“I am not a consultant”: Dis-identification through Professional Discourse as An Agricultural Membership in The Advisory Services Organization

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ABSTRACT

Title: “I am not a consultant”: Dis-identification through Professional Discourse as An Agricultural Membership in The Advisory Services Organization

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Five key words: Dis-identification, Social Identity, Social Categories, Professional Identity, Image of Consultant

Purpose: The aim of this thesis is to explore the process of (dis)identification considering its influence in securing and enhancing self-identity in the agricultural organization context. This research underscores negative and positive aspects of professional discourses that influence interpretative manners among organizational members.

Methodology: This study takes hermeneutics stances as the main methodological and the critical theory is fairly employed to understand power relations. The study is based on empirical materials gathered from a qualitative approach that materialize comprehensive interpretation for analysis.
Theoretical perspectives: The research based on three main theoretical terrains. The theoretical framework of identity regulation guides us through relevant aspects of (dis) identification in modern management. The social identity theory informs elements of the complexity of social impact toward organizational activities. Studies around the image of consultant portray linkage between image and professional identity and how it influence disidentification.

Empirical foundation: The empirical materials in this research are primarily gathered from the qualitative interviews with knowledge workers in the agricultural services organization. The secondary materials such as annual reports, publications, and industrial fact sheets are also incorporated.

Conclusions: The concept of identity regulation is vital for management control in knowledge-intensive firms. However, the organizational dilemmas might trigger skeptical attitudes and lead to dis-identification. Management has to be aware of using specific organizational discourses, as it would lead to variable patterns of behaviors. The study reveals constructive elements of dis-identification through better work performance of HS advisors for business sustainability and employee commitment.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1. Background and problems

Due to increasing unpredictable business dynamics and rapid changes in market environment, organizations in many industries are facing a complex dilemma. The agricultural industry as the foundation of socio economic stability, quality of life and environment is also affected by various circumstances. It is challenged by inevitable changes e.g. unstable and uncertain work conditions in account for climate changes, health concerns, and scarceness of labour and political involvement. EU is one of the most influential organizations that lead and shape trend of the agricultural industry in European countries including Sweden. In the agricultural sector and rural areas, the EU is pursuing balanced economic growth and technological improvement, without any harm to the future standard of living and, above all, in a way that is environmentally sustainable. Based on Common Agricultural Practices (CAP), the decoupled subsidy fund is available for those who work in agriculture and rural development sector across the region.

During the late 1980s and 1990s in Sweden, agriculture was on the rise and the percentage of the population involved in this sector was considerably high\(^1\). However, as rapid growth in other industries and economic revolution, the dynamics of this industry has been changed. Scales of conventional agricultural industry in comparison to the Gross National Product (GNP) has been decreasing while awareness of sustainable development in rural areas promoted extensive concerns in organic agriculture toward ecological consumers. Hence, farmers are the key players to develop rural environment so that they are expected to comply with the market trend. These complexities in businesses practices limit their capabilities to sustain their business advantages. Increase in business requirements, especially ecological products in agricultural industry in Sweden according to EU regulations and free trade policy calls for advancement in modern agricultural technology and efficient management for existing and emerging agricultural enterprises.

The above circumstance highlights the role of agricultural specialists; agricultural-based consultant firms are considered as key actors in the development of Swedish agriculture.

\(^1\) Acta Sociologica 1985 (28), 3:193-205
With the aim to transfer knowledge and skills that enhance adaptability among agricultural enterprises, they are highly dependent on the management of intellectual resources and human capital namely, agricultural advisors. Advisors in agriculture are positioned to get along with the clients’ (related out-group) expectation by providing quality services and at the same time expected to stimulate the value of rural development. In the Swedish rural economy and agricultural sector, many organizations have contributed and worked closely with farmers to develop agricultural industry in rural areas in terms of food production, land development, and environmental awareness. One of three main actors\(^2\) in this industry is *Hushållningsällskapet*. This organization is legendary and well-known among agricultural people in Sweden.

‘The Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies’ or locally known as *Hushållningsällskapet* (‘HS’) are independent member organizations dedicated to enhancing an enterprising spirit in rural areas and promoting good rural and urban living environments in the countryside. However, recent changes regarding socio-economic, industrial market, regulation and climate have been driving the organization to extend various services and the agricultural advisors are required to acquire more specific knowledge and skills with agri-business to improve agriculture related activities. In 1995, when Sweden became a member of the European Union (EU), the EU regulations became the reference of conduct for agricultural business practices in Sweden; farmers have been imposed with more complicated restrictions. Significantly, HS considered establishing an economic and management consulting arm. For many years, agricultural advisors in various specialties have been recruited and assigned to work with clients’ projects.

Throughout managerial work and intellectual services, these employees developed self-concepts as advisors influenced by socialization with internal and external groups of agricultural communities. In addition to this, HS people define themselves as advisors influenced by client’s perceptions. On the one hand, advisors themselves believed that the clients expect them to maintain the same identity as advisors or helpers rather than consultants who act as money-driven workers. In a sense, the advisors are likely to gain impression from their clients about “who they really are” and “what they should do”.

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\(^2\) According to one senior HS advisor, three main organizations that Swedish farmers acknowledge their agricultural services are HS, LRF, and other major agricultural enterprises.
The problematic issue manifested when there is emergence of managerial dilemma between human capital focus and business strategies, which consequently progress identity negation among employees. While HS management has remained advisors’ individual knowledge and skills a tendency to be more commercialized causes the management to demand their advisors to consider more about profitability by emphasizing the notion of ‘consultant’. However, advisors of HS are not fully imposed by this managerial discourse. Instead, the advisors are likely to protect their professional identities by distancing from the value that the organization wants them to incorporate. This term evokes some sense of disregarding the value of agricultural profession among HS advisors so that through the process of ‘dis-identification’ they try to reveal what they really are. The dis-identification confirms their membership recognized by dominated group in terms of professional value in HS.

Moreover, the interplay between client’s perception and collective beliefs constructed within group classification in HS reinforces the legitimacy of dis-identification. One interesting point is that while advisors try to defend against the new management focus of being a consultant, they keep professional work attitude towards their performance and provide quality services to their clients.

1.2. The purpose of the thesis

The aim of this project is to explore the process of (dis) identification considering its influence in securing and enhancing self-identity in the agricultural context. The study also aims to underscore the relationship between internal factors i.e. organizational and individual behaviours and external factors i.e. social and economical uncertainties that invite considerations of the motives toward enrichment of professional identities. Another aspect of the study is to discover the pattern of working behaviors emerged from (dis) identification in terms of job attitude and group loyalty. Comprehending through empirical materials and relevant literatures, we want to urge implication of significant factors of identification development to the realm of interpretative management in the modern business world.

1.3. The research questions

We devised two research questions by considering the research background, problems and aims of the research with a reflective perception:
• How do advisors in the agricultural sector (dis) identify with being a consultant?
• What are the patterns of working behaviors emerged from these processes of (dis) identification?

1.4. Research Framework

To analyze how the advisors (dis) identify with being a consultant and to research the effects of dis-identification, the theoretical framework of identity regulation by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) serves the basis of identity studies and point out how organizations apply identity-focus development as managerial control. Supported by number of previous studies, we are able to extend the study of the process of dis-identification to interrelation between identity materials and the consequences of the processes. We refer to Ashforth and Mael (1989)’s social identity theory as a framework that informs elements of the complexity of social impact. These two conceptions are combined to conduct research more reflexively and rationally. In relation to the consultant image, we study literatures that point out its negative and positive aspects from different perspectives. We also relate these aspects to the linkage between the construction of professional identity and the impact of social classification.

1.5. Research Methodology

In order to approach our research problems, we take double stances in methodological framework comprising of hermeneutics and critical theory. Hermeneutics is taken as the main viewpoint and the latter partly enlighten the focus on power. The study is based on empirical materials in which data processing are carried out through qualitative interviews to extract necessary information from personal contact and interactive dialogue that materialize comprehensive interpretation for analysis. We aim to explore the process of dis-identification in the context of professional service providers; therefore, advisors working with different expertise were selected as our main subjects. According to methodological frameworks, the interviews were also extended to CEO in order to gain insights from managerial perspective as well as secondary materials that enlighten overall contextualization. Limitations and validity of the study were taken into consideration in order to bring the study greater legitimizations.
1.6. The importance of the project

This research opens up an opportunity to be aware of how image affects individual perception and how it controls working behaviours in the agricultural sector. It can be an important consideration for managers when dealing with an employee’s personal concept. The study will reveal unaware factors that affect the development of identification in which knowledge workers are targeted especially in the context of consultancy organizations. In exploring the pattern of behaviors in relation to the processes of dis-identification, we can gain better understanding about the synergy of normative control in the organization. These perspectives can facilitate implementation of identity regulation by considering ideological differences such as organizational, industrial, or national matters.

1.7. Thesis outline

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The first chapter presents an overall view of the study and describing background to approach the research problem. This chapter is to invite a whole picture of the research and attract interest of research.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

In the second chapter, the research methodology is delineated. It outlines the design of the study in terms conducting a preliminary perspective, generation of empirical material in interview contexts and understanding the interviewees. This chapter aims to illustrate and justify the methods to the reader.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical frame of reference

In the third chapter, we discuss the theoretical framework with causes and consequences of dis-identification in the agricultural organization. In order to support our discussion part, we outline applicable concepts of identity regulation, the image of consultancy, and social identity. This chapter will sufficiently support analysis in chapter five.
Chapter 4 – Case description and Empirical findings

We present in Chapter Four the case description and empirical findings, which support our analysis. These findings shed light on the key points to be discussed in the next chapter through reflection and contribution toward theoretical materials.

Chapter 5 - Case Analysis

The fifth chapter reflects on the relevance of theory analysis and the empirical material. We point out the key results of research questions by discussing and examining our findings and framework from previous chapters.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

The sixth chapter is to emphasize arguing points toward the summary of the empirical research, which demonstrates understandable points of the research questions and problems. This chapter also gives some notes for further research.

1.8. Summary of the chapter

This chapter comprises the key elements of our research. This chapter aims to introduce what this study is all about. We initially point out the background of our study and explain why this area relevant to us. Next, we narrow down to introduce our empirical materials: HS, the Swedish rural economy and agricultural societies, in the extent to how it is influenced by social economic changes and major shift in industrial structure. According to the background and problems we have discussed, we specify our research questions. We further explain our research framework and methodology. Importance of the study is then highlighted. We conclude the chapter with the outline of this research paper.
CHAPTER 2
Methodology

In this chapter we start to point out the pre-understanding and qualitative perspectives in regards to the study formulation. We then explain our methodological framework that guides the following approaches in this study. We continue by discussing our research method including the reason behind the case selection, the process of data collection and the empirical construction, as well as the concept of data analysis. Next, we describe some limitations that we have found in practices. Finally, we close the chapter by clarifying the validity of our study.

2.1. Research review

2.1.1. Pre-understanding

The notion of pre-understanding is taken knowledge, experience, insights that go along with the researchers entering the research process. Our study is to focus on the significance of self-identification for modern management in knowledge intensive economy. The process of dis-identification of agricultural people and its consequential effects are highlighted as our main interests. To develop this point, we base our case on multiple views of managerial literatures involving identity, dis-identification and consultancy business. We are aware of the nature of social reality that could be observed through qualitative interviews and personal interactions.

2.1.2. Qualitative approach

As the study is to explore socially constructed aspects of dis-identification in the organization, the qualitative approach is considered appropriate. Qualitative research is an intensely personal and subjective style of research so this approach make it possible for us to investigate in-depth understanding of human beings, or behaviours controlled by social surroundings – e.g. work group, organizations, or profession communities as well as reasons behind those behaviours (Marshall & Rossman 1999). One advantage of qualitative approach can help to break the eye from blind points in understanding, which is preserved from privileged elite standpoints. Using the qualitative approach, the researchers need to understand interaction of behaviour with particular social and cultural contexts and/or
group of individuals. In this sense, we are able to develop and gain better understanding of occurring phenomena regarding dis-identification. In this approach interviews and observations of plurality of organizational settings are employed for data gathering.

2.2. Methodological framework

2.2.1. Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is methodology based on the assumption that social reality has to be understood by seeing it as a system of signs (Marschan & Welch 2004). Interpretation is central for hermeneutics features. There are two main approaches: objectivist hermeneutics and alethic hermeneutics interplayed in social reality interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000). The former refers to the interrelation between the ‘part’ and the ‘whole’ as the cycle of understanding. In this sense, we encounter our study with this approach by moving through specific parts that are the conversation with advisors considered as the social text to the broader sense of a whole, which in this study we refer to professional group in agricultural field and the organization. In order to understand our ‘part’ in depth we have to understand the organizational surroundings. Moving along the part-whole circle, we can widen our interpretation and understand underlying meanings of the subjects. Another approach guides us differently in this study.

“Alethic hermeneutics dissolves the polarity between subject and object into a more primordial, original situation of understanding” (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000, p.57), which means the matter of preunderstanding and understanding is highlighted. Based on the realm of alethic hermeneutics we interpret ‘text’ and develop understanding towards our empirical materials with the preunderstanding about our main focus: identity work, dis-identification, and consultancy business. Also, the aspects of a hermeneutic interpretation are taken into consideration when approaching this research consisting of the pattern of the interpretation- the way we control makes our interpretation logical and coherent, the text that is selected and interpreted, the dialogue in which we are asking questions to our text in order to transform our preunderstanding into new understanding, and the sub-interpretation that have occurred during the process of interpretation that support research arguments. These two approaches and four principal aspects have been employed as the frame of reference in our study and as a result we gained deeper understanding that lead to valid answers.
2.2.2. Critical Theory

In addition to the hermeneutic approach, in this study, we are partially inspired by critical standpoint when approaching our empirical materials. Based on interpretative centrality, the critical theory normally lead researchers to gain deeper insights that encompasses the interpretation of unconscious process ideologies, power relations, and other expressions of dominance that entail the privileging of certain interest over others (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000, p.144). Looking through research interviews with a critical eye, we base our analyses on interpretation of the social text that reflects power relations in living experiences. On one hand, we can depict the way HS management exercises power with the control through specific discourse that prompt cynical reactions amongst organizational members. On the other hand, the power of the group that enable employees to negotiate dominant identities within conditional discretion is to be argued. By not taking thing for granted, we consider these unquestioned factors the possibility to derive constructive analysis that help us to discover ‘what actually drive these people to think what they are up to’ by means of power relations and collective values.

Since we are not only interested in what these advisors essentially mean when they explain about what they really are but also what should be the cause that drives them to think that way, the hermeneutics stance in association with critical theory is vital. These two perspectives will enhance our comprehensive judgment during the process of this study as well as trigger potential means to approach our research questions.

2.3. Research Method

2.3.1. Organization Selection

‘The Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies’ or HS is the Swedish independent organization established to enhance the agricultural sector. This organization has been independently operated while the Swedish government indirectly supports the corporate synergy of rural development through the specific privilege of corporate tax exemption; corporate revenue is expected in return to contribute agricultural advancement. Therefore, investment in knowledge and intellectual people are vital for this organization. The choice of the studied organization lies in its unique characteristic between public-private organization and professional services provider. HS is relatively recognized as knowledge intensive organization that best fit with determination for this study. Like normal
consultancy firms, HS strongly highlights human capital as the main organizational resource and manages to optimize individual competence and work performance through a variety of institutionalized systems. In this case we can investigate impact of social identity among people in this knowledgeable community as well as reactions in terms of dis-identification that entail understanding about group classification and social practices in this context.

We approached the organization located in Southeastern Sweden through our classmate at Lund University and the contact person. With several email correspondences and personal connections, our contact person, who also works as an economic advisor, provided us the opportunity to discuss practicability of the project and helped out with the proposal submission to the organizational management. The access to the case organization was granted in April; further arrangements for research interviews and meetings were conducted accordingly.

2.3.2. Data collection

To obtain subjects’ insights i.e. perspectives, perceptions and interpretations of their social realities by means of a qualitative approach, the interview was used as the instrument for primary data collection. We are aware that through the interview process personal interactions constructed can facilitate data formulation and interpretation. This encourages us to observe additional reactions such as facial expressions, gestures, or tone of voice that enable us to understand ‘underlying meanings’ of how they responded to our questions. We frame our assumptions and develop our analysis within the context of HS as specialized consultancy organization.

The list of interviewees was recommended in accordance with their availability through our contact person. In the meantime, names and contact information were provided to secure confirmations individually. We reached out to them one-by-one by phone to arrange an appropriate interview meeting that best suited our subjects. Ten interviews were confirmed; one of which is the CEO of this particular branch while other interviewees are employed as agricultural advisors in different fields of expertise, including economic management, crop production, and field trial. To specify these interviewees, we refer to them with forged names as follows: CEO, Oak, Pine, Herbs, Spruce, Rose, Spices, Tulip, Willow, and Herbs.
In addition to differences in expertise, they are also diverse in terms of gender, ages and years of working experience. Interviewees’ working experiences in this organization range from few weeks to twenty-five years, so different perspectives based on number of years could be expected. The interviews took place independently. Two interviews were conducted in public places and interviewees came to us while the rest of the interviews were held either in their personal offices or the common room. Each interview took approximately 50-90 minutes when interviewees were initially clarified about our study objectives and they all were aware that their personal information in this study would not be publicly disclosed.

Secondary materials such as annual reports, information from corporate website, and in-house publications were collected as the source of references for case analysis and empirical contextualization. Additional data regarding Swedish agriculture and EU policy help us to develop better understandings about industry overview. Literatures relevant to the study topic were exploited as the main reference of our discussion.

2.3.3. Processing Interviews

Before the interview schedule was confirmed the scope of questions was attached with the study proposal so the CEO, one who granted this permission, could appreciate how the interview will be conducted. Interview questions are constructed into four main areas as follows:

1) **Basic information**: Personal background regarding education, field of expertise and individual preference. Since the questions were open-ended, the interviews varied by informant.

2) **Work experiences**: This includes details of their job responsibilities, work experiences with clients, work motives, key important things for their jobs, job satisfaction, and how they became interested in this organization.

3) **Socialization**: Regarding our research topic, we considered that socialization is an important factor for self-identification in HS Company. The questions around attitude and feeling towards relationship with colleagues and clients as well as bureaucracy were elaborated.
4) **Self-expectation:** We investigated their expectation in work and life. The questions around personal goals, career goals, and desires in life both short- and long-term were highlighted in the interview.

Each interview was started with questions around basic information then move on to research-related ones. However, as the open-ended questions suggest multiple interactions the sequence of interview questions varied for each interviewee. Nevertheless, all interviewees were encouraged to respond openly through each question and some questions were repeated before the end of each interview to assure consistency in responses.

Both researchers incorporated in conducting interviews; three of which were note-taking data due to technical circumstances while the rest were conducted as voice-recording interviews. To capture freshness of emerging utterances right after each interview we transcribed voice recordings that conform to our field notes within three days after the interviews. This also helped us stimulate capabilities of interpretation and refinement of interview questions. With the possibility of paradoxical interpretation between two interviewers, we met regularly to share and discuss before finalizing interview transcription.

2.4. **Limitations**

2.4.1. English as a second language

The initial limitation of our study was the language used in the interviews. Since all the respondents are Swedish interviewed in English, it was possible to obstruct the flow of responses when they encounter troubles finding the right words to explain their intentioned responses. This could have prevented them from elaborating their real feelings and opinions. Moreover, as international students who are not native English speakers, we are aware of potential language barriers. To deal with this limitation, we simplified research questions and carefully explained each question to our informants when they seemed unsure. Also, we kept using common language and encouraged them to speak freely. In case we were uncertain about what they mean, we repeated some key parts of their responses to assure the accuracy of their responses. However, in general, all interviewees are proficient in English so we do not think this limitation will significantly affect the quality of our empirical materials.
2.4.2. Industrial and organizational context

Another limitation for the study is the fact that we as Asian business students are unfamiliar with Swedish agricultural context in which the case organization mainly situates. This initially caused difficulties to understand the surroundings of this particular industry as well as relevance of organizational aspects. The underlying meaning of interviewee’s statements is subjectively constructed in this particular context, so industrial and organizational insights are critical for the quality of interpretation. Nevertheless after couple of interviews and additional sources of secondary data we were equipped with better picture of Swedish agriculture as well as the structure of this industry. On the one hand we consider this as limitations. On the other hand distance from the industry makes it possible for us to see organizational systems from outsider perspective, so we are free from internal bias when encountering empirical materials.

2.5. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability in qualitative research are closely related. Some researchers use them in interchangeable manner while many consider the latter as the consequence of the former (Patton, 2002). Validity of qualitative research mainly concerns the notion of assessment of quality and creditability of research findings. Given multiple definitions of validity, we can generally conceptualize it in relation to trustworthiness, rigor, and good quality of our study (Golafshani, 2003). Many research scholars (Seals 1999; Healy & Perry 2000; Guion 2002; Patton 2002; Modell 2005) suggest that to be able to testify validity of qualitative research the use of ‘triangulation methods’ should be considered. Amongst available measurements, we consider three key areas to justify the validity of our research.

Firstly, validity of the qualitative findings is paramount so that data are expected to be representative of a social reality that we will use for our discussion. In this study we are interested in the process of dis-identification among knowledge workers. All interviewees are engaged with professional work in which specialized knowledge is crucial; therefore, responses gained through interviews manifest as the representative of the group of employees working intensively in knowledge economy. The interviews were hold in communicative and interactive manner. All interviewees were informed about the research interview from the top management with a brief notice of what the project is about but
research inquiries were introduced at the interview. By doing this, we can assure that they could not prepare or discuss about these questions beforehand. In relation to the Swedish professional-services context, we are able to observe the phenomena of intellectual community and significance of self-identification in agricultural workplace. We acknowledged that the interview involves social interaction so any actions or utterances could trigger reactions. In order not to make our interviewees feel uncomfortable with being inquired we tried to create friendly atmosphere and to make them feel free to open throughout each interview. We are also aware of construct of leading questions and avoided to push our interviewees to give us response we were expected.

Secondly, taking part as the team-based researchers different preunderstandings varies the way we approach the research findings as well as the ability to interpret our materials critically. To manage this circumstance, during research implementation information, opinions, ideas, comments etc. were exchanged among researchers in order to avoid misleading information and to enhance capabilities in processing empirical materials at hand. The fact that we are unfamiliar with the organizational context provides a great opportunity to investigate the case as the complete outsiders so better understanding towards research finding would not be obstructed by inherent bias. We are trying to maintain self-reflection manners towards interpretations while discussion was aimed to construct better understanding and to review all pragmatic implementations.

Lastly, environment settings for interviews slightly influence the way interviewees react to research inquiries. The interviews were conducted in differently places both in some public environments and in their private offices. Ones taking place in public areas trigger time constraints, as they have to spend time traveling from the city where the branch locates. Interviews conducted in the office allowed us more flexibility and our interviewees seemed more comfortable to express and to share their opinions since they can reach out additional references such as in-house publications and people they mentioned about. However, we were able to manage to take all interviews within 90 minutes so we could assure that data collected during interviews would serve our analysis. We have found that there is no significance difference between findings derived from the interviews taking place in the public areas and ones taking place inside the local office.
2.6. Summary of the chapter

In this chapter we begin with the pre-understanding about this study and the reasons behind the choice of qualitative research as well as our empirical case. We then detail two research methodological frameworks, including hermeneutics and critical theory. These methodologies guide us the outline for the subsequent processes in this study subject to research method, data collection and analysis. More details about interview as the process of data gathering is mentioned in the following section. We then point out limitations and validity of this study. With these methodology guidelines, we will in the next chapter continue to clarify relevant theoretical frameworks exploited as our analysis platform.
CHAPTER 3
Theoretical Framework

In this chapter we generally explore and examine the theoretical framework with social identity theory, the image of consultant and professional identity, which theoretically support the analysis of our research. First, we start to discuss a concept and a role of identity in knowledge intensive-firm and introduce the different aspects of dis-identification with an emphasis on attribution of image and professionalism. We consider that the process of dis-identification is associated with images of consultant and the attribution of professionalism. Furthermore, we discuss social identity theory by particularly highlighting social categories as we consider that it plays an important role for developing self-identity. In the last part of this chapter, we examine the impact of organizational environment and culture that shape individual and group behaviour.

3.1. Identity regulation in Knowledge-intensive organizations

In knowledge-intensive organizations or knowledge-intensive firms (KIFs) individuals, especially those who provide intellectual services are engaged through variety of organizational discourses that provide them the possibility to construct their identities. Alvesson (2004) highlights significant dimensions of identity in KIFs. The most important aspect of identity is how it reinforces alternative ways of organizational control. He suggests that identity plays important role in creating an internal organizational basis of image management, securing employee loyalty and retention, and lastly counteracting uncertainties and building self-esteem among knowledge workers.

To some extent identity become of great interest as the means of managerial control for intellectual workers. Alvesson (2001) points out four kinds of identity-focusing control in knowledge-intensive companies. First, corporate identity and the institutionalization of the company encourage employees’ commitment via “the combination of internal corporate pride and status of being affiliated through the fame of organization” (Alvesson 2001, p.879). With the notion of being a member of so called knowledge intensive company, it is most likely that individual identities will be formed and constrained through a valuable raw material of identity construction. Secondly, individual identity can be constructed through ‘cultural control’. A corporate ideology is being influential in controlling people with a set of guiding ideas, beliefs, emotion and values.
Another mode of identity as control is normalization, which means disciplining people in the organization through ‘a standard behavior and performance’. It is about self-perception towards what people is expected to do that signal from others. He emphasizes use of the notion of ‘being a professional’ that control the way people behave at work. Lastly, drawing upon Foucault, Alvesson (2001) asserts that individuals create themselves as distinct kinds of subjects then mould themselves around ‘a specific self-definition’. In regards to subjectification, Alvesson (2004) refers as ‘a process of tying the individual to a particular model of self-knowledge’ that encourages him/her to create self concept based on a distinct kind of subject. ‘The crucial element is that the individual accepts certain templates and definitions of him or herself and let them structure and guide existence’ (Alvesson 2004, p.213). It can be interpreted that the personal identification is likely to be formed by making sense of selves in the certain structure.

Identity in knowledge-intensives firms is potentially framed through structural control system by means of its contribution and facilitation to identification process (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004). The authors point out the identification phenomena as a result of combination of two modes of control- technocratic control where the use of bureaucracy and performance measure, and socio-ideological control which focus on values, meanings and ideas-that confirm the centrality of employees’ identity. They also term it as ‘a mental cage of subjectivity’ (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004, pp.171-2). To discuss details of identity construction, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) argue that their model of identity regulation, identity work and self identity draw the framework of how employees develop their self image and work orientations that consistent to what have been defined by organizations. The interplay among these attributions of identity highlights the possibility of management to intervene and regulate individual from ‘insides’ through a number of discursive mode of regulations (Alvesson & Willmott 2002). Their work provides us insights about significance of identity in sustaining employee commitment, royalty and work orientation specifically for those who involve in knowledge and professional intensive community.

Many scholars have constructed various beneficial ideas of the process around self-identity in knowledge-intensive firms for the modern business world (Gioia 1998; Hogg & Terry 2000; Alvesson 2002; Alvesson & Willmott 2002). However, it can be questioned that identity regulation may ineffectively influence individual self-identity rather it may be
interpreted as disruptive elements. The disruptive discourse seems unavoidable occurrence because of contradiction between the businesslike concerns and human being character constructed through social interaction. In other words, contradiction implied in constituted identity regulation through organizational systems and structures itself limit effectiveness of identity work. In response to such discourses, people may space themselves from the organization tie to particular occupation, profession or subgroup as sources of self-definition (Alvesson & Willmott 2002). Additionally, managerial dilemma between the business purpose and sustainability of competitive advantages may trigger some defensive actions among employees. In parallel to effectiveness of identity concept in the modern management, many organizational studies discuss observation of organizational member’s ambivalence, irony, skepticism and cynicism towards identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Costas & Fleming 2009)

It addresses that identity regulation encompasses the more or less intentional effects social practices upon processes of identity construction and reconstruction. Identification implies that individual define him/herself by organization context and social group of members.

3.2. The phenomena of identification and dis-identification in organizations

For identification concerns, identity is related to the way individual sees him or herself. It has multiple definitions and becomes of great interest in organizational studies in terms of psychological control. Identity is best understood as constructed, multiple, and varying rather that something fixed, monolithic, and robust; identity is constructed through comparisons and interactions with others (Alvesson 2004). Generally, people refer to identity as their distinctiveness and belongingness to the world in which they are living (Ashforth & Mael 1989). Identity help us to answer such vital questions as “Who am I?” and “What should I do?” while sometimes it causes continuity of desirable behaviours. Identity is not static feature; it varies and is constructed through comparisons and interaction with other people and group (Alvesson 2004).

Like identification, dis-identification is constructed through social interaction and relates to distinctiveness of personhood. According to Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2003, p.3), dis-identification is “as occurring when individuals maintain a sense of self-distinctiveness through perceptions and feelings of disconnection from an organization”. The process of dis-identification can be observed when an individual starts to dis-identify him/herself from being something that he/she perceive negatively. Dis-identification is a part of
identification oneself in a group, which identify her/himself in the opposition of a set value in an organization (Ashforth & Sluss 2007). In a sense, the characteristics of dis-identification entail handling a contradiction between which individual feels what ‘I really am’ and what ‘I have to be at work’ in order to maintain a sense of authenticity. It helps individual to either protect or defend when employees are said to dis-identify with particular managerial control. Researchers (Dukerich et al. 1998; Pratt & Rafael 2000; Hogg & Terry 2001) point out that individuals dis-identify themselves depending on in or out-group members’ evaluation.

Organizational identification entail ‘the degree to which a person defines himself or herself as having the same attributes that he or she believes the define the organization’ (Dutton, et al. 1994, p. 239). To further, in dis-identification approach, people dis-identify with organization identity when the individual values are not involved or recognized within the workplace.

Furthermore, the concepts of dis-identification are studied in different aspects. For example, according to Elsbach (1999), people distinct themselves from different group identities, as they are able to protect their identity. It reveals that dis-identification reinforce their selfness by being a member of groups to remain the distinctiveness of their values (Tajfel & Turner 1986; Sherif 1966). Another perspective of dis-identification is that it may occur when individuals sense a negative image of an organization perceived by public (Dutton & Dukerich 1991).

The mentioned above, dis-identification is constructed with uniqueness values inspired by image of group and organization. It is important to point out that dis-identification is not simply opposite from identification and it entails the awareness of the notion and the process of identification.

3.3. Roles of the image of consultant

3.3.1. Significance of image

In KIFs, image issues is significant due to the invisible nature of knowledge (Alvesson 2004), it influences the way of perceiving particular characters and shaping certain sets of expectation according to those characters. Similarly, image issue is important for individual in that it regards how individual interprets, perceives, and anticipates from impression. Alvesson (2004, p.71) argues, “an image is then at least
partially a creation with the aim of producing a certain believable impression. It must not be perceived as untrue and the manufacturers must avoid producing images that might too easily too be proven false”. It is understood that image is a medium of sender’s reality and receiver’s expectations. Impression is not only projected through appearances that other sees but also actions that we take. Hatch and Schultz (1997, p.54) contends, “What we are reflected in what we are doing and how other interpret who we are and what we are doing”. Hence, the impression on ‘what we are’ depends on two main things: what we actually do and how others make sense of it. The gap of these two elements leads to vague interpretation and might ground positive or negative behaviour adaptations. This is why image become of great interest as instrumental linkage between individuals and motives in what they are doing especially in the professional context.

3.3.2. Image of consultant

The professional service workers as consultants are professionals who review the present condition of the public’s observation of an individual and organization. The image of consultant can positively and negatively impact on evaluating the degree of perceptions and it presents each consultant’s identity to the client or public. In a sense, the image of consultant as profession positively or negatively shapes client’s perception and consultant themselves so that the certain image of consultant can influence work attitude in terms of the relationship of clients and the knowledge service. Suddaby et al. (2008) refer that management-consulting firms are different from PSFs as a consultant continually confronts to negotiate with the clients as expert. The authors further mention that consultants specialize in specific areas and the image of consultant is impressed by their appearance, attitude, effective communication, and social manners and brandings.

To extend the point mentioned above, Visscher (2006) presents that the vital factors for the growth of consultant knowledge is the mirror of image of the consultant’s own consulting practice individually or together with the colleagues. Consultants produce business knowledge rather than scientific knowledge, which produce through the understanding the client situation and client managerial needs.

Bryson and Wellington (2003) state that the consultancy is challenge, intellectual and personal stimulus. It can be interpreted that image of consultancy is not only perceived as a career, it also be formed as a recreational employment. Individuals in consultancy organizations play with their own images for their own sake as well as in attempts to
acquire employment and promotion. It can highlight that the image of consultant can affects clients’ the expectation and the relationship between consultant and clients’ interactions. Consultancy work is shaped by the expectation structures. Balancing expectation between clients and consultants is crucial in terms of tendency of success or failure in working outcomes (Nikolova et al. 2009).

While the image of management consultant in modern society is perceived as an expert of solving problems and provision of practical advice and helps (Kubr 1996), it is also negatively recognized as the lack of deeper knowledge, overpayment and an immorality of greedy manner (Alvesson & Johansson 2003). The both positive and negative image of consultancy may affect the consultants work behaviours. Described above shows that people act depending on how they are perceived by others. It leads them to either identify or dis-identify themselves as a consultant and it impacts on the commitment of their job and the relationship with clients. The image is likely to play a role as a signal to how individual define him/herself with accepting or negotiating. People maintain and/or modify their identity due to how they want to be seen by others. In the same light, the process of identifying with being professional is affected by others (clients and outsiders) impression and expectations.

3.4. Professional Identity

The notion of professional closely relate to the social collectivity of knowledgeable and intellectual profession. In identifying oneself as ‘professional’, an individual attempts to obtain set of knowledge that refers particular expertise. Ibara (1999) draw upon the findings of the study of empirical case of two professional service firms (PSFs) that professional identity could be adopted to work transitions through adaptation process which is characterized by observing role model, experimenting with provisional selves, and evaluating provisional selves. These three tasks are influenced by situational and individual factors. According to Ibara (1999) professional identity is more adaptable and mutable early in one’s career; over time people adapt aspects of their identity to accommodate role demands and modify role definitions to preserves identity values. The link of professional identity and image is also underlined in that professionals are navigating a transition from technical and managerial work to client advisory roles in which they must convey a creditable image long before they have fully internalized the underlying professional identity. Self-identification in an organization can be constituted an understanding of the
professional attributes. In fact, a means of relating with the inner truths of the ‘professional self’ are observed in the process of changing the self. The process of dis-identification is constructed through the form of the freedom in an organizational context.

Further, it is notable that during times of career transition incorporated with adaptation processes, people are constructing possible identities; the new identities generated in career transition is often provisional until they have been refined with experience. Ideas of professional identity construction are highlighted in the work of Derkzen and Bock (2007) in the focus of how an individual signify professional roles by either incorporating collective norms and behavior or acquiring knowledge into oneself. On the other hand this reflects how professionalism is a multi-layered construction. In regards to our analysis the process in which professionalism is signified. There are three factors associated with this: the existence of specialized technical knowledge, the capacity for self-organization and getting its voice heard, and lastly the closure mechanism that control access to the profession. They assume that people become professionals if they are able to pick up those signifying practices that legitimate them as professionals.

The symbolic value of a professional identity is referred here in order to emphasize that one can construct professional identity through identification with an organization and the capacity to display particular set of specific knowledge he or she has acquired. Moreover, desire of being seen as professionals requires recognition and public acceptance. However, the findings highlight that alternative ways of displaying specific knowledge, which may not include scientific or formal set of knowledge allow people in constructing professional identity in specific context. Mikkola (2009) in the focus of sustainability towards public catering agenda the importance of professional identity is asserted. She suggests those professionals’ actions taken towards such social notion as ‘sustainability’ originates from their willingness to apply and their making use of their professional position and competence to achieve certain sets of expected outcome.

More recent studies point out the constructed professional identity (Hotho 2008, p. 2) states “professions affects individuals’ action, behavior which mean that individual professional is created in the collective and a recipient of structure”. It means norm or group members influence individual professional. On the other hand, Hotho (2008) argues that individuals also evolve profession and it constructs the norms and characters of their profession. To extend the arguments, other authors in professional represent through the knowledge field,
rules and norms which socialize individuals into the profession and which means that the inspiration or meaning of profession is different from other groups (Abbott 1998; Ferlie et al. 2005). A point can be raised that the concept of profession may be vague among different groups in the same industry. Consequently, in different contexts, professional work and behaviours may depend on how group members interpret particular discourses and inform discretion.

Other perspectives of professional identity, Ibarra (1999) argues that people adapt to new professional identity by testing with images what the professional’s workers want their clients to see them. The author highlights that image play a role to progress a new professional with their present competences and their self-identification, and then it influence to work attitude and behavior by the impression of others in their job role. Further he point outs that professional service workers are tend to harmonize with image of their professional job. Professional service workers are more likely to construct a new professional identity because the demonstrated image is a focal role toward their performance.

3.5. The role of social identity theory and social category to develop self-identity

As we discussed the above, like the professional identity, image and self-identification are interacted each other, we consider the relationship with their team and group members can contribute the process of self-identification. The centrality of the social identity to the self-concept and a normative structure will emerge to regulate and maintain these conceptions. Tajfel (1981) argues, “Social identity is the element of the individual’s self-concept which develops from their knowledge significance of that membership” (p. 225). The equal route of social construction and relationship are involved in developing both organizational culture and self-identity. Identification is susceptible from in-group and out-group to change and incoherence (Gioia 1998). Social Identity Theory literature also highlighted the role of group dynamic towards the process of identification construction. Tajfel (1982) adds that: “In order to achieve the stage of ‘identification,’ two components are necessary… a cognitive one, in the sense of awareness is related to some value connotations (p.2)”. The cognitive element reflects the sensitivity and awareness of diverse collective categories and the self one another. To support it, Mills et al. (2005) assert that individual is more likely to define their identities and influence identification with groups such as a group’s homogeneity.
It is pointed out that the concept of social/role identification may provide psychological connection between the individual value and social categories’ standards. Social identity implies a collective individuals’ sense of uniqueness, which are adopted collectively and individually. In the light of Social Identity Theory (SIT), Ashforth and Mael (1989) argue that people tend to define themselves with social category. The authors represent two importance of social identity for self-identification: the first, the social environment influence to individuals to identify, secondly, individual also locate in the group and social norm. Furthermore, particularly, the authors focus on self-identification and group category, which is importantly included in social identity because social categories derive people to being a member of group. The connection between socialization and self-identification is strongly tied as individual reflect and response by others and they are interacted each other. Social identity is characterized with integrated roles of individual identification by group membership, group process and relationship with their members. The content of group behaviors makes people think and act cohesively like a member of the group. This interaction behavior is based on the beliefs of group status and stability and legitimacy of distinctiveness from others. Hogg (2005, p.209) points out that “social belief strongly influence the actual behaviors that people are engaged to protect or promote positive social identity, are social constructs”. It happens normally when the dominant group influences subordinate groups’ belief that leads the cooperative actions.

Social identity is importantly related to the development of individual identity. Social identity leads individuals’ self-definition, which derives their understanding of social structure, norms and values. Social group also help people to maintain in-groups’ identity by supporting the self with specific self-category. It is important to note that the collective social categories guide a feature of social identity that encourage people to distinct from others or coherent within their group. In social identity, corporate value is rooted in the coherent ideological trust systems that make sense of their identities through the relations to other people and other groups. It sets a particular form of individual and group based on social action and manner. However, it can be argued that processes of social identity may not only be progressed by group or individual concerns and also organizational culture. Individual is ‘identity workers’ within managerially stimulated discourses and individuals identification is involved by the organizational culture. Organizational norms and culture shape a core value and practices of a domain workgroup, which influences employee’s behavior and performance.
3.6. The influence of organizational culture on social identity

Organizational culture becomes importantly influential factor to allow the groups’ perception and behaviors because group members socially accept identity by individuals. The development of self-identity is a matter of individual choice, but the established identity occur when culture allow them their behavior. The organizational culture unintentionally may affect social identity as the organizational norm or structure influence to their member’s identity. According to Tashakkori (1993), culture encourages people to embrace as the most positive information about them. The self naturally comes to have a group of values and preference.

Schein (1996) emphasizes that organizational culture state as an organization’s sense of self-identities, its goals, its core values, its principal behavior of working and a set of shared statement. The cultural feature, flexibility and adaptability reflect the importance of external knowledge. The organizational culture is defined as “the way we do things around here” (Lundy and Cowling 1996). In a sense, the organizational culture is defined as subconsciously placed beliefs and values to share personnel in an organization. The components of routine behavior, norms, values and feelings can form part of organizational culture (Hellriegel et al. 1998). The organizational culture forms an integral part of the general operation of their professional job and personal identification in an organization.

Furnham and Gunter (1993) point out the functions of organizational culture as internal integration and coordination. Internal integration can be described as the feeling of identity among personnel and commitment to the organization. The function refers to creating a competitive edge, making sense of the environment in terms of acceptable behavior and social system stability. Organizational culture offers a shared system of meanings, which forms the basis of communication and mutual understanding. Organizational culture complements rational managerial tools by playing an indirect role in influencing behaviour to their professional service work. Culture exemplifies the expressive character of organizations through feeling, the meaning behind language and behaviours. An example is the role that organizational culture plays in the mission and goal statements. The patterns of interaction between people, roles and the external environment represent complex environments, which influence behaviour in organizations. Organizational culture helps to set the working environment by members of a social unit and it defined them through social interaction and shared experience. Cooke and Rousseau (1998) assert that culture is formed
through socialization process in an organization. Culture significantly represents people’s behavior from occupation and their profession (Mintzberg 1978; Schein 1996). The works of the professionals through the culture naturally inhibits the knowledge intensive worker’s rights and regulate their action to their performance. It leads employees’ behaviors are more powerfully determined their work through their professionals.

As well as culture facilitate environment to create a certain characteristic group norm and atmosphere to influence people’s perception and behavior, culture contributes to encourage employee’s knowledge production. According to Ciborra and Andreu (2001), production of new knowledge is defined as “a series of transformation, by which standard resource, which are available in open markets (or contained within the organization), are used and combined within the organizational context in order to produce (competence) capabilities (p.74)”. The organization culture can influence individual and group’s behaviors. Management consultant of knowledge production may develop by the relationship with colleagues and security environment. Lau (2004) studies that knowledge creates through identification of individual, groups, and organizational culture as the source with expertise or practice in specific areas that are eager to share their tacit knowledge. For instance, if the culture is with no hierarchical structure, a good communicational culture and trust working environmental with their colleagues, people may feel free to share their knowledge.

Organizational culture is associated with an organization’s sense of identity; it facilitates corporate values and ways of working. View of culture is likely to allow individuals and groups to interconnect and disintegrate their unique characteristic value or norm. The character of culture is likely to assist social group members and shape social identity as well as influence to individual.

3.7. Summary of the chapter

This chapter shows four important areas that relate to the concept of self-identification. The process of identification in knowledge-intensive context with image, professional identity, social identity and culture are incorporated to the way people create their self-identities. We are considered that all the factors are interconnected to the development and regulation of self-identity as well as dis-identification. For the next chapter, we examine empirical findings by interpreting qualitative interviews in order to analysis with the academic reviews.
CHAPTER 4
Case description and Empirical findings

Concerning our empirical materials in association with given methodological frameworks, we begin this chapter by portraying agricultural sector outlook, as a ‘whole’, in both European and Swedish context. The overview of the empirical organization, as a ‘part’ of this whole, is also described. We then point out key aspects of the case findings by means of how employees perform self-identification through many forms of interpretations. We then discuss how interviewees dis-identify with being a consultant. The final part of this chapter is to reflect upon organizational artifacts seen as potential causes of (dis) identification process and patterns of behaviors emerged from the processes of (dis) identification in which individual identities are relatively constructed.

4.1. Agriculture in European Union (EU) context

Agriculture sector has been the foundation of economy and a part of the culture, knowledge foundation, and way of life in every society for centuries. Realizing the importance of agriculture is an important part of economic, social and environment for sustainability. EU considers agriculture “the heartbeat of rural areas”. Agriculture makes a valuable contribution to the socio-economic development of rural areas and full realization of their growth potential. EU aims to safeguard agricultural and rural development in order to assure sustainable growth in the region. Keeping sustainable agriculture means investing in the future, creating new employment possibilities and encouraging rural diversification so the common practices among EU member countries is crucial. Therefore, in 2001 the European Council constructed the guiding principles for the contribution of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) at Göteborg, Sweden. Later in 2003 concerns in respect to "strong economic performance" and "the sustainable use of natural resources" triggered the recently reformed CAP. In the agricultural sector, and in rural areas, the EU is pursuing balanced economic growth and technological improvement, without any harm to the future standard of living and, above all, in a way that is environmentally sustainable. Based on CAP, the gigantic subsidy fund is available for those who work in agriculture and rural development sector across the region.

3 Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/lisbon/index_en.htm
4 Source: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/lisbon/index_en.htm
4.2. Agriculture in Sweden context

Agricultural industry in Sweden is account for approximately 1.1% of GDP (SEK 800.23 Million)\(^5\). There tendency in structural developments in agriculture that led to fewer and larger farms. This change was first seen in 2005 caused by the change in the support system. Number of small-sized holdings has increased over years. The number of people engaged in agriculture is steadily decreasing. Many Swedish farms are very small. This is nowadays considered a critical issue for Swedish agricultural sector. Swedish government attempts to sort out this problem with the national agenda in promoting sustainable development in rural areas i.e. ‘Sweden the new culinary nation.’\(^6\) According to this policy the significance of agricultural sector and rural development becomes of great interest.

In addition to the culinary agenda, Swedish government invetsed a total of SEK 35 billion during 2007-2013\(^7\) into wide ranges of relevant projects which create better conditions for jobs and the envirnoment in strengthening rulral areas. This program provided direct and/or indirect opportunities to support companies and organizations that want to be part of rural area developemnt scheme. This initiative benefits people living and working in rural areas as they are given greater opportunities to run their own businesses which relatively stimulate the project accomplishment.

While the government has invested vast efforts in agricultural development the impact of CAP on member countries makes agricultural industry in Sweden more complicated. Sweden as a EU member country has endeavoured to realize an agricultural policy that promotes competitive production in the principle of sustainability and achievement in higher economic benefits and lower budget cost. While positive consequences are emerged along with this CAP, Swedish agricultural enterprises have to pay more attention on their business future. In-house knowledge seems inadequate; therefore there tendency that they turn to agricultural advisors who can provide them expertise to survive through greater competitive conditions in European market and increase in restriction for environmental concerns.

However, the decline in agricultural industry in Sweden with limitation of local labour and

\(^5\) As of 4\(^{th}\)Q 2009 source: http://www.scb.se/Pages/Product___22922.aspx
\(^6\) The vision of Swedish minister of Agriculture source: http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/11310/a/117765
\(^7\) The responsibilities of Agricultural Ministry source: http://www.sweden.gov.se
arable land regarding increasing in price is restricting the conventional approach to this sector. This calls for advancement in modern technology and efficient management for existing and emerging enterprises. To some extent the consultancy businesses in Swedish agriculture turns out to be in great demand.

4.3. Organizational context

Hushållningsällskapet (HS) is the organization that has a long history of rural development in Sweden. The first Agricultural Societies was established on the island of Gotland in 1791 and local offices were thereafter established all over the country. There are currently twenty local HS with around 800 employees working in county offices nationwide. Many service areas - namely crop production, economic business and management, rural development, food and health, forestry, environment, horticulture, fishery, tourism, and education- are provided in response to clients’ requirements. Rural development is part of the ministerial policy that foster development in Swedish agriculture and that control the following conducts in this sector. HS has primarily contributed to develop rural and agricultural areas; agricultural advisors have been working closely with farmers in developing agriculture related activities. HS successfully maintains a high reputation and a good image of the organization in terms of quality of advisory services among clients. Three main areas of knowledge i.e. rural development, food, and agriculture are interplayed and highlighted through professionally advisory services performed by agricultural advisors.

The study is interested in HS ‘Kristianstad’, the branch located in the southern part of Sweden where broaden agricultural activities are implemented. There are around thirty advisors working in this branch; over half of them are full-time based employees. The business concepts are to provide expertise advices and services to individual farmers and other stakeholders, to carry out field trials with high credibility quality, and to conduct applied research and development in agricultural areas. According to the 2008 annual report, demand in agricultural advice has increased and it tends to be continually growth with this trend according to increase in environmental concerns and complexity of business structure controlled by CAP. As a result the company mainly invested in collaborative projects that enhance advancement of the technology and knowledge of agricultural development. The urgency in improvement of the way agricultural enterprise runs their farms in term of technical aspect requires people with specialized skills such as crop
production or water management while business integration is relatively required to enhance economic values for local businesses.

With wide ranges of professional services and accessibilities, HS Kristianstad is able to provide their clients specialization in the integration of agricultural system. It becomes a major player of rural development in the region. To sustain this role, human capital and individual skill are vital. HS people who work as advisors or specialists construct typical characteristics incorporated with collective values as ‘agricultural people’ and assure the stability of excellence in their work performance. The question relies on ‘how these advisors develop conception of self and link it to their performance at work’; the following empirical findings demonstrate of organizational realities regarding (dis) identification.

4.4. Identity of ‘an agricultural advisor’ in HS

4.4.1. Self-identification as ‘an agricultural advisor’

To answer the question ‘Who am I?’ we normally reflect upon self-conception in particular context. In the context of the empirical study, most interviewees define themselves as ‘an agricultural advisor’ who provides intellectual services regarding agriculture in many fields, for instance, economic, technical farming or accounting to clients – normally farmers in local areas. To define who they are at work most of advisors extensively discuss certain sets of actions and responsibilities they have to encompass at work:

“I am an advisor who provides clients (farmers) advisory services regarding agricultural economics. I work with them and help them in business planning, financing the farm, and prepare clients in setting their farm to align with EU legislations. I also help them to complete EU forms. My job is to provide suggestions about business development.” [Oak]

“I work as an advisor; I do not only give clients advices about how to run the farm and management. I also give farmers business analysis which farmers can be profitable. One big party is the financial issues. Look up on the possibilities to give the better advice to grow the payback. Sometimes we are asked questions and have to be expertise for them.” [Willow]

It is observed that there attempts in explanations with the expression as ‘professional in agricultural practices’ by these advisors. The educational background specialized in agriculture from top universities in Sweden underscore the professional status and this status also guides them to define how to perform their work professionally:
“I got the Master of Science in agriculture from Uppsala University specializing in plant product. I worked here for 25 years and provide farmers advices in plant productions.” [Spruce]

“I am an economic advisor for financial, marketing and EU substituted application. I studied master in Business administration and economic. The course is related to agriculture.” [Spices]

“We are recruiting people from the agriculture university then they have got a good background in agriculture (MS.C.), and we have contacted university, we take references knowledge test, personality test, so that you can arrange people profiles.” [CEO]

Specific expertise that they possess enhance the view of self as ‘an advisor’ who need to maintain capabilities in these filed so as to provide clients acceptable services or even improvement of services fulfilled by further education or training.

“Good advisors have knowledge. The person who can feel for farmer’s need and he/she can help them for more than money. He/she must be interested in the agriculture and culture of people. We have economical studies and we have to know more about it. You need to know the field how to manage it.” [Willow]

“I have to be at my top performance all the time. I have to believe that I am the best advisor and I can provide the best solution for my clients. My self-esteem relies on the belief that I always on the top performance. If I realize that I need to know more (from clients, or colleagues), it is my desire in pursuing further training or learning.” [Pine]

Individuals are able to construct their professional identity during career development and interactions with other colleagues in the same group classification. With this step they are also able to reinforce this status with the interaction with clients and how they understand clients reflects the way they position themselves throughout advisor-client relationship:

“I think they should listen to clients and understand what they really need. You should put yourself into their situations and be honest with them. These are really important things the advisors should have as we are supposed to help our clients.” [Spruce]
“Farmers expect me to speak that we are experts. I am expected to be a good. The client and advisor situation is clear that advisor is to help the clients.” [Herbs]

Interestingly, one thing they have in common is that most of them have personal background or personal interests that rely heavily on agriculture. In this sense, personal identity embedded through the link of agricultural spirit reinforces group classification as ‘agricultural people’. Therefore working as an advisor allows them to remain this sense of self and tighten relationship among colleagues whose values emerged from agricultural implantation. During the interview all advisors relate themselves closely to Swedish agricultural sector and countryside. Joyful and delightful expressions could be seen every time they mentioned about being part of this sector:

“Another motivation is my family background, which is in agriculture, and I also have the farm on my own. This might be the key reason that makes me decided to keep my career in this sector.” [Pine]

“I am grown up in the agricultural environment. Most my relatives are farmers and my father is a science teacher at Agriculture University in Sweden. It is influential to study and working agriculture. I wanted to involve somewhere agriculture when I was young. I like agriculture, people and values.” [Herbs]

“I get to familiar with agriculture since I was young. My Grandfather has a farm business so it is my dream working in the farm. He was the client of this organization too. Since I was young I wanted to be a farmer…. I like my clients too; they are farmers and hey are nice people.” [Spruce]

Identification of self among advisors of HS occurs easily with slightly organizational influence. It is noted that all advisors agreed to embrace particular identities such as intellectual person, high self-discipline, agricultural people, as they don’t have to distance themselves from it. In contrary, the attractiveness of work identification makes it easier for them to build up self-esteem and sense of comfort in their job. Long working hours and/or proactive learning behaviour reinforce the legitimacy of ‘the great advisor’ as well as ‘the great agricultural people’.
4.4.2. Dis-identification as ‘a consultant’

While most of informants see themselves (and prefer to be acknowledged as) as ‘an agricultural advisor’, they were trying to dis-identify with being ‘a consultant’ as well. They dis-identify with being a consultant due to many reasons; some of them don’t want to be perceived as greedy persons who only think about money:

“I put my self into work a lot, not much distance between my job and my life. I do care about their business and financial condition. ‘I feel not so good when I have to send them the bill for my services with a lot of money’. It is a little difficult for me.” [Rose]

When asked why charging money made her felt bad about it, Rose has some difficulties to talk about it and explained that due to the close relationship with clients and information about their financial condition she doesn’t want to be one who causes them too much trouble with too much fee. Some advisors explained in the way that - being a consultant is just for work but what they really are is an advisor who does more than consultancy work. Image of a consultant is all about charging money; he also refers about providing ‘help’ to clients that make them different or even better than just a typical consultant:

“I am working as a consultant but I am an advisor. I think they call me an advisor. ‘Advisor’ is the appropriated word for the job. Advisor is more than that. The farmers’ way of thinking as a consultant is not very a positive word. I do not see or call myself as a consultant because the farmers need advice and need our help. I guess the farmers think that consultant is to charge them thousands for an hour and they think the image of consultant is for money than helps.” [Spices]

“I am an advisor working as a consultant […] I couldn’t be only a consultant as clients rely on my expertise. Charging them money is not only thing we have to do for our clients.” [Spruce]

The CEO also mentioned that he put some efforts to encourage them to be a consultant by introducing this organizational discourse - ‘consultant’ in order to make them thinking more businesslike on their job:

“I want to stress it a little bit more, not just for these people but also the focus of the organization as we do the business as well. It might take sometimes to change this but we
have to do something. I also stress this consultant concept in the regular meeting and put it in the business plan as objectives like more customers, more efficiency.” [CEO]

At some points they want to dis-identify as a consultant because they think who they really are is more than just a consultant by means of quality of services, intellectual competence in their expertise and their attitudes towards client-advisor relationship which base on trust and respect:

“\text{I always put what clients want on top priority. However, there are agreement on the advisory work which is when provided all possible advices, clients are ones who make all decisions. We have to respect this point.”} [Pine]

“\text{Clients have expectation to sort the problems out. If I cannot deliver the expectation, they will leave me. So, the difficulties can be how to speak at the same level and build the trusty between clients and me.”} [Herbs]

In consideration of knowledge orientation, some advisors who identified themselves as a consultant claimed that it is because being advisor means to something more knowledgeable:

“\text{I am a consultant. They call me an advisor. For me, the meaning of advisor is to know more about it […] maybe I want to be an advisor. But I do not want because I have to push myself to do more about my knowledge at work. It would be nightmare.”} [Tulip]

When HS people dis-identify with being a consultant they seemed to be aware of what they actually are and stressed out through the process of (dis) identification. Causes and patterns of working behaviors emerged from these processes will be discussed in the following section.

\textbf{4.5. Causes of (dis) identification process and Patterns of behaviors emerged from the processes of (dis) identification}

According to identification/dis-identification narrations and practices at HS depicted in the previous section, we now bridge them to relative social artifacts within HS. The synergy of these elements in respect to (dis) identification is not linear progression. Rather, they are interconnected in contributing the processes of self-conception. On the one hand it causes the process of (dis) identification. On the other hand, we can perceive it as a
part of patterns of behaviors emerged from this process. The intrinsic motivation, for instance, can be seen as the major element that lead people to distinct themselves from others and embrace the dominating identities while it is possibly considered as the pattern of motivation that all advisor have in common in that through (dis) identification individual will perceive particular motive as one essence of self identities and act in response to it.

In this sense distinctiveness between causes and effects is not crucial. The fact that these social elements are interplayed to complete the loop of (dis) identification in HS should rather be underscored and this fact will be taken into account when discussing the following parts.

4.5.1. Intrinsic motivation, the contribution to identity construction

1) Self-development at work- a culture of knowledge building

There is no career path in HS due to the flat structure located in the boarder line of public and businesslike organization. Thus, the motivation for work among advisors is not about to be promoted to the higher-level position like normal consultancy firms where the positions like consultant, manager, or partner are designated. Instead, the career achievement is to rely on the fact that they can develop expertise through the flexibility of advisory services. One of our informants is a new recruited advisor but he can manage to continue doing master thesis and to remain his employee status - ‘Currently I am doing for a master thesis. It is more personal things…I felt that I need to expend knowledge for my career. It is more relevant to global economic environment.’[Herbs] He is allowed to finish this study initiated by his own interest so that he could apply new knowledge to enhance his expertise in livestock and meat industry. Herbs can also foresee this as his self-development and career building:

“I feel like home. They emphasize on producing our knowledge. I remember that they offer me to carry on studying master thesis when I had a job interview. I think this company invests for knowledge production rather than only making profits because we believe that money come later. So, this company focuses on each individual’s value in terms of different knowledge in different areas.” [Herbs]

Management intentionally underlines the significance of self-development among advisors, and considers it the organizational prime:
“At the same time our advisors can manage to work in their own way in order to improve their performance or have some special interest in something such as R&D project. For example, there is one lady in farming advisor is taking PhD course in agriculture within the company together with the university. This will give payback sort of in job performance.”
[CEO]

2) More passionate with ‘my work’

Most of interviewees express the passion in their jobs since they can incorporate their personal interest into what they are doing at work. The sense of agricultural people is inherited into their life through family, relatives, and childhood; therefore, being in this society of profession, they can maintain personal preferences through lived experience at work. One senior interviewee says that:

“I prefer to work for a small-scale company where I can strengthen and follow up its development. I think this is not just my work but also my personal interest. When they asked me to get back here to work for them I told them that ‘I don’t want to work for you, I want to work with you’…I am not working for just money; this job provides me more than that.” [Pine]

“It is my personal interest, I am happy when I see plant come out or grow; it’s probably hard to explain this joys in words. I think it is in my blood” [Spruce]

Many advisors love the fact that their work is always challenging and exciting. We thus observe that they seem very proud and pleasant when talking about work and how exciting going to work everyday. They response with smile and willing to elaborate further:

“I think it’s never being boring when you meet different people. Some people you meet many times and get close to them. Some of them you met once but they all are different.” [Rose]

“Everyday is not the same things to do. Everyday is something new. One of thing is that I have a lot freedom and can learn a lot. It is good to get up and go to work everyday.” [Tulip]
4.5.2. Doing the good things for the good reasons

1) Being a part of Swedish agricultural development

In the long history of the organization spirit of Swedish agriculture have been implanted over years. People who work for this organization somehow believe that they are member of the society that encourages development of rural areas. The shared belief relies heavily on the notion of ‘independence’ and ‘membership’ organization. The independence aspect affirms its critical value in sustainable development for countryside with no political or business agenda while membership structure highlights distinctiveness of this workplace. Employees can be members here according to either working status or farming activities. One advisor is elected as the board member.

This value allows them to build strong ties among colleagues who share the same task as well as trustworthy relations with clients whose business success signify the good things in account for the motives of this job:

“Now the school project that aim to produce agricultural students is in progress. This school will make it much easier for HS to recruit young generations who fit with organizational criteria. In particular the belief in sustainable agriculture and rural development will enable them to work under HS culture and understand the value of the organization embedded in agriculture development.” [Oak]

“Most of colleagues are not just doing their job. Because they are really interested in agriculture areas and they like to help farmers. It makes me happy to work here.” [Willow]

The value of the organization highlights the elite identity for all employees and they can interpret as the good reason to be part of this workplace:

“Here it is ‘by education, rewards and career work to improve the countryside.’ Everyone working here is very natural. We do not have to discuss. Perhaps only new employees are not clear about what we supposed to do. But most of advisor came from countryside. So we are involved ourselves with the knowledge, experiences and agricultural background. We were not forced into that. It is naturally clear for me.” [Willow]
4.5.3. Uniqueness of HS corporate culture – ‘Feel more comfortable at work’

1) Culture of membership interactions: strong ties to colleagues and clients

Relationships in HS seem very crucial. These advisors explained that their relationship with colleague is one of many reasons they maintain this career. Based on sharing and help, advisors are bound together through daily work. Many of them mentioned that they could trust their colleagues for work; all of interviewees point out that there is no competitive feeling among them:

“Relationship among colleagues is another reason that makes me love this job. There is no competitive atmosphere, no political pressure; everyone is working with respect to others.” [Oak]

“There are no such things like competitive atmosphere in HS. There might be personal challenges among colleagues for example about forecasting interest rate, or economic figure forecast, but it all for friendship at work. At HS it is more complement rather than competitive. There is no difficulty involve with colleagues at all. I am delighted to say that all colleagues always help each other in improving or developing their knowledge and skills.” [Pine]

“If you are a good advisor you can open your own business and bring your clients with you but you don’t have your colleagues like you have got them here. The main reason I work is because of colleagues because we can share the knowledge with those who passionate in the same thing.” [Willow]

When they have problems or difficulties with work, colleagues, especially senior colleagues are ones who they normally contact or consult for help. Spruce mentioned, “First of all, you have good colleagues so go ask them, they can help you somehow.” Most of them also supported the fact that how their work is dependent on colleagues and how much they can help him as well as how much he can help them. “The boss does not know how to guide it in my job… But, we have to discuss with colleagues what they need or what we need to develop. I do not know what I need to do unless we talk with my colleagues. I trust them on that.” Palm said.

Based on the principle of give-and-take within HS professional community, people working here can assure their accessibility to help from colleagues. “We do not have to know by ourselves. We help each other. It is comfortable to work here with colleagues as
we help each other. There is no competition.” Tulip added.

They further described that the good relationship are created through regular socialization at work and after work. In the membership context, HS encourages many social events, which allow employees to participate and discuss informally. The office space is arranged for friendly atmosphere where learning and sharing occur. Many advisors prefer discussing work at Swedish traditional break time – FIKA since they can meet their colleagues and exchange work ideas or clients information. During the interview scheduling process, one interviewee avoided to set meeting time that overlaps with FIKA hour so that he can join this regular event at work. Many of them indicated that FIKA is enhancing work quality:

“Daily talk over morning coffee is tradition here; we will be able to talk about our project problems or clients problems that they struggle and other colleagues might be able to help or other information regarding to their job will be disseminated. I feel that this ‘FIKA’ allows us to learn about our colleagues, to practice socialization, to build relationship, and to obtain new knowledge everyday. I like it” [Oak]

The advisor-clients relationship is principally built up on ‘trust’ and ‘respect’. Due to the main focus of HS on small-size farming enterprise, client relationship rely mostly on individual basis or what they term ‘peer-to-peer relationship’. Most of advisors maintain long-term relationship with their clients. In particular, those advisors who have been working here more than 10 years consider their clients as friends or families. One senior advisor says “When I first started working here, I had to take all clients from the consultant who quitted the job to run his own farm. There were fifty five clients at that time and some of which are still my clients or their children became my clients” said Spruce.

They highlighted that ‘trust and respect’ are very important to maintain healthy relationship between advisors and clients. Although the main role is to help or to give advices advisors have to treat them with respects interpreted through professional discourses:

“We are looking at the farmers, as they are the farming company. They not own this land only for business; they are professionals, so we want to support the professionals. Our main customer group is the professional farmers.” [CEO]
Honesty is often mentioned during the interview regarding advisor-clients relationship. Even the young advisor who has been working here for 3 years supports that:

“I have to be honest. For example, if I don’t know anything, I have to tell my clients and other colleagues and I do normally check out and find out answers later. I think it does not make me a bad advisor. It is more about building the trust between clients and advisors. So, trust issue is the most important in the relationship between clients and advisors in our organization.” [Spices]

Embodied with the nature of agricultural people, advisors keep building their relationship with clients in the very informal ways such as meeting over kitchen table or working together on clients’ farm. By doing this, they not only built better understanding with clients’ real situation and also eased the trust building with 24 hrs reachable norms. This make them feel more comfortable at work. They added:

“I have to learn to get to know them and talk to them and to build up personal relationship over the kitchen table. I normally go to their farm; they are also invited to my place for the project meeting.” [Oak]

“I have to be frank. I sometimes go to their kitchen with my computer drinking coffee and working together there. And sometime they talk with you about private life too. I have a good relationship with the clients, which I think it is very important for this job. I keep their secret, so they can feel free to open to me.” [Rose]

As advisors, interviewees take close relationship with clients into account and prioritize clients’ benefits just as their own until somehow this concern affects the way they manage to work with advisory fee. The CEO clarified that as advisors having close relationship with clients they may not be able to bill clients with big amount of money. The consultant discourse, however, is aimed to remind HS advisors to adjust the length of hours they work for their clients:

“We have to earn enough money to develop this sector. Thus, sometimes you need to think as a consultant for this reason as well. Of course you are advisor you cannot charge people a lot of money […] it is the matter of balance between being professional and keeping business in place. They cannot send the big amount bill to customer, so they may negotiate about time of work, how they can change vs. how much they actually work for their clients.” [CEO]
2) Friendly climate with transparency, trusty and open communication

During the interview we note that the reason why honesty and trust are principles of this organization is that the corporate culture is strongly constructed in accordance with trust-based relationship. Transparency in HS is vital; it manifests in the friendly climate through open communication and the absence of hierarchy. Interviewees in general perceive HS as a very flat and autonomous organization; some said that in addition to agricultural matters HS is full of connection and intensive socialization. Herbs, who has experiences in the normal consultancy company, indicated, “The culture is different from the previous office. I can feel more comfortable. Everyone is welcomed. I feel like home.” Another consultant, Spruce, supported this point that “It’s very ‘flat’, no hierarchy that makes the gap between boss and employees smaller. Here you have freedom to do your job.” At HS, there is an intention from management to maintain this climate by emphasizing on open communication and sharing:

“It is the matter of give and take. If I give customer today, I may get customers from you tomorrow– just like that. They can feel secured with that; there is no problem at all I mean my colleague is my worst competitor. I think it is because of the organizational culture through which people are formed a bit; we have very open climate here with lots of transparency. We are always communicated, and we try to keep this transparency, open climate to build individual confidence and commitment. And of course we are not company and not public kind of ‘foundation’; we are so independent so we are not aiming for profit maximization. This allows us to create the friendly climate very easily.” [CEO]

In this sense, it is the corporate culture that evolves ‘de-individualization’ that makes it possible for advisors in HS to relate self-concept in terms of social commitment and group membership. Friendly climate and open communications allow them to shorten space between individual project and colleagues so social classification strongly influences the construction of self among these advisors. Such social identities they are embracing encourage them performing defensive reaction such as dis-identification against anything that distance from it.

3) No desire for promotion, happiness associated with getting better within the field of expertise

More knowledge being acquired justifies the status of a good advisor. Rather than thinking of being promoted, many advisors keen to learn more and extend new fields of
expertise or develop the breadth and the depth of their specialty. Dis-identification with being a consultant enlightens the idea of being more than ones working for money. Specializations of knowledge they can provide to clients become their main interest. In association with the corporate focus in knowledge and human capital, interviewees narrated that they see themselves in the future with either more intellectual in theirs fields or more innovative in other services. Some even mentioned that they don’t want to pursue higher position just to be better in what they do:

“I don’t know. But, I have never dream to be in senior position like CEO or something like that, what I want is to be better on what I have done these days. I think I may be developing new filed to advise around economic for farming. I want to improve my self and develop new knowledge to provide new services for clients. I don’t think I will be in Sven position.” [Rose]

Mostly, we could observe during the interviews that for young advisors the career goal is around their field of expertise:

“In a short term, I want to develop or create a model for consultant can use to manage farmers. It is kind of decision-making model to give a good advice for farmers.” [Herbs]

“I need to learn more then it help me to work effectively. I can work the less time if I know better on my job.” [Spices]

It is interesting that for some senior advisors the goal is to see more advancement in agricultural advisory services not to be promoted in higher position, and to work less:

“For me quality is more important than quantity. High quality of advising to the clients is an important for the clients. Keeping advisor is main issue of the company to develop and keep human capital. It is important to have a right person. My personal goal is to work a little less. I think in 10 years time, it is better to work less.” [Willow]
4.6. Summary of the chapter

In this chapter we depict critical aspects of agricultural sector in European and Swedish context in order to understand significance of the agriculture consultancy business in Sweden. Besides, we discuss the reason why becoming ‘a good advisor’ through identity work is vital for those who involved in the empirical organization. Drawing upon a findings breakdown - 1) identification of ‘an agricultural advisor’, 2) dis-identification with being ‘a consultant’, and 3) causes and patterns of working behaviors related to the processes of (dis) identification, we are able to bridge these substantial dimensions to theoretical frameworks as well as academic literatures given in chapter 3 in favorable to the discussion in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5

Case Analysis

In this chapter, we analyze causes of (dis)identification process and patterns of behaviors emerged from the processes of (dis)identification by incorporating literatures reviews in chapter three and empirical findings in chapter four. Firstly, we analyze the problematic issue that evokes disidentification among HS advisors through organizational discourse. We then reflect on internal and external factors of dis-identification by empirical evidences of HS advisors and interpret it in the relations to theoretical frameworks of image of consultant, professional identity, social identity theory, and organizational culture. We remark the importance of HS social identity of which two social categories: agricultural people and trust-based relationship. These causes are interplayed to influence patterns of working behaviors emerged from the processes of (dis)identification. Those behaviors are concluded in the last section.

5.1. Introducing a new value of HS people - ‘a consultant’ – identity regulation through managerial discourse

HS has been historically understood as independent organization where characteristics such as flat, adhocracy, and autonomy are continuously promoted through decentralization. These days those characteristics have been remained and autonomy in business operation challenge HS local offices. For over 100 years, the strong values of genuine people who serve agricultural development have been complemented. It has influenced HS culture as well as constructed specific organizational identities. Recently, changes in management focus regarding business perspectives have triggered some senses of dis-identification among organizational members. With this focus, top management has introduced some forms of managerial discourse – ‘a consultant’ that signal desirable changes in work practices among agricultural advisors. Kärreman and Alvesson (2004) mention in their study that firms are potentially framed through structural control system with identification processes; in our case, the meaning of ‘a consultant’ has been employed in order to shape and promote businesslike perspective. To support this, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) assert the significant role of managerial discourses that are underpinned through the concept of work ideologies. Here, through communications, social activities such as formal meetings the notion of consultant that represents some degree of work ideology is intentionally highlighted. As the identity regulation through discourse
require interpretative activities, management failure in replacing particular discourses is possible. In some cases the term that go against exiting beliefs and values might evolve some forms of resistance or cynical behaviour of employees. Employee misunderstanding toward relevant subjects that disregard their values and beliefs might cause struggling in self-identities (Sveningsson & Larsson 2006). Drawing on our empirical materials, it is noted that with this ‘consultant’ notion through interpretive activities HS employees feel that they are forced to become someone they are not; therefore they start to dis-identify with that term. The underlying causes and effects of these processes are to be explored in the following section.

5.2. The impact of ‘image of consultant’ to the process of dis-identification

The image becomes crucial in the absence of the existence of tangible qualities available for inspection; it also becomes vital as a substitute for reliable indicators of the skills and knowledge of personnel (Alvesson 2004, p.72). Image is something affected by the intentions of particular actors (e.g. a company), for whom the image is singled out as a particular concept and target for instrumental action (Alvesson 2004, p.71). Image building is an interactive process; hence, in our case, image is one of main reasons for the process of dis-identification. We argue the negative image of consultant as the cause of dis-identification within two folds: the negative aspects perceived by out-group and the process of image construction.

Reflecting upon the empirical evidences, HS advisors’ expression, “we are advisor and working as consultant” [Spruces, Spices], it can be interpreted that employees dis-identify themselves as a consultant. We argue that this could be derived from the negative aspect of the image of consultant. While the consultant is perceived as an expert and problem-solver, other group of people think that consultants are more likely related to profitability (Kitay & Wright 2007). It is also negatively recognized as the lack of deeper knowledge, overpayment and an immorality of greedy manner (Alvesson & Johansson 2003). Based on dis-identification research of Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2003), the process of dis-identification can be observed when individual start to dis-identify him/herself from being something that he/she perceive negatively. According to relevant literatures, we extend how the advisors of HS dis-identify as a consultant through out-group’s perception. HS advisors perceive negative image of consultant especially about money-related issues; one advisor emphasize, “I guess the farmers think that consultant is to charge them thousands
for an hour and they think the image of consultant is for money than helps.” [Spices] while Rose also mentions that she feels not so good when it comes to the matter of billing her clients. Here, they want to distance from the negative image of consultant and do not want be impressed as same as other consultants.

Another negative image of the consultant that drive HS advisors to dis-identify with being a consultant relate to the fact that as image-sensitive player, consultants more focus on a means to deceive clients for reliability and/or impression. Alvesson (2004, p.74-82) regards significance of image for PSFs workers, “the actual beliefs and meanings of employees, affected by normative control, are expressed and influenced by an ambition to shape perceptions of WHAT can be expected from the company and its employees. People in PSFs also need to act as representatives and present a good face, so issues of appearance rather than impression of intellectual ability gain more attention”. In contrary, for our interviewees, impression of what they can offer to clients in terms of expertise is first priority rather than focusing on appearance. They underscore how they can manage to meet client’s expectation and perception or ‘image’ comes later. We acknowledge that the reason why HS advisors want to be distinctive is supported by the concerns of Alvesson (2004) about the gap between clients’ expectation and reality that can lead to negative assessment. In order to do that, HS advisors tend to concentrate on how to develop their expertise at the same time how to build trust among their clients as they think trust is crucial for understand what client’s needs. Spices highlighted the trust issue that, “trust issue is the most important in the relationship between clients and advisors in our organization.”

Unlike normal consultants in others industries, the consultants in agriculture work in person-to-person basis rather than person-to-company. It means advisor-client relationship can be created in very informal way, and by doing this they not only facilitate building of trust and respects with their clients but also understand clients’ needs based on real situation. As HS advisors understand what farmers need and how they trust them, interviewees justified that they have to put emphasis on quality services and trustworthy concerns for clients. Spruce said, “I think they should listen to clients and understand what they really need. You should put yourself into their situations and be honest with them. These are really important things the advisors should have as we are supposed to help our clients”. Rose, the advisor who works with financial issues, confirmed, “I have to be frank… good relationship with clients is very important for this job. I keep their secret, so
they can feel free to open to me”. In terms of expectation Herbs indicated, “I am expected to be a good. The client and advisor situation is clear that advisor is to help the clients. They have expectation to sort the problems out. If I cannot deliver the expectation, they will leave me.” What Pine mentioned in the interview also highlights their attitude upon expectation, “I always put what clients want on top priority.”

HS advisors thereby dis-identify with being a consultant because they believe that clients perceive their image through what they work for them not through how they look or represent. We can relate this issue to the concept of professional image. The HS professional image their clients perceive with reliable, trustworthy, and caring is constructed based on what interviewees actually do in work. It shows that the image perceived by related out-groups (clients) strongly influence their work behaviours and actions. It also shapes uniqueness of professional identity of HS advisors. Attitudes toward this professional image lead them to strongly concern about what their competence based on their specialty. Thus, they focus on meeting their client’s expectation rather than pay attention to appearance or creditability issues. For advisors of HS, maintaining these images is important to satisfy clients’ expectation in the way they perform their work professionally. The consequent behaviour resulted by their attitude toward the negative image of consultant is to be further discussed in the last section.

5.3. The influences of social identity to development of dis-identification

HS people dis-identify from a managerial discourse i.e. ‘a consultant’, not from their colleagues or in-group. We argue that the social identity has impact on the process of dis-identification with being a consultant at the same time it confirm self-identification with being an agricultural advisor. It is therefore an applicable issue how dis-identification is developed by linking the concept of social identity to Alvesson and Willmott’s identity regulation model (see Figure 1). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) emphasize that the identity regulation such as organizational structure, promotion or reward system etc. has impact on the development of self-identity through identity work. As individuals are living in a group, it is difficult to separate the dynamics of identity construction from the influence of social identity. In this research, the dis-identification in HS case is accepted by workgroup; this implies the crucial role of social identity in the process of identity construction meanwhile it also influences the synergy of dis-identification. HS advisors have strong social ties with
their colleagues. In account for this fact, we approach how the sense of united identity is constituted.

HS people have sense of themselves as group members, which is a crucial driver for securing group identity and for possibility to develop dis-identification against any terms that might downplay it. Wilder (1977) highlights the functional dimension of group relationship leading a source of social information and validation. It can be argued that groups influence individual identification through collectively shared and defined norms, knowledge and identity within in-group. The HS in-group’s identities are contained that group members is distinctive from the relevant out-groups (other consultant company’s group). All advisors in HS have a good relationship with colleagues so that group identities are gradually tighten throughout daily work. In connection to the impact of social identity, we refer the dis-identification in HS as a result of ‘a mental cage of subjectivity’ (Kärrenman & Alvesson 2004: pp. 171-2); HS employees’ identities are strongly shaped through a subjective terminology as ‘advisor’.

Social identities in HS are sensitively united and created in according to the characteristics of the group. Even if, a new consultant present differently from in-group, the new employees gradually shift to the common self of what signal the feature of the group.
Reicher (2001) stresses that in spite of identity are to help individual define and place self through organizational structure, the sense of individual engages shared perspectives. For HS, social identity interacts with the identity construction and influences the loop of identity regulation, identity work and self-identity.

From argued above, the process of dis-identification in HS occurs because individuals live within in-group and the in-group affirm the rationality of dis-identification. To support this point Swann et al. (2003) contend that individuals bring with them their values to the network and corporate to social values in order to act in similar ways. In other word, HS advisors cannot be dis-identified with being a consultant without support from their colleagues. Social identity powerfully control HS people’s identity. It shows that HS social identity engages power relations; it provides HS advisors abilities to negotiate their value and the way to conform the managerial discourse as ‘a consultant’ Harmonization between individual self and social identity is therefore significant, as individuals tend to modify to meet the community acceptation. In this sense, dis-identification with being a consultant not only securing sense of self as an advisor but also strengthen group acceptation from other HS people. Our search suggests that social identity is the main elements of the process of identification in HS. The norms and in-groups behaviours lead advisor’s determinations, thoughts and actions.

The study of Kärrenman and Spicer (2009) extend a social identity by relating collective constructions with social category to the process of dis-identification. We see that HS advisor’s group identites and the group-categorization is considered as a crucial primary driver of the process of dis-identification. Ashforth and Mael(1989) claim that self-identification and group category is importantly included in social identity because social categories help people make sense of being a member of group. In highlighting the significant role of social identity, we then continue to clarify further the categorization of social identity in HS.

5.3.1. Categories of social identity in HS

*Category I:* “Agricultural people” and “agricultural professionalism”

The normative thoughts and actions are informed from both self identification and identification referred to the group. Social identity is formed through self-categorization
within social category (Turner 1982, 1985). The strong relationship contributes their behaviour and perception to modify their identity in a group. The sociology scholar, Giddens (1991, p.18), asserts that “mechanism of self-identity is shaped and it also shapes the institutions of modernity. The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action”. In other words, self-identity is not only formed from group, the self also contribute to social identity formulation.

For group members, the social identity provides reflective construction in which each individual can define his/her identity. HS in-group members have uniqueness of group norm, which they describe themselves “we are agricultural people” and each of them like agricultural environment, culture and people living in this social world. The most important for them is that no matter what they do in this workplace they are engaged to the spirit of agriculture. For them, it is not about work experience in HS, it is about the enthusiasm on working in agriculture areas. To support this point, we refer to this quote, “I feel so good when I help farmers in field” and “I just love it and I think it is in my blood” [Spruce]. It shows that advisors of HS are well aware of the agricultural culture and are passionate to be an agricultural service person. This also relate to their background rooted in the spirit of agriculture. Even though some researchers (Kitay & Wright 2007) stress that the good consultants are required as person with expertise and also with the experience to know when and how to apply it, HS advisors highlight a uniqueness of their job is not only about experience and expertise, it includes the inspiration of the agricultural development. This constructs the category of ‘agricultural people’; however, this category consists of both spiritual aspect and professional knowledge in agriculture.

In terms of professionalism, HS people have maintained with knowledge and expertise that legitimate their professional identity. They hold certain types of specific knowledge and accessibilities to professional communities in agriculture. Referring to Ashforth and Mael (1989) social identification affects the outcomes associated with group formation and positive evaluations of the group; it could be expected that identification would be regarded to loyalty to, and pride in the group and its activities. We can incorporate this social identification concept to professionalism when reflecting on formulation of agricultural professional mindset in HS. Becker and Carper (1956) assert that the professional identity plays a symbolic connection role. It argues that individuals’ identity is influenced by well-
defined professional work, which implies the relationship between professional career and the process of self-identity (Kitay & Wright 2007). HS workgroup’ norm is associated with their professional practices. Alvesson (2000, p. 1109) points out that “a strong professional identity may imply more independence of and disloyalty to employers, than is characterised by workers that have no distinct extra-organizational reference group”. With this statement we can extend that this professional identity as ‘agricultural people’ that has been shaped through reference group of HS advisors drive them to dis-identify as a consultant.

We suggest that the social identity of professionalism is very much interconnected to the aspect of self-image as discussed earlier (in 5.2). Kitay and Wright (2007, p.1617) argue that “occupational members construct identities by making use of imagery associated with a range of social roles corresponding to different aspects of work”. Reflecting upon the advisors of HS’s professionalism, the workgroup perceive the image of their workgroup as pride and prestigious, which encourage them to remain professional manners as well as act against the negative sense that might downplay this image.

According to Luhtanen and Crocker (1992), while group shapes individual identities, individuals are conforming the group category. It is portrayed with the intuition based on trust HS advisors maintained as working principles. In the next section, another key social category will be discussed in order to indicate how individual identities validate the group category.

**Category II: Trust-based relationship**

To extend the function of social identity, we highlight the matter of trust in relationship amongst HS advisors. Built through social interaction, trust in HS is a powerful social element that affects individuals work behaviour. Relying on trust-based relationship, they share the knowledge to develop and serve the better service to their clients. Especially, when they cannot solve client’s problem, advisors of HS normally get some help from their colleagues. Most of informants regarded ‘trust’ as significant motives at work once engaged in the interviews. Spruce mentioned, “First of all, you have good colleagues so go ask them, they can help you somehow.” Most of them also support the fact that how their work is dependent on colleagues and how much they can help him as well as how much he
can help them. “We have to discuss with colleagues what they need or what we need to develop. I do not know what I need to do unless we talk with my colleagues. I trust them on that.” Palm said. As a result, our interviewees believe that the shared knowledge is based on trust among the colleagues. The trust-based relationships category reinforces distinctiveness of HS social identity. According Robert et al. (2009), assert that individual’s perception derive how people should act by dominated group of members. Based on the trust category, advisors of HS share knowledge and adopt their values. Advisors of HS dis-identify with being a consultant in order to emphasize their member status.

Similar to image of consultant, HS social identities inspire the process of dis-identification among HS people. We argue that these social categories including ‘agricultural people’ and ‘trust-based relationship’ are positive social identities that shape HS advisors’ individual identities at the same time their own identities are brought into group and reinforce these existential categories (see figure 2.).

![Figure 2. Categories of social identity](image)

**5.4. The role of organizational culture in strengthening HS social identities**

Alvesson and Willmott (2002, p.626) stress that “the reflexive creation of self-identity is assembled out of cultural raw materials: language, symbols, sets of meanings, value […] that are derived from countless numbers of interactions with others and exposure to messages produced and distributed by agencies (schools, mass media), as well as early life experiences and unconscious process”. The group members and individuals define
themselves through the organizational culture by sharing their values and living in a particular roles and rules of category. In HS, culture is formed by non-hierarchical structure, which can make advisors feel free to communicate with their colleagues. It can help to build a good relationship without the boundary. This culture facilitates a strong social tie among the group members. An interesting aspect of social identity at HS is associated with the culture. Cabrera et al. (2008) suggest that a useful way of understanding collective determinants of behaviour is to appeal to the notion of culture. In implicating to our study, we suggest that HS culture guide organizational members to perceive their special and genuine status so that they internalize group’s norm and behaviours. Becker and Carper (1956) also support that individuals identify themselves depend on what they do from their job and the occupation identity in particular context. In-group members of HS are devoted to serve the development of rural areas. This values shape HS’s group identities and these lead HS people to believe they are distinctive from other consultants. For instance, the high level of autonomy culture, no competition environment and the absence of hierarchical structure leave them with no boundary for relationship formation with colleagues, seniors and top management. It shows that culture facilitated construction of social identity.

5.5. The patterns of behaviours related to the process of dis-identification

In order to dis-identify with being a consultant, HS people not only expressed through the way they explain themselves and also how they perform in their career. Dis-identification not affect only imaginary level or is considered as the fantasy (Sveningsson & Larsson 2006) but shape their behaviours at workplace. Many agricultural advisors at HS mentioned “charging a lot of money from clients makes me feel uncomfortable” or “for me money is not everything”. On the one hand, it is noted that what make them feel uncomfortable may be the result of the close relationship with clients as they acknowledge client’s financial condition. They don’t want to be perceived as a person who works for just a lot of money as perceived through the negative image of the consultant recognized as the lack of deeper knowledge, overpayment and an immorality of greedy manner (Alvesson & Johansson 2003). Thus, in order not be seen as a greedy person, HS advisors determine to negotiate reasonable working hours. HS advisors realize that the more hours they have the greater income they can claim as the performance indicator but they choose to maintain self-concept as an advisor who tends to provide effective services with less fee or more reasonable hours.
Influenced by the perception toward the image of a consultant, HS advisors are distancing with being a consultant by putting emphasis on client’s expectation rather than image building. To do that, they consider self-development and ambition of deeper knowledge in their field of expertise the most important in work. For HS advisors, advancement in their specialty is central. This thereby results in the use of professional discourse. To be able to distance themselves from being a consultant, HS advisors try to highlight the claim of being the professional advisor. With the notions of becoming ‘professional’, individual will associate with three main factors: availability of specialized technical knowledge, ability to get voice heard, and the mechanism that control access to the profession (Derkzen & Bock 2007). Technical and specialized knowledge become vital in legitimization of professional in agriculture. All informants in this study demonstrate their determination in knowing more about their field as this can strengthen their competence at work as well as confirm the professional value. Moreover, deeper knowledge acquired signifies distinctiveness of HS advisors. One senior advisor emphasizes that learning is the most important thing for all advisors as they supply agricultural knowledge. Without learning, knowledge could not be produced, and that is, as he said, “the one we should compete with is ourselves, if you are not learning anything each day at your work, you are considered stupid here.” [Pine]

According to Ibara (1999) in the professional community individual tends to adapt their identity over time in order to accommodate role demands and modify role definitions to preserves identity values. Advisors in this study demonstrated this adaptability in terms of professional identity through accommodation of their role demand as ‘an advisor’. Specialized knowledge they are acquiring reinforces the identity value as agricultural professional.

Through dis-identification HS advisors not only pursue their professional identity by being the part of this agricultural group but also affect their feeling. They feel more comfortable at work as there are more relax atmosphere at workplace. Unlike normal consultants with high degree of competition at work, HS people can be more enjoyable with the friendly climate and aim for their best in job performance. They prefer to continue working in the current position with better skill as an agricultural advisor rather than being promoted. This could be regarded as the result of trust-based relationship that underscore the strong tie and pride of being a member of this group of HS advisors. Having realized that dis-identification makes them become a member of HS professional; these advisors according
to Ashford & Meal (1989) are enabled to locate themselves in the realm of the intellectual classification. Hence, their sense of belongingness is strengthened.

5.6. Summary of the chapter

To conclude the study based on previous literature reviews and empirical materials, the causes and the patterns of behaviours related to the process of dis-identification are identified. It is shown that dis-identification among HS advisors are influenced by the attitude toward the negative image of consultant perceived by out-group (their clients). The study shows that the advisors found out that their images their clients have of them is different from what the organization have recently introduced. HS advisors are determined to take into account the image from clients because they believe that the image constructed through matching clients’ expectation is align with their identity. Another important remark on our analysis is that the social identity of HS advisor influenced by strong corporate culture is a critical factor that leads dis-identification with being a consultant. They tempted to dis-identify themselves when it seems to go against existing identities of the group as they have strong social interactions with their colleagues. The concept of professionalization on their work role known as ‘the agricultural people’ and ‘the trust-based relationship’ are two key social categories of HS social identity. Therefore, the advisors of HS dis-identify with being a consultant without feeling any contradiction with their group members. With the processes of dis-identification, number of desirable behaviors regarding working performance, work ambition and knowledge production can be observed.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Identity has become a critical means in contemporary management for such organization where knowledge is vital such as knowledge intensive firms (Alvesson 2002, Robertson & Swan 1998, Starbuck 1992, and Whetton et. al, 1992). In this study we have explored individual (dis) identification in a knowledge intensive organization through two dimensions: the processes of dis-identification and the effects of these processes. In the first dimension we focus on how individual (dis) identify him/herself within agricultural context. In exploring the processes of (dis) identification we have engaged key influential factors i.e. image of consultant, professional identity, and social identity. The second dimension links processes of dis-identification to the effects. As the uniqueness of HS people relies heavily on trust issue it resulted in work practices. Rather than just dis-identify themselves through speaking, HS advisors act upon it by practicing defensive actions related to the processes of dis-identification.

The studied organization is considered knowledge-intensive firm in which identity concept is employed as institutional regulation through values, beliefs and discourses. Hence, the specialization in agricultural consultancy business draws greater attention in securing self-identity among workforces. Throughout the analysis, we have observed the organizational dilemma between the trend of commercialization and human capital focus. This problem triggered some skeptical attitude from HS employees and leads to dis-identification.

We interpret dis-identification in our case as a constructive means to facilitate better work performance of HS advisors. Dis-identification is a part of identification (Sluss & Ashfort 2007), its process makes people to be aware of or discover their existing values or true self compared to others. HS advisors through dis-identification protect their values of agricultural people signified by intellectual concerns and interaction with their clients.

It could be argued that the primary cause of dis-identification in HS is social identity embedded through strong socialization within organization. It is social identity that clarifies HS people the term of references as a member of advisor group (Tajfel 1981; Ashforth & Mael 1989; Gioia 1998; Thye 2005). We indicated that HS social identities include two key social categories: ‘agricultural people’ and ‘trust-based relationship’. The first term,
‘agricultural people’, refers their professional identity incorporated with the genuine mind of people from agricultural background. The latter term refers to the principle of social interaction that based on trust their have with others (both clients and colleagues).

In relation to existential social identities in HS, we claim that the image of consultant play important role in the processes of dis-identification in that its negative aspects urge the sense of self-protection. Influenced by HS social identity, we see that HS advisors perceived the image of consultant negatively in two aspects: overpayment and appearance issues. Thus, they distance themselves from these negative matters that go against their professional values. These values are distinctive from other professional identity. It is inspired by passion of agriculture and ambition in rural development. In addition, it is implied that HS’s social identity is reinforced by the corporate culture including the strong ties with colleagues and clients, friendly climate with transparency, and trust and open communication.

Referring to the second dimension of this study, we conclude that these processes of dis-identification bring about the combined effects that we consider positive for business sustainability, employee commitment, and corporate branding. Dis-identification has resulted in self-development at work, the passion in agricultural field, no desire for further promotion as well as happiness in workplace with non-competitive atmosphere. These social artifacts, on the other hand, can be seen as the cause of dis-identification process.

Extending the studies of dis-identification (Pratt 2000; Elsbach & Bhattachary 2001; Chraim 2002; Kosmala & Herrbach 2006; Costas & Fleming 2009), we underscore the fact that relevant causes- professional identity perceived through image, social identity, and corporate culture-are interplayed to influence the process of dis-identification. It is crucial to be aware of potential factors and how they are related.

Our study highlights specific definitions of professional in account for particular context that derives development of self-identification and strengthens social identity. Investigation of alternative forms of managerial control through professional discourses is thus interesting for future study; moreover, the positive impact of dis-identification in terms of securities of selves at work is another important aspect that worth exploring. In this light, knowledge production is also considerably related.
REFERENCE


