Breaking the Compass

Cultural dynamics in organizational change

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Abstract

Title
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Keywords
Organizational Change and Development, Organizational Culture, Cultural Values, Dynamics of Culture, Reorganization, Resistance to Change

Purpose
From a cultural perspective, understand how employees experience and interpret an organizational change attempt with an involving approach.

Research Question
How do employees experience a change attempt with a participative approach?

Methodology
Following an interpretive approach with in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis. Usage of ethnographic ideas in presentation and analysis of data.

Findings
Employees’ initial excitement about the change is replaced by negativity exhibited in loss of trust, a decrease in productivity, and internal arguments. Existing culture stops having the unifying and direction-providing role it previously had as a consequence of dynamic processes that affect individual sense-making of the change.

Contributions
Our findings suggest that cultural dynamics can be used as a tool for better understanding effects of an organizational change, and how and why employees within the organization experience and interpret the change the way they do.
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1.0 An organizational overhaul

“... I feel like I’ve been in a tumble dryer since 2014 [laughs]”
Sophie, Middle-manager at TheWorldGoods Malls, April 2019

The comment was made in a joking fashion, but her words were sincere. Five years earlier, her company, a global organization developing and managing shopping malls, had started going through changes. First, it was about streamlining processes and trying to get the different regions to feel like they were working for the same company, whether it was in Europe, China, or Russia. Then, in 2017, they were going to completely change their approach to their business. This would involve replacing their product, changing how they worked, how leadership was exercised, and a complete organizational overhaul to boot. Everyone at the company felt that the change was necessary and welcome, as the proposed changes would remedy the biggest problems with their old ways of working, and it would ready the company for the rapidly changing environment following the increasing popularity of e-commerce, which had caused many of their competitors to go bankrupt. The employees liked working for The WorldGoods Malls, but there were some things that they liked less, and they were enthusiastic that management were taking steps to work with those issues.

Many retail stores and shopping malls were experiencing difficulties in the wake of increasing internet consumption (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017; The Guardian, 2018) with CNN estimating that 25 percent of all american shopping malls open in 2017 would be closed in 2022 (Isadore, 2017). This inspired “An entire new way of thinking about shopping malls” at The WorldGoods Malls, and for other actors in the mall-business to innovate, in order to make sure that customers visit the stores owned by tenants at the mall.

The end goal was clear from the start. Instead of viewing their shopping malls as simply shopping malls, they would be thought of as meeting places, or “community centers” and the change was presented as an inclusive co-creation process. The CEO of the company
proclaimed that everyone was welcome to take part in the process, shaping how they would get to “The beautiful future” ahead of them. The employees were energized - finally, things were going to happen!

With a clear road ahead, the company started arranging workshops, deciding how they wanted to work with each other in the future. What did strategy mean to the business? What was sustainability to them? How did they want leadership to work? People were involved, and somewhere between 25-50 percent of the employees in the organization took part in one of the ten groups, discussing different topics that were important to them.

Then, when it came to the design of the organization, it was announced that everyone who would be part of “The new organization” would have a new job and contract, when the change was completed. Those who did not get a new contract would no longer be working at The WorldGoods Malls. Then, the employees were left in the dark. New positions were assigned, contracts were signed, but uncertainty and doubt spread - who would get to keep working, and who would have to go? People with new employment contracts felt like they could not enjoy it and tell their colleagues, as others would end up unemployed. At the same time, people started questioning if the change really had resulted in what was promised from the start. Were they really more agile, and did the people closest to the customer really have the mandate to make the decisions they had to?

In 2019, many employees feel bitter, even those who got renewed employment contracts. They don’t feel like they can trust the organization anymore. Things that made working at The WorldGoods Malls unique has disappeared, and many see the company in a different light than before. Some have chosen to quit, while others are waiting for the dust to settle, hoping that they will find the same joy in their work they felt before.

**What happened?**

The management at The WorldGoods Malls had a clear goal in mind, that would solve many of their problems. They had engagement from their employees, who urgently felt that the
change was necessary. They had help from leading consultancy firms and deeply competent leadership, yet there are outcomes of the change that has hampered their progress, reduced productivity and changed the employees’ perception of the company. How did the excitement and eagerness to move forward with the change become replaced by mistrust and apathy? How did the company, that many people chose to work for very much thanks to its reputation for having people-centric values, lose those values?

On Change

Organizational change has been a topic of interest for the better part of the last century, and has been studied thoroughly by both practitioners and academics. Van De Ven & Poole (1995) divides change in four categories, and out of these four we are, in the scope of this thesis, focusing on the planned, or teleological, change - which seldom goes as planned (Kotter, 1995; Maurer, 1996). Wide fields of study has developed, with a variety of philosophical starting points and different implications. Early literature, exemplarized by Lewin’s ice-cube model, views change as a three-part process with clear, distinct phases, whereas contemporary scholars emphasize a shift toward “development” rather than “change”, suggesting that it is more beneficial to view change (or development) as a more long-term, ongoing process (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). There is no consensus, or even a sense of common agreement, among scholars and practitioners when it comes to how to handle change. However, we can observe that change is ambiguous, unpredictable, and difficult when attempted to handle in a practical sense.

A one-sided debate

Organizational change is a subject which is commonly studied from a leadership perspective, offering advice on how leaders and managers should go about in their attempts to plan and manage organizational change (Kotter, 1995; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008; Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). These studies, mostly normative in nature, often divides change into different categories, creating dichotomies such as Continuous vs. Episodic change, Organizational Change vs. Organizational Development, Diagnostic vs. Dialogic Organizational Development (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017; Weick & Quinn 1999;
Bushe & Marshak, 2009). While some studies, such as dialogic organizational development, has more emphasis on the dialogue and relationship with the employees, there are few that takes the view of the people on the “receiving end” of the change. One of the main reasons that change doesn’t go according to plan, according to traditional change literature (eg. Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008) is Resistance to Change, that the employees of an organization resist the change attempts made by change initiators for different reasons (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). There is a wide range of articles and tips on how to “cope with” resistance, and this patronizing perspective on the employees is cause for concern, as the resistance can be well founded (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017), and more than just child-like complaining. Alvesson (2001) is critical towards the plethora of studies focusing on management and leaders, rather than the members of the organization, and Collins (1998) criticizes the lack of theoretical analysis in popular change management literature, arguing that in order to better understand change, we must to a larger extent take into account perspectives of those outside of the organization’s management. Sörgärde (2006) adds her voice to this critique, calling the foci on how change is led “one-dimensional”, particularly calling out the discourse surrounding the change agent as the sole actor with any sense of agency. These studies call for more descriptive studies of what actually goes on as an organization undergoes a change process; what the people affected feel and how they make sense of their role, both in the change and in the organization in general.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to study an organizational change attempt, where the management team has attempted to involve the employees in the change process, from the perspective of the employees. We want to study what is actually happening in the practice, taking into account the social processes that come into play when the management team attempts to implement a change by involving the employees in it. While we maintain the idea that people interpret the world differently, we also recognize that there are things that people share. To some extent, people have agreed on a common way to look at the world around them using shared ideas, values, identity and assumptions, what Alvesson (2013) describes as
We are applying a cultural perspective on the phenomena in order to understand the situation at The WorldGoods Malls. A cultural perspective will allow us to give context to the social processes unfolding in the organization, and gives us tools to explain and understand what is happening. By using a cultural perspective, we can understand how meaning is created by the employees as the change progresses and certain actions are taken by the management team.

1.2 Research Question

In order to provide a topic to study, we have chosen an empirical research question which we will seek the answer to, and then to analyze the phenomena we encounter according to the purpose of the study. Our research question is:

How do employees experience a change attempt with a participative approach?

1.3 Disposition

After this chapter, which includes a short introduction of our chosen case study, problematization and presentation of our research question, this paper is disposed as follows.

In chapter 2, we will present our theoretical background, consisting of a brief introduction to the Human Relations perspective on organizations, followed by literature on Organizational Change and Development, and on Organizational Culture. This literature helps us to understand what is going on during the organizational change that we study, how it can be viewed and interpreted from a cultural perspective, with a Human Relations perspective in mind.
In chapter 3 we will present our methodological approach, the interpretive, and ideas that has inspired us, as well as how we collected and analysed the data. In this chapter we also give an insight into a few limitations for this study.

We have chosen to present the empirical material through a story, which is outlined in chapter 4. The story is divided in five parts: It starts with an introduction to the case company and its background (A value-based company). The second part (From shopping malls to community centers) gives a better understanding of why the company needs to change. This is followed by the third part (Planning for co-creation) where the intentions with the change is presented. How the change was experienced and its implications is presented in the two last chapters of the story. Since we found two distinct categories of how the change was experienced, we present them in two separate parts in the story: “Change and the loss of stability” and “Departing from values”. This is followed by a short summary of our empirical findings.

In chapter 5 we interpret the data and try to link the findings with our theoretical background. Using a cultural perspective as theoretical framework, we see that “resistance” is a limiting perspective of what is happening at the organization. We also see that there is a perceived contradiction in the co-creation process and lack of structure. This leads to the employees experiencing a shift away from the people-oriented values previously held by the company, which we illustrate using Alvesson’s (2013) metaphors for culture.

This is followed by the last chapter in this thesis, chapter 6, where we make a summary and conclusion of our main findings, and suggest future studies. Here, our conclusions are that cultural dynamics is an effective tool for understanding what is happening during an organizational change. The conclusion also includes “Practical implications”, that can be useful to keep in mind in future organizational changes.
2.0 Literature review

In this review, we will give an overview of the main themes in the literature surrounding Organizational Change & Development in order to provide a theoretical context to the empirical phenomena as well as for our analysis and discussion. Further, we will review the literature on Organizational Culture in order to be able to use a cultural perspective. Our aim is to provide a wide theoretical background on which we can base our research, and to provide a toolbox that allows us to look at our empirical phenomena through different glasses. In order to give an understanding of what some of the ontological starting points for our theories are, we begin by briefly introducing the Human Relations perspective on organizations.

2.1 Human Relations perspective

Most modern organizational theories today are Human-Relations centered and have their foundation in the Hawthorne studies, which started the theoretical schools of thought putting the social needs of people in the forefront (Collins, 1999). This was a rejection of earlier, Tayloristic models of thinking, that based its theories on the assumption that all people are economically rational beings, leading to a heavy reliance on extrinsic motivation such as monetary rewards and having a machine-like perspective on the organization (Collins, 1999). The Human Relations perspective emphasizes the organization as a co-operative and social system, rather than a mechanical one, and highlights the importance of informal structures, norms and values (Collins, 1999). Knowing this foundation of organization study is important moving forward, as most change and development theories are based at least partly on it. Keeping the Human Relations perspective in mind, we also allow ourselves to see the organization as a social entity that continuously creates meaning, sometimes without the explicit intervention of managers. In particular, it becomes important to keep in mind when
studying a change attempt characterized by involvement and participation as social factors will come into play as the change progresses.

2.2 Organizational Change & Development

We use the literature on change in order to get an understanding of what change is, as well as different ways of approaching it, allowing us to get a better understanding of how the recipients of change can interpret a change attempt. Organizational Change has been studied for the better part of the last century, with the “Organizational Development” approach being introduced by Richard Beckhard in 1969. Organizational Development, or OD, has a core set of values that focus on humanistic psychology, defined as a planned, long-term, action-oriented change effort, based on changing the attitudes and behaviours of the recipients of change (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017).

In 1995, Van de Ven & Poole defined four basic theories of Organizational Development or Change, one of which being what they refer to as Teleological. This is based on the philosophical school of thought that revolving around the existence of a goal or final cause for guiding actions. According to this, Organizational Development is something that moves the organization, with purpose and adaptability, towards a final state (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). This is what is also called planned change: a conscious effort to in some way change the current organizational state into something else (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). The way in which this can be done has many varieties and change situations are usually multifaceted and filled with ambiguity (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2016). In 1991, Porras & Silvers, brought attention to an emerging contrast within change research between change as episodic and discontinuous, and change as evolving and continuous. This perspective was developed by Weick & Quinn (1999) who further explored the implications of the two ways of looking at change.
2.2.1 Types and levels of change

Change is often divided into different types, with different tools and techniques being described in order to make the change successful (Burke, 2017). Firstly, organizational changes can be divided into two types: First revolutionary, which is characterized as a sudden, radical, event within a specific unit of time (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Then, there is incremental change, which can be seen as a gradually ongoing, usually more widespread change (Burke, 2017; Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017; Weick & Quinn, 1999). It can be helpful to make further distinctions within the change, by looking at how changes affect different levels within the organization, in order to understand the complexity and ambiguity with the change, as the organizational change can be understood or experienced in different ways depending from what level within the system that the change is observed, and Burke (2017) divides it into three parts: individual, group or organizational level. On an individual level, a change may be about for example removals of staff, new employment, education or coaching (Burke, 2017). On a group level a change can be for example to create a new team or when different groups need to collaborate, according to Burke (2017). To continue, the author means that a change on an organizational level is about for example reorganization, leadership, more radical changes that affects the whole organization.

2.2.2 Why change?

There are many forces behind organizational changes, which can be divided into external forces and internal forces (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2016). Some examples of external drivers to change are technological-, political-, market- or cultural forces, and examples of internal triggers to change is technological, interests of leading individuals, rapid expansion or new products/services (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2016). In general, literature on change preaches the inescapable necessity for organizations to change, with examples like Burke (2017) who claims that, unlike before, the external environment now changes with such a tremendous pace that organizations can only play catch-up. The emphasis on the necessity of change by both academics and in the general discourse can not be overstated, and while this
is most likely the case, we want to maintain a critical disposition. A widespread urgency to change has the possibility of making organizations change for the sake of changing, rather than out of actual necessity (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017).

2.2.3 Planned & Process view of change

The literature on how to manage change is often normative in nature, intended for practitioners, and it usually includes steps to follow in order to successfully conduct organizational change, as for example Kotter’s eight success factors when leading change (1996). These models belong to the “planned change” literature and have been criticized for assuming that it is possible to control the change process, as long as the “recipe” is followed step by step (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). Reality is not quite that simple, and “n-step models”, the collective name for models including a number of steps in order to achieve change, fail to take into account many of the variables that organizations are affected by (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2016) and oversimplify a phenomena that is context-dependent and unpredictable (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). This perspective is characterized by a manager-centric view of change, focusing on how change is something that is initiated and implemented by managers or change agents, and that affects the rest of the organization (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). Pfeffer & Sutton (2006) do suggest a four-step model wherein the fourth step is to “embrace the mess”, which is an admittance of the complexity of change, but is less straightforward advice to follow for change agents. Another criticism of planned change is that the management tend to be seen as a separate entity, and is not affected by the changes that are imposed on the rest of the organization (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017).

Planned change is usually contrasted by processual, or emergent change, that views change as a constantly ongoing process, not bookended by a neat beginning- and end point, spearheaded by Andrew Pettigrew (1985; 1987, cited in Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). Pettigrew brings attention to the many different, multidimensional factors that can affect the outcome of change. A processual perspective on change invites us to consider the wider context wherein the change is taking place, the substance of the change, and the politics at play (Dawson &
Andriopoulos, 2014). The task of the change manager becomes an ongoing process of legitimizing the change proposal by using symbolic actions in attempts to get other organizational members to buy into the ideas in what can be described as the “management of meaning” (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). Social and political factors are pointed at, which is in alignment with the Human Relations perspective that we discussed earlier. Weick defines Emergent Change as “Emergent change consists of ongoing accommodations, adaptations, and alterations that produce fundamental change without a priori intentions to do so” (2000, p. 237), which implies that the concept is incompatible with “planned” change. However, we will be applying the ideas to planned change in order to create nuance and inspire alternative ways of analyzing the events at The WorldGoods Malls.

2.2.4 Diagnostic & Dialogic Organizational Development

Permeating much of literature on change is a discourse of diagnostics; the organizations is diagnosed with a “disease” and must change in order to be cured, for example in Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan (2017): “The problem has been diagnosed, and appropriate organizational changes have been agreed. What to do next?” (p. 335). Bushe & Marshak (2009) brought this phenomena to attention and offered a contrasting view: the dialogic. They suggest that, while OD was a departure from the Tayloristic perspectives of early 20th century, it still involved a somewhat mechanical perspective on the organization. The dialogic perspective takes into account post-positivistic ideas such as social constructivism and interpretivism (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). Organizations are described as meaning-making systems, and that change processes are highly influenced by sense-making processes, which occur in social interactions between organizational members (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) describes sense-making as a social process that occurs when people “fill in the gaps” of knowledge they do not have. We bring this up in order to introduce a concept in line with the metaphysical assumptions of this thesis; that while sometimes having shared beliefs, values and norms, people tend to experience the world differently, and organizations are social systems where reality and meaning is continuously constructed. It also offers a contrasting and more critical approach to the
prevailing discourse, and gives us tools to study the participative change approach adopted by The WorldGoods Malls from a perspective that recognizes the complex social reality where meaning is created by the recipients of change, and not just by the initiators.

2.2.5 Resistance to Change & Participation

Resistance to change is usually blamed for the low success rate of organizational change, and is usually described similarly to a version of the principal-agent problem, in that the person exhibiting resistance does not want to do what the change initiator wants them to, because there is something wrong with the way the “resistor” perceives the situation (Besanko et al., 2013; Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017). In their 1995 article “Choosing Strategies for Change” (reprinted in 2008), Kotter and Schlesinger presents some “best practice” methods for successfully managing change. The article describes Resistance to Change as something that must be overcome, suggesting several ways in which to do so, ranging from educating and supporting the employees, to manipulation and outright coercion when the situation demands it (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). One of these suggestions is “Participation and Involvement”. They argue that involving employees is an effective way of overcoming resistance to change, especially when the change initiators do not have all the information needed to design or implement the change. This suggests that participation would be a successful way of assisting the implementation at The WorldGoods Malls. While this is the case, this perspective of resistance is at odds with a dialogic view of organizational development, which is more focused on the continuously ongoing process of change and highlighting the importance of sense-making in a change process (Weick, 2000). In order to understand and gain insight into this continuously ongoing process, we will apply a cultural perspective that takes into account the wider context of the organization.

2.3 Organizational Culture

We are using organization culture as a theoretical framework in order to analyze how the employees at The WorldGoods Malls perceive the change and what significance that
perception has, taking into account a wider context, as suggested by a dialogic perspective on Organizational Development (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017).

How organizational members interpret and experience organizational changes is in most cases related to the organizational culture (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2016). There are many definitions of organizational culture, and many ways in which to apply them when studying organizations. The first studies on organizational culture were published in the 1940s, but it was not until 1980’s that the subject got much more attention, thanks to a number of studies that showed that the road to success for companies was to have a strong culture (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Researchers continuously emphasize the importance of culture, that it affects all aspects of organizational life, that it is a source for competitive advantage, and with Pfeffer (1994) calling it the most important success factor for the organization (Alvesson, 2013; Alvesson & Kårreman, 2001; Pfeffer 1994).

Culture can be expressed in shared values, identity, and assumptions of a group, that lead to a common way of interpreting and constructing their reality and guides behaviour (Alvesson, 2013; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). It is historically related, emergent, holistic, and difficult to change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). The degree of how distinct the values are, the level of common goals, history and interpersonal interaction are all factors that affect to what extent an individual identifies with a group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), which is important for a strong organizational culture (Alvesson, 2013).

2.3.1 Cultural Dynamics

Hatch (1993, cited in Dooley & Holmes, 2004) developed a model describing the dynamics of organizational culture, including how the processes of manifestation, realization, interpretation and symbolization underlies cultural change and stability. The model was based on Schein’s three-level model of organizational culture, which included assumptions, values and artifacts (Dooley & Holmes, 2004). Schein’s theory revolved around how taken-for granted assumptions underpins the values held by the organization, which in turn are
manifested in artifacts. Hatch’s circular model adds symbols to the mix, and argues that all four aspects are related by four different processes in a circular model (Dooley & Holmes, 2004). So, assumptions are manifested in values, which are realized in artifacts and symbolized in symbols, which in turn are interpreted as assumptions (Dooley & Holmes, 2004). This dynamic is a constantly ongoing process, and a change attempt usually starts with realization or symbolization when a change initiator introduces the change through language or other artifacts, which in turn is interpreted and manifested in the culture (Dooley & Holmes, 2004, p. 206). Hatch’s model gives us a way to understand how the participative change effort can be interpreted by the employees and how it can have implications for the values and assumptions they hold.

The model describes four processes and their relationship to four aspects of culture.

**Manifestation:** The process in which assumptions are manifested in values, or vice versa.

**Realization:** The process in which values are realized in artifacts, or vice versa.

**Interpretation:** The process in which assumptions are interpreted as symbols, or vice versa.

**Symbolization:** The process in which symbols are symbolized by artifacts.

While an understanding of how the dynamics of these four processes affect culture as a whole, we are mostly interested in the movement from values to symbols, how values are realized in artifacts, and in turn the symbolization of artifacts. As artifacts are the only
components of culture that are tangible, studying them and how the employees interpret them will allow us to understand how they can be significant to the culture as a whole.

2.3.2 Metaphors for Culture

Alvesson (2013) suggests the usage of metaphors to illustrate how culture can manifest. Three of which can help us analyze and better understand how culture works at The WorldGoods Malls are culture as a compass, culture as mental prison, and culture as social glue. Using the compass metaphor, we can see how culture can provide a common sense of direction, providing guidelines for which values are “correct” (Alvesson, 2013). Culture as social glue is a way to emphasize it as a way to control through informal means, examples of this include using shared beliefs and values to avoid fragmentation and tension, rather improving harmony and a sense of belonging (Alvesson, 2013). While having a very ominous name, the metaphor of the mental prison has the purpose of highlighting the way culture can work to create an invisible structure, acting as “blinders”, that the culture makes people only see a certain reality, possibly blinding them from the wider scope of a situation (Alvesson, 2013).

2.4 Summary of literature review

Organizational change is a thoroughly studied subject, and there are many ways in which to look at a specific change situation. These different perspectives offer different insights for the practitioner and researcher, and more recent research emphasizes the ambiguity and complexity of change, highlighting the sense-making processes of people involved in the change. In order to better understand these complex processes, we are applying a cultural perspective. This allows us to study the relationship between the components of culture and how the employees experience them during an organizational change. Like most contemporary social science, theories on organizational culture has its roots in the Human Relations perspective, which brought the importance of social interaction to light. In applying a cultural perspective on a change, we are attempting to take into account these social interactions in order to better understand the perception of change at The WorldGoods Malls.
Even though management can be very conscious and encouraging about organizational culture, in many cases there is still a lack of understanding when it comes to how culture actually affects people and organizations (Alvesson, 2013). Further, as organizational culture is ambiguous and elusive in nature, dependent on its history, difficult to change and socially constructed by a group of people, one might understand why it is hard, and in some cases even impossible, to control (Hofstede et al., 1990; Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2016). When it comes to organizational change, culture is often seen as the issue and reason why many change efforts fail (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2016).
3.0 Research method and metaphysical grounding

The data material for this paper was gathered during the spring of 2019 and in this chapter, we will go through the methodological approach we have used. We will state our own ontological point of departure and talk about how we philosophically ground our research. Then, we describe the method we have used to carry out our research, describing our choice of data collection and presentation and how we have analyzed the collected material. Lastly, we will present a few limitations that might influence the result.

3.1 An interpretive approach

Our aim is to understand the perceptions and views of our subjects, and to gain insight into how they make sense, and create meaning of their position in the organization, and their relationship to it. This lends itself to a mainly interpretive approach. As we are particularly interested in how people make sense of their socially constructed reality, we are using ideas from Symbolic Interactionism, as it emphasizes the “detailed development of the “self” in the construction of reality” (Prasad, 2018, p. 19). We want to see how the employees experience a change attempt initiated by top management, and how those experiences influence the ongoing process of Cultural Dynamics (Dooley & Holmes, 2004). Our hope is to gain an understanding of how our subjects experience themselves and their reality - to enter their Lebenswelt (Prasad, 2018). The social interplay with other actors within the organization, both co-workers and management, is of interest. Further, we want to see how all of these processes are affected by a potentially traumatic event, such as a major restructuring. While we understand that people interpret the world differently, we maintain that people agree on and share some things, such as values, ideas and assumptions. The fact that our interviewees come from all over the world and have different world views might affect the way they are interpreting events, symbols and language (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). While this can provide some difficulties when analyzing the material, it gives us a better representation of the organization as a whole.
From the gathered data, we recognize that we are studying an organization with a strong sense of identity and culture, and that concepts, phenomena, and ideas can take on a particular local meaning. It is our belief that gaining an insight into the subjects understanding of their own culture is of great importance, as this will greatly influence how they make sense of and create meaning of their reality. In other words, we are also taking into account ethnographic ideas, especially when it comes to the presentation of our data (see chapter 3.4). We also intend to create a thick description of the interviewees’ subjective interpretations of the process, taking into account the present intercontextualities that are present and affect our interview subjects (Prasad, 2018). We recognize that we have not conducted a traditional ethnographic study, but want to look at and take into account these factors as are important in our case organization.

3.3 Case study

In order to study how employees experience a change with a participative approach, we chose to conduct a case study of the WorldGoods Malls, a company operating shopping malls in different parts of the world. “The WorldGoods Malls”, and every person- and company name in this study are pseudonyms, in order to anonymize the participants. Our goal with the study was to get a deep understanding of the topic, why a single case study was appropriate (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Eisenhardt & Grabner, 2007). Further, we are studying a change process and we want to explore the employee perspective on organizational change with a participative approach, which are in line with Eisenhardt & Grabner’s (2007; 548) statements that case studies are more applicable when the research is about change processes or when the author/s wants to “provide freshness in perspective to an already researched topic”. We chose our case organization due to its interesting and complex ongoing change Fit For Fight, which is a representation of the certain change that we wanted to get a deeper knowledge and understanding about.
3.4 Gathering of data, sampling

Our data collection course of action was qualitative, consisting of semi-structured interviews, assisted by an interview guide (see Appendix A). The scope of the change project means that there are extensive internal documents, which we have taken part of, and have used them to help us understand and refer to the same information our subjects have received. Keeping with an interpretive tradition, we asked broad questions (Prasad, 2018), and based our analysis on induction, relying on our empirical findings, as well as abduction, being based on existing literature.

For the interviews, we asked our contacts at the case organization, the change managers, to pick out approximately 20 people with mixed levels of involvement in the development of the change, with different jobs within the organization, on different levels within the hierarchy and from different parts of the world. This can be referred to as a sample of comfort, which can be seen as problematic when compared to other forms of sampling, according to Alvehus (2014). However, this method of sampling gave us access to many interviewees we would not have been able to contact through another means of sampling, according to Alvehus (2014). However, this method of sampling gave us access to many interviewees we would not have been able to contact through another means of sampling, and it is our belief that this has not affected the study in a negative way. To the contrary, we believe that it has added a breadth of experiences and opinions amongst the interviewees. Out of the 20 people who were asked, thirteen agreed to take part in an interview, one of which failed to be carried out due to scheduling difficulties. In a quantitative study, this would have been problematic, but considering the qualitative nature, we don’t consider this as a big problem, while recognizing that we might have missed out on interesting material.

We had three initial meetings with the change managers at the company, with the purpose of writing a short pilot study and getting a general overview of the change project and to plan the co-operation between us. During these meetings, we decided on how we would gain access to potential interviewees and how to conduct the interview. We also gained access to
internal material, such as video files of internal presentations and a timeline of the process, detailing milestones and notes.

Our interviews are conducted in 2019, and our interviewees are on different levels middle-management, with many different positions and areas of work, and many having worked in the WorldGoods group for over ten years. The interviewees are located in all of the different areas where The WorldGoods Malls operate. They are a mix of men and women, and since we are not writing a gender study and do not want to add any meaning into gender or nationality, we have chosen to give them all traditionally american female names.

The names we have chosen to give our the people in the organization are: Sarah, Carol, Rebecka, Cindy, Rachel, Summer, Catherine, Cathy, Celine, Ruth, Samantha, Sophie, Sally, Skylar and Nathalie.

Due to the great geographical distribution of the interviewees, skype-meetings were the most practical and appropriate way of having the interviews. Within the organization, Skype-meetings are very normal, which strengthened our choice to hold the interviews via Skype. Furthermore, according to Bryman and Bell (2015) telephone interviews can be useful when asking sensitive questions, since the interviewee may be more comfortable when answering an interviewer who is not physically present.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, giving us the ability to adjust the course of the interview as they progressed. The goal was to find topics that the interviewees had strong opinions about and could elaborate on. This involved sometimes taking the role of the “harmless idiot” (Czarniawska, 1977) and allowing the respondents to tell us about the organization in an explanatory way.
3.3 Analysis

After having gathered all data, both primary through interviews and secondary via internal videos and documents, we transcribed the interviews and made notes from the secondary data. Our analysis began during the interviewing and transcribing phase, as we took notes and pointed out topics that seemed interesting and recurring. We divided the work in three parts: sorting, reducing and arguing as suggested by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015).

Sorting can be seen as “socializing” with the empirical material in order to get to know it as well as possible (Rennstam and Wästerfors, 2015). One important aspect during sorting process according to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015) is spending time with and “getting to know” the data material, which is why we coded it several times, to be able to look at it on different levels and from different perspectives. We started the sorting process with initial coding, going through the material with an open mind, in order to not lose anything that might be of our interest later. This was followed by focused and selective rounds of coding. During this process we were careful about the different themes that we found in the empirical data, making an effort not to jump to conclusions, which is important in order to keep an open mind throughout the process (Rennstam and Wästerfors, 2015).

During the interviews, we tried to keep in mind both what and how, things were said, which is in line with “Analytical bracketing” (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997), which can be used to understand the meaning of what they say on a deeper level. With our research question in mind, we wanted to gain insight into how the employees experienced what happened during the change, how the employees interpreted it and what significance these interpretations has. By asking the interviewees what and how the change is experienced and interpreted we might, according to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015), get a better understanding of why things are happening and interpreted as they are, in order to eventually be able to link this with theoretical perspectives, which is the aim of this study. In an early stage, we could identify distinctive themes, for example how our interviewees used the same expressions,
such as “co-creation”, “parallel working” and “I understand that the change is necessary but…” and how they said “it’s a long process”, with a sigh.

In coding the empirical data, it was automatically reduced. Realizing that we had to choose among the discovered themes and categories from the sorting process, we needed to reduce the material within these chosen themes and categories. We used a categorical reduction-approach, in combination with reduction through a story (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). We could divide the themes in “story” and “categories”. Story consisted the themes “Fit For Fight” and “organizational background”, covering important empirical material necessary for understanding and get a deep insight in our chosen case study. The other, categories, included themes such as “sense of urgency/why change”, “values”, “change leadership” and “interpretations of change actions”. This is similar to how Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2011) describes the ethnographic process, moving between observed themes and more theoretical, analytical points.

After sorting and reducing the empirical data, we began arguing for our findings. Using established literature on change, we applied a cultural perspective to analyze the observed empirical phenomena. This was then presented inspired by Emerson et al’s (1995, in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015) excerpt-commentary unit model, making analytical points that illustrate with empirical material and elaborated by analytical comments. Taking into account existing theories, we observe details and individual interpretations of the events taking place in order to form our theoretical contribution.

3.4 Data presentation

The WorldGoods Malls is a complex organization, in a complex organizational setting and the change it is going through is comprehensive and difficult to grasp. In order to offer an overview of the situation, we present our findings as a story, starting with a description of the organization and its context, and then moving on, telling the story of the change process
through the eyes of the employees. Each “chapter” has a specific theme and leads up to the current day (in 2019). The data is presented in the past tense, but we want to clarify that The WorldGoods Malls is still in business.

Our method was initially inspired by Rennstam & Wästerfors’ (2018) idea of stories as a reduction principle, and our form of data presentation can be compared to how an ethnographer creates a “thematic narrative” when presenting the world they have studied (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2011, p. 202) advocates writing ethnographies “…as narrative ‘tales’, not in the sense that they are fictional, but in that the writer uses standard literary conventions”, as a way of conveying details and nuance, and creating interest for the reader (see also Prasad, 2018). While our study is not strictly an ethnography, our goal is to in a pedagogical way present the current situation our interviewees are in from their perspective.

Our method of presenting data also helps us provide a coherent picture of the background to the events taking place at our case organization and elaborating on it as the presentation progresses, similar to how Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2011) describes it. We consider this way of describing what is happening at our case organization as an effective way, and that it is not limited to presenting ethnographies. As in an ethnography, we have not had a working hypothesis, but have rather developed our narrative themes through our main research question, generating insights rather than predictions (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011; Prasad, 2018). Prasad (2018) suggests that a cultural analysis using ethnographic methods can be used to offer “unique contributions to the field” (p. 91) as it emphasizes cultural embeddedness and social interactions, which goes in line with the perspective of this thesis. It is with these factors in mind we chose to present our data as a narrative story.

3.5 Limitations

As mentioned before, culture is difficult to grasp and study (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2016). Understanding culture requires deep studying and it might be hard to sort out what
actually is cultural change (changes in meanings, symbols, values, assumptions et cetera.) and
general behavioural change. Further, with the thought of that the world is constantly
changing, it might be hard to judge whether cultural change is due to the organizational
change, or something else in our environment that change our beliefs, meanings, values or
assumptions.

We have conducted a case study drawing from many interpretive research traditions, mainly
the ethnographic. We are aware that an ethnography normally includes extensive
observations in order to get a comprehensive insight into the culture that is studied. Due to
the limitations of the scope of this thesis, this has not been possible, as our case organization
is located all over the world. We have had to limit ourselves to interviews with members of
the case organization, along with viewing recorded video conferences that all of the
employees also watched. It is our belief that this has been sufficient to be able to draw some
conclusions about how our interviewees perceive the culture at The WorldGoods malls and
what their relation to it implies.

It also might be difficult to understand what actually happens within an organization during
change. Interviews is a kind of social interaction, which means that we, when interviewing,
might have navigated or interpreted it (unconsciously) in one specific/personal direction. In
the same way we can also see that the interpretation and presentation of the gathered data is
influenced by our personal experiences, assumptions and other personal factors that might
affect the way we look at and present the data.
4.0 Empirical Findings & Analysis

4.1 Chapter 1: A value-based company

The WorldGoods Malls is a company with its head office in central Europe. The company is part of the WorldGoods Group, which revolves around WorldGoods - a multinational organization with a global presence; producing, distributing, and selling consumer goods directly to consumers through their own stores. WorldGoods had a strong corporate culture, which was shared with the other companies in the group, and many of the employees cited the culture as the main reason they chose to work at The WorldGoods Malls. The culture was signified by democratic values, innovation, and respect for people and work-life. Making decisions in WorldGoods Group usually took a long time, in part because of the size of the organization, and also in part of the consensus-based decision making form, where several instances had to approve of a decision before it could be made.

What made the employees enjoy working at the WorldGoods Malls was the values that permeated the organization on all levels and Ruth had been working there for twelve years. “What I like here is that it is based on the values that come from WorldGoods, and that makes the atmosphere different and special, and maybe that’s what people like about working for WorldGoods” she said. The sentiment was echoed by Celine, who explains that the WorldGoods brand had a high standing in China, much thanks to the values: “I am talking about respect for people to have a better balance of job versus life, really flat or open atmosphere, encouraging co-workers to express themselves... very democratic”. The people who worked at The WorldGoods Malls were motivated to work and attracted to the organization as an employer by the values. “When I first joined, what attracted me most was the values of the company. They value the person” - Carol.

One might say that the employees identified with the company in the sense that the values gave the employees pleasure in carrying out their work tasks, tasks that could otherwise be considered mundane or boring. The values were reinforced in the communication of senior
managers: at The WorldGoods Malls, they work together to solve their problems and put the co-worker in focus. However, there were downsides to the values carried by the company, as a democratic approach to decision making lead to slow processes, thought Carol:

“You always have to get agreements from others, from other departments, other colleagues, and you have to stay in one place for days or weeks listening to others... this whole process makes things have a really slow pace”.

Ruth thoughts ran in the same veins;

“I do understand that we are a company and that we should have some bureaucracy. But sometimes it makes me unhappy when I see that. When we are seeking a place or not moving fast enough, just because the system doesn't allow us to make a fast decision and try, and test and so on. Sometimes I feel that we have to... in Russia we have a saying about when we generate problems. When we touch the hot milk? Then we think about everything like hot milk, even if it is water [...] It's just to make you clear with this, for example, if we have some problem with one contract, then [afterwards] I should have 100 pages in each contract that we have now. Just to prevent any leases when, the partner will use the situation wrongly.”

The employees wanted the company to do well, and thus often weighed in on all kinds of issues, whether it is their task or not, which resulted in long documents, drawn-out decision making, and a lot of discussions in many different forums. This was something that had worked for The WorldGoods Malls in the past and the company had historically been very profitable. In the past, the world was moving at a slower pace, which allowed The WorldGoods Malls to take their time, but in 2017, global developments and the advent of internet shopping had changed the environment, putting The WorldGoods Malls in a rapidly changing setting.

“It’s really so important, in the future, that we can make quick decisions... Because speed is essential. [...] If tomorrow, with Skylar, we find a super opportunity to buy a building in the
inner city center that is perfect for us, perfect for WorldGoods, really good, if the group takes nine months to make a decision, then we can just say goodbye to the project, nobody will wait for us nine months to see if we want to do it or not, which was the case in the past [...] Because around, the world is changing so fast [...] and we must change, must adapt”.

4.2 Chapter 2: From shopping malls to community centers

The WorldGoods Malls operated in Europe, Russia and China, and their mission was to drive visitation to the WorldGoods stores by building and developing shopping malls, where the WorldGoods store was a tenant. Historically, this mostly involved “standard” shopping mall management, such as taking care of facilities and tenants. In the years leading up to 2015, tenants at the shopping malls had gone bankrupt, leading to The WorldGoods Malls losing revenue streams that were previously regarded as secure for many years. This led The WorldGoods Malls to rethink their core business strategy, and decided to shift focus from shopping malls to community centers, with a new approach to their business, designed by the management team: The Community Center Approach. The idea behind the Community Center Approach was to create places where people can socialize, connect, have fun, eat, shop, and where people felt like they wanted to spend time naturally.

In order to accomplish their new mission, The WorldGoods Malls embarked on a change process, redesigning the entire organizational structure. Natalie, the CEO of the company, in a video conference with the entire company in the summer of 2017, declared that the goal was to create an agile, front-led organization that is “Not customer-centric, but customer-obsessed” and where decisions were made as close to the customer as possible. The global service office and management were to provide “servant leadership” to the local malls, helping them adapt to their local markets. Natalie called this change process “Fit For Fight”, emphasizing the change as a necessity for the company to stay relevant and meet the customer of tomorrow.
At the video conference, Natalie also spoke about a recently finished change, where The WorldGoods Malls had become “Truly one company” after previously being four separate ones (two European, one Russian, and one Chinese), a process that started in 2015.

With rolled up sleeves and infectious energy, Natalie spoke about how the Fit For Fight-project was something that they would figure out and do together, and that neither she, nor the top management of the company had all the answers on how to get there, but that it was something everyone in the organization were welcome in participating in providing. The change would be carried out through a co-creation process, and Natalie encouraged everyone at the company to take part in some way. The employees understood that the company had to change in order to be relevant in the future.

“The traditional shopping center or mall, and the entire retail market is going through a huge change. Based on the possibility to, how you shop today, is not the same as it used to be. So it’s about being ready, and... so that you don’t get overtaken by your competitors” - Sarah

Sarah talked about the external situation forcing The WorldGoods Malls to change the way they worked, especially emphasizing the ability to make faster decisions as the key - and her co-workers shared her opinion. Catherine explained: “Customer behaviour is changing, and the organization in the shape as it was could not stay to be efficient any longer”. Cathy was thinking the same vein and recalled: “I met a shopping center company in Dubai, they went through the same change two years ago with [A big consultancy firm], so we always need to evolve”, arguing that their competitors were moving forward, adapting to the new world order, which in turn increased the need for The WorldGoods Malls to change.

The consensus was clear, The WorldGoods Malls needed to change in order to succeed in the future. They had to make decisions faster in order to respond to changing customer needs, to become more customer-oriented. Natalie spoke about this in her conferences; change was
absolutely necessary to be relevant in the future. She talked about the “beautiful future” that lay ahead of the company, but that they had to change in order to get there.

At the same time, the employees at The WorldGoods Malls read articles prophesying the imminent death of the shopping mall, and saw many shopping malls losing tenants in cities around the world (The Guardian, 2018). The pressure on the employees came both from sources outside the organization and from within, and they all felt like they had to do something in order to survive in the future.

4.4 Chapter 3: Planning for co-creation

“I am really excited about this journey we are about to embark on”, Natalie said with a wide grin, as she addressed the entire company in a video conference. She was presenting how the company was going to change in order to be ready for the future, a change project she called “Fit For Fight”. The goal of the change process was very much a remedy to the problems experienced by the employees, with a more agile organization, being able to make decisions closer to the customer, as the goal. In her broadcast, Natalie said that in order to get there, they would cut some layers in management, in order to become a less hierarchical organization - after all, the global service office should only provide “servant leadership”, with those closest to the customer making the decisions. All of these actions were in support of the Community Center approach - the people in the community knew best how to adapt to the needs of the community.

This was quite a change of philosophy from earlier, when the local shopping mall were not even allowed to negotiate the rent with their tenants. The message got through to the employees, Samantha explained what she thought the reason behind the change was: “I think the base of Fit For Fight has been also that it clearly states that the decisions must be taken as close the the business as possible”. This in itself was also a departure from how The WorldGoods Mall had worked in the past, having been a quite hierarchical and top-down steered organization.
“We don’t have all the answers, and we will figure that out together with you”, Natalie said. She told the employees that while they knew what they want to achieve, they didn’t know how to get there, and that they needed the help of everyone in the organization in order to get there. “Fit For Fight” was designed as a co-creation process, and everyone at the company were invited to participate. Cathy explained the reasoning behind this:

“It is to not impose a change from top-down, to really have ownership […] to create awareness from day one, and buy-in, and actually, if we want to go away from hierarchical management, if we want to really go into self-leadership and agile working, so just to start developing that”.

She was involved right from the start:

“I mean, from day one, it was proclaimed that people will participate through co-creation and involvement, in this process, it will be done together. So eleven areas were chosen […] So each area was called a stream, and I was leading the [X] stream. So I was setting up what [X] means for the company […] be really action oriented and result oriented […] I was running a group on our internal network, and we had more than 100 people there, participating and sharing”. She goes on to explain how other co-workers were involved:

“Everyone could sign up, who has an active position, to have an active position and create some impact and to participate in something new. So these people, who had an active position, they could sign up, and we had to involve them - I mean, there was no chance not to”.

In each of these “streams”, several workshops and discussions were held in order to decide how the new organization would work in that specific area.

While the process would be co-created by the employees, presentations described a clear step-by-step plan for how the project would develop. When the change was announced, some discussions in management teams had already started. These would be followed by input
from the rest of the organization, and in turn followed by design of the new organization with workshops and discussions. Then, preparations and transition would be executed in phases, followed by integration of the new way of working into the business. Finally, the goal would be to sustain and continuously improve the organization. In order to facilitate their task, The WorldGoods Malls took the help by a world-renowned consultancy firm, and borrowed ideas for the change from popular change programmes, such as Six Sigma, the most prominent being a formula: \( E = Q \times A \) (Effectivity = Quality of the idea \* The acceptance of the idea) (Six Sigma, 2019). The formula describes the relationship as the effectiveness of a solution being a factor of the quality of the solution and the acceptance of it (Six Sigma, 2019). The higher the level of involvement/participation in the solution among the employees, the higher is the acceptance level.

The employees understood that their involvement in the change process was a way for the management to have the employees on board with the changes that would be made. However, they did not seem to mind, as they recognized the need to change, and felt it was a suitable way of getting acceptance among the employees.

“It [involving employees in the process] is to not impose a change from top-down, to really have ownership to create awareness from day one, and buy-in.” - Cathy

4.5 Chapter 4: Change and the loss of stability

After the change started, Summer’s initial excitement was replaced by negativity:

“In the beginning, it was positive, but it’s become more negative. They wanted to make faster decisions and leadership was to be pushed outwards, which sounded like a good idea. But I would still say that results and decisions were pushed up”.
While a lot of things were changing, Sophie noticed that, from her point of view, the management team had almost not been changed at all, when they communicated that their restructuring were finished:

“The management team looked almost the same as it had been doing before, which sent strange signals [...] and that everyone were supposed to re-apply for positions, because no jobs would be the same as before [...]”.

Sophie grew sceptical of how much was actually going to change. Perhaps the management team was exempt from the process, and the change was just something that would affect them, the employees?

As the change progressed, a very explicit change to the organizational structure was the removal of an entire level of management. Previously, there was a global, regional, and local level, and with “Fit For Fight”, the regional level was removed, shortening the organizational distance between the global office and the local level. The idea behind this was to facilitate decision-making for those on the local level, since the goals of the change was to make decisions closer to the customer. However, this effect was not noticed by the employees, since now, the spacial distance between local and global office slowed decision-making down. Cindy felt that the challenges of co-operating with a global office has become the biggest change for her as a result of “Fit For Fight”: “I think the biggest change is the working approach [...] Because now we are working in a remote team, so you have to adjust your working ways to meet the requirements”.

Her concerns were shared by Catherine:

“At the moment, I have to say that the project itself [Her current work project] is the one that I’m dealing with itself is frustrating. First of all, when you are located in China, it’s absolutely impossible to co-operate in a good way with the people working in a global level. It is time difference, and secondly, they always prioritize those who are located close to them..."
or sitting with them in the same office, because European managers, project managers, are sitting with them and they always…. Solve the problems in the canteen, you know. And you never have the time to catch up, because they are always booked, overloaded, occupied” - Catherine.

Despite Natalie’s proclamations and her own efforts to participate in the change process, there was little that Rachel actually got to do to make her voice heard: “Well, I wanted to be part of one stream, but then I just participated in one or two surveys”. Sarah was in a similar situation: “I signed up for a couple of the groups, but the pressure [of people applying to the groups] was so high that I didn’t get to be part of any”. Her idea of the involvement was that it is something that was mostly done for show, “it sounded good, but then you fall back, and do what the consultants recommended”. Catherine’s view was similar:

“It was some kind of co-creation everything, spending time to co-create something and then all the results were dropped in the waste-bin and then the organization, higher management of the organization decided “Okay, now we do this, Bam Bam Bam”, and everything was decided from top to down”.

Summer chose not to take part in any of the streams: “You had to take away priority from your real job to be that involved, but I chose to keep working with my project”. Even though there might have been a theoretical possibility, the work tasks did not allow her to take part in the change process. While the management team had urged the employees to be involved in the process, they experienced that they in fact did not have the ability to participate and voice their opinions.

As time went on, and the change progressed, the employees at The WorldGoods Malls grew more and more sceptical towards it. The atmosphere within the company changed, and the employees in general felt exhausted, with too many work tasks and an extensive change period. Celine felt that motivation was inhibited by a lack of clarity and structure within the organization after the change: “Then, on the people’s part, the local people may lose
motivation, because it just gets added complication of everyday work. So our work grows, and the people we report to can’t really help us solve our problems”. Samantha also observed that as an effect of the change, most people are not as effective in their everyday work; “You can feel that, when we discuss everyday business, they are not on top of things… their head is somewhere else. And that must be maybe 70% of the people”, and also pondered the risk it meant for the company “And then, at the same time, they are still in charge of projects where we have millions and millions”.

Summer, who as part of the change signed a new job contract, was confused, not sure about who to report to and what her tasks were. “We haven’t got any organizational chart, which we were promised to get the 1st of April (2019). We need to know who we are supposed to report to.” […] “My team is destroyed and shattered. You feel alone”. The lack of structure also affected Samantha, who suddenly did not know who to ask when it came to specific questions:

“Today there is so much changes […] that if you need support for finance, you don't know how to go, or how to deal with it, because finance is behind everybody for the reorganization”

At the same time, Celine felt that the ones who already got new job positions were expected to do both their new job tasks, as well as those that belonged to the earlier position:

“I work basically double the time than before, and still, I feel like I don't have enough capacity to handle all the job needs and also we have many different counterparts to negotiate with, or clarify the line of responsibility… […] I just feel very exhausted. […] In the new role, there are many things that need attention, and people count on me to really be responsible for the new role’s requirements. So there are new meetings, new topics and new tasks… On the other hand, I still have the existing job that transferred from the old days”.

This kind of double work was a problem that many employees had in common. Samantha
thought about what she had to focus most on when she was working:

“It is to stay alive. [...] managing my new focus, my new job. Plus, still doing the old one. Because as the organization is not in place, I still have project managers calling me every day. And I started also to be in my new job [...] So I have a lot of meetings with externals, [...] with investors with agents, etc. [...] and if it was not enough [...] it's more meetings about the new organization and ways of working“

In addition to having more work tasks and things taking more time due to the uncertain structure, Celine had to spend time on arguing with her colleagues:

“We have to spend a lot of energy not working on the business itself, but on other parts. Fighting for roles and responsibilities, convincing each other what we should or should not do - we have different views from each other. And maybe the new setup isn't really supporting us to share the common goal and have the right people carrying the right responsibility”.

Even though people within The WorldGoods Malls were used to a slow pace when it came to decision making and speed within the company, Rachel thought that the change project had taken too much time to realize. “...this process is so long to actually I would die probably if, if I would think about this all the time”. Samantha had similar thoughts:

“[...] the problem is that at one point some deadlines were given. And were never respected, for different reasons. Maybe sometimes under-estimating the task. Sometimes also because we have been blocked by WorldGoods Corporate, who wanted “[Fit for fight]” to wait for a lead, work and organize process in the rest of WorldGoods Corporate. [...] And then the problem is that people are just waiting for the deadline you gave. So that's for me the problem we have had... So it’s a long process in total [...] of course it's not always the best period. When you know that your job disappears and you still don't know what you will do in the future. So it's not the most comfortable situation.”
Sophie was tired of the constantly changing circumstances, and not knowing where to go or who to ask about anything, and exclaimed “I’ve been in a tumble dryer since 2014”, referring to both the current change process, and the one that was finished just before.

As a result of the new organizational design, with fewer layers and new positions for every employee at The WorldGoods Malls, people within the organization lost their jobs or, as in many cases, did not know what their future in the company would look like. As explained by Rachel:

 [...] “this is just big stress, because you don't know what will happen with you wherever you will have your job or not, what kind of job, whether your salary will be reduced, you know, decreased or not, who will be your boss [...] you feel you have all these questions and worries about future because, you know, everybody has family and has to pay bills. So, this is not easy [...] this process is so long so actually i would die probably [...] if I would think about this all the time [...]”.

The uncertainty about the future affected the motivation of the employees, which was experienced by Catherine in her everyday work:

 “It's something that totally influences the motivation, the delivering result, the eagerness to work and to reach something. So everybody, not only me, but everybody around me is sitting and waiting, what will happen next? And of course that influence on the efficiency [...] I come to the office only to spend time in the office. Of course, it’s not that I stopped working - I have tasks, and I do my tasks, I’ve always done that, but my engagement does not require 100% of my working time”.

Sarah was deeply troubled, thinking that the company, known for its culture and strong values, had lost trust among its employees:
“Since the new year, one can say that there is an incredibly sad feeling, with a lot of bitterness and sadness. [...] It is hard to handle when you... I was one of the first persons who signed [a new employment contract], but I don’t feel like I can show that I am happy, because then I feel guilty for getting a job, and then I do not want to tell anyone else. The longer the times goes, the more people are set up [in new positions] but then there are some who is not ready. It is very hard for everyone”.

4.6 Chapter 5: Departing from values

There was another feeling looming over the employees: that the values of WorldGoods, which many of the employees thought of as important, were fading away. While the values were communicated as important, they were no longer manifested in the organization. Celine explained: “I doubt if the company really walks the talk. Because in many places, I think they don’t walk the talk”. It is evident that as the change progressed, people started to feel like the company had drifted away from the values. “My feeling of this is that a lot of people will not really live the values anymore”, Samantha said. Sarah was along the same line, and thought that the company recently had not been managed according to the values. They were of such importance to the employees that the feeling of the company not living them led to employees losing trust in the company. Summer, who was an example of this, declared: “I will quit my job due to the values” and went on to say she was not alone in doing so: “I know many people who have been or who are going to leave the company due to that the company does not live according to the values anymore.”

Out of WorldsGoods values, what people felt the company has lost is the orientation around people. Catherine thought that while the company tried to give the impression that it took care of people, both customers and employees, they were failing to look after her and her colleagues. Sara described the current situation:
“I think it clearly shows their incomprehension that it is people they [change leaders] are talking to. They [change leaders] have been talking to functions. I have not had a value as a person, but rather as a function. And then we will see if my function is needed in the future organization, that is going to be filled with functionality.”

Summer also questioned the people-value within the company, and when talking about new competencies that was needed with the new business idea, she thought that WorldGoods Malls could have been doing it much better by “realizing the changed needs in time in order to have time to educate the employees that already work within the company”.

On a more understanding note, Samantha thought about how it is natural that the values had changed: “I would say that WorldGoods is a company with values. With a big business. But it’s a company, companies have to develop, has to earn money”, referencing the many pressures that was forcing them to change. When thinking about her colleagues who are negatively affected by the change, she says “I think a lot of people have been very naïve, thinking that ‘No, WorldGoods will never do something that will affect people’”.

When looking at the actual results of the change, Celine thought they had failed at pushing the decision-making power out to the local level, that they ended up in a worse position than before: “With the new setup, it is very difficult to work cross-functionally at a local level. Either people no longer have the decision-making power, or the local people are reporting to different managers who have different styles and views”. She wondered how the global office would be able to make choices on a local level, when they were so far away from them. Carol also became quite cynical, and thought that the real reason behind the change was: “I think they want... control”.

Ruth reflected on the change, wondering how necessary it really was, and said that maybe the solution to the problem was not just a complete overhaul of the structure, but just learning how to make faster decisions. “I prefer to make it easier, but not less interdependent? Because I like the way how we are trying to solve their... the issue or any big project? And I
think that we need to train people how to make decision in a group? Because it looked like everyone tried to push their own side to get some advantages, and it is not faster”. Her point was that maybe, the best solution would have been to keep the old structure, and focus on the new business areas to become better at making decisions as a group.

4.6 Chapter 6: Summary
To summarize, The WorldGoods Malls were in a situation where the management and their employees all felt like they had to change, for several reasons, mostly due to the rapidly changing external environment. The management team initiated a change project, where the end goal was to work according to the “Community Center Approach”, which involved a shift from the current way of working, requiring new competencies and a new structure. The WorldGoods Malls was to achieve this change through a process of co-creation, involving the employees in the design of the process. Once the change was underway, the initial excitement among the employees was replaced by negativity. Loss of stability and structure in the organization, resulted in insecurity, long processes and ineffective work. To add injury to insult, the changes made employees feel that the company was no longer living their values, especially when it came to taking care of people. This made them cynical, with some people choosing to leave the organization. While inclusion and co-creation had been promised from the start, some felt that they had not had any real possibility to voice their opinion, and that the change really was designed and implemented top-down. At the same time, employees were asking themselves if they really were closer to the more agile organization that was promised, or if decision-making mandate had just been moved further up, to the global office. This would be opposite to what was promised when the change process was announced: that the people closest to the customers were going to be making the decisions.
5.0 Discussion

Throughout the discussion, we will use the theories described in chapter two of this thesis. We will first use theories on Organizational Change and Development in order to understand what is happening at The WorldGoods Malls, and then use a cultural perspective as analytical framework in order to better understand how the observed phenomena have developed.

When turning the focus to what is happening in the organization, we can observe an attempt at a planned change characterized by employee involvement. The management team has a clear goal in mind and are taking initiative to alter the organization from one state to another with a clearly laid out step-by step plan, while attempting to have employees participate in and shape the process. The most straightforward way to approach this change process is to apply an episodic perspective, as signified by its intervention-based nature. The change is a revolutionary one in the sense that it affects every level of the organization defined by Burke (2017), encompassing both the work that is carried out, and the way in which it is done. The goal that every employee at the company would have a new contract after the change is a clear signal of this, and the removal of an entire level of management is confirmation - the scope is massive. This has the potential to turn the situation volatile and unpredictable, as it involves many factors that can affect the organization. A change on this level has the potential to affect relationships with every external party, between every employee. The discourse surrounding the issues in the organization are evidence of a diagnostic approach to change, with clearly identified issues to be solved by the change effort, exemplarized by this quote from Carol:

“You always have to get agreements from others, from other departments, other colleagues, and you have to stay in one place for days or weeks listening to others... this whole process makes things have a really slow pace”.

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With intentions to push mandate for decision-making toward those who are closer to the customer, The WorldGoods Malls hope to remedy their historically slow pace of working. By involving the employees, the management team wanted to find solutions to problems that they did not currently possess, which can be a way to handle the potential ambiguities of change and many different factors that come into play that Alvesson & Sveningsson (2016) warns about. Considering the size of the organization, and the experienced pressure to change, the approach seems reasonable: offering an “easy” solution to a difficult problem. The management at The WorldGoods Malls themselves highlight the difficulties of the changes, presenting it to their employees as a challenge they must overcome, and thus seem to recognize the difficulties surrounding the change.

5.1 Limits of a resistance-perspective

We note that some of the employees we have interviewed exhibit what can be interpreted as “Resistance to Change”, they do not like the change, and some are working slower, without focus, as exemplified by Catherine: “I come to the office only to spend time in the office”. It is true that this statement can be seen as an exhibition of resistance, but with a broader perspective, we can see how classifying this as resistance is limited, as the situation is more complex than that the employees simply do not want to change, or that they just want different things than the top management.

By applying an emergent approach to change, we can highlight the complex interconnectedness of every aspect of the organization, that the wider context must be taken into account when considering change. A dialogical approach to change emphasizes organizations as meaning-making systems, mentioning the social process of sense-making as a way in which the employees will construct the reality in which they exist, an ambiguous process that is difficult to control (Bushe & Marshak, 200). Weick (1995) describes sense-making as a social process that occurs when people “fill in the gaps” of knowledge they do not have. This can be applied to our case. The employees at The WorldGoods Malls
make their own assumptions about the underlying assumptions and values guiding the behaviour of the management team. From a processual perspective on change, the purpose of the change initiators becomes the management of meaning, legitimizing change through symbolic action (Palmer, Dunford & Buchanan, 2017). Change is hard, and symbolic action can be interpreted in many different ways. While the symbolic actions initially created support for the change project, the complexity of an ongoing change process made it more difficult for the management team to control and predict how their actions would be interpreted. Here, we can observe a link between an emergent view of change and the dynamics of culture, in the interpretations of symbols and how they relate to other aspects of culture.

5.2 Planning to co-create

Using a cultural perspective, we can gain insight into how the employees at The WorldGoods Malls experienced actions and events, and how they through this attached meaning to them. Many models of change involve some version of embracement of ambiguity, where the cure is usually to let the members of the organization solve the issues through involvement in the process, as is advocated by the formula adopted from a Six Sigma programme. However, we can observe that in this case, the “embracement of ambiguity” and involvement of co-workers have been interpreted as a means to an end, that end being the goal that the management of the company has in mind, as recognized by Cathy:

“It [involving employees in the process] is to not impose a change from top-down, to really have ownership to create awareness from day one, and buy-in.”

We can see that the recipient of the change understands that involvement is a way to get the employees to buy in to the change and to accomplish the set goals. At this point, we do not notice negative disposition towards the change as a result of this instrumental view of their participation. The employees experience an urgency for the organization to change and
understands that this can be an effective process. They all assume the organization has to change.

When using Hatch’s (1993) model of cultural dynamics we can see that the organization valuing its employees are initially realized (the process in which values and artifacts are related) in the participative change process. When we start to look at how the employees were actually involved, initially a lot of time and effort was spent on discussing how the new organization would work with the employees. This is a clear symbol for the value of including people, based on an assumption that the employees’ opinions are important, they have good ideas, and that their employer trusts them. These values were continuously expressed in the language used in the video-conference communication with the employees of the company. Usage of phrases such as “co-creation” and the emphasis on the change as a challenge that the company had to overcome together being realizations of people-oriented values.

Time progresses, however, actions by top management is interpreted as symbols for the change not being as necessary as before, such as Sophie’s observation that the management team looked the same after having gone through the change process. When Sarah applied to be part of some of the groups in order to give her input on the change process, she was not able to:

“I signed up for a couple of the groups, but the pressure [of people applying to the groups] was so high that I didn’t get to be part of any.” - Sarah.

This could be interpreted in different ways, either that the management underestimated the amount of people who would be interested in taking part of the change, or that the number of people who got to take part was intentionally low. For those who saw it as an underestimation, it was interpreted as a signal for a naïvity from the management team in regards to the complexity of the change. For the people who interpreted it as an intentional action, it signaled distrust of the employees, based on an assumption from the management
that the employees did not have any good ideas. This was amplified when some employees interpreted decisions made by management as evidence that the input from the employees had been discarded:

“...and then all the results [from the input] were dropped in the waste-bin and then the organization, higher management of the organization, decided ‘Okay, now we do this, Bam Bam’, and everything was decided from top to down”.

Intentional or not, the initiative is interpreted as a symbol for a centralized, top-down organizational structure based on the core assumptions that The WorldGoods Malls do not trust its employees. It creates a situation where employees feel let down by their employer, and is further complicated by the importance of the values surrounding people that made many to seek out The WorldGoods Malls as an employer in the first case, and this series of events led to Summer deciding she no longer wants to work there.

“I know many people who have been or who are going to leave the company due to that the company does not live according to the values anymore.” - Summer

The disappointment is manifested in several employees mentioning that they feel that The WorldGoods Malls have abandoned their old values. This is a consequence of individual interpretations of cultural artifacts by the employees, and how these interpretations affect culture.

From the perspective of Summer, the way of dealing with the contingencies from a complete shift in business concept (from Shopping Malls to Community Centers) is a failure and a betrayal of the values the organization holds as important. Summer suggests that an employer who values people would re-educate current employees in order to have the competencies required to make the shift, and not to let people go, only to be re-hired by people with a different background. When applying the perspective of the dynamics of culture, we can see that Summer has interpreted the replacement rather than re-education of staff as a
consequence of an underlying assumption that the employees first and foremost fill a function, and not as people, which contradicts the people-oriented values she thought the company had before, an interpretation that is shared by Catherine when she says: “I have not had a value as a person, but rather as a function”. The employees’ have interpreted the succession of actions as a departure from the previous people-oriented values at The WorldGoods Malls, towards a more instrumental, functionalist view.

5.3 Loss of structure and direction

While we can identify that the general perception of the change process “Fit For Fight” among both employees and management as episodic, the goal state is continuous change and adaptation to local and current circumstances, which at first glance seems like a constructive way of perceiving change, but becomes difficult when applying in reality. There also seems to be a contradiction in the strategy of the change, seen in the will to include co-workers, yet still setting the agenda and goal on a management level. These different actions are interpreted in contradictory ways by the employees, and signal a loss of structure and direction. This perception is increased as the organizational restructuring starts, with people switching positions causes even more confusion, as explained by Samantha:

“Today there is so much changes [...] that if you need support for finance, you don’t know how to go, or how to deal with it, because finance is behind everybody for the reorganization”

This can be a normal consequence of change, but while this is case, through the process of interpretation, the employees see it as the management having had an overly simplistic idea of what the change would mean for the organization. The drawn-out recruitment process for the new organization signals both the same kind of simplistic view of the change from management, and also creates additional tension and mistrust between employees in the organization. When the employees do not know who to ask about, as in the example brought
up by Samantha, financial questions, this becomes a symbol for the new organizational
design not being clear enough, which becomes a manifestation of a perceived naïvity about
the change process. This is reinforced when conflicting information is provided, deadlines in
the change are not held, and steps are postponed.

The change process involves a step in which every employee will get a new employment
contract, if they are staying at the company. First, this was a way of communicating the scope
of the change - no stone would be unturned. As employees get their contracts renewed, they
feel like they cannot tell their colleagues about it, since they do not know if the others will
stay, and they do not want to make them upset. This creates an environment where people do
not talk to each other about their current situation. Distrust among the employees, against
their employer, and the assumption that the employees can not trust each other, spreads. This
is realized in language, with the employees referring to themselves and their colleagues as “I”
and “them”, talking about “I know some who…” instead of talking about “us” and “we”.

The employees do not interpret there to have been any shift of mandate towards the people
closest to the customer, which was communicated as the intended goal of the change process.
They perceive that decision-making power has been moved further up the organization,
towards the top management team and the global office. When asked about what she thinks
the goal of the change process was, Carol answers: “Yeah, they want to control the business”
which is interpreted as The WorldGoods Malls not valuing honesty, adding to the distrust the
employees feel towards their employer.

5.4 Breaking the compass

We will now utilize Alvesson’s (2013) ideas of using metaphors to conceptualize culture. In
the initial stages, before the change process, as the organization was described, we can
identify the culture as a compass. The culture, observable through the commonly held
assumptions and values the organization was described to share, provided a common sense of
direction. This sense of direction, shared by the employees, facilitated decision-making,
clarified structure, and guided employees in which behaviour was acceptable at the company. The metaphor of culture as mental prison, or blinders, highlight the way in which the established culture provided a sense of direction, that change was absolutely necessary, that was so strong that other options were ignored. Finally, by using the metaphor of culture as social glue, we can bring attention to how the culture’s unifying properties made working at The WorldGoods Malls a more enjoyable experience, facilitating social interactions.

When the employees perceive a shift in the values held by the company, it affects them in their daily work. As we have discussed, we can see this in the perception of the employees main purpose being their function, rather than their value as people, which, along with contradictory information, leads to fragmentation. This, in turn, leads to time spent arguing with other employees about, to name a few things: what is important, how work is to be done, and who is responsible for what. They start referring to themselves and each other as “me” and “them” rather than as “we”. This adds to the sense of a lack in structure and clarity, leading to uncertainty and ambiguity among the employees.

Employees start questioning if the change was necessary at all, exemplified by Ruth:

“I like the way how we are trying to solve their... the issue or any big project? And I think that we need to train people how to make decision in a group? Because it looked like everyone tried to push their own side to get some advantages, and it is not faster”.

She questions if such a comprehensive change was the best way to deal with the organization’s problems and suggests, the way to do so was learning to make decisions in groups better, rather than coming up with an entire new way of working.

Here, we have seen examples that suggest we can no longer apply Alvesson’s (2013) metaphors, as the culture no longer provides a common sense of direction that motivates, guides action, and unites the employees. Their interpretations have led to fragmentation, and to use our own metaphor, “Breaking the Compass”, resulting in, confusion, arguments, and
the employees worrying about their future. We want to point out that the compass does not break in the sense that it stops working, no longer filling a function, but rather that fragmentation leads to the employees no longer having the same shared compass, instead being guided by individual compasses. When these point to different directions, conflicts appear. This metaphor is a way of illustrating what the dynamic processes that take place during change can lead to - the significance being that these processes have an observable effect on the culture.
6.0 Conclusion

We have studied an organizational change attempt where the management team had the intention of involving the employees in the process, from the perspective of the employees. We have problematized the management-centric perspective of many studies on organizational change, for example the patronizing approach to change resistance. In order to understand the complex processes through which the employees create meaning from what is happening as the change progresses, we have applied a cultural perspective, using the Hatch’s model of cultural dynamics. We have linked this to a processual view of change, and suggest that a cultural perspective can be useful in order to understand some of the complexities of organizational change, such as how individuals interpret artifacts in ways that are difficult to foresee.

Further, we conclude that the established perspective on resistance to change is an oversimplification of a complex phenomena, and a result of a manager-centric perspective of change and organizations. The studies focusing on how to deal with organizational change take a patronizing perspective on the people affected by the change, and instead of trying to understand the complex processes that lead to why “resistance” occurs, they attempt to make a “comb-over” with suggestions on how to make the change initiators’ problem go away.

Hatch’s model of cultural dynamics is an effective tool to begin understanding the processes in which symbols and artifacts are interpreted by the employees of an organization as it goes through change, revealing some of the complexities “hiding” under resistance to change. Instead of discarding change resistance as simply complaining, we suggest taking the perspective of those exhibiting that “resistance” in order to take into account the wider context affecting the situation. It helps us see uncover the processes affecting culture, such as the “Breaking the Compass”, illustrating how the dynamic processes of culture can lead to a perceived involuntary value shift. The main point being that there is an observable consequence of the cultural dynamics during organizational change. An emergent approach to
change allows us to do this, bringing to light the social processes, in which the employees are affected by meaning-making actions taken by change initiators. It is these processes that can be understood with the help of the model of Cultural Dynamics.

From a methodological perspective, we have given an example that presenting data as a story can be an effective tool when attempting to give a comprehensive image of the context in which the studied phenomena take place. We have shown that this way of data presentation is not limited to strict ethnographies, and that it allows the researcher to illustrate a complex situation in a straightforward and pedagogical way without oversimplifying the situation.

6.1 Practical implications

When adopting a perspective that employees are “complaining” about change, it becomes easy to discard this as unfounded whining. The reality for the change initiator is hectic, and it is difficult to foresee how every action that is taken can have symbolic significance. This paper contributes with a perspective on change that emphasizes the significance of the dynamic processes in which employees construct their collective reality. We can consider this as a suggestion for change leaders to be closer to the people working in the organization and to take an active role in the working environment, being part of the sense-making process and facilitating the “management of meaning” as suggested by authors advocating a processual view of change.

By using a cultural perspective and adapt Hatch’s cultural dynamics model, we can learn some things from this study at the WorldGoods Malls, that might be useful for future change leaders and employees. What we believe is one of the main lessons from this study is the importance of understanding that when we change artifacts that can carry symbolic value, such as for example actions, objectives or language, we will in some way also affect the values and assumptions of the culture. As artifacts are the only tangible aspects of culture, they are the ones that can be subject to direct intervention. A proclamation that “At our
organization, we value people” does not automatically imply that the culture will be characterized by having high regard for people. Artifacts, such as words and actions are continuously interpreted and given symbolic value, and affect culture. This is a complex social process that should not be underestimated, and managers should pay attention to the creation of meaning and how it is attached to artifacts that are part of the culture. Not doing so is in part a missed opportunity and a negligence of the dynamic relationships that affect organizational culture.

6.2 Further studies

Our study provides an understanding of how employees interpret and experience an organizational change with a participative approach. This complements the “one-sided” studies within organizational change, were the most studies are written from the view of the change leaders, and not the receiving employees. This study first and foremost focus on understanding what is going on in the organization during the change, with a cultural perspective to understand why the employees experiencing it as they do. By applying Hatch’s model of cultural dynamics on our case, we can much better understand the employees point of view. With the thought of how enormously deep and complex culture can be, we believe that we only have been scratching the surface of why employees really interpret and experience a change as they do. A suggestion for future studies is therefore to do a deeper ethnographic study based on observations rather than interviews, of an organizational change from an employee perspective.

Moreover, this paper has problematized the expression “resistance to change”, suggesting that “resistance” is a flawed term that simplifies a complex phenomena. Future studies can continue exploring why “resistance” happens, and how to understand the processes in which this occurs even better. This should be done through ethnographic studies, where the researcher can spend more time at the case organization.
References

Books


**Articles**


**Online resources:**


Appendix A

Interview guide

Our interviews have been following the same set-up: background for the interview, personal questions, general questions about the World Goods Malls, questions more focused on the change “Fit For Fight”, and a final closure. The exactly order of the questions have varied, as well as the exactly question that we have been asking, depending on how the interview has been going.

Background for the interview

We have started the interviews with introducing the background of the study, who we are and what we are studying, confirmed the time for the interview, and asked the interviewee if we are allowed to record the interview.

Personal questions

We have asked our interviewees to tell us their background, for how long time they have been working at the WorldGoods Malls and what made them wanted to work there from the beginning. Further, we have asked them about their current role at the organization and what work tasks they have. We have also asked them about what they love with their job, respectively what they do not like.
**General questions about the WorldGoods Malls**

In this section we have asked the interviewees what the WorldGoods Malls business idea is, what the company actually does. Furthermore, we have asked them to describe the culture within the company and if there has been any previous changes within the organization.

**Fit For Fight**

When asking questions about the change Fit For Fight we have asked the interviewees to tell us what the change is about and how the change has been communicated. Furthermore we have asked the interviewees why/if they think that the change has to be done and how they have experienced the change, and how it has affected themselves and how they experience the change’s effects on other employees within the company.

**Closure**

The interviews have been finished by asking the interviewees what they think about the WorldGoods Malls future and if there is anything else that we have missed to ask that they think can be helpful for us to know in order to respond our research question.