain the potential participation may mean for the shared adventure when seeking for the best possible way to do something.

Furthermore, participation is in the whole hospital mainly limited to inside one’s hierarchical level and department: nurses have meetings with nurses, clinic heads with other clinic heads. At best, the different groups have an opportunity to state their preferences, but they really do not have opportunities to listen to others who may have different ideas and preferences. In a meeting between the SALUT-project group and employees who participated in a hospital workshop in Nottingham (see Appendix 2), this aspect became widely discussed. All those present, representing all the different hierarchical levels of the hospital, ended up agreeing that the line organization does limit mutual learning and idea exchange. Regardless of the issue, meetings are always arranged based on the groupings within the line organization. Only those who almost certainly share the same perspective have an opportunity to meet; meetings in which different perspectives would be presented and discussed are not intentionally arranged. The idea of arranging »mixed groups« with those employees and managers representing different perspectives on some important issue raised a lot of hopes; this really would extend learning as well as mutual understanding within the hospital! As noted in section 6.5, this kind of a group was eventually formed to deal with certain problems relating to the ward department reorganization and, indeed, the group was experienced to function well.

Another problem relating to decision-making and reported by different hierarchical levels is that decision-making takes a lot of time and sometimes, no decision is made at all. The employees and department managers seem to describe a big black hole in the organization’s highest levels to which many decision-making issues simply vanish. The hospital’s director has the eventual decision-making authority with the hospital’s management group as his advisory group and it seems that many decision-making issues reach the management group level, and after that the department managers and employees lose track on what happens to the issues to be de-
cided. Many of the clinic heads also note that too many detail issues are de-
cided in the hospital’s management group; maybe the hospital’s organiza-
tion suffers from one of the symptoms of deteriorating bureaucracy as described by Heckscher (1994; see chapter 3). Too many detail questions have over time migrated to the highest levels of the hierarchy even though they might be more efficiently dealt with at the lower levels. It might be worth considering why the hospital is suffering from deteriorating bureaucracy. Why is the hospital’s management group dealing with detail ques-
tions? Is it because the group is not secure in itself and avoids both dialogue and conflicts by concentrating on minor issues instead of debating strategic issues? Or is it because the group does not consciously or unconsciously be-
lieve that the »lower« levels of the hierarchy could make decisions relating to smaller detail questions?

Maybe the feeling of a big black hole is also connected to the manage-
ment group’s lacking concentration on strategic issues. There is no clear strategic direction, but instead many separate decision-making issues – each of which has to be considered separately and each time a new consen-
sus is sought within the advisory group. In the Archipelago meeting, the group working on decision-making actually pointed out this as a problem in all decision-making; that there is too much participation in decision-
making at the highest hierarchical levels, that in a decision-making situa-
tion each and everyone has to have his or her say. The group pointed out that the existence of strategic underlying decisions as well as trust towards others would enable more efficient local decision-making.

Finally, at all levels, there is also a feeling that decisions made are not followed up. This comes through equally in the employee interviews (the employees say that as the department manager does not have time to be present at the department, she does not have time to see to that decisions made in the department are kept) and the hospital’s management group interviews (the members say that decisions are made to be implemented in the »line«, but no follow-up is carried out). As noted already above, Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) state that one reason why companies find it so difficult to turn their knowledge on how things should be into action is that deci-
sion-making substitutes action. It may be that Norrtälje Hospital has fallen to this trap at least to some degree. The decisions made are not sustained and, consequently, organizational development becomes unsustainable – change and development do not take place as they should and, as noted
above, where change takes place it takes place at the expense of human resources trusting that the employees and their managers absorb the change pains while they last.

6.8.5 The difficulty of being a hospital –

The consequences of the institutional setting

The problems that Norrtälje Hospital is facing are not unique, but in fact shared by other hospitals in Sweden and also in other countries. For instance, Borum (1997) when writing about the Danish hospitals states that there are severe intertwined problems when it comes to management and organizational innovations in the health care sector. In this section, certain aspects of hospitals’ institutional setting are discussed and their consequences on organizational innovations and collaboration in the health care sector, and at Norrtälje Hospital in particular, are characterized. The aim here is to be realistic about the branch related problems Norrtälje Hospital has faced and will face in its way to regenerative work. Hopefully this discussion also makes the institutional hinders visible and, therefore, easier to overcome.

First of all, the hospital’s institutional setting probably influences its culture. Work at all levels of the hospital is affected by decisions made by the County Council. Many times, the Council’s decisions have caused negative operational and organizational changes in the hospital (e.g. some part of operations or some care form has been removed from the hospital) and created many conflicts and frustrations in the clinics. It is interesting to think, how such a situation may influence the hospital’s organizational culture. In private companies, nowadays, the major environmental constraints are posed by markets (product, labor, capital, etc.) rather than clearly identifiable individuals or organizations. Thus, the constraints do not have »a face« or identity. In Norrtälje Hospital, problems often have a face - the current political model for decision-making in the health care sector. Thus, it is easy to find someone to blame when problems emerge. For a private company such scapegoats do not exist. If a business has hard times, there probably is no one person to point a finger at. How does then having an identifiable adversary affect an organization’s culture? It may be that when in bigger things it is easy to point out the scapegoat whose fault the problems are, one also ends up in smaller things, maybe even in the hospital’s internal things, looking for a scapegoat. Some clinic heads, employees, and department managers note that Norrtälje Hospital has a
culture of a small town: of gossiping, rather than speaking frankly, and of
taking sides. Maybe this culture is not only due to the fact that the hospital
is small, but also because its employees are used to thinking that, for any
problem, there is always someone to blame rather than thinking that there
is a complex, difficult situation in which different people have legitimately
different preferences. A few clinic heads do actually note that the employ-
ees do not see the »big picture« of issues, but only look at things from the
perspective of their own preferences and needs. Consequently, one possi-
ble consequence of the hospital’s institutional setting can be a tendency to
experience »the others« to be »bad« rather than understanding the different
legitimate priorities in a complex system (see e.g. Hirschhorn (1988) on
such organizational defenses).

A hospital’s position in the complex institutional setting, in the health
care sector, also effectively limits organizational innovations, i.e. new ways
to organize and manage a hospital. Borum (1997) suggests that the institu-
tional setting is very conservative due to, for instance, the widespread
general interest in life-and-death questions and consequent efforts to
standardize the health care processes to ensure their controllability and
quality. Earlier, I tentatively suggested that this may lead to the standard-
ization of also managerial and organizational solutions (i.e. only »experi-
mentally proven methods« are applied) and Borum (ibid.) backs this up by
noting that in the health care sector similar structures are implemented
even in very different types of workplaces with different local conditions.
Also the educational system aimed at creating high-level professionals
increases the trend towards standardization within the health care sector.
The educational system aims to train homogeneous professionals to
provide high-quality treatment in all the hospitals and health care centers
and, thus, versatility and personal solutions are not high on the agenda.

At Norrtälje Hospital an important development step seems to have
been taken in this respect; the autonomy of the clinics when designing their
own organizational solutions and leadership questions is emphasized.
Some clinics seem to have advanced far in creating flexible management
practices suitable just for the clinic in question. However, the standard
structure of a clinic head, head physician, and a department manager is at
some other clinics obviously treated as a problem solved; once the struc-
ture has been established, little work has been done to really bring this
structure into life, to create content in the management and leadership
processes. Also Borum (ibid., p. 11) states on the standard »troika«-man-
agement model (i.e. model consisting of an administrator (a clinic head), a head doctor, and a head nurse) that:

…this managerial model has helped to create the illusion of hospitals having a management, rather than furnishing them with a functioning management system.

Another reason for the problems in organizational innovations is according to Borum (ibid.) the education system. The different actors in the health care sector go through very different types of training and, consequently, their perspectives on the »rights-and-wrongs« in their organizations are colored by their background and socialization gained through professional training. Also subsequent learning at work is »path dependent«, dependent on the earlier learning and consequent value base. Finding each other and common points of departure in organizational changes is in this situation very difficult. Furthermore, a hospital is a very complex system (with various care forms provided, with many different professions represented, etc.) and the way to understand this complexity depends on one’s educational and professional background. Thus, people within a hospital end up having very different needs, priorities, and understandings on what is the best way to improve the organization. In such a situation, people seem to find it hard to accept each other’s ideas and suggestions - each suggestion can justifiably be accused of being one-sided or not taking into account the different needs and priorities existing in the complex system. Thus, new ideas are very seldom accepted in a hospital.

The complexity of employees’ backgrounds certainly applies at Norrtälje Hospital. Most of the clinic heads are physicians, most department managers nurses, and their ideas on organizational development do differ in certain ways from each others. The actual goal of creating a well-functioning management structure to the clinics is shared, but there are profound differences in perceptions on how to get there. The clinic heads, for instance, are more result-oriented and focus on creating the structures, while the department managers seem to emphasize the need for continuous dialogue in creating respective management roles. Also, when the department managers and the clinic heads speak about expectations to the other party, they seem to speak different languages. The clinic heads say that a department manager should actively try and solve problems that emerge in their work and department, communicate actively, and be loyal
to the highest management. The department managers in their turn hope that the clinic heads are available, clear, and have time for all the different tasks in the clinic’s management. These expressed wishes are not contradictory in any sense, but somehow they exist at different levels. The clinic heads speak mainly about what the department managers should concretely *do*, while the department managers emphasize they way a clinic head should *be*. Furthermore, at Norrtälje Hospital the differences between the clinic heads and department managers affecting socialization are more versatile than just the professional education (see table below). The focal questions are, thus, how to turn these differences into benefits and how to find the common ground for learning and development at individual and organizational levels. This case study points out that at least the first step in creating the common ground is simply that the department managers and clinic heads talk with and listen to each other. Only by truly working together, may they learn to know each other and also themselves in relation to the other; only by leading and managing together, are they able to create their respective and unique roles in the clinic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The clinic heads</th>
<th>The department managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Usually male</td>
<td>Usually female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional training</td>
<td>Natural sciences</td>
<td>“Humanities”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Usually medical doctors</td>
<td>Usually nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility area</td>
<td>Medical and operations management</td>
<td>Operations management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical level</td>
<td>Highest management</td>
<td>First-line managers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6.8.6 In the end**

The problems Norrtälje Hospital is facing are not thus unique but shared by other organizations in the health care sector. Based on this case study, however, I would say that the resources and potential the hospital has are unique; the hospital has a skillful and motivated managerial staff as well as employees with insights. Hopefully, the SALUT-project may act as one step towards the better utilization of all this potential.

Nevertheless, real organizational improvement is not easy in the health care sector loaded with traditions and structures that pull people apart.
rather than bring them closer together and enable the realization of individual and collective potential. The bureaucratic impersonality (see chapter 3) is the traditional way of thinking in the health care sector and, based on this case study, it seems to still prevent people from doing what they feel is right and necessary. A greater shared and individual sense of active responsibility for the organizational development is therefore an important corner stone for the future development in the hospital. The »invisible« highest management should be replaced by the real and existing management; those people I saw in the Archipelago meeting wanting to really change their working place and create more regenerative work for themselves and their employees. And even if »gut feelings« are not accepted as reliable guide-lines for medical work, they might be beneficially used in management and leadership tasks. When the »nothing happens«-feeling emerges, the managers should do something – do what they think should be done!

Consequently, in this case study, it is possible to see how quite a traditional organization - a hospital - is struggling with new demands. Problems emerge as the traditional way to manage and steer a hospital is not enough anymore; when things cannot be predefined and pre-planned, steered from above. Maybe the most important conclusion both from the research point of view and also from the point of view of the hospital’s managers is that in such a situation new ways to manage and steer operations have to be found. As things cannot be planned beforehand by »authorities«, they have to be planned on the way by those affected. One could say that already earlier it was understood in the hospital that people have to be informed and, consequently, meetings and minutes were devised. Now, being informed is not enough, the people involved have to also communicate and process the information together in order to be able to work in a complex environment and create their respective work roles together. In the Archipelago meeting plans to this direction were made by the hospital’s managers. When it comes to conceptualizing these observations and ideas further, that shall be done in chapter 8, where the whole thesis work is discussed and conclusions on it are drawn.
Hyresgästföreningen i Stor-Stockholm (the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region) is a tenants’ union and its main task is to negotiate rent levels and other questions relating to rental apartments with both municipal and private landlords in the Greater-Stockholm region. The Union also promotes the quality of apartment houses in the interest of its members as well as offers bargaining and legal help to its members having conflicts with their landlords. Promoting tenants’ influence in housing questions is one of the main goals of the union. Tenants’ Union also aims to be an active and visible actor in the social and political dialogue when it comes to housing questions. Housing in the Greater-Stockholm region is a problematic issue; there is a constant lack of affordable homes in the capital city area, where about 20 percent of Sweden’s inhabitants live. The main reason for the lack of apartments is that too few new apartments are built each year in the region. As a regional union, the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region is a part of the nationwide tenants’ union organization (The Swedish Union of Tenants).

Both private and municipal landlords own apartment houses in Sweden. The municipal apartment houses offer an important housing form; towns build and manage apartment houses in order to be able to offer affordable,

---

1 Information on the Stockholm housing situation can be found for instance in the web-pages of City of Stockholm, (http://www2.stockholm.se/english/); County Administrative Board of Stockholm (http://www.ab.lst.se/lansfakta/fakta.htm), or the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region (http://www.hyresgastforeningen.se).
secure, and high quality housing for their inhabitants. For instance in Stockholm City, one fourth of its about 400 000 apartments are owned by municipal housing companies. In recent years, however, many municipally owned apartment houses have been privatized and it seems that the traditional Swedish housing politics is transforming. This is a major challenge for Tenants’ Union as it tries to represent its members in a more and more market oriented environment.

The negotiations between Tenants’ Union as well as municipal and private landlords are regulated by law with an aim, for instance, to prevent rent levels from rising too high in such regions as Stockholm where there is a lack of apartments. Consequently, one of the main aims of the tenants’ union movement is to prevent market rents, i.e. unregulated rents determined based on the market situation. In the rent level negotiations, Tenants’ Union represents all those tenants whose tenancy agreement contains a clause authorizing the Union negotiations. Consequently, the Union negotiates the rent levels also for those not members in the Union. Tenants may also choose to carry out the negotiations on their own; however, almost all with the necessary clause in the tenancy agreement leave the negotiations to the Union. The aim of the rent level negotiations with the municipal landlords is to guarantee rent levels that correspond to the costs of the municipal companies and with the private landlords to guarantee rent levels corresponding to the utility value of the apartments. The yearly negotiation round is begun by the rent level negotiations with the municipal landlords, and the results from these negotiations drive also the subsequent rent level negotiations with the private landlords. Even though the rent levels are thus regulated through these negotiations, the lack of apartments in Stockholm has still many harmful consequences. For instance, »black-market« renting does occur and sometimes tenants pay a landlord to win a competition for a rental agreement. Besides of the rent level negotiations, Tenants’ Union also negotiates agreements relating to, for instance, maintenance and repairs in the apartments and houses. In these negotiations the Union represents only its members.

In addition to single members, important collaborators for the Union are its local actors such as local tenants’ unions, the representatives for tenants in a certain geographical area, delegations representing the tenants of a certain area, and house representatives – tenants representing the other tenants in their apartment houses. These local actors collaborate with their landlords and regional unions on all the local questions relating to apart-
ments and rent negotiations. For negotiations with larger private apartment owners and municipal apartment owner companies, delegations representing the local tenants are formed; there usually are large delegations with the highest authority and operative small delegations working for the large delegations. The ombudsmen from the regional Tenants’ Union collaborate with and lead these delegations to carry out the negotiations with the counter part, the owner.

Figure 7.1 presents the overall organization of the tenants’ union movement. As can be seen in the figure, the movement consists of two parts. First, there is the representation of tenants (the right hand side of the figure) and, second, there is the organizational line for people working for the movement (the left hand side of the figure). The arrows in the figure depict active collaboration relations. For instance, the employees at the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region collaborate with the delegations and house representatives as well as the Board of the Union. The CEO of the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region has in her turn a close contact to the Regional Board. The Union Office works with issues concerning whole Sweden.
People working for the movement are organized into ten regional tenants’ unions; in this thesis the focus is on the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region and especially on its negotiations operations in which the negotiating ombudsmen, negotiations assistants, and the managers of these employee groups work. The overall member representation organization (the right hand side of the figure) is quite complex. There are several boards at different levels as well as regional and national annual meetings in which decisions influencing the movement and the regional tenants’ unions are made. Consequently, the organizational environment of the ombudsmen, negotiations assistants, and their managers is varied and wide; their work is affected not only by decisions made in the »home organization« (i.e. the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region) but by decisions made and actions taken in the different parts of the movement.

7.1 The Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region

There are about 130 employees at the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region (Tenants’ Union for short from here on). Many employees have worked for a long time in the Union, some more than 25 years. The average age of the employees is thus quite high, around 50 years. Many employees have initially joined the Union due to their interest in improving tenants’ situation in Stockholm (or in Sweden in general) and to work in a people’s movement. Consequently, many employees do not have any professional education or have education in some totally unrelated field. The organizational chart of Tenants’ Union in the beginning of 2001 is presented in figure 7.2.

![Organizational chart](image-url)

*Figure 7.2. The organization at Tenants' Union in the beginning of 2001.*
The negotiations and support for the local actors are located in the Regional operations unit. The Member service unit offers guidance and advice to the union’s members on any legal or practical questions relating to apartments, rent contracts, etc. The Marketing unit is responsible for creating the marketing image of the union as well as increasing the Union’s visibility in the society. Marketing efforts are important both for keeping the old members and attracting new ones. The Operations support unit offers, for instance, ICT-support for the other units. The organizational structure depicted in figure 7.2 was removed in May 2001 due to its inherent problems (see below) and the Regional operations unit was reorganized into two new units, the Negotiations unit (responsible for the rent level and housing condition negotiations) and the Local Support unit (responsible for supporting the local tenants’ unions and the local tenants’ representatives). The employees, i.e. so-called ombudsmen, from the Private team carrying out the negotiations with the private landlords moved to the Negotiations unit, as did some of the ombudsmen from the Public team (which used to carry out negotiations with the municipal, »public« landlords). Other ombudsmen from the Public team moved to a new Local Support unit, which would continue to focus on supporting the local tenants’ unions and house representatives on specific housing questions. Also the employees from the earlier Local Support team moved to this new Local Support unit. The Administrative Support team was divided in two; some negotiations assistants from the team started to work in the Negotiations unit and others in the Local Support unit.

Initially, this case study concentrated on the Public, Private, and Administrative Support teams (with about 50 employees) and, after the reorganization, on the Negotiations unit. The ombudsmen, negotiations assistants, and their managers are followed through the organizational changes and development efforts aiming to create more regenerative work.

7.2 The SALUT-project at Tenants’ Union

The SALUT-project at Tenants' Union aimed to map and understand the reasons why the organization’s employees experience a loss of their resources at work, why - while working - the employees lose their energy and strength. Furthermore, the project aimed to distinguish both organizational and individual ways to improve the situation and create work experiences that enable the employees’ growth and well-being rather than stress and exhaustion.
In advance to the SALUT-project, some ombudsmen and managers from the Regional operations unit distinguished several reasons leading to human resources consumption. For instance:

- Lacking competencies are a problem. Many things are changing within and outside the Union and this creates demands for rapid competence updates.
- The performance norms are experienced to be unclear; it is difficult to prioritize tasks. The employees worry whether they are doing the right things.
- The employees are working quite alone and experience that the managers cannot support them. Also, the employees experience that they do not receive support from each other.
- The employees experience that they cannot influence many factors external to the organization that still directly influence their work. Sometimes, the employees also experience lack of information on what is going on in the tenants’ union movement and its environment.
- There are no back-up employees. If someone becomes sick, her tasks are difficult to re-allocate. This is due to high workload; each employee has much to do in her own tasks and cannot take on additional tasks. Sick-leaves are, thus, quite problematic.
- Many employees are in the »crisis age«; they are getting older. They work too much and do not have time for their private life. Many are not physically in good shape.

Another starting point for the SALUT-project was a study made by the Swedish working environment inspectors on the working conditions in the Regional operations unit in the early 2001. Such studies are made based on anonymous complaints on working conditions in an organization. The study resulted in several demands on working environmental improvements. The inspectors noted in their report that task priorities should be clarified, guidelines should be created for how different tasks should be carried out, competence to deal with work’s psychosocial demands should be increased, social support should be ensured at work, and the employees should be able to participate in improving their working environment. The participation in the working environment improvements should be built on the employees’ own work experiences and on spontaneous, natural exchange of these experiences, the report noted. The discussion on the unit’s
SALUT-project (see section 7.9) provides some insights on whether these improvements were eventually achieved or not.

The project organization of the SALUT-project was very flexible in the sense that certain key persons carried the responsibility for SALUT, but other persons were engaged in the project as needed. The main contacts for the two SALUT-researchers (see chapter 1) ended up to be two project leaders – an ombudsman negotiating with the municipal landlords and an ombudsman with the responsibility for internal development – as well as the two managers of the Negotiations unit. The vision owner of the project was the CEO of the Union.

One underlying idea of the SALUT-project was not to organize and understand it only as a project, but as something more profound. As one of the Negotiations unit managers put it, SALUT should be »an eye to look over all the development activities in the unit«. In other words, the SALUT-ideas on regenerative work should form a foundation for the unit’s overall development and the SALUT-researchers would follow the development of the unit. Furthermore, as there always are many external factors and sudden changes affecting work in the Negotiations unit, the unit and its employees should gain the ability to handle the unforeseen things in a sustainable way – this was one desired outcome from SALUT. Consequently, it was agreed that SALUT proceeds in the unit with its informal project organization and with its aim to underlie all the different development efforts in the unit. The development that took place in the Negotiations unit (2001 and 2002) is described in this case study. Figure 7.3 summarizes the major activities in the study, and more detailed description on the project events is presented in Appendix 3.

---

**Figure 7.3. The SALUT-activities at Tenants’ Union, 2001 and 2002.**

---

**February - March 2001**
- The first interview study (N = 9)

**March 2001**
- The feedback session

---

**Autumn 2001 - Spring 2002**
- Observations (N = 8)

**May 2002**
- The second interview study
Also the structure of this case study follows figure 7.3. Section 7.3 contains the vertical analysis of the first interview study and some overarching issues emerging in the study (i.e. the horizontal analysis) are discussed in section 7.4. The main issues discussed in the feedback session on the first interview study are reviewed in section 7.5. Sections 7.6 and 7.7 explain the developments taking place in the SALUT-project as well as in the negotiations operations in general. Eventually, the vertical analysis of the second interview study and observations is presented in section 7.8 and, finally, the whole case study is discussed in section 7.9.

7.3 The initial organization at Tenants’ Union and work in it

The first interview study of the Union’s SALUT-project was carried out in February–March 2001 with three Private team ombudsmen, three Public team ombudsmen, and three negotiations assistants working in the Administrative Support team. The interview study took place before the reorganization; the Regional operations unit was turned into the Negotiations unit and Local Support unit in May 2001. The aim of the interview study was to go deeper into the existing problems at work and work organization leading to the human resources consumption. At that time, many employees in the Regional operations unit experienced their work as consuming; five employees had ended up on stress related long-term sick-leaves. This section presents the outcomes of the interview study. Discussions with the managers have also been benefited from when it comes to describing the details of the negotiations processes (section 7.3.2).

7.3.1 The initial organizational structure

Tenants’ Union has traditionally been organized into local offices in which both municipal and private negotiations were carried out. The offices were located into their geographical negotiations areas. There were both ombudsmen and negotiations assistants working in these local offices. However, in the late 1990s in order to increase the efficiency of the negotiations and also to cut costs, most of the local offices of the Greater-Stockholm region were terminated, and the ombudsmen and negotiations assistants were gathered to the same, centralized office located in Stockholm City. An organizational structure depicted in figure 7.2 was established. The private and municipal ombudsmen formed in this structure two separate groups and the negotiations assistants formed their own group. There were no formal meetings between the groups.
When comparing this organizational structure to the traditional way to organize the Union, the ombudsmen interviewed in February/March 2001 say that it is in this structure much more difficult to utilize the help of the negotiations assistants. Many ombudsmen say that it was good to have the assistants working close by, as a part of the same group. In that situation, the negotiations assistants had better opportunities to support the ombudsmen - they were all the time aware of the specific negotiation processes and also were familiar with the geographical negotiation area. Many ombudsmen say that in the small local offices the employees supported each other and everybody worked as one team. This form of organization is still for many ombudsmen the ideal, the best possible way to organize the negotiations operation and the tenants’ movement. However, the negotiations assistants consider it a great benefit to be able to work as an assistant group in the current organization. In their own group, the negotiations assistants are able to function collectively in relation to the ombudsmen and, furthermore, develop administrative routines. They experience that they have gained their own identity as a group.

Many employees (both the ombudsmen and assistants) also say that the management structure is quite complex in the organizational structure of figure 7.2. For instance, the responsibilities on personnel and negotiations management are separated from each other in the Regional operations; there is a manager with personnel responsibility and another with the responsibility for negotiations. This can be sometimes quite confusing.

7.3.2 The municipal and private negotiation processes
Both municipal and private negotiations can be seen as a three phase work process; there are preparatory tasks to be carried out before the negotiations, the actual negotiations tasks, and eventually tasks to be carried out as the negotiations have been successfully completed. Before the negotiations, the Union receives proposals from the apartment owners on the rent adjustments and other issues to be negotiated. The proposals are administratively registered and the ombudsmen consider their content. The local actors and members are informed on the negotiations prospects and, furthermore, the negotiations are planned together with the delegation members and house representatives. For this end, meetings are arranged. Both the ombudsmen and assistants work on the meeting arrangements and invitations. Since there are about 1200 house representatives and all together 50 large delegations, this means that many meetings have to be
arranged and attended. Eventually, the actual negotiations are carried out. The municipal negotiations are usually longer processes where many issues besides the rent levels are discussed, while the private negotiations (when running smoothly) are more rapid: concluded in one meeting. In addition to the negotiating ombudsmen and the landlord (or his/her representatives), the house representatives and delegations participate in the negotiations. The ombudsmen and negotiations assistants have the responsibility for calling the negotiations parties together. Consequently, also the negotiations mean many meetings to be arranged. After the negotiations, the contracts are registered and all the relevant actors, especially the members, are informed on the outcomes. An unsuccessful negotiation may be taken into a special court called the Regional rent tribunal.

The aim is to finalize the annual municipal negotiations during the autumn, since the outcomes of these negotiations also drive the private negotiations; the rent levels in the private apartments follow closely the municipal rent levels. The private negotiations should be finalized such that the annual rent increases could become effective on the first day of the year. In practice, the work pressure is too high for the ombudsmen and the negotiations cannot be carried out in this time frame. This means retrospective rent increases for the tenants.

All in all, the Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region negotiates with 25 municipal apartment companies and the municipal negotiations cover about 60,000 union members. The ombudsmen working with the municipal negotiations usually negotiate with a certain municipal company or several companies operating in a certain area. The ombudsmen collaborate intensively throughout the year with the relevant delegations as well as local tenants and their representatives. Since the rent level negotiations take place annually, there is a continuous work going on for evaluating the past negotiation outcomes, discussing the rent level developments in the area as well as discussing questions relating to renovations, the condition of buildings, and infrastructure in the area. There often exist also certain area specific questions that the ombudsmen and the local actors are working on (e.g. recreation opportunities of the tenants, the Internet and cable-TV connections). The ombudsmen have also the responsibility for arranging training for the tenants’ representatives and keeping them informed on any relevant developments. To do all this, the ombudsmen have to follow closely the relevant legislation, municipal decision-making, and tenants’ union strategies. The ombudsmen have to know the houses and
the areas they negotiate on well. Consequently, there is a need to visit the apartment houses and residential areas.

Tenants’ Union is also responsible for over 6000 private negotiations annually. Some private landlords are represented by the central association for the real estate owners (i.e. Swedish Property Federation), but many also negotiate on their own or through some other representation; therefore, the number of opponents in these negotiations is much larger than in the municipal negotiations. There are local delegations for certain private negotiations and also about 900 house representatives representing a certain private apartment house or certain houses. The private negotiations cover about 80,000 members.

The private ombudsmen usually negotiate rent level contracts with all the private apartment owners operating in a certain area or areas. While each municipal ombudsman is working on the same negotiations process with the same apartment owner company all through the year (meeting with the delegations, collecting background information for the negotiations, etc.), the private ombudsmen have a certain time of the year (i.e. autumn) when they should complete all the negotiations. The other parts of the year they carry out, for instance, house inspections, have meetings with members, and concentrate on problematic cases that have not been solved during the usual negotiations period. Even though this all means a lot of work all through the year, the negotiations period is still the busiest working period. The following tasks are carried out relating to each private negotiation:

- The negotiation proposal coming from the apartment owner is studied and registered.
- The house representatives and possible delegations are called in for preparatory meetings (here the ombudsmen collaborate with the assistants).
- The negotiations are arranged. All the relevant parties are invited.
- The negotiations are carried out.
- The contract is registered (here the ombudsmen collaborate with the assistants).
- The members are informed on the negotiation outcome (again the ombudsmen collaborate with the assistants).

Even though the negotiations and tasks relating to them are the main job of all the ombudsmen, they do have also other responsibilities. They have to
be accessible for the members and their representatives by telephone, mail, and email. There are house inspections to be carried out as the apartment houses grow older or are renovated. Furthermore, there is a lot of internal development work going on in the unit and the whole Union to which the ombudsmen should also participate in.

The interviewees say that the municipal and private negotiations are very different from each other. The municipal negotiations are more extensive and formalized in their character. Many issues besides of the rent levels are important in the negotiations; for instance, tenants’ leisure activities as well as tenants’ influence opportunities are discussed. The private negotiations have instead a faster tempo, and each negotiation is more or less a question of buying and selling. The ombudsmen say that one becomes a chameleon in the private negotiations – to make a good deal, one has to adjust one’s behavior according to the opponent. When compared to the municipal negotiations, single private negotiations are smaller deals. However, the amount of the private negotiations is much larger.

The ombudsmen also perceive a status difference between the ombudsmen working with the municipal and private negotiations. The private negotiators are a »special group«, a little higher in their status. Negotiating in the private sector is somehow more fashionable, more »macho«. Some interviewees say that this status difference has diminished, but others experience that it still strongly exists. Currently many of the municipally owned real estates are privatized and this creates additional tension between the two types of negotiations. As will be discussed below, the private ombudsmen experience higher workload than the ombudsmen negotiating municipally. The privatization of municipal apartment houses increases the imbalance in workload between the two groups even more.

Both the private and municipal ombudsmen say that knowledge on the local conditions, on certain delimited geographical area, is a valuable asset at work. When one learns to know a certain area and its actors well, one is able to negotiate better. Also, the awareness of local conditions increases the experienced meaningfulness of work. Work becomes more meaningful, when houses and people become familiar, when one knows what the area and houses look like, who the local actors are.
7.3.3 Administration supporting the negotiations

The main administrative tasks relate to:

- registering the negotiation proposals and results.
- inviting different actors to meetings and negotiations.
- informing the members on negotiation processes and results.

In practice this means that the assistants feed data into databases, print out invitations and information letters and mail them. The letters are usually formulated by the ombudsmen or the unit managers. The aim is to send out only well-formulated letters; unclear letters cause a lot of extra work as members contact the Union to get the information a letter has failed to give them. When it comes to formulating the letters and mailing them, situations where slightly different information is sent to different receivers at the same time are especially difficult. Many different letters have to be formulated separately and the mailing process has to be organized such that every member gets the information that was meant to be sent to him or her.

The administrative tasks are organized into their own Administrative Support team with negotiations assistants working in it (see figure 7.2 above). The number of negotiations assistants used to be higher, but due to economic reasons fewer assistants are working in the unit now. As noted above, in the traditional local offices, the assistants were working close to the ombudsmen. When the number of assistants was reduced and a separate Administrative Support group was established, certain administrative tasks were handed over to the ombudsmen, who had to learn to take care of administration and use computers in their work. Now the ombudsmen, for instance, write letters to members and work with databases containing information on the houses and apartments. Especially in the Private team, the ombudsmen feel that they have too many administrative tasks that eat time from the most important tasks, i.e. from the negotiations.

There is no direct contact between the Support team and the other teams; the ombudsmen leave their paperwork in a basket, from which the negotiations assistants take the papers and process them. The Support team tries to empty the baskets every day but, since there is so much to be done, they sometimes have to prioritize certain tasks. The supervisor of the Support team is responsible for deciding such priorities. There are differences in the way the ombudsmen seek help from the Support team. Some ombudsmen say that they prefer to do at least the most urgent administrative tasks on their own, since they do not have a personal contact to the
Support team and cannot be sure how rapidly their tasks would be processed there. Some ombudsmen also experience that, since the negotiations assistants are not aware of the details of different cases, it is better that they do their paperwork themselves so that everything gets properly done.

The Support team employees say that, as they have had an opportunity to work together as a team, they have been able to improve many administrative routines and rationalize their work. There used to be »territory boundaries« between the negotiations assistants, but now they are all working as one team. The assistants interviewed evaluate that much remains to be still done, but the team has already developed a lot. However, the assistants say that it is difficult to agree on new routines with the ombudsmen, who do not follow the suggestions from the Support team. Furthermore, when the Support team employees do not have a direct contact to the ombudsmen, they sometimes have difficulties in understanding what the tasks left in the baskets really are all about and what is expected from the Support team.

Technology is an important part of administration. There are several different databases (e.g. an apartment register) that the employees appraise to be, as such, good databases but not working well together. All in all, different technical issues, relating to for instance databases and information letters sent to thousands of members at the same time, raise a lot of problems for both the ombudsmen and assistants. The administrative routines are not clear and mistakes happen. For instance, when it comes to mailing information to the members, sometimes only a part of an intended letter has been sent out or letters have ended up to wrong addresses; the members living in the southern parts of the Greater-Stockholm region have received information on the rent level negotiations in the northern part or vice versa.

7.3.4 Quantitative and qualitative workload –

The employees’ many demanding tasks
Especially in the Private team and in the Support team, the workload fluctuates during the year. The busiest time of the year is from October to April/May, when the actual negotiations are going on. Other times of the year with member communication and preparation for the negotiations are quieter. In the Public team workload does not fluctuate as much.

The Private team ombudsmen estimate their workload to be higher than in the Public team. The ombudsmen in the Private team say that they have
to work much overtime and still they do not have time to do everything. They also report that, when compared to the earlier years, many new responsibilities have been vested on them. The privatization of the municipal apartment houses increases their workload. Furthermore, the Private team experiences the administrative burden heavier than the Public team. However, also the ombudsmen in the Public team say that they have many meetings in the evenings and this makes working days very long. The workload in the Support team is also quite high; there are only ten permanent employees when there should be 13. Additional employees have been "rented" from a staffing company to ease the work pressure.

The interviewees say that the high workload has negative consequences both at individual and collective levels; the employees feel tired and there are many persons who have to take a sick-leave due to stress related health problems. Also the collaboration relations within the organization and between the employees and external parties are suffering. For instance, the employees have so much to do, that they do not have time to collaborate with each other. Consequently, within the organization, a negative climate is growing. People seem to keep an eye on each other and if someone is doing something besides the very basic tasks, there are comments: "how do you have time for that?". The collaboration problems extend also outside the organization. Some of the interviewees feel that they lose touch with "the field" (i.e. the local tenants' unions and representatives) when they are so busy. Furthermore, some say that the local tenants' representatives start to treat the ombudsmen as "they" – the local tenants' representatives may say, for instance, "you have raised the rent" even though the ombudsman has worked to prevent the increase. One of the interviewees says that she experienced it very negatively when a counterpart said to her: "Let's make the easiest possible deal, since I know you do not need any extra work". The ombudsmen feel that the workload is compromising their role in the negotiation process.

Tenants' Union is a people’s movement organization and that is why it has strong connections to the changes in the society. The recent societal changes are to some degree negative for Tenants’ Union and affect the qualitative work pressure. People do not anymore participate so actively in people’s movements and associations; the current values in society emphasize individualism rather than collectivism. The ombudsmen, who have worked several decades at Tenants’ Union, say that people have changed; especially many of the most fortunate ones have become very demanding,
almost spoiled. The ombudsmen experience that it is hard to represent such persons. The interviewees describe the contemporary society as divided, besides of those doing well, there are many very poor people who suffer from the current developments in the housing – the privatization of formally municipally owned tenant houses, the high rent levels, etc. For an ombudsman it is very demanding to see the hopeless situations of many tenants.

An important societal question influencing Tenants’ Union is the privatization of the municipal apartment houses mentioned briefly above. The municipal housing companies are increasingly selling their houses to private owners. Often the new private landlords have very different ideas on tenants’ rights and needs from what the municipal owners have. For instance, the private owners are not in generally as interested in promoting tenants’ influence and leisure activities as the municipal owners are; the municipal owners have traditionally provided funds for such activities. This change endangers the ombudsmen’s relations to the local tenants’ representatives. For the local tenants’ representatives, influence and leisure activities are both intrinsically meaningful and also extrinsically rewarding; some of the local representatives get paid for organizing the local meetings and leisure activities. The local tenants’ representatives get angry with the ombudsmen, if opportunities and support for such activities are reduced. Consequently, the ombudsmen also have to re-educate the local tenants’ representatives to the new situation. One of the ombudsmen says that earlier there was only one opponent, but in the current situation it is almost as if one had two opponents: both the apartment owner as well as the local tenants’ representatives.

7.3.5 Negotiations competencies – Professional and personal

The ombudsmen describe their work demanding two types of professional skills: administrative skills and negotiations skills. The administrative skills mean knowledge on computers and databases, as well as an ability to write letters and take care of all kind of paperwork. The negotiations skills are a broad category of skills; the negotiations are not only a question of communicating and arguing - a good negotiator has also the right facts and can found her arguments on correct information. Especially in the municipal side, a good negotiator also engages others, the local tenants and their representatives, in the negotiations.

Many ombudsman interviewees say that being a good negotiator relates
to one’s personality; either one is a good negotiator or not. It cannot be learned or taught. A good example of such a negotiations skill is being a good actor. Especially in the private negotiations, in which the negotiations are characterized by fast tempo buying and selling, it is important that the ombudsman is able to adjust her behavior to correspond to the behavior of the opponent. In the municipal negotiations, it is important instead to make a good impression – it is a bit like visiting one’s future family-in-law for the first time, one interviewee says.

Coping with work also necessitates certain personal characteristics. For instance, one interviewee says that as an ombudsman one meets sad stories, people who have to give up their longtime apartments – their homes – because of the rising rent levels or other changes in the housing conditions. One has to be quite cold-headed to be able to deal with these sad stories and not to be emotionally drained by them. Also other interviewees bring forth the need to be a strong person. Furthermore, experience in negotiations work is a valuable asset. When the ombudsman, her collaborators and opponents are aware of all the rules and regulations in the negotiations, things proceed smoothly.

As was stated above, many ombudsmen do not have any formal professional education. Traditionally, political consciousness and activity in social issues have been appreciated more than professional competence and skills. In the current situation, the Union’s management perceives lacking professional competence as one of the major problems leading to unnecessary consumption of human resources.

### 7.3.6 Social connections and support within the organization

Work at Tenants’ Union is quite often lonely work; one has one’s tasks and one carries them out on one’s own. Some of the interviewees say, however, that it is possible to exchange ideas and experiences with others. There are not many formal opportunities for such exchange, but it mostly happens in the smoking room and corridors. Furthermore, communication takes place mostly within one’s team, not between teams. An interviewee notes, that work related communication is natural to take place between the closest colleagues; information sharing and social contacts may instead take place more broadly in the organization.

One interviewee states that collaboration has never been the strong side at Tenants’ Union, but the current work pressure and organizational structure may have reduced the amount of collaboration even further. Also, one
of the interviewees notes that currently there is no culture of helping out at Tenants’ Union. Earlier, in the small local offices, everyone carried responsibility for everything and supported each other. Now, there are employees at Tenants’ Union who will not help others, they do not consider that to be their task.

In the interviews, both positive and negative issues relating to managerial support came up. In the Support team, the support from the closest supervisor works well. The supervisor, for instance, takes the responsibility for prioritizing the group’s tasks and the employees can concentrate on their own work, not to worry about the priorities. The supervisor also has an important boundary role in the Support team; if there are problems with other teams, she helps in clearing them out. In other groups, there is a more ambivalent perception on the managers’ roles and some experience very little support from the managers. There is a feeling that one cannot share one’s problems with the managers; often they cannot help. Also, many interviewees experience that they very seldom get positive feedback from the managers. The complaints and «bad news» come through the managers and, even if the manager is nice and capable, one starts to get worried every time one sees the manager; something must be wrong, when she comes to us! Many seem to receive positive feedback from outside the organization (i.e. from the members and the local tenants’ representatives), but they would also like to get positive feedback from their own supervisors.

7.3.7 Culture and climate

Many of the interviewees say that discussion is very open at Tenants’ Union; one can say what one thinks. However, the interviewees also mention factors relating to the history and culture of the organization that are creating negative climate. First, earlier downsizing and many change processes have created a certain tiredness in the organization. The employees refer to the acronym »BOHICA« – »Bend Over, Here It Comes Again«. Second, there is a historical status difference between the »macho« private negotiations and »moderate« municipal negotiations, as noted above. Furthermore, there are status differences between the white-collar employees of the organization (e.g. lawyers and economists) and the ombudsmen. This status difference is reinforced also by a difference in the salary levels. Such status differences harm the organization’s internal collaboration, the
Furthermore, there are value conflicts; instead of shared basic values, several values operate in the organization. Some, including many of the managers, are supporting a more «professional» approach to the operations (i.e. high quality negotiations in which qualified ombudsmen could almost routinely negotiate with landlords); others maintain that the traditional political people’s movement approach engaging tenants and their representatives in the process is the only way. The discrepancy between professionalism and people’s movement is directly connected to the ideas on how the operations should be organized. Those advocating the people's movement approach would like to organize work such that the ombudsmen would act locally, to collaborate with local tenants' representatives from a certain area. Those advocating professionalism emphasize the professional negotiations and, for instance, an organizational structure enabling each ombudsman to concentrate on certain counterparts (i.e. certain municipal or private landlords) rather than on some geographic area. The latter group is accused by the former of turning Tenants’ Union into an insurance company; professionalism is perceived to undermine the people’s movement spirit. This issue is very sensitive and it has created strong tensions and personal conflicts in the organization, the interviewees say.

7.3.8 Positive things at work
In the interviews, the employees also identify many positive things at work:

1. Work itself is a source of enjoyment. The employees appreciate especially the variability of work as well as the learning opportunities and challenges it offers to them. Many employees also say that they are autonomous in their work and enjoy that; they like to be able to steer their work independently.

2. Many also think that being a people’s movement is an important, positive characteristic of work. There is a feeling of being a «Robin Hood»: defending the poor against the rich. The employees experience that they can influence the society in a positive way.

3. The contacts to the local tenants’ representatives and single members are also sources for positive work experiences. The interviewees say that the best reward for work is meeting satisfied members and knowing that one has done something good for them. Also, some interviewees note how good it is to see, when members develop with the help of the Tenants’ Union-activities. The social contacts to the local ten-
ants’ representatives and members become even more important as one has not got so much time for private life and social contacts there.

4. Some also state that the colleagues and managers provide important positive contacts at work. Nevertheless, there are some who feel that in the current situation there is not that much time for positive social contacts within the organization.

7.3.9 Physical working space and its influence on work

Tenants’ Union is located in a five-floor-building, in which the Public team and the Support team are located on one floor and the Private team on another. The employees experience this division to obstruct collaboration - one does not go from one floor to another, but communicates mostly with people working on the same floor. Some of the interviewees state that the working space solutions have been developed separately from the work organization, now the two do not work well together.

There are different kinds of room solutions in use. Some share a room, some have their own rooms. Many prefer to work in a room where there are also others working – it is nice to have someone to exchange ideas with. However, most also think that having too many persons in the same room is a problem. There is too much noise and too little consideration for others in such a situation. As a rule, the ombudsmen do not have negotiation space in their own room, but use negotiation rooms located on the highest floor of the building. This creates some problems; the folders needed in the negotiations are located on the second floor and, especially earlier when the negotiation rooms were not equipped with computers and telephones, getting everything right for a negotiation situation took a lot of extra work. Many of the ombudsmen would like to have their own negotiation spaces in connection to their rooms.

There are plans for Tenants’ Union to move to new premises. A group representing different employee groups (called the Premises-group) is planning the new working space solution. The group tries to inform the other employees as fast as possible on the latest developments in the planning, so that rumors would not start to spread. However, other employees’ perceptions on how much they receive information from the Premises-group varies. The Support team members appreciate the information meetings the group arranges and say that they can express their opinions on the working space questions to the group (although there are also doubts whether these opinions really make any difference in the final decision-
making). The ombudsmen have a more negative perception on the Premises-group; they say that they either cannot influence the group even if they have tried or do not have time to participate in meetings arranged on these questions.

One of the initial ideas for the new working space design was a totally flexible working space – nobody would have a permanent work desk, but only trolleys for books and papers. Then, each morning, the employees would find empty working spaces where they could work. In this way, the working space would change each day. The employees working together could try to find vacant desks close to each other. This idea did not receive support from the employees. There has also been a suggestion to adopt a landscape office design. An interviewee, who also is a member in the Premises-group, says that moving into a landscape office has not been finally decided, but many other interviewees believe that the landscape office solution will be chosen. There are different opinions on the landscape office. The negotiations assistants in the Support team would not mind working in a landscape office, while many ombudsmen do not like the idea. The ombudsmen suspect such an open office to be too noisy and say that it would be difficult to concentrate on one’s work in such an environment. Some of the interviewees also state that a landscape solution will not improve collaboration. Everyone will still have their own tasks; having others working close by will not provide any useful information or support to one’s tasks.

7.3.10 Thoughts on the new work organization
As described above, Tenants’ Union was reorganized in May 2001, shortly after the first interview study reported here was carried out. In advance to the reorganization, both the managers and employees hoped that the new organization would ease the problems experienced in the initial organizational structure (reviewed also in this chapter). The management, however, did not expect only the new structure to solve the problems; the aim was to carry out development work in many areas, simultaneously. The following areas of development were distinguished by the management:

1. **Organizational structure** will be developed such that a Negotiations unit is formed with both private and municipal negotiations as well as negotiations assistants working in it.
2. **Technology**; there is a small pilot project on distance work using laptop, mobile phone, and databases on CD-disks.
3. **Working Space Solution;** the employees experience their rooms to be too small and the workspace does not support collaboration. Consequently, new workspace solution should be created.

4. **Culture and Values;** there has been an employee survey one personal values, current organizational values, and desired organizational values. Such instruments should be used further.

5. **Management Instruments –** a reward system and measurements relating to the Balanced Scorecard – are currently being developed.

6. **Well-being of the Employees;** seminars and personal coaches (for personal guidance) are used to expand the employees’ awareness of health related issues.

The managers pointed out also, that the new structure should help in steering the organization; according to their experience, stress emerges when there is not enough guidance and that is why the new organizational structure should guide the employees in their work. The unit’s management identified the following goals for the new Negotiations unit:

1. **Reduced Vulnerability.** Earlier, too often there have only been one or few persons in the Union capable of doing some specific task or knowing some specific piece of information. The new organization is aimed at increasing collaboration and overlap in competence areas.

2. **Increased Flexibility.** Flexibility – e.g. the employees’ ability to move from one task area to another – is perceived to be important, but the managers also say that it cannot be prioritized in the beginning. In the beginning, most effort will be directed at getting the new organization functional and effective.

3. **Process Orientation.** The daily work will be carried out in processes, for instance, the negotiations can be perceived as processes. Two project leaders have been appointed for the Negotiations unit to clarify the negotiation processes.

4. **Project Orientation.** Special tasks and development efforts will be carried out in projects.

The employees’ thoughts on the new organization (as they appeared in the first interview study) a few months before the new structure was established are reviewed below.
The employees’ expectations for the reorganization

The employees have both negative and positive expectations for the new organizational structure. Many wishes for it relate to a more accurate resource distribution. The employees in the Private and Support teams experience that work is not as hectic in the Public team as it is in the other teams and, consequently, it is hoped that the workload would become more evenly distributed. Furthermore, especially in the Private team, the ombudsmen wish to receive more administrative support. It is understood that the number of negotiations assistants will not increase, but there is a wish for more accurate resource focusing when it comes to the administrative support.

A suggestion for the new organization that comes up in the interviews is that work should be organized into teams in which both private and municipal negotiations would be dealt with in order to equalize the workload. Even though municipal and private negotiations are different from each other, it is possible for a single ombudsman to do both at the same time. The interviewees perceive both drawbacks and positive sides in organizing the negotiations such that all the ombudsmen would do both kinds of negotiations. Some municipal ombudsmen say that work would become fragmented and frustrating, if one were to carry out both kinds of negotiations. Furthermore, one interviewee states that tasks tend to prioritize themselves - maybe the more acute private negotiations would take the upper hand of the more long-term municipal negotiations. One interviewee from the municipal team notes that the negotiations do not mean only the few minutes by the desk opposite to the counterpart when everything is finally agreed upon. Everything that is done during the year is about negotiations: the visits to tenants’ houses, training the local tenants’ representatives, collecting information, speaking with the members, etc. How could one carry out these processes relating to both private and municipal negotiations at the same time? Also if one would work on both, it would be hard to stay a jour on everything. Competencies develop better when one works on a delimited working area, the interviewees say. A positive side of carrying out both kinds of negotiations is that a new kind of a culture could be created; a common culture for negotiations instead of the separate municipal and private negotiation cultures. Furthermore, the private negotiations depend on the results of the municipal negotiations – connections between the two types of negotiations are important!

There are also doubts concerning the organizational change. Much like
the managers, many interviewees note that just changing the organizational structure will probably not solve the existing problems. It would be important to concentrate in more detail on the underlying problems! Furthermore, many interviewees also say that the new organization may also cause new problems, for instance the work pressure problem in the Private team may just spread to the whole organization instead of being solved. The negotiations assistants say that if the Support team is terminated in the reorganization (as they believe many ombudsmen to hope), the change will be a move into the past. The development of administrative routines will stop and it is unlikely that the change will influence the ombudsmen’s experiences on the amount of administrative support they receive.

The new work organization – Questions, challenges, and ideas
In the interviews also questions the employees have on the change process as well as challenges they perceive in it were collected. Furthermore, many ideas for the new work organization came up. Here are some of the main questions on the change and its challenges:

1. How to organize the different tasks so that they support each other?
2. The municipal negotiators have much work during the evenings (meetings, etc.) and the private negotiators have much work during the days. Would it be possible to combine work efforts so that this could be turned into a potential to reduce workload?
3. How to target different resources in the organization better?
4. The plans for the new organization do remind the earlier organizational structures - the private and municipal negotiations are planned to come together and the administrative support will be directly connected to the new teams. The structure will be as before, but will there be economic resources to deal with this kind of a structure?

Following ideas for the new work organization were presented in the interviews:

1. The employees should learn to work together better. Some training on collaboration and teamwork would be needed.
2. Competence development when it comes to negotiations would also be needed!
3. Some negotiations are more difficult than others. Would it make sense to allocate the difficult negotiations for a special group, a task force?
4. When the new organization is built, the special characteristics of the private and municipal negotiations should be taken into account!

5. The future division of labor should correspond to the existing situation in which the amount of municipal negotiations is diminishing.

The new work organization – The development process

At the time of the interviews reviewed here, the new work organization was discussed in team meetings; the Private, Public, and Support teams had their own meetings in which the management informed the employees on the change. In the interviews, many employees report that their ideas are listened to when it comes to these kinds of changes; one can say what one thinks! Also, different studies have been made on the employee attitudes and the results of these studies function as basic information for the change.

A negative factor influencing the change is tiredness and cynicism – the BOHICA-thinking mentioned above. There have been changes earlier, and still the problems persist. How would this time be different from the earlier ones? Some of the interviewees also note that the organization follows the same pattern. When there are problems, new organizational charts are drawn. In reality nothing changes; underlying problems are not solved.

7.4 Discussion on the first interview study

In this section, the main points from the first interview study are summarized and discussed. A feedback session with the ombudsmen, negotiations assistants, and the managers was arranged based on this discussion. The feedback session’s outcomes are described in section 7.5. The subsequent observation period (i.e. from the autumn 2001 to spring 2002) as well as the second interview study in May 2002 were founded on the discussion here; their aim was to see what kind of development eventually took place relating to the consuming factors at work described in this section.

7.4.1 Work content

When looking at the situation at Tenants’ Union in early 2001, it seems that work there both does and does not correspond to the post-bureaucratic work as defined in chapter 3. Even though the negotiation work cannot be pre-defined, there still are clear rules and regulations for what is negotiated with whom and in which order. The administrative tasks (carried out either by the ombudsmen or the negotiations assistants) are mostly routine
tasks or at least the employees are trying to establish clear routines for how the red tape should be handled.

However, there are also elements at work that do correspond to the notions of post-bureaucratic working life. For instance, the ombudsmen are directly affected by social, technical, and economic changes. Also work itself, though bounded by routines and strict division of labor, is complex, cognitive, and also invisible (see Howard, 1995). Furthermore, when it comes to organizing work, it is obvious that the traditional bureaucratic approach does not work well. The initial organization with its predefined division of labor and communication patterns has led to many problems. The structure has not been able to respond to the changes in tasks and their amount, for instance. Furthermore, the structure prevents collaboration; the ombudsmen and assistants are »communicating« only via the baskets. The organization is also vulnerable as single persons carrying out certain tasks are the only ones mastering them; more integration is obviously needed to enable the organization to respond to its complex and changing environment.

7.4.2 Reorganization – A possibility for a sustainable organization and better work?

Tenants’ Union is a traditional people’s movement organization facing the changing times characterized by contradictory trends, such as decreasing appreciation towards interest associations and social participation and, at the same time, the increasing vulnerability of tenants in the apartment markets. In its recent history, the organization has fought to balance its economy by reducing its staff and faced the consequent high workload problems with the remaining employees. Also technological changes and computerization have affected the organization profoundly. The problems are thus many, and the organization is now trying to come to grips with the new situation by, for instance, reorganizing its operations and planning a move to new premises that would support collaboration within the organization better. The management has obviously chosen a path towards increasing collaboration and integration as well as towards increasing professionalism and competence instead of the emphasis on the political aspects of operation. However, the persisting value conflicts between those supporting professionalism and those advocating people’s movement indicate that this path is not the shared vision in the organization. Many ombudsmen even now long for the times of the local offices and have not let go of the idea.
that this is the way the Union still should be organized. Maybe since this is-
issue is a »hot potato« in the organization, it really is not lifted up as an issue
for a debate. Consequently, there is no consensus on which path should be
followed to ensure the organization’s sustainability.

In the beginning of the SALUT-project, the main characteristics of the
new organization to be established in May 2001 had already been defined.
The main idea was to collect all the different types of negotiations, both
private and municipal, to one unit (the Negotiations unit) and to move all
the local support issues to the Local Support unit. However, all the details
of the new organizations were still open at the time the interview study was
made. Based on the interviews, for the ombudsmen the main questions
concerning the reorganization of the municipal and private negotiations
relate to a) workload - what kind of a structure would distribute it more
evenly throughout the whole organization; b) work content – how would it
be possible to create developmental and interesting work for the ombuds-
men; c) collaboration – how would it be possible to create collaboration
and common culture within the organization, and d) the awareness of local
conditions – how would it be possible to maintain and increase the aware-
ness of the local conditions and better benefit form it? From the Support
personnel’s point of view, the most important question is how to organize
the administration such that it best supports the ombudsmen, but still
leaves possibilities for the assistants as a group to develop their routines and
working methods?

7.4.3 Culture: Collaboration and participation
Based on the interviews, it is clear that the organizational change cannot
only be about the structures. There is also a need to work on culture and
competence related issues within the organization: the »underlying« prob-
lems as the employees say. The culture of the negotiations is very individu-
ålistic – »each employee for herself«. Even though the interviewees say that
the culture of helping existed in the traditional small local offices, currently
the employees mostly work alone and have no time to discuss with each
other. The employees have become confined and separated from each
other by the division of labor between individuals and units. The status
difference between the municipal and private negotiators also hinders the
emergence of collaboration and the culture of helping. However, based on
the interviews it seems that the status differences do not seem to relate to
persons, but rather to jobs they occupy. People have changed and are
changing between the two types of negotiations. This is a big opportunity -
there are no A and B class people, but only problems relating to the existing
organizational divisions. Thus, it is probably possible to regroup employees
in different ways. When compared to the Public and Private teams, there
exists instead a feeling of doing things together and relying on each other in
the Support group.

Many interviewees also say that the organization’s culture is character-
ized by concentration on one’s own little world. Furthermore, it seems that
gaps easily emerge between groups. This can be seen as a friction between
the Public and Private teams as well as a friction between the ombudsmen
and the negotiations assistants and, even, as a friction between the tempo-
rary Premises-group and the other employees. It is quite interesting that the
»we-they« positions are taken so easily in the organization. Could the
reason for this be the traditional »we-they« attitude inherent for the negoti-
ations work? As in the Norrtälje Hospital case (see chapter 6), also at
Tenants’ Union the opponent is very concrete and identifiable, problems in
one’s work can very often be connected to the actions of »the others«, the
counterparts in the negotiations. Maybe this counterpart thinking has
become internalized at Tenants’ Union; also within the organization
people treat each other as counterparts, as »they«.

The interviews also indicate, that much organizational development is
carried out by the management without opportunities for the employees to
participate; for instance, the outlines for the new organization were more or
less simply given to the employees. The unit’s management does, however,
want to increase the amount of participation. For instance, after the inter-
view study was carried out, all the employees affected by the change as well
as their managers spent a few days away from the office discussing the
organizational development. Since the resources are very tight in the orga-
nization, participation and collaboration would seem important tools in
benefiting from the resources to the maximum.

7.4.4 Competence needs at work
Competencies are an important area of the development. Especially the
management recognizes lacking competencies leading to unnecessary
stress in the organization. The interviewees mention several types of com-
petencies that are needed in their work, see figure 7.4. Besides of profes-
sional and social competencies, work seems to also demand »coping com-
petencies«: competencies that relate to personal and collective ways to
cope with work, such as an ability to be strong when facing the problemati-
ic situations of some members with their apartments.

![Figure 7.4. Different types of competencies create a frame for prospering at work.](image)

Competence development may not, however, be easy at Tenants’ Union since the employees understand many of the competencies being related to personality; either one is a good negotiator or not, for instance. The interviewees also seem to think that such competencies are almost impossible to learn from others and, consequently, competence exchange does not really happen in the organization. One may, however, question this approach; is it really so difficult to learn negotiation competencies from others? Would not the exchange of ideas and experiences benefit the employees? Furthermore, if one does not speak about personal competencies with others, there may be a danger that the more tangible professional skills are not discussed either. For instance, the problems with administrative routines would definitely call for the exchange of experiences. Furthermore, many of Tenants’ Union employees have a long career and experiences from many different work situations and life events. In an organization, where so many now are falling ill because of stress, sharing these experiences might be an important resource in coping with the current and emerging work demands.
7.5 The feedback session

The interview results reviewed above were discussed in a 1.5 hour-feedback-session to which all the ombudsmen and the negotiations assistants as well as their managers were invited. Due to their work situation, no negotiations assistants from the Support group could participate in the session. All the managers and most of the ombudsmen were present. The interview results are summarized in figure 7.5 (see below): a figure drawn based on Porras and Robertson’s (1991) model on organizational elements and their interaction as well as the outcomes of the interaction (see also chapter 2).

Figure 7.5. The main issues emerging from the first interview study according to the Porras and Robertson model (1991).
After we (the researchers) had presented the figure above and our inter-
view results, a group work (planned by me and the other SALUT-re-
searcher) was carried out in which the employees in mixed teams contain-
ing ombudsmen both from the municipal and private negotiations dis-
cussed two separate questions. First, they identified the »corner stones« of
Tenants’ Union’s work - i.e. those important things at work and in the or-
ganization that do not depend on the organizational structure, but rather
stay the same, affect the employees’ work, and that should be taken into ac-
count also in the new organizational structure. Second, they created sug-
gestions on how the operations should be organized in the future. The re-
sults from the groups are summarized below.

The corner stones for the operation are:
1. Collaboration between the organization’s internal stakeholders. With-
   in the organization this collaboration should be built on shared under-
   standing of work roles, responsibilities, and routines.
2. The collaboration with and the relationships to different external
   stakeholders. One group identified the following stakeholders impor-
   tant for the ombudsmen work, see figure 7.6 below. The organization
derives its legitimacy from creating benefits for its members and by be-
ing perceived as an important actor in the housing issues. One group
identified organizational learning and competence development as an
important tool is creating organizational legitimacy; only competent
employees can help the members in the best possible way.

![Figure 7.6. The stakeholders in the ombudsman work. The sign with the word »Policy?« on it
means that the ombudsmen are aware of different stakeholders in their work, but sometimes it
is not so clear which policies should be followed when trying to unite the various preferences
of these stakeholders.]
How to organize?
1. Work would proceed better, if it were organized into teams in which both types of negotiations, municipal and private, are carried out. This would make it possible for Tenants’ Union to adjust flexibly to the privatization of the municipal apartment houses. One group identified walls within the groups (not only between them, see figure 7.5 above) as a potential threat for such an organization.

2. Administrative issues are an important challenge for the reorganization; more clear archive routines for negotiations documents should be developed.

3. One group emphasized the need for creating groups that base their operations on the knowledge of the regional conditions and that are supported by organizational procedures and structures. The overall organizational structures have to be in line with the needs of the groups. These ideas received much support from the other employees.

4. Communication should be developed within the organization. Instead of one-way-information, true communication between different employee groups should be achieved.

7.6 The continuation of the SALUT-project: Observations and interviews from autumn 2001 to spring 2002
The SALUT-project continued to follow the development in the negotiations operations after the feedback session, i.e. from autumn 2001 to spring 2002. In practice, the researchers observed the weekly meetings of the Negotiations unit (see below) in order to study different development efforts as well as the consequences of an extensive competence training effort. Eventually, the observations were complemented with the second interview study carried out in May 2002.

The discussion that follows below is thus founded, first of all, on a very versatile observation material; formal talks around the meeting tables as well as talks during the coffee breaks with the employees and their managers have been benefited from. Furthermore, material from the second interview study is used to complement and explain the observation material where necessary.
7.7 Reorganizations as a background for the development work - New organizational structures in May 2001 and May 2002

This section discusses the organizational changes made in the unit between spring 2001 and spring 2002. The organizational changes provide the background for other development efforts that emerged during this time.

7.7.1 The structure from May 2001: The unit as one group

The whole Tenants’ Union of the Greater-Stockholm Region was restructured in May 2001. The Union was organized into a CEOs office, operations support (e.g. IT-support), and into four sub-units corresponding to the core operation areas: negotiations, juridical services (former member services), member communications (former marketing), and local support. All the regional unions around Sweden were renamed as Regional Offices at this time. The decision to structure the organization in this way was made in the national board of the tenants’ union movement and the new organizational structure was planned to set the members in focus; the new organization was aimed at supporting the Union’s members in the best possible way. This is quite a big change for the movement at the mental level since, traditionally, many of its employees have concentrated on the local tenants’ representatives and negotiation delegations as the most important actors. The change might be compared to a trade union changing its focus from employees’ representatives and the organizations they form to single employees. Naturally, negotiations and daily work would still run in close contact with the local tenants’ representatives, but for the tenants’ union movement the main raison d’être would now be each and every member, rather than the groups formed for the political people’s movement activities. Thus, the change took the organization from the political approach closer to the professional approach. Also, the aim was to create an organizational structure that corresponds to the economical conditions of the Union; collaboration and professionalism within the organization should lead to a better use of available resources.

From now on the SALUT-project concentrated on the Negotiations unit to which all the ombudsmen carrying out the municipal and private negotiations were located as well as to which several assistants from the Regional operations’ Administrative Support team moved. The new organizational structure in the Negotiations unit is depicted in figure 7.7 below; one of the unit’s managers outlined the new structure in this way.
The Negotiations unit (the big gray oval in figure 7.7) consists of about 40 employees. Also in this new unit, according to its managers, the private and municipal negotiations run separately and, even though the idea is that they do form one unit, there really are two groups and a gray zone between them. The two managers of the unit (the unit managers) also have divided their responsibilities such that one of them works close to the municipal negotiators and the negotiations assistants, while the other works close to the private negotiators. Within the private negotiations, three to five ombudsmen form groups. The managers note, however, that there is not much collaboration within the groups. The aim is simply to guarantee an equal distribution of workload between the ombudsmen in a group. When it comes to the municipal negotiations, only the annual rent level negotiations are left to the unit and all the ombudsmen working with the municipal negotiations are called negotiations leaders – they coordinate and lead the tenants’ representative delegations participating in the negotiations. The negotiations with the municipal counterparts are organized such that one or several negotiations leaders negotiate with certain municipal companies. Thus, if a municipal company has operations in different regions of Stockholm (as they usually do), a negotiations leader negotiates agreements relating to all these different regions. However, there are also negotiations leaders, who focus on so-called county communes, i.e. communes around Stockholm City. These negotiations leaders work regionally, i.e. they nego-
mediate with all the municipal housing companies operating in a certain area. There are also some ombudsman-negotiations leaders, who negotiate both with municipal and private landlords in their regions. The negotiations leaders also meet regularly in a special negotiations leader team depicted in the figure.

The six negotiations assistants of the Negotiations unit still form a group and, for instance, have their own meetings. Their collaboration with the ombudsmen (which was experienced to be problematic in the old organization) is supported by more personal connections between the assistants and ombudsmen; each ombudsmen has a contact person to discuss all the administrative issues with. The baskets between the ombudsmen and negotiations assistants still exist, but are complemented by more direct contacts.

The Negotiations unit is connected in many ways to other units. For instance, especially the private negotiators need contacts to the Juridical Services unit to which the Union’s members phone when they have questions or need help with something relating to their rental contracts. The ombudsmen negotiating in the municipal domain have the contact to »the field« through the extensive local organization (e.g. local tenants’ unions and the representatives of the tenants), but in the private domain the contacts between the members and the Union are more direct via the Juridical Services. Also, the Negotiations unit is logically connected to the Marketing unit where the Union’s public image is created and new members are recruited. Finally, work at the Local Support unit (working with e.g. local tenants’ unions) is connected to work in the Negotiations unit and, especially, to the work of the ombudsmen working with the municipal negotiations. However, as will be seen below, even though the need for connections between the different units exists, in reality there are very few contacts between them.

**7.7.2 The weekly meetings and daily contacts as forums for development**

The new unit has a new meeting structure that was established in connection to the reorganization in order to create forums for the further development work. This also gave the opportunity for the SALUT-researchers to study the unit’s development by observing the meetings.

In the autumn of 2001 (after the organization depicted in figure 7.7 had been taken into use), the municipal ombudsmen had regular meetings with
their manager every fortnight. Similarly, the ombudsmen working with the private negotiations had regular meetings every fortnight with their manager. The meetings of the municipal and private negotiators took place in turns, week apart from each other. The negotiations assistants always sent someone to represent them in all these meetings. Once a month a meeting was arranged for the whole unit, where issues affecting everybody were discussed. For instance, the quality system and control mechanisms were subjects in such meetings; especially the Union’s Balanced Scorecard application called the Signpost was discussed and developed.

The two subgroups started out their respective development work with slightly different agendas. The group with municipal ombudsmen and assistants concentrated from the beginning on the good working environment. The inspection and consequent report from the Swedish working environment inspectors (see section 7.2) provided a starting point for this work structured around two questions; first, which factors there already exist that contribute to a good working environment and, second, which factors there exist that prevent a good working environment from emerging. The manager of this group noted that these two questions would be concentrated on instead of trying to create a vision of a good working environment. The group probably does not have a shared vision; there are many different – maybe even conflicting – visions and concentrating on “what is our common vision?” might lead to a blind alley rather than to a meaningful development path. The private ombudsmen started out their development work instead by concentrating on issues relating to practical work. For instance, technical tools helping in the administrative tasks, the negotiations time schedules, as well as the common strategy for the negotiations were discussed. This group was also meant to start to work on the working environmental issues, and the results of the two groups were planned to be eventually unified into a common plan for creating a better working environment. However, the private ombudsmen had only few meetings discussing the working environmental issues before the meeting structures were changed again (see below); also the municipal ombudsmen group was only on its way to concretize the positive and negative factors, when the meeting structures were changed.

The change that took place in early 2002 namely meant that the number of the unit wide meetings with all the ombudsmen, assistants, and unit managers was increased at the expense of the meetings in the smaller subgroups. The unit managers made this change in order to increase collabo-
ration between all the employees; for instance the competence training effort discussed in section 7.8.1 below and carried out in mixed, rather than the traditional groups, increased both the employees’ and managers’ willingness to collaborate more widely in the unit. At this point, however, as noted above, the subgroup processes on creating better working environment became to a halt.

Consequently, the meetings were planned to increase and improve collaboration within the unit. Collaboration was also supported by the physical working space layout; the ombudsmen from municipal and private negotiations were mixed in the office space. The aim was to enable the different employee groups to concretely see each other’s working situation. One of the managers said at this point that such an arrangement did not directly affect daily work, but it had a high symbolic value in creating unity within the organization with its long “each ombudsman for herself” culture. Based on the consequent observations and the second interview study, it seems that the employees ended up having different opinions on whether the new working space arrangement is good or not. For instance, one employee says that she thinks that the new arrangement reduces suspicion between the groups. As the initial interviews pointed out (see above), there were doubts whether all have equally heavy workload. Now the employees can concretely see that also the others are working hard. Another employee says, however, that when she does not sit close to the other ombudsmen working with similar negotiations as she does, she does not really have any contacts with them now. She also says that sitting close to ombudsmen carrying out different kinds of negotiations has no additional benefit for her work.

7.7.3 The structure from May 2002: A unit of small groups

The organizational structure from May 2001 was in place for exactly one year; in May 2002 a new reorganization was carried out within the Negotiations unit. The unit’s management decided based on the messages they received from the employees that the unit would be organized into small geographical groups; the oval depicted in figure 7.7 above was replaced by several small groups (see figure 7.8). The managers consequently initiated a discussion in the unit on what kind of groups should be formed; they made a suggestion on groups and members. After slight modifications based on the employees’ wishes, the new groups were established. The negotiations in Stockholm County would be carried out by two groups.
(South and North) working with both municipal and private landlords in the county communes. However, in Stockholm City the division of municipal and private ombudsmen would still remain, since it is impossible for the two ombudsmen negotiating the extensive contracts with Stockholm’s municipal landlords to do anything else besides. The idea was, nevertheless, to create collaboration between the groups working within Stockholm City as depicted by connecting lines from Stockholm municipal-group to the two Stockholm private-groups.

Furthermore, the management decided that the very cumbersome rebuilding and renovation questions that often create a pressure for rent increases would be concentrated in one group: the Renovations group. The employees chosen to work in this group would both carry out the discussions with the landlords relating to the rebuilding and renovation questions and also answer to the more complicated member inquiries on
these issues. All in all, the employees supported the idea of a special renovations group. A special group is able to give necessary attention to the difficult cases and, at the same time, the work of the other employees does not suffer because of some difficult cases have to be prioritized.

Consequently, the negotiations were carried out within three different organizational structures during this case study. Figure 7.9 summarizes all the structural changes affecting the Negotiations unit employees in 2001 and 2002. The different phases of this case study are also depicted in the figure.

In the second interview study, the employees’ experiences on the latest reorganization were mapped. Based on the interviews, the employees experience the reorganization in general positively; the decision to form small groups was made based on the employees’ wishes that they expressed to the managers for instance in the weekly meetings and that
also were discussed during the competence training (see section 7.8.1) as well as appeared in the first interview round of this case study. Some interviewees note that forming these small, geographically oriented groups means actually returning to the old, good way of working - small groups resemble the traditional local offices (see section 7.3.1). Several interviewees say that the new groups may potentially improve the employees’ working situation; in a small group, it is easier to find ways to do things together, to carry the burden together, and to benefit from different competencies. However, a few interviewees also say that the new group structure will not reduce their workload; it may even increase it. Consequently, they perceive that the group structure is not a solution for the workload problem discussed above and also below (see section 7.8.3).

Many interviewees state that forming the groups creates new issues to be solved and it is important to discuss how certain problem situations are dealt with in the small groups. For instance, what is the role and mandate of the negotiations leaders in the new structure? How do, for instance, the two negotiations leaders in the Stockholm City and the unit managers share authorities and responsibilities relating to these important negotiations the results of which will influence all the other negotiations? Furthermore, what if someone becomes ill? The groups are small and, as in the earlier organizational structure, there are no buffers; everybody has much to do. So, how will the groups deal with the tasks of those who have become sick? How will the groups deal with the privatization of municipal apartment houses? The interviewees note issues like these as potential problems, but also seem to consider them as problems that can be solved by discussing them in the newly established groups and between the employees and managers.

Besides of these quite positive attitudes towards the organizational change, three interviewees also note that this reorganization is one more in a series of many organizational changes. Many past reorganizations have led to a situation where the employees, just when they have learned to function in one environment, have to learn new things and change their way of working in order to cope with the changed environment. Not only do the collaborators within the organization change, but also - as one changes from one geographical region to another or from municipal negotiations to private ones or vice versa - the local actors in the field, the local tenants’ representatives and counterparts change. Thus, sometimes reorganizations create a need for seemingly unnecessary learning. One intervie-
wee also notes that reorganizations are too often used in trying to solve work and personnel related problems. Instead of distinguishing the reasons for the problems, new structures are created with a hope that the problems somehow will disappear along with the old structure. This, however, never happens.

In addition to the group structure changes, another important structural change that took place in May 2002 relates to the way the members’ telephone service is organized. In the Negotiations unit during the winter 2001-2002 many weekly meetings were used in discussing the so-called group number, i.e. a telephone number to which the members can phone to reach the Negotiations unit. The problem with the group number was that only few employees ended up picking up the calls and even though these employees worked hard, the members had to wait in a telephone queue for a long time, since there was not enough employees answering the group number. The managers presented several solutions to the situation in one whole unit meeting and a group work was carried out to choose the way to deal with the group number calls. As a result, it was commonly decided that everybody would take the responsibility for making the group number work from now on and, when they register to be present by their own telephone, they also register to the group number line so that calls that come to that number are routed to their telephones as well. All written information sent to the members has to also be planned carefully; unclear letters only cause a high load on the group number as the members call to ask questions. Finally, it was agreed that the managers discuss with the telephone service providers to make working with the group number as simple as possible from the technical point of view.

This solution did not, however, last for long. The national board decided that the availability of all the Tenants’ Unions to their members has to be improved; the members have to be able to reach the Tenants’ Unions by telephone from Monday to Friday during office hours. Therefore, it was decided by the management of the Greater-Stockholm Region that a new group staffed by employees coming from the Negotiations, Local Support, and Juridical Services units would be established to take care of the telephone inquiries. At any moment there would be four employees serving the telephones, and the four persons work for half a day on the telephones. After that the next four employees take over. In practice this would mean that each Negotiations unit employee works for four hours every fortnight in the telephone group. The new telephone service also means that, unlike
before, the organization is available for the members during lunch breaks; the shifts are planned such that the telephones are manned from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. The separate unit-specific telephone numbers were also removed at this point and the new group would receive all the member inquiries instead. The telephone group of four persons would sit in its own location. Consequently, while on telephone duty, the employees are able to concentrate solely on the calls.

At the time of the second interview study, the member telephone group had just been established, and the interviewees had not had many shifts answering the telephones, but already based on their few shifts, they say that the service takes a lot of resources from the unit and for very little avail. There are very few callers and still the employees are required to sit by the telephones in the room reserved for this purpose. One can take some paperwork to the room, but one is not allowed to transfer the calls to one’s own telephone. The interviewees say that it is frustrating to sit by the telephones, when so few calls are coming through and when, at the same time, one has many other things to do.

7.8 The employees’ experiences on the development in the unit
In this section, different development areas (besides of the structural changes discussed above), development efforts, and – most importantly – the employees’ experiences of the development steps taken and their working situation in the transforming organization are discussed. The discussion is organized around the following areas: first, collaboration and communication; second, organizational structures and their influence on work; third, work related stress; fourth, organizational visions and values; fifth, the employees’ collaboration with the managers; and sixth, the employees’ evaluations on the development work done so far. These areas relate also to the first interview study; when discussing their wishes and ideas for the new organizational solution, the interviewees for instance wished for a better collaboration as well as for a more equal workload division in their unit (see section 7.3.10). They also hoped the development work to clarify the organizational goals and directions. Stress has been, in its turn, a grave problem in the organization all along. Consequently, this section also follows developments relating to some issue areas distinguished important by the employees.

It is important to note that this section mainly describes the working situation in the second organizational structure depicted in figure 7.7. The
observations were carried out before the final reorganization (i.e. the establishment of the small groups) and the second interview study precisely when the reorganization had taken place.

7.8.1 Learning to work together and communicate with each other

As described above, most employees have earlier worked in small regional offices with simple organizations. Based on the observations it seems, that the employees experience their unit with about 40 employees and the whole organization with about 130 employees as big and complex. Working in a larger organization is made difficult by the fact that the employees are unaccustomed to function in such an environment after a long career in the small offices. The employees and their managers all say that many problems in the unit relate to the old »one-employee-entrepreneur« thinking; the employees do not really take seriously the organizational decision-making that they are a part of and that happens around them. As one of the ombudsmen puts it; things are decided together and, then, everyone just does as he or she wishes to do. The weekly meetings – in the initial subgroups of either municipal or private ombudsmen and assistants as well as in the whole unit group – concentrate much on creating a shared understanding of work related things and a consensus on how certain things should be done, how certain routines should be managed, etc. Many times the weekly meetings offer a venue to initiate projects and to authorize volunteer groups to work further on them. Nevertheless, the weekly meetings have also confirmed the notion of »difficult« employees that came up already in the first interview study; there are employees who do not play towards the same goal with others and do not take personal responsibility for carrying out the jointly made plans. When common plans and decisions are made in the meetings, there are also often anonymous references to those who do not usually follow the decisions.

The weekly meetings also have a kind of »glasnost« meaning. One of the ombudsmen summarizes this by saying that, for instance, stress related and working environmental issues have not been discussed in the organization; now, everyone should find the courage to come into the discussions on these issues. Speaking about difficult things in the group, showing that one has problems or is stressed, is never easy, but considerable development steps do take place. For instance, in one meeting certain external actors were discussed. In the beginning, contacts to them were discussed in quite
a superficial way; what the contacts are all about, that it is a pity that making contacts to these actors is quite difficult, etc. Then as the discussion was already drawing to its close, one ombudsman said that she had had a difficult meeting with these external actors: »…one of them is really a difficult person, I do not know what I should do with her…«. A lively and supportive discussion ensued; also others noted that they have had similar difficulties and, with the help of the unit manager, the team ended up speaking about how to deal with such difficult people, where to get help. The ice was broken; admitting one’s difficulties led to the demonstration of support from others, not to the demonstration of contempt or disregard. However, in the interviews, a few employees spontaneously say that, at personal level, it still is difficult to bring forth one’s problems. One interviewee describes this by saying that everybody wears a mask: a mask covering weakness and need for help.

To be a part of a large, complex system
It is challenging for the employees to work as members in a large and complex system, the operations of which are steered by various actors and decision-making processes. Legislation, political decisions, and decisions from, for instance, the regional and national boards or the Union Assembly all influence directly the work in the Negotiations unit. This creates sometimes irritation among the employees; especially a decision that the employees do not agree with can cause a lot of dissatisfaction. Also these issues are discussed in the weekly meetings and the unit managers try to steer the discussions into a constructive direction. For instance, a manager may say that »If you are dissatisfied, speak openly to me. I have the responsibility; I will try to explain and make sure your views become heard«. Also the ombudsmen themselves note that despite the fact that many external issues influence work, they can nevertheless decide how tasks are carried out and how external decisions are implemented. One ombudsman says, however, that the unit would need a common goal in order to implement external decisions in an efficient and meaningful way. She also notes that the new negotiations strategy document written by the unit’s managers is a good start in creating a common direction and common goals. Also the Signpost should become such a directing, living document (see below), the employee says.

When one listens to the discussions in the weekly meetings, a striking feature of all the discussion is the employees’ and managers’ commitment
to the tenants’ union movement and the benefit of the members. An unconditional criterion for everything discussed is how the issue will affect the members and their representatives. Sometimes the employees quite spontaneously note that they get stressed, when they experience that they are not available enough for the members. Also, all the organizational changes and decisions are debated based on how they affect the members.

For instance, when different ways to organize telephone service for the members were discussed in a weekly meeting, not a single question or comment was presented relating to potentially increasing workload. Instead, a heated debate was carried out relating to how the changes planned would influence the members and their opportunity to contact the ombudsmen at the Negotiations unit.

Becoming a trustworthy and reliable employee – Competence training

An important part of the development work in the Negotiations unit is training provided for all the unit’s employees and managers on being a responsible, competent member of the organization. The training is carried out by external consultants with earlier work experience in sports team training. All in all, the training aims to create individual and collective competencies that may help in dealing with work. The training also aims to create better collaboration relations within the unit. The competencies learned in the training should not only increase the potential and well-being at work, but also in the employees’ life as whole.

»Framework competencies« is a key concept in the training; the unit’s employees learn to create frameworks and set boundaries on their personal and shared activities. For instance, in order to reach a commonly agreed goal, the unit members have to define together the framework for their journey towards the goal. In a way then, a »framework competent« unit is able to agree on common norms and rules that will help its work, as well as to maintain and, when necessary, revise them. At the Negotiations unit, the employees find the framework competencies a very helpful concept. Not only does the concept support in coping with one’s work, but it also supports collaboration within the unit as the employees agree on common norms.

Framework competencies also contain an understanding on what one can influence and what one cannot. Concentration on what one cannot influence takes a lot of energy from an individual and the whole unit. Instead, the trainers emphasize that it is important to concentrate on what
one can influence and proactively operate in this area. In line with this, one ombudsman notes that her proactive attitude is probably the reason why she does not become stressed. She actively participates in many groups in Tenants’ Union and in the tenants’ movement. Through participation, she gains new possibilities to learn how the complex negotiations system functions, and consequently she also gains new insights on how she can influence the system. She experiences this very motivating and says that because of this attitude, she does not usually become stressed even though she has a high workload.

Another part of training is being »trustworthy«: doing what one has promised to do. As representatives of a people’s movement, the employees experience this as a very important issue. The legitimacy of the whole organization depends on the fact that external actors can trust its employees. To do what one has promised to do also has a positive impact on the unit’s internal collaboration, the employees say. For instance, the problems with the unit’s telephone number (see above) have been closely related to personal and collective trustworthiness. Before the telephone service was centralized, the unit set as its goal that each employee will carry responsibility for answering the group number.

The employees have experienced the framework competence thinking and the concentration on trustworthiness helping them in collaboration; this becomes obvious from the general discussion in the unit and also from the interviews. For instance, one ombudsman notes that consideration towards others has increased; the employees do not any more rush into each other’s rooms, but instead ask whether the colleague has time. The ombudsman says that everybody’s personal space is in this sense respected more than before. Also, many employees say that an idea (coming up in the training) that one can maintain emotional distance in a certain situation, to »disassociate« one’s feelings from the situation, has supported them in difficult negotiation situations. One can choose the things one »associates« with (i.e. becomes emotionally engaged in) and issues that one keeps personal distance to (»disassociates« with). Also a small, but quite significant change is the use of language; the employees try to avoid otherwise quite usual impersonal, passive voice in their speech. In Swedish it is quite customary to replace the active voice (e.g. »I am satisfied with my job.«) with a passive voice (e.g. »One is satisfied with one’s job.«). This is done to describe even very personal feelings, and of course it obscures who is speaking, who has the responsibility. After the training begun, the employees have started to
correct themselves; they may start to say, for instance, that »one wants to do...«, but then correct »...I mean, I want to do...«.

An important outcome from the training has consequently been, that the employees have learned new concepts that can help them to understand better their own and other’s behavior. The interviewees of the second interview study underline that these concepts do not contain new ideas but, instead, they conceptualize something already familiar – make these things visible, easier to approach and use. For instance, the ideas underlying »dis-associating« and »associating« or »framework competencies« are familiar to the employees, but the new concepts have helped them to become truly aware of these things.

In the competence training, three shared truths were chosen as guidelines for the unit’s operation. When discussing these shared truths, the interviewees indicate that the most important of them is »our differences are our strengths« (the others being: »it is nice to go to work« and »we are proud of our professional negotiations support«). The interviewees explain that for them differences being a strength means that one is allowed to do things in one’s way. Furthermore, if someone is good at something, she should be allowed to concentrate on that to the benefit of the whole unit. Conversely, if someone is not good at something, she should receive help from those who can deal with the task in question better. One interviewee summarizes this by saying that the sentence »our differences are our strength« is a cry for help - use me and my competencies in the right way! A few interviewees note that their best example of »differences being strength« comes from the small local offices. There, people knew each other well and knew each other’s competencies. When one faced a problem or a problematic person that one could not deal with, one could ask help from others with other kinds of competencies. In these small local offices, the employees truly complemented each other.

In the weekly meetings, the »lonely wolves« have been mentioned frequently, i.e. people who prefer to do things on their own rather than work together with others. Some interviewees say that the idea of differences being a strength applies also to lonely wolves; it should be all right if someone prefers to work alone. However, one interviewee notes that even though the idea of respecting personal differences is important, it should not be taken too far. Common rules and decisions should be respected, being different should not mean disregarding the others and common decisions.

The observations in the weekly meetings indicate and the interviews car-
ried out in May 2002 confirm that the employees experience the competence training effort very positively. Even though there was initial tiredness for the idea of »yet another consultant coming in«, the training providers were able to respect this and not to try to sell the unit ready made solutions or models. As one of the interviewees says, the training effort has had the right attitude. The interviewees also note that that they are afraid that the positive effects of training may vanish in the unit; what was learned can be forgotten. The interviewees say that already now, right after the training has been finished, that has happened to some extent.

7.8.2 Organizing the operations and »Who owns the question?«

A further area that has caused a lot of discussion in the weekly meetings relates to the experienced uncleasness of the internal organization. A very often mentioned problem is – »who owns the question?«. When it comes to work tasks, the boundaries between the Negotiations unit and some other units are quite blurred; that is, the tasks of the units are intertwined and related to each other. However, the existing organizational boundaries (between the units) hinder collaboration. Also the boundaries between the different employee groups within the Negotiations unit are sometimes problematic. These problems will be discussed in detail in this section.

Within the Negotiations unit the boundary between the ombudsmen and negotiations assistants is particularly difficult. In the initial organizational structure (the Regional operation unit), the ombudsmen and negotiations assistants worked in different groups and contacts between them took place via the paperwork baskets. This structure, though beneficial for the assistants who were able to become a group and develop their working methods, did not work well from the whole unit’s point of view; the ombudsmen and assistants lost touch with each other and the ombudsmen experienced a lack of administrative support. In the organizational structure of May 2001, the assistants still form their own group, but each assistant has a direct contact to certain ombudsmen to support them in their work. This is experienced as an improvement, but problems still emerge. For instance, in one weekly meeting, a group consisting of both ombudsmen and assistants discussed the boundary line between the two groups and both sides still experienced uncleasness. The ombudsmen say that they are not certain which tasks they can leave over to the assistants, and the assistants that they are not certain which tasks they can say no to. However, the group also did agree that tuning down the basket system idea has been a
step into the right direction.

Also in the interviews the relations between the ombudsmen and the negotiations assistants came forth as an important area for further development. Both the assistants and ombudsmen perceive a lack of mutual trust. For instance, the ombudsmen do not trust the assistants to carry out the administrative tasks without any problems and that is why some ombudsmen never turn to the assistant group but instead try to manage their paperwork on their own. A major issue influencing the experienced mutual trust between the ombudsmen and assistants relates to whether each ombudsman should have a certain assistant carrying out his or her administrative tasks or whether the assistants should process the administrative tasks as a group. The ombudsmen would prefer a similar situation as in the small local offices; a designated assistant for each ombudsman group. The assistants instead say, that they can handle the administrative tasks better as a group and that the assistant receiving the task and carrying it out does not have to be the same person. At the time of the second interview study, i.e. at the time when the small geographical groups were formed, this discrepancy in perspectives had not yet been solved, and the ways the assistant group and the geographical groups would collaborate was still under discussion.

When it comes to the boundary between the municipal and private negotiations, the ombudsmen consider it quite clear. However, the division of labor between the municipal and private ombudsmen is to some degree experienced as problematic; the municipal negotiations do influence the private negotiations by showing the way for them and, in this sense, the two negotiations are sequential. In a weekly meeting in November 2001, one private ombudsman noted, for instance, that the private landlords in her area are postponing the negotiations to wait for the municipal negotiations to reach a conclusion. This means empty, inefficient days for the private ombudsmen at that time of year and, quite soon after that, a hectic negotiations period. The latest organizational structure (of May 2002) may support in better integrating the municipal and private negotiations to each other; as discussed above, this is one of the most important objectives of the reorganization.

There are also »who owns the question«-problems between the Negotiations unit and some other units, especially the Local Support unit whose employees support local tenants’ representatives and single members in any tenancy and tenant movement relates issue. The main problem, experienced especially by the ombudsmen negotiating with the municipal coun-
terparts, is that the organizational structure of May 2001 in the Negotiations unit does not correspond to the organizational structure of the Local Support unit, see figure 7.10.

When it comes to the municipal negotiations, initially there were three ombudsmen negotiating for Stockholm City. In spring 2002 one of them quit her job and two remaining ombudsmen took over all these negotiations. There are also several ombudsmen negotiating with the municipal landlords in different communes in Stockholm County. The private ombudsmen negotiate contracts with private landlords operating in certain areas within Stockholm City as well as in certain county communes. The Local Support unit is organized, in its turn, into teams that take care of a certain region consisting of both areas within Stockholm City and surrounding communes. For instance, the Team South of the Local Support works with the union members in the southern parts of Stockholm City and the southern parts of the Greater-Stockholm region. Consequently, the two units have totally different kinds of structures.

The ombudsmen of the Negotiations unit are responsible for seeing that
the contracts they have negotiated are implemented correctly. To do this, they need to collaborate with many teams functioning within the Local Support (who – after all – have a close, continuous contact to the members). For instance, those ombudsmen negotiating with the big municipal landlords within Stockholm City need to collaborate with all the teams in the Local Support-unit, since their contracts are implemented in all the areas of Stockholm City. Similarly, the teams in the Local Support have to maintain contacts to many ombudsmen in the Negotiations unit, since many different private and municipal contracts are in use in their areas. The new group based structure in the Negotiations unit (see figure 7.8) brings the two units closer to each other in their organizational solutions – both have now geographical groups. But the problem remains; in a geographical region where there is one Local Support-group operating, several Negotiations unit ombudsmen and groups are negotiating rent level contracts.

The differences in the organizational structure as well as the relatedness of the tasks in the two units make it sometimes difficult to see who owns a certain question. In one weekly meeting, a municipal ombudsman said that she concentrates on the rent negotiations with the landlords; all else belongs to the Local Support. Others noted, however, that there are situations when this is not so cut and dry. Furthermore, the two units do not have common meetings and, therefore, they do not meet to discuss their respective roles and tasks. However, plans for common meetings with the Local Support unit are continuously discussed in the Negotiations unit; the meetings would enable creating a common understanding on who owns the question.

Some of the ombudsmen also note that each employee has a responsibility for trying to understand the organization and finding an answer to the who owns the question-problem. As one ombudsman puts it; there are many dimensions in the organization, and one has to be active and try and move in all these dimensions. Then it becomes easier to understand the organization: who does what and who should be doing a certain task. Another ombudsman says, however, that the organization is so large and complex that beneficial group dynamics does not emerge. One has to start anew each time when there is a need for collaboration with other units. Yet another ombudsman states that the problem is that the only way the organization now works is that the ombudsmen do all they can to clarify things. However, it would be better if the organization as whole worked to make itself clearer, she says. For instance, process charts on negotiations have been
developed earlier. These charts should be taken into use again and developed further so that they could support the ombudsmen’s work!

Also in the interviews, the experience of organizational structures hindering collaboration comes forth. One interviewee, for instance, says that even though the organizational visions relate to collaboration - the management wants the employees to collaborate with each other for the best results from the members’ point of view - the existing organizational structure does not really support such collaboration!

7.8.3 A satisfied unit with a persisting high stress level

But how have the reorganizations, competence training, and weekly meetings affected the employees’ perceptions on their working situation? Some answers to this question were collected with the help of a personnel survey (administrated annually by the management) as well as the interviews of the second interview study. The annual personnel survey was carried out in Tenants’ Union in late autumn 2001, i.e. after the organizational structure from figure 7.7 and efforts to create a more sustainable working situation had been in use for about six months. The reply frequency of the survey was quite low; only about one in five replied to the survey in the unit. Consequently, the survey results only indicate certain trends in the unit rather than describe the experiences of all the employees. However, the survey results were discussed in small groups in a whole unit meeting and also the second interview study provides much information that helps in understanding the results from the personnel survey.

All in all, the results from the survey are positive; when compared to the results of the 2000 survey, the Negotiations unit has developed into a positive direction when it comes to, for instance, experienced working environment and competencies. When comparing the Negotiations unit to the rest of the organization, the Negotiations unit employees are in general more satisfied with their working environment, work, competencies, and management than other units. For instance, 80 percent of the Negotiations unit respondents say that there is a good climate in their work group com-

---

2 The unit’s managers say that the criterion for a good result in the survey is that 70 percent or more of the respondents consider a certain factor positively.
pared to 68 percent of the organization as whole. In the Negotiations unit, 92 percent of the respondents say that they are in general satisfied with their working situation compared to 67 percent of the organization as whole. Furthermore, 88 percent of the respondents in the Negotiations unit say that their managers enable participation in planning and follow up tasks; 69 percent of the organization as whole report this to be case.

The Negotiations unit employees do, however, rate their learning opportunities as quite low (as does the whole organization). Only 60 percent experience that they can benefit from other’s competencies and experiences, and 64 percent of the unit’s respondents say that the employees are encouraged to share competencies and experiences. This result can be understood in the light of the interview material; the interviewees express the difficulty of benefiting from each other’s competencies in the big unit. The interviewees note that the slogan »our differences are our strength« and the reorganization in the smaller groups shall perhaps improve the way competencies are benefited from; they hope different competencies would be benefited from the way they used to be in the small local offices.

Information systems are also experienced not to function well; only 44 percent of the Negotiations unit respondents say that there are good information systems in use. However, at the time of the second interview study, clear development was taking place with the information systems; a new computer system combining separate apartment databases would be introduced and this system would probably help the employees in their work in many ways. In a weekly meeting where the new computer system was discussed, a person representing the system development group said that the system would basically make it possible for even a layman to carry out successful negotiations, just based on all the information available in the system. After this improvement, it seems that major problems in the office technology relate to printers and Xerox-machines that function very unreliably. In the second interview study, the employees say that the printers and Xerox-machines may jam or overheat and prevent all printing and copying tasks. The Office Support-unit should help with these questions, but some interviewees say that its support is not sufficient. Some also experience that the Office Support employees look down on other employees struggling with the ICT-systems; »you should know how to do that« may be a reply to a help request.

The most important issue emerging from the survey and taken up by almost all the interviewees in the second interview study is, however, the
persisting high stress levels. Despite the other relatively good results in the personnel survey, the stress levels are still very high. Only 36 percent of respondents in the Negotiations unit say that it is possible for them to carry out their work without high stress and only 16 percent report experiencing stress seldom.

The second interview study concretely demonstrates the gravity of the stress situation; three of the interviewees have been on a long-term sick-leaves due to work related mental exhaustion and/or physical symptoms. Three other interviewees either say directly that the current working situation is endangering their well-being and that they will not be able to continue to work as they are working now, or more indirectly express tiredness in their working situation. In other words, of eight interviewees, five are extremely negatively affected by their work. Most of these interviewees clearly point out that their major problem is simply the too large a workload. In general, they enjoy their work and experience the social relations at the workplace very positively. Furthermore, earlier they have been able to deal with their work without any major problems; they consider themselves and are considered by others as experienced, even exceptionally skillful employees. In the current work situation, they simply have too much to do – as one of the interviewees puts it: »when a glass is full, it just runs over.« Also in the weekly meeting, the discussion on the personnel survey and stress led to a conclusion that high workload is an important reason for experienced stress.

Very often the employees initially have a large workload. Then something changes and new tasks or rework emerges. How can one cope with such a situation? Three interviewees also speak about receiving new tasks while already burdened with the already existing tasks. Sometimes the managers have asked an ombudsman to take on additional negotiations even though she has already had a large workload. The interviewees note that, in these situations, the managers must have known that the person really should not take on any further tasks, but still have suggested it. Sometimes an ombudsman has taken new tasks to herself and only afterwards realized that she will not be able to cope with all the tasks. Also in such a situation a manager should have interfered, the interviewees say, and asked in advance whether the person actually will be able to deal with all the work. The interviewees experience such situations very negatively; not only do they end up with a huge amount of work, but also with anger – not towards the managers – but towards the situation where there is no way out.
from the far too large a workload. For the managers such situations are also very difficult; all the negotiations have to be carried out, but there simply are not enough ombudsmen to deal with them all. This is especially the case if someone becomes sick. Where should the managers place the person’s negotiations?

It also seems that the employees cannot improve their overloaded work situation by prioritizing their work and leaving some things until later; the situation has not improved in this sense from the first interview study. Two of the interviewees note that in certain situations one would need help from the managers: a clear guidance on what one can leave until later. However, instead of prioritizing, everybody is trying to be equally committed and concentrated on negotiations, administrative work, member relations and communications, etc. Some interviewees also note that it does not make sense that even in the current situation with less resources than in the past, the unit tries to carry out all the same tasks and in the same way as before. For instance, two interviewees note that many of the private negotiations could be carried out in a more simple way; when a private landlord is willing to follow the negotiations result from the relevant municipal negotiations, it would be possible to simply sign a paper confirming the fact that the municipal negotiations result is followed in the landlord’s apartments. No actual negotiations would be needed in such cases. There are many such simple, routine private negotiations according to these interviewees and they believe that carrying out them as simple paperwork might release a lot of resources for other, more complicated negotiations and reduce the workload of the private ombudsmen.

Many interviewees experience that workload is not equally high in all the groups or units of the organization. The Negotiations unit employees experience that they have higher workloads than some other units and, within the Negotiations unit, the private ombudsmen and some other single employees have a very high workload. The differences in workload relate, according to the interviewees, to the unequal distribution of resources in the organization. For instance, a few interviewees end up wondering why there are so few negotiating ombudsmen even though the rent level negotiations are supposed to be one of the Union’s core operation areas and also bring in income for the whole organization (the Union receives compensation for the negotiations from the counterparts). The way the existing human resources are allocated within the Negotiations unit also raises some questions; one interviewee wonders why so many people are needed...
in managerial and supportive tasks. The new team based organization (see figure 7.8) has all together three managers and four employees with different support tasks, such as the development of negotiations processes. Also, the Renovations group will receive additional employees; even one of the private ombudsmen is transferred to that group. Furthermore, the Renovations group will receive two newly hired members – an architect and a construction engineer. The renovation questions are important, but the interviewees question additional resources to this group when, at the same time, the private ombudsmen are becoming sick because of too much work.

The Negotiations unit employees consequently experience their workload very high and, furthermore, think that some other employees and employee groups in the organization may have a much lower workload. An important initiative was, however, taken during the winter 2001 / 2002 to create an objective picture of the workload problem; at that time, the Negotiations unit employees recorded daily their work tasks for a time measurement study. The aim of the time measurement study was to see how working time is actually spent during the most active negotiations phase. When the unit shall have a clearer picture on where time is spent, it may be easier to structure work in different ways, to prioritize, and maybe even remove some tasks. The aim was to follow continuously the results from the time measurement study in the weekly meetings. However, this was not done; somehow the issue was never put on the meeting agenda.

Even though workload seems to be a major factor creating stress, also other factors emerge from the group discussions and interviews. The complex system to which the Negotiations unit belongs is experienced to create stress. There are many actors who influence the negotiations processes – for instance the boards of the tenants’ union movement or local tenants’ representatives. Sometimes these actors have different interests and set contradicting demands on the Negotiations unit; whose interests should be prioritized? Also, the Negotiations unit employees experience it quite stressing that the membership surveys indicate that the members experience dissatisfaction with the Union’s operation and results. It is quite contradictory that the members are not satisfied with the Union, while the employees themselves rate their professional competence high. The employees also say that their own ratings are not worth much, if they are not supported by the members’ evaluations.

Three of the interviewees also note that their experiences at work are made more negative by »difficult people in the field«, i.e. by demanding, un-
reasonable, and inconsiderate tenants’ representatives and landlords. Such people place many demands on the ombudsmen and sometimes almost harass them by phoning or sending e-mails all the time. The ombudsman in question may have other equally pressing negotiations going on and it may be impossible to concentrate only on this one case. Sometimes these difficult people then end up contacting the Union’s highest management and making complaints; they make an ombudsman a scapegoat for everything, even when she really has tried to do her best. One of the interviewees furthermore experiences that the support from one’s home organization falls short in these situations. Instead of dealing with the complaints in close collaboration within the organization, the complaints are circulated in the hierarchy and the ombudsman does not have a direct opportunity to explain her point of view to the highest management who initially received the complaint. The interviewee notes that it would be very important to deal with complaints in collaboration, since the ombudsmen are not always to blame - there can be difficult people out there who may have unreasonable demands. Another ombudsman notes, however, that the unit managers support the ombudsmen in these kinds of situations; they do listen to the person making the complaint, but also stand up for their employees.

One further reason for stress is a culture encouraging it. One small group discussing the personnel survey results in the weekly meeting noted that the unit employees are very good at becoming stressed. Very seldom there are conscious thoughts on »I can do and will do this without stress.« Already in the earlier meetings of the municipal ombudsmen, one employee noted that »seriousness is a norm« in the unit. Somehow, one has to be serious and stressed to be accepted; the employees could also take it a bit easier sometimes. In another occasion, a few ombudsmen said that there are many people (they themselves included) in the unit who almost thrive when work is rough - somehow it feels right when one has a reason to get stressed. They also stated a rhetorical question; how will we cope if things improve? Also in the interviews ideas relating to the culture feeding stress emerged; it is not customary for the employees to openly indicate need for help or express feelings of weakness. Three interviewees bring forth the idea, that it is in the Union’s culture that the employees should be able to cope with all the demands they face. They note that one should not show that one cannot cope; there is a need to wear the »I am OK« mask even when one is not doing fine. The interviewees indicate that it would be al-
most impossible for them to say that they are not able to deal with their workload; one should do what is required without complaining.

Furthermore, in the group discussions on the personnel survey results, the lack of collaboration within the organization was identified as a potential stress factor. The employees note that having better information on how the others are working and having a better coordination within the organization would create motivation and reduce stress. Also, lacking contacts to other units, for instance to the Local Support unit, are experienced negatively. Somehow the Negotiations unit functions separately from the other units even though for the members it would be better to have an organization working as a unified whole.

**Maslach and Leiter’s burnout factors – How do we locate?**

In the second interview study, the reasons for many sick-leaves and high stress levels were also approached with the help of Maslach and Leiter’s (1997; see chapter 2) burnout model. The interviewees were asked to indicate which of the burnout factors they experience existing in their work. As can be already guessed from the discussion above, most of the interviewees distinguish workload – the mismatch between quantitative work demands and available resources – as the major reason for stress. Furthermore, three interviewees connect lack of control to workload; when one has too much to do, it is impossible to experience control at work!

Besides of the workload, the interviewees also mention other burnout factors creating problems at work. Two interviewees end up saying, that all the imbalances on the Maslach and Leiter list are relevant for their unit in some form! For instance, unfairness is experienced in different ways. Two interviewees say that they do not feel appreciated – they very seldom receive positive feedback and also the salary is low compared to work input. The experience of too low salaries is shared by other interviewees, but some interviewees also underline that the most important rewards for them are the rewards directly from work. One interviewee also notes that she is respected and appreciated at the workplace, but still she suffers from unfairness - the resources and demands have been distributed unfairly and some employees or employee groups may end up having far heavier workload than others. Most interviewees do not perceive conflicting values as a problem in the organization; in an organization like Tenants’ Union, people are used to the fact that there are different values and ideas on how things should be! However, one interviewee also underlines the need to
discuss these different values in the organization; only by discussing them can they be turned into strengths.

An interviewee notes that the Maslach and Leiter burnout factor list misses one important burnout reason relevant for Tenants’ Union; namely, being stuck with one’s job – i.e. having to work without the alternative to seek for another job. This interviewee and also one other interviewee note that quite many employees are »stuck« with their jobs at Tenants’ Union. Without any professional training or other type of work experience, it would be difficult for them to find other jobs at least with equal salary and status. So, quitting the job is not an alternative. Being a »prisoner« of one’s job is very negative and creates a lot of stress among the employees, these interviewees say.

Some consequences of the high work pressure and ideas for improvement

Many interviewees note that the workload hampers the development of the unit and the quality of work suffers as the employees cannot muster energy for development work. One interviewee notes that everybody in the unit wants to improve the working situation and carry out high quality negotiations, but when there is no time, no energy to think and improve things, one gets frustrated. Along the same vein, another interviewee says that a colleague of hers noted once that »We are so busy chopping the wood that we never have time to sharpen the ax.« Consequently, work pressure at individual level cascades to an inability at collective level to improve work and its results.

Many employees experience, thus, a high work pressure without a way out of it. Escaping the workload by changing a job is not an alternative for many. Going on a strike is not an alternative either; one interviewee notes that going on a strike is not in the Union’s culture. The employees – committed to their negotiations – could not just walk out in a protest. Thus, it seems that almost the only way out from the high work pressure is to become ill, to take a sick-leave. One of the interviewees notes that for those who stay at work, it is irritating to hear how those who have become ill have had opportunities to take time for themselves, to relax on a doctor’s order. Everybody in the unit would need that! For both sides – for those who have become sick and those left behind - the situation is made even more complicated by the fact that those who stay at work have to take over the negotiations of those on a sick-leave. One interviewee notes that it takes
a lot of time to re-allocate the negotiations and another interviewee explains that it is difficult to take over negotiations already started by someone else; it is difficult to take over all the paperwork (or even to find all the necessary papers) and to jump into the relationships the other person has already built with the others in the negotiations. For those, instead, who have to take a sick-leave, it is very difficult to think that the others, already overloaded, have to take over the extra work. All this creates negative tensions among the employees.

The group discussions on the personnel survey in the weekly meeting did, however, also point out several concrete measures to improve the situation. First, the development discussions should be used at individual level to improve the working situation and working capabilities of each employee. Many small groups also note that, somehow, better conditions for exchanging information, ideas, and experiences should be created. At the time when the personnel survey was discussed (early 2002), the unit management had not yet made the decision to organize the unit into the geographical groups. In the group discussions, some employees actually advocated creating such groups as a solution for information, idea, and experience exchange. For instance, two employees noted that if one would have one’s »own« group, it would be easier to share difficult tasks and the high workload. In a designated group, it would be easier to make demands also on others, since the whole group would be accountable for its common tasks. However, at that time, some employees and also the managers indicated that they prefer more »un-organized« or informal collaboration. Instead of creating a standard solution for collaboration, each employee should be allowed to contribute to the unit’s work in his or her personal way. The managers underlined that this does not mean confirming the »each ombudsman for herself«-culture, but rather the aim is to establish a flexible way for organizing. The goal should be that each employee could find his or her way to work and collaborate within the unit. The small groups could emerge spontaneously and flexibly. These ideas were supported by an employee who said that:

We are like alphabets. In the Swedish language, certain letters are used more than others, but still – each and every letter is needed!

The other employees applauded to this. However, even after this discussion some employees maintained that standards are needed also in such a
flexible organization. The managers could maybe help the employees to find each other and to form small groups, and concrete ways to benefit from different skills should be created together in the unit. Some employees, in their turn, said that in the current situation nothing prevents the employees from creating collaboration. For instance, regular meetings with the Local Support unit could be arranged few times a year to create a better understanding of each other’s work. Also, two employees remarked that within the Negotiations unit, one can always ask for help from others. It is up to the employees to try to benefit from each other’s competencies, and they also have to work to share tasks more efficiently.

7.8.4 Organizational visions – Signpost and the employees’ everyday goals

In the weekly meetings, the organization’s visions and goals are much discussed in the form of the Signpost document (a Balanced Scorecard application). The overall organizational visions and goals created by the regional and national boards as well as the Tenants’ Union’s annual assembly are documented in the Signpost, and all the Negotiations unit employees work to derive the unit’s goals from these general guidelines. The general visions for the Tenants’ Union organization relate to engaged, reliable, open, and clear work with the members and other stakeholders to fulfill the organization’s tasks.

Many of the issues discussed above are included in the Negotiations unit’s Signpost; for some issues concrete plans have already been made, for others a need to make plans in the future has been identified. For instance, the following issues are confirmed in the unit’s Signpost-document:

1. The information to the members in advance to the negotiations will be improved. A small group is authorized to make plans relating to this.
2. The difficult rebuilding and renovation questions will be located in one group (as discussed above).
3. More focus is put on having the facts right. Important information is collected and made available to all, »who does what« in important questions is clarified.
4. There is a goal to clarify work tasks and responsibility areas.
5. All the work processes, at general level and in detail, will be documented by August 2002. The aim is to create a better understanding on how to carry out negotiations and administrative tasks.
6. Work groups are established to improve the organization’s intranet.
7. A small group of ombudsmen and negotiations assistants is formed to continuously work on administrative routines and, for instance, letter formats used in communication with the members and their representatives.

8. Meetings with other units are also arranged to increase mutual understanding between the units.

The second interview study indicates, however, that the whole process of working with the Signpost has not brought the organizational visions and goals any closer to the employees or made the visions and goals any clearer. Some interviewees say, that in their current working situation, they do not have time to take in all the visions and goals and really think what they mean in their own work. One interviewee says that she thinks she understands the overall goals of the organization, but she also feels that in reality she is not supported in achieving them. For instance, collaboration is emphasized. However, the collaboration between the ombudsmen in the Local Support unit and in the Negotiations unit is not supported. Quite the contrary, the organizational structure separates these two units from each other!

Consequently, the discussions on the organizational visions and goals are experienced to be too abstract; as one interviewee puts it »we have to wake up from the nightmare to be able to dream«. Now, there are many problems in the daily work that are not discussed or solved and, at the same time, to concentrate on dreams and visions – that is impossible, the interviewees say. Furthermore, one of the interviewees notes that the unit employees have their own, very simple goals. Their aim is to carry out high quality negotiations work without becoming ill in the process. More abstract, eloquent goals seem meaningless in this context. Nevertheless, a comment from one interviewee also emphasizes the importance of the employees’ activity in making the Signpost visions to live. She tells how she and some of her colleagues once decided to give the Signpost a try: to use it as a guidance in their work. She says that when used in that way the Signpost proved to be a good document!

Different perspectives on how the operations should be organized create an additional twist to the vision discussions. The perspectives on organizing the operations are namely closely connected to the perspectives on the organization’s most important values and its possible visions. The management advocates a professional approach to negotiations. One employee
notes that when the current Regional office was established, in which all
the ombudsmen begun to work under the same roof, the management -
maybe half jokingly - considered a »queue«-system; a landlord would come
in, take a queue number, and then be called in by any available ombudsman
for a negotiation. Thus, professionalism would mean uniform quality and
standardized negotiations. In practice, professionalism has meant organiz-
ing operations based on the counterparts (i.e. division of municipal and
private negotiations). Traditionally, however, Tenants’ Union has been
organized based on regions, a local office taking care of a certain region and
all the negotiations within it. Here the underlying value has been the peo-
ple’s movement thinking and advocating the tenants’ interests through the
local unions and tenants’ representatives. For many ombudsmen, who have
worked for a long time at Tenants’ Union, this approach and these values
are still closer to heart.

As noted above, these two perspectives have earlier caused conflicts in
the Union. One of the ombudsmen notes, however, that somehow these
two perspectives are approaching each other. It is understood that the
organization can be a people’s movement organization and professional at
the same time. Even in the current organization, there is room for the peo-
ple’s movement, she says. Other employees note in the second interview
study that – unlike during the first interview study in the early 2001 – the
professional organization versus the people’s movement is not discussed so
much anymore. The discussion has somehow just faded. However, some
interviewees note that it would be important that the organization’s direc-
tion in this respect would be clear. Once this issue were made clear, it would
be possible to start to plan the negotiations work further; should the nego-
tiations work still contain working with the local actors, engaging people to
a people’s movement or should the negotiations work concentrate on
professionalism – on efficient two party negotiations between the ombuds-
man and a landlord? A decision on this issue would affect resources needed
in the negotiations as well as planning what is included to the negotiations
tasks. As no clear decision has been made on the two value bases, the
Negotiations unit now – to be on the safe side – seems to try to do it all; to
carry out both professional negotiations with streamlined resources as well
as to concentrate on the people’s movement work among the members and
their representatives, the interviewees say. Furthermore, one interviewee
notes that as Tenants’ Union does not clearly define itself in the public dis-
cussion as a representative of a people’s movement, the members lose
touch with the people’s movement ideas. They may speak about Tenants’ Union as »you«, not as »us«. They expect the ombudsmen to do everything when actually, as members of the union, they themselves have the responsibility to be active and influence the union’s direction. The interviewee experiences this hindering her work; she and the members do not share the same idea on how the union should function.

7.8.5 The interviewees’ evaluation on the collaboration with the unit’s managers

Both the observations and the interviews indicate that the contact between the managers and the employees in the unit is very good; the employees appreciate their managers and do not blame them for the existing difficulties at work. In this sense, there is a feeling of the managers and employees being in the same boat. There are, however, some further wishes for the management. Many interviewees say, for instance, that the managers at all the levels should be more clear and set clear directions and boundaries for the operation. Two interviewees note that the lack of contact with the highest manager is extremely difficult; the employees are used to having an extremely visible (both inside and outside the organization) CEO and experience that the current CEO is not visible enough and does not always provide clear directions for the organization. Two interviewees also underline the need for the closest managers - the unit managers - to be a bit tough at times and insist that the jointly made decisions are followed.

One interviewee does also note that the current changes in the unit have taken the unit managers further away from the employees. Both unit’s managers are concentrating on the whole unit and have many different tasks in managing the unit, dealing with the members and local actors, dealing with the negotiations, etc. The near contact to the closest supervisor existing in the Regional operations unit has consequently disappeared. Also having meetings mainly in the big whole unit group instead of the subgroups has influenced this change.

The experiences on the employees’ participation and influence opportunities seem to be somewhat mixed. Many interviewees do emphasize their good and direct contact to the managers; if they want to suggest something, the managers gladly listen. However, many also speak about occasions where important decisions have been just communicated to the employees. For instance, the decision to establish a separate group for the members’ telephone service is an example of such a decision. The employ-
ees and managers worked together to make the telephone services function well and planned different models to make sure that the unit’s own telephone number would be occupied. Then, suddenly, the centralized group for the members’ telephone service – a totally different kind of solution – was introduced.

Some of the interviewees also express a need for more support from the managers on workload related issues. The interviewees miss help and guidance in prioritizing work; when one has absolutely too much to do, what can one leave out? Furthermore, sometimes the interviewees experience that rather than helping in reducing the workload, the managers are piling new tasks on the employees. The managers do try to give advice to the employees on how to deal with the workload, but some interviewees note that the advice does not help. A manager may for instance say that «do one thing at the time, it is all you can do.» This is of course true, but when one has much to do and wants to do things well, this advice does not really help. Furthermore, some of the interviewees experience that the support the managers offer is mostly social – listening and comforting. Also «real» support would be needed; the managers should intervene when someone is about to become sick because of work. Nevertheless, the interviewees do note that there is little the managers can do to reduce workload if the number of negotiating ombudsmen is not increased.

7.8.6 The interviewees’ evaluation on meetings and development work in general

As can be seen above, the weekly meeting is an important forum for the development work as well as the employees’ and managers’ collaboration. Nevertheless, in the second interview study, many indicate a need to develop the meetings further. Especially when it comes to whole unit’s meetings, in which all the employees from the unit participate (and the number of which was increased to increase collaboration within the whole unit rather than in the unit’s sub-groups), the interviewees evaluate them to be nice, but not useful. When one has a lot to do, it is difficult to «sit in a meeting» and try to concentrate on what is talked about. The interviewees experience that often the issues discussed are too abstract; they do not really relate to the daily work. Another problem with the meetings is, according to some interviewees, that there is a very little room for discussion – the meetings have not functioned as a forum to bring forth important issues in the daily work and somehow the structure of the meetings is so pre-planned
that spontaneous discussions do not emerge. One interviewee notes that the small group meetings of either municipal or private ombudsmen and assistants were actually better; the things discussed in those meetings were more relevant for one’s work.

Furthermore, the development work in the unit has succeeded in creating, for instance, better collaboration relations and improved the social climate in many ways, the interviewees say. There are, however, also areas that have not been reached in the development work so far and that the interviewees consider important. For instance, some interviewees note that the development work has not really changed the daily work or work reality. The same workload related problems still persist and actual collaboration patterns have not changed, when it comes to carrying out work tasks. Furthermore, according to some interviewees the experience of being stuck with the current job (see above) is a dangerous feeling, it makes people feel helpless, they just have to suffer the negative sides of their jobs, they have no way out. This issue has not been formally discussed at all in the unit (it only came up in the interviews) and has not, consequently, been reached in the development work.

7.9 Discussion on the case and some suggestions for further development work

At the end of the observation period and the second interview study, there still are many persisting problems in the unit. Workload was experienced very high at this point; this may be at least partly because the direction of the unit and the whole Tenants’ Union is not clear. The tasks relating to the people’s movement tradition and a more professional approach are both carried out; priorities are difficult to judge. Also, the resources are very tight; there simply are too few ombudsmen when considering the massive amount of negotiations they have to go through every year. In order to cope with the situation, the unit invests a lot on the internal development work; there are reorganizations, training efforts, meetings. But the chances to improve the situation are probably quite low, if the resources for the negotiations work are not increased or the philosophy underlying the whole operations is not reconsidered and clarified. Nevertheless, besides of summarizing and discussing the existing problems, also this section aims, where possible, to indicate further opportunities for the Negotiations unit to keep on developing.

All in all the development efforts started after the first interview study are
very ambitious. A simultaneous, gradual development has been initiated at all the systems levels; at individual level through – for instance – competence training efforts, at group level through sub-group meetings, and at unit level through unit meetings and shared experiences in the competence training. In this section, the development work and its consequences are discussed. The aim is here to see, how the challenges, questions, and ideas for the new organizational structures distinguished in the first interview study (see e.g. section 7.3.10) turned into reality during the observation period.

7.9.1 On collaboration
Regardless of the persisting problems shortly outlined above, clearly positive development is taking place in the unit. An external observer realizes this in the positive atmosphere in the meetings and the employees also themselves say that positive development has taken place – there is a different, more positive and collegial, climate now. The employees do still hold different ideas on how to carry out Tenants’ Union tasks, how to best create benefits for the members and their representatives. These ideas may sometimes conflict with each other and create friction. But the employees know each other well enough to actually often foresee each other’s views. Furthermore, some employees also express a wish that the different views would be discussed more in the organization; that there would be more opportunities to create shared understandings. In this sense, a seed of sustainability exists. The unit is not a unit of total harmony, but rather a unit that wants to deal with its discords. The managers are also important here; they are consciously aiming to create controlled debates by setting boundaries to discussions when they suspect that the discussion will become destructive rather than constructive.

However, the current way of dealing with discord in the unit also contains a seed of a problem. In the meetings, for instance, it is often taken for granted that there are »difficult« employees; persons who do not respect the joint decisions made in the unit, but rather focus on their »one-employee-enterprises«. Furthermore, the managers emphasize respecting diversity and underline that everyone should be able to work in a way most suitable for her. These two ideas put together - the taken for granted attitude towards the »difficult« group and the respect for diversity - may in the worst case legitimize the existence of the »difficult« group and strengthen its identity. Even though respecting diversity is extremely important, diversity
should not be confused for not playing by the joint rules. The competence training offers a potential to create the balance between diversity and shared »frameworks« (i.e. common norms and rules), but the challenge here is of course to create frameworks which all the employees – especially the »difficult« ones – are able to internalize.

The culture differences between the two groups, the ombudsmen working with the municipal negotiations and with the private negotiations, mentioned already in relation to the first interview study can also be seen in the weekly meetings. For instance, the group of municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants initiated its work with sensitive and »soft« working environmental issues, while the group with the ombudsmen taking care of the private negotiations and the negotiations assistants concentrated first on general questions relating to the daily negotiations brought forth by its manager (e.g. negotiations strategy and time tables). The different approaches, however, seem to have worked for the groups. The sub-groups have learned to work and meet as groups and, quite rapidly, the need for collaboration within the whole unit rather than in the sub-groups emerged in both of them. In practice, at this point unit wide meetings were increased at the expense of the sub-group meetings. Nevertheless, the interviews indicate that this change in the meeting patterns was made with a price; some employees were left to wonder what happened to the good development initiated in the smaller groups, such as the discussions on the work environmental issues in the two subgroups. Maybe the change was made too fast or maybe the initial plans on how to improve working environment were forgotten at this point, since the processes started in the subgroups now became stalled. Or maybe digging deep into the work environmental problems created too much anxieties in the unit; as can be seen above, the whole unit meetings then concentrated on less-sensitive issues: on technical tools and on the quite abstract vision document. In any case, the initial and promising results from the discussions on the work environmental issues were never benefited from; in a way this valuable work was wasted in the turmoil of the internal development.

7.9.2 Being a part of the change effort
The unit’s two managers have taken personal interest and responsibility for improving the unit’s working conditions. Not only do they have a central role in creating the new collaboration patterns in the meetings and leading the discussions on very sensitive working conditions related issues, but they
also through their own example aim to create new visions for collaboration in the unit. For instance, in line with the competence training, the managers clearly make efforts to be clear, consistent, and framework competent. In the meetings, the managers have a very central role. They plan and prepare issues to be discussed in the meetings and function as chairmen of the meetings. They also encourage discussion and delimit it when they think necessary.

In the meetings, the direction of the discussion can in consequence be described to be «top-down» - from the general, shared issues and /or problems towards an individual’s work as well as from the managers to the employees. For instance, the problem with the group telephone number was detected by the managers, who then steered collective planning in creating a solution to the problem. This solution would then affect the employees’ work. Moreover, usually it seems that the employees come to the meetings without having prepared for the discussions. Often, for instance, if some document is discussed, the employees read it for the first time in the meeting. It might help to develop the meetings further, if the employees had a responsibility to suggest issues to be discussed as well as individually and collectively prepare for the meetings in advance. The interviews also confirm the employees’ quite passive role in the meetings and especially in the whole unit meetings. Many interviewees do not really experience the meetings touching them. Instead, they get frustrated when they have to «sit in the meetings», while they would have many things to do – things they consider to be more important.

Naturally, the managers have an overview of the unit’s working situation and can bring forth issues with relevance for all. Working out the problems top-down, from the general level towards each employee’s personal work, is important. However, such processes could be complemented (not replaced) by processes running in the opposite direction: starting from single problem situations in the employees’ daily negotiation and administrative work and rising to the shared level through discussion. This would help to detect those problems at work that now have not been reached. It is quite obvious that such problems do still exist in the unit’s work. For instance, workload problems are such a crucial problem area that should be addressed in the unit meetings. Furthermore, maybe some of the issues underlying stress are on their way to be improved, but there may also be other problem areas that are yet to be recognized. Some ombudsmen did actually state in the meeting where the personnel survey was discussed that
the high stress levels cannot be explained by looking at the working conditions at general level; each employee is different and may experience different issues stressful. It might be, thus, beneficial for the unit and its employees to access such personal stress through more daily work focused interventions.

Establishing improvement processes that start from the employees’ daily work worries has also been advocated by the Swedish working environment inspectors who studied the working conditions in the old Regional operations unit (see section 7.2). The inspectors noted in their report dated in March 2001 that there is little room for spontaneous discussions on the employees’ daily work problems and experiences. Even though the new meeting practices have improved the situation, maybe the meetings could still be developed further by providing opportunities to approach work related problems both from the organizational level to the individual level (as is done now) as well as from the individual level to the organizational level. The separate meetings for the municipal ombudsmen and assistants as well as for the private ombudsmen and assistants did actually provide more »bottom-up« approach: from daily experiences to general solutions. However, the increase in the unit wide meetings at the expense of the subgroup meetings did slow down, even stopped, these processes.

The meetings have so far also concentrated much on organizational issues; for instance, on collaboration patterns and technological tools within the organization. The problematic situations at negotiations have not been discussed as extensively. In a weekly meeting, one ombudsman actually pointed out this as a reason for frustration. She says that her work consists of negotiations tasks and tasks that support negotiations, and most of the meetings concentrate on these supporting tasks that she considers of secondary importance. Now, dealing with and planning how to deal with the supporting tasks take time from negotiations, and this makes her frustrated. The concentration on the supporting tasks may indicate that the negotiations are still perceived somehow as the ombudsmen’s private sphere; that – as was discovered in the initial interviews – each ombudsman is quite alone with her tasks and even the negotiation competencies are perceived as personal competencies that cannot be learned from others. It might be helpful for the employees to create also forums, where experiences and problems relating to the actual negotiation situations are freely discussed and where the employees have opportunities to learn from each other’s experiences and find natural connections between their work.
7.9.3 From flexible collaboration to formal groups

However, the way such forums should be created in the unit remained unclear for a long time. On the one hand, many employees indicated that they would prefer more »standardized« solutions; the creation of formal groups that offer a kind of »home base« for each employee and in which an employee can rely on the others to help and share her workload, if it gets too heavy. However, the unit’s management and some employees advocated instead a more flexible way to organize; the employees would flexibly form groups that can support them in their work.

Eventually, the choice between formal groups and flexible collaboration was made in favor of the former. After having communicated the vision of flexible collaboration within the whole unit for quite a long time, the management then suddenly initiated the discussions on the small-group based organization by presenting their model (the structure of this model was the same as the structure of the group-based organization eventually chosen and described in figure 7.8). The managers explained their change of heart on the matter by saying that the various signals from the unit employees indicated that they would prefer to have formal groups.

As the small groups were established much focus was concentrated on the structure; which groups there should be and who should be in which group. What was not discussed as much was the purpose of the groups; why are the groups established? How are they supposed to be functioning? For instance, many interviewees in the second interview study expressed a wish that the new groups would enable them to benefit more from other’s competencies. Is this also a formal aim for the groups? If so, how could the groups achieve this in practice? When introducing the idea on the new group-based organization, much focus was consequently placed on what the new organization will be like; why to organize in this way and how the groups are supposed to be functioning was not discussed as much. In the second interview study this could be seen as the interviewees’ confusion on how the groups would actually change their work.

7.9.4 What is missing from the development work?

Three further observations can also be made on issues that have not been discussed and worked on sufficiently in the unit. First, it seems that changes are made extremely rapidly. For instance, the planning work within the Negotiations unit on the members’ telephone service was swiftly replaced by the decision from the Union’s management to establish a centralized group
to receive all the different kinds of telephone contacts. Similarly, the vision on flexible collaboration advocated by the unit’s management was dropped within a few meetings and the group-based organization was established instead. Furthermore, the subgroup weekly meetings concentrating on working environmental issues were discarded as the unit wide meetings were increased. All these changes had their grounds and many of them were on the employees’ list of wishes also. Consequently, the management of the unit seems to very rapidly »read« the employees’ wishes and is prepared to turn the unit around to accommodate them; the development work progresses dynamically.

However, the danger here is that the development in the organization becomes erratic – going first in this way and then in that way. This danger becomes even more clear, if the unit does not really discuss the reasons why the changes are made. For instance, as noted above, the managers initiated the transformation towards the group-based organization by saying that the employees wanted to have these kinds of groups. But maybe more fundamental discussion on the reasons to reorganize the whole unit would be needed; why are the groups established – what is their goal and purpose? Discarding the subgroup work on the work environmental issues took place with even less discussion. The second interview study gives already indications that the employees are, to some extent, falling behind on the rapid changes. The interviewees say that the unit wide meetings are distant to them; the meetings seem to happen to them, not with them. Consequently, it would be important to go through each change process starting from the employees – to let them discuss what is happening and why. Also they should make the changes happen!

A second and related issue is that, so far, the meetings have been mostly heading forward and a rear-view mirror has seldom been looked at. For instance, there was an aim to follow up the time measurement study’s results each month, but in practice this has not taken place. There is of course a danger that if the time measurement study is not followed up or discussed, the employees will forget it or, at least, fail to actively fill in their own time measurement forms that should be filled in every day. However, the development of social interaction and collaboration is instead followed up actively; for instance, the competence training consultants arrange meetings in which the employees can reflect on the consequences of the training so far. Nevertheless, it would be important to check also the experienced development on other issue areas. Has the reorganization and the
consequent development work, for instance, reduced the workload in the private negotiations? Have the changes improved the administrative support the ombudsmen receive? Furthermore, when it comes to flexible, organic collaboration within and outside the unit, it is very important to collectively follow up the development and the employees’ experiences on collaboration and its effects on their daily work.

A third issue that has not really surfaced is the idea of the organization’s loyalty towards the employees. Already in the initial interviews some noted that one carries the responsibility for an unsuccessful negotiation result alone and that the higher levels of the organization punish rather than support in such a situation; only bad news come from the managers. Also during the sub-group meetings and unit meetings the question of the organization’s loyalty towards the employees has almost surfaced a few times, but has never really been discussed. For instance, in one group work carried out in a weekly meeting, the employees recognized »closed power relations«, »different blurred maps on decisive issues«, and »unclear management« as obstacles for a good working environment. Nonetheless, so far these issues have not been discussed in detail in the unit. The employees do seem to have open and good relations to their closest managers and consider them to have improved the unit’s operation and working conditions in many ways. However, maybe the unit employees experience some distance to the overall management of the tenants’ union movement and would like to bridge this distance. As mentioned, some interviewees in the second interview study noted that the highest management is not visible enough inside or outside the organization and, furthermore, the different boards (the regional and national) seem to sometimes be quite far away from the employees. Still, their decisions influence the employees’ work directly or indirectly. For instance, a decision in the national board on the members’ telephone service led to a local decision to discard the group numbers after the Negotiations unit had already spent many meeting hours for improving its availability to the members. This kind of an event may well undermine the employees’ experiences of control in their work and the organization’s loyalty towards them. Also, the unit’s managers are in a difficult position trying to implement the board decisions in a way that is in accordance with the unit’s overall development. It would seem that a closer contact between the Union’s decision-making bodies and its employees might be beneficial for increasing the mutual understanding and shared sense of organizational direction.
7.9.5 The development in the Negotiations unit from the Porras and Robertson perspective

During the time interval of this case study, the Negotiations unit has consequently begun an important trip from consuming work to regenerative work. Change is not easy, one year after the initial interviews in which the factors creating consuming work were detected, the problems still persist. The employees experience high stress levels and some end up on stress related sick-leaves. Nevertheless, the unit has embarked on an ambitious development path in which all the different system levels (individual, group, and unit) are focused on and in which different work system elements are developed simultaneously. In this section the development work in the Negotiations unit is discussed from the perspective of the Porras and Robertson model (see figure 7.5) in order to see more clearly how different work system elements influencing the employees have developed during the SALUT-project.

Much effort has been invested in the social factors in the unit. The subgroup and unit meetings as well as the competence training are all aimed at bringing the employees closer together as well as enabling collaboration between people working in the unit. It seems that the managers’ vision has been to let social factors to steer organizational arrangements rather than the other way around. For instance, the managers initially advocated informal groups as a foundation for the collaboration in the unit instead of having formal, organizationally designed groups. Also, when it comes to the formal groups eventually formed, the managers’ first concern was to determine who are in the same group rather than the general purpose and operation methods of the groups. Similarly, the way the employees are located in the office space is aimed at supporting social factors rather than work tasks; employees working on similar issues do not necessarily sit close to each other. Furthermore, the competence training described in section 7.8.1 concentrates mostly on stress management and social competencies rather than on professional and work related competencies. In this sense, the Negotiations unit as an organizational unit has come a long way from its initial mass-production oriented organization (defined in figure 7.2) in which each employee had her own position »box« and predetermined collaboration lines. These new ideas, advocating social interaction and basically a post-bureaucratic way to organize (see chapter 3), are taking hold only one year after a situation where, for instance, the ombudsmen and ne-
gotiations assistants had to »communicate« with each other through plastic baskets (see section 7.3.3) rather than interacting freely.

Based on the interviews in the second interview study, the employees do perceive that the social factors are one of the best things at work – if not the best thing. However, there are many serious problems remaining in the unit that seem to be difficult or impossible to solve only by looking at the social interaction in the unit. For instance, the development efforts have not reduced the workload or, according to the interviewees in the second interview study, even influenced the way the employees go about their daily work. Consequently, a strange situation emerges, where the employees experience things improving at the workplace but not in their work! To reach for instance the workload problems, other types of development efforts might be needed. For instance, an idea emerged from the second interview study on changing the way the most routine private negotiations are carried out; i.e. to create simple routines to take care of those private negotiations where the landlord is willing to accept the rent level agreement reached in the relevant municipal negotiations. Thus, discussing the actual work processes; what is done, why, and in what way, would be important and, as noted above, these discussions should be anchored to the employees’ work situation.

In the unit’s current situation, where the way to work and organize has changed and is changing so drastically and rapidly, visions (an essential element in the Porras and Robertson model) are of crucial importance. Nevertheless, based on the second interview study and also the observations in the unit, it seems that a potentially weak point in the development process relates to vision creation, vision communication, and vision internalization. The vision discussions leave the employees cold and unmoved; the interviewees say that the weekly meetings where the Signpost is discussed have not really brought the visions any closer to them, the discussions do not touch them or connect to their work. Consequently, it seems that there are visions and goals, but somehow they have not become internalized, they do not have a decisive influence on the daily work. Maybe one reason for this is that the visions and goals are not debated in the Union. The organization level visions are only discussed within the Negotiations unit, there have not really been discussions between the Negotiations unit and the organization’s highest management or other units on what the visions mean. The value and vision conflicts are not
debated but, instead, different visions and values are allowed to live their own silent lives in the organization. The contradictory perspectives on professionalism and people’s movement have not, for instance, been debated through.

Also, the employees themselves somehow do not often take the responsibility for actually trying to connect the organizational visions with their work. One interviewee in the second interview study noted that only when she and some of her colleagues really tried to apply Signpost in their daily work, it started to make sense and it helped them in their work. It would, thus, be important that the employees would carry the vision processes both in the meetings and in their daily work.

Also sometimes discussions on visions and goals – why something is done – are omitted. For instance, the perspectives on the flexible, organic collaboration versus more standardized formal groups emerged more or less accidentally. The managers never before came around to present their visions for collaboration, until in one unit-wide meeting the discussions just by chance entered this area. It may be that not focusing on visions prevents frustrating discussions on conflicting visions and values from emerging but, all the same, it may also undermine the development efforts. Sooner or later a question »why« will emerge; why do we develop the unit to this direction? Why is it important to let collaboration grow organically? Why are the formal groups created? The employees seem to already now experience certain uncertainty on the organization’s directions and goals; this is obvious from the interviews (see section 7.8.4).

Having now discussed the interplay between vision, physical setting, organizational arrangements, and social factors; technology is the only work system element left to be discussed from the Porras and Robertson model. The employees and managers have also invested a lot of effort in improving the technological side of the operation; for instance, a group working to improve administrative forms and routines is planned to be established and, during the observation time, improvements on databases functioning as an important support in the negotiations work have been made. However, much work still remains to be done when it comes to technology. For instance, improving the mailing routines, the telephone availability towards the members, as well as the use of different databases have not been easy. Each issue has contained much confusion, even basic issues relating to these questions have not been clear to many employees.

Furthermore, technical machines will easily end up being foes rather
than friends, if there is no time to learn to use them well or even guidance on how to use them. Some interviewees note that the Office Support-unit, whose task it is to support other employees with technical questions, sometimes fails to provide enough relevant (and good spirited!) advice. However, in the weekly meetings both the unit’s employees and employees from other units proficient with some technical equipment or technical routine advice the others. It seems that experience exchange is most active between the different units relating to technical questions; representatives from other units have not visited the Negotiations unit’s weekly meetings on other – for instance organizational – issues.

Technology also easily ends up being a foe, if it is developed to simply automate employees’ work. Automating certain routine parts of work may make sense in a situation where doing this supports the employees in their work efforts, reduces their workload, and enables them to concentrate on what is important. This is literally rationalization – making work more rational both from the point of view of employees and organizational outcomes. However, automating work such that the employees’ professional competence is undermined is less fruitful. At the Negotiations unit, new professional routines and computer systems are, however, often presented to reduce the competence needs. For instance, the new computer system discussed in section 7.8.3 was described to make it possible for »anybody from the street« to carry out successful negotiations. Similarly, professionalism in negotiations work was at one time (see section 7.8.4) connected to person independent negotiations work; the negotiations should be standardized such that anybody could negotiate anything. The ombudsmen quite the contrary emphasize the personal competencies needed in the negotiations and seem to connect negotiations successes to their Self – to who they are as persons, to how they as individuals are able to meet the opponents. Consequently, describing routines and technical tools as not increasing the employees’ possibilities to carry out their work well but rather as reducing the need for competencies, can be quite alienating for the employees and does definitely not encourage the use and exploration of new technical tools or work routines.

### 7.9.6 Persisting stress levels – Which burnout factors exist?

Despite the development steps the unit has made, quite high stress levels still remain. The personnel survey indicates high stress levels, as do the discussions on the survey as well as the interviews of the second interview
study. Also stress related sick-leaves still take place. When we look at the Porras and Robertson-model, development has been initiated in most of the work system elements. Why do high stress levels persist? Maslach and Leiter’s (1997) burnout model discussed in chapter 2 and also in section 7.8.3 may shed some light to the stress situation. Maslach and Leiter distinguish six burnout dimensions or risk factors in which an imbalance between an employee and her work may lead to the experiences of stress; the factors are (see chapter 2) workload, control, rewards, community, unfairness, and conflicting values. At this point, with many development efforts in their beginning, imbalances still exist relating to many areas. Workload is still extremely high during the negotiations; the development work has so far done little to reduce it. Innovations, such as the establishment of the Renovations group, may gradually decrease the workload to some degree. Also improvements in the administrative routines as well as collaboration relating to administrative tasks may reduce the workload. However, based on the second interview study, the employees seem to be convinced that if the resources are not distributed in a new way in the organization, the privately negotiating ombudsmen's workload will not decrease. It really is worth asking why Tenants’ Union has only ten of its 130 employees working with the private negotiations within Stockholm City; an increasing and demanding task area creating also vital income for the organization.

Lack of control is another important problem and, according to the interviews, closely related to workload. When one has much to do, when new tasks are piled on already burdened shoulders, it is easy to experience a loss of control. The employees just work as hard as they can, but the workload never diminishes and the employees also lose the possibility to enjoy the job done well. When they have too many tasks, all highly prioritized, it is impossible for them to do as good a job as they knew they could do with a lower workload. Consequently, an idea brought forth already earlier in this chapter, is also worth mentioning here; it really would make sense to reconsider work processes to see which tasks might be possible to carry out in a simpler way as well as which tasks to prioritize. Based on the second interview study, it is clear that the employees think that with the current resources, it is not possible to carry out all the work tasks as have been done before.

There are still imbalances relating to rewards, unfairness, and conflicting values. When it comes to rewards, the employees regard their salaries too
low and also note that other rewards have disappeared. The current way to organize, the experienced movement towards »insurance agency mentality« may have decreased intrinsic rewards from the work as the employees living and thriving in a people’s movement end up staring at computer screens and getting entangled with red tape. This change and still persisting longing for a more people’s movement oriented operation may also increase the employees’ sense of conflicting values. In an organization like Tenants’ Union, where the employees are truly committed to the purpose of the organization, conflicting values may have exceedingly harmful consequences. The employees have a strong sense of how to service the members and their representatives in the best possible way. If they experience the Union’s internal organization to prevent them from doing this, it is very likely that they feel their energy consumed at work. Additionally, as noted above, the organization’s loyalty towards its employees seems to be still an issue at least for some of the employees. They experience, that if they do not succeed in their work, the organization punishes rather than supports them. Consequently, there may still exist largely unrecognized experiences of unfairness in the organization. Furthermore, the decisions coming from the national and regional boards may render the development work done in the unit obsolete as happened in the case of the group telephone number. A decision made in the national board could not be integrated to the earlier development work done in the unit and the employees’ earlier efforts to improve their availability to members could not be realized. It would be important to figure out ways to integrate the board decisions in the overall development in the unit; as the employees say, even though decisions come from outside, it would be good if the unit still could decide on how it implements the decisions.

All in all, it might be a good idea to look at Maslach and Leiter’s burnout factors and discuss them in the unit. How do the employees locate themselves on the different factors? In which factor are the imbalances worse? Why? Answers to these questions would probably help in the further development of regenerative rather than consuming work. This kind of a process might also complement the top-down development work done so far by creating a bottom-up process in which the employees would have an opportunity to distinguish those daily work experiences that consume their resources. Such bottom-up processes also might be important, since they would place the initiative and responsibility for the development work with the employees. As noted above, currently the employees often simply
arrive at the meetings without having prepared in any way. The danger here is that they lose the perspective on the continuity of the development work; they are at the receiving end rather than have to make the development happen, live through the change, and become also self transformed by it (see chapter 2).

7.9.7 How to go further?

One of the aims of the Tenants’ Union SALUT-project has been to increase the organization’s ability to face rapidly emerging demands and changes from the environment. Whether the Negotiations unit has actually succeeded in increasing this ability will only be seen in the long term; however, quite positive predictions may already be warranted on this issue. The unit has now established different forums, for instance the weekly meetings, in which the whole unit has an opportunity to discuss and plan how to react to the changes. Furthermore, the aim to create better contacts to other units and employee groups within Tenants’ Union may also enable better insights to upcoming changes and demands as well as collective actions needed to face them. Furthermore, already now, the managers do their best to convey information from the higher levels, such as the board of the union. Also, the organizational innovations created so far – such as the special task force for renovation questions, other small groups as well as the encouragement for flexible collaboration within the unit – also potentially increase the unit’s ability to deal with changing demands. However, it is important that the employees are internally committed to this development work of continuously responding and even proactively acting at the face of changes. Now, it seems, that the employees express only passivity in the unit meetings and do not really feel touched by the general issues discussed.

Consequently, three ways are suggested here to further advance the Negotiations unit’s development:

1. To complement the current top-down development work (from overall development needs and problems towards the daily work) with bottom-up development work that builds concretely on the employees’ daily work experiences. Also, the employees should gradually take larger responsibility in the development work: to prepare for the meetings, to suggest issues to be discussed, and to carry the responsibility for certain development projects. Only by carrying the responsibility for the development work more actively, will the employees truly become internally committed to it (see Argyris, 1998; chapter 2).
2. To create *dialogue on visions and values* within the unit and between the unit and the highest management and, in this way, to increase the employees’ understanding on why the management drives a certain development line. The employees’ own vision of carrying out negotiations as the members expect them to be carried out while not becoming ill, should also be taken as a starting point for creating concrete goals and milestones for the organization’s development. Furthermore, the collaboration between the unit employees, the highest management, and also the movement’s decision-making bodies (for instance different boards) might help those others to understand the problematic working situation in the Negotiations unit. It would be important to gain these other actors’ understanding on, for instance, the workload problems in the unit.

3. To *look critically at the current work processes and resources division* in the whole organization to find out why the privately negotiating ombudsmen have such a high workload. Would it be possible to reduce this workload by targeting the existing organizational resources differently or would it make more sense to »rationalize« the private negotiations – to develop the negotiations processes such that routine cases could be dealt with more efficiently? Relating to the point two of this list, it would be important for the management to decide what should be the fundamental idea underlying the negotiations work – should the negotiations work still carry on the people’s movement tradition or should the unit concentrate only on professional negotiations with the landlords and their representatives? The path that is chosen will certainly affect the negotiations processes and, consequently, the resource needs at work.
The aim of this chapter is to put together all that was learned in the earlier chapters and, furthermore, to lift the analysis yet a level higher: to find the recurring patterns relating to human resources consumption and regeneration in the case studies (chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7) and literature research (chapters 2 and 3). Here the synthesizing horizontal analysis of the empirical material is presented; the underlying themes relating to the research questions in all the four case studies are brought forth and discussed. Furthermore, the aim is to let the theoretical perspectives presented in chapters 2 and 3 to »discuss« with the empirical material in chapters 4 through 7. The empirical findings are backed up and conceptualized with the help of the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis.

This chapter, consequently, aims to provide answers to the research questions identified in chapter 1:

• What characterizes post-bureaucratic working life?
• Why and how do human resources become consumed in the contemporary working life?
• What does regenerative work supporting employees’ personal and professional growth as well as well-being mean in the contemporary working life?
• How to create such regenerative work in the present situation?

One focal question in the contemporary working life research has been whether or not we are living through a paradigm shift in the working life. Chapter 3 reviews the discussion on the paradigm shift and, quite obvious-
ly, many researchers tend to lean towards the idea of a paradigm shift taking place; we are moving from tayloristic mass production era towards something else, towards post-fordism, post-industrialism, post-bureaucracy. These researchers state that the characteristics of the contemporary working life do not correspond anymore to the industrial mass production-ideal; tayloristic division of labor is replaced by extended job contents and integration, bureaucratic power structures are replaced by various and flexible authority boundaries, etc.

Also this thesis reports changes in the working life: changes in the nature of work and, to some degree, also in the nature of work organizations. The new kinds of challenges at work, the emergence of post-bureaucracy, are quite obvious in the NewMedia and TeleCom cases. However, it is surprising to see certain post-bureaucratic elements also in the more traditional case organizations, in Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union. Also in these organizations, it was possible to see both work corresponding to, for instance, Howard’s (1995) definition of post-bureaucratic work as well as problems relating to the bureaucratic ways of steering an organization. Consequently, the case studies of this thesis enable the conceptualization of reasons for human resources consumption stemming from a paradigmatic change and the difficulties when trying to master the situation.

Even if the focus is on the paradigmatic shift taking place that does not mean that a full-scale emergence of the post-bureaucratic working life is advocated here. As noted in chapters 1 and 3, there are still plenty of organizations and work settings where traditional bureaucratic and tayloristic work realities exist. Consequently, the aim here is not to draw a picture of working life in general, but instead to concentrate on the changes taking place and conceptualize the characteristics of post-bureaucracy and its consequences on employees where it exists. To put it metaphorically; I am discussing yellow flowers here, but do not claim that all flowers are yellow.

This chapter begins by discussing the characteristics of post-bureaucratic working life and, especially, their consequences on employees. The first and second research questions are answered in sections 8.1 and 8.2. Section 8.3, in its turn, provides answers to the fourth research question. In chapter 2 regenerative work was defined at conceptual level (what it is, i.e. the third research question) and here the aim is to see how collectively – through organizing, through leading, and through being led – regenerative work might emerge. In section 8.4 the current paradigmatic change is put into a broader historical context and discussed as a new phase in the con-
tinuously unfolding history of work. Finally, the chapter concludes with a critical evaluation on the thesis work. The implications of the thesis as well as further research questions are discussed as well.

But first, a note on the concepts used in the thesis. As yet the emerging era is only known as being »new« or »post« something – the new economy, post-industrialism, post-fordism, or post-bureaucracy – and there is no generally adopted name for it. Even the popular concept of »new economy« became more or less discarded as the first two years of 21st century indicated that ICT-stocks may also lose their value and if one does not have sufficient income, one cannot run a business; the emergence of new branches had not changed the way the economy works. Thus, only time will give a new name for this era after industrialism and bureaucracy. For better and for worse, here it is called post-bureaucracy underlining the current transition in work as well as in both power structures and the logic of organizing.

8.1 The changing world of work

The case studies and the literature research carried out identify several simultaneous developments present in the working life that challenge the earlier wisdom on work and work organizations. A key research interest area in this thesis is to explore these emerging characteristics of working life and to document them (the first research question), as well as to see their implications on work organizations and employees (the second research question). Already the Empirical Study I indicated that the contemporary problems relating to human resources consumption may relate to the transformation from predefined and confined work to more post-bureaucratic work (see section 5.10). The Empirical Study II does confirm this notion and, in this section, I shall discuss and exemplify the post-bureaucratic characteristics of work and the challenges they pose on individuals.

This thesis points out that as the world surrounding and penetrating organizations is changing (see figure 3.1), these changes are in the first phase changing the daily work activities in organizations. One of the main conclusions that will be put forward in this section is that organizational solutions – support and control processes, organizational structures, management and collaboration practices, etc. – tend to lack behind. They are still aimed at supporting, controlling, structuring, and guiding compartmentalized, divided, and standardized work activities. An imbalance or a mismatch results between the work activity level and the structural level.
This results in human resources consumption as employees’ work is no longer supported by organizational solutions. The case studies actually describe how the mismatch between work activities and an organizational setting leads to negative consequences at individual and organizational levels; this is discussed further in section 8.2. Furthermore, the case studies also indicate how the organizations studied try to design such structures, tools, and processes that would better take into account the work realities (see section 8.3). Nevertheless, this is not easy either since the new kinds of organizational and collaborative approaches seem to mean in practice that employees and managers must engage in very demanding collaboration and dialogue processes on work goals and priorities. This is discussed in sections 8.1.1 and 8.3.3.

Consequently, this discussion chapter aims to make visible the special characteristics of present day working life, the gradually appearing mismatch between work activities and organizational structures as well as how this mismatch consumes employees’ resources. Eventually, the aim is here also to learn from the case organizations’ challenging paths towards a more balanced situation.

### 8.1.1 Comprehensive personal presence at a workplace

One working life characteristic, apparent from all four case studies and profoundly affecting employees, is that work in the case organizations is demanding more comprehensive and profound personal presence at the workplace than work in traditional, bureaucratic work systems characterized by impersonality. Naturally, people have always been present at workplaces as whole beings; even in the most bureaucratic settings people have existed with all their needs, fears, values, etc. Nevertheless, the point I am making here is that in the case organizations, increasingly, employees have to engage themselves more fully in work; the grounds for their behavior cannot anymore be the ready made answers (»this is the way a nurse behaves«, »this is what my job description says«), but rather personal judgments and choices. Professional presence is extended to comprehensive personal presence. As Kahn (1992) puts it when discussing psychological presence at work, an employee is »fully there« with her thoughts, feelings, and beliefs all involved in the work process.

Already in the literature review of chapter 3, this characteristic of post-bureaucratic working life was distinguished as a potential positive opportunity or a potential threat; the case studies illuminate further both of these
aspects and, above all, increase the understanding of why more comprehensive and profound personal presence at the workplace is needed.

What leads to a more comprehensive personal presence at a workplace? Based on the case studies, there are several reasons for the need of a more comprehensive personal presence at the workplace. One of the most important is that work and the way it is organized cannot be pre-defined in many situations. Consequently, the need for on-going, on-the-job, real-time discussions and negotiations between employees and their managers on how things are done and how they should be done increases. Hatchuel (2002) defines such work »unconfined«; it is not predetermined and delimited by work designers. My case studies show that as work becomes unconfined in this sense, employees have to and do take the responsibility for re-confining their own work. Together with their peers and managers they try to make sense of their work, individually they try to mentally confine it (»this I do not have to care about«). Both activities are demanding and may become overwhelming, if an organization does not create support and room for them – more on this later on in the chapter.

The discussions at workplaces on tasks, roles, and priorities make it necessary for an individual to make personal judgments and choices as well as to communicate them to relevant others. The personal judgments and choices are not only a question of professional preferences or professional codes and standards, but they also relate to an individual’s awareness of her competencies, skills, values, and needs. Consequently, the need for personal presence at work increases as employees have to make quite personal judgments at work. For instance, the interviewees in the TeleCom case study indicated that while learning how to work, they also need to learn to know themselves; otherwise it is extremely difficult to engage in the continuous discussions on tasks and project priorities. Furthermore, a more comprehensive personal presence at work also relates to the fact that as an employee engages in designing her work, her relation to it becomes that of the creator’s to the created; work becomes one’s »image« and, consequently, more and more important part of the person. In the Norrtälje Hospital case, the department managers created their own ideas on what their roles should be like; the abstract or non-existing job descriptions left this possibility open for them. However, eventually the reality did not meet these personal ideas on the department manager roles, and many department
managers became very frustrated and reported profound disappointment towards their work.

In chapter 3, it was noted that the increasing personal presence at a workplace makes also certain affective states more personal; for instance dependency and envy are not contained anymore by the bureaucratic system, but become related directly to persons and have to be dealt by them (Hirschhorn, 1997). The NewMedia and TeleCom case studies indicate that the same happens to dealing with failures; bureaucracy depersonalizes failures while post-bureaucracy takes them closer to an individual's Self. In a bureaucratic system when a person makes a mistake, the whole system reacts to it. As Heckscher (1994) notes, the task in which the mistake took place is often delegated »upwards«; a manager takes over. The employee may be punished by the authorities but – after that – she does not really have to think about the whole matter anymore. Naturally, such a process can be embarrassing and negative to the employee but, in a way, she does not have to live with the mistake. The issue has been delegated elsewhere, she has received her punishment and served her sentence. At NewMedia and TeleCom, however, mistakes are mainly the business of the person making the mistake. She made the mistake and only she can sort out the situation. Managers may help in this by, for instance, asking question to clarify the situation, but they will not take over. The whole mess and its consequences remain on the employee's desk. Rather than being punished by the system and authorities, the employee ends up being punished by herself. There is no external authority to administer the punishment and pardon, the employee has to go through all these processes and related emotions on her own. Dealing with mistakes in a more post-bureaucratic environment is, therefore, also a good example of a situation where work demands a more comprehensive personal presence, for good and for worse.

Yet another reason for a more comprehensive personal presence at work relates to the boundaries of work and organization; these are discussed more extensively below. Here it may suffice to say that in the contemporary working life as it appeared in the cases, employees' daily work seems to be strongly affected by a complex web of societal and economic factors surrounding and penetrating the organization. This probably has always been the case - organizations are embedded in the society – but in the contemporary working life many societal and economic factors affect work and employees in a quite negative way. For instance, the employees both at
Tenants’ Union and in Norrtälje Hospital are affected by such societal trends as increasing disregard towards other people as well as the relentless and unconditional pursuit for one’s own good even at the expense of other’s welfare. At the hospital, the employees have to deal with for instance elderly people, who have to stay hospitalized since they have nowhere else to go. There are no extended families in which they could find their place and be cared for, and for the town, responsible for the care of the elderly, it means savings if the elderly are cared for in the county’s hospitals rather than in the municipal old-age homes. The increased efficiency and savings demands in the public sector consequently reflect directly to the employees’ work. At Tenants’ Union, the employees instead fight for people losing their homes, when the privatization of the municipal apartments or changes in the rental contract forms rise the rents beyond the paying capacity of many low-income tenants. Dealing with such situations is personally involving and potentially consuming. For NewMedia and TeleCom in their turn, the globalization of competition and unregulated markets among other things create uncertainties in the daily work; things may change very rapidly. As in the NewMedia case, there may appear external changes that necessitate the creation of totally new product line and abandoning earlier projects. At the same time, the employees are responsible for their projects as well as committed to their work and motivated to do their best. Abandoning a project or a task one has worked with means abandoning something in which one has invested much of oneself.

Also social interaction at work necessitates a more comprehensive personal presence at the workplace; an individual cannot encounter other people purely as dictated by job descriptions or organizational policies, but for instance emotions and personal histories are always involved in human interaction. Furthermore, the positive and negative sides of social interaction become more pronounced as the importance of social contacts at work is continuously increasing. Social contacts are not anymore the characteristic of only certain jobs, but the use of small group work as well as the importance of information at work make social interaction an essential element of work. For instance, the TeleCom case study points out the importance of informal social networks the employees build and maintain in order to receive enough and correct information vital for carrying out their work. Also all four case studies indicate the facilitating role informal social connections between different organizational actors have in relation to formal connections. Having an informal, personal contact to others makes it
easier to take them into account in one’s work often interconnected to the work of those others. Vise versa, the informal contacts also enable a person to receive support from others and increase the likelihood that the others take the person and her work into account when carrying out their work. Thus, each employee faces increased demands to informally bind herself to »invisible« and informal networks; failure to do so decreases the possibility to cope successfully with one’s work. However, being socially active is not easy for all (or any of us at times); quite the contrary, there probably are equally many inclined to prefer solitude or simple, predetermined social contacts at work as there are more socially flexible persons. Work can be experienced very consuming, if it becomes a popularity contest.

On putting one’s Self on the line and on becoming whole

In section 5.10 (at the transition from the Empirical Study I to Empirical Study II), two questions relating to employees’ individual coping with the post-bureaucratic elements of work were presented, namely:

• Based on the Empirical Study I, work post-bureaucratic in its nature is very demanding for individuals. How is it possible to mentally master one’s invisible, complex work?

• At NewMedia and TeleCom the employees seem to have to carry active and broad responsibility for their work to perform it successfully and to make the whole »production system« function. What does such broader responsibility taking mean and how can it be achieved?

These questions also relate to the second and fourth research questions. An individual’s thoughts and behavior influence her interaction with work and the consuming or regenerative outcomes of that interaction (see figure 2.5). This section as well as section 8.1.3 will go deeper into these issue areas and discuss salutary personal approaches and competencies needed in the post-bureaucratic working life.

But let us start with the threats the comprehensive personal presence at a workplace may cause. By being present at the workplace as a whole person, an individual with all her humane qualities becomes invariably more exposed to work and social demands as discussed above. Decisions made and directions taken affect not only the »professional me«, but rather the whole person; mistakes made are not anymore system errors but personal mistakes to be dealt with. When tying her whole person to work processes, an individual is more likely to experience both victories and losses more profoundly. As the expectancy theory (see Vroom, 1964) points out, an in-
Individual’s motivation is likely to be stronger the more she values the outcome in question – when, for her, the stakes are higher. Similarly, based on Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) appraisal theory, it seems that an individual is more alert towards a stimulus that has a personal meaning to her and, consequently, a stress process is more likely to result from such a stimulus. All the case studies do point out that employees experience the more comprehensive personal presence at work as a real threat and some persons interviewed note that one has to be able to keep some distance to one’s work in order not to become consumed by it. The TeleCom and NewMedia case studies also indicate how the employees underline the importance of “not taking things personally” in the sense that one should not consider each failure a personal failure; even if a person fails in a situation, she is not a failure. To cope with work demanding personal presence, employees quite consciously keep it at arms length from themselves.

A more comprehensive personal presence at work is, nevertheless, also a source of well-being and development. For instance Moxley (2000, p. 12) notes that:

…employees want […] to use all their energies, to use their whole self, in their work.

According to Moxley, the bureaucratic approach compartmentalizes the use of physical energy from the use of mental - cognitive and emotional – energy at work. People become either hands or brains or hearts for their workplaces. The current trend in the working life, the increasingly comprehensive presence at work, may reverse this division and, once again, allow individuals to engage their minds, hearts, and bodies to work. Also Hirschhorn (1997) underlines the great positive potential of personalized work in which an individual may connect more fully to herself and also to others at the workplace. Furthermore, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990; chapter 2), the unity of personal and work goals is an important element in Flow-experiences and also Antonovsky (see chapter 2) underlines the salutary potential of personal presence at work; if a person values her work, she is more likely to find it meaningful. Also in the case studies, the opportunity to engage one’s whole personality in work and to develop as a person and a professional was clearly valued as one of the most positive things at work.
Thus, more personal presence at work may both consume one’s resources or regenerate them and, furthermore, not only the quality of workplace events and relations (positive or negative) influence the way the personal presence is experienced; also individual personalities affect the way people are able to deal with the more comprehensive personal presence. It is, thus, not possible to say whether the demand for the comprehensive personal presence at work is »good« or »bad«; it definitely is a challenge. As one of the managers at Tenants’ Union always kept on saying: »Everyone has to be able to participate in the workplace activities from his or her own starting points; we have to respect the fact that we all are different.« Maybe this can be used as a guideline for dealing with the demands for the personal presence at work – some employees may need support from their managers and peers in dealing with more »personalized« work, while others actually thrive in this kind of an environment. The paragraphs below tell the stories of two employees encountered in the Tenants’ Union case study, who reported coping well with their work just because they actively involve themselves as whole persons in it.

When an offensive is the best defense –
Getting involved and enjoying work

Two ombudsmen working in Tenants’ Union describe how reaching out, engaging one’s whole personality in work actually makes a complex job seem more comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. One of the ombudsmen says that as she works as a part of a complex system both within and outside the »home organization« (i.e. the regional office of Tenants’ Union), she finds it easier to understand the organization when she actively participates in various activities within it. She is a member in many of the home organization’s special task forces and project groups. During the weekly meetings when volunteers are looked for, she usually is suggested or suggests herself as a candidate. She is also active in the »field« and works closely with the local tenants’ unions and representatives. All this makes it easier for her to see the different perspectives present in the complex system; she learns to understand the complexity better and,
above all, has learned that there are many truths, not only one, when it comes to the difficult issues that Tenants’ Union works with. She says that as she comprehends the system better, she is also better able to manage with her work. Furthermore, she obviously finds her work meaningful; activity and participation enable her to see how she can influence the tenants’ union movement, how she can make a difference.

The other ombudsman says, in her turn, that regardless of the organizational structure or general plans in her unit, she is active and tries to collaborate with many different people within her organization. She says that being active and looking for collaboration has helped in her work and that she finds her work interesting when she is active. She was not always this way but, at one point, she simply decided to start to be more active and move around the organization more. That really made a difference for her.

These stories point out the salutogenic potential in work done with engagement and enthusiasm, in taking initiative and in extending outside towards other people and work opportunities. The stories contain a threat of energy consumption. The first ombudsman says, for instance, that she probably would become overwhelmed by the complex work system she is a part of, if she were not active. By investing more of themselves, by investing their emotional, cognitive, and physical energies to the task, the employees are instead able to develop and enjoy their work.

8.1.2 The expanding boundaries of work
Another important trend in the contemporary working life detected in the case studies relates to the boundaries of work (see also Allvin et al., 1998; Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1993). The case studies indicate how the boundary of work confines an employee’s work by defining what she can control. Furthermore, the boundary also shows what influences an employee’s work and, consequently, what she has to care about. Literature shows (see e.g. Kira, 2000a; Babson, 1995) that in some workplaces, like in the Lean Production-plants, the traditional bureaucratic boundaries of work exist to the degree of preventing individual choice and development at work. An
employee has to care only about her immediate work, and even though this
may make work more manageable, the problem is that the things an
employee can control are also very few. Furthermore, the problem with
such confined and narrowly designed work is that it does not allow an indi-
vidual to use her resources and potential at work; instead of the problems
discussed above relating to a comprehensive personal presence at work,
work threatens to wither the individual and her development. Often, in this
kind of a situation, any organizational development that takes place
increases the amount of things employees have to care about, whereas their
possibilities to control their work are not extended. The critics of the Lean
Production paradigm suggest this to be the case in such contemporary
manufacturing models (see e.g. Delbridge, 1998; Parker & Slaughter,
1995).

In a more post-bureaucratic setting, however, the bureaucratic bound-
daries of work seem to be disappearing. There are only goals and responsi-
bilities, but no clear rules or routines (something that Brytting calls »the
good bureaucracy«; see Brytting, 2001). For instance, as could be seen in
the case studies, traditional job descriptions or regulated working time do
not often suit the contemporary work. In this sense, employees can control
much of their immediate work reality and decide on what, how, and when
they work. This is clearly the situation in all the four case studies. Never-
theless, in such boundaryless work, employees have to care about (take into
account) many different things even when they have no control over them.
When employees’ work is not totally confined by the boundaries created
by the strict division of labor and other bureaucratic organizational princi-
pies, any changes and developments within work, organization, technolo-
gy, branch, etc. seem to influence their work and choices at work. For
instance in NewMedia and TeleCom, the employees’ work is strongly
influenced by the competition situation; the interviewees spoke about the
need to change the direction in the »mid-air« because of the market and
competition changes. Similarly, the Norrtälje Hospital employees’ and
their managers’ daily tasks and work opportunities may be changed by
decisions made by the political decision-makers (who also are changing
from one electoral period to another) or by the health care administrators.
The department managers also reported that new work routines, quality
controls, administrative tasks, etc. pile up on their tables. The health care
officials make decisions that have to be implemented in the clinics and de-
partments; often the responsibility is laid on the department managers.
Also, the Tenants’ Union employees reported their daily work being strongly affected by such large-scale societal changes as the privatization of municipally owned apartment houses or legislation related to housing questions.

All these examples indicate decisions made, actions taken, and changes happening far away from the organization and its control sphere, but influencing directly the daily work. Employees, though more or less able to influence and steer their daily tasks, are trapped in a web of complex factors. Many of these factors they cannot control; they just have to do their best in order to deal with the emerging situations. At the individual level, the seemingly easiest way to cope with these situations is to work harder and work more: even to consume one’s resources. For instance, at Norrtälje Hospital, some department managers ended up trying to carry out all the administrative tasks allocated to them without daring to prioritize certain tasks, leave others to later, or delegate some tasks to their employees. Also, at Tenants’ Union, all through the SALUT-project, the ombudsmen toiled alone under their vast workloads, single-mindedly pushing through the mounting tasks by sheer force. The initial reaction from the employees in both organizations was to push themselves harder at the face of changes and new demands they could not influence.

Thus, in traditional, bureaucratic organizations (also in many Lean Production-systems) the boundary for control is, at maximum, equal to the boundary of care and the boundary of care is very limited. An employee has to care about few things, but she may be lacking control over those things. In the post-bureaucratic working life, employees’ care boundary has not been defined and they have to care about many complex things. They have to care about anything that influences their boundaryless work. Also the control boundary has not been defined. Employees have control over immediate work and, in this sense, they are autonomous or at least able to influence their daily work. But employees cannot control most of the things within their enlarged care boundary. The control boundary is not defined, but still it is limited.
8.1.3 The extending competence needs –
From professional skills to personal maturity

Integrating various aspects of one’s Self to work and the more comprehensive personal presence at the workplace also lead to expanding competence needs. Dealing with work is not only about »knowing what and how«, but also something else – about affective and cognitive coping with work. In the case studies, people in different kinds of jobs had to deal with work, not only as professionals, but as whole persons. For instance, a manager could not only »manage« her employees, but also had to live through with them such difficult situations as taxing night-shift work (see chapter 6), or to support them during the »growing pains« when the employees were learning how to work in an extremely complex work setting (see chapter 4), or to share with them the anxieties of an organizational change (see chapters 5 and 6). Similarly, employees had to rely on their intuition and personal judgment, for instance, in order to be able to set priorities in their work and turn down projects offered to them that they simply would not have been able to carry out (see chapter 5). Professional skills and competencies may help in coping with such situations, but also something else is needed.
In all the case studies, the interviewees emphasized the fact that they have to rely on their personal ways to cope with their work. For instance, the interviewees noted that such personal characteristics as "maturity" and "being a strong and secure person" are essential in their work. Consequently, maybe a new competence category is needed in addition to the traditional professional skills (knowing what to do), professional competencies (knowing how to do it), and social competencies (being able to work with people, being able to seek and receive their support); maybe a competence category of "coping competencies" that relate to cognitive and affective coping with work and working environment is needed (see figure 7.4 in the Tenants’ Union case study).

The competencies needed in the contemporary working life are, thus, very fundamental in their nature. In order to be able to cope with complex, cognitively and emotionally demanding, fluid, interconnected, and invisible work (see Howard, 1995; chapter 3), employees seem to have to be what the developmental psychology calls "mature individuals". According to for instance Allport (1964), a mature individual has:

- An extended sense of Self making it possible for her to participate in different activities: not only to be present in them, but also to engage her personality, her Self in them.
- An ability to love and care for others for their own sake: ability for compassion.
- Emotional security at the face of daily problems.
- Self-insight in the sense that one is aware of what one values and one’s own value.
- A realistic orientation towards the world and an ability to perceive it quite accurately.
- A unifying philosophy on which one can build one’s life.

All these characteristics would clearly help in coping with the post-bureaucratic working life as defined above. For instance, an extended sense of Self (the first criteria listed above) is connected to the comprehensive personal presence at a workplace. Allport writes that only a mature person can become truly involved in her work, her spear time, collaboration with other people. Similarly, ability for compassion is essential in a work situation, where each individual is connected to others and has to take them into account in her work. Also self-insight and a realistic orientation towards the world are needed as employees collectively define and redefine their tasks and mutual responsibilities.
The need for maturity has always been there, but probably it becomes more emphasized as work becomes more post-bureaucratic, when each individual - not only the professionals and those in the management positions - faces the need to cope with role negotiations with others, social interaction, complex and continuously changing tasks, and so forth. The disappearance of bureaucratic, professionally delimited boxes exposes many employee groups to such work situations and even those employee groups (such as managers and experts) more used to work post-bureaucratic in its nature, face new challenges as their work is not protected anymore by an army of secretaries, administrators, and other support personnel. When the bureaucratic roles and structures do not provide all the answers, people have to rely on themselves more.

As noted already in section 3.3, basic and professional training systems as well as parental and societal upbringing face the challenge of supporting the development of such personal resources that enable coping with complex as well as both cognitively and emotionally demanding work. Furthermore, the case studies indicate also how a workplace can provide opportunities for its employees to work on their personal and professional development: on their self-insight, ability for compassion, and the understanding of the world. In the case organizations, learning how to work and how to cope with work took place at the workplaces often quite informally: in spontaneous dialogues between employees (e.g. nurses supporting each other to cope with a death of a patient) and between employees and their managers (e.g. the spontaneous discussions at NewMedia and TeleCom between an employee and her closest manager on whether she is working too much). However, the case studies also point out more formal ways for the organizations to support their employees in acquiring versatile competencies at work and in their personal development. For instance, development discussions between the closest manager and employees seem to have extended from quite instrumental goal setting and goal achievement evaluation negotiations into more person-centered and reflexive dialogues on how one works, how the organization functions, which issues one finds difficult, and how one could better cope with such issues (see the NewMedia and TeleCom case studies). At Tenants’ Union, the training effort described in section 7.8.1 also concentrated on personal ways to work and collaborate; actually, the training providers connected the training effort into a larger context and said that the competencies learned in the training should support the Negotiations unit’s employees in all different facets of
their lives. Finally, at Norrtälje Hospital and NewMedia, the managers at
different levels were offered an opportunity to work with an external men-
tor. All these examples point out how the case organizations aimed to pro-
vide opportunities for their employees to reflect upon their own function-
ning at the workplace, to reflect upon their work and their relation to work.

The case studies, therefore, indicate that there is a need for employees
individually and collectively to work on their personal development at
workplaces, to have continuous opportunities to reflect upon their work
experiences and behavior as well as upon their relation to their work and
colleagues. The case organizations seemed to design such development ac-
tivities quite naturally and without conflicts but, of course, there is a danger
for trouble when an employer enters the sphere of such delicate issues as an
employee’s maturity or way to think and behave. What seems to have
guaranteed the harmony in such development efforts in the case organiza-
tions is that all the training and daily development opportunities emerged
from the interaction between employees and managers. For instance, at
Norrtälje Hospital, the department managers themselves indicated the
need for a mentoring program and the highest management decided to
arrange such a program to which participation would be voluntary. Even
though maturity is needed and it would make an employee’s work easier,
the search for maturity cannot be imposed on employees.

The case studies, consequently, indicate that the case organizations have
noted the need for personal development. However, the question whether
basic and professional education systems as well as parental and societial
up-bringing are responding to the increasing importance of maturity is be-
yond the reach of this thesis; only an uneducated guess can be made. At
least in Sweden, public media are full of reports on lowering educational
standards and of pupils leaving school without even the basic skills (for in-
stance the National Agency for Education reports that one quarter of pupils
leaving the elementary school in 2001 failed in one or several compulsory
subjects\textsuperscript{1}). Growing group sizes in schools, declining mental and economic
well-being of students and their parents, and the lack of qualified teachers
are just some of the reasons identified by the mass media as leading to the

\textsuperscript{1} See \url{http://www.skolverket.se/publicerat/press/press2002/press020128a.shtml}
lowering educational standards. Ann Howard documents similar problems in the USA and notes that (1995, p. 34):

The bureaucracy era had dumb jobs and smart people; the post-industrial era threatens to have smart jobs and dumb people.

Consequently, if the education system is facing such profound problems, it is very likely that it has no possibilities to contribute to the growth of competent as well as mature, balanced, and strong individuals. In a way, then, the post-bureaucratic working life is emerging based on an unlikely hope that the people of near future will be able to deal better with more complex realities and demands than the people of today and yesterday. Zuboff (1988) documented in her book »In the Age of the Smart Machine« how the employees of that time put their hopes on the new generation. The employees in a newly computerized Pine Wood Mill noted that future employees would need »an extremely flexible personality« in order not to be »mentally affected« by the rapid changes at work. The employees said (Zuboff, 1988; p. 4):

We find it all to be a great stress […] but it won’t be that way for the new flexible people.

Fifteen years on, it seems that »new flexible people« have not appeared and (looking at the way children are educated) are not likely to do so. Furthermore, people will always have their simultaneous needs for security and stability, but also for challenge and change. Too much of either will endanger the creative and productive potential as well as the well-being of people; a work system that forgets this and fails to deal with these paradoxical needs of people will not be sustainable. A work system cannot function founded only on the belief that employees’ personal maturity or their competencies will see them through regardless of the amount of turbulence and complexity in work. Instead, also calmer waters and safe havens have to be built within a work system (this will be discussed further in section 8.3, when ways to organize post-bureaucratic work are outlined).

8.1.4 Consuming or regenerative post-bureaucratic work?
This section has indicated how the characteristics of the contemporary working life are both creating new opportunities at work and, at the same
time, causing new challenges for employees. In chapter 2, regenerative work was defined to be comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful as well as responding to an employee’s needs and individual values. The characteristics of contemporary work, as presented above, clearly influence all these aspects. This section discusses the characteristics of post-bureaucratic work presented above from the perspective of the definition of regenerative work adopted in this thesis. The aim is here to summarize the threats of the contemporary work (as it appeared in the case studies) for human resources consumption as well as to point out the opportunities it offers for human resources regeneration – for development and growth at work.

**Comprehensibility**

It seems that for employees, post-bureaucratic working life means an increasingly complex environment. More complex work content and an individual’s relation to work create both threats of human resources consumption and opportunities for regenerative work experiences. As noted in chapter 2, work that contains variation, meaningful collection of sub-tasks, and goal-setting responds to an individual’s psychological needs and, thus, is “good work” creating potential for development and well-being at work. However, it is also apparent from the discussion above that an individual faces high demands in the post-bureaucratic work; work can be too complex, like a kaleidoscope it can have too many forms and colors to constitute a harmonious whole. Based on the case studies, thus, it seems that one of the most pressing aspects of the contemporary work is its lack of comprehensibility. Inability or difficulty to comprehend led to the consumption of employees’ energy and enthusiasm. Both employees and managers in the case organizations often expressed a need to comprehend their work better. Experienced irrationality, mixed messages and ambitions in an organization or at its boundaries created a lot of frustration.

In all the case studies, employees and managers were facing an increasingly complicated work and work settings. In this context, the shared attempts to clarify all the different elements of work, work organization, and an organization’s environment were also emphasized. Increasing comprehensibility was, in different ways, put on the agenda. For instance at Tenants’ Union, the whole development process had as its undercurrent an attempt to create a shared understanding on what the surrounding world looks like, how the organization’s members should work together, and what is important in the collective and individual efforts. Furthermore, the
case studies also point out the need for the managers to lead the collective sense-making processes as well as to try to explain the surrounding world to the employees. At Norrtälje Hospital this created problems when all the meetings within the clinics and departments were wasted to managerial information monologues. At NewMedia, instead, the highest management aimed to free the employees from the need to understand all the complexities of the surrounding world by saying that they, the highest management, would deal with them; the employees could concentrate on their work. Consequently, managers do have an important role in making sense of the world for employees, but the case studies also indicate that not being enough. Employees also have to take the responsibility for trying to understand what they actually need to care about and, then, trying to stay actively informed on these issues. In order to comprehend, each and every member of an organization has to both study and think.

Manageability
Managing with the emerging post-bureaucratic work is quite demanding. First, boundaryless and personalized work demands versatile competencies from employees and, second, also sets higher demands on the collaborative resources available for them. The collaborative contacts to others influence strongly the sense of manageability at work (see chapter 2) and their meaning in the context of manageability increases when work is more and more interconnected and dependent on the information and support one receives from others. Even though others may offer social support and also simply meaningful social interaction experiences, they may also take more energy than they give. In the case studies, the interviewees often mentioned situations where other employees did not take them into account or did not do »their bit«, and they expressed such situations to be taxing; the potential to manage with one’s work in these situations was experienced to decrease. When employees are dependent on each other’s work input and when the work inputs are not predefined, the question whether the others are doing their bit becomes, thus, very important. For instance, the employees in the TeleCom case study noted this as a key factor in affecting them at work; they indicated that they can manage their own job and deal with its demands, but it is very stressful if one does not receive correct information from others or if they do not take one into account in their interconnected work tasks the way they should. Both in Tenants’ Union and Norrtälje Hospital, in their turn, tension was created between those
employees or employee groups who wanted to learn to steer the collective work more through a dialogue and in collaboration between the different actors and those employees and employee groups who did prefer (or at least were perceived by the others to prefer) to do things in their own way or who did not for one reason or another allocate time for dialogue and collaboration. Thus, as individuals can make choices at work, new key questions emerge - for instance, what if the choices are not concerted and what can an organization do to harmonize the choices and actions better?

The Tenants’ Union and Norrtälje Hospital cases both indicate the importance of an »organizational strategy« in this context. In both organizations, it was more or less unclear for the employees and/or managers how they were supposed to be working, what kind of behavior was expected of them at the workplace. At Norrtälje Hospital, the department managers implored the highest management to indicate whether they should be acting as managers or also as leaders. At Tenants’ Union, the »lone wolf« versus »shared effort« cultures clashed at times. Consequently, even though strategic planning may be difficult in the current, complex and changing, working life, strategic thinking should definitely be carried out (see e.g. Minzberg, 1994). Strategic thinking is needed in organizational issues to provide a common base for the collaborative effort, to provide an answer to the question »how should we work here; based on which principles.«

Furthermore, when it comes to manageability, a strategic foundation for how to work in an organization also provides grounds for setting priorities and even opting out some tasks. At Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union, the lack of a clear strategy on how the department managers and the Negotiations unit employees should work led to a situation where they tried to do everything. The department managers tried to be both leaders and administrators, the Negotiations unit employees worked one foot in the people’s movement tradition and the other in the professional negotiations. Trying to realize two different priorities clearly compromised the manageability of work in both cases.

**Meaningfulness**

If the meaningfulness of work depends on an employee’s possibilities to »stand on the boundary«, to produce something or to provide a service to others such that she directly can see the value of her actions to others (see chapter 2), post-bureaucratic work has a high potential to provide meaning in employees’ lives. Expanded job contents, in which employees are re-
sponsible for their work, tentatively bring employees’ closer to internal and external customers - allow them to experience that they are doing a job that has value for others and impacts other’s lives. The case studies do support this. In all the four case studies, the interviewees expressed high commitment to work and experienced that their work makes a difference. The meaningfulness of work relates also to the comprehensive personal presence at the workplace. Comprehensive personal presence at work provides opportunities for an individual to try and act according to her values and pursue her interests. In short, then, more comprehensive personal presence may provide opportunities for creating personal meaning but, as noted above, it can also be very demanding. Furthermore, the case studies indicate that meaningfulness decreases when the organizational setting does not support work, when employees cannot concentrate on what is important in their work. This happens when the organization of work demands their attention elsewhere; when instead of their core tasks, they have to concentrate on supportive or administrative tasks. This shall be discussed further in section 8.2.

Values and needs

Finally, good work was in chapter 2 defined to correspond to an employee’s values and needs. It was noted that work that »only« responds to the self-actualization need may not be good work after all, if it is accompanied by disregard for an employee’s other needs that may exist side by side with the self-actualization need. Even if a person values challenging work, she may also value decent salary and job security. What do the case studies say about salaries and job security?

For instance in Tenants’ Union, the organization’s employees did experience the internal rewards from their work higher than the external ones; the employees were not satisfied with their salaries. However, this did not emerge as a major issue; the salary levels were complained about but taken more or less given. Consequently, the Maslowian need hierarchy (Maslow, 1998) and Herzberg’s motivator-hygiene factor theory (Herzberg, 1990) seem to apply here; first, as the basic income was guaranteed for the employees, they concentrated on needs higher up in the need hierarchy and, second, the low salary level only caused dissatisfaction - it did not destroy the employees’ motivation and internal commitment to their work.

When it comes to job security, in the other case organizations job security was quite high at the time of the studies, but in the TeleCom case some
insights were gained on internally rewarding but uncertain jobs. At TeleCom, the uncertainties on the company’s ownership – whether some of them would merge with a TeleCom’s competitor – as well as the ongoing reorganizations caused quite an uncertain future for the employees. The merger of some of the company’s owners with its competitor would probably have meant that TeleCom as it was then could not have continued to exist and reorganizations taking place during the case study did actually affect some employees’ employment status. Nevertheless, the interviewees were not worried about their future and work opportunities. At the time of the case study the labor market situation was very favorable; overall unemployment rate was extremely low and there was a great demand for, for instance, qualified IT-professionals in Sweden. This may at least partly explain why the employees at TeleCom were not worried about their future; should their work at TeleCom end, they would surely find new jobs. Nevertheless, the times changed and labor market situation started to get worse (from an employee’s point of view) quite rapidly after the case study was carried out. Consequently, an important research topic in the post-bureaucratic working life existing in a tighter economic situation would be the meaning of job security and an employer’s loyalty toward its employees. How does it affect the organization if its nimble, flexible, and creative employees suddenly start to fear for their jobs and worry about job security?

The Tenants’ Union case offered a possibility to observe almost a directly opposite phenomenon to the job security fears: i.e. «too high» job security. Some employees experienced their current jobs in the organization offering such security that even if they were not satisfied with their work anymore, they remained because of the security their jobs and salaries offered. Also this created a problematic situation; the gradual diminishment of the intrinsic rewards from work led to a situation where some employees seemed to remain in the organization mostly due to the extrinsic rewards it provided them. Some of the interviewees at Tenants’ Union distinguished this as a major factor leading to consumed resources. Work that once was meaningful and important was now carried out without enjoyment and for money. This actually is an important aspect when considering the future of organizations like NewMedia and TeleCom; interesting work may turn sour also in them. At the time of the case studies, the employees of these organizations mostly enjoyed their work with versatile content as well as many changes and challenges. However, the question is whether work will remain that way or whether bureaucracy eventually creeps in and makes
work confined and stale. If this is the case, there will be a real danger for many employees in the »new economy« sectors ending up experiencing a growing mismatch between themselves and their work.

All the case studies did thus reveal that for employees the opportunity to carry out meaningful work offering possibilities for well-being as well as for both personal and professional development is a major concern – if not the major concern. Factors preventing self-actualizing and high-quality work were generally experienced very negatively. Nevertheless, at general level, I am still not prepared to discard Ciulla’s (2000) questions on whether self-actualizing work simply is the current strategy for generating high aspiration levels. Even though the satisfaction of basic or »lower level« needs did not emerge as a major factor affecting the employees’ working experiences in this study, the discussions with the employees at Tenants’ Union and Norrtälje Hospital pointed out that the employees do expect their employer to be fair and reliable. When they as employees are committed to their work, the employer should in the same way be committed to its employees, their well-being and future.

To summarize
But to put it all together then – is post-bureaucratic work regenerative work? Does it offer possibilities for sustainable development? This research indicates that post-bureaucratic work is difficult to comprehend, requires new resources at individual and collective levels to be manageable, and may be profoundly meaningful if only made comprehensible and manageable. All the case studies indicate that the employees had no problems with their work; quite the contrary they enjoyed work that allowed them to engage in it personally, to experience variation and challenge. The problems were created more by an organizational setting that did not allow them to concentrate on their work or did not support it. Consequently, an important conclusion here is to encourage post-bureaucratic work but, at the same time, to create an organizational setting that supports it. This is the direction we shall head next.

8.2 Changing work and backward organizations –
When work and an organization do not meet
In traditional bureaucratic organizations, job descriptions, rules and regulations, and organizational charts more or less provide answers to employees on what they should be doing, with whom, when, and how. For most
employees someone else defines and delimits their scope of work action – their care and control boundaries. This thesis indicates, however, that if and when working life is transforming towards post-bureaucracy, bureaucratic structures and regulations do not anymore provide adequate solutions; many things cannot anymore be predefined by the highest levels of hierarchies, and watertight structures and regulations do not allow an organization and its members to act as flexibly and innovatively as needed. But what should replace the bureaucratic machinery? The case studies do not offer final answers to this question; the organizations seem to find it difficult to structure, control, and support the symphony of extended work realities. This is depicted in figure 8.2; in the bureaucratic mass-production (the figure on the left), bureaucratic control system and the tayloristic design of work explain each employee’s task and role in an organization. In the emerging post-bureaucratic system (the figure on the right), organizational systems seem to provide little guidance for employees. Consequently, one profound reason for human resources consumption in the case organizations seems to be the lack of organizational structures, processes, and tools that can support extended, versatile, and continuously moving work. In this section, I shall illuminate the emergence and existence of this mismatch between work and organizational levels.

Figure 8.2. Changing work reality and comprehending work (developed from Forslin, 1996). In the bureaucratic system, organizational charts, job descriptions, as well as rules and regulations help an employee to understand her role and tasks. Many of these become, however, obsolete in the post-bureaucratic working life in which planning things in advance in detail is not possible anymore. What will guide employees now?
8.2.1 The mismatch between post-bureaucratic daily work activities and a bureaucratic organizational setting

Much of the research and debate on the changes in the nature of work seems to share the often unstated assumption that job design and organizational design always go hand in hand (see chapter 3). It is assumed that in those organizations where work has changed to be more variable with extended roles, accountabilities, and competence demands, also organizational design has accommodated to this and, consequently, it is possible to witness decentralization of authority, flat structures, trust, managers acting as coaches, etc. (see e.g. Howard, 1995). Probably even more generally shared understanding is that the causality goes the other way around; organizations change to become more lateral, flatter, and flexible in order to respond to competition demands (i.e. post-bureaucracy is a strategic choice), and consequently a new kind of a work reality emerges (see e.g. Mohrman & Cohen, 1995). Maybe the current transition from the »old« economy to the »new« one, from the manufacturing and service economies to the information economy, from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy is so overwhelming that it is safer to see it as a cut and dry change – inevitable, comprehensively overtaking. However, this thesis indicates that the change taking place is not as simple as that; the change process in itself is problematic with changes proceeding faster in some issues while lagging behind in others creating not an »ideal type«, but rather an unbalanced and confusing situation with many different characteristics.

Being an organization where work is envisaged to be or actually is post-bureaucratic in its nature while organizational structures, processes, and tools still are characterized by bureaucracy can be very problematic. This is clearly demonstrated by the case studies carried out for this thesis. For instance, at Tenants' Union when the local offices were terminated and all the ombudsmen and negotiation assistants gathered to the regional office, the organizational logic adopted corresponded to bureaucracy even though work as such did correspond, has corresponded, and still does correspond to the post-bureaucratic work described by, for instance, Howard (1995). The consequences in this case were high experienced workload, unresponsive and inflexible organization unable to deal with external changes (e.g. the privatization of municipal apartment houses and consequent flood of work tasks from the municipally negotiating ombudsmen to the privately negotiating ombudsmen), and eventually stress and burnout.
at the employee level. The Norrtälje Hospital case in its turn documents the emergence of quite a post-bureaucratic managerial role in a traditional hospital bureaucracy. The department managers expected their work to be a leadership position in which they can support their employees and develop their departments: a position not regulated by rules but by dialogue, and not characterized by hierarchical power but by personal responsiveness to the employees’ and operation’s needs. The other employee groups expressed similar visions. Nevertheless, the bureaucratic system to which the new type of a role was planted rejected it and, consequently, the department managers ended up in a situation where their own and other’s expectations on their work differed profoundly from its reality. Mismatches of many different kinds between the department managers and their work resulted.

The empirical findings of these two cases illustrate a situation where the organizational settings and the reality of and/or aspirations for the daily work activities are not in sync with each other, but rather follow different logics. The daily work activities in the two case organizations (or at least the ambitions of actors carrying out the activities) corresponded to a great degree to the definitions of post-bureaucratic work in chapter 3, while the organizational settings (including for instance the organizational structures and operation principles, managerial approach, control and support processes, and also to some degree informal and formal communication patterns) followed the bureaucratic logic. As a consequence, the employees (including managers) ended up experiencing a lack of support for their work and often felt that they had to stretch in order to bridge the gap between their daily work and organizational setting. As the organizational system did not support their work, the employees had to face and deal with the demands alone without formal advice and support from the organization. Furthermore, many problems were more or less created by the mismatch between work activities and organizational setting. The main questions for the employees when discussing development needs at the workplace very often related to profound issues, such as how should we work together and communicate with each other? How should we collectively respond to continuously emerging change demands? In other words, the employees did not experience the existing organizational setting sufficient; there was an obvious need to create a new logic for the collective action.

A concrete example of this is the way the salary administration system Palett was implemented at Norrtälje Hospital. The implementation process followed the bureaucratic logic while the department managers’
daily efforts to steer their work were more in line with the post-bureaucratic logic. The tasks relating to Palett were delegated without discussion to the department managers, who then had to cope the best they could with the time-consuming routine tasks relating to the system. The prevailing bureaucratic logic in the organization led to such an unreflected implementation; that is the way new things are implemented in bureaucratic systems – by a decision from the highest management, without discussion on how the existing work situation of those affected can «absorb» the new tasks. Also the department managers were accustomed to such a bureaucratic decision-making and did their best to cope with the new system rather than collectively tried to change the way to work with Palett. If the highest management allocated Palett to them, they had to cope with it; if the superiors put something on their plates, they had to chew it. However, the department managers and their employees with visions of supportive leadership experienced the introduction of Palett extremely negatively; delegating the tasks relating to Palett to the department managers was in great conflict with the department managers’ and employees’ ideas on what the department managers should be working on.

The strange contradiction between work and its organizational setting? See for yourself – we have it!

After having detected this pattern – the strange contradiction between the bureaucratic organizational logic and the less bureaucratic reality of daily work – I started to test how people working in different organizations react when I propose such a contradiction to exist. For instance, in a meeting at Norrtälje Hospital with representatives present from the SALUT-project group and the so-called Nottingham group (see chapter 6), I pointed out that it is strange how the organizational setting often does not support the daily work. Also, in a meeting with several employees from one of the SALUT-organizations (the Board of Procurement), I made the same statement. Finally, I also made a presentation of my ideas relating to human resources consumption at a SALUT-network meeting and concluded by saying that the organizational logic in many organizations does not seem to correspond to the logic of daily work; daily work is not support-
ed by the organizational setting. In all these situations, a light of understanding was lit in the eyes of those present and they commented how well that statement holds true in their organizations. They all said that they know their work well and what they think they should do to do their work well, but too often they run into organizational boundaries, administrative processes, information blockades, and quality assurance routines that just do not match with their work.

It is, thus, as if the organizational system, the abstract structural and institutional setting of work, had been developed to support some other kind of work than is actually carried out in the organization or had been developed without reference to work that should be carried out in the organization. If this is the case, organizational isomorphism may be the reason (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), the organizational setting has not been developed and designed to correspond to the unique situation of the company, but rather structures, models, and tools have been chosen based on fashion considerations, based on what other organizations are doing. Another option is, of course, that the organizational setting was developed and designed to support work that existed in the organization earlier. Little by little, however, changes in technology, products and services, occupations, social values, etc. changed the reality of work - what the employees actually do each day at work - but the organizational setting did not follow and develop in the same pace (see below).

The situation in this aspect is better in the first two case organizations, at NewMedia and TeleCom, where the interviewees reported that, even though the companies have quite traditional organizational structures, the traditional organizational setting has been adjusted to respond to the needs of the non-standardized, changing, and boundaryless work. As noted by some of the interviewees at TeleCom, a »marriage« has been found between the predefined structures and rules as well as the need for flexibility. The company needs predefined structures, rules, and routines in order to be able to »reach a large operating radius« as well as to enable the employees to function effectively such that they do not need to »reinvent the wheel« in each and every new situation. At NewMedia, a similar train of thought was followed, and a functional organizational structure was adopt-
ed in order to increase the comprehensibility of the organization (e.g. the clarity on such questions as who has the authority to make a decision and what are the priorities of different organizational units) as well as to increase the manageability of work from the employees’ point of view – the structure was aimed to define their work area and indicate what their tasks are. Nevertheless, since the case studies only provide a snap-shot view of the two companies, it is difficult to say whether the organizational structures chosen as well as rules and regulations established will succeed in supporting boundaryless post-bureaucratic work in the long term or whether they will eventually deteriorate daily work into bureaucratic work delimited and confined by bureaucratic boxes and characterized by employees’ increasing focus on work inside and only inside their respective boxes. In both companies, the interviewees emphasized that the continuously changing markets and corresponding »internalities« of the companies (the way things are done, the organizational values, culture, and climate, etc.) will keep them un-bureaucratic, but this really remains to be seen.

Furthermore, there is one indication in these case studies of the failure to maintain the post-bureaucratic spirit. The organizational change process at TeleCom documented in section 5.6.2 was carried out by stumbling into the traditional change pains so usual in more bureaucratic organizations; the employees were left out from the process, they did not even receive information on what was going to happen, let alone had an opportunity to influence the change. Thus, one can ask whether the internalities will suffice; whether they will be respected and applied also under pressure and strain or whether there is a danger that »as the going gets tough, the tough gets going« - that when under pressure, an organization forgets its values and lets the already existing bureaucratic structure take over and become the logic of operation.

In sum, then, the case studies point out discrepancies between organizational settings and daily work activities. In a way, work realities and organizational realities are not the same and changes in one are responded to with delay, if at all, in the other. The case studies indicate that the discrepancy between organization and work activity levels may emerge as work activities change due to, for instance, general social, technical, and economical changes, while work organization fails to reflect this change in the work reality. The discrepancy may also emerge as an organizational logic and practical solutions are unsuccessfully created to structure and confine exist-
ing work activities, as the chosen organizational logic does not respond to the logic of work. The first situation took place in the Norrtälje Hospital case, where the post-bureaucratic aspirations of the department manager role as well as the employees’ expanded responsibilities in the daily work started to set the bureaucratic management and decision-making approaches into question. The latter situation may characterize the future of NewMedia and TeleCom, if the functional organizational structures and marriages between rules and flexibility do not work out. Also the Tenants’ Union case is an example of a situation where too strict an organizational logic was established for boundaryless, person dependent, and interrelated work tasks, and where as a consequence many employees lost their inspiration at work.

Consequently, the case studies indicate situations where post-bureaucratic work clashes with bureaucratic organizational principles, structures, and methods. It is, nevertheless, possible that bureaucratic work fails to transform itself even though the organizational framework would be opened up and did its best to support the emergence of more extended work realities. Table 8.1 presents a matrix of all the problematic situations emerging from the various discrepancies between the logic of work and the logic of organization.

Table 8.1. The connections between the logic of work and the logic of organization. The concepts of “rust-out” and “burnout” are used here as in Hobfoll (1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The logic of work</th>
<th>Bureaucratic Work</th>
<th>Post-Bureaucratic Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The logic of organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic Organization</td>
<td>Confined situation</td>
<td>System errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• taylorism</td>
<td>• Employees as parts of a machine</td>
<td>• Organization not supporting work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• bureaucracy</td>
<td>• Potential for consuming work (“rust-out”)</td>
<td>• Potential for consuming work (“burnout”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• rules and regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• hierarchy/top-down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• managers as superiors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-bureaucratic Organization</td>
<td>Expanding situation</td>
<td>Sustainable Work System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• little pre-definition</td>
<td>• Potential for “good work” OR</td>
<td>• Organization supporting comprehending and managing with complex work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• decentralization</td>
<td>Wasted investments since employees cannot utilize organizational opportunities</td>
<td>• Potential for regenerative work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• guidelines and dialog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• flat structure/both ways</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• managers as coaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 8

413
Tenants’ Union and Norrtälje Hospital found themselves in the »System Errors« box of the matrix with bureaucratic organizational logic clashing with existing or emerging post-bureaucratic work realities and aspirations. NewMedia and TeleCom may find themselves in this box, if the marriage between rules and flexibility fails. However, all the case organizations can also be seen on their way to »Sustainable Work System«-box. Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union did take ambitious and also successful first steps to create organizational processes and structures that would support post-bureaucratic work reality (see chapters 6 and 7, respectively). NewMedia and TeleCom, at the time of the case studies, seemed to create an organizational system that would, on the one hand, structure and delimit the turbulent and extended work realities but, on the other hand, would also support work as it is rather than to confine it into meaningless »boxes«.

The two other possible situations in the matrix, i.e. »confined« and »expanding«, did not appear as clearly in the case studies, but are familiar from literature. The »confined situation« relates to purely bureaucratic and tayloristic systems (see chapters 2 and 3; Kira, 2000a; Babson, 1995) and, as can be seen in chapter 2, Sociotechnical Systems-thinking and Job Characteristic Model lead to the »expanding situation«. Practical organizational development attempts informed by Sociotechnical-thinking and Job Characteristic Model often lead to a situation where quite traditional, but more upskilled and slightly expanded, job contents are created in organizations (more or less) characterized by new logic emphasizing decentralization, flatness, collaborative relations between employees and managers, etc. However, the expanding situation with less bureaucratic organizational setting and still quite delimited work realities can also mean wasted investments as employees, still confined in their delimited work, are not able to utilize the whole potential offered by the organization. Such situation occurred at TeleCom where the customer service group during an organizational change period was confined to do very limited, unskilled, and repetitive work. At that time, these employees had no opportunity to benefit or enjoy the opportunities of, otherwise, post-bureaucratic organizational principles.
The work science has for a long time, all the way from Taylor, tried to
define organizational solutions that unify employees’ benefits with employ-
ers’ benefits. The focal question through this search has been; what kind of
an organization can take into account the humane dimension in work
processes? All in all, this question has led to the paradigmatic development
described in chapters 2 and 3: to the gradual liberation, flexibilization, and
democratization of work organizations. The aim has been to »open up«
work organizations, to allow more degrees of freedom for employees in
their simple jobs. However, a work organization should not only take into
account the psychological and physical needs of the employees, it should
also correspond to the nature of work and operations carried out in the or-
ganization. The work organizational approach should support work. In the
current situation, where post-bureaucratic work is emerging, work organi-
zational approach should not only change due to humane considerations,
but it will have to change since post-bureaucratic work is not supported by
traditional organizational approaches. Boundaryless work cannot be sup-
ported by strict bureaucratic boundaries and rules, instead a clash of logics
and strives is formed between work and work organization. Consequently,
we need new organizational approaches. But an important question is;
what kinds of organizational approaches – values, structures, processes and
methods – are needed to support expanding work realities that many
employees are facing in the working life. This question already presented in
section 5.10 is discussed in section 8.3 with the help of all the four case
studies. However, before proceeding to that, the reasons for the mismatch
between work and an organization and the consequences of such a
mismatch are explored in more detail.

8.2.2 The emergence of the mismatch and its consequences
The Barley and Tolbert (1997) model on actions and institutions as well as
the Crossan et al. (1999) model on organizational learning (see chapter 2)
offer an explanation for why the reality of work and an organizational set-
ing may end up being in contradiction with each other as discussed above.
The external changes and consequent shifts in actors’ values may initiate a
transformation at the daily activity level; new kind of ideas for work and
and collaboration emerge, new kinds of scripts are tried to be created. However,
these new ideas contradict the prevailing organizational logic and organi-
zational setting and, consequently, the actors – the employees and /or
managers – end up feeling that »the organization does not support our
work. Existing organizational rules and regulations, organizational structures and communication processes, and above all organizational values and norms may relate to the bureaucratic logic (which has dominated our thinking for so long), while in daily situations new, post-bureaucratic ideas are raising their head.

Exactly this happened in Norrtälje Hospital. The managers at different levels and all the other employee groups shared the same vision for the department manager role. This vision related to new management and leadership ideas in the society in general; people want their managers to be coaches, supporters, and facilitators rather than superiors and authority figures. The department managers are very close to the employees; they often share the employees’ professional background and they often are women as their employees are too - they therefore are easy to approach and the employees do not regard them as traditional bureaucratic bosses in the hospital hierarchy. Consequently, the new visions and new shared ideas on what a manager should be like and what she should be working on became strongly focused on the department managers. The department managers in their turn tried to change the scripts regulating their daily work by striving to be supporters and coaches. However, the traditional hospital bureaucracy kept on hindering this. For instance, discussions on the department manager role – what it should be like and how to achieve the ideal - were not systematically carried out between the different managerial levels, since such discussions had not been needed before. Earlier, the bureaucratic roles were clear – one size fitted all – and that is why dialogues on roles were not needed. Eventually, many department managers and also their clinic heads did perceive the need for dialogues, but initiating them or finding time for them was difficult as there did not exist a script for such dialogues.

Similarly, at Tenants’ Union the organizational logic and daily work activities contradicted each other; here the problem was that bureaucratic scripts were imposed on work not bureaucratic in its nature. The traditional way of working at Tenants’ Union has been to work with a few colleagues occupying the same local office. Each local office created its own way of working and each ombudsman created his or her own way of negotiating; this is very clear from the interviews, where the ombudsmen stated for instance that one cannot learn how to be a good negotiator – one either is that or is not. Now, in the regional office the aim has been to create high quality negotiations, similar processes and outcomes not depending
on the ombudsman carrying out the negotiation. The scripts relating to working alone were challenged by the management demanding professionalism and high quality, and not by just any means, but by shared negotiations strategies, administrative routines, etc. Many ombudsmen experienced this threatening and felt that their traditional «craft work» know-how was challenged. The employees’ identity and what was expected of them became separated from each other. No wonder, conflicts and stress ensued. However, here the subsequent process of competence training and creating new shared mental models for how things are done may have helped many employees and also managers in understanding the unit’s work better. As one ombudsman said; the new ideas relating to professionalism and the traditional ideas relating to people’s movement were gradually brought closer together.

The reflections on the two cases from the perspective of the Barley and Tolbert (1997) and Crossan et al. (1999) models indicate that discrepancies between work and its organizational setting may and are actually even likely to take place. These discrepancies are prone to emerge, when overall societal changes and changes in the daily work processes lead employees and managers to challenge the prevailing organizational paradigm. Indeed, we are living in a time of transition when changes outlined in section 3.2 all challenge the bureaucratic logic. Individual intuitions and collective scripts are moving closer to post-bureaucracy and if an organization cannot respond to that, if bureaucratic ideal is allowed to prevail (as was done at Norrtälje Hospital) or is tried to be implemented (as was done at Tenants’ Union), feelings of imbalance at individual level and consequent efforts to somehow accommodate to the discrepancies between the daily activity level and institutional setting are sure to follow.

Employees are left to swim against the stream, to invent informal ways to operate that may then eventually replace the formal ways of operating, but which – in the initial phase – simply function as unauthorized commonsense ways of operating. The case studies in this thesis do, however, point out that this process is not as easy and straightforward as it seems; employees have to really put themselves on the line in order to bridge the gap. Too often they bridge it at the expense of their own resources. For instance, at Norrtälje Hospital, the dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and mental strain of the department managers have at least partly been caused by their hopeless efforts to bridge the gap between the formal way of working (with for instance extensive workload due to administrative routine tasks) and their in-
formal, but shared, aspirations to live another kind of life as department managers. Similarly, at Tenants’ Union, the employees paid a high price in terms of burnout and stress for the discrepancy between the organizational setting and their work aspirations.

This thesis work, consequently, offers a few new insights into the already earlier detected tensions in the interaction between institutional and activity levels. First, the thesis points out how serious the tensions can be in the contemporary working life where a paradigmatic change is starting to take hold of activity (work) level while leaving institutional (organizational) level still mostly untouched. Second, the thesis brings forth the human toll of the discrepancies; very often it is assumed that employees simply adopt informal ways of operating and then go happily about their work or become dissatisfied with their work and leave the organization. However, in the case study organizations, the employees did not only choose these options; they also consumed their own resources to bridge the gap. As discussed above, it seems that the employees try actively to understand the institutional setting and find support from it. When such support is not available, frustrations and a sense of an imbalance between oneself and one’s work and work organization emerge. As seen in chapter 2, such sense of an imbalance can lead to the experiences of stress and, eventually, to social and organizational stress reactions making the vicious circle of ill-health at work even steeper. Employees also try to accommodate both realities. They try to live out their dreams on what their work should be like, but at the same time they try to cope with the demands originating from the institutionalized rules and routines. Both at Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union the employees did their best to carry out their work as they considered it should be carried out; at the Hospital, the department managers did try to stretch to have time to support and be with their employees, at Tenants’ Union the ombudsmen refused to let go of their traditional way of working close to certain local actors, in the field, on one’s own. In both cases, at the same time, the employees also »did what they were told to do«; for instance both the department managers at Norrtälje Hospital and the ombudsmen at Tenants’ Union tried to carry out the various administrative tasks the best they could even though they kept on feeling that »this is not my job.«

Furthermore, the thesis raises forth the potential danger of organizational isomorphism in the current situation; the danger that organizations adopt structures, processes, and routines not based on their particular situ-
ation but rather based on other organizations’ earlier choices. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call such behavior mimetic isomorphism; an organization when facing uncertainty follows the example of other relevant or seemingly successful organizations in order to achieve structures and processes already proven to be efficient elsewhere. DiMaggio and Powell point out that there actually are very few different organizational structures to mimic and, consequently, through mimetic isomorphism, organizations end up being quite homogenous. The bureaucratic ideal type is spread through this mechanism into new companies and new branches; mimetic isomorphism inevitably means selecting bureaucratic structures since (as noted in chapter 3) ideal type post-bureaucratic organizational models do not exist yet². NewMedia and TeleCom, at the time of the case studies, were creating their institutionalized structures, routines, practices, etc. In both cases, rather than creating new post-bureaucratic structures, the organizations ended up choosing quite bureaucratic structures instead. Consequently, there is a real danger that the two companies end up unintentionally becoming bureaucratic just because they mimic other, bureaucratic, organizations and through this process lose their potential for creating new kinds of workplaces characterized by interaction and individuals’ possibility for meaningful work. However, interestingly both companies aimed to combine their traditional structures with »internalities«. The interviewees in both organizations said that organizational routines and procedures that exist are not bureaucratic but created in collaboration and that they accomplish a »marriage« between bureaucracy and flexibility. As noted already above, it remains to be seen whether the two companies (and other companies within the »new economy«) end up continuing the bureaucratic tradition or can be seen in the future as the path finders of the post-bureaucratic era.

² Attempted departures from the bureaucratic logic do not often offer true alternatives. As noted in section 2.3.2, many business process re-engineering programs and empowerment attempts end up being »an emperor’s new clothes« as Argyris (1998) puts it – only talk and no substance – rather than true opportunities for participation. Also Heckscher (1994) warns of »false« post-bureaucratic models in which empowerment or de-bureaucratization is used only to widen the operational boxes of people, not to create dialogue between them (see section 3.2.4). Therefore, one can state that post-bureaucratic examples do not exist; we only can witness post-bureaucratic ideas and elements, not a functioning full-scale application.
8.2.3 A formal bureaucratic organization and an informal post-bureaucratic organization?

The observations on the clashing natures of work (activity) and organizational (institutional) levels resemble to some extent of the well-known existence of formal and informal sides in each bureaucratic organization. The bureaucratic rules and structures are only one reality in an organization, a coexisting reality is formed by informal ways of operating. The employees of an organization may circumvent some bureaucratic rules and structures and get the job done by operating and collaborating as they see best. Sometimes employees may actually cause a total standstill in an organization by disregarding the informal ways of operating and by working to the rule (Wallace, 1998). The bureaucracy has in these cases become inherently impossible and can function only when short-cuts are created and utilized. Thus, each bureaucracy seems to have its vital informal organization – »how things are done around here« – without which the bureaucratic system would get entangled with its red tape. In this sense, the two operation logics - the bureaucratic logic and the other logic of flexibility, cooperation, and openness – may and often do exist in a bureaucratic system. Furthermore, the former logic exists mostly at the organizational level (in structures, rules, etc.) while the latter kind of logic exists between people, at work. So, what is the difference between my research results and the traditional formal-informal split?

Maybe the greatest difference is that an informal organization emerges in a bureaucratic setting to mend a conflict between people and an organization, while in a post-bureaucratic setting the conflict exists between work and an organization. The informal organization of a bureaucratic system emerges due to the inhumanity of bureaucracy; a full-scale bureaucracy may end up being so cumbersome that following each rule and regulation and interacting based on the bureaucratic organizational connections is not humanely possible. Instead, people create the informal organization based on their needs and wishes. The idea of the clashing bureaucratic organizational logic and post-bureaucratic work logic relates, in its turn, more to actual work characteristics and demands – to what work is like. Post-bureaucratic work emerges as a response to many »external« - societal, market dependent, technological, etc. – factors and the existing organizational setting – if bureaucratic – does not correspond to it anymore.

Thus, the split informal-formal in organizations has to do much with what employees want and need; the clash between bureaucratic organiza-
tion and post-bureaucratic work has to do with and is driven by the changing demands and nature of work. The environments in which many of the contemporary organizations exist create a pressure for the post-bureaucratic work to emerge. To put it short, employees both have to take the responsibility for more various and complex set of interrelated issues and, eventually, also have to be allowed to take this responsibility in order to reach their individual and collective goals. For this to happen also organizational system has to change; the next section will therefore discuss the characteristics of the post-bureaucratic organization.

8.2.4 To summarize
The discussion above indicates that the post-bureaucratic working life brings in its wake positive opportunities for regenerative work experiences. Closer and more comprehensive connection between an individual and her work provides meaning, and the potential for self-actualization in maslowian sense increases. However, potential threats in the post-bureaucratic working life are also obvious - personal presence at work exposes an individual in a more profound way to workplace demands and challenges; comprehending and managing with expanding job content in a changing environment is difficult (to say the least). The sections above have, consequently, discussed the emerging post-bureaucratic work and its consequences (both positive and negative) for employees. An important conclusion that can be drawn is, that for work to be regenerative its organizational setting has to support it. Bureaucratic work was and is supported by its bureaucratic setting and, similarly, organizational solutions that support post-bureaucratic work have to be found.

Already in the 1920s Hendrik de Man (see Applebaum, 1992) wrote that each human being has instincts (such as the instinct of activity, instinct of self-assertion, herd instinct, and aesthetic instinct) which make working inherently an enjoyable experience. If a person is not able to derive joy from work, de Man concluded, it is because that has been somehow impeded by e.g. technological or organizational factors. Consequently, the question also in the current situation is, what kind of a work organization both corresponds to employees’ »instincts« (or needs and values) and, furthermore, corresponds to the requirements of work to be carried out and supports it. The following section aims to contribute to that by discussing the emerging characteristics of post-bureaucratic organization. More concretely, organizational structures and practices that, based on the case studies, seem to
increase the comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of post-bureaucratic work shall be discussed below.

8.3 Post-bureaucratic organization – How to coordinate collective actions in the post-bureaucratic working life?

Moving from bureaucratic organizing and organization to post-bureaucracy means some kind of an organizational development process (see section 2.3). In organizational development theory and practice (and in the organizational theory in general) much focus has been concentrated on organizational structures and concrete management tools. Often the aim has been to solve organizational problems relating to both business results and employees’ well-being through structural changes. In the case companies this approach has created a lot of frustration and tiredness; both at Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union the employees (and also managers) said that the earlier re-organizations have not succeeded in solving the underlying problems. New structures have been established, but old problems have persisted. At Tenants’ Union, the employees speak about BOHICA-syndrome – Bend Over Here It Comes Again. In a stream of rapidly following organizational changes, it is easier simply to »duck« and keep on doing what one has always done rather than take the change seriously and try to change one’s work and one’s way of working to correspond to the new structures.

It is possible to detect a vicious circle at work here (see figure 8.3). Let us start with a situation where something is wrong in an organization (e.g. there are workload, collaboration, or quality problems). Managers’ task is to do something about the problem and they have, roughly speaking, two options for what to do; they can try to restructure the operations and hope that the employees will start to function in a new way in the new structure, or they can more directly try and change the way the employees work and collaborate - for the employees in the case organizations, this meant tackling the »underlying« problem. The latter is, naturally, more difficult and also more risky. How is it possible for the managers to influence the way the employees relate to their work, carry responsibility, take initiatives, etc.; how is it possible for the managers to influence the way the employees think and, consequently, act? Furthermore, solving such »underlying problems« means taking collectively a critical look at the organization and shared assumptions, traditions, informal cliques and groupings in the organization, etc. That is always a bit scary. Consequently, it is »easier« to
restructure, structure is something the managers can directly influence and restructuring is therefore something the management can do, concretely. Furthermore, when restructuring, the managers may more concretely indicate to their managers or other decision-making authorities that further resources are needed in the new structure. However, restructuring may create the BOHICA-sentiments; the employees are frustrated. The problem the restructuring tries to address has been around for a long time, and the employees think that no new structure can help since the problem is not a structural, but rather an »underlying« one. For the employees, the new structure does not represent an opportunity for new kinds of behaviors; it represents one more disturbance at work. This is true even more so as the employees perceive the restructuring as the management’s project. Consequently, the employees do not change their behavior. They become a passive audience to the management’s development attempts.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 8.3. The vicious circle when solving »underlying« problems by only restructuring.*
Thus, it seems that it is important not only to restructure, but also to »solve the underlying problems«. Furthermore, this truly has to be a collective effort, since management alone cannot solve problems relating to collective ways of thinking and behaving. For something to change, employees have to think and behave in a new way. In this section both areas of improvement are looked at. The discussion starts here from organizational values that underlie the search for regenerative work. Then, organizational structures (»what« an organization should look like) and regenerative work are discussed and, eventually, the organizational »hows« (rather than »whats«) are addressed; i.e. the ways employees and their managers should work and collaborate in order to contribute to the regenerative potential of work is outlined.

8.3.1 Organizational values as a basis for employees’ well-being and development

All four case studies indicate clearly how an organizational value base emphasizing the human factors as an integral element in all decision-making is an important precondition for the creation of more regenerative work. To put it bluntly, an organization will not be able to create regenerative work, if it does not want to do that. This sounds simple, but for instance the Norrtälje Hospital case study shows that this idea is not so self-evident. In hospitals, in general, employees are not the first priority but for all stakeholders, patients are always the primary focus group. During the past decades, also economic considerations have gained in importance in the health care sector. Employees and their work experiences, their opportunities for regenerative work, come in the equation only after these other, socially more important, factors. The unstated assumption is that dedicated and professional employees will somehow cope with their demanding daily work and also absorb discontinuous changes taking place in it.

Even though patients and economics are extremely important for a hospital – a hospital exist for its patients and has to (in Sweden) live by the taxpayers’ means – based on the Norrtälje Hospital case study, it seems that not focusing on employees and, especially, disregarding them during an organizational change may undermine many a change and improvement efforts also from patients’ and economics’ point of view. For instance the story of the new hospital building of Norrtälje Hospital is a good example of this. At Norrtälje Hospital the new, beautiful hospital building was designed to be somewhat smaller than the patient load at the time of the
planning would require. The reason for this was that there was an aim to shorten the care time per patient in the ward departments by releasing them more rapidly than before. The smaller hospital size was chosen even though many of the hospital's employees and managers objected it. The hospital building (and especially the ward departments) proved very soon to be too small, patients ended up in corridors as the ward departments did not have enough patient seats for all. The plan to discharge patients with no immediate need for continuous medical care more rapidly (see section 6.2.1) did not work out, since other factors besides of the hospital building's size did not change. Thus, the assumption that the employees would be able to adjust their work to the changed working conditions did not work out and, as can be seen in the case study, the new problematic situation with too few patient seats ended up consuming the employees' and managers' energy as they tried to provide good care in a working space not supporting their work.

Thus, putting employees on the third place does not seem to work, but creates additional and unforeseen problems. Should employees then be put first? Richard Branson, the founder of the Virgin concern seems to think so. He says (see Pfeffer, 1998) that when employees are put first, they will take care of business and customers in the best possible way. Thus, putting employees first and creating a working environment that takes them into account is not only a humane thing to do; it is good for the business as well. Similarly, also Sam Walton of Wal-Mart emphasized putting employees first (see Pfeffer, ibid.), since he believed that the way management treats employees is reflected to the way employees treat customers.

Maybe, however, less radical and more sustainable, but unfortunately also more demanding way to deal with the question is to put employees, customers/patients, and economics first; the idea advocated already in chapters 1 and 2. This means, in practice, continuous organizational and work development in which each new step is considered by its implications to all these stakeholders. For instance, at Norrtälje Hospital the move into the new hospital building might have required a few more phases in the planning process of the political machinery. If it were decided that the new hospital would have fewer patient seats (due to economic considerations), the next step should have been to think the consequences for the employees. How will it affect their work? What kind of other resources can be offered to them and how can the care system be changed to enable them to cope in the new hospital building? In practice, what needs to be done to en-
able faster release of patients not in need of medical care? Who should do what? This kind of a planning sequence was carried out only at the time of the case study (i.e. several years after the new hospital was taken into use) when the problems had become apparent. A solution was found; a new municipally owned care home was established for patients not needing medical care anymore, but who still need basic care.

But it is not only managers and the high-level decision-makers who tend to disregard employees - employees do that themselves too! For instance, at Tenants’ Union when discussing the telephone service to the members, it seems that for the employees the only criteria for the service was the members’ possibility to reach the unit’s ombudsmen in the best possible way (see section 7.7.1). The employees never grounded their arguments on their own needs or resources; what is possible for them to do and what is not. Consequently, it is possible that the employees ended up suggesting solutions that are not optimal for themselves individually or collectively and that, in the long-term, they would not be able to carry out. Of course, it may well be that many personal wishes and preferences became masked as statements on how the members need it to be. But this is also problematic; it probably would lead to a better discussion and decision-making, if what the employees can do, what the members need, and what the Union expects from its employees were considered as separate factors.

Another idea relating to the value base underlying regenerative work and putting people first becomes apparent from the TeleCom case, in which the managers pointed out that sometimes one has to invest additional resources initially in order to create a sustainable solution in the long-term. They described, for instance, the following opposing possibilities:

- To invest in face-to-face dialogue in a group even though e-mail communication would be quicker, easier, and cheaper.
- To invest in participative decision-making instead of pushing through a decision.

In both cases, the managers noted that they choose the first option even though it takes more resources in terms of effort and time. Face-to-face dialogue enables a group to mature and create a sense of self; thus, it eventually pays off to have face-to-face dialogues. Participative decision-making instead enables better acceptance for the decision and, consequently, better implementation. However, also at TeleCom, the company did fall a prey to the »easy way«; the organizational change process described in section 5.6.2 was obviously carried out at the expense of the employees, with a firm
trust in that »if they only can hang in there during the change period, it will be OK.« Complex thinking considering all factors and people involved was not obviously exercised here.

Consequently, adopting a value base emphasizing the importance of regenerative, or at least not consuming work, is not a simple thing; it creates a need for complex thinking in change situations and at daily work. It makes decisions building on the idea that »they /we can stretch and get it done somehow« impossible; it makes decisions building on the idea that »if they /we just hang in there a few months, it will get better then« impossible.

These decisions have to be replaced by decisions that build on the understanding of the complex system the decision is made in, is affected by, and will affect. Of course, it is lucrative to choose a »quick and dirty« solution that is founded on the fact that an organization’s most adaptable and easily controlled element - people - absorb the pressure. However, the case studies indicate that this is not a sustainable solution. Problems emerge eventually not only among employees but within the whole organization and its operation. The world is not simple, so no such simple thinking patterns are able to master it. This idea is not new, but advocated by, for instance, Peter Senge (1990) in his appeal for systems thinking at all levels and by everybody in an organization.

Thus, the value base for regenerative work does not make trade-offs, but tries to see the whole system of factors intertwined around the decision-making moment. This also means that an organization cannot have a childlike belief in »if you do not see it, it does not exist.« In the case studies, it seems that sometimes management and also employees wanted to delimit discussion, since an open discussion would have brought forth existing conflicts – maybe the conflicts do not exist, if they are not talked about. For instance, in the Tenants’ Union case study the discussion on the organization’s vision – to be a people’s movement or to be an insurance company – was avoided since, from an earlier experience, everybody knew that the discussion would make the existing conflicts visible. This may be a wise strategy in a time when emotions are running high and making the conflicts visible would only create irreparable gaps between people. However, eventually, the existing conflicts have to be faced in one way or another; otherwise they remain hidden, but still drain employees’ and managers’ energy. Furthermore, facing the conflicts may be done in a subtle way. At Tenants’ Union the way to eventually face the conflict was to start afresh and in a new way to look for things that bind the Negotiations unit together rather
than pull it apart. Shared »truths« were identified. Probably at least partly due to this, the experienced value level discrepancy had clearly diminished from the first interviewee study to the second one.

In sum, when it comes to the value base of an organization, one can ask whether the business of a business simply is business. This section has aimed to provide a strong negative reply to that question; the business of a business is business but also people and the social system people and organizations form. I have argued here against the assumption that better business results come from putting the business first and have, instead, argued that putting also people first makes sense for business reasons as well, even though it demands quite a complex thinking. Here I would like to point out that it is easy to allude to economics and rationality when discussing working conditions and opportunities to create regenerative work; quite often it seems that »can we afford this?« or »what will be the return of this investment?« considerations emerge as working conditions are discussed. Naturally economical considerations are important, but demanding each working environmental improvement to have a clear rate of return may be demanding too much, since it is difficult to calculate the income from having energetic and developing rather than apathetic and regressing employees. Furthermore, companies in general make many other kinds of investments that do not necessarily make »rationally« sense; for instance, why do companies spend enormous amounts of money on brand logos without any guarantees for corresponding return on their investment? Somehow, however, »rationality« wakes up when improving the basic working conditions of the »usual« employees is discussed.

8.3.2 Organizational structures supporting post-bureaucratic work activities

Even though changing organizational structures – or to put it more cynically; redrawing the organizational charts – does not, based on the case studies, single-handedly solve problems relating to human resources consumption, an organizational structure that supports post-bureaucratic work and collaboration activities is an important precondition for regenerative work experiences. As noted above, when work organizational logic and the logic of work activities do not match, problems start to emerge at individual and group levels. This also implies that organizational structures should be reconsidered if and when work within an organization starts to resemble post-bureaucratic work. However, structural changes should not
be confused with solving »underlying« problems. This section discusses the structural side of the post-bureaucratic working life. Consequently, the questions »What kind of an organizational structure is needed to support employees in coping with their post-bureaucratic work?« and »How do work organizations have to develop to correspond to the emerging post-bureaucratic work?« presented in section 5.10 are taken up here and discussed with the help of all the case studies.

From boxes to »hula-hoop« organizations – What it is and how we understand it to be

What kind of an organizational structure would then be optimal to contain, control, steer, and support post-bureaucratic work? The case studies indicate that there is no simple answer to this question. For instance, at TeleCom an extremely traditional divisional and functional organizational structure was experienced by both the employee and manager interviewees to support their boundaryless, fluid, and complex work. The structure provided boundaries for work, but was not experienced to prevent the employees from working and interacting as they considered best. The interviewees at NewMedia also speak about the similar situation in their organization. So maybe the images of virtual and network organizations as the future organizational structures are exaggerated; also more traditional structures may persist, provided that there exists collectively created and officially supported »internalities« that enable flexibility, autonomy, liberty, and initiative taking needed when dealing with the contemporary working life realities. In the whole SALUT-network only one organization had a more »cutting edge« organizational structure, i.e. matrix structure. However, this structure was not any easier than the other, more conservative structures. The matrix had its own problems that, once the structure was established, needed to be worked on and solved (see Backström & Ladan, 2002). Thus, it seems that the structure itself is not the make or break point, but the way the structure is used is more important. In other words, what an organization looks like seems not to be as important as what it really is like.

Actually, an important factor in post-bureaucratic organizing seems to be employees’ collective perceptions on how their organization is functioning and what it is like. The dynamic and interconnected nature of post-bureaucratic work makes it important for employees to understand themselves not as occupants of a single organizational »box«, but as members of several organizational groups simultaneously. This becomes apparent in
the Norrtälje Hospital case study, where the SALUT-project did not lead
to or coincide with a hospital level reorganization. Instead, the project en-
couraged the managerial levels to perceive the organization in a new way:
as an interactive multi-group organization (a hula-hoop organization)
rather than as a strict line of independent boxes (see figures 6.2 and 6.3).
The hospital’s SALUT-project leader and director both experienced the
new way of looking at the organization improving the managers’ working
situation (Hoverhjelm, 2002; personal communication and Müller, 2002;
personal communication). At Tenants’ Union, instead, many of the prob-
lems described related to the employees’ commitment to one group at the
expense of other collaboration relations as well as the strongly prevailing
mistrust towards other groups. Especially before the development process-
es and competence training carried out in autumn 2001 and spring 2002,
the walls between groups seemed to grow up as rapidly as mushrooms
emerge after a rain in the autumn. Maybe the »us-they« thinking learned
from the rent level negotiations contributed to an internal »us-they« think-
ing. Be as it may, walls grew rapidly between even temporary groups (such
as the Premises-group working on the new physical working space design)
and others in the organization. Consequently, any organizational restruc-
turing could potentially create new problems since the employees respond-
ed with an immediate and automatic mistrust towards others forming a
group.

For employees to understand that they simultaneously can belong to
many different groups, it naturally is important that an organization’s high-
est management supports the employees in understanding their intercon-
ectedness to many groups within the organization. However, in both
Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union, an extremely important factor
influencing the employees’ behavior was their own understanding of their
position in the organization. For instance, the Negotiations unit managers
at Tenants’ Union did their best to support the employees in understanding
their versatile connections within the unit by, among other things, creating
forums (weekly meetings) for all the unit employees to meet and learn to
know each other. However, the focal question was all along whether the
employees would give up their »us-they« thinking in general and start to
benefit from these forums.

In addition to managerial attempts to create a more complex, multi-
group understanding of an organization, it seems that two further decisive
factors influencing the way employees perceive their organization to »be
like« are the organization’s history and its institutional context. For instance, at the Negotiations unit, the employees seemed to perceive their unit and organization as big and complex; the unit’s 40 employees found it hard to create collaboration relations spontaneously with each other since the unit was considered to be so big. It is easy to see that the earlier work experiences in the small local offices made the bigger organization seem overwhelming. At Norrtälje Hospital, instead, the employees and managers alike spoke about »the small hospital« with »only« little more than 650 employees, where everybody knows each other. Here, the hospital’s environment had its influence. Norrtälje Hospital is the smallest hospital in the county and many employees have earlier worked in other, much bigger hospitals. In sum, the way employees perceive their organization and their ability to »navigate« in it depends a lot on their shared mental models on what a »usual« organization is like. For Tenants’ Union employees, a usual organization is small and they did not feel at home in the »big« 40 employee unit; for Norrtälje Hospital employees, a usual organization is large and they considered the »small« 650 employee hospital almost too intimate. It all is relative. It is, thus, important for employees to collectively understand how the earlier experiences and the institutional setting influence their thinking and therefore also their behavior. Having such an insight on the shared mental models and where they come from may also help to question them and create new, alternative ways to perceive one’s organization and one’s possibilities to function in it.

**Boundaries confining work**

Another important perspective relating to work organizational structures in the contemporary working life emerging from the case studies is an organization’s role in confining and structuring work. Already basic definitions of work organization state that (Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991; p. 7):

> Organizations are social arrangements for the controlled performance of collective goals.

Thus, an organization should contain social and productive activities and orchestrate them. As can be seen in the NewMedia case, without conscious thinking a growing social structure easily ends up into chaos and oligarchy; employees when not knowing their relations to each other, their respective roles and tasks, do not dare to make decisions, nobody takes the lead. Thus,
a structure is needed to coordinate the different inputs and to help people to face and interact with each other. Even in the post-bureaucratic working life, the task of an organizational structure is to provide employees with boundaries to confine their work in a meaningful way. However, it is important to note here that it probably is impossible for an organization to confine its employees’ work totally through organizational boundaries. There are factors affecting employees’ work (i.e. factors within their »care« boundary) that are beyond even the organization’s control. Nevertheless, much can still be done to design more meaningful jobs; this is discussed here.

Based on the discussion in section 8.1.2, it seems to be important to set boundaries for the things people have to care about at work, to create a horizontal division of labor that helps employees to reduce the factors that influence their work and what they have to care about. This strategy was obviously adopted at NewMedia and TeleCom where organizational structure was created to divide different tasks from each other and to signal the employees what their tasks and responsibilities as well as authorities are. Furthermore, at TeleCom organizational rules and regulations were created to make it unnecessary for the employees to »reinvent the wheel all the time« with an aim to create »a marriage between bureaucracy and flexibility«. Also at NewMedia dividing different functions from one another was aimed at increasing the employees’ opportunity to concentrate on their own work. Similarly, at Tenants’ Union, for instance, a special group was established for dealing with the renovation questions in order to allow the other employees to concentrate on the most important parts of their work and not to get stuck with a few difficult cases. At Norrtälje Hospital, the engagement of additional administrative help at the clinic level can also be seen from this point of view; this was done to enable the department managers to concentrate on their work.

However, there were clear differences in the degree to which the employees in the different case organizations were able to concentrate on their core tasks. At NewMedia and TeleCom, the interviewees considered a greatest challenge in their work to be finding the balance between too much and enough. For instance, the interviewees experienced the complexity and variability of work enabling learning, development, and sense of suspense at work. At the same time, the complexity and variability made work sometimes difficult to comprehend and manage. Similarly, contacts with others provided meaning to work, but too many contacts left the
employees disoriented and buried with work. Consequently, the greatest problem for these interviewees was such »Janus«-kind of work; the two faces of a same thing causing regenerative and consuming work experiences. In section 5.10, I wondered whether this Janus characteristic of work would be present in the more traditional case organizations as well. It was not. At Norrtälje Hospital and ‘Tenants’ Union the most profound problems at work namely related to the design of jobs: what was included to a person’s responsibilities. Additional tasks of, for instance, administrative character were experienced to prevent the concentration on the core tasks in one’s work. Therefore, one can say that it the »new economy« companies jobs were better designed focusing on their purpose; the employees were able to concentrate mainly on the tasks that they, as the experts of their work, considered to be most important in it. Problems were mainly created by »too much of the good thing«. At Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union development towards better defined jobs was only in its beginning.

Consequently, the main point made here is that, based on the case studies, it seems that it is important to divide work horizontally to allow each employee and each employee group to concentrate on the most important issues in their work, to confine and delimit their work such that it contains what naturally belongs to it. So are we speaking about taylorism all over again here? Not necessarily and here comes the difficult part. Dividing work horizontally into functional »boxes« may or may not lead to taylorism depending on how it is done. If the division is done by external actors and permanently, we may end up with tayloristic working reality, not suitable for the contemporary working life at all. Instead, new opportunities open up if the division is done based on needs apparent in the daily work activities (as was the case at NewMedia) and if it is done such that individuals are still »allowed« to travel around the organization, to create networks, to contact and collaborate with whom they need as was the case at NewMedia, TeleCom, and Tenants’ Union. In all these cases (and also when it comes to the department managers at Norrtälje Hospital), the initial problem with work contents was that they were very broad and establishing the horizontal division of labor eased up the employees’ situation by delimiting the amount of issues that they directly had to care about; it did not make their work content poorer or less meaningful - quite the contrary. When work is complex as it is, thus, delimiting it by starting from the natural functional division lines seems to benefit employees. Consequently, we are here
actually closer to Sociotechnical Systems-thinking than taylorism; in chapter 2 it was noted that Sociotechnical Systems suggested forming a job as a collection of sub-tasks that, together, form a meaningful whole work content. Where Sociotechnical Systems aimed mostly at increasing sub-tasks to form »whole« work content, I am suggesting here that in many cases it seems to be wise to decrease the number of sub-tasks in order to achieve a meaningful work content.

What I am saying here is much against the seemingly prevailing organizational practice. For instance, the department manager job at Norrtälje Hospital is a splendid example of public sector jobs that often contain a wide variety of roles and responsibilities. A department manager is not only a department manager but also an administrator, janitor, practicing nurse, counselor, consultant, etc. The overall savings in the public sector and the increasing competition and need for cost effectiveness in the private sector have created such multi-role jobs. At the positive side, such versatility of tasks and responsibilities enables a person to truly carry out versatile work; the negative side seems to be that it is not humanely possible to have time to carry out all these different roles, and the role occupants consume their cognitive and affective resources when trying to be it all, trying to do it all - also master those roles they do not feel at home with. Thus, my perspective is that in order to be regenerative and meaningful, work has to be naturally delimited. With this I mean that there has to be humane possibilities to concentrate on the most important - for the individual and the organization – parts of work. The structural wholeness of work has to be created from this starting point, versatility in work content should not be achieved by piling up tasks of unrelated nature on people.

The strategy of re-confining work may, consequently, be sound but it also has its potential pitfalls. The main question is whether the established organizational structures and rules truly create a natural division of labor by codifying the earlier organizational learning (see Crossan et al., 1999) as in the case of NewMedia and TeleCom was aimed to be done, or whether the organizational structures and rules have been chosen based on organizational isomorphism and externally set by a few consultants or management representatives. In the first case, the structures and rules are more likely to support employees’ work and achieve the aims of providing clarity, direction, and resources for them. This is because the structures and rules rise from their individual and collective learning, from their daily inventions on how to carry out individual tasks and shared work processes. In effect, at
TeleCom the employee interviewees said this to be the case, at NewMedia
no employees were interviewed, so it is not possible to say how they
perceive the structures and rules. If the organizational structures and rules
follow the way of isomorphism, there is obviously a greater potential for
alienation caused by the new structures; they represent a strange reality for
employees and may differ from the way they would like to carry out the
tasks. Consequently, management has a big responsibility in establishing
the organizational structures and rules. It is not enough for managers to
know the different possible ways to organize operations; they have to know
their own operations through and through, be aware of both converging
and contradicting ideas the employees have on how things should be
done around here, and rather than creating and communicating the
design to the employees, they should be able to create processes were indi-
vidual and collective learning is allowed to, eventually and continuously,
converge into ideas on how operations should be organized and regulated.
Creating such a process is not easy; management naturally wants to in-
crease control, clarity, and manageability of an organization and may well
be tempted to push through and choose the design and rules it considers
important and suitable. Nevertheless, this strategy is not likely to cause a
sustainable success; first of all, in Vansina’s words (1998), it does not allow
the transitional space for employees and, secondly and more importantly, it
does impose only the management’s »truth« on the organization. What
guarantees are there that the management alone is able to perceive a
»truth« that others in the organization could eventually adopt as their own?
Thus, management’s task should be to initiate and support processes, in
which the needed organizational structures and rules are discussed and
designed continuously and as needs arise.

So far, the horizontal division of labor - the boundaries of work separat-
ing employees at the same hierarchical ladder - has been discussed, but also
the vertical boundaries of work seem to gain a new meaning in the post-
bureaucratic working life. In other words, the role of managers and the
relation between a manager and her employees changes. In the bureaucratic
realm, the lack of control at the employee level depends much on the fact
that management has taken over all control; it is they who make decisions
and regulate employees’ work. As noted already earlier, the lack of control
in more post-bureaucratic work does not depend so much on the vertical
division of labor, but on uncontrollable factors external to an organization.
Consequently, it makes sense for employees and managers in collaboration
to try and deal with the uncontrollability of work; the TeleCom case is a good example of this, the managers interviewed indicated that rather than telling the employees what to do, they concentrated on defining and delimiting the complex and boundaryless jobs in collaboration with the employees. Furthermore, the NewMedia case offers an example of how vertical division of labor can actually support employees in gaining control over their work. The company’s CEO gave clear messages that it is her task to worry about the markets and rapid changes in them – she would monitor and explain the changes, the others could concentrate on their work. The vertical division of labor in the bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic settings is further discussed in section 8.4.

Learning from the past? – Professional organizations
Post-bureaucratic work, as defined here, actually reminds quite strongly of traditional »professional work« – the work of highly educated engineers, lawyers, medical doctors, architects, etc. as it always has been. So maybe in order to understand what kind of a structure might support post-bureaucratic work, it makes sense to ask what kind of an organizational structure has supported that type of work? Could similar work organizational solutions be applied in the current situation? Two important ideas relate to this. First, professional work (as defined by e.g. Naisbit, 1982) has actually often been confined by a similar kind of approach as suggested in this chapter. Earlier many professionals have been able to concentrate on the core of their work: a lawyer on the legal aspects of her cases, a medical doctor on medical procedures. These privileged professional roles were surrounded by administrative and support staff taking care of related tasks (e.g. paperwork and appointment practicalities). Thus, in a sense I am suggesting this type of a solution even now; the inevitable logic of one person doing all different tasks relating to her work area should be to some extent questioned. For instance, at Norrtälje Hospital, the department managers emphasized the fact that making them carry out administrative routine tasks is not necessarily the cheapest option. Directly, the costs are higher when their expensive working time is used for routine tasks that could probably be more efficiently carried out by an administrative specialist. Indirectly, their absence from their departments and consequent inability to support the operations and personnel probably has its costs also.

However, a second aspect when comparing post-bureaucratic work to professional work is that the two really cannot be compared; they are not
the same thing at all. Professional and post-bureaucratic work do remind of each other - there is the same sense of expanding boundaries, invisibility, complexity, fluidity, etc. – but a great difference is that when professional work was and is carried out by a relatively small number of well-educated individuals, post-bureaucratic work and working life probably will be the reality for many different kinds of employees and employee groups. Thus, economically it is not possible to provide an army of support and administrative personnel for everybody working in the post-bureaucratic reality; it simply would be too expensive. However, by putting together these two aspects – that division of work is needed in post-bureaucratic realm and that this division cannot provide similar kinds of one-purpose roles as with professionals’ work – a solution may be reached. Post-bureaucratic work roles are and will be quite extensive and their occupants have to carry out supporting and administrative tasks in relation to their work; for this, however, there is a limit. There is no standard solution, but each organization should seek to create meaningful and natural work roles in which the purpose of one’s work defines what naturally belongs to it. If a department manager spends most of her days feeding administrative data into a computer system, such a meaningful and natural work role has not been created. Thus, at Norrtälje Hospital the attempts to reduce department managers’ administrative burden really make sense. If a programmer spends most of her days replying to customer calls, such a meaningful and natural role has not been created. Thus, it made sense to create a customer service center at NewMedia. If an ombudsman does not have time for her negotiations, as she instead gets stuck with one legally impossible case, such role has not been created. Thus, having a supporting renovation group and union lawyers at Tenants’ Union really makes sense.

In the case studies, it was quite clear that the development work on job roles and organizational structures should be carried out; in each case organization the situation was unsatisfactory and problematic enough to indicate that something needed to be done. The more difficult question may be, consequently, when not to start development. For managers this presents an additional challenge; they have to follow how their employees and they themselves are doing. Is the work system at its threshold of pain or are tiredness, frustration, lack of energy, etc. employees and managers are experiencing just temporary and possible to remove by some smaller, «technical» changes? Or is there a need to reconsider the existing job roles and their connection to each other (as in the case studies)? Managers’ and
employees’ »gut-feelings« on individual and collective energy losses become, thus, the starting point for job role and organizational development. The management and employees all have the responsibility to lift a red flag when, as in the case studies, they feel that they cannot cope with the existing roles or that the existing roles do not make sense from their own point of view or from the point of view of the organization.

8.3.3 Autonomy and interconnectedness – An interactive organization

So far, organizational values and structures supporting the post-bureaucratic work have been discussed. Both have led to similar conclusions; organizing post-bureaucratic work is demanding and needs to be done continuously and by everyone. The goal of organizing should be to create meaningful individual job roles as well as collaborative resources. In this section, these two aspects - the autonomy of individuals and their interconnectedness in the post-bureaucratic working life are discussed further.

In literature, the non-bureaucratic way to create non-bureaucratic structures is often referred to as »empowerment«; employees are empowered to steer their own work (see e.g. Howard, 1995; chapter 3). To me it seems, however, that empowerment is an old cure for a new disease. Empowerment (or autonomy) has been and would be able to solve problems relating to a too limited work content: when bureaucratic work confines people into tiny boxes where they become withered and powerless. When it comes to post-bureaucratic work described above, it cannot be controlled, not even by an employee herself. It is too open (boundaryless), fluid, and uncertain to be controlled. Furthermore, post-bureaucratic work cannot be defined and controlled by one person since it is relational in its nature, always in changing connections to other’s work. Within teams and networks to which an employee belongs, there are many contradictory demands that simply cannot be prioritized by unilateral decisions. This is obvious in all the case organizations. Employees and managers experienced themselves as members in a complex social system, and for them the possibility to make decisions in their work was not enough. They wanted to engage in collective work to deem priorities and make sense of the work situation.

Thus, empowerment cannot single-handedly be the solution. This is not to say that empowerment and autonomy are not important; they are at least for two reasons. First, as Karasek and Theorell’s (1990) demand/con-
control model points out, control at work is important since without control, people experience strain and find it hard to cope with their work. Eventually, not enough control in relation to the demands of work leads, according to Karasek and Theorell, to negative health consequences. The second reason why control is important in a post-bureaucratic work system is that such a system will not function, if its members do not carry responsibility for their own work and also for the operation of the whole system. Employees have to carry the responsibility for their personally demanding, boundaryless, and interconnected work; such post-bureaucratic work is simply not possible, if employees do not take the responsibility to make it work. Being responsible, in its turn, requires having control; one cannot be responsible for something that one cannot also control to some degree – or at least that kind of a situation is not healthy. This is quite obvious from Karasek and Theorell (ibid.) model and also from, for instance, the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union case studies. The department managers and the ombudsmen did carry extensive responsibility for their work and also for the situations at work that they could not control, and they all experienced that extremely difficult.

Consequently, even though empowerment and control are important, in a post-bureaucratic system they are only half the story due to the interconnected nature of work. The interconnectedness of people and their tasks makes collective steering of work and an organization’s operation essential. Personal autonomy and control thus have to be accompanied by possibilities for an organization’s internal dialogue and negotiations gradually and dynamically making sense of the shared task, the changing resource needs and priorities at work, the meaning of different actors in carrying out the task, etc. For instance at Norrtälje Hospital, an important step towards a more sustainable work system was taken in the Archipelago meeting, where the department managers and clinic heads decided to take time for such processes: to arrange special dialogue meetings and to move from information monologues to two-way communication in the clinics’ regular meetings. They realized that as things could not be pre-planned, they would have to engage in continuous processes in defining their respective work roles, their collaboration, and their shared understanding of the world. Also Heckscher (1994; see chapter 3) calls his ideal post-bureaucratic type »an interactive type«. A post-bureaucratic organization, for him, is an organization in which all the employees experience responsibility for
the whole system and engage in dialogues in order to make decisions and steer the organization together.

When discussing how to steer a post-bureaucratic or an interactive organization, for instance Heckscher (ibid.) and Senge (1990) emphasize the need for dialogue. But what does the concept »dialogue« really mean? David Bohm, an influential author on the subject, describes it as (1996, p. 6):

\[
\text{a stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us. (original emphasis)}
\]

In Bohmian dialogue, everybody wins as people involved approach a consensus. The participants suspend their assumptions, understanding that their assumptions are just that - they are not final and objective truths, but simply personal assumptions. Consequently, the participants neither carry out their assumptions nor suppress them. They keep them at distance, wonder about their meaning, and prevent them from steering the dialogue. No-one tries to convince the others, but listens to both herself as well as the others. Wilhelmson and Döös (2002) suggest that a manager’s role in a dialogue should be to encourage it: to support the different views to emerge rather than to steer the dialogue. Actually, according to Wilhelmson and Döös, too dominating an involvement from a manager or anybody else reduces dialogue into a usual discussion and debate.

Such ideas on dialogue make sense, but are very difficult to carry out in practice. In a work setting, how is it possible to suspend one’s assumptions and not try to convince others? Is it enough just to seek for a consensus when the operation of an organization is at stake? Is one not allowed to disagree with others or get upset? Maybe dialogue as defined by e.g. Bohm is a way of speaking with one another that is worth pursuing; for instance, understanding the nature of assumptions is important and helps in listening to oneself and to others also. Furthermore, dialogue maybe a useful »tool« when the subject under consideration relates to broader questions, such as organizational principles and job roles. When speaking about these issues and creating a shared understanding, time and space for dialogue may really be needed. Dialogue, in short, may be a good tool when there is a need to create a fundamental, shared understanding on something; when it is necessary not only to state one’s opinions and assumptions, but also together
with others to form new opinions and assumptions.

But the question that comes to mind when reading books on dialogue (e.g. Williamson & Döös, 2002; Bohm, 1996) is; why is it not allowed for people to try and convince one another? Why does one have to »suspend one’s assumptions« - why cannot one disagree strongly with someone else or even get upset or angry and show it? It seems almost that dialogue prevents us from being human, from having or showing any feelings. For instance, Bohm (1996, p. 20) writes:

Normally when you are angry you start to react outwardly, and you may just say something nasty. Now suppose I try to suspend that reaction. Not only will I now not insult that person outwardly, but I will suspend the insult that I make inside of me. […] I hold it back, I reflect it back. You may also think of it as suspended in front of you so that you can look at it […].

But disagreeing with someone, holding one’s assumptions, does not necessarily mean getting angry and saying nasty things. Consequently, maybe one does not have to »suspend one’s reactions«, but it is enough to be civil; even when disagreeing with others, respect them and not to »say something nasty«. Furthermore, maybe disagreeing can be made »safe« if people through consent approach their differences constructively. During the time of industrialism exactly this has been done in (or at least has been the goal of) collective bargaining processes in which employers and employees or their representatives have steered and developed various aspects of working life and settled their differences through negotiations. Maybe then the dialogue ideas could be complemented with the ideas of negotiations? This is also suggested by Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1993; see chapter 3), when they explain the existence of a political boundary in post-bureaucratic organizations. Contradictory priorities and values do exist in any organization. An efficient and salutary way to deal with them is to negotiate; to allow people with different priorities and values to meet on the political boundary, make it visible, and constructively try and create a deal acceptable for all parties. Such negotiations (very much like dialogues) would be founded on the understanding that there are many, equally legitimate priorities and ideas. The task for the participants is then to seek for a solution through negotiations - through presenting their different ideas and arguing for them and through listening the others do the same. At Tenants’
Union one of the ombudsmen actually said that this is the way many issues are solved in the organization. The ombudsmen are used to negotiating – it is their job. Even when in the "home field", they negotiate with each other. The ombudsman noted that she experiences this very positively; when the employees are negotiating with each other, they are always trying to find a common solution. Leaving the negotiations table (metaphorically) is not an option.

However, if dialogue is not easy, neither are negotiations; human weaknesses step into play easily and may destroy the constructive atmosphere. For instance, the perspective and opinion differences that create the need for negotiations may become "frozen" into "us and they" positions. Permanent groupings of "us and they" are formed, differences in the opinions and priorities move from issue level to personal differences. People do not any more differ in certain questions but instead permanently end up on different sides. The SALUT-project leader at Norrtälje Hospital had a good advice for that; when discussing different opinions and priorities present in the hospital, he always said that conflicting views should be dealt with in discussions in which everybody goes after the ball and never after the other players.

Role negotiations in principle and in practice
Employees' roles are an important subject for both dialogue and negotiation processes. Throughout this chapter, it has been indicated that job contents and roles have to be defined flexibly and continuously between an employee and her peers and managers. However, as can be seen in chapter 3, for instance Hage (1995) states that most of our current social problems relate precisely to the difficulties in such role negotiations. The case studies do confirm Hage's worry for the threats present in the more personalized and non-standardized social world. For instance, in the Norrtälje Hospital case, the department managers did perceive the need for the role negotiations, but were initially prevented from carrying out these negotiations by the bureaucratic system they were a part of. There did not exist "a script" (see chapter 2) - a shared mental model - for the negotiations and individual solutions in defining work roles and, consequently, the persons working in the system - the department managers and clinic heads - were not always able to recognize such needs. As a result, some department managers ended up having unclear and undefined roles; as the roles could not be standardized and predefined, they were never defined. However, in some
cases, those involved perceived and acted on the need to discuss the roles, and a better working situation seems to have resulted. Also at Tenants’ Union, the role negotiations emerged only gradually during the case study. Initially, work roles were not discussed and, in line with the people’s movement tradition, each ombudsman worked alone in the field. The training input and weekly meetings arranged in the Negotiations unit did, however, gradually change the situation. The unit’s employees started to understand that they could form small groups corresponding to the group work natural in the earlier small local offices. The management did clearly support this; the unit’s managers emphasized the possibility for flexible, employee-driven organizing besides of having formalized group structures. The formal groups were, furthermore, formed based on the natural communication and collaboration patterns in the unit.

Managers’ actions seem actually to be an extremely important factor affecting the emergence and successfulness of the role negotiations. An organization’s management as whole and the closest managers in particular have a decisive role in making the role negotiations between employees and between employees and themselves happen. Based on the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union case studies, it is clear that management has to »allow« the role negotiations: to give room for them and to provide concrete time and place. This is a preliminary condition for the role negotiations to emerge and succeed, and it is probably due to the fact that defining roles and organizing relations between the roles is a part of the managerial planning and decision-making work. Not only do managers perceive it as their task, but also employees »look up« to their managers and expect them to provide the solutions for such questions as »what is my role and what are my tasks in this organization« and »whom am I supposed to be working with«. Departure from such thinking patterns demands that both employees and managers understand that, as roles and jobs cannot be predefined in detail or standardized anymore, they have to be defined on the way and flexibly, depending on the personal abilities, preferences, and potentials of people involved. Furthermore, since such a change means that management allows employees to enter a sphere traditionally dominated by management (i.e. organizing and supervising work), the way management communicates and actually carries out sharing the responsibility in role and job definition is of crucial importance. At both Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union, the management signaled the need for a new type of dialogue on job roles and also provided natural forums for such negotia-
tions to emerge. At the hospital, the management meeting reported in section 6.7 and in Tenants’ Union the weekly meetings functioned as such natural forums to ground the idea for role negotiations. The TeleCom and NewMedia cases also bring forth the importance of management allowing and initiating the negotiations; in both companies the closest managers were speaking partners for their employees and work groups on defining the roles, resources, and priorities at work.

In the Swedish context, it is also important to understand continuous role design as a work environmental question. If perceived such, the legislation actually binds managers to involve employees in defining roles and collaboration; the Work Environment Act namely states that (Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2001):

The employee shall be given the opportunity of participating in the design of his own working situation and in processes of change and development affecting his own work.

8.3.4 Leadership and employeeship

As can be deduced from above, managers’ role becomes an essential factor affecting work experiences in the post-bureaucratic setting. Even though it sounds like a cliché, successful managers do act as coaches. The dialogue and negotiations processes, the common search for meaningful work contents, job roles, and boundaries of work, have to be guided by managers who understand the need for these processes. As will be discussed below, it is almost as if the basis for a managerial role transforms from superiority, power, and mental work to working for employees.

Besides of guiding the dialogue and negotiations processes, management has an important role in creating a foundation for these processes through providing employees with an organizational direction. In the post-bureaucratic setting instead of bureaucratic rules and ropes, management should be able to provide shared mental models on the mission and required behavior in the organization. However, a note of caution is in order here; controlling through »clan« (see Ouchi, 1979) is just as much control as is controlling through bureaucratic rules. Thus, management does not only have to disseminate the mental models on directions and behavior, they also have to involve the whole organization in creating these models. This task is not demanding due to the difficulty of creating mental models. Shared mental models are created and recreated in organizations each day.
as people interact with each other; mental models emerge based on what is said and done as well as based on what is not said and done. The challenge is, however, for management to create conditions for the forming of mental models that truly support the organization’s operation and take it forth to the direction that may guarantee the sustainability of the organization. As suggested above, such »large scale« processes in creating shared understandings in an organization probably necessitate taking time and making space for dialogue processes. Also the case studies point in this direction. For instance, in Norrtälje Hospital’s Archipelago meeting, many of the clinics ended up deciding to have few times a year special meetings away from the hospital and dedicated for dialogue: for creating a common understanding on where the clinic is now and where it should be heading next.

The case studies also point out how difficult it can be for the managers to support the development of shared mental models. This is because employees primarily concentrate on their daily tasks and operational work in an organization, while managers instead concentrate on organizational development and visions for the future. Managers, much more often than employees, think about »where we are now« and »where we should be heading to«. In Vansina’s (1998) terms, managers are continuously living in a transitional space. Consequently, when organizational development, improvement, and change are discussed in an organization, managers – when compared to employees - have taken a head start. This is natural, but it may create a problem if managers fail to take it into account. If that happens, managers end up only presenting their mental model to employees – »this is how it should be« – and forget to share their thinking path to the conclusion they have reached. Managers somehow start from the second step; they remember to describe what should be done, but not why. The why is clear for them, but not necessarily for employees. Employees may understand what the managers mean, but not having gone through the same transitional space the why and how questions may remain open to them. This happened to some degree at Tenants’ Union as many changes rapidly followed one another and were founded on the management’s initiatives. The second interview study indicated that the employees did understand what the management aimed to achieve with different change processes and supported some of the changes made (e.g. the establishment of small geographical groups), but somehow the employees also remained detached from these processes. Maybe they missed their own transitional
period, time to consider the whys and hows of changes the same way as the managers did.

Managers in post-bureaucratic organizations have thus a key role in coordinating the creation and communication of directions, visions, and boundaries for work. The obvious question is whether managers actually are able to deal with all this. Is it possible for them to comprehend the incomprehensible post-bureaucratic work any better than employees? Do managers become burned out if all the responsibility is pushed onto them? Delegating the responsibility to managers is the easy answer, but probably not the correct one. Managers may carry the responsibility for initiating, supporting, and guiding the processes aimed at creating comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work, but employees have an equally important role. As Flood (1999), Hage (1995), and Senge (1990) among others state, more complex and creative systems thinking is required from everyone in the post-bureaucratic world. Furthermore, in many of the case studies (see e.g. sections 6.2.1 and 7.8.1) the idea of «employeeship» corresponding to the manager’s leadership came forth. Managers carry the responsibility for coordinating and guiding people and work in organizations, but similarly employees should take the responsibility for the interacting whole, for being a part of organizational re-creation and meaning construction. The Tenants’ Union case study provides a good example on this, in section 7.8.4 one of the employees says how, when actually putting their mind on the organization’s Balanced Scorecard-tool Signpost, the employees were able to understand it better and use it to support their work. All the discussion on Signpost in the unit meetings was irrelevant until the employees tried to internalize the Signpost and its meaning.

A final note on the manager role in the post-bureaucratic setting relates to the skill of communicating. Based on the case studies and the reasoning above, it seems that a successful manager is not only a good at talking, but also knows how to listen to her employees. For instance detecting when and for what reasons employees’ resources become consumed at work necessitates that managers continuously listen to employees and have their fingers on the organization’s pulse. Furthermore, when it comes to talking, it seems that it is essential for managers not only to inform employees when something is happening but also inform them when something is not happening. For instance in the Norrtälje Hospital case study, the reorganization in the ward departments lasted for about a year and there were times, when nothing happened relating to it. However, the employees were not
always aware of that nothing happens now and wondered why they hear nothing about the development process. Similarly the department managers at the hospital noted that often they lose track in decision-making; a decision to be made travels to the hospital’s management group and then nothing happens. Sometimes frustration starts to build up in these situations, those affected by the change or decision feel that they are hanging in the air and losing control. Therefore it is important for managers to listen to employees, remember their need to know also when things - for one reason or another - are in the standstill.

**8.3.5 Summary – Sustainable development at individual and organizational levels**

The starting points for this section 8.3 were the observations of the emergence of post-bureaucratic work (8.1) and simultaneous failure to individually and collectively master such work (8.2.). The aim of this section has been to distinguish organizational factors that may increase comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of post-bureaucratic work and, in that way, create possibilities for sustainable individual and collective development in the contemporary working life. The section has not aimed to create a post-bureaucratic ideal type (cf. Heckscher, 1994), but instead bring forth new ways of thinking as well as individually and collectively acting in the post-bureaucratic working life. Alternatives for bureaucratic approaches to organizing have been explored.

An important message from the section is that when moving from the bureaucratic logic to the post-bureaucratic logic, new ways of thinking are needed both from employees and their managers. Both groups have to carry the responsibility for the whole operations to make it work; supporting and coordinating leadership has to be responded to by employeeship. Furthermore, a more complex way of thinking is needed. In an interactive organization, actions taken in one part of the organization influence many other things in it and, consequently, there is a need to be aware of this.

Another important message from the section is the fact that an organization and organizing come closer to each other in a post-bureaucratic system. An organization is recreated and redefined continuously in dialogues and negotiations between its managers and employees; as things cannot be simply predefined, they have to be defined on the way. However, engaging in the dialogue and negotiations processes needed is demanding both for managers and employees; it requires complex thinking and understanding
of the work system as well as it demands social competencies from all involved. That is why these processes and competencies needed have to be made visible and concrete. For instance the Norrtälje Hospital case study indicates how important it is simply to jointly understand that people involved in a work system have to engage in dialogues and negotiations as well as have to learn «dialogue competencies», i.e. new ways to relate to their own and other’s ideas and ways of communicating. In short, individual and collective coping is not easy in the post-bureaucratic working life, but my conviction is that it can be made at least a bit easier by recognizing the needed competencies and collaborating processes, and by providing room and time for nurturing these competencies and carrying out these processes.

An important area in the continuous redefinition in a post-bureaucratic organization relates to the boundaries of work. In this section, the need to confine work along its natural boundaries has been discussed. What these natural boundaries mean has to be defined and redefined in each organization and the signposts for founding the natural boundaries relate equally to organizational effectiveness and job occupants’ «gut feelings». If the way jobs have been designed prevents employees from contributing to their organization’s work in a meaningful way and if employees experience that they do not have time for what is important in their work, there probably is a need to check the boundaries and content of jobs.

As was noted above, for post-bureaucratic work to be regenerative, its organizational setting should be post-bureaucratic too: to support the work activities as they are rather than provide bureaucratic relics for operation guidelines. This section has indicated that there is no specific form for such a post-bureaucratic organization; it is defined by how it functions rather than by what it looks like. A post-bureaucratic organization is continuously being created and recreated by its members taking and sharing the responsibility for that work. Consequently, regenerative work and sustainable development emerge not because they have been achieved and created in an organization, but rather because they continuously are sought in it. Instead of carrying out improvement projects on «good work», employees and managers should concentrate on sustainable development. They should continuously work and collaborate to develop their respective roles and tasks as well as organizational practices with an aim to create and sustain regenerative work. Such sustainable development work should become embedded in the organizational life; as a single project, it probably
would consume too much time to be possible to carry out. Instead, in every
daily collaboration situation and in each meeting, the underlying agenda
should be the collective work in creating and re-creating job roles, tasks,
structures, and - simply - the way to understand the organization, its differ-
ent actors, and work in it.

8.4 Paradigm shifts and division of work
At this point, I shall leave behind the discussion on what post-bureaucratic
work is like, how it affects employees (and why it does affect them the way
it does) as well as how, in practice, an organization should function in the
post-bureaucratic working life in order to offer support to its employees.
Instead, the focus is now turned to the actual transition from bureaucracy to
post-bureaucracy. This chapter aims to bring this transition into its context
as one paradigm shift among many others and, consequently, make it pos-
sible to use the teachings from the other paradigm shifts in understanding
this current one. Here again, I am not claiming that a comprehensive and
universal paradigm shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy is taking
place; I am concentrating on the shift where it happens. Returning to the
yellow flower metaphor from the beginning of this chapter, I am looking at
the yellow flowers where they are starting to bloom.

In order to understand the shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy, it
is important to remember that working life paradigm shifts have happened
already earlier in the working life. The way societies have understood work,
economy, and business has changed along the history’s unfolding; the con-
ception of work is not constant, but in continuous transformation and a
subject for gradual social re-construction. Harry Applebaum’s book »The
Concept of Work. Ancient, Medieval, and Modern« (1992) illustrates well
how various thinkers from Aristotle to Luther, Marx, and Weber have seem
to either initiate and/or conceptualize societal change trends leading to the
transformations also in the idea and practice of work. Also Gies and Gies
(1994) document how, for instance, the written codes of the monastery
movements influenced the prevailing conceptions of work in the Middle
Age only to be replaced by socially constructed conceptions on work as the
practices and daily tasks in the monasteries and their surroundings changed
how work was generally conceived. Consequently, the history of work par-
adigms is a curious interplay of interwoven societal and technological
movements influencing the reality of work and authorities capturing these
movements into doctrines that then influence daily work (for more on this
see Anthony, 1977), while transformations in daily work practices again create foundations for new authorities and new doctrines to emerge.

In the western history of work, in general, an interesting element in the paradigmatic changes of working life has been the transformations in how manual labor and mental work have been thought about (see e.g. Howard, 1995). The conceptions of manual and mental work have strongly influenced the division of labor and, consequently, the social structure and power relations in work settings. This section discusses these transforming conceptions on manual and mental work and, eventually, based on the case studies, sets a hypothesis that the transition to the post-bureaucratic working life yet again means a transition in the conceptions on manual and mental work. Furthermore, it is argued that – unlike earlier – the split between manual and mental work is not anymore in the post-bureaucratic working life the decisive determinant for the division of labor. Finally, the individual histories of the case organizations and the most recent paradigmatic working life changes (from craft work to bureaucratic ideal types and to post-bureaucracy) are discussed side by side, and interesting convergencies in the individual histories of the case organizations and the recent paradigmatic working life changes are noted.

8.4.1 Earlier paradigm shifts in the European working life –

The changing conceptions on manual and mental work

In the ancient world of Greeks and Romans, there existed a value loaded separation between manual and mental work. The higher status of mental work was emphasized and manual labor with utilitarian purposes was understood to degrade the mind (Tilgher, 1977). However, the Jewish and early Christian authorities adopted a more complex view to manual work. The Old Testament tells about God’s creation work; consequently, if God works, so must people also work (Applebaum, 1992) and work with their hands to create the secular world in addition to the created one. In Christianity, the founders of the monastery movements from the early centuries AD perceived the close connection between manual labor and spiritual labor; manual work was valued since it enabled an individual to be independent and not in need of other’s help as well as since it enabled an individual to carry out charitable acts: «it is more blessed to give than to receive» (Applebaum, ibid.; Tilgher, 1977). Furthermore, the ideas of work as a prayer and penitence were strong. God had ordained men to work sweat in his brow and doing so would take men again closer to God. For instance, the Bene-
dictine Rule (that strongly influenced both the practice and philosophy of work from the latter part of the first millennium) underlines the value of manual labor both due to its material and, moreover, spiritual consequences; manual work carried out by monks provided livelihood for the monastery, but was motivated by its spiritual, salvation offering dimension.

However, the value of monastic manual labor in practice became gradually degraded during the Middle Age as the monastery movements moved away from the Benedictine ideal of combined mental and spiritual work and as the highest layers of monks dedicated themselves for »clean« work, work indoors. In a way, this medieval separation of manual and mental (spiritual) work was to be predicted as manual work was often perceived only as a vehicle towards spiritual work which, in the bottom line, was the focal occupation of a monk. Consequently, as it became possible – as the monasteries became richer - technological and social innovations were made to enable the monks and nuns to dedicate more of their time for spiritual work. For instance, machines such as watermills and windmills were developed to reduce the reliance on human labor and, when it comes to social innovations, more hierarchical social order was adopted to free the »higher« levels of monks and nuns to spiritual work (Applebaum, 1992). The ranks of aristocratic monks with prayer, the study of authorities, and God service as their tasks were complemented with lower class lay brothers taking care of the manual labor with hired unskilled laborers as their helpers (Gies & Gies, 1994, Tilgher, 1977).

Mental work in its turn seems to have had during the Middle Age a dual meaning. On the one hand, spiritual work in contemplation and prayer was deemed important and, in a more secular realm, creativity relating to craft work was also respected. On the other hand, mental work was limited in its scope since the right to create humane understanding of the world and Bible was reserved only to the highest ecclesiastical steps. Thus, mental work as a natural part of many manual tasks or as a spiritual act of prayer was respected, while truly inquisitive and creative work for creating new natural and theological knowledge or creating beauty was a privilege of only those closest to God (Gies & Gies, 1994; Applebaum, 1992; Shorter, 1973).

Thus, the task of even a scholar was to copy, to study the authorities - not to become one. As a Benedictine abbot from 14th century might have put it (Eco, 1998; pp. 36-37):

CHAPTER 8
If God has now given our order a mission, it is to oppose this race to the abyss [of sin], by preserving, repeating, and defending the treasure of wisdom our fathers entrusted to us. [...] it is up to us to defend [...] the very word of God, as he dictated it to the prophets and to the apostles, as the fathers repeated it without changing a syllable…

The monastery movements, consequently, ended up subordinating manual work to spiritual (but not intellectual) work, but the respect for manual craft work was strengthened yet again by, for instance, the ideas of the Renaissance and the Reformation as well as the consequent emergence of the early Modern Time; manual work was once again accepted as a worthy occupation of a civilized and educated man. For instance, in line with his Renaissance legacy, Galileo Galilei could equally be found working on his garden or on his astrological notes. Sobel (1999, pp. 117-118) describes how a group of distinguished guests found Galileo in his garden wearing an old leather apron:

I am ashamed that you see me in this clown’s habit,« he [Galileo] reportedly said […]. »I’ll go and dress myself as a philosopher.« But he must have been jesting, for when the men asked Galileo why he didn’t hire someone to take over his manual labor, he replied: »No, no: I should lose the pleasure…

The legacy of Martin Luther and other reformists during the third quarter of the 16th century established a new work ethics celebrating both manual and mental work as prayer, as a potential path to salvation (Applebaum, 1992). As with the early Christians, manual and mental work became once again unified. However, Luther and his colleagues took work out to the world from monasteries; they perceived spiritual work in monasteries as a selfish endeavor while work-as-a-prayer should bring worth to the society at large, not only to the individual working (Applebaum, ibid., Tilgher, 1977). Thus, Luther and other reformists aimed to diminish the (by then) value-laden distinction between spiritual and secular work; all work was valuable, all work was prayer. However, Luther did not aim to change the prevailing social order. Each man had his position in the society and from that position he should work for the benefit of his soul and his society. Nevertheless, the legacy of Luther and other reformists did eventually change the prevailing power structures and, in particular, the right for creative
mental work. The authority of church was challenged in the sense that even a simple man could ask »why«, study, and learn to understand the Creation better. Thus, mental work as a creative intellectual effort became conceived in a more democratic way. As the first Protestant universities were established in the 16th century, all »learned, able, and God-fearing persons, preachers, and officials«3 were allowed to receive education.

This short summary on just few aspects and phases in the history of the western work indicates the complex history of the relative conceptions on manual and mental work. At times, manual and mental work have peacefully coexisted within a person’s work or manual work has been perceived to lead to spiritual, mental work. At other times, manual work has been degraded and perceived as the obligatory toil of slaves or lowest levels of society. Full-scale industrialism emerged in the late 19th century eventually in a world where manual and mental labor had been separated from each other yet again in the sense that the higher class would carry out mental work, while manual labor was deemed as a suitable occupation for the lower classes. However, up to this point the compartmentalization of mental and manual work had not been complete; also manual work contained mental work. Skilled craft work demanded problem solving, planning, creativity, and also manual proficiency. Industrialism and taylorism meant eventually a long prison term for such work, thinking and doing were for most people effectively separated from each other as craft work was superseded by industrial work. This revolutionary transformation was consolidated by the work of few influential men. The work of F.W. Taylor and other proponents of Scientific Management provided the practical, engineering foundation for such work and the ideas of sociologists such as Max Weber defined the social ideal type of the emerging bureaucratic paradigm (see chapters 2 and 3). Henry Ford and Alfred Sloan respectively created the technological and organizational settings for the total separation of manual and mental work.

Historically closest paradigm shift for us, thus, is the emergence of industrialism after the craft work era. During that shift, the roles of both manual and mental workers changed drastically as the two areas of activity were

---

3 See, the History of Philipps University of Marburg, web-page: http://www.uni-marburg.de/zv/welcome_e.html. The University of Marburg is the second oldest Protestant university and the oldest still functioning Protestant university in the world.
normatively and totally separated from each other, yet brought together into the same industrial plant. The bureaucratic governance machine was taken into use in order to facilitate the interaction between the lower and upper levels of hierarchies, those people working so close to each other and still occupying totally different worlds. As can be seen from the discussion earlier in this chapter it seems, however, that an alternative for bureaucracy is emerging and a new kind of approach to division of work, mental and manual labor, and power relations can be outlined. As will be discussed below, for instance, the strict separation of mental and manual labor is giving way for more whole jobs in which concrete doing and abstract thinking are intertwined. At the same time, new dimensions along which work is divided in organizations can tentatively be seen to emerge.

8.4.2 The miniature cases of the working life history – Paradigm changes within organizations

Based on the discussion above, at least two intertwined dimensions - power relations and the division of mental and manual labor - seem to determine the paradigmatic outlook of each era. However, the history of work and economies is not as cut-and-dry as it might be deduced to be from above. During all the different eras some occupations and organizations have reminded more of the prevailing ideal type, while others have corresponded more to earlier or maybe future ideal types. Based on this thesis study it actually seems that in the contemporary working life as an organization matures, it goes through different phases which, in the order of appearance, resemble craft work, bureaucratic mass production system, and - recently - also the definitions of post-bureaucracy. The case organizations are good examples of this; if we consider the recent paradigm shifts from the craft work to bureaucratic ideal type to post-bureaucracy, it is possible to see periods reminding these paradigms in the case organizations as well as changes from one paradigm to another as they mature.

NewMedia’s early life resembled a craft work setting. The employees

4 Here manual work is understood very broadly; for instance routine programming tasks on computers are understood as manual tasks, since they do not require much thinking and creativity but rather mechanical operations on the key board. As Shorter (1973, p. 31) puts it: »Although opportunities for initiative and spontaneity characterize the science sector [e.g. electronics and chemistry driven sectors], there is in fact little scope for creative work. The end products must be standardized [...]«
(the founders of the company) basically did all the different kinds of tasks containing both manual and mental labor. At the time of the case study, however, the organization had grown and there was a shared feeling that the earlier approach (everybody doing everything) would not function effectively; the craft work was transformed closer to bureaucratic mass production work with division of labor both in vertical and horizontal directions. However, this did not mean the separation of manual and mental work from each other as the shift from craft work to bureaucratic mass production in the macro scale meant. In the technical parts of the company, the programmers and other IT-people still both think and do, and in the content production parts of the company, the employees still create ideas and concrete products. Nevertheless, the interviewees at NewMedia do distinguish at the same hierarchical level existing »practical doers« and »creative thinkers«. Thus, the change corresponds to some degree to the monasteries separating the monks (with mental work) from the lay brothers (with skilled craft work). Manual and mental work became, not divided, but at least allocated differently between the employee groups. Nevertheless, in the horizontal direction, more important determinant for the division of labor than the manual-mental split seems to be the employees’ relation to computers and customers; the employees either work within computers’ black boxes (the programmers) or they work outside it (as users) through operating systems. Another division line runs between those employees who have a direct contact to the customers and those who do not. Moreover, the vertical division of labor does not aim to separate doing from thinking but, rather, the aim of doing and thinking is different at different levels. The employees do and think for the benefit of the customers, while the managers do and think for the benefit of the employees and the organization as whole.

The development of TeleCom is very similar to that of NewMedia. TeleCom was initially small, »craft work IT-shop« in which the employees worked with all the different elements of the production process. Later, this early form of TeleCom was merged to a more established company and, eventually, it became what it is now – an established company owned by several other European telecom-actors. Consequently, also when it comes to TeleCom, the company evolved from the early entrepreneurial craft work phase to a more mass production oriented company. At the time of the case study, the interviewees used such phrases as »processes run smoothly through the factory«. But also in the case of TeleCom, it was not possible
to divide mental and manual work in the industrial sense; work with information and communication systems, with computers, demands both complex mental processes as well as more hands-on manual labor with hardware and software. Unlike at NewMedia, at TeleCom, most employees work within the computers’ black boxes; the horizontal division of labor has been carried out based on technical expertise areas and, yet again, having a direct customer contact or not having it. Similarly as at NewMedia, the vertical division of labor is not aimed at separating thinking from doing but rather separating working for the customers (the employees) from working for the employees (the managers).

Tenants’ Union followed the same path as NewMedia and TeleCom even though its craft work phase was considerably longer and more profound than those of NewMedia and TeleCom. Tenants’ Union was namely, for a very long time, organized as a collection of craft work shops. The ombudsmen and the negotiations assistants worked in small local offices with all the aspect of the negotiations and support for the local actors. Each local office had its own ways of working, its own knowledge on its trade. When the ombudsmen and the negotiations assistants were gathered into one big organization, the craft work approach was abandoned and more bureaucratic mass production approach was adopted. The ombudsmen and negotiation assistants were separated and face-to-face contacts were replaced by the plastic baskets. Also, the ombudsman work was divided in a new way; private and municipal negotiations were separated from each other and professionalism in one’s delimited negotiations area was called for. As the interviews in the case study pointed out, the ombudsmen experienced a loss of important knowledge in their work: the knowledge on the local conditions. Even though the ombudsman work was very demanding even in this new situation, a clear reduction in the mental - both cognitive and affective – dimensions took place. Simultaneously, the Negotiations unit managers concentrated on taking care of the most difficult cases and solving difficult situations. At this point, it seems that the mass-production approach overtook the people’s movement feeling and many employees felt disillusioned with their work. At the time of this case study, yet another shift took place in the Negotiations unit; characteristics of post-bureaucratic organizing as outlined in chapter 3 begun to emerge. For instance, a free interaction between the employees as the organizational principle and more interconnected ways to work indicate a sharp departure of compartmentalized negotiations work. Furthermore, the different negotia-
tions tasks – both municipal and public – became eventually unified in the
new geographical teams. At the same time, manager roles changed from
experts and specialists to the employees’ supporters working very close to
them.

The case study at Norrtälje Hospital was able to capture indications on a
desire for the new team organization. The case study did not look far enough into the
past to see whether the hospital in question actually ever lived through a
pre-industrial phase at all employee levels, but indications on the slight move-
ment from »industrial« health care towards less bureaucratic and flexible
way of working are apparent in the case. For instance, the establishment of
care teams in the clinics has, according to some employee interviewees,
reduced the power distance between the physicians and nurses enabling
them to collaborate more personally and equally; a strict doctor-nurse au-
thority boundary has been replaced by a more complex set of authority
boundaries. Also the shared expectations for the department manager role
indicate the emergence of a new kind of managerial role: a managerial role
as the employees’ supporter rather as their superiors. Furthermore, in some
clinics the steering of the clinic’s operation is carried out collaboratively
between the clinic head, department managers, and also the head physi-
cians rather than relying on authoritarian bureaucratic management
models.

8.4.3 The purpose of one’s work as the new base
for the division of labor?

The changes at the macro level, in work paradigms, have strongly been af-
fected by technological and overall societal changes (see e.g. Shorter, 1973;
and chapter 3). For instance, the bureaucratic mass production system with
the strict division of manual and mental work as well as the bureaucratic
power system relied on automating technology that made it possible to
compartmentalize the different human activities as easily as machine activ-
ities. The division of manual and mental work as well as the bureaucratic
control enhanced further the need and development of automating tech-
nology. Similarly, the development of the information and communication
technologies has supported the re-connection of manual and mental work
as well as the emergence of more various authority bases and, consequent-
ly, authority boundaries in organizations.

At this higher, work paradigm level, the above listed recent shifts have
mostly affected the way manual and mental work have been combined to or divided from each other. Furthermore, the earlier paradigm shifts at this macro level have also changed to some degree the prevailing power relations. Power structures have mainly followed the hierarchical structure – the higher the ladder, the greater the power - but variations in the power structure can also be distinguished. In the craft work realm power relations were simple, between few people or few people groups and founded on master-apprentice, higher class-lower class dimensions. In bureaucratic industrial systems, as already noted above, impersonal government machinery was lifted between the people.

As discussed above, however, the most recent work paradigm shifts – the shifts from craft work to bureaucratic mass production work and towards post-bureaucracy – seem to also take place within single organizations as they mature. If work paradigmatic changes trail technological and societal changes, the maturing of a single company seems to be, based on the case studies, directed by the need to steer a growing social system that is getting more and more complex (see also Greiner, 1998). However, also at the organizational level, the »paradigmatic« changes as an organization matures affect the power relations as well as the division of manual and mental work in the organization. In their craft work phase, the case organizations had very simple power relations as well as manual (in the broad sense, see the footnote above) and mental work combined in each employee’s role. In this initial phase, everybody more or less did everything as was noted in relation to NewMedia and TeleCom cases. The industrial mass production phase seems to have created more bureaucratic power relations in the case organizations; a governance system was lifted up between the different employee groups. Maybe this is a humane way to try to maintain stability and collaborative potential in a social system, where different groups existing very close to each other have increasingly different work realities. Similarly as at the macro level, single organizations seem to make this change very naturally. Allcorn and Diamond explain this by writing that (Allcorn & Diamond, 1997; p. 3):

In part, people create bureaucratic organizations to fulfill their deepest needs for interpersonal control and security. […] They intuitively understand that routinizing human relations at work limits personal anxieties…
The case studies also point out that (to a lesser degree) a separation of manual and mental work took place in the organizations at this point; for instance, most difficult or specialty tasks were allocated to task forces often consisting of managers. Furthermore, »practical doers« and »creative thinkers« became separated as different groups.

However, the younger case study companies - NewMedia and TeleCom - combine to their mass production phase the »internalities« indicating a new overall paradigmatic change. Also the older case study companies operating in more traditional sectors - Tenants’ Union and Norrtälje Hospital - are moving towards a more post-bureaucratic way of working. In this most recent, or actually only just now emerging phase, the power relations seem to become more complex as the one-way top-down authority is replaced by various authority relations. The basis of power seems to become to a certain degree detached from the hierarchical structure. The authority in each of the case organizations is higher at higher hierarchical levels, but employees at lower hierarchical levels are able to gain more authority based on their professional skills and competencies, their personal characteristics (for instance initiative taking and extroversion), as well as their roles in various groups and constituencies emerging in a more complex work system. Mental and manual labor (in the sense of practical doing and creative thinking) also become combined in many different employee and managerial roles.

In the case organizations, it actually seems that power structure and the division between manual and mental labor are not anymore the foundations for the vertical division of labor. Instead, a new basis for this division of labor is emerging. Especially in NewMedia and TeleCom cases the basis for the existing vertical division of labor is the purpose of one’s work rather than mental / manual or empowered / powerless dimensions. The managers are managers not only because of the power they poses or the entitlement for mental labor; the managers are managers since the purpose of their work is to support and guide all the employees individually and in their collective efforts. The purpose of the employees’ work is to provide services and products to customers. Thus, an employee position does not anymore by definition mean powerless position with mostly manual tasks. The idea presented here, that the purpose of work becomes the decisive factor for the division of labor, nicely connects to another idea presented above – i.e. the idea that post-bureaucratic work should continuously be delimited along its »natural« functional boundaries in order to create more »human
sized jobs. The fact that division of labor is founded on the purpose of different jobs should be made explicit in an organization and the continuous re-confinement and redesign of jobs should be founded on this. The logical questions when creating more comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful jobs run from »what is the purpose of this job?« to »what belongs to it? what does not belong to it?« and to »what resources are needed to carry it out?«.

Table 8.2 below summarizes some of the important dimensions going through changes as the whole working life or a single organization transforms from craft work to mass production and, eventually, to post-bureaucracy. The table also summarizes much of the discussion here on the differences between bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy.

Table 8.2. The recent paradigm shifts at the macro level and corresponding developments in single organizations as they mature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development areas</th>
<th>Recent paradigm changes</th>
<th>Craft work</th>
<th>Bureaucratic mass production</th>
<th>Post-bureaucratic work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power structure</td>
<td>Simple, between few persons</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Post-bureaucracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational structure</td>
<td>Simple, clear professional roles</td>
<td>Multi-level hierarchy</td>
<td>Flat hierarchy, alternative constellations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority relations</td>
<td>Master - apprentice</td>
<td>Supervisor – subordinates</td>
<td>Various authority boundaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control and steering systems</td>
<td>Direct control, self-control</td>
<td>Formalized</td>
<td>Communicative, dialogue based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of labor</td>
<td>Undivided</td>
<td>Horizontally and vertically divided</td>
<td>Divided based on the purpose of one’s work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal presence at the workplace</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of responsibility</td>
<td>For the product, its creation, its use in community</td>
<td>For one’s specified task</td>
<td>For the whole operation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and private life division</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
<td>Strict</td>
<td>Fluctuating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.5 A critical evaluation of this thesis study and future research questions

The objective of this section is to conclude the thesis by, first, discussing the research questions and the corresponding research results; did the research provide answers to the research questions? Second, the methodological strengths and weakness of the study are evaluated. Third, essential future research questions are outlined.

8.5.1 The research questions and results

The subject areas of this thesis are not easy. Two very fundamental areas have been approached, i.e. the transition from the bureaucratic working life to post-bureaucracy as well as the eternal questions on what is good work and how to create it. One may ask whether the two such fundamental issue areas are too big a mouthful for a doctoral thesis; after all, many researchers and research groups have devoted the best part of their work on one of these issues. I do feel, that in many ways, this was too big a mouthful. At personal level, looking into the issue areas was undeniably fascinating but, at scientific level, more cases with a longer time perspective would be needed to truly understand the post-bureaucratic working life and how to create regenerative work as well as sustainable individual and collective development in it. What I think I have been able to do, however, is to benefit from the earlier research and the ideas of other researchers as well as take the understanding on the issue areas a bit further with my case studies and conclusions on them. I have contributed to the research areas, not concluded work on them; I believe that they never can be exhaustively concluded – things change and once again we have to think what characterizes the working life, why it influences individuals and organizations the way it does, and how it is possible to cope with it.

It is also important to note here that this thesis study is very much applied research. My aim has all along been to benefit from the theories and theoretical models presented in chapter 2 and, at most, to expand my and other’s understanding on them, not to verify them or seek similar kinds of truths through my research. For instance, I have taken Antonovsky’s ideas on Sense of Coherence as given; his (and other’s) work has proven that the experiences of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness increase an individual’s ability to cope with the world and move her towards the health end of the health-disease continuum. This I have taken as given and tried to see how it is possible to create comprehensible, manageable,
and meaningful work in the contemporary working life. This approach naturally influences the research results obtained; my results relate to the application of such basic research in the contemporary setting which I have also sought to define and describe.

The first issue area mentioned above, the transition from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy, is debated (as can be seen already in chapter 3). Furthermore, discussions I have had with researchers from other countries have indicated that the situation is very different in different countries. In some countries (like in Germany) many researchers do not perceive a transition taking place. In others, like in Sweden, the idea on that something very fundamental is happening in the working life is instead more widely shared. Consequently, this thesis does not describe the working life in general in Europe. Instead, it looks at organizations where signs of fundamental transition can be seen, it looks at these organizations and tries to make visible the indications of the transition and its consequences. The first research question »what characterizes post-bureaucratic working life?« is explored through all the four case studies and, eventually, the results of the horizontal analysis relating to this question are presented and discussed in section 8.1.

When it comes to the second research question, i.e. »why and how do human resources become consumed in the contemporary working life?«, the thesis ended up concentrating on the problematic transition from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy as a major source for current working life problems. Based on this thesis, the human resources consumption in the contemporary working life relates strongly to this transition, to the changing nature of work which, as yet, we do not know how to deal with individually and collectively. This thesis work, however, does contribute to the better understanding on the characteristics of the contemporary work (see section 8.1) and the problems its emergence causes in traditional, bureaucratic organizations as well as among people accustomed to think in traditional, bureaucratic ways (see section 8.2). The case studies also point out several different issues that may prove to be vital in securing organizational and individual well-being and development in the contemporary and future work organizations (see section 8.3).

For the second issue area mentioned above – namely, what is good work and how to create it – many ideas and theories already exist. In a way, the third research question »what does regenerative work supporting employees’ personal and professional growth as well as well-being mean in the contempo-
rary working life? became already answered in chapter 2 where some theories and ideas on good work were summarized and discussed. The literature research shows that regenerative work is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful; it corresponds not only to an individual’s needs but also her values (see section 2.2.4). During the thesis study, it often seemed to me that not only I but also many others in the SALUT-network shared the feeling that we already know what regenerative work is. The question is how to achieve it and, in particularly, how to achieve it in the present situation (i.e. the fourth research question – “how to create such regenerative work in the present situation?”). This thesis aims to point out that there is no quick fix for this “how”-question; we have to look at organizational values (8.3.1), job and organizational design (8.3.2), managerial processes (8.3.3), and managerial roles (8.3.4) as well as individual and collective ways of thinking (see all these sections) to understand how and what a post-bureaucratic organization supporting employees and managers in their post-bureaucratic work should be like. The basic, quite simple and yet so difficult, idea here is that we should embrace the possibilities that the emergence of post-bureaucratic work offers: to enjoy the variability, responsibility taking, and relevance of post-bureaucratic work. However, to do this – to create comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work – we need to create and recreate organizational solutions that support such work. These organizational solutions are ways to understand an organization or ways to collaborate rather than concrete methods and tools.

The following table summarizes the research questions as well as the corresponding major results. The table also points out the sections and chapters in which different research questions have been discussed.
Table 8.3. The summary on research questions, results, as well as corresponding sections and chapters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The research question</th>
<th>The results</th>
<th>The relevant chapter(s) or section(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| RQ 1: Post-bureaucratic work? | • Comprehensive personal presence at work.  
| | • The expanding boundaries of work.  
| | • The extending competence requirements.  
| | Work is difficult to comprehend and manage, but it potentially is meaningful and corresponds to employees' values. The experienced meaningfulness may, nevertheless, decrease if work is not comprehensible, manageable, or does not correspond to an individual's values or self-image. One may also ask whether self-actualization is bought at the expense of the satisfaction of other, more basic, needs? | • Section 8.1. |
| RQ 2: Why consuming? | • Employees face versatile demands and consume their energy as they try to comprehend, manage, and find meaning in their evolving work. Organizational structures and practices do not support in this; there is a gap between work activities and organizational structures and/or practices. Post-bureaucratic work logic and bureaucratic organizational logic clash; employees are left to swim against the stream. | • Sections 8.1 and 8.2. |
| RQ 3: Regenerative work? | • In order to develop in their activities, people have to be able to experience comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. Work has to correspond to their personal values and general human needs.  
| | • NB! This definition was created based on the literature research, not empirical research. | • Chapter 2. |
8.5.2 Methodology - Strengths and weaknesses

In this section, I shall discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the research approaches applied in the thesis work. Rather than concentrating on the details of the research methods used, I shall focus on the overall research approaches and fundamental design choices. First, my role as an action researcher is addressed. Then, I shall discuss the action research and action learning approaches adopted in the thesis work more generally. Finally, other, more specific methodological problems faced during the thesis work are discussed.

All in all, one can say that all the case studies were complex and unpredictable; when embarking on the journey, it was impossible to say where
we were heading to. Possibilities and obstacles for research, participation, and action emerged and disappeared. Buchanan et al. write about an opportunistic approach to field work and state that (1988, p. 53):

Fieldwork is permeated with the conflict between what is theoretically desirable on the one hand and what is practically possible on the other.

This certainly applies to my fieldwork. Since many things, that would have been theoretically desirable were not practically possible, the best I could do was to seize every opportunity for collecting material and making observations. My guideline was to use every opportunity to understand the case organizations a little bit better. Everything I saw and heard, even felt, I treated as research material.

My role as an action researcher – To be seen, but not heard?

An action research project may contain several different phases (Westlander, 2002; personal communication and Vartiainen, 1994); problems are identified, goals are set, planning for actions is done, change is realized, and outcomes are evaluated. In the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union projects (the action research projects of this thesis), the organizations had the main responsibility for all these phases. However, I participated as an action researcher in all of them besides of the outcome evaluation. When the thesis work ended, changes were still happening in the organizations and, therefore, evaluating the outcomes from the SALUT-projects will probably be a long process continuing well into the future. Indeed, both Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union expressed a wish that the SALUT-ideas - the visions of regenerative work - would not be treated as projects but rather as ideas to underlie the organization’s future development. If this is achieved, the outcome of SALUT is a process rather than a delimited deliverable and, similarly, the outcome evaluation will be a continuous process. In this sense, I was also present in the organizations only during some initial actions towards more regenerative work.

In both case studies, I was, above all, a part of the project team or development effort, not its leader. The project leaders’ role was to lead the project. As a researcher I acted, in my turn, as:

- a researcher. I supported the project groups’ or organizations’ work by carrying out certain research activities, such as interview stud-
ies. The pure results from such research activities were offered for the use of the project groups and the organizations or parts of them (e.g. the feedback session for the whole Negotiations unit or a meeting with all the managers at Norrtälje Hospital). Also, I made interpretations, suggestions, and conclusions based on the research data and submitted them to the project groups and organizations. This was especially the case at Norrtälje Hospital where I was able to work with the SALUT-project group; at Tenants’ Union my role was more passive (as shall be discussed below).

- **A speaking partner to the local actors.** I offered my support and ideas for the project groups, their single members, or others in the organizations when needed. I also listed to them when they wanted to speak and reflect upon their experiences.

- **A mirror for the project and organization.** I mirrored the project groups’ work or organization as whole with the help of relevant theories and was, in that way, able to present »an outsider’s view«.

- **A discussion initiator.** Sometimes I made presentations on my theoretical interest areas and initiated discussions on them in the project groups/organizations. This happened, for instance, in the Archipelago-meeting of Norrtälje Hospital where I made a presentation on the knowing-doing gap discussed in section 2.3.

- **A participant to the organizations’ activities.** Often I was simply present in meetings or other internal activities in the role of a SALUT-project representative.

Already in the beginning of these two case studies, I had my own research questions and interest areas formulated through the literature study and the Empirical Study I. However, the case companies decided on the project agenda. How was I then able to carry out my research? First, my research areas were so broad after the Empirical Study I that any organization in the contemporary working life could have provided some interesting data for my research. Second, and more importantly, the case organizations shared my interest areas. They also were interested to know why the contemporary working life hits so hard some of their employees and how to move towards regenerative work. My theoretical interest areas were gladly accepted as some starting points for winding open these questions. Moreover, the actions the case organizations took on their own (for instance, the establishment of the weekly meetings at Tenants’ Union) also
quite spontaneously corresponded to my ideas on what should be done and what would be interesting to do.

Nevertheless, in retrospect I must say that even though the case organizations had the main responsibility for the project agendas, I could have been more active in the development work at times. I probably could have, for instance, suggested more clearly some »exercises« or actions relating to the theoretical models on good, regenerative work. In practice, I – for instance – presented Antonovsky’s ideas on comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful work in the projects every now and then. I also analyzed the empirical material through the Sense of Coherence-lens and could see how many activities in the case organizations could be understood to be aimed at increasing the comprehensibility, manageability, and/or meaningfulness of work. However, the local actors never adopted these concepts to actually drive their activities, since I mainly observed the development work through my theoretical »spectacles« rather than offered them actively for the organizations to use or suggested that these concepts could guide the whole development effort. Research and development projects became separated to some degree at this point; the theoretical concepts were hanging in the air, but never structured or directed the development work.

The ideal role for me, as an action researcher, would have existed in the balance point between influencing the development processes and letting the organizations’ members to make the development work themselves (thus allowing them to learn as much as possible about regenerative work, about themselves, and about their organizations). Finding such balance was difficult because, as mentioned above, the general goal in the SALUT-project was to let the organizations carry the responsibility for their development work and I probably ended up being a bit too careful in not treading on their ground. Finding the balance was also difficult, since it sometimes meant letting go of my ideas on »how this should be« or »how this should be done«. I had always the opportunity to state my ideas and justify them clearly, but if the organization decided to choose another way, I had to accept it and support the organization on the road it chose. However, submitting myself to the organizations’ decisions was made easier by the fact that I was convinced that if my ideas were not »bought«, they were not suitable or feasible for the organization at that particular point of time. Nevertheless, as noted above, at some points I could have been more assertive to make sure that the case organizations truly learn and benefit from the theoretical knowledge available.
My role as an action researcher developed in the case studies in interaction with the organizations. Consequently, what the role looked like initially and what it ended up to be during most of the project was not the same thing. In the beginning, there was certain amount of uncertainty from both mine and the organizations’ part; I wondered what I can do and how I can influence, the organizations wondered what they could expect of me. It was important for me to state clearly that I am interested in participating in every activity and offer all the support I can; gradually, the organizations learned to trust this to be the case and collaboration became easier. During the project, new possibilities for the researcher role were looked for all the time. For instance, if the project group or project leader(s) decided to have a SALUT-presentation for the rest of the organization, it was also discussed how the researcher can support in that work. In Norrtälje Hospital case, where the project organization was somewhat clearer and more fixed, my role was clarified earlier than in the Tenants’ Union case. In that latter case, my role was from time to time discussed, so that an understanding existed between the organization and me. For instance, in the planning meetings of the project, the researcher’s role was always discussed and also in the observation situations, I discussed my role with the employees present. Having a researcher colleague participating actively in the Tenants’ Union case study was also a positive factor influencing the clarity of the researcher role. Somehow, when there were two of us present in the organization, it seemed to be easier for both us and the organization’s members to »categorize« us and understand our role.

An interesting, additional, challenge for the collaboration with the case companies was, especially in the beginning of the project, the language barrier. I can understand, speak, and write to some extent Swedish, but nevertheless it is my third language after Finnish and English. Sometimes I had difficulties to express myself in Swedish and I probably would have provided more written material for the case organizations, if writing in Swedish were easier for me. Nevertheless, co-operation succeeded well not least because of the support from other SALUT-researchers and project group members. Also the employees in the case study organizations did not seem to mind my blunders. For instance, in Tenants’ Union I led a discussion in Swedish on the interview study results and continuously got stuck with the word »prioritera«, to prioritize. Instead of »prioritera«, I kept on saying »priorisera«, which does not mean anything. In the end of the two hour discus-
Carrying out action research – Or did I?

All in all, I think that the action research approach with in-depth cases has been a strength in the study. I believe that in order to understand how employees and managers experience their work, one cannot only send out a survey or interview them - one has to also be there with them and share the daily work experiences as well as to see the interactions between different actors unfolding, to see emotions emerging and being expressed. When I compare the case studies from the Empirical Study I (i.e. NewMedia and TeleCom) to the Empirical Study II (i.e. Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union), this belief is confirmed. In NewMedia and TeleCom, I was able to carry out only interviews, and many questions were left open - probably I did not even learn to know the organizations well enough to pose all the relevant questions! At Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union instead, I had the opportunity to learn to know the organizations, employees, and managers well enough to understand what really was going on.

However, when it comes to these action research case studies, one can ask whether the research really was action research as defined in section 1.3.2. Did the research lead to actions in the organizations and were the research results derived from the experiences gained through collective actions? Was the union of research, action, and participation present (see Greenwood & Levin, 1998)? At Norrtälje Hospital, this was the case to some extent. My analysis on the department manager work and conceptualization of the factors causing problems in it were worked on and benefitted from both in the project group and in the 40-group. First steps towards a better working situation for the department managers were actively planned. Research, action, and participation interacted and became intertwined. The action cycle was, nevertheless, quite simple in this case; indeed, only plans for action were made after the analysis phase. The time period of the case study was too short for me to actually influence the consequent action within the clinics and departments. If we take Lewin’s (1997) three phase change model, the project ended and I exited before the re-freezing phase; something that for instance Foster (1972) considers undermining many action research attempts. Even though, as noted above, the case organizations – both Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union – hoped that the SALUT-project would lead to a change in thinking and be-
having rather than to some concrete change in organizational structures, even though they hoped that there would not be any end point for the project (»now we are there«), re-freezing would have been important. The new ways to think, work, and collaborate need to be refrozen and, for that, the case organizations would have probably needed external help. Therefore a longer time period would have been required to truly plan, carry out, and evaluate actions.

At Tenants’ Union, I and the other SALUT-researcher had mainly a participant observer role rather than the role of a primus motor of an action research project. Only the feedback session reported in section 7.5 gave us an opportunity to influence the actions taken in the unit; in more informal ways, we were also able to discuss the development work going on with the employees and managers during our participative observations. Nevertheless, this was not much and the research approach ended up to be a traditional research inquiry rather than an action research approach. This was probably due to the organization’s wish to have SALUT as an eye looking over the unit’s development work (see section 7.2): an observer rather than an actor.

If we look at Chein et al.’s (1948) different varieties of action research (see section 1.3.2), the case studies ended up being mostly diagnostic efforts with some flavors of participant and empirical action research approaches. In other words, the main outcomes of the projects were diagnoses on the organizations. The case descriptions resulted in action suggestions (see chapters 6 and 7) for the case companies; whether they would follow the suggestions would be and will be up to them. However, when it comes to Norrtälje Hospital, the SALUT-project group did participate in the research work when analyzing the department manager work (i.e. the participant approach). Also the Archipelago-meeting provided opportunities for doing »something and [...] [keeping] record of what is done and what happens« (Chein et al., ibid.: p. 47): i.e. the empirical approach. In the Tenants’ Union case study, such empirical phases also took place; for instance the participant observations in the weekly meetings correspond to this definition. I did not initiate these activities but had, nevertheless, an opportunity to observe and document what happened. At Tenants’ Union, probably due to the missing project organization, participant action research did not take place. To put this all together, even though the aim was to carry out participant and empirical action research, the projects ended up to be mainly diagnostic in their nature with only a touch of participant
and empirical approaches. Therefore, even though I experience that the re-
search effort became completed in the time frame of the thesis (the re-
search results presented earlier in this chapter were generated), action re-
search was not completed as the diagnoses ended up being the main out-
comes of the projects.

Nevertheless, even if the both cases did fall short of the ideal action
research approaches, I do feel that the close collaboration with the organi-
zations enabled me to see such events and processes unfolding that a more
distant relation to the research subjects would not have allowed me to see.
Even if I did not contribute strongly to the way the two organizations
developed, I was actively present to see, document, and also sometimes
influence the ideas and actions of the case study organizations.

Learning in action – Or did they?
From the point of view of the case organizations, the SALUT-projects and
the participation in the SALUT-network were planned to contribute to the
organizations’ learning; SALUT was an action learning network. Also here
one can ask whether the activities really led to action learning. Did the case
organizations take actions that were then reflected for instance in the
network meetings, conceptualized, and applied in new actions? When it
comes to the members of the SALUT-network (i.e. the SALUT-project
leaders), I would say that this did happen at least to some extent. The net-
work meetings offered opportunities for the Norrtälje Hospital and Ten-
ants’ Union project leaders to reflect upon their experiences in the »home
field« and come to new conclusions on these experiences. However, I
doubt whether the action learning became more spread in the case organi-
zations. At Norrtälje Hospital, the project leader and the project group
psychologist had the formal project group in the hospital to work with as
well as the eventual authorization to organize a day long meeting for all the
hospital’s managers on the SALUT-ideas, on what they had learned during
the SALUT-project. This formal and clear project organization made it a
bit easier to create more extensive learning in the home organization.
Crossan et al. (1999) define organizational learning emerging as individual
intuitions become shared at group level, integrated into collective action
and, eventually, institutionalized (see section 2.3.1). At Norrtälje Hospital,
there were opportunities for this to happen during, for instance, the Archi-
pelago meeting. At Tenants’ Union, a clear project organization was miss-
ning and the SALUT-project leaders were able to share their learning expe-
riences only when participating as any other employees in the Negotiations unit’s development work. This probably was not enough to enable the whole unit to benefit from the network experiences. Therefore, I think that a clear and functioning project organization and project plan is needed to enable a whole organization to benefit from its representatives’ participation in an action learning network.

The action learning network supported research as well. The network meetings offered a valuable forum for me to both learn new things about my case study organizations as their representatives participated in the network discussions and, furthermore, together with the representatives from my case study organizations, I also had an opportunity to present the developments in the case study organizations to the other SALUT-organizations and benefit from their comments and questions. The network structure also enabled a close collaboration with others when it comes to research. In the Norrtälje Hospital case study, the project leader and the hospital’s psychologist (also a member of the SALUT-project group) offered invaluable support for my research. Similarly, in the Tenants’ Union case study, the researcher from National Institute for Working Life was active in the study; we carried out observations and interviews together, spoke many hours face to face and over the telephone on our impressions, and as soon as I had written my reports on the interviews and observations, she read, commented, and helped me to develop further my ideas on the case. These close contacts proved to be a true benefit for me in my work; I never felt alone with my data and my thinking.

The research approach – Other methodological weaknesses

Having now discussed action research and action learning as the underlying research approaches of the thesis, I shall turn to more specific methodological problems. The research methods and some underlying factors in the research design are discussed here.

When it comes to the research methods used - interviews and participative observations – one can truly say that sometimes what was theoretically desirable was not practically possible. For instance, having larger interview samples from NewMedia and TeleCom as well as having also employee interviewees at NewMedia would have been preferable. However, the working situation at both companies prevented more extensive studies. Following the advice of Buchanan et al. (1988; see above), I tried to do the best I could with those interviews I was able to make. Also at Norrtälje Hosp-
pital, it might have been better to interview department managers not participating in the project group in order to gain a more thorough understanding on the department manager work in different clinics. Now, I only have one department manager interviewee from outside the project group; the work at project group as well as other interview studies took so much time, that I did not have any left for additional department manager interviews. Once more, I tried to do the best I could with the interview and observation material I had.

A methodological weakness, that I experience to be present in all the case studies, relates to studying the characteristics of post-bureaucratic work. Even though the interviews and observations on different meetings did provide a rich material on how the employees experience their work and what they experience its relevant characteristics to be, I missed observing also work as it is being done and studying it more directly. In order to truly understand the way in which work is boundaryless or requires personal presence, rigorous work analyses should have been carried out. However, the observations in meetings and the interview studies kept me so busy that I never came around to the job content analysis. I consider this omission serious, since I think that the lack of job content analysis is a general problem in the current work science and also in organizational practice. Both the researchers and practitioners pay, in my opinion, too little attention to job design. Somehow both the changes and traditions at work are taken as given, as if an organization were not able to influence its job design. This could be seen in the case studies; rather than engaging in conscious job design, the case organizations allowed work to evolve based on the technological, market, and social changes while at the same time espousing unreflected ideas on what should go into a certain job. For instance, the department manager job was never seriously defined in collaboration in the hospital; new demands based on external changes were included while leftovers from the head nurse jobs were still carried along. It seems that work system problems often become visible at structural, organizational level, and it is this level that is analyzed (by the researchers and practitioners alike) and worked on. However, for instance, in chapter 7 – in the Tenants’ Union case study - I suggest a complementing way to improve work and an organization: to start from the basics, to first understand what work is like and what kind of jobs there exist and then to think about the organizational setting that would in the best possible way support the existing work. Nevertheless, I have to admit that I do not practice what I preach. I
did not carry out first hand analysis on the jobs, but rather reconstructed an understanding on them based on the interview data. At this point, I can only mention this as a potential weakness.

Another methodological weakness of the thesis relates to its time frame already mentioned above. Studying work and its consequences on individuals and organizations cannot be done by looking at a snapshot picture; instead quite a long time period would be needed to judge whether work is regenerative and enables sustainable individual and collective development. The strength of this study is that I was able to follow closely the developments at Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union; week after week I was able to return to the organizations and follow the unfolding of their development as well as the employees’ experiences at work. However, the 18 month time frame (the time the case studies lasted) is quite short. In both case studies, development was only in its beginning when the case studies were concluded. Both the case organizations and I were still learning new things and forming new ideas on regenerative work when I concluded the collection of empirical data. Consequently, the time frame of a Ph.D. thesis is far too short for such a fundamental research topic. Empirically, I think I only had time to scratch the surface, but I do hope that my attempts to rigorously document and analyze the empirical material as well as my conclusions and discussion on the research topics can serve as a contribution to the collective search for the better understanding of work in its psychological and social sense.

The final methodological weakness of the thesis (that I wish to address) relates to the problem orientation discussed already in chapter 2 in connection to the Appreciative Inquiry. I do think that at least to some extent the wrong question was asked in the case study projects of this thesis. Even though also the positive experiences and successes were discussed in the Norrtälje Hospital and Tenants’ Union case studies and SALUT-projects, both cases ended up being mainly formulated in terms of problems. I think that this did prevent both me and the case organizations from seeing all the possibilities for regenerative work. Furthermore, sometimes when interviewing people for my case studies, I felt that they came to the interview situation already oriented to let some steam out, to »complain«. Sometimes after going through their very real and serious problems in detail, some of the interviewees noted quite spontaneously: »You must think that it is really bad here, but it is not all that bad...« or »well, one cannot only complain; there is also so much good«. Somehow both the interviewees and I, we both shared
the mental model of the working life research being all about problems and suffering, and sometimes we got stuck with this approach. Instead of letting the light come into a dark room, we tried to carry the darkness out in a sack. I have no practical experiences on the Appreciative Inquiry and its results, but based on what I learned during this study, I would be prepared to give it a try. It would be interesting to see, what would happen if unconditional positive questions were asked instead of the questions focusing on problems. Probably the existing problems would not be understood and mapped in such a detail, but maybe instead a better foundation would be built for action, for creating something positive, for creating regenerative theories.

8.5.3 Further research questions

Due to the time frame problem mentioned above and also due to the generic explorative nature of any research effort, this thesis work leaves many questions unanswered and, hopefully, provides grounds for further research. First of all, I think that it is extremely important to carry out further research on the characteristics of post-bureaucracy and deepen the understanding on the following areas:

1. An employee’s more extensive personal presence at work as a psychological and social question. For instance, which opportunities and threats such presence contains from an individual’s point of view and how to make sure that more extensive personal presence is a positive opportunity rather than a negative threat?

2. Personal »maturity« needed at work from the psychological and social point of view. When it comes to the social point of view, it would be important to understand how the society in general can contribute to an individual’s maturity and consequent coping with more and more complex world.

3. In section 8.3 it was noted, that more complex thinking is needed from both managers and employees in the post-bureaucratic working life. It would seem important to work further on this question and, in a way, to continue the valuable work initiated by e.g. Peter Senge and his »Fifth Discipline« (1990). In practical sense, it would also be very important to work further on the twin concepts of leadership-employeeship; what kind of employeeship is needed to respond to leadership in a post-bureaucratic work setting? Leadership is currently taught in many professional schools and universities. Should there also be courses on em-
ployeeship that might help young employees to function in their jobs?

When it comes to organizing a post-bureaucratic work system, I would suggest two further research areas:

1. In order to gain a better understanding on post-bureaucratic work, job content analysis should be revitalized as a research area and an area of organizational practice. Maybe F.W. Taylor was so influential because he offered us tools for truly understanding work tasks; he anchored all development in a work system to work, to what is actually done by people. In the same vein, maybe it is possible for us to create a well-functioning post-bureaucratic organization if we truly understand work carried out in it. Revitalizing job content analysis as an area for research and practice necessitates also methodological development; fluid, boundaryless, and changing work is probably difficult to analyze with the help of the traditional job analysis tools mostly designed for analyzing concrete and visible industrial work. Consequently, new tools for analyzing post-bureaucratic work should be developed.

2. The ideas on organizational dialogues and negotiations should be developed further. In which situations should and can dialogue and negotiations be used? What are their limitations – are interactive organizations possible? What are the legal and collective bargaining implications of organizing through dialogues and negotiations? Which resources are needed for organizing through dialogues and negotiations?

This thesis begun with a citation from Leo Tolstoy's »Anna Karenina«. My reformulation of the citation contained the ideas that even though in the contemporary working life the problems relating to the difficult transition from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy are shared, every happy organization can be happy only in its own way. This thesis study indicates that dialogues and negotiations are needed in the contemporary organizations, but I also believe that future research will show that these processes cannot be captured in detail into textbooks. Each organization will have to find its own ways to continuously become happy. The future research, I hope, will however provide us with a better understanding on the conditions for organizational and individual »happiness« in the contemporary working life; i.e. the conditions that enable us both individually and collectively cope with the increasingly cumbersome but all the same more interesting world of work.

CHAPTER 8
Published references:


REFERENCES

481


EMERY, F. (1977) *Futures We Are In*, Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Social Sciences Division.


FORSLIN, J. (1996) *Från Taylorism till...? Om Förändring av Arbetets Organisation mot Bakgrund av Fem Företagsprojekt* (From Taylorism to...? On Work Organizational Change based on Five Company Projects), Stockholm: SPF.


REFERENCES


REFERENCES 489


REFERENCES
REFERENCES


REFERENCES


Newspaper articles analyzed in section 1.1.1 (in Swedish):


REFERENCES


Personal communications:


HOVERHJELM, B-Å. (2002) Discussion at the SALUT-network meeting at Norrtälje Hospital, June 11th, 2002.


Other references:

# Appendix 1

**APPENDIX 1: The interviews carried out for this thesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Interview study</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Interviewees' location in the organization</th>
<th>Reported in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NewMedia</td>
<td>Two consecutive HR-managers</td>
<td>HR-department</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TeleCom</td>
<td>Five employees and four managers</td>
<td>Different departments; for instance a help-desk and a technical department</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrtälje Hospital</td>
<td>Department managers</td>
<td>Five department managers and the project group leader (a clinic head)</td>
<td>Sections 6.2.2, 6.3, 6.5, and 6.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrtälje Hospital</td>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>17 employees</td>
<td>Different clinics</td>
<td>Sections 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 6.3, 6.5, and 6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrtälje Hospital</td>
<td>The hospital's management group</td>
<td>Seven clinic heads, the economy manager, the personnel manager, and the hospital's director</td>
<td>Different clinics and staff function</td>
<td>Sections 6.2.4, 6.2.5, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, and 6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants' Union</td>
<td>The first interview study</td>
<td>Six negotiating ombudsmen and three operations unit assistants</td>
<td>The Regional operations unit</td>
<td>Sections 7.3 and 7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants' Union</td>
<td>The second interview study</td>
<td>Six negotiating ombudsmen and two negotiations assistants</td>
<td>The Negotiations</td>
<td>Sections 7.7 unit and 7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: Activities in the Norrtälje Hospital SALUT-project 2001-2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>autumn 2000</td>
<td>A SALUT-presentation for the 40-group consisting of the hospital’s director, clinic heads, department managers as well as the personnel manager and economics manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2001</td>
<td>The first meeting of the SALUT-project group. The initiation of the project, first discussions on the problems in the department managers’ work situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. &amp; 12.2.2001</td>
<td>Interviews with the department managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2001</td>
<td>The first meeting of the SALUT-project group. The initiation of the project, first discussions on the problems in the department managers’ work situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. &amp; 12.2.2001</td>
<td>Interviews with the department managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2001</td>
<td>The second meeting of the SALUT-project group. Further discussion on the problems in the department managers’ work situation. Individual perspectives from the project group members. Discussion on the interview results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3.2001</td>
<td>An interview with the SALUT project leader on the process to transform the hospital into a company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.4.2001</td>
<td>The third meeting of the SALUT-project group. Discussion on the current work situation of the department managers and discussion on the things the department managers need from their closest supervisors, the clinic heads. Also discussions on the collaboration between the department managers and clinic heads as well as problems relating to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.4.2001</td>
<td>A whole day with the SALUT-project group (the fourth meeting). Discussion on the department manager role, and the project group’s goal setting for improving the department manager work at the hospital. Ideas for SALUT-activities in the hospital (e.g. SALUT-theme days, SALUT presentation in the intranet).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.5., 5.6., 11.6., 14.6., &amp; 20.6.2001</td>
<td>Interviews with employees who have a department manager as their closest managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6.2001</td>
<td>The fifth meeting of the SALUT-project group. Planning a presentation on the hospital’s SALUT-project so far to the whole SALUT network. The main aim is to have an opportunity for a discussion with the other network participants on the questions that the project group considers interesting (i.e. What causes the feeling in the organization that things do not improve even though much seems to be happening? How can one make sure that developments made are also maintained? How to create communication bridges between different management levels?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.6.2001</td>
<td>The SALUT network meeting in Norrtälje. A press coverage on the meeting by Uppsala Nya Tidning and Norrtelje Tidningen’s interview on the hospital’s SALUT project with the project leader and researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9.2001</td>
<td>The sixth meeting of the SALUT-project group. Planning a presentation on the SALUT-network in the 40-group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10.2001</td>
<td>A presentation on SALUT-activities in the hospital's 40-group. A group work on SALUT-issue areas and the change in the company form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.10.2001</td>
<td>The seventh meeting of the SALUT-project group. Discussion on the 40-group meeting, ideas for further work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.10.2001</td>
<td>A meeting between the project group and a group to travel to Nottingham, UK, to a health care workshop. The workshop's issue areas were very close to SALUT-ideas and some SALUT-researchers had participated in creating the workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.10.2001</td>
<td>An interview with the hospital's director and an interview with a department manager who was spotted in the 10.10.-meeting as a potentially interesting interview subject for the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.11.2001</td>
<td>Nottingham group's report in the 40-group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12.2001</td>
<td>The eighth meeting of the SALUT-project group. Discussions on the current work problems of the participating department managers. Planning for the first year report on the project group's work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.2002</td>
<td>The ninth meeting of the SALUT-project group. Plans for the report on the SALUT-work during 2001. Which are the conclusions and reflections from the analysis phase of the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.1.2002</td>
<td>A planning meeting between some project group members and the vision owner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2.2002</td>
<td>A SALUT-network meeting with an in-depth discussion on the SALUT-project at Norrtälje Hospital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2.2002</td>
<td>Finalizing the report on the SALUT-project at Norrtälje Hospital during 2001. Discussion with the Nottingham-group on the report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.3.2002</td>
<td>Discussion on the SALUT-report in the hospital's management group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4.2002</td>
<td>Planning the Archipelago meeting with some of the SALUT-project group members, the hospital's personnel manager, and SALUT-researchers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. &amp; 3.5.2002</td>
<td>The Archipelago meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.5.2002</td>
<td>The tenth meeting of the SALUT-project group. Reflections on the SALUT-project in general and the Archipelago meeting in particular.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.2.2001</td>
<td>A meeting with the unit manager of the Regional operations. Discussions on the Tenants’ Union organization and negotiations operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.2., 28.2.,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3. &amp; 8.3.2001</td>
<td>The first interview study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.3.2001</td>
<td>A meeting with the SALUT-project leader at Tenants’ Union. Discussions on the interview results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.3.2001</td>
<td>A meeting at the Regional operations unit with all the employees and managers; feedback on the interview results. Group work on the interview results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.6.2001</td>
<td>A meeting with the Tenants’ Union SALUT-project leaders. What has happened at the unit recently? How to go on with SALUT?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.8.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on e.g. how to create better working environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.8.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the private ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on e.g. negotiations schedules and laptop computers as a tool in the negotiations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.8.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on what hinders and what supports a good working environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.9.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the private ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on e.g. archive routines and negotiations schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.9.2001</td>
<td>Meeting with all the researchers and Tenants’ Union employees/managers active in the SALUT-project. What has happened in the negotiations operations so far? How to proceed with the SALUT-ideas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.9.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussion on e.g. archive routines and working environment issues – what hinders and what supports a good working environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.9.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on e.g. negotiations strategy and negotiations schedules (what is happening now, what should happen in the near future).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on e.g. the telephone service for the members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this appendix only those meetings that I observed alone or together with the other researcher are listed. Those meetings that the other researcher observed alone are not included.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.10.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on e.g., the Union’s intranet and telephone service for the members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.10.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on the competence training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the private ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on e.g., how to deal with apartment houses in which the landlord does not take the responsibility for necessary maintenance. Also discussions on the time measurement study to be carried out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on several issues relating to the quality of negotiations – how to document the negotiations, how to make sure everyone involved receives the negotiations contracts, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.11.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on the Signpost, the Balanced Scorecard application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.11.2001</td>
<td>Meeting with the work safety committee of the Tenants’ Union. Discussions on SALUT and how it connects to the work of the work safety committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.11.2001</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on »who owns the question« as a decisive working environmental issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on e.g., the competence training and Signpost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2.2002</td>
<td>Observing a meeting between the Negotiations unit employees and the competence training providers – How has the training influenced the unit and its employees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.2.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on the personal survey and, especially, the persisting stress levels in the unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on e.g., the telephone service for the members, the Union’s economical situation, and how to recruit new members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.3.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting of the municipal ombudsmen and negotiations assistants. Discussions on e.g., working environmental issues – concretizing the hinders and supporting factors for the good working environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.3.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on the heavy workload right now and the telephone service to the members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.4.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on reorganizing the unit – forming small geographical groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.4.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Continuing the discussion on reorganizing the unit – forming small geographical groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.4.2002</td>
<td>An interview with the SALUT project leader; his experiences as a manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.5., 28.5., 29.5., &amp; 30.5.2002</td>
<td>The second interview study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.5.2002</td>
<td>Observing a weekly meeting with all the employees and managers in the Negotiations unit. Discussions on a new database.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.8.2002</td>
<td>Meeting with the Negotiations unit managers. What is their work like? How do they perceive the current situation and future of the Negotiations unit?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interview questions for the semi-structured interviews of the department managers at Norrtälje Hospital (The same set of questions was used also in the interviews carried out at NewMedia and TeleCom)

WORK AND WORK ORGANIZATION
1. Work organization – Describe the work organization in your department and in your hospital/company.
2. Work content – Describe your work tasks.
3. Which work organizational development projects or competence development projects have taken place in your department/organization recently?

BURNOUT DIMENSIONS
4. Workload – Do you experience that you have too much to do?
5. Demands and control – Are the demands and authorities in balance in your work? Do you have control over those things you are responsible for?
6. Rewards – Does the hospital/your company reward you for your work sufficiently?
7. Social support – When you think about your colleagues and your work group, do they influence you positively or negatively?
8. Does the hospital’s idea on good health care correspond to your idea on what good health care is like? (The question used only at Norrtälje Hospital.)
WORK AND »COPING RESOURCES«

9. In the long term, how does your work influence you a) physically? b) mentally? c) as a professional?

10. Do you think that your value as a) a person b) an employee grows in your work? Explain!

11. Does your work suit your personality?

12. Which personal strengths do you have that help you to cope with your work and work in this hospital/company?

13. Is your work comprehensible? Can you understand what is happening and why? If not, why is that? If you can, why is that?

14. Do you experience that you can manage with your work?

15. Do you think your work is meaningful? Explain!

NEGATIVE ELEMENTS AT WORK

16. Which problems are in your work?
   • Which problems there are relating to your work content?
   • Which problems there are relating to your colleagues, managers, patients/customers, etc.?
   • Are there elements in your work that you experience problematic and which you cannot do anything about?
   • Which uncertainty factors there are relating to your work and your work organization? How do these uncertainty factors influence you?

17. Which are the most difficult demands in your work?

18. Which negative developments do you perceive a) in your work b) in your work organization? c) in your organization’s environment?

POSITIVE ELEMENTS AT WORK

19. Which good things are happening in your work?
   • Which good things there are relating to your work content?
   • Which good things there are relating to your colleagues, managers, patients/customers, etc.?
   • Can you influence the development of your work in the short and long run?
   • Does your organization support you in your work? Explain!

20. What is your work like at its best?

21. Which positive developments have taken place a) in your work? b) in your work organization? c) in your work organization’s environment?
The interview questions for the semi-structured interviews of the employees at Norrtälje Hospital

WORK ORGANIZATION AND WORK TASKS
1. Which work tasks do you have?
2. Who is your closest manager?

THE DEPARTMENT MANAGER WORK
3. Which are the department manager’s most important tasks in your opinion? Does she have work tasks that someone else could do or are there tasks that she does not currently carry out but, in your opinion, she should carry out?
4. What is the department manager’s role in your department? Which is more important focus in the department manager work – daily administrative tasks or operations development and support for the employees?

COLLABORATION BETWEEN YOU AND THE DEPARTMENT MANAGER
5. What kind of support do you need from your department manager and how can she support you in your work?
6. Practical questions:
   • When do you meet your department manager?
   • Do you experience the department manager as a resource in your work?
• When issues concerning your department are decided, can you influence the decision-making?
• Do you experience your department manager concentrating more on work tasks or on employees?

7. Do you collaborate with your department manager or would you like to collaborate with your department manager when…
   …your work group’s work is planned, tasks distributed, and staffing decided?
   …you carry out your work tasks?
   …you solve problems that have emerged?
   …you evaluate results from your work?

8. How is the conflict between scarce resources and patient’s well-being dealt with? Who makes the difficult decisions?

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN GENERAL
9. The management structure
• Who are those who decide things affecting your work?
• What kind of decisions do they make?
• Do you have direct contacts to your clinic’s clinic head?
• Does the management system (decision-making, compensation setting, responsibility and resources allocation, division of tasks, staffing decisions, etc.) in your department and in the whole hospital work well? If not, what would you like to improve?
The interview questions for the semi-structured interviews of the clinic heads at Norrtälje Hospital

YOUR WORK AND ROLE AT NORRTÄLJE HOSPITAL
1. What does your role as the clinic head contain?
2. As a clinic head you are a member in the hospital’s management group – what does that mean? Do you represent your clinic in the management group? How do you influence the decisions that are made?

THE DEPARTMENT MANAGER WORK
3. What does it mean to be a department manager? What is the department managers’ role in the hospital organization?
4. Which are the department managers’ most important tasks in your opinion?
5. Which competence demands there exist for the department managers?
6. Which problems there exist in the department managers’ work in your opinion?

MANAGING THE CLINIC
7. How do you collaborate with your department managers? Which issues do you collaborate on? Do you have regular meetings?
8. What kind of guidelines and support do you receive from the hospital’s director and staff for managing your clinic?
9. Which problems there exist in managing your clinic? Do you think there are clear rules that help you in steering your clinic?
COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE HIERARCHICAL LEVELS
10. How do you experience the line organization to function? Which problems and which positive sides there are?
11. What kind of contacts do you have to the clinic’s employees?

EMPLOYEESHIP AND PARTICIPATION
12. In your opinion, are the employees able to influence such work organizational developments that affect their work?

DEVELOPMENT VISIONS
13. In your opinion, what are the most important development areas in the hospital’s management and leadership questions?
The interview questions for the first interview study at Tenants' Union

WORK AND WORK ORGANIZATION
1. Tell about your work; which work tasks do you have? For the ombudsmen: How does the negotiations process run from the beginning to end? Which differences are there in the municipal and private negotiations? Is it an advantage or hinder to work on only one type of negotiations?
2. Are you mostly working alone or with others?
3. Tell about your work group and unit - What is the organizational structure like?
4. Do you think you receive support for your work from your colleagues and your closest manager? Do you receive feedback on your work?
5. How does your organization collaborate with the relevant external actors?
6. Workload: Do you think you have too much to do? Does the workload vary during the year? Do you have time for recuperation?
7. Do you think you can manage with your work or are there situations that you find difficult to cope with?
8. Do you think your work is meaningful?

COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING
9. Does your competencies correspond to the work demands?
10. Which formal and informal ways there exist for competence development?
11. Which personal strengths do you have that help you in coping with your work?

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
12. Do you experience that you are well aware of all the developments that are taking place and will take place in the near future in your work?
13. How are work organizational changes carried out? Who is the driving force in such changes? What is your own role? Do your managers listen to you and your colleagues? Do you and your colleagues share the same idea on how things should be developed? What kind of changes would you like to see in your work?
14. Do you prefer to work alone or with others? For the ombudsmen: Would you like to have your own geographical area or carry out negotiations in the order they arrive?

PHYSICAL WORKING SPACE
15. Do you have your own room or do you share a room with someone else? Which positive and negative aspects there are in the current working space arrangements? Do you prefer having your own room or would you prefer to work in a landscape office? Are you located close to those you work with? Do you collaborate with others sitting far away from you? Does the working space support or hinder your work? In which ways? How would you like to organize the working space?

OPEN QUESTIONS
16. Which negative aspects there are in your work?
17. Which positive aspects there are in your work?
18. When you are working do you lose energy or does work regenerate your energy?
The interview questions for the second interview study at Tenants’ Union

1. When you think about the past year, what kinds of positive or negative developments have taken place in your unit? The unit has worked on work environmental issues, work organizational questions, and collaboration. Do you think there is something that is missing from the development work? In your opinion, what should be concentrated on in the future? Do you think that the different development projects (reorganizations, the telephone service for the members, the weekly meetings, the competence training, etc.) relate to each other and support each other?

2. Weekly meetings – Which experiences do you have on them? What is your role in the meetings? What have you learned in the meetings?

3. Daily collaboration in the unit – Do you collaborate with your colleagues? Has collaboration changed during the past year? Do you receive support for your negotiations work from others? What do you think about the new geographical groups that are being created in the unit?

4. Daily collaboration in the organization – Whom do you collaborate with from other units? What is the goal of this collaboration? Which problems there exist in the cross-unit collaboration?
5. The competence training – How has the competence training influenced your unit? How has it influenced you as a person?

6. One of the ideas that were emphasized in the competence training was «our differences are our strength». What does it mean to you? Which differences should be benefited from? The »lonely wolves« are mentioned quite often in the unit – Is it OK to be a lonely wolf?

7. Support from the managers – Do you experience that you receive the support you need from the managers? Do you experience that the organization is loyal towards you?

8. The visions of Tenants' Union – Are Tenants' Union’s visions clear to you? Do you think you are aware of the management’s vision on how one should work at Tenants’ Union?

9. According to the personnel survey, the stress levels are still very high. Tell about the different situations where you experience dangerous stress. Which of the Maslach and Leiter (1997; see chapter 2) burnout dimensions are relevant in your work?

10. Physical working space – Whom are you located close to? Do you collaborate with those located near you? Or are there social contacts between you? Does the physical space support your work?
The main program points of the Archipelago Meeting

THE FOLLOWING GROUP WORK SESSIONS WERE CARRIED OUT:

• **THE PRELIMINARY WORKSHOP IN MIXED GROUPS:** people sitting around the same table formed a group and discussed their expectations for the meeting.

• **WORKSHOP 1:** What needs to happen so that the hospital can start a journey towards a) participation b) good decision-making c) dialogue d) balance between managerial tasks and leadership e) meaningful managerial roles? This workshop was carried out in small groups formed based on the participants’ interests; everyone could choose a topic she or he would like to discuss and form a group with others interested in the same topic.

• **WORKSHOP 2:** The clinics’ vision for a good work situation. Choose a date in near or far future, and describe what kind of a working situation exists on that date rendering energy to you and others in your clinic. This workshop was carried out in the clinic groups; i.e. in groups consisting of the clinic heads and the department managers of a clinic.

• **WORKSHOP 3:** Good experiences – Exchanging ideas on good experiences at work and in work organization. This workshop was carried out in mixed groups; one person chose another person whom she did
not know well, these two persons found yet another person whom they did not know that well, etc. – a group was formed.

- **Workshop 4**: The next step – Each clinic decides how it will start its journey towards the vision created in the workshop 2.

**THEORETICAL INPUT DURING THE MEETING:**
- **Jan Forslin** (Royal Institute of Technology): Consuming and regenerative work.
- **Mari Kira** (Royal Institute of Technology): Why change is so difficult – The knowing-doing gap perspective.
The visions and first steps of the clinics at Norrtälje Hospital

In this appendix, the results from the clinic sessions in the Archipelago meeting are described. The clinic head and department managers of each clinic discussed their vision for a good working situation in the future as well as their very first step on the way towards this vision. The plans of the clinics are summarized below.

The medicine-geriatric clinic concentrated in its vision on more time for good leadership and management processes as well as a better collaboration between different actors within the clinic. Their vision contained, for instance, a better basic staffing in the clinic and, consequently, happier employees - not employees consumed by their work. Also, long-term sick-leaves should be reduced in the clinic. Relating to collaboration, the managers envisaged better collaboration between the line managers and head physicians as well as effective small groups working on certain special tasks and consisting of representatives of different employee groups. The vision also included a more visible clinic head, the existence of active assistant department managers, and a more balanced relation between information spreading and dialogue in the clinic. Finally, the clinic wanted to allocate more time for coaching as well as for creating and realizing visions.

In practice, the clinic’s first step would include, for instance, establishing a clinic secretary and intensifying collaboration between e.g. the clinic head and department managers as well as the department managers and the head physicians.
An important idea came up in the general discussion during the Medicine-geriatric clinic’s presentation of its vision and first step. The Medicine-geriatric clinic, like some other clinics, would like to have some further persons working on the administrative routine tasks. But since in a hospital the budget is always tight, how is it possible to hire new employees? In one of the clinics this problem had been solved by not hiring new employees, but by allocating the existing human resources in a new way; an employee who was not feeling up to the demanding basic care work anymore was asked if she would like to carry out some administrative tasks part time to give her breaks from the care work. This arrangement has worked very well for the employee and department. It was generally agreed that the hospital’s managers should try to see if there are other such employees who are having problems in their current tasks and are in risk of having to take a long-term sick-leave due to these problems. Such persons could be then transferred to new tasks in other parts of the hospital based on the existing personnel needs and the person’s own preferences. For instance development discussions between the managers and their employees provide opportunities for the managers to spot employees who may need such individual solutions in their work.

The hospital’s director, personnel manager, and economics manager formed their own group discussing the possibilities for the staff functions to support the hospital. The group identified creating an operations plan for the hospital as an important task; a plan outlining the »whats« and »hows« of the hospital’s operation in the future – what it will do and how it will do that. It became clear, however, in the general discussion that this group on its own would not be able to create such a plan. Also people representing the medical functions would have to be engaged in its creation. All in all, the question how to engage as many people as possible, also employees, in creating a living and influential operations plan for the hospital was brought up in the discussion but left yet to be answered. The managers have to work to find ways to engage their personnel to the development work.

The group also brought forth the problematic name »staff« (in the context of line and staff organization). Somehow the name staff does not define anymore the Personnel and Economics departments and since »staff« as a name is to some degree negatively loaded in the hospital – a sep-
arate entity from the line – maybe a new name would be needed for these support functions.

In the paramedical clinic, two major issues emerging from the discussion are the basic staffing, which is experienced to be too low, and information/communication development needs. In practice, the clinic decided to try and increase the basic staffing; the resources are of course always tight, but the clinic will do its best to convince the hospital’s management group that it really needs more employees in order to function properly. The clinic also decided to arrange an internal planning day twice a year; in the normal meetings, there is very little time to concentrate on important issues or use time for reflection. That is why a special planning day should be dedicated twice a year for more profound dialogue and reflection within the clinic. Another improvement relating to the communication is that the clinic’s managers will start to write »weekly letters« to the employees containing important information that has come up during the week and that the employees should be aware of. The idea here is to have all the employees informed already when they come to meetings, so that meetings can be used for two-way communication.

At the specialist physician group several different medical areas are represented; for instance gynecology and dermatology. In the clinic, the different specialists work in very small practices and without any direct connection to each other in the medical sense. The clinic managers experience the future of the clinic quite open; does it make sense to have such small practices in the hospital at all? In the 40-group meeting, other clinics expressed several times that they experience it an important resource to have these specialists within the hospital. For instance, it is important that the patients in the ward department may get help within the hospital for their dermatologic problems. Nevertheless, the Specialist physician group experiences it important to reconsider their operation in the new corporatized hospital. The group has as its vision a decent workload; now the alone working physicians have their schedules full for several months in advance and the demand for their services is much larger than their possibility to offer them. The vision also includes good information channels. In practice the aim is to take the clinic closer to these visions by trying to find solutions together, by arranging further planning opportunities. Furthermore, the clinic looks forward to a strategic dialogue on the clinic’s role and future
with the new CEO. Nevertheless, the clinic is frustrated; already earlier they have created visions and tried to change their working situation but all this has been without success. The economic framework has been too tight or the political decisions from the County Council have undermined the visions of the clinic.

At the anesthesia clinic information spreading and communication became important issues in the clinic’s vision discussion. Similarly as in the Medicine-geriatric and Paramedic clinic, the managers at the Anesthesia clinic experience it frustrating that meetings end up being managers’ monologues as they try to keep everybody informed. The weekly letter to summarize and collect together the current important issues will also be used at the Anesthesia clinic.

A special improvement area in the collaboration within the Anesthesia clinic relates to the participation opportunities of the operation room nurses. The nurses working in the operation rooms are occupied in them the whole day; consequently, they do not have time to meet the other employees or managers of the clinic. The clinic managers decided to try and improve the clinic’s meeting forums such that opportunities for also these employees to meet and communicate with others in the clinic would be provided.

Finally, the Anesthesia clinic identified a need to improve different planning and follow-up systems in the clinic; for instance, better plans for care processes should be made and the managers should be better trained to follow the economical issues. Planning the care processes in a better way necessitates that the managers try to involve the head physician and other employees for making the plans; gaining a better understanding on the economics could be, in its turn, achieved with the help of the Economics department and the economics manager.

At the psychiatric clinic the main development need relates to the meetings within the clinic; the current meeting structure does not support the operations of the clinic. There are many different regular meetings for different employee groups and managers, but the meetings end up being ineffective and it is not always clear who should be involved in which meetings and where different things should be decided at. Consequently, the managers of the clinic focused on sketching different new possibilities for a meeting structure. They separated decision-making meetings from »dia-
logue meetings, i.e. meetings that are dedicated for reflective dialogue on issues important for the clinic.

**The Surgical Clinic** ended up, as many other clinics, thinking about their meetings. There are many meetings in the clinic and the managers are trying to inform employees the best they can. Nevertheless, as the clinic head put it, the employees are less informed than before! The clinic’s manager group set as their goal rationalizing the meetings in the clinic; in the future there should be fewer, but more effective meetings. Another important development area in the clinic’s operation is, according to the manager group, access to the employees. Currently, as already pointed out elsewhere in the case study, much of the department managers’ time goes to phoning in substitute employees to cover for instance sick-leaves and other absences. The group stated that the hospital should actually almost over-employ; the basic staffing cannot be calculated without taking into account the fact that all the time there are employees who are ill, in training, on vacation, etc. The group also stated that it would make sense to have a common »personnel pool« from which all the different departments could hire substitute employees. This has been tried already before, but somehow it has not worked out. A new and better effort should be made on this issue.

**The IT-Department and Maintenance Department** both offer important service to the hospital and function in the supervision of the hospital’s vice director. That is why the IT-manager, the maintenance manager, and the hospital’s vice director formed a group to discuss their work and collaboration. All in all, the group felt that so far they have not really functioned as a group and this should be changed! The group planned for instance the following visions and first steps towards them. First, the aim is that the hospital’s vice director in future has a tighter contact to the IT-manager and the maintenance manager and supports them in their work. The group members are located in different places around the hospital and that is why it is important that the hospital’s vice director actively visits his employees for instance for a coffee break. The group also felt that they need more support from the economy manager and decided to invite her to a meeting within a month to discuss how to improve the collaboration.

Furthermore, the group set as its aim to work towards a better solution for the physical working space. When the new CEO starts her /his work at
the hospital; the group will strive to engage her/him in planning a better working space solution.