Master Thesis

Walking the Walk and Talking the Talk: A Case Study of Organizational Identity Dynamics at Sparbanken Gripen

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Heather Hodgetts & Veronica Sandgren

LUND UNIVERSITY

School of Economics and Management
Department of Business Administration
Managing People, Knowledge and Change

Abstract

Title: Walking the Walk and Talking the Talk: A Case Study of Organizational Identity Dynamics at Sparbanken Gripen

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Authors: Heather Hodgetts and Veronica Sandgren

Advisor EHL: Sarah Muhr and Stephan Schaefer

Keywords: Organizational identity, organizational culture, organizational image, resistance, cynicism, human resource management

Purpose: The purpose of our study is to further the understanding of the dynamics between organizational identity, culture and image, and the role of HR in this dynamic.

Methodology: Through an abductive mode of inference our methodology follows a reflexive approach, encompassing a hermeneutical interpretation of the empirical material.

Theoretical Model: Our own conceptual understanding of the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* as put forwards by Hatch and Schultz (2002)

Empirical Foundation: Our empirical material was gathered through semi-structured interviews with employees, HR representatives, and managers at the site of the case organization.

Summary of Findings: From the empirical material we have expanded on the understanding of the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* (Hatch and Schultz 2002), arguing that it the framework has previously neglected the feasibility of the simultaneous occurrence of the model's dysfunctionalities (*narcissism* and *loss of culture*).

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Chapter One: Introduction

> "...it is our view that knowing how organizational identity dynamics works helps organizations to avoid organizational dysfunction and thus should increase their effectiveness.....organizations should strive to nurture and understand the processes relating organizational culture, identity and image. An understanding of both culture and image is needed in order to encourage a balanced identity able to develop and grow along with changing conditions and the changing stream of people who associate themselves with the organization" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1014).

In their research regarding the dynamics of organizational identity Hatch and Schultz core understanding centres on the interplay between identity, culture and image (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). This dynamic relation was first presented by Hatch and Schultz in their *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* (2002). This overarching relational conceptualization forms the basis or our research as we endeavour to add to the understanding of the interplay between organizational identity, image and culture at the Swedish savings bank, Sparbanken Gripen.

Our point of reference in our research undertaking at the case organization has been the study of the HR department and its role within the organization. For this reason we have chosen to specifically explore the development and implementation of HR tools and processes to drive organizational change, and subsequently the role of HR. We ground our theoretical perspective through the visualization of Hatch and Schultz's (2002) *Organizational Identity Dynamics Mode*. This theoretical perspective is chosen as it provides us with a model which presents one way of explaining the relationship between organizational identity, organizational culture and organizational image. Through our own conceptualization of the existing literature concerning organizational identity, culture and image we develop our own understanding of the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model*, building on the ideas of Hatch and Schultz (2002). Hence, our research aim is to investigate the practical application of our understanding of the model in the case organization Sparbanken Gripen.

Against the backdrop of the aims of this thesis, we have sought to answer two research questions, which have guided our research:

- *How do HR tools and processes impact organizational identity and culture?*
- *Is there employee resistance to HR tools and processes that threaten organizational identity and culture?*

Based on the above, the following paragraphs will present an overview of the layout of the thesis. Following this introductory chapter we will present the methodological foundation for this thesis.

The second chapter presents our qualitative approach to the research undertaken. This approach was chosen as it provides us with the possibility to gain a deeper understanding of the case organization through the parallel use and analysis of; interviews, field notes, existing academic literature and organizational documentation. In considering our ontological and epistemological perspectives we chosen to work in line with an abductive mode of inference. An abductive mode of inference is a suitable way to interpret and explain a single (often surprising) case alone (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), as opposed to an inductive or deductive mode of inference. Resulting from this standpoint we have chosen to follow Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2009) reflexive approach to methodology. Alvesson (2003, p.14) explains that by use of a reflexive approach a researcher has two advantages, "(1) avoidance naivety associated with the belief that 'data' simply reveal reality and (2) creativity following from an appreciation of the potential richness of meaning in complex data". Resulting from our reflexive approach we have implemented the use of hermeneutics to gain a deeper understanding of the case organization and to be able to answer the questions "what is going on here?" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). As such our epistemological standing can be seen as our understanding of a phenomena rather than a definitive explanation thereof. Specifically, we have adopted alethic hermeneutics as it incorporates a circular flow between pre-understanding and understanding (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Based on this, our ontology falls into social constuctionism, and therefore leads us to develop an understanding of how reality is social constructed using our epistemological approach. In addition to the gathering of existing material and information, the methods applied by use of the above methodology have guided our gathering of new material by semi-structured interviews with members of the case organization.

The third chapter seeks to explore the relation between the themes of organizational identity, culture and image, through the existing literature - thus developing our conceptual understanding. This is achieved through the exploration of each theme separately and thereafter subsequently related to one another by use of the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* by Hatch and Schultz (2002). We contextualize organizational identity as an organizations attempt to construct and answer the question "who are we as an organization.

We bring into this discussion the idea of place identity which highlights the notion of an emotional attachment to place of work by employees of an organization (Humphreys & Brown, 2006). Following this, the research regarding organizational culture is introduced, specifically noting the importance and affect of historical rootedness on organizational culture. Stemming from this we address the increased awareness in academia of a cultures ability to hinder organizational change (Brown, 1998; Mullins, 2007; Brooks, 2006). The final theme discussed is that of organizational image. This discussion is twofold incorporating organizational image research as well as research into the image of *human resource management* and its functional role in an organization. A key perspective taken, on image and identity, is that of adaptive instability, addressing the ability of image to destabilize organizational identity and thus cause for its revaluation (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). Addressing the image of HR we foremost note the historical development of this organizational function moving from that of *traditional personnel management* to *human resource management*. Bringing these themes together, we utilize Hatch and Schultz's (2002) *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model*, and specifically their representation of the processual links connecting the themes above. In developing their conceptualization we also draw attention to potential dysfunctionality in the processual relation between these themes. This leads us to address one of the research questions for this thesis, namely that of resistance. In particular we highlight the more contemporary forms of resistance such as humour and cynicism (Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Fleming, 2005:b; Fleming, 2005:a).

Our fourth chapter introduces the reader to our case organization, Sparbanken Gripen. Firstly, we present a general historical overview of saving banks as financial institutions, which is then followed by a more detailed presentation of Sparbanken Gripen and its historical presence in its area of operation. Utilizing the process links of the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* (Hatch & Schultz, 2002), as conceptualized in the previous chapter, we develop a visual depiction and an analysis of the material gathered in our research at the case organization. As such this chapter seeks to explore the perception upon identity, culture and image, and the interconnectedness between these concepts. We begin with the process link connecting organizational culture and organizational identity where "identity is seen to express cultural understanding" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 991). This link is collectively referred to by the employees of the organization as 'The Gripen Spirit', which incorporate historical notations of loyalty as well as place identity. The second link addresses the connection between organizational identity and image, as "expressed identity leaves impression on others" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 991). This expression takes the shape of deliberate and projected image work in annual reports and on the banks internet homepage. To further the understanding of the image efforts of the bank we explore the role of HR and their function in the organizational expression of the organizational identity and culture. This exploration brings to light a disparity in the perception of HR between the employees (perceiving HR in terms of traditional personnel management) and HR (perceiving themselves as strategic business partners). The third link subsequently links the organizational image to the organizational identity as "identity mirrors the images of others" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 991). This mirroring process has occurred within the bank through the HR driven development and implementation of an organizational development program, in this thesis referred to as the "Vision 2002" program. This program sought to firmly establish the banks business idea, vision, and values. We look to develop an understanding of how HR presents the development and implementation of the program, and the employee's perception of it. To further expand on our understanding of the program, we explore the impact and perception of the *Great Place to Work* award, which HR argues has a direct correlation to the perceived success of the "Vision 2002" program. The fourth process link, which is discussed in parallel to the third process link above, concerns the link between identity and culture, as "reflecting embeds identity and culture" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 991). In other words, the fourth process link addresses the employee's perception of HR-driven tools and processes. In summarizing the chapter we draw all the process links together and address both of our research questions through the theme of resistance. By inclusion of this theme, we critically reflect upon and evaluate the HR driven tools and processes, addressed above, and employee resistance in the form of humour, criticism and cynicism.

In concluding our thesis in the final chapter, we seek to answer our two research questions. Addressing the first question we find that HR tools and processes impact the organizational identity and culture to the extent that they are internalized by the employees. Subsequently we have at our case organization found occurrences of subtle expressions of resistance, towards the HR driven tools and processes, in the form of sarcasm, criticism and cynicism. The impact of this resistance arguably causes a discrepancy of the organizational identity between the HR department and the employees. By expansion of the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* by Hatch and Schultz (2002), we put forward the argument that the outcome of the resistance is highly problematic for the case organization, not solely as a result of its occurrence, but foremost as it has gone unnoticed by the HR department.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Following our introduction of the research problem and the overall structure and aims of the thesis, this chapter will explain our methodological foundation for this thesis. Upon identifying the ontological and epistemological grounding, the appropriate methods of data analysis used throughout the thesis will be discussed, including: interviews, field notes, and secondary material.

Through the two main fields of methodological analysis; qualitative and quantitative research, there is a vast and dynamic range of methodologies and methods at the disposal to us as academic researchers. Qualitative and quantitative analysis are often pitted against each other, with both camps arguing for the supremacy of their methods. However, some researchers question the validity of this debate all together, preferring to emphasize the importance of choosing the appropriate methodologies and methods of analysis for the research in question (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Silverman, 2006). We understand qualitative research through the definition put forward by Denzin and Lincoln (2005).

> "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalist approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

As such our thesis takes its standing in the qualitative branch of research methodology. Using the chosen methodological perspectives, reflexivity and hermeneutics, on which we will expand upon in the coming sections, the practical methods used in this thesis were semi-structured interviews, field notes (recorded after the interviews), secondary material and a thorough analysis of the academic literature used to build our conceptual framework in chapter three. This approach allowed us to gain a deeper understanding into the process and behaviours of employees at the organisation, as well as an understanding of the existing literature, and subsequently analyse our findings in an attempt to answer and explore our research questions.

2.1 Reflexivity: Considering our Ontological and Epistemological approach

Within the literature regarding the most appropriate ways in which to conduct research, we find multiple theories and understanding of the best way to approach research. In their most basic forms, ontology is the way we understand the world and the essence of being and following on from this epistemology can be seen as the techniques we will use to understand the ontology (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, we do note that the definitions of these labels are far from definitive, and vary depending on the authors philosophical positioning (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003).

We begin the discussion of our ontological and epistemological standing with a discussion of the predominant modes of inference. Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2003) acknowledge three of these as the inductive, deductive and abductive modes of inference. The deductive approach can be seen as characterised by a systematic and rigorous analysis of theory through a form of testing. In other words this approach uses the basis that a theory is conceptualized, and subsequently a research strategy is designed to test the hypothesis in a single case (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Alvesson & Sköldberg, (2009, p. 3) critically note that this approach "does not really appear to *explain* anything, but rather avoids explanation through authoritative statements." In contrast the inductive approach deals with the development of theories after the data has been collected, allowing the researcher to gain an understanding of the nature of the problem before creating general truths about a phenomena (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). However, according to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p.4) "this approach thus involves a risky leap from a collection of single facts to a general truth". Thus we chose to approach our research through an abductive mode of inference, as "in abduction, an (often surprising) single case usually interpreted from a hypothetic overarching pattern, which, if were true, explains the case in question. The interpretation should then be strengthened by new observations (new cases)" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 4). Upon this understanding, we choose to follow Alvesson & Sköldberg's (2009) reflexive approach to methodology. Alvesson (2003, p. 14) explains that utilizing a reflexive approach to research may have two possible advantages, namely the "(1) avoidance of naivety associated with the belief that "data" simply reveal reality and (2) creativity following from an appreciation of the potential richness of meaning in complex empirical data." Alvesson & Sköldberg (2009) have chosen to express their reflexive approach through the notion of levels; where the first level is concerned with how the researcher interacts with the material and constructs the data. Following on that, the second level concerns the researcher's interpretation and the search for underlying meanings in the material, which we chose to discuss through the principles of hermeneutics below. Lastly, the third level is about a critical interpretation of the social, political and ideological characteristics of the research. The last level asks for the researchers to critically scrutinize themselves, and the language which they use in their interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). While we base our approach in reflexivity, due to time constraints we were unable to fully embrace all the levels of reflexivity and thus mainly worked with levels one and two, only at times touching on the third level of criticality.

Taking our ontological positioning in an abductive mode of inference, with the understanding of reflexivity, we looked to hermeneutics as our means inquiring into how knowledge is created in the organizational reality, to further ground our epistemology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Hermeneutics offers a methodological perspective that centres on the researcher gaining a deeper understanding of the case organization, and developing insight into the question "what is going on here?" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). As such our epistemological standing can be seen as an understanding of the phenomena that we are researching, rather than a definitive explanation of it (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). This logic will also be enhanced through a reflexive approach in the challenging of the organizational reality that we wish to uncover, as "reflexivity operates with a framework that stimulates an interplay between producing interpretations and challenging them" (Alvesson, 2003, p. 14). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p.92) note that "from the very beginning a main theme in hermeneutics has been that the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole." From this objective approach, hermeneutics draws a sharp line between the studying subject and the studied object. In other words, objective hermeneutics can be seen to take the interpretation of the material (the text) objectively, taking what the researcher knows outside of the text out of the equation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In stark contrast to the objective movement to hermeneutics "alethic hermeneutics dissolves the polarity between subject and object into a more primordial, original situation of understanding, characterized instead by a disclosive structure" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 96). This approach to hermeneutics deals with the circular flow between understanding and pre-understanding, allowing for the revelation of something hidden or undiscovered through understanding the underlying meaning of a text (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). This concentration on the underlying meaning of the case study as well as the interplay between pre-understandings and understandings makes alethic hermeneutics a good fit for the depth of understanding that we wish to achieve in our research, and the freedom to apply our own understanding in the research as opposed to the objective nature of objective hermeneutics. In close connection to our epistemological standing in the hermeneutic approach, we find our ontology, in that we see the essence of being as a socially constructed reality. From this social constructionist standing, "reality- or at least parts thereof- is not something naturally given" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 23). This therefore leads us as researchers to study and attempt to understand how reality is socially constructed, through our epistemological approach. Following the above discussion of the methodological underpinning of this thesis, we now move to practical application of the research, in the applied method.

2.2 Discussion of the Applied Method

Bryman and Bell (2007) acknowledge that interviews can arguable be seen as one of the most predominant methods of qualitative research, and as such we sought to follow a qualitative research study. The method of conducting interviews with members of the organization under investigation appeared to the most suitable method in relation to our purpose with the thesis – namely to understand the reflections, opinions, values and mindsets of the organizational members.

The most common interview techniques are; structured, semi-structured, in-depth, and group interviews (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). Traditionally in the semi-structured approach to interviews, the researcher will work from a list of themes and questions that they wish to cover during the interview. In the case of the research undertaken for this thesis, the interviews followed along the lines of a semi-structured approach with the key questions and themes developed through an analysis and reflection upon the first interview with the HR Manager of the organization. Our interview questions and themes were also heavily influenced by prior knowledge and pre-understandings which we as the researchers jointly brought to the table. This knowledge and pre-understanding, comes from our separate Bachelor degree studies, work experience in the field of Human resource management by one of us, and importantly from our Master degree studies over the past year as part of the

Masters Program "Managing People, Knowledge and Change" at Lund University in Sweden. However, as the semi structured research approach builds upon a flexible and adaptable line of thought, the questions have varied and changed depending on the flow of the conversations during the interviews, leaving the interviewer to decide which questions are relevant to ask in order to guide the interviewee in a specific direction which might be of interest. Importantly for a qualitative approach this method provides a possibility to add additional questions to the conversation depending upon the subject matter touched upon by each individual participant. This in turn has enabled us to further explore the answers provided and change the line of questioning depending on the reactions and reflections of the interviewees (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews often consist of both open, and at times probing questions. The use of open questions allows the participant to describe, develop and define certain situations without the confinement of a question aimed at producing a specific answer. In the words of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003, p. 232):

> "The value of an open question approach lies in the dual ability to provide information regarding both more objective facts and more subjective opinions and attitudes as "an open question is designed to encourage the interviewee to provide an extensive and developmental answer, and may be used to reveal attitudes or obtain facts"

Probing questions, in turn, can develop on answers that are important to the research topic and allow the researcher to explore the responses further (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). During the interviews we conducted, the probing questions asked included "how did this make you feel?", "what are your thoughts or feelings in relation to that?" as well as, "what was the reason for this?". Using the answers given by the interviewees for the open questions, the probing questions further asked the participants to give specific examples of situations that have shaped their views and subsequent answers on the topics.

Following the first interview with the HR Manager of the organization, which took place at the Head office of the Bank on the 26th of February of 2010, all subsequent interviews were scheduled for and conducted during the period of 8th April, 2010 to 15th April, 2010. Following the initial interview, the HR Manager provided us with a list of, according to him, suitable organizational members to contact for interviews at the Bank. These members first received an email describing our thesis; subsequently we contacted all the people on the list, by phone, resulting in 7 scheduled interviews. The remaining three people were not able to participate in interviews due to time constraints. Appendix 1 contains an overview the interviewees as well as providing a short bibliographical presentation of each interviewee. Although all listed positions are correct, the names of the interviewees have been changed to pseudonyms, in the presentation of the case study as well as in the appendix.

The length of each interview varied between 45 minutes to 80 minutes. Each interview was conducted in the native language of the interviewees, Swedish. During this process all interviews were recorded, with the consent given by each interviewee, and subsequently translated during the transcription process. We acknowledge that the translation of the interviews, conducted in parallel with the transcription process, might have led to a possible distortion of certain words and the original meanings of some statements (Temple & Young, 2004). However, we have to the best of our abilities sought to translate the meaning of the statements or expressions of thoughts or feelings, rather than focusing on a correct word-by-word translation.

In addition to conducted interviews, field notes were also taken by the interviewer following all the interviews, in most cases within a day of the interview, in order to record the information and observations whilst they were fresh in the mind. The field notes have subsequently been used as a means of contextualizing of the interviews, by providing records of the interviewer's ideas, perceptions, observations and interpretations of the interview and the responses given during the interview process. Due to the fact that one of us did not attend the interviews, field notes also served as another means for us to share and discuss an understanding of the dynamics and proceedings of the interviews.

The use of secondary material has included the gathering of a wide range of existing material, which has often given us an opportunity to gain data, results and information that we would otherwise have been unable to collect ourselves, due to factor such as times, money and accesses. This material, in addition to academic literature, includes annual reports spanning eight years, and information made available on the case organization's website. Although secondary documentation opens up a wide range of existing material to us, the use of such material also meant that in our own analysis can be seen as "the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data" (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 326). We acknowledge that the analysis of the secondary material, has influenced and shaped our understanding of the interviews, in addition to our previous pre-understanding of the themes and topics addressed during the interviews. Foremost however, the secondary material used has been utilized in order for us to gain a grounding of existing theoretical knowledge on which to base this thesis, the conceptual framework and literature review - and not at least, the presentation of the case company.

Considerations are also given to the social context of interaction and subsequent ‘production’ of material obtained through interviews. As argued by Kvale (1996, p.281):

> “The interview is the inter-subjective enterprise of two persons talking about a common theme of interest. The interviewer does not merely collect statements/.../focusing on the transcripts as a collection of statements may freeze the interview into finished entities rather than treat its passages as stepping stones towards a continuous unfolding of meaning of what was said. In the latter case, the analysis of the transcribed interviews is a continuation of the conversation that started in the interview situation. The interviewee’s answers open a horizon of possible meanings to be pursued during later conversational analysis with the interview text. The focus of the analysis moves from what has already been said, beyond the immediate given, to what could have been said”.

Based on this, considerable reflection was placed on, not only what the interviewee said, could have said, or didn’t say, but also how they said it. This brings to light the argumentation by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995, p.60) that “the goal is not merely a picture of the daily life and concern of others, but rather a picture of this life and these concerns as seen, understood, and conveyed by the ethnographer”. Or in the words of Kvale (1996, p.276) that “the purpose of analysis is to uncover the meaning of the question, to make explicit its presuppositions, and thereby implicit conceptions of qualitative research it implies”. This links to the application of a reflexive approach to interviews as proposed by Alvesson (2003). Whilst acknowledging qualitative interviewing as a form of knowledge production, Alvesson (2003) presents eight metaphors aimed at enabling a re-conceptualization of the interview, as arguably, much research neglects the interview situation as a socially and linguistically complex situation. Importantly these eight metaphors highlight that interviews must be looked upon as “existing in a field of tensions between different logics (e.g., communication of facts and experiences, political action, script following, and impression management)” (Alvesson, 2003, p.14). From a reflexive standpoint this means that we throughout the process have sought to be aware of our own role in the gathering and presentation of the material, in the form of interview transcripts and field notes. We further sought to undertake a reflexive pragmatism acknowledging that the ‘conveyed message’ on the part of the interviewees ought to be discussed and problematized, as the “the sum is or can be something else or something more than its parts” (Widerberg 2002, p.149).

This section of the thesis has identified our ontological and epistemological positioning, presenting an understating of our mode of inference in the abductive approach. We have also discussed reflexivity and how, in conjunction with a hermeneutic approach, we will endeavour to understand and interpreted the material we have collected through interviews, field notes, and secondary material in the form of company documentation, websites, and existing literature regarding our theoretical concepts. The next chapter of our thesis will thus present an overview of the existing academic literature regarding organizational identity, culture and image. This will form our conceptual framework, and be visualized by use of the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

Chapter Three: Theoretical framework

> "Almost all corporate and organizational identity research link identity to image and always have. Similarly, culture has appeared regularly in discussion of corporate identity, although it has only recently been made an explicit part of theorizing about organizational identity" (Hatch & Schultz, 2000, p. 20).

Following from our presentation of the methodological considerations for this thesis, this chapter will give an overview of the contextualisation of our research questions and develop on the key concepts encompassed in those same questions. Foremost we in these sections seek to explore the interconnectedness between the theoretical concepts of identity, culture and image. We are therefore firstly looking to understand each concept separately, subsequently applying our understanding of these concepts in relation to Hatch and Schultz's (2002) *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model*. Importantly this overview will serve to not only contextualize the case organization itself, but also to place the role of HR in an organizational setting. The role of HR is included in this section as HR plays an important role in driving and developing tools and processes which are often of significance or of impact to organizational identity dynamics.

3.1 Introducing Identity Research

Within academic research there is an array of views regarding identity, and as a result of its dynamic and ambiguous nature researchers have found difficultly in definitively defining the phenomena. This has lead to a plethora of definitions, further complicated by the multiple means of identity construction and the many ways in which the context of identity can be understood (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006; Alvesson, 2004). While the definition of identity may be a theme of some perplexity, within the context of organizational studies "identity has become a popular frame though which to investigate a wide array of phenomena. Organizational scholars are increasingly concerned with organizational, managerial, professional and occupational identities, as well as how organizational members negotiate issues surrounding self in workplace settings" (Ashcraft, Alvesson, & Thomas, 2008, p. 5). Alvesson (2004), note that the word identity can be used in a variety ways and can describe a range of levels from that of self-identity, corporate identity, and religious identity to ethnic identity. On the level of the individual, identity often manifest in the way in which one endeavours to answer the questions; "who am I?" or "who do I want to be?" (Alvesson, 2004). This specifically concerns how a person attempts to construct and negotiate who they are in a social context, and how their own view of themselves is affected by the views and perceptions of those around them (Alvesson, 2004; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006). Alvesson also gives a more practical example of how personal identity has become increasingly important in organizational studies:

> "A particular personal identity implies a certain form of subjectivity, and thereby 'ties' a person's feelings, thinking, and valuing in particular direction. Decisions are often affected by the logical inherent in a specific self-image (Mitchell, Rediker, & Beach, 1986). If one defines oneself as primary a professional member doing a particular job, this means rather different identities even though the 'objective' work situation is the same. The professional may be somewhat less inclined to follow the instructions of management, while the organizational member may be more inclined to take the firm's best interest into account" (Alvesson, 2004, p. 189).

Alvesson (2004, p.109) further states that "identities are constituted, negotiated, reproduced, and threatened in social interaction, in the form of narratives, an also in material practices". Endeavouring to bring coherence to the understanding of the social nature of identity, *Social Identity Theory (SIT)* tenders a social-psychological perspective of identity, developed principally by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, and "according to SIT, people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories, such as organizational membership, religious affiliation, gender, and age cohort" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 20). The ability to categorise oneself and others in the social environment gives individuals the opportunity to place themselves and their identity in a social context. Individual and social identity can broadly be seen as some of the processes essential to understanding how people relate to not only their environment but also their working environment - in other words the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Importantly Alvesson (2004, p.191) argue that "a specific social identity increases the likelihood that certain ideas, values, and norms associated with the group or company concerned are internalized". Furthering the argumentation above, Ashforth and Mael (1989, p.27) elaborate on the development of social identification, stating that "although the SIT literature is relatively mute about how social identification occurs, the literature on organizational socialization suggests that situational definitions and self-definition both emerge through symbolic interactions." Symbolic integration in turn imposes an informational framework scheme on organizational experience, or in other words, social identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Furthering the discussion on identity research, Stuart Albert and David Whetten are often acknowledged in research literature as two of the first researchers to bring the field of identity research onto the organizational level (Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006), and “organizational identity is typically taken by scholars to be an organization’s members” collective understanding of the features presumed to be central and relatively permanent, and that distinguish the organization from other organizations” (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000, p. 64). Thus we argue that organizational identity can be seen as the shared or collective awareness of how members of an organization attempt to construct and answer the question “who we are as an organization?”- In other words, the socially constructed identity of the organization.

While some researchers understand organizational identity as somewhat static, we are in agreement with Humphreys and Brown (2006, p. 233) who “regard organizational identities not as generally static and objectively existing entities, but as extremely fluid discursive constructions constantly being made and re-made.....”. This fluidity can also be seen in how individuals and collective identities are created, defended, understood and negotiated (Humphreys & Brown, 2006; Alvesson, 2004). Due to this fluidity, an employee’s ability to develop and defend an individual identity in relation to the organizational identity becomes important (Humphreys & Brown, 2006). From the perspective of the employee, Humphreys and Brown (2006, p.231) argue that “every institution captures something of the time and interest if its members and provides something of a world for them; in brief, every institution has encompassing tendencies”. One way in which an organization may (intentionally or unintentionally) effect the identities of its employees is ‘place’, or more specifically the location of the organization (Humphreys & Brown, 2006; Rooney, et al. 2009). Whilst place identity is by Ronney et al (2009, p.47) defined as “a pot-pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings”, Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, (2003) highlight that the connection between an employee’s personal identity and the place their setting or place of work is most prominent in those employees who have an extended place history, which can increase the sense of place dependency that they employee may feel. This attachment to a certain place, or work location can have a knock on effect for the organizational identity as employees may build their own identities around the “place”, thus seeping into the collective organizational identity. This correlation between place and identity may also effect the organization in times of change, especially so when the “place” comes under jeopardy, “as people form emotional attachments to the place in which they live and work, they are more likely to resist changes to those places" (Rooney et al., 2009, p. 47).

3.2 Culture and the Organization

As with many research topics, there is yet to be a consensus on a definitive definition of organizational culture (Brown, 1998; Brooks, 2006; Senior & Fleming, 2006). In some cases the given definitions of culture contradict one another, "for example, if we define culture in an objective manner as an organisational variable then the understanding that culture can and should be actively managed is implicit. If we view culture as interpretative, intangible and indistinguishable from the organisation itself, we tend to accept that it is a much deeper concept which can only be understood in subjective terms" (Brooks, 2006, p. 249). While there are multiple definitions of organizational culture, this thesis draws on the definition put forward by Brown (1998, p. 9) stating that "organizational culture refers to the pattern of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organisation's history, and which tend to be manifested in materials arrangements and in the behaviours of its members." This definition importantly acknowledges the historical context of organizational culture, allowing us to fully explore not only the behaviours of the employees and managers with regard to culture, but also how the history of the organization effects how the individuals' construct their own identities and the organizational identity.

The culture of an organization can arguably be seen as developing over an extended period of time in response to complex factors that shape and inform the organization (Mullins, 2007). In an attempt to understand how a culture manifests itself Brown (1998, p.42) highlights three specific sources of organizational culture: "[1] the societal or national culture within which an organisation is physically situated; [2] the vision, management style and personality of an organisation's founder or other dominant leader; [3] and the type of business an organization conducts and the nature of the business environment". In addition to these sources of organizational culture Mullins (2007) also notes history, size and location as factors that may influence the development of culture. In an attempt to gain a competitive advantage management has also taken it upon them to foster, or create organizational cultures using a multitude of tools and initiatives (Senior & Fleming, 2006). One example of this can be seen in the research regarding "cultures of fun":

> "According to the original culture gurus, including Peters and Waterman (1982), Pascale and Athos (1981), and Deal and Kennedy (1982), managers should revitalize employees by creating a corporate environment that is conducive to fun, humour, and play. What Deal and Kennedy (1982) called "work hard/play hard" cultures aim to supplant the traditional stereotype that depicts work as a serious and deadpan activity. Through informal dress codes, office parties, games, humour, zany training camps, joking, and so on, organizational members are encouraged to loosen up and find more pleasure in their roles" (Fleming, 2005:b, p. 286).

While some researchers continue to add to the discourse of cultural change, others stress the extreme difficulty of such an endeavour, even questioning if forced cultural change is even possible (Senior & Fleming, 2006). As Wilson & Rosenfeld (1999, p. 237) state, "the pervasive nature of organizational culture cannot be stressed too much. It is likely to affect virtually all aspects of organizational life." Thus, we feel it is of great importance to not only study organizational culture but also understand its origins in the organization and how it affects the organization at all levels.

"While not strictly speaking a component of an organisation's culture, it is generally agreed that culture can only be fully understood as the product of a historical process" (Brown, 1998, p. 31), and as such organizations steeped in a strong organizational history often develop cultures stemming from their historical background. In line with this Mullins (2007, p.724) has argued that "the reason, and manner in which the organization was originally formed, its age, and the philosophy and values of its owners and first senior managers will affect culture". As well as the subtle influence that history can have on organizational culture, it can also be manipulated as a tool in a effort to strengthen or foster culture, as Mullins (2007, p.724) explains: "corporate history can be an effective induction tool to assist, for example, a growth programme, and it help integrate acquisitions and new employees by infusion with the organization's culture and identity." Rowlinson & Hassard, (1993) in turn take the influence of history further, arguing that the roles of leaders, narratives and symbols have been mistakenly identified as core factors of culture. They propose that a more thorough analysis of an organizations historical context may often reveal more complexity than first apparent. While we agree that organizational history is of critical importance in the understanding of organizational culture, Rowlinson & Hassard's, (1993) argument can be seen as somewhat overstated in its attempt to undermine the importance of narratives and symbols. As Hatch & Schultz (2002, p. 1001) state: "when symbolic objects are used to express and organizations identity, there meaning is closely linked to the distinctiveness that lies within any organizational culture/.../ artefacts become symbols by virtue of the meaning that are given to them. Thus, even though this meaning will be reinterpreted by those who receive it/..../ some of its original meaning is still embedded in and carried by artefact", we argue for the importance of the consideration of cultural artefact and the meaning which they can carry with them.

Stemming from the discussion of organizational culture academic literature highlights that organizational culture is increasingly considered to be one of the main obstacles to organizational change, making culture a vital ingredient in the success or failure of an organization (Brown, 1998; Mullins, 2007; Brooks, 2006).

> "In recent years attention has shifted from the effects of the organization of work on people's behaviour to how behaviour is influenced by the organizational culture, What is much more common today is the widespread recognition that organizational change is not just, or even necessarily, about changing the structure but often changing the culture too" (Stewart, 1999, p. 123).

According to Schwartz & Davis, (1981, p. 35) "culture is capable of blunting or significantly altering the intended impact of even well thought-out changes in an organization". Culture has the ability to greatly affect the success of a change initiative has lead to a plethora of research attempting to develop tools and processes with which managers can change organizational culture (Senior & Fleming, 2006; Brown, 1998). Whilst the literature acknowledges that cultures are not static and therefore organizational culture has the ability to change, due to the fact that organizational culture is interlocked with the beliefs, values and norms of each individual; organic, unforced change is often slow and not easy to direct (Burnes, 2004; Senior & Fleming, 2006; Brown, 1998). In bringing the main points of this section together Burnes (2004) highlights the effect of a culture rooted in traditions and history, in relation to change initiatives within the organization:

> "... most employees in an organisation have a high emotional stake in the current culture. People who have been steeped in the traditions and values of the organisation and whiles philosophy of life may well be caught up in the organisation's cultural assumptions will experience considerable uncertainty, anxiety and pain in the process of change.... Even if there are personal gains to be made from altering the habits of a lifetime these are likely to be seen as potential or theoretical only, as against the certainty of the losses" (Burnes, 2004, p. 181).

3.3 Image and the Organization

> "Image is in the eye of the receiver. An organization may transmit a message about itself to its employees, its investors, its customers, and all its internal and external audiences. It may indeed wish to convey a particular self image, but it is in the reception of the message that is the important factor. The corporate image is simply the picture that an audience has of an organization through the accumulation of all received messages" (Ind, 1990, p. 21).

Once again researchers are faced with a concept that is tricky to define, with an ontological position not yet fully established (Alvesson, 1990; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). This confusion is in part due to the different dimensions of image, in that sometimes image may refer to as an "inner picture" (how an individual perceives and object) and on the other hand image may also be "communicated" (involving the view, opinions and attitudes some communicates about an object). An additional reason for the confusion with image is also to do with which field image is being defined in (Alvesson, 1990; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). This is further stressed by Boorstin (1992, p .19) who states that "an image is ambiguous. It floats somewhere between the imagination and the senses, between expectations and reality." Within the marketing communication field, corporate image can be arguably be seen as the associations made by an individual in response to a signal or message by or about an organisation (Gioia, Schultz & Corely, 2000). Taking this understanding to a deeper level, through a more identity related approach Gioia, Schultz, & Corley argue that:

> "Scholars have seen organizational image as a broader concept, which includes notions involving the ways organizational members believe others see the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991); fabricated, projected pictures aimed at various constituencies (Bernstine, 1984); and the public"s perception of a given organization (Berg & Gagliardi, 1985)" (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000, p. 63)

Image management is able to manifest on multiple levels, from how an organization attempts to manage its corporate reputation to how an individual employee endeavours to foster their own personal image (Alvesson, 2004). Everything an organization does affects image, including factors outside organization control. In pinpointing specific organizational attempts aimed at image management Alvesson (2004, p. 75) notes that "most actives are not exclusively about influencing the external worlds impression of the company - what is intentional image management may be hard to tell." Some strategic decision may also have an undertone of an organizational attempt at image management. An organization that is well know is often viewed as successful and thus organizations develop marketing and communication strategies to boots awareness of products, services and importantly also the organization itself (Alvesson, 2004; Bernstine, 1984; Ind, 1990). For example, an organization may look to align itself with an academic institute, in an attempt to give the image of an organization involved in intellectual research, an organization may also look to be recognised by awarding bodies for achievements such as being a good place to work, having excellent customer service, or having award winning quality (Alvesson, 2004). Awards such as these are often aimed at the external audience; however an organization's internal audience may also be influenced by such image initiatives. Whether an employee decides to or not, they all engage in some form of image management, what is important, for the organization is whether the employee's image projections fall in line with the intentions of top management or if they run against it (Alvesson, 2004). Thus an attempt at image management that strengthens the employee's image of the organization in line with management's intending image can be seen as positive, "realising that every employee is a potential salesman for the company, and that the company is selling much more than its conventional product range, brings the employees into the centre of the image formation process" (Kennedy, 1977, p. 123). This image selling, or projection of image, on the part of the employees can be thus be seen as intertwined in the organizational identity, as stated by Rindova & Fomrum (1998, p. 60) who argue that "projected images reflect not only a firm's strategic objectives but also its underlying identity".

Taking another perspective on the relationship between image and identity and building on the argument of the fluidity of identity, Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2000, p. 64) state "...that the instability of identity arises from its ongoing relationship with organizational image, which are clearly characterized by a notable degree of fluidity." While this instability may be interpreted as negative, Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2000) argue that the instability of organizational identity can in fact be more usefully understood as adaptability to changes in the organization.

> "The basic concept of adaptive instability in organizational identity is a straightforward one: as a consequence of its interrelationships with image in its various guises, organizational identity becomes dynamic and mutable. This instability in identity actually allows better adaptation to the demands of the environment that is itself undergoing continuous change" (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000, p. 74).

Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2000) further propose that identity change due to adaptive instability occurs in one of two ways: reactively or proactively. Exploring the reactive response "[t]he interpretations of an organization's projected images(s) by outsiders most often results in a reactive examination of identity" (Gioia, Schultz, & Corely, 2000, p, 74). This is most notable in today's business world in the relationship between the organization and the global media. Whilst Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2000, p.75) highlight that “over time an organization is subjected to multiple interpretations of its identity and image, most often transmitted by the media”, they further argue that this in turn will lead to multiple identity and image changes, as a reactive response by the organization noting that “other research, however, has demonstrated that organizations can also be proactive in inducing identity change, even in the absence of obvious external pressures or crisis” (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000, p. 75). In one research example Gioia & Thomas, (1996, p. 75) “found that the top managers sustained the ongoing change effort by projecting and touting a captivating future image (becoming a “top-10 public research university”) to help guide the organization toward a new, desired identity. They projected this desirable future image on the assumption that the image would channel identity into alignment”. Critically however, Humphreys and Brown (2006) questions the ability of the organization to uses adaptive instability as a tool to effective initiate change, throwing into question how predictable these reactions, either proactive or reactive really are:

> “While organizational identities may be adaptively unstable, and thus mutable within the constraints imposed by the availability of discursive resources, it is not clear that they are manageable by elites in programmed and predictable ways. Hegemony, like control, is never complete” (Humphreys & Brown, 2006, p. 252).

3.3.1 The changing Image and Evolving Role of HR

Developing our understanding of image and identity, the development of the contemporary image of the *human resource management* department also serves as a parallel example of the connection between image and identity. We therefore find it appropriate to discuss the historical role of HR in more depth and their scope of influence, by use of specific tools and processes, specifically in the interplay between image and identity.

Within academia it has been acknowledged that there has been a progression from a more traditional *personnel management* to a contemporary understanding of the function as *human resource management*. This has not only changed their role in relation to the organization, but also its scope of influence within the organizational setting (Torrington, 1989; Evans, 2003; Armstrong, 2006; Leopold & Harris, 2009). As argued by Evans, “[the] HR role has evolved from that of a payroll clerk and welfare supporter, through corporate policeman and relations expert, to that of a business partner role” (Evans, 2003, p. 28). Table 3.1 below provides an overview of some key factors of differentiation between the traditional personnel role in the organization and the role of *human resource management*.

Table 1: Contrasting perceptions of traditional personnel and HRM (Adapted from: Evans, 2003, p. 29)

Perception of Traditional Personnel role	Perceptions of the role of HRM
Reactive	Proactive
People as an expense	People as assets
Stability	Constant change
Task force	Task and enablement focus
Tactical solution	Strategic solution
Focus on operational issues	Focus on strategic issues
Employee advocate	Business partner

Whilst Evans, above, has spoken about a traditional personnel role versus a role of *human resource management*, Leopold and Harris referring to the same phenomena refers to notions of a 'low commitment HR strategy' and a 'high commitment HR strategy' (Leopold & Harris, 2009, p.31). A 'low commitment HR strategy' includes components such as supervision, regulation, and a strong administrative focus. On the other hand a 'high commitment HR strategy' incorporates; value management, customer focus, and partnership relations. This division to a larger extent encapsulates that traditional or low commitment HR practices are not obsolete from contemporary organizational settings. Rather the way in which human resources are managed is a strategic choice significantly dependent upon the operational context of the organization in questions. Alvesson, who refers to similar differentiating concepts, namely between a 'human capital advantages' and a 'human process advantage' argues that "all organizations need both human capital and human process in order to work. But as resources are not endless and one can't have everything, the two elements may be prioritized differently" (Alvesson, 2004, p. 139-140).

The altered scope of influence can be seen as dual in its cause of emergence stemming both from a changed organizational scope, mirroring an increasingly competitive global market where human resources have become a key competitive advantage; as well as from the HR profession itself, and by extension academia, in adapting to these altered circumstances which organizations face to an ever increasing extent (Leopold & Harris, 2009; Storey, 2005). The transformed organizational scope does in an overview presented by Storey (2005) stretch from a shift in factors from rigid, rational and bureaucratic forms of management, to globalization, entrepreneurialism and informationalism. Importantly Storey (2005) also argues that whilst these factors influence human resource practices, they carry implications for organizational forms. These changes have not only brought about new ways of managing and organizing employees, but also a change in attitude, "...yesterday personnel was about managing a resource. Today, it is about people being the only source of competitive advantage" (Morton, Newall, & Sparkes, 2001, p. 1). The increased importance of human resources and the management thereof have, in other words, lead to these matters taking on an increased strategic importance for many organizations, as a factor enabling sustainability and competitive advantage (Alvesson, 2004). Leopold and Harris argue that the strategic managing of human resources is to be understood as "the establishment of principles and the shaping of practices whereby the human resources which an organization, seen as a corporate whole, requires to carry out work tasks that enable it to continue successfully in the long term" (Leopold & Harris, 2009, p. 21). Basing his ideas on the strategic importance of HR, Alvesson has develop the term *personnel concept* to encompass the idea of a company's conceptualization of the kind of employees it wants to attract; its offering of rewards and benefits for these employees as stimulating and developmental components; and the active shaping of motivational-identity orientations and cultural beliefs and meanings (Alvesson, 2004). Of interest to this thesis is primarily the last component to this concept, namely HRs active role in the shaping of identity orientations and the impact of this identity on cultural beliefs and meanings.

Linking this overview of HR to the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* by Hatch and Schultz (2002), it can be said that the professional or departmental identity of HR is in its expression directly impacting the image of HR in organizational and academic settings; whilst simultaneously mirroring and thus amending its identity as a outcome of the importance attributed to the image and role of HR.

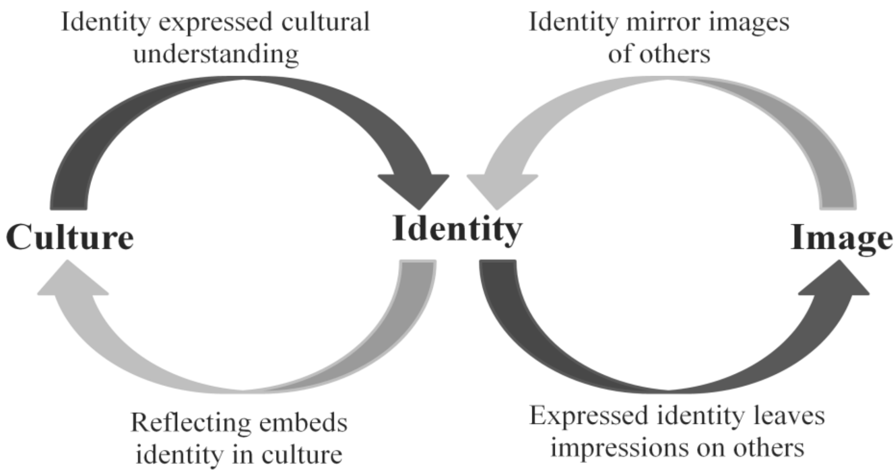
3.4 The dynamics of Organizational Identity, Culture and Image

Following our discussion of the theoretical concepts of identity, culture and image, we now seek to understand the interrelations of each topic in the organizational setting. As previously discussed in this chapter there is throughout the literature little consensus as to the definitions of identity, image and culture, and adding to the confusion often each word is used in the defining statements of the other (Brooks, 2006; Brown, 1998). We therefore agree with Hatch and Schultz (2002, p. 991) who argue that "organizational identity needs to be theorized in relation to both culture and image in order to understand how internal.... definitions of organizational identity interact." We further stand alongside Hatch and Schultz (2002) who acknowledge that organizational identity is neither wholly culture or image bound, and can thus arguably be understood as a set of process that interrelate both concepts. Developing the understanding of the interrelations of identity, culture and image, Hatch and Schultz (2002) put forward the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* which outlines four process links, linking culture, image and identity (Figure 1),The processes are;

> "Mirroring (the process by which identity is mirrored in the images of others), reflecting (the process by which identity is embedded in cultural understandings), expressing (the process by which culture makes itself known through identity claims), and impressing (the process by which expressions of identity leave impressions on others)" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p.991).

In order to develop a deeper understanding of the link between identity, culture, and image in the organizational identity dynamics model, we will discuss each process link in turn.

Figure 1: The organizational identity dynamics model (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 991)



The first process links concerns the connection of culture to identity, Hatch and Schultz (2002) define this link as; "identity expresses cultural understanding" (Hatch and Schultz, 2002, p.991). This process encompasses how identity claims allow members of the organization to speak about themselves in relation to the organization; this can be to those outside the organization, but also other internal members (Hatch and Schultz, 2002). One area of interest, as highlighted by Hatch and Schultz, is when an organization uses symbols as means of expressing organizational identity, as these symbols carry with them parts of the organizational culture - “artefacts become symbols by virtue of the meanings that are given to them. Thus, even though its meaning will be re-interpreted by those that receive it, when a symbol moves beyond the culture that created it, some of its original meaning is still embedded in and carried by the artefact” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1001). We however deem it appropriate to also incorporate the conceptualization of place identity in this process link. Due to the fact that place identity incorporates the idea that employees may form an emotional attachment to place within which an organisation stands, including the history, traditions and cultures that are inherently part of the identity of that specific place (Humphreys & Brown, 2006; Burnes, 2004).

The second process link explains that the “expressed identity leaves impressions on others” and concerns the link between the organizational identity and image 8Hatch and Shultz 2002, p.991). Hatch and Schultz (2002, p.1002-1003) explain that “in its most deliberate from, identity is projected to others, for example, by broadcasting corporate advertising, holding press conferences, providing information to business analysts, creating and using logos, building corporate, or dressing in the corporate style.” Projected images such as these can thus be seen as cues of the underlying organizational identity (Rindova & Fombrun, 1998). However, organizational images are not only projected through the endorsement of management, and as such members at all levels of the organization can be seen to partake in transmitting images (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Rindova & Fombrun, 1998). Hatch and Schultz (2002, p.1003) hence state: “expressions of organizational culture can make important contributions to impressing others that extend beyond the managed or intended impressions created by deliberate attempts to convey a corporate sense of organizational identity.” In this thesis we argue that HR plays an important role in attempts to convey organizational identity, by means of the active shaping of motivational identity orientations and cultural beliefs and meanings (Alvesson, 2004).

In linking image and organizational identity, Hatch and Schultz understand the third process link as how “identity mirrors the image of others” (Hatch and Schultz 2002, p.991). The image and opinions of other parties, both internal and external can arguable be seen to have an effect on organizational identity, in that these opinions act as a mirror to the organization. While this mirroring may sometimes show that the organization that it is being perceived in the way it wishes, it may also throw up some ugly truths and show inconsistency between the projected image and the perceived one (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

> "... what people see as their organization's distinctive attributes (its identity) and what they believe others see as distinctive about the organization (its image) constrain, mould, and fuel interpretations.... Because image and identity are constructs that organization members hold in their minds, they actively screen and interpret these issues..." (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991, p. 550; in Hatch and Schultz, 2002, p).

This mirroring can lead members of the organization to actively change or reflect on the image that they "see in the mirror". Thus, image can be seen as a destabilizing force of identity and it can create a situation where members feel the need to re-evaluate the organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Linking to our conceptual discussion of image and the organization we feel it is important here to highlight the work of Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2000) and their argumantation for adaptive instability to foster organizational adaptation. We agree with Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2000) that image has the ability to destabalize organizational identity and thus cause a revaluation of the exsiting identity, enabling change, through either reactive or proactive means. Importantly, we believe that the role of HR is not to be neglected in the discussion of image, especially so as we perceive adaptive instability as a direct force triggering the organization to re-evaluate organizational identity, in the effort to align organizational image and identity. Viewing HR as a strategic business partner to management (Leopold & Harris, 2009; Storey, 2005) hence means that HR plays a key role on these alignment efforts.

The final link to be discussed deals with the process link between organizational identity and culture, in that; "reflecting embeds identity in organizational culture" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p.991). Hatch and Schultz (2002) claim that once the organizational images, as discussed above, are mirrored in the organizational identity, they will be interpreted in how the organization defines itself as embedded in the existing cultural understandings - "We believe that reflecting on organizational identity embeds that identity in organizational culture by triggering or tapping into the deeply help assumptions and values of its members which then become closely associated with the identity and its various manifestations (e.g. logos, name, identity statements)" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1000). This argumentation highlights that organizational identity can be seen as the process by with the members understand and explain themselves as an organization:

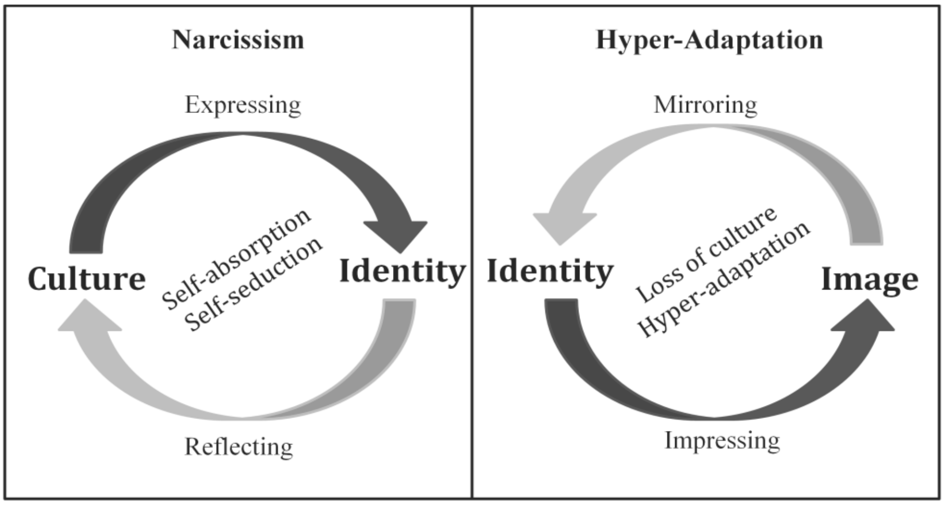
> "... Organizational culture provides context for forming identities as well as for taking action, making meaning and projecting images. Thus, when organizational members reflect on their identity, they do so with reference to their organization's culture and this embeds their reflections in tacit cultural understanding or.....as basic assumptions or values. This embedding, in turn, allows cultures to imbue identity artefacts with meanings..." (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1000).

However, organizational members may not always follow or belong to the collective identity, and thus we acknowledge that understanding is dependent on the context (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). As such, efforts by an organization or specifically the HR department, to shape or drive organizational identity in a specific and desired direction may lead to resistance, which we will discuss at the end of this chapter.

Following the discussion of the proposed idea of the dynamics of organizational identity, we feel it is equally important to look at the possible areas of dysfunction in the model, and how these may look in an organizational setting. Hatch and Schultz (2002, p. 1005) theorize that "when organizational identity dynamics are balanced between the influence of culture and image, a healthy organization identity results from processes that integrate the interests and activities of all relevant stakeholder groups." Regarding the discussion of balance we question Hatch and Schultz accretion that an organization can be generalized as ever being truly balanced. As with the argumentation of Lewin's three step *Change Process Model* (Unfreezing-Movement-Refreezing) one may critically argue that the dynamic nature of an organization cannot be describe as something frozen, and thus some researchers reassessed the model, stating that in a change process and organization should first be frozen, then changes should be made, and finally unfrozen to return to organization to its naturally dynamic form (Palmer et al. 2006).

Nonetheless, Hatch and Schultz (2002, p.1005-1006) argue that dysfunctionality arises predominantly when culture and images become disconnected, and that "the result of such dissociations is that organizational identity may be constructed primarily in relation to organizational culture or stakeholder images, but not to both equally. When this occurs, the organization is vulnerable to one of the two dysfunctions: either narcissism or hyper-adaption" (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sub-dynamics of the organizational identity dynamics model and their potential dysfunctions (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1006)



Looking at the left side of figure "the first dysfunctionality emerges from a constructions of identity that refers exclusively or nearly exclusive to the organization's culture with the likely implication that the organization with lose interest and support from their external stakeholders" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1006). This dysfunctionality is coined as *narcissism*. Developing the notion of narcissism on the organizational level, Brown (1998, p.650) notes the necessity of self-esteem of the organizational collective:

> ".... organizations and their subgroups are social categories and, in psychological terms, exist in the participants" common awareness of their membership. In an important sense, therefore, organization exists in the minds of their members, organizational identities are parts of their individual member's identities, and organizational needs and behaviours are the collective needs and behaviours of their members acting under the influence of their organization self-images."

It is therefore important that there is a balance between the expressing and reflecting of culture and how this is mirrored in the image of the organization as "large corporations and other organizations have become so preoccupied with carefully crafted, elaborated, and univocal expressions of their mission and "essence" that they often overlook penetrating question about stakeholder involvement" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1009). Arguably, in times of disassociation, were narcissism or self-absorption may occur, a strong organizational identity may be able to right the balance; however Hatch and Schultz (2002) also note that it may contribute to the organizations demise.

Moving the discussion to the right side of Figure 2, Hatch and Schultz discuss the loss of culture that can occur when an organization pays too much attention to organizational image, as "organizations may risk paying too much attention to marketing research and external images and thereby lose the sense of who they are. In such cases, cultural heritage is replaced by exaggerated market adaptations such as hyper-responsiveness to shifting consumer preferences” (Hatch and Schultz, 2002, p.1010). This loss of organizational culture may occur when an organization becomes so absorbed in the processes of mirroring and impressing that they become dissociated with the organizational culture, and the core identity of “who we are” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

In conclusion of their *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model*, Hatch and Schultz (2002, p. 1004) summaries:

> “Based on this model, we would say that at any moment identity is the immediate result of conversation between organizational (cultural) self-expression and mirrored stakeholder images, recognizing, however, that whatever is claimed by members or other stakeholders about on organizational identity will soon be taken up by processes of impressing and reflecting which feed back into further mirroring and expressing processes. This is how organizational identity is continually created, sustained and changed.”

However, when discussing the possible dysfunctions in the O*rganizational Identity Dynamics Model*, we again highlight the fluidity of identity, and that these states of dysfuntionalities are dynamic. We are also critical of Hatch and Schultz’s argument that narcissism excludes any occurrence of hyper adaptation and vice versa, neglecting that there might be grades of these processes occurring simultaneously.

Stemming from the theories presented above, coupled with our understandings developed through the existing literature and our applications of these to the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* by Hatch and Schultz (2002) in Figure 3 we seek to present a visual overview of this chapter as a whole. This visual conceptualization will be further used and referred to in the following chapters of this thesis.

Figure 3: Visual illustration of the conceptual framework

As we have been highlighting through our research question and the above visual conceptualization, we place a specific emphasis on the role of HR in the dynamics between organizational identity, culture and image.

3.5 The Notion of Resistance in this Dynamic Process

Throughout the dialogue of our conceptual understanding, we allude to the potential emergence of employee resistance in the face of changes to organizational identity, culture and image. The following sections therefore aim to give an understanding of resistance in an organizational setting. The literature regarding resistance highlights multiple ways in which resistance can manifest in an organizational setting. Lawrence (1986, p. 49) elaborates stating:

> "Resistance may take a number of forms — persistent reduction in output, increase in the number of "quits" and requests for transfer, chorine quarrels, sullen hostility, wildcat or slowdown strikes, and, of course, the expression of a lot of pseudo logical reasons why the change will not work. Even the more petty forms of this resistance can be troublesome."

Ford and Ford (2009, p. 103) add to this account of resistance with the idea that the perception of resistance is also important as "managers have many terms to describe resistance: pushback, not buying in, criticism, foot-dragging, and so on. And they may perceive as resistance a broad spectrum of behaviours they don't like -- from an innocent question to a roll of the eyes to overt sabotage."

Taking a critical stance on the traditionally negative view of resistance, more recent research has begun to question the view that resistance is a completely negative reaction to organizational change (Fleming, 2005:a) - “Unfortunately, when the word resistance is mentioned, we tend to ascribe negative connotations to it. This is a misconception. There are many times when resistance is the most effective response available” (Hultman, 1979, p. 54). These academics conclude that if resistance is managed appropriately as a resource, instead of an unwanted response or behaviour, it can aid in strengthening and assisting change (Ford, & Ford, 2009)

As researchers have begun to devote more time to the resistance discourse, new and more contemporary topics have arisen such as humour, irony, cynicism, and sexuality to name but a few (Fleming, 2005:a). These forms of resistance can arguably be portrayed in a far more subtle manor, and can thus in some situations go unnoticed as obvious resistance:

> ‘The criteria for the activities that count as resistance are broadened so that we may detect transgression even in the most claustrophobic cultural hegemony...... Rather than looking for blatantly grandiose and global strategies of insurrection we may instead find it in the commonplace cracks and crevices of inter-subjective relations and other quiet subterranean realms of organisational life’ (Fleming & Sewell, 2002, p. 863).

One specific manifestation of this type of resistance we take interest in, is cynicism. Fleming & Spicer (2003) highlight three perspectives regarding cynicism. The first perspective comes from the literature which notes cynicism as a psychological defect that needs to be corrected, much like the traditional view of resistance as something negative which needs to be overcome (Ford & Ford, 2009). The second perspective is the radical humanist approach which understands cynicism as a defence mechanism that employee utilize in time of uncertainty, or to protect their self-identity. Finally, Fleming & Spicer (2003) note the increasingly dominant perspective which suggests cynicism is a process by which employees may attempt to dis-identify with the prescribed cultural norms while still having to work within them.

Following from that argumentation, we feel it is appropriate to link the third manifestation of cynicism, as put forward by Fleming and Spicer (2003) to Ashforth and Mael (1989) through the dynamic between social identification and internalization. Importantly, identification differs from internalization, in that the latter refers to the incorporation of values, attitudes, social processes, and systems of authority (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). One subsequent organizational implication assumes that organizational socialization indirectly, by a process of social identification, results in internalization of organizational values and beliefs. However, relating to the third manifestation of cynicism, Ashforth and Mael (1989) highlight that organizational identification can be achieved without internalization of the values, attitudes and social processes of the organization:

> "Albert and Whetten (1985) argue that an organization has an identity to the extent there is a shared understanding of the central, distinctive, and enduring character of the organization among its members. This identity maybe reflecting in shared values and beliefs, a mission, these structure and processes, organizational climate, and so on... the more salient, stable, and internally consistent the character of an organization (or in organization themes, the stronger the culture), the greater this internalization (Ashforth, 1985)". (Ashforth & Mael 1989, p. 27)

Resisting such internalization, is as argued by Casey (1999) the result of coping with an increased feeling of ambivalence, anxiety, discomfort or need for psychic accommodation. Adopting a psychoanalytic approach to organizational contexts, Casey (1999, p.171) argues that "the psyche must contain ambivalence to a tolerable level through the activation of ego defences, or it must discarded it in either the acceptance of, dissension from, the object, in this case the designed corporate culture". This defence mechanism can arguably be seen as a form of resistance

Through this chapter we have sought to explore and contextualize the main themes of our thesis, namely, organizational identity, culture, image and additionally employee resistance. Through the Organizational *Identity Dynamics Model*, we have linked each theme bringing our own conceptual understandings to Hatch and Schultz's *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* (2002). Moving into the next chapter, we will begin our discussion of the case organization, and analyse our case material with the understanding developed through our conceptual framework.

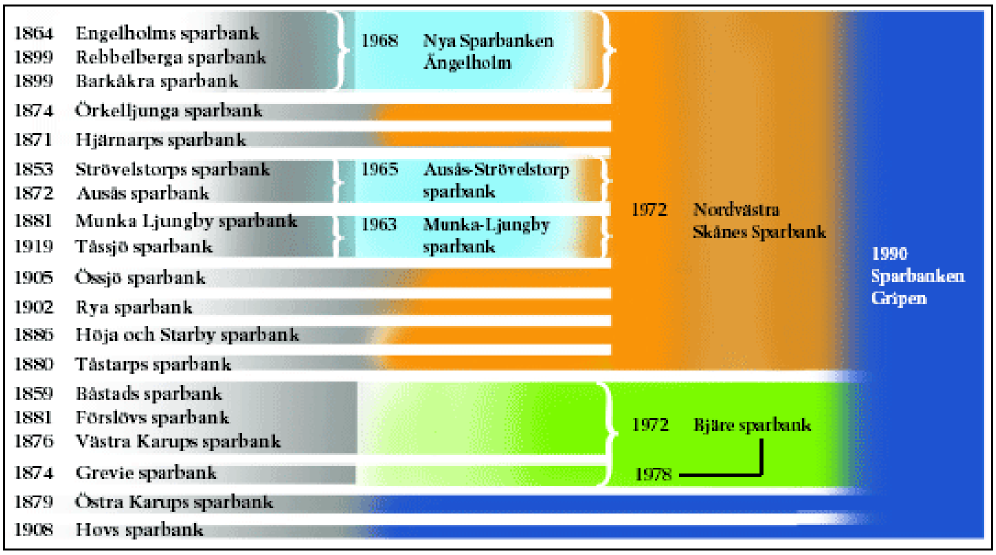
Chapter Four: Walking the Walk and Talking the Talk – a Case Study of Identity Dynamics at Sparbanken Gripen

Developing on the contextualization of the theory in chapter three, this chapter of the thesis will begin with an introduction to Sparbanken Gripen and its history – a history encompassing both the evolvement of a financial institution *for* the people, and a creation of Sparbanken Gripen *by* the people. Following this introductory section on the Bank, a presentation and analysis of the interviews conducted will follow. The layout of these sections will mirror or theoretical framework, as set in the previous chapter, and will throughout be subject to a parallel analysis in relation to the framework previously presented, namely the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* put forward by Hatch and Schultz (2002). As such, this chapter seeks to explore the perception upon identity, culture and image and the interconnectedness between these concepts at the case company Sparbanken Gripen. Special attention will be paid to the role of HR, and HR tools and processes, in creating or initiating, as well as driving the dynamics of these concepts in their relational exchange. Summing up the chapter we'll present a section discussing employee resistance to these HR efforts. In order to visualize the dynamic and processual nature of the interviews, analysis and the framework itself, each section will begin with a visual overview identifying which part of the framework we are seeking to draw attention to and comprehend in the case of Sparbanken Gripen. First however, a short presentation of the case company:

4.1 Sparbanken Gripen: A Financial Institution for the People

Sparbanken Gripen (the Bank) is a historically rooted savings bank in North Western Scania in Sweden, with 12 offices in an area stretching from Rydebäck in the south to Båstad in the North. The Bank dates its operational legacy to the 3rd of January in 1853, when Strövesltorp Sparbank opened in the Kristianstad municipality (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2008; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2004:b) This linear connection is the result of a number of fusions of savings banks in the area of North Western Scania over the past century, predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s, over which time period 19 savings banks merged into what is today known as Sparbanken Gripen. The chart (Figure 4) is an overview over the fusions which have resulted in the creation of Sparbanken Gripen in 1990.

Figure 4: Timeline of fusions leading to the creation of Sparbanken Gripen (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2008)



4.1.1 *The History of Savings Banks as an Institutional Form*

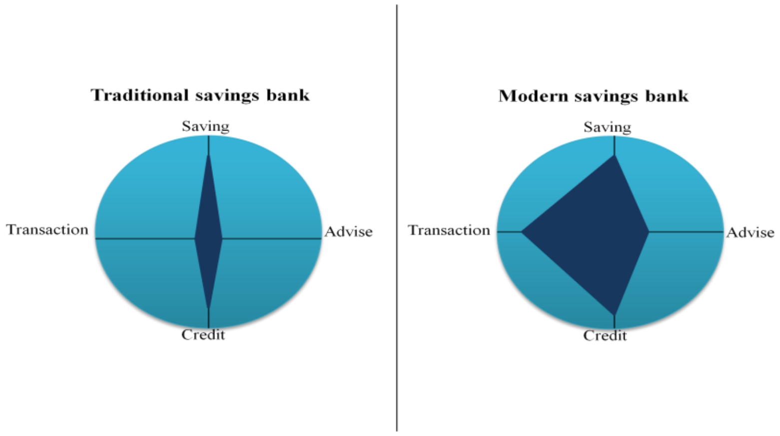
The history of savings bank on a more general note is hard to come by in academia, as most historical accounts often concern the single savings banks rather than the multitude of them as an institutional form. However, in the historical account of Hälsingborgs Sparbank we find that it is presumed that the idea and discussion of savings banks was first addressed through a formal proposal in the parliament, for the creation of an institution where private persons and farmers could keep their savings (Borna, 1937). The motion in itself was not received very well, but as King Oscar I ordered a script to be written on his behalf, which stated that this could be “the seed for the Swedish soil, the seed which could soon enough develop deep and strong roots and grow into a might tree” (Sparbanksstyrelsen, 1948, p. 64) the first savings bank in Sweden was opened in 1820. (Borna, 1937) This account is also supported by Petersson in his book *Mellan det lokala och det globala: Det svenska banksystemet ur ett historiskt perspektiv*, where Petersson is looking to place the development of Norrtälje Sparbank in a larger European societal perspective (Petersson, 2009). Here we learn, what also is confirmed by Lundström and Ottosson (Lundström & Ottosson, 1988), that although the banking sphere had been developing for some time, it has been focusing on the relationship between the bank and the commercial customer and industries, rather than workers and small scale agricultural firms. In contrast the focus of the savings banks should through their communal ownership and operations function as banks for the people, governed by trustees from the local countryside, in charge of borrowing and lending of smaller amounts of financial capital between the people (Petersson, 2009). The pre-dominantly different factor for the savings banks were as such that they were not considered to be part of the general Swedish banking sphere as they were not to be profitable in the sense of the commercial banking industry. Rather they have had a local focus aimed at supporting and reinvesting in the local community, both through charitable donations and direct investments in the bank itself (Petersson, 2009; Borna, 1937; Sparbanksstyrelsen, 1948; Forssell, 1988). In the historical account of Kullens Sparbank this foundational aim is expressed by the chairman of the time, Gustav Jönsson, when answering the question of what the bank can expect from the future:

> "Our savings banks have in general obtained a safe foundation on which to build on, that is the communal trust. They do not work to obtain profit for their own interest; rather the profit which is gained is used to strengthen the security of the bank, and is the joint holding of the lenders and the community/.../ Its future is not only dependent upon its operational area which is governed by the statues of the savings bank, rather it is dependent upon that the operation is conducted in such a way that it may maintain the trust of the customers. If the board of a savings bank wholeheartedly seeks to aid and support all entrepreneurs whom show willingness to work and a futuristic spirit, then the bank can become a solid foundation for the entire community's financial future." (Sparbanksstyrelsen, 1948, p. 17)

4.1.2 The Modernization of the Traditional Savings Bank

The modernization of the traditional savings bank sector has been illustrated by Anders Forssell (1988) as having moved from a focus upon borrow and lending towards a broadened scope nowadays also including transactional and financial assistance.

Figure 5: Traditional versus modern savings banks (Forssell 1988, p.10)



But even though the scope of the savings banks have changed, the foundational aim of this institutional form, as stated in the Swedish legislation, still remains the same as it did over a century ago:

> "A savings bank has as its aim, without rights for its creators or others to take part of that profit which may be the result of the operations, to further thriftiness [frugality] by conducting banking operations in accordance with the regulations notified in this law and the law concerning banking and financial operations" (Sparbankslagen, 1987, p. §1:1).

According to Forssell (1988) it is only natural that the institutional form of banking represented by savings banks is legitimized by governing bodies and authorities as a public good. However, Forssell further argues that this legitimacy is not to be taken for granted as the tendency to change and adapt savings banks following examples in the commercial banking sector, may damage the foundational legitimacy – that is, the historical ties between the savings banks and their customer, the savers, who entrench the savings banks in the community - a foundation not only build upon business likeness, but upon personal and ideational ties (Forssell, 1988, pp. 35-36). In addition he argues that whilst the institutional form provides freedom and independence, by being institutions which are governed and administrated through a communal rootedness, rather than commercial commodities, there are none the less limitations and obstacles faced by this same institutional form (Forssell, 1988). This is in argument with Pettersson's views on the historical development on the savings banks, and they are both in agreement in that the predominant limitation lies in the difficulty in enlarging the saving bank capital by means other than margins of profit and including credential loans in their own capital (Forssell, 1988, pp. 36-37; Petersson, 2009).

4.1.3 Sparbanken Gripen – Facing Changing Times

Both the opportunities and limitations put forward by Forssell and Petersson above, have been evident in the history of Sparbanken Gripen, and are very much a current issue. As it stands at this point in time Sparbanken Gripen has entered an agreement with Sparbanken Finn for a fusion of the two banks from January 1st of 2011. This can be seen as a likely result of the financial crisis experienced globally over the past years and as a direct result of credit losses experienced by the bank. In the 2009 interim annual report for Sparbanken Gripen it is stated that:

> "The situation regarding credit losses this autumn is not yet clear, although the bank is aware that the danger is not over. The economic fundamentals have not yet settled. The Banks are seeing a rise in defaults quite close to home, which means increased credit risk. It is our belief that the bank has a long journey ahead before the tide turns" (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2009:a, p. 8)

And just a few months later in the Banks annual report for 2009 it becomes clear that Sparbanken Gripen had made the decision that together with Sparbanken Finn create a new bank (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2009:b), with the motivation that:

> "The financial sector is undergoing constant regulatory changes at a pace affected by a more and more globalized economy. If you add to this the customers changing behaviours, demand for customer service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and a fast moving development, you realize that it takes a larger bank to maintain the administration at a reasonable level." (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2009:b, s. 6)

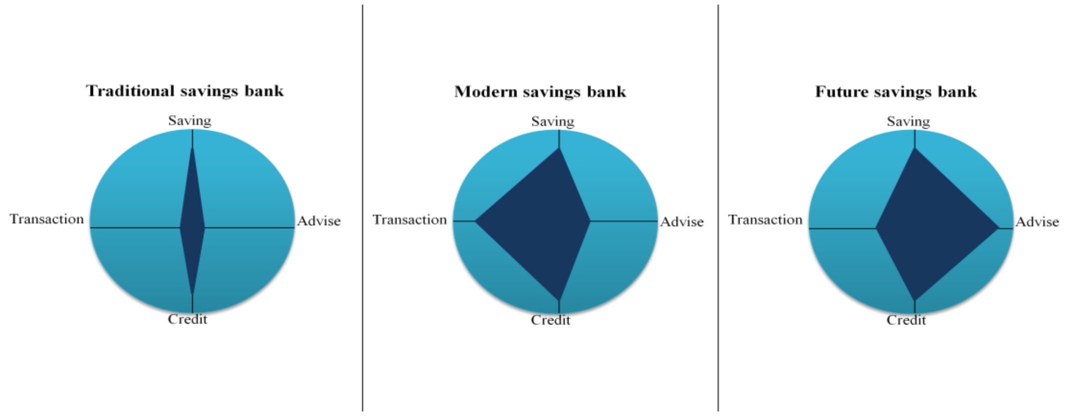
In addition to these two banks merging, Sparbanken Syd have been invited to join the fusion, and are currently in the midst of making the decision of whether to join or not. Irrespective of Sparbanken Syd joining the fusion or not, the matter still stands that the new bank will have a significantly larger regional presence and a stronger financial capital foundation than then they do separately today (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2009:b).

The fusion of Sparbanken Gripen, Sparbanken Finn and possibly Sparbanken Syd should however not only be seen as an outcome solely based on financial factors but also importantly on administrative factors as a direct result of changing customer behaviours (Forssell, 1998; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2005; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2008). Already in 2001 Sparbanken Gripen stated in their annual report for that year that:

> "Gripen's ambition with regard to personal advisory services and personal relationships continued in leaps and bounds. The Bank has achieved a great advisory density in relation to the number of clients/…/This has become possible thanks to the fact that these days the Gripen Computer Bank takes care of an ever increasing part of our client's routine payments. The number of cashier transactions has gone down by more than 25 percent whereas the number of payments via the Computer Bank has increased by over 35 percent." (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2001, s. 2)

This trend has been followed with a clear strategy by the Bank, focusing on the continued development of the Computer bank and Telephone banking services over the years in conjunction with a conversion of all their bank offices into advisory offices where the Bank can focus its resources on its personal meeting with the customers – becoming a bank of relationships (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2001; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2005; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2006:b; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2009:a). As such it might be said that there has been a shift in focus for the Bank, from what Forssell (1988) refers to as the "modern banking" strategy (depicted above) to what we here refer to as the "future bank", namely a shift from a transactional focus to an advisory focus.

Figure 6: From traditional to future savings banks -adaptation from Forssell 1988 (Forssell, 1988, p.10)



4.2 Expressing Cultural and Historical Rootedness

Figure 7: Visual illustration of conceptual framework- First process link

With an aim to get a deeper knowledge about the Bank and a comprehension of the culture at the Bank all interviewees were asked to speak freely about Sparbanken Gripen and their experience of working at the Bank. Many of them did so easily and without hesitation telling not only of their specific roles at the Bank but also about the culture at the Bank, something which they all are collectively aware of and all referred to as the "Gripen Spirit". The notion of "the Gripen Spirit" was introduced by one on the employees in the following way:

> "We have something which is called the Gripen spirit […] it is a special… It is a certain "go", that there is…. Well, you can sometimes notice if you are calling another company or bank that they fell a bit slacker and that is how it is. We have a certain way; you could say we have a drive when there is something we want. Then we are or have been a bank of rather small means or resources, we are a small bank with don't have that much money, but we have a strong will. We have still been… with the means

> available to us, we have come a long way, actually. And it is because of that people are active and want to influence, that they don't just sit there waiting." [Karin Ek]

For one of the managers, this was also expressed in the following way:

> "We operate a bank like you are supposed to operate a bank but we might do it with a softer approach. It is not, it is not just the formal "bam and it is done", so yes, a softer approach, and this, that we are close. We are close to our customers and have very local offices/…/We have many advisors and these advisors are also deeply connected to the countryside. So in a way we live a bit as we learn and that many times builds a trust as you are not just a formal person behind a desk or like that. You are also a person who in addition participates in the local club activities and who you meet at the ICA store or whatever it might be. And this humanity, I am not saying that other banks don't have a humanity, but a willingness to help, a willingness to find solutions, which are sometimes based on that you have knowledge about the customer – a deeper knowledge about the customer, because we live and work where we are. I think that that really is what the Gripen spirit is." [Eva Nässelbo]

Another manager, when asked to speak about the Gripen Spirit, simply put it in the words below:

> "And that is no bull shit. It exists! It is a way of relating to, a way of being between colleagues which actually exists. And you, you… when I got here and I didn't know that much, I could enter into any room what so ever and ask "can you help me?" and I was always given that help. Everybody is here for everyone. Everyone are really helpful and supportive and [the HR Manager] use to say, when he is employing people, that, about this Gripen spirit, that "if I see that your plants need water I don't tell you that, rather I water them instead". And that is probably how it is, you support each other enormously. There is a "we-feeling" which I think people have been comfortable with which has contributed to them staying on. The backside of this Gripen spirit is that we make less. We have a lower salary then what they have in other banks. And that comes from that the employer hasn't had to pay any more, as people have stayed anyways." [Hanna Ståhl]

What the above is seeking to demonstrate is that there is a strong feeling of social inclusion, a strong "we" feeling, and a sense of belonging, which the employees working at the Bank give expression to experiencing - in other words, a collective construction of an organizational identity (Alvesson M. , 2004; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Puusa & Tolvanen, 2006). It is about being helpful and about a feeling of responsibility and closeness with not only Sparbanken Gripen but also to the community through your role at the bank. In others words Sparbanken Gripen, in its institutional form, creates a 'world' for the employees in which they invest both time and interest, as argued by Humphreys and Brown (2006). This draws on the definition of organizational culture as put forward by Brown (1998, p.9) who states that "organizational culture refers to the patterns of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experiences that have developed during the course of an organization's history". This has not only meant a long standing loyalty, but a loyalty which has led to sacrifices in matters such as salaries and benefits, as emphasized in the last quote above by one of the managers who is also one of the union representatives at the Bank. This loyalty should however not only been seen as conditioned upon the experience of working at the Bank, as an financial institution, but also as working at an institution deeply connected to the countryside in which it has its operational area. This assumption is drawn from the multiple references the interviewees made to the countryside and the intrinsic connection between the Bank and its area of operation in the countryside - a countryside which has a tight nit community of which the employees at the Bank are an integral part in their private lives as well, either through having remained in the area since their childhood, or by having relocated there. As argued by Pretty, Chipuer and Bramston (2003) the connection between an employee's personal identity and the place of work is most prominent in those employees who have an extended place identity. This is arguably the case for many of the employees at Sparbanken Gripen. The feeling of place identity, as discussed Humphreys and Brown (2006), is arguably twofold, in that the organizational identity is rooted in its historical location of operation, but also the employees own personal histories are linked to that same location. One of the employees told us what it meant for him to work at the Bank:

> "A big advantage is that a lot of us who work here, we live her as well, so we meet a lot of customers in school and on sporting events and so on. I think that is a really nice thing/…/we should be local and visible/…/ You are always the bank, even in your time of so to speak/…/We have a large share of the local market and that contributes to us meeting a lot of people who are customers here. So if their advisor where to be away, I think they feel a safety to know that I am here, since they know me a bit as well." [Peter Borg]

Developing on this, one of the managers' emphases that it is not even about what role they might have at the bank, but simply that they are known to work at the Bank. This strengthens the argument by Mullins (2007, p.724) that "the reason and manner in which the organization was originally formed, its age, and the philosophy and values of its owners and first senior managers will affect culture". Exemplifying this and explaining what it means for her to be representing the Bank, one employee says:

> "And many customers don't really have a deeper knowledge about what you do at the bank, what your role is, but they know that you are with the bank, and that is what is important." [Eva Nässelbo]

The familiarity with the community experienced by the employees and vice versa, is as such linked to the employees themselves being a part of the community, but also as originating from the community and their often lengthy time of employment with the Bank. Out of all the interviews conducted there was not a single person whom had been with the bank for less than eight years. On the contrary, many of them had been there for closer to, or more than twenty years, making it their first job out of high school, thus being their only job. In most of these instances working with Sparbanken Gripen specifically was not a strategic choice, or even a choice at all, as it rather was the result of coincidence. One employee tells about how she came to start at the Bank:

> "I have been with the bank since 1987, so it is a long time ago since I started, and at that point it was Nord Västra Skånes Sparbank/…/ And the situation was like this, I had been doing an internship with the branch office in Munka-Ljungby during high school, and then I thought maybe there would be an opportunity to apply for a summer job, and then it became a permanent job. And that wasn't really…I attended the social-science degree program in high school, and I hadn't really though that much about economics, but then I thought that might be something I could try. And then I kind of got stuck here. But I mean, I have really liked it here, and I still do." [Karin Ek]

Another employee tells a similar story:

> "I attended a three year long degree at high school, what was then called the economics degree/…/ and I completed that degree in 1987. And I had applied for a summer job with was then called Bjäre Sparbank, and we were to be placed with the branch in Västra Karup and Grevie and the Torekov branch office. Or rather, there was a position with the Torekov office which I applied for, but then they realized that they also needed someone for Västra Karup and Grevie. So they got in touch with me and asked if I would be interested, which I naturally was. So, well… [Laughing] I was 19 when I graduated and since then it has sort of just carried on since then." [Maria Sjögren]

However, in contrast to the employees, whereof all but one person interviewed has only ever had one employer – Sparbanken Gripen, both of the managers have held employments with other organizations. Whilst one of the managers tell of it being a pure coincidence that she started with Sparbanken Gripen, as she was unemployed and looking for any job at the time, the other manager tells of a journey actively aimed at gaining a position as a bank solicitor at a smaller bank, though not necessarily a savings bank or Sparbanken Gripen. However, the very lengthy employment by several employees has not gone unnoticed. One of the managers tells us that:

> "It is unbelievable. Young girls who you think "how can she have gotten that as a 25 year gift? She who is really not that old". But then they have started as temporary workers during the summer holidays when they were about 16 17 18, and then they have remained here - a great many of them. As I told you previously, I am not that kind of person at all. I have changed job about every second or every third year, except for now really." [Hanna Ståhl]

One of the employees', who work's within the telephone bank department for the Bank, linked the feeling of integral connectedness to the countryside and the community to not only knowing the community, and walking the walk so to speak, but also talking the talk. She put is like this:

> “It is a difference if you speak to someone who lives in Stockholm; it is a slightly different mentality. I think that it feels good, both for the bank and the customers, that you know a bit more about each other in a way. You know in a way that those are the customers on Bjäre, they have a certain way of talking – you know a bit about that – you know the talk so to speak...” [Karin Ek]

As she continues, the identification of working for a “smaller” and “local” bank continues by comparison to the bigger cities and city banks; this even though the Bank itself has one of its bigger offices in the city referred to and she assist the city customer as well, through her specific role at the Bank.

> “…then there is a difference if you go to Helsingborg, it is more of a bigger city, and you notice that, it is different, and the customers are a bit different than they are out on the countryside.” [Karin Ek]

The comparison to the “city” as a way of distinguishing the Bank is a common recurring theme in almost all of the interviews. One of the employees exemplifies this through an event she attended with her colleagues where there were also attendees from other banks:

> “If you look at SE Banken of Handelsbanken or these more commercial banks, they don’t seem to have this cosy jovial atmosphere among their staff, in the offices. Well, I don’t know as I don’t have any experience from it so to speak, but I know that one time when we visited a real estate agent in Ängelholm which we were in contact with. When he opened up an office/…/ the banks were invited for some opening mingles. And we got there in the way in which we dressed, you know from a day at work. And then there arrived these dark suits and girls in dark suit jackets and dark skirts and we just [sigh] … and they were then from SE Banken. And we were just, well, you can just tell from the way they looked, they were a bit more…” [Maria Sjögren]

Not only does she distinguish them as acting differently and being less jovial people, they also dress differently and link the appearance to an almost presumed mentality in their work. This notion of a distinguishable dress and language, a cultural self-expression, acts as a reference to a collective identity where shared artefacts hold an intrinsic power by means of communicating behaviourally about the shared organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, pp. 1001-1002). Even one of the managers whom had previously been with one of the larger Swedish commercial banks states that there is a difference of mentality and commitment to ones work between the city and the countryside; even between Sparbanken Gripen's own offices:

> “I believe that there is a difference. I don’t believe that is very big, but I believe there is a difference between the old Gripen area and the newer offices. And those who were the last to open/.../ I am sure that there is a Gripen spirit but it is probably more of a big city phenomenon, you see Helsingborg doesn’t work that way. Helsingborg has had an enormous staff turnover rate. Now after ten year, they have existed for ten years, now things have started to calm down. In the beginning it was nobody who stayed, and was you understand that was very different as in Ängeholm they stay for thirty to forty

> years, so that was very odd. But I believe it is a big city phenomenon. There wasn't a Gripen spirit in that way." [Hanna Ståhl]

According to one of the employees whom as well have worked for one of the larger Swedish commercial banks, it is not only a distinction between commercial banks and savings banks in general or between the city and the countryside, rather Gripen is unique in both instances. Firstly he distinguishes the small banks from the large banks and then he distinguishes Gripen from other savings banks:

> "The large banks in Sweden are more commercial banks, and here there is/…/ that we want to know our customers and try to help them in the best way possible, with both possibilities and problems so to speak. So you, this, the spirit as such is that partly there is a good atmosphere and then you look a bit more to the customer and not the numbers…" [Peter Borg]

And then continues on saying that:

> "…most of the other savings banks are tied to Swedbank in one way or another, so in the grand scheme of things they are a big bank even if they are a smaller part within that. They collaborate with them and don't have any services of products of their own…" [Peter Borg]

Reaching the conclusion that within Gripen:

> "…you are not as controlled from Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö, rather you are local and that is what the big advantage is. You feel like you have knowledge about everything more or less. You are a large piece of the puzzle rather than a small piece." [Peter Borg]

Not only is the physical place as such of importance but also the institutional market location of being a savings bank within the financial sector at large. This is anchored in the history of Sparbanken Gripen as a local savings bank, with an organizational culture deeply affected by the long standing values and ways of operating which have developed over a time period stretching over centuries. As such, Brown's (1998, p.31) statement that "culture can only fully be understood as the product of a historical process" rings very true in the case of Sparbanken Gripen's organizational culture. This culture is as presented by the employees themselves, at the beginning of this section, expressed in terms of the "Gripen Spirit". We feel that the cultural rootedness (place identity) thus creates a high emotional stake in the Bank for the employees, as discussed by Burnes (2004).

4.3 Organizational Image as an Expression of Identity

Figure 8: Visual illustration of conceptual framework- Second process link

The culture which is experienced and expressed by the interviewees is also by and large confirmed by the Bank itself in its projected image work, such as its annual reports and its homepage on the internet. This supports the argument by Rindova and Fombrun (1998, p. 60) that "projected images reflect not only a firm's strategic objectives but also its underlying identity". This is also the light in which the statements about the bank and its culture should be seen – namely as an expression of identity aimed at leaving a certain impression of the bank with the stakeholders and customers of the bank, whereof the employee statements about the Bank plays an important contributing part, as many of them partake in daily interactions with both stakeholders and customers. Arguably, an organization which is well known is often seen as successful (Bernstine, 1984; Ind, 1990), and as the market leading bank in its operational area, Sparbanken Gripen's marketing and image work can be seen as an attempt to portray and sustain this fact. Looking closer at the representational efforts emerging from within the Bank, we can, on the first few pages of all annual reports since 2003, read that the business concept of the Bank has since then [2003] been that:

> "Sparbanken Gripen is a local bank that belongs to North West Scania. Its object is to be a nearby, human, and profitable bank that satisfies its clients" requirements regarding qualified banking services."

With the vision that:

> "Sparbanken Gripen shall be the leading bank in North Western Scania and the best banking option for private persons, small and medium-sized enterprises and agriculture."

The only change to both of these statements over the years has been the addition of the word "qualified" which was added to the business concept between 2003 and 2004 (Sparbanken

Gripen AB, 2003; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2004:a). Nonetheless, the two together tells a story of a company - much in line with the employee perception of their experience of working at the Bank - which in the words of the Bank itself should be seen in the light of its historical and local roots:

> "We believe that the social network is /…/ important and that interrelationships between people must be observed and given place. One can also see Gripen's activities from this perspective, as we are strongly entrenched in local affairs. The Bank exists in a palpable mutual relationship with the surrounding districts and contributes towards their development and progress. Our emphasis on a personal approach in client relationships does not only provide the prerequisites for successful advisory work – it also contributes towards giving us a place in our clients" everyday lives." (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2002, p. 3)

This is also a story which is expressed by one of the managers, who said:

> "We have an incredible rootedness in our countryside and incredibly large market segment/…/so you know what it means to be the market leading in a specific area and not just market leading, because every mistake made is a wrongdoing against the community so to speak. To be market leading also means that you shoulder an incredible responsibility for everything you do." [Eva Nässelbo]

This responsibility points to the affects of not only intentional communication strategies by the Bank, but also the unintentional image projections, whose importance take on an even larger significance through the organizational members intrinsic relation with the communities in which it operates (Rindova & Fombrun, 1998). Any discrepancy in image projection between strategic statements and employee opinions would as such be both noticeable and of impact to the customers and stakeholders. This point to the importance of coherence between the past section of the thesis presenting the connection between culture and identity through as expression of a cultural understanding which directly leads into this sections presentation of the impact of identity as leaving an impression on others (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

4.3.1 The Evolving Image of HR

Taking our departure in the efforts undertaken by the Bank in their publication material and other stakeholder related interactions, this paper also seeks to take a closer look at the role of HR and their role in the organizational expression of the organizational identity and culture. The output of the HR driven tools and processes will hence be the focus moving forward. However, to do so, we firstly seek to understand the role of HR within the Bank. As the HR manager points out, not only is it the job of the HR staff to drive the HR issues of the organization, but it is a job which is dependent upon the mandate accredited to the HR department by those members of the organization whom hold the power to sanction such a mandate:

> “We have a role at HR. And, I mean, this is not something strange. This is very basis really. But if you are to succeed with this it necessitates that you have the CEO with you, and the CEP has the insight, and that the CEO wants to do something about it. If you don’t have the CEO with you, you might as well just hit your head bloody against the wall. So you really have to start there.” [David Berg]

These is as such a direct link to Hatch and Schultz’s argument that “the choice of which cultural material to deliberately draw into expression of organizational identity usually falls into the hand of those designated by the most powerful members of the organization” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1004). As we came to notice during the course of our interviews, it is evident that the HR department have been given a strong mandate by the top management of the Bank to drive their area of responsibility in a very, “developmentally inclined direction” (David Berg –HR Manager). This inclination can be seen as a ‘high commitment strategy’ as discussed by Leopold and Harris (2009) in the previous chapter. Such a strategy arguably reflects or has been reinforced by the Bank’s shift in focus from transactional services to advisory services, i.e. to meet altered market demands (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2001; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2005; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2006:b; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2009:a). This direction is prominent in the individual development programs and efforts initiated and driven by the HR department, which we will go into in more depth in the following sections. Further however, the HR manager emphasize that the HR job, in addition to requiring a strong mandate, is a job which is both demanding but also necessary as a complement to the financial and “harder” operational aspects. He puts it in the following words:

> “One could say that …naturally this is all governed by financial. However, to secure that you achieve the financial targets you have to attend to the soft parts as well. And this can be demonstrated; this is nothing new at all. Businesses….Businesses that only work with, or only focused on the hard part, that is the practical, financial aspects, who don’t give a damn about the staff, well those companies’ crash and burn. And those companies that only pay attention to the soft aspects, with a lot of cuddles, who don’t give a damn about the financial, well, those crash and burn as well. And when I studied at one point this was visualized in the shape of a walnut. Where you then had...well, you know a walnut, where you have two halves, and where you have the soft parts on one side and the hard parts of the other, the humanistic and the financial. And these have to be reasonably in balance. And once again, to large of a focus on the financials it will be turbulent in relation to other aspects, too much focus there will get you problems here... So ... this....well, this is what I have had in mind [for the development of the change initiates driven by the HR department].” [David Berg]

Before we move in to a closer presentation of the change efforts driven by the HR department, it can serve as a backdrop to those sections to get a sense for the employee perception of the HR department, in contrast to the HR department's view of themselves and the top managerial openness to invest in the softer operational aspects. Interestingly all of the employees interviewed tell a similar story of a personnel department witch foremost focuses on its responsibilities relating to training and recruitment. This is in stark contrast to the argument that the role of HR has evolved from that of *personnel management* to *human resource management* as a strategic partner (Evans, 2003; Armstrong, 2006; Leopold & Harris, 2009). One employee, when asked to describe the role of the HR department in the workplace said that:

> "Here they have a lot of responsibility relating to training and development so in that area they should be heard and seen, but besides from that I think it is just nice to know that they are there if you have any questions, concerns or problems or anything like that. One my own part I haven't had that much contact and I haven't applied for any other positions and so on." [Mats Alm]

Another employee tells of how helpful the personnel staff is when it comes to figuring out how to do her time reporting when working on projects, and also confirms that it is just nice to know that they 'are there'. She says:

> "When it came to report the times spend with that project it was just to pick up the phone and ask Kristina who sits at personnel, and then she sorts out how to record it in the books and how to write it up for the time reporting and so. No, there is always an open line to both [staff in the personnel department] that's what I feel. It works really well. They take the time to listen and so." [Maria Sjögren]

Interestingly, when asked about the HR department and their role, not all employees knew what HR stood for; rather the question had to be rephrased in the words of "personnel department". This is in contrast to the HR Manager who only spoke about HR in terms of *human resource management*. On the other hand, the managers interviewed where well conversed in the terminology used by the HR staff themselves and spoke not only about a reliable support in matters of training and recruitment activities, but also of HR as a strategic partner to the organization. One manager put it in the following words:

> "When they then have a prior knowledge about the situation, you might have an easier time being understood, but foremost you are able to have a discussion at the right level, if you can put it like that, rather than having to start form the very beginning and provide the entire background to be able to have a discussion following that. Or if you would have had a personnel department which simply said that "but according to our collective agreement things have to be like this and this and this, and that is it!" and then it is done. Now we can have a discussion, going back and forth, and I can also see that be having a participative personnel department of participate personnel staff or function or whatever you

> want to call [the staff at the personnel department], it is the nature of things that there is more or less always a need for staff changes. And by them being participative /.../ they have an overview of things and are able to say that "well, maybe we could do it like this?" and so on, and are able to find the overarching perspective." [Eva Nässelbo]

Attempting to bring the two standpoints of management and employees together into a joint and coherent image of the HR department at the Bank is highly problematic. This is in line with Alvesson (2004, p.139-140) who states that "as resources are not endless and one can't have everything, the two elements may be prioritized differently". These two standpoints can arguably be seen as opposite sides of the spectrum – a spectrum which we identify as being *traditional personnel management* on the one hand and *human resource management* on the other (Evans, 2003). As put forward by Evans (2003) there has been a shift in role of HR over the past decades, and the trends of HRM undoubtedly appear to have been adapted by the HR department at the Bank in a theoretical sense, and management in a practical sense as well. However, as the employees not only perceive the HR department as a traditional personnel function, but still receive the service and support traditionally provided by such a function, there is a discrepancy between intended image impressions and experienced perception. We hence question to what extent there is a lack of self-examination on behalf of the members of the HR department with regards to the mirroring process? As argued by Dutton and Dukerich (1991, p.550) "because image and identity are constructs that organizational members hold in their minds, they actively screen and interpret issues/…/ using these organizational reference points". This argument should be kept in mind for the following sections where we not only present the HR initiated and driven efforts since 2002, but also the employee perception of those same efforts.

4.4 "Developmental" HR Tools and Processes

Figure 9: Visual illustration of conceptual framework- Third and Fourth process links

As a direct result of the work commencing in 2000 to focus on the Bank's core activities (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2001), the HR department, in conjunction with the top management, in 2002 launched a program seeking to firmly establish the Bank's foundational vision, business idea and values. In other words, a program aimed at creating and solidifying a specific image of the organization, both internally and externally, although the focus of this paper is the internal process rather than the external, which is foremost relating to publication material and external stakeholder efforts. The internal part of the project is here referred to as the "Vision 2002" program.

4.4.1 "Vision 2002" –an Individual and Organizational Development Program

One of the most noticeable impacts of the focus on the Bank's core activities had up until 2002, meant a staff decrease as a number of employees had had their employment transferred to Cerdo Banking partner AB, a mutually owned company for administration and IT services established in 2001 together with Sparbanken Finn (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2001; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2002). 2002 was also the year in which Sparbanken Gripen and Sparbanken Finn created their second joint enterprise, Frispar Företagskredit AB, a credit market company, as well as being the year in which Sparbanken decided to initiate a transformation to a foundation owned limited company, launched in 2003 (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2002; Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2003). As such, 2002 was a year of several significant changes for the Bank, and in the midst of this "Vision 2002" was launched. In the Bank's annual report for 2002 it is stated that:

> "The rapid changes that are taking place in the banking world place ever increasing demands on the current and updated know-how of practically all of Gripen's employees. For some time now we have had an ongoing program for individual and team related development." (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2002, p. 5)

As the "program" referred to in the quote above also included the acquiring of professional competence requirements by several employees, to meet upcoming legislative regulations, "Vision 2002" must be seen a part of the 2002 change efforts within the company, but not as the overarching change program in its entirety. This links to Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) and their argumentation for adaptive instability, in that mirroring can lead members of the organization to actively change or reflect on the image that they "see in the mirror" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). In other words, the external and rapid changes affecting the bank triggered the need for both a proactive and reactive re-evaluation of the organization identity. When telling about "Vision 2002" the HR Manager at the Bank provided the following overview of the program:

> "It is not enough that you write this down on a paper and say that "here is the organizational business idea and vision and values, now let's do this, this is what goes" as when you have finally put this down of paper that is when the actual work starts/.../ You then have to gather all who has a managerial position/.../ those who in different ways, in their roles, shall represent these parts. And there you have to assure that these persons...use the business idea, the vision, that they understand the values, in that way which the executive board and the management want these to be comprehended. And, so you have to drive this process, where you affirm that, through various activities that you affirm that they have understood all of this in the right way/...[and]/ when all managers have had this made clear to them you have to go the entire way, you must head out to every person and process this out through various exercises. And you have to start with the business idea, breaking it down sentence by sentence, and having each and everyone write and work in different formations with this – how you comprehend this sentence, that sentence or that sentence...and they you go through it all together. And through this you affirm that this is the way in which the executive committee and management want you to comprehend this, and this is what they intend by this or that..." [David Berg]

Hence, the HR department developed the "Vision 2002" program which consisted of three overarching areas, namely; leadership development, teambuilding events and the "Vision 2002" folder. This again demonstrates a focus on a *high commitment* HR strategy (Leopold & Harris, 2009) by the Bank. This folder, which consisted of plainly stated information about the business idea, the vision of the bank, the values of the bank, and expected attitudes and behaviours in conjunction to these, was work which demanded an extensive staff engagement effort in its development. As such there were various sessions with all departments and all offices, giving them an opportunity to talk about it, to share their thoughts and opinions about the vision and values and in addition give input to the how the behaviours and attitudes were phrased. We view this as an attempt by HR to mould the behaviours and attitudes of the employees by steering them to a new corporate culture through a feeling of inclusion in the advocated practices of the desired culture. As Casey (1999, p.159) explains in her article *Come join our family* addressing a similar case to the one presented in this thesis, the "processes of self-regulated emotional experience and expression, and self-determined judgement and effectively are altered and usurped by the practices of the designed corporate culture". In addition to the above mentioned sections of the folder, there was also a section including scorecards for performance measurability stretching from the overarching goals for the bank down to the goals for each office, department and finally each employee, where the employees put in a lot of hours calculating and working with the goals for their specific departments and offices. The HR Manager of the Bank explained the chosen model in the following way:

> “When you start something like this, you look at “What is our financial status today”, “Where are we going to be in five years time?”, “What results should we have?”, “What marginal income should we have?”, “What volumes should we have?”, and then you set these. And one purpose with this whole journey is to secure that you really will reach this goals. And for this you need to have the entire organization with you. You need to have all of you co-workers with you. At every entity you set those results, those volumes, which shall be applicable for that specific office. It is not on the map that my goals are not achieved. This means/.../ team development and operational development. “In which way shall we act?”, “What shall we be working with?”, “What shall our priorities be?”.../.../We have worked with score cards but not balance score cards to the full. It is about applying this on a reasonable level. You can make it as complex as you would like, but people throughout the organization have to be able to understand it as well.” [David Berg]

As such, “Vision 2002” did not only seek to develop the organization for the sake of development itself, but to implement a performance measurement tool, which could be directly used for statistical comparison both between various individuals and offices, but also in comparison to other financial institutions. The goal of this program can hence be linked to the argumentation by Casey (1999, p.156) that “most organizational change programs share the common fundamental aims of the reorganization of the workplace and the production of new sets of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours among corporate employees to enable increased productivity and profitability for the organization”. As such, these numbers and information gained significance, not only internally as proof of performative efforts, but also externally to stakeholders and customers. As for the financial aspect it goes without saying that this program was the outcome of a significant investment by the Bank and in the 2003 annual report of the Bank, the CEO when speaking about the program says:

> “This [the large-scale individual and development program], together with active personnel care, is an area that the bank finds very important. Everything to do with keeping a low staff turnover, low sick absence and dedicated staff is of great interest. When everybody in the organization pulls together and finds that he or she gets dividends for their efforts, even in the form of companionship, appreciation, professional pride and increased skill; we get the best preconditions [for the future].” (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2003, p. 4)

This statement must as such be seen as an effort to justify the investment, referring to future dividends for the stakeholders- something which can only be “proved” through statistical comparison.

4.4.2 The Employee Experience of "Vision 2002"

Turning to the employee perception of "Vision 2002" and their lived experience of it, as interviewers we were struck by the apparent difficulty by many interviewees to remember the program. They found it hard to recall when it took place, and what components were included in the program and in addition had difficulties in seeing a sustainable and added value resulting from the program. We found this interesting considering how the HR manager portrayed this initiative as an integral part of the operational ways of working within the Bank. Upon reflecting about the added value to the organization of the program one employee stated that:

> "It was a very advanced process, and we went away for external meetings, which were partly really good – for the purpose of strengthening the group, and in that regard I think it has been really important. We have been sitting down talking about these questions and come to an agreement of how we are to work and that has been really good. Then in the past couple of years it has disappeared a bit think/.../it feels like, that the year we developed this folder and a two three years thereafter that was a very large focus on this work and we had scorecards which we followed as a part of this ...but then after a while, things like this slowly dies out." [Mats Alm]

When asking the same employee about the currency of this work he responded that:

> "If there is an intention to keep this work going, it is high time to do something again. If not, it won't be sustainable and there will most likely be a dispersion of this work. Looking at it this way, it does feel like it is high time to start addressing these matters again. /.../But it might be possible that some offices still work with this – but I am a bit unsure about this. But I must say that I haven't seen it in quite a while. And I know I did the scorecards for it, and I it is long since then. If of course no one else has been assigned that task..." [Mats Alm]

Another employee tells a similar story:

> "Well, you lose that after a while. You had some follow ups and were to update it on a regular basis but there has been no such work done in the last couple of years. So I haven't really thought about it in quite a while. So it wasn't any work which I though gave a lot, as I see it. You got your visions and so on, but it is nothing that has been my focus, it is almost so that I have forgotten about it." [Peter Borg]

And even though the same employee states that the work was something that provided value at that point in time, it quickly lost momentum:

> "…I believe there was something new at that point. And at that point they said that this was something that was to be living. And when you had your monthly meetings you were to bring this folder which you speak about and you were to add things and keep it up to date but that all evaporated into nothingness after a while/…/But as I said, I have really let go of that, so I don't really recall it. I remember that there were a lot of tabs in this folder which were to be supplemented and you could add some new material to it, but I have a hard time commenting on it really." [Peter Borg]

Another employee, on a more positive note perhaps, also shared her thoughts about the program:

> "I know it was a lot of work and everyone was heavily involved in it, this that everyone was to work against the same goals, and have this imprinted into them. Our values, our goals and well, what was important. And that is still, that we have a bit of, we have, not meeting, but that we go through it dust it off at times. That this is really important, what we stand for. That we know what we stand for, our business idea, our values, what is important in Gripen. And the foundation for this... or there was a lot of work regarding this then at least." [Lisa Havsblad]

However, when asked if this work provided something new or added value to the organization she responded that:

> "Ohh... I wish you could have asked a simpler question....If it was something completely new? Well, there have been values previously and a business ideas and things like that previously as well. But it was really emphasised a lot during this work. That each and everyone was to fully internalize it, that "this is who we are", "this is how we work" and "this is what is important for us" and the goals and so... /.../It probably made it more concrete in a way, that everyone truly knew, that we were all in the same place and hence able to work towards to same ... In a way I believe that. That it was important, that everything became a bit clearer." [Lisa Havsblad]

The "Vision 2002" program arguably intended to mirror not only HR trends at the time, by developing a vision and complementary values, but also to influence organizational members to get behind issues aimed at influencing both internal operations and external perceptions of the organization (Casey, 1999). Seen as a part of the other organizational development efforts since the year 2000, the program fits the contextual and external circumstances experienced by the organization. However internally, from an employee perceptive the program was not seen as providing something entirely new, rather it provided an opportunity for reflection and concretization of how the employees themselves already experienced their culture. Even though Hatch and Schultz (2002) point to reflection as vital factor for embedding a mirrored conception by embedding their understanding in the current internal cultural climate, it appears to us that the employees did not internalize the mirroring process presented to them, nor did they fully understand the novelty of the content of the "Vision 2002" program.

In contrast to several of the employees, who feel that the work has lost momentum, one manager, even though plainly acknowledging that the program was more of a concretization of what already in existence, proclaim the added value of the program:

> "There was an incredible amount of work which went into that, a lot of energy which went into that, but values, attitudes and behaviours were drawn up, and I would probably like to say that he values…[…]

> we live with them in a way. If you went out here and said "what are your values" they would not know them. But if I said, "but they are that we are local and…." then they would say" oh, well, that!/.../It is there in the back of their minds; it is in their bone marrow that this is the way in which we work. You don't reel of attitudes or behaviours and so on, but we carry them with us, and we talk about them often/.../ We might not talk about that "we build long-standing relations" but in each and every other errand we still have the discussion that "well, if we look at this long-term, then we might be able to develop this", or "well, they have been customers with us for such a long time that we must be able to help them" and in a way that is the outcome of a long-standing relation. So that is why I am saying that you can't list them and say what values do you have as a cross examination because then they just go "uhhh?" but if you speak to them about how you behave, how you act, that is according to the values. And I can feel that that is a good score for the values that were developed, that they are deeply rooted in the practical work/.../ [however] I don't believe, in essence, that it contributed… it wasn't anything revolutionary that "now we are going to work according to this…", rather/.../ it was brought to the surface in a way and said that "yes, this means that you agree with the values of the bank, you are living the values of the bank" but you did it in a completely natural way." [Eva Nässelbo]

Looking specifically at the last three sentences of the above quote, we are again brought back to the argumentation of Casey (1999) that the designed corporate culture aims to initiate processes of self-regulated emotional experience and expression in accordance with the desired culture by the employees. However, Casey (1999, p.164) argues that "a successful employee's values, attitudes and general orientation must correspond to those promoted by the organizational culture. Consequently, specific traits and attitudes that are useful to the work and the team are stimulated and rewarded and those that are unnecessary or that impede the processes of the workplace culture, and therefore of production are thwarted and suppressed" this does not seem to be the case within the Bank. As stated by one employee:

> "Well [laughing] they want us to know them when they wake us up in the middle of the night. They are just supposed to be there with you bone marrow [laughing] … but well, yes…."close", "human" , and "the one who dares" I know that we had – I think it was round this time, and I believe the "close" and "human" are still current but "daring" I think that have removed and replace with something else. Well… Hmm… Yes, Okay, It can be good that you have some common values, or whatever you might call it, but you don't work…you don't have those on your mind all the time. Or think, we should be like this or that… but sure, you need to be aware of it, you need to be clear about what our goal and values are so…" [Maria Sjögren]

And further upon reflecting about potential new values for the new bank, the same employee simply said:

> "I will have to memories those as well at one point or another as well. No so that doesn't… Well, you know that they are there, you know that off course, but, you know that they exist…/…/ [but] I can't really claim that they [values] have any importance." [Maria Sjögren]

Not only does this quote provide a reason to suspect that the process might not have been seen as all successful, the actual content or outcome of the program – the "Vision 2002" folder and the content therein- does not appear to be perceived as providing any artefactual value for the employees. This is also the argument here - as artefacts should be seen as organizational cultural symbols by the meaning given to them, (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2000), and no such meaning was attributed on a collective basis. Besides several employees having difficulty with seeing a very clear added value from the program, one employee was outright negative to the entire program. She put it like this:

> "It felt, difficult, like a hard job, and there have been other such things even if they have been called something different, other development efforts of vision work or whatever you can call it, within the bank as well. And what you feel when you have been through a few of these is that they be good fun but it needs to be comprehensible and you have to understand what it all is going to lead to. And there needs to be a follow up, more than anything else. It has to be something where you feel you reach to something, but then you have to keep on to that thread of what it is and think about how we can use that further. And that I don't think the bank has succeeded in, to keep it going/…/then I think/…/ the next time something like this comes along then you feel that, you don't really have the … energy to do something with it." [Karin Ek]

However, the same employee adds that these sorts of efforts can be very important, and especially highlight the added value for new employees of such programs or the outcomes thereof, i.e. the "Vision 2002" folder. This view is also confirmed by one of the managers, who herself was a rather new employee around the time of the launch of this program. Her view on it was that:

> "I started here in conjunction with all of this, so it was one of the first things which happened when I had been here for just a short while. So I don't have a reference to what things were like before that, so to speak. But I think that the work which was done then in 2002, and the way in which that was followed through, that strengthened the Gripen spirit enormously. /.../I was a relatively new employee and didn't have any deeper … and this thing that you put down the business idea and the values it were us there and then you developed these. We had group work and made suggestions which we developed, and then this work which the offices put into all of this, was taken charge of and developed and out of that this business idea and these values were developed. So everyone was able to stand for this, as a result of that, as It was we self who characterized ourselves in this way." [Hanna Ståhl]

The apparent value perceived by the manager in her role as a new employee might very well be linked to that she did not hold a strong prior understanding of the culture within the Bank. Rather the program was interpreted in light of prior external, rather than internally embedded, understandings and experiences. However, although she herself saw the value of the program as a new employee, she points to the same factor as both the other manager and other employees interviewed did, namely a concretization of characterization of what was already there. This perception is arguably supported by the argument by Mullins (2007, p.724) that "corporate history can be an effective induction tool/...[for example]/ help integrate acquisitions and new employees by infusion with the organization's culture and identity". Or in the words of Ashforth and Mael (1989) that through the process of socialization and identification there is an indirect internalization of the organizational culture. Ashforth and Mael (1989, p.27) further argue that:

> "The often noted affect of socialization on the internalization of organizational values and beliefs is comprised in part of an indirect via identification/.../ Albert and Whetten (1985) has argued that an organization has an identity to the extend there is a shared understanding of the central, distinctive and enduring character or essence of the organization among its members".

This, can somewhat be confirmed by our review of the Banks annual reports over the past decade. Whereas there is no vision or business concept in annual reports prior to 2003, as clearly stated as in the reports thereafter, we non-the-less find heading in the annual reports which tells a story about a "broad interface throughout North West Scania", about being "dominant on the local market", by having a "focus on clients", by "being a bank for everyone", where "qualified advisors – a matter of course" (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2001). The vision, business idea and values can hence, more or less, be seen as phrases which have simply been formulated along the lines of a vision or a business idea, more so than bringing something entirely new to the table. Thus, there is a divergence in perceptions about the success and added value to the organization of the "Vision 2002" program.

4.4.3 2nd Place in "Great Place to Work": A Mirror of Success?

Building on the HR efforts commencing in 2002, the Bank in 2005 signed up for the competition *Great Place to Work*, a competition run by the *Great Place to Work* institute which is a survey and management consultancy firm. The task assigned to the European organizations of the institute is to "help organizations within all sectors to reach sustainable improvements in their work relations, which in turn will result in measurable advantages and results for the organizations" (Great Place to Work Institute Sverige, 2010:a). Every year the Institute runs a competition in collaboration with one of the bigger Swedish business magazines, *Veckans Affärer*, publishing lists of the winners of the competition, encompassing 40 countries, seen as excellent workplaces within their specific categories (Great Place to Work Institute Sverige, 2010:b). Sparbanken Gripen was awarded with 7th place for small to medium sized companies in Sweden, an award which was brought to the attention of all stakeholders in the 2005 annual report, where one can read:

> “Sparbanken Gripen achieved an honourable seventh place in the Swedish list published by the Great Place to Work Institute. None of the other Swedish participants got a placing higher than Gripen… consequently, we’re the best!!!” (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2005, p. 5)

Further the deputy CEO of the bank is quoted as saying that the survey, which is based on questions to all employees about working atmosphere, personal development, leadership and health, proves that Sparbanken Gripen is a good, secure and appreciated employer (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2005, p. 12). Not only is the statement that “we’re the best” a rather bold statement in itself, the award is also seen as an artefactual proof of the Bank being a good, secure and appreciated employer. Linking this to our theoretical discussion the award it used by the HR department as a tool to incorporate the desired image into the organizational identity, thus embedding a new artefact into the organizational culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). As Hatch and Schultz (2002, p. 1001) argue “artefacts become symbols by virtue of the meanings that are given them” and arguably HR attempted to give cultural meaning to the award.

The award is a representation of the internal organizational culture, as expressed by the employees of the organization in responses given to the *Great Place to Work* survey. This survey is used by the institute, in addition to other material submitted by the organization, as a base for the Institute’s decision as to what organization receives an award. Thus, we argue that HR views this award as confirmation of the success of “Vision 2002” process, and has had an impact on the organizational identity and culture. However, we argue that HR is lacking a self-reflective component of the mirroring process, as explained in the link between image and identity in Hatch and Schultz *Organizational identity dynamics model* (2002). Rather, we believe that the culture expressed by the employees in the survey is a reflection of the “Gripen Spirit” (organizational identity) and not the result of the “Vision 2002” program. Subsequently there is no cultural meaning embedded in the award as a cultural artefact for the organizational members.

The lack of self-reflection on the part of HR is further highlighted by the fact that in 2006, the Bank entered the competition again, this time achieving second place amongst companies with up to 250 employees (Sparbanken Gripen AB, 2006:a, p. 2). Speaking about the effects of “Vision 2002” and the payoff of the investments made, the HR manager makes a direct linkage between the “Vision 2002” program and the award in 2006:

> "It was because year 2002 we set goals for "this is where we are going to be year 2007" ... and they were tough targets ... really really tough targets...and when you then see these targets "what is it that we have to do to guarantee that we reach these?" And there are no shortcuts ... This is an investment, a tremendous investment in organizational development, in leader development and in personnel development. However, when you are communicating this, you have to communicate HR issues, in such a language that the management will understand what you are saying./.../ I have to secure that you have the competence which we as an employer demand, the authorities demand, and the customers demand. And what pay-off time do I have on the investment I make in you? And it is precisely those terms you have to work with when you work with HR issues to be able to get approval for this investment/.../ We were not good enough at it previously. We have, we have had... we chose this structure to get a good operation. And this has amongst other things lead to what hangs on the wall over there [looking at ward plaque for second best place to work in Sweden 2006] - which is great!" [David Berg]

More than anything else, the award can arguably be seen to represents the success of the "Vision 2002" program according to the HR Manager. Speaking about having to really drive this process in a thorough and strategic way the HR Manager said:

> "What is incredibly important is that, this comes in turns; that you process each turn on its own – this is the way in which you create sustainable change and teams. Because I am completely against that you attend a training program for a week and then everything goes back to normal again. You have to create sustainable change/.../ it is very easy to want to take short cuts. But is requires an organizational climate, it demands...it demands ... a great level of openness. It requires a CEO who is developmentally inclined. And many may say that they are open to change and to be developmentally inclined is something positive, but when it affects me, when it gets very concrete, it demands that one stands ones ground and stands for ones developmental inclination." [David Berg]

In other words, the HR manager expresses the firmness in the HR departments execution of the process of the "Vision 2002" program, in combination with a desired implementation of a developmentally inclined mindset of the HR department, and argues that it has not only driven the program, but has led to its success.

4.4.4 Employee Reflections on the Image of Success

The strongly contrasting perceptions shared by the employees, regarding the award in 2006, points to the idea that perceptions might differ significantly depending on your point of view. Upon asking the employees about their thoughts and feelings towards the award in 2006, only one employee was outwardly positive, but links its success to the Gripen spirit:

> "You see, I, now I am taking about me personally; I feel like I get to participate in things, I feel well informed as to what is going on in the bank. You feel like you are a part of something, as you are as well informed as you are you feel like a participant in things. It is a safe, secure and good employer. It is yet again this Gripen spirit /.../ and I think that is a large contributing factor to this award, or to this placement in this competition, or this survey." [Lisa Havsblad]

Interestingly, by linking the award to the Gripen Spirit, she does not only “disregard” the “Vision 2002” program in her reflections, she also emphasis the low impact of the program as the award is both understood and explained in relation to the organizational culture, as expressed both prior to, an throughout the course of the “Vision 2002” program. Another employee expresses the impact of the award emphasis what made the win noticeable in slightly different terms:

> “Well, we got cake [laughing loudly] … But sure, you got a bit proud anyways. Because it was published…It was in the newspaper and so, in the local newspapers, but also in the bit larger Privata Affärer who was behind this.” [Maria Sjögren]

This might be said to emphasise the facts that whilst the external image of the Bank is of importance to both employees and HR, there is a lack of consistency regarding the value of the award as a valuable cultural artefact. Taking this view to the extreme, another manager was outright cynical to the award, saying that it meant:

> “Not a damn shit. We got a sign which we had to put up on to the wall. And I think it might still be there up at Rebbelberga. I’ll have to take that down soon, because old things like that can become a bit embarrassing as time passes. No, I thought it was really great fun, and it was a confirmation on that it actually is a really good workplace. Then we do personnel staff attitude surveys once a year where we get to share our opinions, and each damn year I always write that I think that I consider that, that there is a lack of diversification in this workplace. I want to have co-workers of colour, I want to have people from other countries, I want to have handicapped and homosexual people, I want to have different kinds of people, and we aren’t that here at Gripen. If you look at us, it is starting to happen now, and [the HR Manager] is stoked that he has hired his first co-worker of colour. But we weren’t the first to do it! So that sign which you speak about, well, it was fun that we were a good workplace, but we are far from perfect.” [Hanna Ståhl]

If one takes this quote into account, there however seems to be a discrepancy not only in the perception of the internal organizational identity, but also a divergence in perceptions about the value of the award, and what it actually mirrors. It is here worth emphasizing that the manager stating the above quote is also the only manager who holds dual roles, as both a manager and a union representative at the Bank. This fact may very well be of importance when taking her statements into consideration, due to the fact that she embodies two professional identities. As argued by Alvesson (2004, p.189) “a particular personal identity implies a certain form of subjectivity, and there ‘ties’ an person’s feelings, thinking, and valuing in particular direction”. Arguably, her union involvement can thus be seen to influence perceptions. However, despite her dual roles, the fact still remains, that there is in fact a low range of diversification amongst the staff, as exemplified by the low turnover rate and long employment time by several employees. This may in turn also be a factor of importance in the strong cultural unity which is expressed in terms of the Gripen Spirit (organizational identity). Whilst trying to share her opinions in more diplomatic terms, the other manager nonetheless points to the facts that a "lack" of external knowledge or experiences might very well have been of impact for the award. She said:

> "I'll have to put my chin out again, and say that I believe that if you have had a previous employer then you appreciate the sort of employer which Gripen is, because Gripen is a good employer. Gripen sees to that we have favourable working conditions; Gripen sees to that we have benefits, some say that they aren't the best in the world, but I claim that they are more than enough. /.../ if you have been part on another organization you appreciate, or ought to appreciate Gripen as an employer, and the value of them as an employer, "but", we have an incredible amount of people who have never had another employer but Gripen. And then you only know what you have, not what things could have been like, and then you don't really have the possibility to make a comparison. You take a lot of things for granted and believe that "off-course this is what it should be like", and you might even think that is a shame that certain things won't get done. But if you can compare things with another organization you might realize that this would not even have been up for discussion at all. So, did it mean anything for me in my role or for me personally? No, for me personally it probably didn't because I believe I had the sense to appreciate it before that." [Eva Nässelbo]

Having the award up on the wall in several offices and speaking about it openly and loudly prompted the marketing manager to make the following reflection:

> "It doesn't feel like a huge value. But off course when you hold a presentation or so, it in additional positive thing which.... well, I believe it is more internally that one might feel that it feels good. But I don't know externally, it can be both sides of the coin with customers actually/.../ I don't know really, it can be a bit much to hit yourself on the chest and say we are really great and we have such a great workplace. I don't know if this can make people think "oh well, then they must have huge salaries" and become jealous in a way, I don't know really. It can simply become too much." [Mats Alm]

This statement points to another important aspect regarding the perception of the award, namely the external perception of the reward by the customers of the Bank. Coupled with knowledge about the Bank's strong historical and local rootedness, there is as such also a perception shared that an award, or a display of a visual artefact, like this might impact the perception of the Bank in a negative way by stakeholders and customers alike. From the above quotes by Hanna Ståhl and Mats Alm, we were given the impression that they were in fact embarrassed by the outward displaying of the award. A factor which has arguably not been considered by the executive members and HR department of the Bank, considering their statements and opinions shared about the award in the previous section of this thesis. This gives credit to Hatch and Schultz (2002) argumentation that it is important to achieve a balance between the expressing and reflecting of culture and cultural artefacts. They argue that organizations have become “preoccupied with carefully crafted, elaborated, and univocal expression/../[of their own] essence” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 1009).

Before summing up this section we also wanted to include an interesting anecdote which was also shared by one employee concerning why the Bank never entered the competition again after 2006:

> “Well, I know that when we got it he [the HR Manager] joked and said that he would never send it in again/.../ or initiated that, because he meant that then we are required to become better than second, and then there is only one place to be.” [Lisa Havsblad]

This statement does on the contrary to our argument above, give reason to believe that the executive members of the organization, or at least the HR manager of the Bank, has given consideration to the impact of “less favourable” image, an awareness which is in line with the ambiguity of an “image” by Boorstin (1992) as existing in a sphere in-between expectation and reality. The successful image of the Bank, which has sought to be strengthened or confirmed by means of the award, or even both, might as such, be tarnished by a lower placement in the competition.

The diverging perceptions of the award does in summary not only differ between management and the employees, but does so on a number of levels namely; with regard to its verification (of the organizational culture – the Gripen Spirit-, or the “Vision 2002” program); with regards to what it mirrors (a successful culture or a culture lacking in diversity); and with regards to the value of the award (as an image of success displayed as a cultural artefact or an image of boosting lacking awareness of the impression it leaves of others).

Summing up this section, we find it appropriate to again highlight the notion of adaptive instability. Gioia, Schultz, & Corley’s (2000, p. 64) argue that “the instability in identity allows better adaptation to the demands of the environment that is itself undergoing continuous change.” However, in the case of our organization we are in agreement with Humphery and Brown (2006) who argue that adaptive measures, which may be either proactive or reactive, cannot be completely managed in programmed and predictable ways. Therefore we find that the HR efforts, although hyper-adaptive in nature, are failing as they are in reality not impacting upon the organizational identity in the way that HR has predicted.

We feel that the HR department has neglected critical self-reflection and due to this fact are unaware that the "Vision 2002" programme has not been successfully accomplished through their efforts as they intended.

4.5 The Rise of Resistance at Sparbanken Gripen

The pressing question to address based upon the above is hence why the HR efforts are not successful? As addressed in the section on resistance earlier on in this paper there are multitudes of ways of expressing resistance, and we believe that there have been numerous verbal insinuations of resistance by the employees, in the interviews conducted. These statements have included sarcasm, mild humour, feelings of embarrassment and outright cynicism. It has further been expressed by laughing about questions or their own answers to them, as well as firstly answering questions in a less politically correct way than maybe desired and then "streamlining" their answer making it more "appropriate" (Alvesson 2003). This alludes to the argumentation by Fleming (2005a; 2005b) on more contemporary conceptualization of resistance as taking other forms than resistance as previously understood as more hostile and outwardly expressed. In exploring the criticism, and our perceptions of the resistance to the "Vision 2002" program, one employee states:

> "…..it wasn't any work which I though gave a lot, as I see it. You got your visions and so on, but it is nothing that has been my focus, it is almost so that I have forgotten about it." [Peter Borg]

This critique was also back up by another employee who humorously criticised the attempted internalization of the new values developed in the "Vision 2002" program:

> "Well [laughing] they want us to know them when they wake us up in the middle of the night. They are just supposed to be there with you bone marrow [laughing]." [Maria Sjögren]

Referring back to the analysis of the *Great Place to Work Award* in section 4.4.3, we see another example of one employee using humour as a means of portraying her criticism of the value of the award, and it's value to here and an employee, when stating "Well, we got cake [laughing loudly]" [Maria Sjögern]. In another expression of criticality, this time giving expression to feelings of embarrassment, one manager stated:

> "Not a damn shit. We got a sign which we had to put up on to the wall. And I think it might still be there up at Rebbelberga. I'll have to take that down soon, because old things like that can become a bit embarrassing as time passes." [Hanna Ståhl]

We arguably perceive that the use of both humour and statements of embarrassment can be linked to feelings of anxiety and discomfort as expressed by Casey (1999) as causes for resisting internalization. Importantly this links to Humphreys and Brown's (2006) questioning of an organizations use adaptive instability as a tool to effectively initiate change, raising the question of the predictability of reactions to these initiatives. As argued by Humphreys and Brown (2006, p.252) "while organizational identities may be adaptively unstable/.../it is not clear that they are manageable by elites in programmed and predictable ways". Hence, whilst mirroring efforts may sometimes show the organization that it is being perceived in the way it wishes (i.e.by winning the *Great Place to Work* award), it may also throw up some ugly truths and show inconsistency between the projected image and the perceived one (by the employees) (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

Taking our analysis further we will specifically address expressions of cynicism as an expression of subtle resistance (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). In addition to the above quotes in this section, which all have cynical undertones in the use of humour and critique, subtle resistance can be exemplified in the following statements by one of the employees when addressing the low rate of absence due to illness:

> "We do have a really good workplace and the employer doe stake really good care of us, and everybody seems to like it here. And we have a great atmosphere and we have a very low rate of leave of absence due to illness. Then off course it is easier to go to a job at a bank if you have a cold than it might be if you have really demanding job, but things like that are sort of self evident." [Mats Alm]

In the above quote, as well in some prior quotes, we perceive the interviewees as attempting to frame their answers to their presumed idea of what themes and topics are of interest to us as researchers, beginning with an positive explanation of the organizational identity and culture, or the HR driven programs, followed closely followed by cynical adage to their statements. This is in line with Alvesson's (2003) argumentation for a reflexive pragmatic view on interviews, and as such can be seen to correspond to the fourth metaphor which highlights cultural scrip application. We further find an example of outright cynicism in the quote below, as one employee gives her perception of the possibility of new values in the organizations future:

> "I will have to memories those as well at one point or another as well. No so that doesn't… Well, you know that they are there, you know that off course, but, you know that they exist…/.../ [but] I can't really claim that they [values] have any importance." [Maria Sjögren]

In agreement with Fleming and Spicer (2003) we have specifically highlighted resistance by the employee's interviews through the expressing of cynicism. Fleming and Spicer (2003) note a third form of cynicism as a process by which employees attempt to dis-identify with the prescribed cultural norms, whilst still having to work within them. This third perspective of cynicism can be exemplified in the following statements by one of the employees when addressing the Banks vision and values on a more general note:

> "Then there is always one thing in practice and it is hard to put that on paper and then go about changing all of it. There are a lot of us here from Gripen who will work in the new bank and we naturally will bring of things with us, and you can't change people in a heartbeat. Then naturally the people from the other banks are a certain way and think in a certain way, so it always takes some time to reach a common ground. But I guess this will have to be dealt with as time passes. Then off course you can't control things like this with a few words on a piece of paper." [Mats Alm]

A second example of Fleming and Spicer's (2003) third perspective of cynicism can be seen in the following statement regarding the link between participation and internalization:

> "Everything which you are just informed about, without being given the opportunity to have an opinion about always runs the risk of not being internalized to a larger extent, or that you become critical. Because you might think that something is strange if you can't get an opportunity to refute things but just have to accept things. So this dialogue form, that you listen, is hugely important – if it is to be internalized and become something good. Then it is really important." [Karin Ek]

In the above two quotes each employee describes a cultural norm of the banks HR processes, whether it be the vision and values or the means of participation. Even though they prescribe these in a way akin to cultural scrip application (Alvesson, 2003), they nonetheless express a distancing or dis-identification with the normative system in which they work (Fleming & Spicer, 2003).

Developing on the above argumentation of Fleming and Spicer's (2003) third perspective of cynicism (namely the dis-identification with the normative system in which the employees work whilst still identifying with the organizational culture) we argue there is a link to Ashforth and Mael's (1989) ideas of social identification and internalization. In other words, by example of the quotes given in this Chapter, there is a clear employee expression of social identification with the organizational culture of the Bank, manifested in the Gripen Spirit. However, there is a simultaneous dis-identification or lack of internalization of the organizational identity designed by the image work of HR (Casey, 1999).

Although the employees have spoken to us about a solid culture, a lasting loyalty and an intrinsic feeling of being the bank (the Gripen Spirit), the subtle tones of resistance we have seen or inferred from statements made by several employees and managers give us reason to believe that there might be an overemphasis on the desirable cultural aspects in combination with not buying in to – internalizing - the cultural efforts undertaken by HR. These desirable aspects would be the historical locality and rootedness, the communal and institutional loyalty, the closeness to management, the interactional atmosphere between all members of the organization, the high level of information and deliberation involving the employees, and foremost an organizational identity as well as personal embedded in the Gripen Spirit – as the employees own identities are intrinsically linked to that of the Bank, of being the Bank.

4.6 A Visual Conceptualization of the Case

Figure 10: Visual illustration of conceptual framework- Summary of all process links

We have throughout this chapter visually sought to illustrate the connection between our conceptual understanding developed in chapter three and our findings and analysis of the case material. Bringing all of it together in a comprehensible way this last subsection seeks to shortly summarize all previous sections of this chapter. Firstly we have sought to give voice to the collective understanding of the ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE as EXPRESSED by the employees of the Bank. This expression reflects an experience of the employee's employment with the Bank as intrinsically connecting and influencing both their professional and personal lives. An experience which is often strongly and historically linked to both the countryside where Sparbanken Gripen has its predominant operational area (place identity), and the Bank itself as an institution through their often lengthy time of employment. The historical locality and loyalty directly feeds into their perception of the ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY as the Gripen Spirit. In addition to the employee experience of the organizational culture, there are efforts undertaken by the executive members of the organization seeking to express the organizational identity by ways of leaving an IMPRESSION of a specific and desired ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE with both internal and external customers and stakeholders. By a process where the organizational identity is MIRRORED in the image of others, the HR department has developed and implemented specific HR tools and processes – namely the “Vision 2002 Program” - as a direct outcome of their reflections and internal experiences in relation to surrounding external conditions. These efforts have sought to influence the ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY in a developmentally inclined direction and have been expressed both internally and externally. These efforts have in turn been interpreted by the organizational members and REFLECTED upon in relation to the existing ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE and existing organizational self-definitions – namely the “Gripen Spirit”.

In parallel to this we have sought to give specific attention to the role of HR and their own, as well as the employees and managers, perception upon their IDENTITY, and their EXPRESSION of this identity as a certain IMAGE. We firmly believe that this parallel focus is of significant importance for gaining a more complete picture of the employee perception upon the role or IMAGE of HR as well as the tools and processes developed by HR. Importantly this also aids a fuller understanding why these MIRRORING efforts have been driven so firmly be the HR department at the Bank.

Lastly, we have included a section specifically with the theme of resistant, in which we have sought to highlight specific instances and expressions of subtle resistance. These are more contemporarily conceptualized as, criticism, humour, sarcasm and cynicism (Casey, 1999; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Fleming, 2005). This resistance has further been coupled to Ashforth and Males (1989) ideas of social identification and internalization. As such, we argue that in our case organization, resistance is occurring as a result of the employees’ attempts to defend a perceived threat to their organizational culture, expressed as the “Gripen Spirit”.

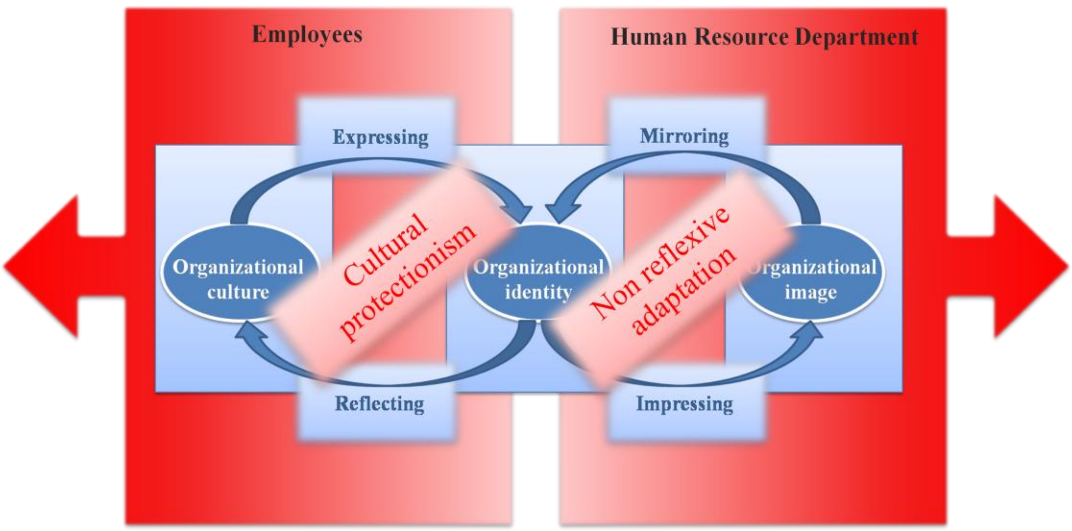
Chapter Five: Concluding Discussion

In concluding our thesis, we find it useful to refer back to our research questions and interpret and reflect upon these using the materials and discussions presented in the previous chapters, regarding our case organization Sparbanken Gripen.

The first research question we raised was "how do HR tools and processed impact organizational identity and culture?" From our theoretical discussion regarding the themes of organizational identity, culture and image, we argued that the HR department at Sparbanken Gripen embodies a contemporary understanding of *human resource management* encompassing a 'high commitment HR approach' (Leopold & Harris, 2009). However, from the viewpoint of the employees, we present an understanding of the role of HR, as aligning with more *traditional personnel management*, or a 'low commitment HR approach' (Leopold & Harris, 2009). We argue that this disparity causes a disconnection between the HR department and the employees regarding their understandings of the role of HR. Whereas HR, through their perception of their own role, feel a strong mandate to drive and develop the organizational identity, culture and image, the employees do not acknowledge this need. We argue that the employees disregard the contemporary role of HR in the case organization, largely as a result of a strongly rooted place identity. The connection to place is historically bound, in relation to both the culture and history of the community of operation and the Bank as an institution. This place identity has both impacted and shaped the culture of the Bank, and is manifested as the "Gripen Spirit" (the organizational identity). The two examples of HR tools and processes highlighted in this thesis are the "Vision 2002" program and the *Great Place to Work* award. These have arguably been aimed, by the HR department, at impacting the organizational identity and culture by way of developing new cultural artefacts. But as previously stated, we are in agreement with Hatch and Schultz (2002, p.1001) that "artefacts become symbols by virtue of the meanings that are given to them". As an outcome of previously existing cultural rootedness (the "Gripen Spirit") the employees have rejected an internalization of these new artefacts. However, due to the emotional attachment by the employees to the Bank, they nonetheless maintain a feeling of organizational identification without the need to internalize the cultural artefacts developed by the HR department. As such our argument is that, HR tools and processes impact the organizational identity and culture to the extent they are internalized by the employees. This leads us on to our second research question, inquiring into whether there is “employee resistance to HR tools and processes that threaten organizational identity and culture?” At Sparbanken Gripen we find that there are occurrences and expressions of resistance, as has been developed upon in the previous chapters of this thesis. The employee resistance we have found at Sparbanken Gripen can be described as subtle forms of resistance, as portrayed in the contemporary resistance literature. In our material these expressions of resistance have taken the form of sarcasm, criticism and cynicism of the HR driven tools and processes, for the reasons stated above.

The impact of this resistance can be seen as a discrepancy between the perceptions of organizational identity, between the HR department and the employees. Developing on the *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model* (Hatch & Schultz, 2002), where dysfunctionality of the model is manifested by means of narcissism and loss of culture, we argue that the dysfunctions can be expressed by different means, in our case organization. Whereas Hatch and Schultz state that the dysfunctions cannot manifest at the same time, we argue that it is in fact possible for these dysfunctions to occur simultaneously in the same organization. Thus from our research we find it more apt to re-conceptualize the labels given to the dysfunctional states (narcissism and loss of culture) as *cultural protectionism* and *non reflexive adaptation.*

Figure 11: Visual illustration of conceptual framework – dysfunctions at Sparbanken Gripen



As visualized in Figure 11, we found that (1) efforts of *cultural protectionism* were triggered by perceived threats to the organizational identity and culture, due to the employees strong emotional attachment to the existing organizational culture, manifested as the "Gripen Spirit"; (2) simultaneously, the HR department has developed and implemented HR tools and processes, attempting to shape the organizational identity and culture, by means of *non-reflexive adaptation* of the organizational image; (3) resulting in an unsustainable divergence of the organizational identity. We argue that the outcome of this divergence at Sparbanken Gripen is highly problematic for the organization, not solely as a result of its occurrence, but foremost as it has gone unnoticed by the HR department. We propose that this divergence has gone unnoticed for three reasons; (1) that both dysfunctions (*cultural protectionism* and *non-reflexive adaptation*) are occurring simultaneously within the organization; (2) that the HR department takes a non-reflexive approach to their own role; and (3) the fact that the HR department are unaware of the occurrence of the employee resistance.

Acknowledging the limitations of the research and analysis in this thesis, we find that these fall into three categories. Firstly the methodology with which the thesis claims to reside in, second the interpretive nature of the analysis of the case data, and finally the applied method used in the data collection and analysis. As previously discussed in chapter two, this thesis grounds its methodological perspective in hermeneutics and reflexivity. Taking a critical approach, when working with the methodological concepts of hermeneutics, there is an assumption that there is truly a relationship between the part and the whole. As explored in the understandings of postmodernism, one cannot always assume that there is a subjective and coherent whole (Silverman, 2006; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In the case of this thesis due to time constraints little time was given to the establishment of what was deemed to be the part and the whole, this factor needs to be taken into consideration should further research be pursued. When discussing the limitations of the applied method, two key issues can be discussed; the case organization and the means of gathering material. One of the key limitations to this thesis is the use of a single case organization for analysis. To further the research and its contribution to the field, the means of gathering material and analysis need to be expanded, allowing the opportunity for a more sophisticated explorative approach to be taken, for example collecting material from multiple savings banks in an attempt to understand what phenomena are strictly related to Sparbanken Gripen, and which are more widely seen in the savings bank sector. It is also appropriate to discuss the amount of people interviewed for this study of this study, due to the time constraints of the study and the availability of possible participants; convenience sampling was used throughout the research (Riley, 2000). While we made an attempt to incorporate both management and subordinate employees, the scope was limited due to HR manager being the one who supplied the contact details of the participants contacted. Finally we acknowledge the possible limitations involved with interviews as a means of gathering unbiased material. While we acknowledge these limitations, we do not view them as failures of the work, but rather areas of improvement for further research in the field.

To further develop on our themes of study, further research efforts should be focused upon understanding of the phenomena of simultaneous dysfunctionality in the savings banks sector as a whole. We would also like to further research the influence of age upon our study and the results presented, namely by expanding the scope of research to include the thoughts and opinions of younger or newer employees. We would also welcome further studies focusing on the external implications of the HR tools and processes, namely the "Vision 2002" program and the *Great Place to Work* award.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interviewee overview incl. shorter bibliographies

Interviewee	Role
David Berg	HR Manager
David is the HR manager with the Bank at situated at the Bank's head office. He has a background of a strong involvement with the union moment as a union representative but has later on joined the employer side within Human Resource Management.	
Mats Alm	Marketing Manager
Joining Bjäre Sparbank after High school in the beginning of the 1980s, Mats has worked in areas spanning from cash and customer service, to accounting and since closer to twenty years ago marketing.	
Maria Sjögren	Business Advisors - Back office
Completing an economics degree in high school in the mid 1980s, Maria applied for a summer job with Bjäre Sparbank, and has been with the bank ever since. With temporary positions following the summer job, and later on a permanent position, roles at the bank have spanned from the cash and customer service desk to accounting, to projects, and now back office duties for the business section.	
Lisa Havsblad	Private Financial Advisor
Applying for a position with Bjäre Sparbank in the cash and customer service desk at end of high school, Lisa has been with the Bank since the mid 1980s. Having held positions in both the cash and customer service area as well as administration in the head office for several years, Lisa is now working as a private financial advisor in one of the newer branch offices.	
Peter Borg	Private Financial Advisor
Commencing his banking career in Stockholm with a larger commercial bank, which also brought him to Scania, Peter has been with Sparbanken Gripen since the late 1990s. Applying for a position with the Bank, which he still holds today, was a direct outcome of having noticed its local image and influence.	
Hanna Ståhl	Cash and Customer Service Desk Manager (Head office Branch)
Hanna has been in the bank industry since the beginning of the 1980s. With a high school degree in informatics, it is a coincidence that she ended up in the industry. Hanna joined Sparbanken Gripen in early 2002 and has since progressed from being a cash and customer service desk co-worker to becoming the manager of that same department in 2008. Hanna is also a union representative at the Bank.	
Eva Nässelbo	Branch Office Manager
Originally a solicitor, Eva joined the bank industry in the beginning of 1990. After a few years of getting to know the industry she found the desired position of a bank solicitor with Sparbanken Gripen in 1995. Combining her two professional interests for a number of years, Eva was in 1999 asked to assume the role of an office manager for Sparbanken Gripen's northern business area.	
Karin Ek	Telephone Bank Advisor
Applying for an internship with the Munka-Ljungby branch office in the mid 1980s, following the completion of her high school degree, Karin has been with the bank since then. When the Telephone Bank opened in 1999, Karin applied for a position and has since then been situated at the Head Office Branch in Ängeholm.	