



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
School of Economics and Management

## **Scrap the Culture Talk, Let Employees do the “Walking”**

A processual approach to understanding culture change  
in a rapid-growth firm.

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## Abstract

**Title:** Scrap the Culture Talk, Let Employees Do the “Walking”.

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**Five key words:** Rapid Growth Company, Processual Change, Organization Cultural Change, Knowledge Sharing, Identity.

**Purpose:** The Purpose of this research is to investigate and analyze how knowledge sharing as a key component can change organizational culture and sustain development in a rapid growth company. We are conducting our analysis through highlighting three main themes which are surrounded around cultural change, knowledge management practices as well as identity work.

**Methodology:** The research bases on a case study. Qualitative and quantitative sources have been used. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with organizational members at various levels, which serve as primary empirical material.

**Theoretical perspective:** Three theoretical parts were considered: organizational change and culture change, knowledge and knowledge sharing, and identity.

**Empirical foundation:** A case study of the rapid growing renewable energy organization.

**Conclusions:** The research brings the following conclusions: knowledge sharing plays essential role in communicating the need for organizational change; employees need time to identify themselves with the change aspect to become more customer-oriented. Some of the reasons for current discrepancies in Wind lie within unstructured and inconsistent communication, rapidly changing business environment, triggers created by different national culture as well as ‘immature’ leadership. It is essential to create collective knowledge in order to establish collective identity, which signifies the changing culture.

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## 1 Introduction

I stop walking  
The wind pushes against my back  
Telling me to move forward

I look behind me  
The wind blows in my face  
Telling me not to look back

I rake some leaves into a pile  
The wind scatters them  
Telling me to leave them be...

Whatever I do  
The wind reacts  
Telling me what I need to hear.

(J. Sullivan, *The Wind Tells Me*, Canada)

Changing an organization's culture to brave new challenges such as changing market conditions or strategic goals is increasingly necessary in today's economy. If an organization wants to survive and prosper, its managers must continually innovate and adapt in "a world of increased competition" (Morgan, 1997: 33-50; McNamara, 1997).

However, transforming a culture is no easy task. Past studies highlight that up to 70% of the intended large-scale changes fail (Pettigrew et al., 2001). Further, most, if not all, academic researchers buy into the myth that changing an organizational culture to something ideal is difficult to accomplish, at least and unattainable, at most. Organizational change can cause confusion, low morale, turnover, and decreased productivity among employees. Whatever the case may be to justify the need for change, an organization cannot successfully achieve its business and financial objectives until a "critical mass" of employees has completed their individual transitions (McGuire & Rhodes, 2009: 33-34).

The ambition for organizations to create strong unified culture is "highly fashionable". Much attention by management is usually prioritized to the organization's structure, processes,

measurements, policies, and procedures. Yet all transforming organizations seem struggle with people-related issues. The objective then for this dissertation is to demystify organizational culture change seen as processual and context-dependent. Elevating knowledge sharing practices as key drivers to shaping and sustaining organizational culture in a particular context of a rapid-growth firm is central scope of the stated purpose.

The theoretical contributions of the thesis come in three-fold. First, present-day research offers a rich collection of varying perspectives and models about organizational culture change, not to mention the numerous prescriptive pathways of accomplishing this. However, there is little research that elevates the relationship between cultural change efforts, knowledge-sharing practices and identity work.

Second, several contributions have been done in the areas of knowledge-sharing. However, most research mainly focuses on the structures that support or hinder the process and little or none has been done in the rapid-growth windmill industry. Also, present-day researchers suggest that more focus towards knowledge-sharing should be done to address its importance.

Third, the research employs the processual view of organizational culture change, a perspective in research that is often neglected and least acknowledged when compared to the planned and emergent countering views of change efforts. Here, the research advocates the fact that in the process of organizational culture change, the employees' responses are unpredictable; that there are always new challenges emerging and the change itself is highly dependent on context.

Summing up, the practical implications of theoretical contributions should provide new insights to academics and practitioners of organizational culture change. Especially to rapid-growth industries, like the wind turbine industry, an industry seen that is exposed to new external pressures to meet with the increasing trend of consumers seeking' "greener" environmental solutions.

Can knowledge-sharing be a driver of cultural change in a rapid growing company? How does the top management communicate about change? How do the employees relate to knowledge sharing practices? What are their self-identities? Does it matter? Can self-identity be supportive or problematic?

Following the above questions, we defined the purpose of this research. In this paper, we want to investigate and analyze how knowledge sharing as a key component can change organizational culture and sustain development in a rapid growth company. Three main themes, cultural change, knowledge management practices as well as identity work, are subject to the research.

The research is organized as follows. First we explore theories around organizational culture change, knowledge sharing and identity. After introducing the methodology and a short description of the background of the company where our research took place, we elaborate on the three main components of this study: organizational change, knowledge sharing practices and identity that constitute the major empirical inputs for discussion and analysis. We then proceed with an analysis of the observed discrepancies, clashes and alignments and search for possible reasons for their appearance. Afterwards we will provide a short summary, draw some conclusions and develop suggestions.

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Organizational Culture and Change**

Edgar Schein (1990) once suggested that an organization's culture develops in order to cope with its changing external environment and issues of internal integration. Numerous organizations today face an assortment of complex issues in attempts to establish, change or maintain its culture. Schein continues on to address that such issues are present due to the inability of organizational leaders to evaluate and understand their organizational culture. Consequently, obstacles with organizational change also arise from failures to analyze an organization's existing culture. It begs the questions then, what does organizational culture mean? How does this influence an organization such as NEUWind to reshape its culture? There exists no solitary definition for organizational culture. The term popularized in the last thirty years with practitioners and researchers coming from a variety of perspectives and disciplines developed numerous differing definitions, theories and models explaining what it is (Alvesson & Svingsson, 2008). The generally accepted definition of culture indicates that



people share something with each other. This can include for example a set of shared attitudes, systems of meanings, basic assumptions or traditions” (ibid: 36).

In one of its early definitions, introduced by Andrew Pettigrew (1979: 574), culture is “the system of [...] publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time. This system of terms, forms, categories, and images interprets a people's own situation to themselves.”

More recently, Alvesson (2002: 2) advocates that organizational culture is “significant as a way of understanding organizational life in all its richness and variations. The centrality of the culture concept follows from the profound importance of shared meanings for any coordinated action.”

You as a reader, can engross yourself into a vast collection of scholastic interpretations of organizational culture available out there. However, for this research, Schein’s three-level model of culture proves to be an ideal starting point for the in-depth analysis of NEUWind’ culture transformation.

### **2.1.1 Three-level Model of Culture**

In 1985, the decorated former MIT Sloan School of Management professor, characterized culture as consisting of three interrelating levels: (1) artifacts and behaviours (2) espoused values, and (3) assumptions (Schein, 1990).

*Artifacts and behaviours* delineate everything that is visible. This is the observable level of culture that includes behavioural patterns and outward manifestations of culture; i.e., what is seen, heard or felt when a person enters a particular company (ibid; Baumgartner, 2009). According to Schein (1990), Brown (1995), Baumgartner (2009), language, dressing style, rituals, stories, and technologies are some of the examples of artifacts. However, knowing the artifacts does not automatically mean that one understands the organizational culture resulting from different perception of artifacts than the researcher (Schein, 1990).

*Values* explain both the reasons why certain things are done in a certain way and the existence of the particular artifacts in an organization. Though they are not directly observable, values describe what members perceive as important and provide guidelines.

To fully understand culture, one has to get to the deepest level. *Basic assumptions* grow out of values and exist unconsciously until they become taken for granted and are no longer questioned or discussed (Schein, 1990). Basic assumptions or beliefs not only guides the individual's behaviour; they also determine the thought processes and feelings of the organizational members (ibid; Baumgartner, 2009). After understanding the basic assumptions one can comprehend the artifacts and the reasons for certain behaviours and routines.

Schein's model of organizational culture highlights how difficult it is to change culture. The basic assumptions are often rooted in the history of the organization and taken for granted. Questioning or challenging them might lead to fear and resistance on the member's side (Schein, 1997). Evidently, grasping all three levels to understand culture altogether is no easy task.

### **2.1.2. Changing Organizational Culture**

Organizational members create, develop, maintain and reshape their organization's culture. Further, change is driven by an array of external and internal stimuli. What holds great interest here is how an organization such as NEUWind engages in its culture transformation ambitions. As stated above, an organization must first analyze and understand its existing culture in order to assess what needs to be changed.

Palmer, Dunford & Akin (2006) and Alvesson & Sveningsson (2008) define several reasons for organizational change, which they classify as environmental (external) pressures and organizational (internal) pressures. Environmental pressures include the following: fashion, mandated, geopolitical, market decline, hyper-competition and reputation and credibility. Organizational pressures, on the other hand encompass growth, integration and collaboration, identity, new broom, power and politics are mentioned. Although it is often intricate to make a clear distinction between the two, these triggers are related to organizational change. At the same time they can also motivate or support cultural change. In the underlying case study some of the mentioned pressures can be identified and will be further discussed in the analysis.

According to Dawson (2003: 11), different views on organizational change exist. He identifies four key dimensions: (1) scale and scope of change, (2) sources of change, (3) politics of change, and (4) content of change.

The scale of change ranges from revolutionary (affects big parts of the organization) to evolutionary (small changes in some parts of the organization) change. The former involves significant strategic changes that affect organizational structures and culture, among others, as a result of changes of technological development, mergers, and market and industry competition. The latter scope involves operational changes influenced by improvements in product manufacturing and distribution, recruitment of additional human capital or ameliorated focus in customer satisfaction (Alvesson & Svensson, 2008: 16).

The view departing from the sources of change, distinguishes change as either planned or emergent change. Here, planned change emphasize that managerial plans and goals are predominant. In the contrary, emergent change elevates the importance of organizational members outside management and recognize the fact that change processes are contextual and ambiguous (ibid).

The politics of change influence how the change is taking place. Depending on how change is communicated and implemented, members may participate or resist.

Finally, the content of change refers to what is changed with regards to corporate culture, strategy, business processes, support structures, and so forth.

Of remarkable interest to the research from the above mentioned views of organizational change, is the advocacy that the evolutionary changes are seen as continuous and emergent. A bulk of the research regarding organizational culture focused primarily on a planned approaches, despite proven failed change initiatives. Alvesson & Svingsson (ibid: 27), alternatively, underline the increasing talk about culture change as a process that is open, continuous and highly unpredictable, with no clear beginning or end. As the methodological approach of choice for this research follows a similar sentiment, the processual approach of Dawson takes precedence here in understanding the complex and contextual character of change.

Following Latour's (in Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) idea of change as translation, elevating how social institutions and interactions are dependent on how the organizational players grasp and reinterpret the factors that link people and social elements together. The analysis focuses on what the organizational members tried to accomplish through the micro-processes indicated above, which we believe involve the processes of knowledge-sharing practice.

## 2.2 Knowledge and its sharing practices

Numerous academic literature highlight how academics and practitioners share the same sentiment of identifying organizational learning as "perhaps the key factor" in achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000: 245). Organizational learning and sharing is also mirrored to culture being shaped. Furthermore, organizations learn to seize knowledge from each individual for the purpose of managing and utilizing its collective intellectual capital. If those statements indeed are aligned and genuine, then it is vital to address the following questions: what kinds of knowledge are there to be learned and shared? How is the sharing of knowledge encouraged or facilitated? How does participation in information sharing processes related to culture? This section will address just that.

### 2.2.1 What is Knowledge?

*"Knowledge is one of these words, one knows exactly what it means – until one is forced to define it. Its illusiveness becomes obvious when one tries to pin it down in definite terms (Ilbert, 2007:104)."*

Ilbert's rather interesting interpretation of knowledge is contingent to a famous line iterated by Michael Polanyi (1966), that "we know more than we can tell", suggests that knowledge is internalized and conceptualized as an overlapping combination being both tacit (know-how) and explicit (codifiable information) (Kogut & Zander, 1992). Knowledge then takes many forms in various levels within an organization, as outlined on the overview below:

Types of knowledge	Focus on	Individual or Organizational Knowledge?	Examples
Embrained	Intellectual abilities	Individual	Problem solving skills
Embodied	Physical abilities		Capabilities
Encultured	Interpretative abilities	Collective, Organizational	Stories, rituals and symbols
Embedded	In relation to a group or a production system		Teamwork
Encoded	Language-based		vision, mission, values, manuals, intranet

**Figure 2.1 | Different Levels of Knowledge in accordance with Blackler (1995).**

Authors, outside of the above aforementioned, define knowledge in other ways. However, this research will not detail the various knowledge types. Generally, the above definitions of knowledge chosen should provide readers a clear understanding the working definitions of knowledge in relevance to organizations and the research’s ambitions. Nonetheless, appreciating the epistemological nature of knowledge is essential before delving into the concepts of knowledge-sharing.

### 2.2.2 Exploring knowledge sharing

Prior to examining what and how knowledge is shared, it is notable to address the ambiguity of knowledge as illuminated by Alvesson (2004: 41) as being “everything and nothing.” Since knowledge forms the foundation of knowledge management, i.e., the creation and distribution of knowledge in organizations, it is also a key learning point that knowledge is seen as ambiguous and difficult to define. As a result, the very same ambiguities translate over to knowledge management (KM) (Alvesson, Kärreman & Swan, 2002).

If KM is supposed to be the structures and processes that support organizational members to use what they know, how then is knowledge both shared and managed and what sorts of practices are out there that facilitate them?

According to Alvesson and Kärreman (2001), KM is mainly achieved through the use of technologies, notwithstanding the possibility to practice KM through social interactions is not neglected. These ways of KM practices are also found in Hansen et al. (1999) who see the KM practices tied to the organization’s strategy. In a research of two consultancy companies they defined two KM practices: (1) personalization, and (2) codification. Companies striving for unique solutions use the personalization strategy that focuses on tacit knowledge, which can only be shared with others through person-to-person

interaction. This is where the research departs from knowledge management to elevate the oft-neglected processes of sharing knowledge.

#### **2.2.2.1 What is knowledge sharing?**

*"It is only when people start to interact with each other that the organization's task can be performed in an acceptable manner (Sandberg and Targama, 2007: 89)."*

The term (or practice), sharing, can be viewed in many ways. Generally, the verb, to share, is to (1) give a portion of (something) to another or others; (2) use, occupy or enjoy (something) with another or others; (3) possess a view or quality in common with others; (4) to tell someone about something – all observable in organizational contexts (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 2008). Previous researchers further claim that knowledge sharing is a basic feature for companies to create and sustain competitive advantages (Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000: 345). If that is the case, how does knowledge sharing occur in organizations and why? To assist our ambitions in explicating this matter further in relation to culture transformation, the research follows Widén-Wulff & Suomi's (2007) work on knowledge sharing.

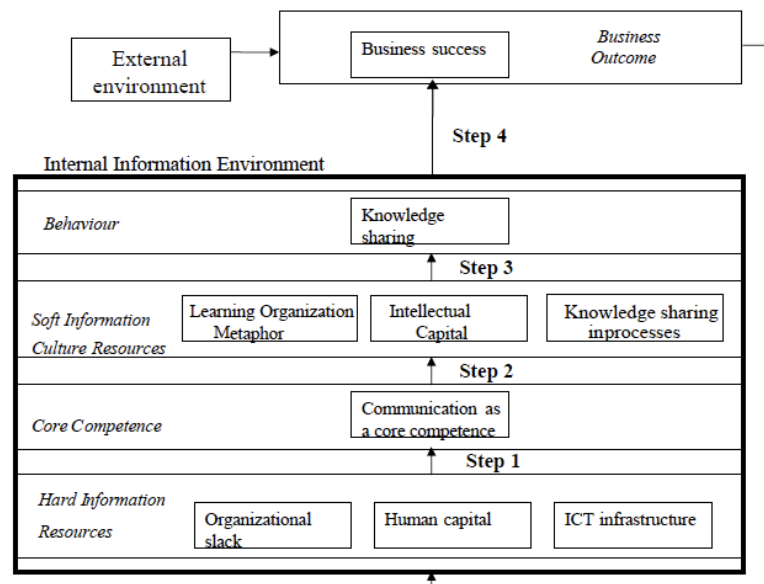
Knowledge sharing occurs through diverse combinations of social interactions to meet individual or organizational motives. However, Orna (2002, in Widén-Wulff & Suomi's 2007) contends that before such interactions are to occur and the fact that each organization's information and knowledge are highly specific, organizations are to define first what information and knowledge is important with respect to their goals. Factors such as purpose, accessibility, timing, and internal environment play a key role in the facilitation and hindrance of sharing knowledge (Solomon, 2002 in Widén'-Wulff & Suomi, 2007). Widén'-Wulff & Suomi (2007) explain that based on the context mentioned, each individual possess its own understanding and way of how to make use of its networks and the organizational structures in the organization's internal environment.

There exists only a handful of research and models about knowledge-sharing, focusing on concepts that include knowledge capture, flows and transfers, along with structures that promote or demote such processes. Although such concepts are not to be ignored, this research intends to place more emphasis to knowlede sharing for the purpose organizational

learning in lieu of structure-based concepts mentioned prior. Essentially, the research follows suit that organizational learning through knowledge sharing shapes culture

### 2.2.2.2 The knowledge sharing model

In 2007, Widén-Wulff & Suomi published a systematic model, based on resource-based theory, on how information resources in organizations can be adapted into a knowledge-sharing culture through incorporating communication as a core competence and as a result, promote business success that can be reinvested back to its resources.



**Figure 2.2 | Knowledge Sharing Model (Widen-Wulff & Suomi, 2007)**

Figure 2.2 incorporates the metaphoric concept of a learning organization, “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future (Senge, 2006).” The key learning points raised with this concept is that organizational learning is about how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels of the organization. It is about harnessing each individual’s knowledge and making it to collective knowledge (intellectual capital). Similarly, the concept advocates that individual visions are integrated in organizational vision, hence building a shared vision. The learning organization’s foundation constitutes vital elements that include core competence, cooperation, motivation and dialogue to facilitate. This concept is indeed interesting for the research since this is the context

NEUWind is at right now. Further, the model itself attempts to elevate the relation between knowledge-sharing and business success, such as culture transformation.

The model begins with the building blocks of an organization, termed hard information resources, i.e. human capital (the personnel) which can also include social capital, organizational slack (the time) and information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. In order to achieve knowledge sharing, not only are all of these resources are needed but also communication is a key aspect and can become a core competence. In the next step, the soft information resources are added which are utilization of the learning organization metaphor, intellectual capital and knowledge sharing in processes. The learning organization metaphor implies that learning is seen as a part of the daily business and facilitates double loop learning. Intellectual capital describes the knowledge which can be found in the social community. Knowledge sharing then takes place in processes which have integration for example through computer systems. In using hard and soft information resources, knowledge sharing becomes possible. As can be seen in the model, these three steps are summarized under the term “internal information environment” which influences the business success. However, to what extent the knowledge sharing can improve the business success depends as well on the external environment. A feedback loop connecting business outcome and hard information resources indicates how the company can build these resources (Widén-Wulff & Suomi, 2003).

Our research builds upon the knowledge-sharing model above and elevates the need to focus on identity of current and potential human capital and how inter-organizational processes of sharing is highly dependent on that identity.

### **2.3 Identity**

*“The extent to which organizational members identify with the organization is important for whether a more distinct organizational culture emerges” (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008).”*

The above statement clearly highlights the relationship between identification with the organization and its influence on organizational culture. Alvesson and Willmott (2002)



develop this thought further and introduce identity as a dimension of organizational control. In shaping the members' identity, their behaviour in the organization can be influenced and guided to a certain direction which in turn will also effect organizational culture. Different to the above interpretation of Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008), the authors take a more planning approach in mentioning tools for identity regulation. According to Alvesson and Willmott (2002), the use of "member identification" instead of "external stimuli" may be even more effective in achieving organizational control (ibid: 620). However, the process of identity construction takes time.

In order to influence the member's organizational identity the self-identity (reflexively created view of yourself) needs to be influenced. The self-identity is based on the individual's previous life, unconscious processes and the sense making of the "cultural raw material" which is gained in interaction with others and through messages from the outside. The "cultural raw material" involves language, symbols, values and further characteristics of the company. (Giddens, 1991 in Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 626)

At the time a member starts identifying with an organization, the corporate identity stimulates identity work. This means that the member starts reflecting upon the company characteristics which leads to "changing, forming, repairing or strengthening" the member's self-identity. (ibid: 626). This process not only takes place when a new individual enters the organization and starts identifying with it.

Several incentives for identity work among other members can be identified such as new discourses, induction, training etc. These Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 629-631) define nine ways of how identity can be "influenced, regulated and changed within work organizations":

- 1) Defining the person directly
- 2) Defining a person by defining others
- 3) Providing a specific vocabulary of motives
- 4) Explicating morals and values
- 5) Knowledge and skills
- 6) Group categorization and affiliation
- 7) Hierarchical location

- 8) Establishing and clarifying a distinct set of rules of the game
- 9) Defining the context

Some of these modes of regulation could also be identified within the company and will be discussed further in the analysis part of our research.

Alvesson and Willmott's conceptual model of the relationship between self-identity, identity work and identity regulation is a good theoretical background for our research. The processual approach applied by the authors mirrors our way of conducting the study.

## **3 Methodology**

In the following chapter, we would like to introduce the reader with the research methodology we applied to our research project. Following paragraphs present research approach and research process, sample, data collection and data analysis. In addition, validity, objectivity and reliability are discussed.

### **3.1 General Research**

#### **3.1.1 Research Approach**

Some researchers say that it is difficult to understand changes through a snapshot and instead emphasize a longitudinal approach (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008: 4). In this paper we are taking a processual approach. According to Dawson (2003), a processual analysis involves breaking down the data into parts, then placing data under one or a number of different categories and subcategories. Further steps include connecting all material to a whole. The methods used for the longitudinal study are taped, semi-structured interviews which are widely employed by those adopting a processual perspective in organization studies (Dawson, 2003). In order to make sense of the data as well as reflect the meanings and experience of others, it is important for the researcher to engage in a form of empathetic thinking.

The research has started in spring 2008 and continued until spring 2009, comprising almost a period of one year. In our research project, interview transcripts were transformed from

single texts to multiple fragments, which were afterwards combined and related to other data while developing pre-assigned categories.

The empirical study we are talking about in our thesis is formulated to explore how knowledge-sharing practices are influencing the shaping of a new organizational culture at NEUWind. The Purpose of this research is to investigate and analyze how knowledge sharing as a key component can change organizational culture and sustain development in a rapid growth company. We are conducting our analysis through highlighting three main themes, which are surrounded around cultural change, knowledge management practices as well as identity work.

### **3.1.2 Research Process**

The empirical data collected from the renewable energy company, NEUWind, was analyzed based on an in-depth qualitative approach, the method used among many well-known researchers. For instance, Ogbonna and Wilkinson state that “it is commonly argued that in-depth case studies are more appropriate methods of uncovering the meanings that organizational members ascribe to their environment as well as the ways in which such meanings are constructed and re-constructed” (2003: 1156). Furthermore, Alvesson and Sköldbberg argue that qualitative research “allows for ambiguity as regards interpretive possibilities, and lets the researcher’s construction of what is explored become more visible” (2000: 4).

One of the limitations in our research is the limited number of the interviews conducted during the period of the research. Some employees interviewed a year ago left the company, which did not allow us to have follow-up interviews with all the prior interviewed employees. Moreover, some of the employees interviewed have been working in the company only for a short period of time, which might have caused some subjectivity in their answers to questions, which require longer work experience. However, in order to overcome these limitations, we had several follow-up interviews, as well as interviews with employees who have been working at the company for a long period of time.

### 3.2 Sample

The purpose of having a case study in our research is to better understand the dynamics present in single settings (Eisenhardt, 1989). With the help of a case study it is possible to describe reality in an efficient way. Due to the fact that reality is socially constructed, each person perceives and understands it in his/her own way. Thus, such things like language, pre-understanding of researchers, theory and dependence of empirical data on our interpretation could have influenced the research question (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000: 1).

The research is based on a case study of Wind Northern Europe (NEUWind), with the focus on the Swedish office in Malmo. The office has been recently established as a headquarters of Wind and thus has not been studied by researchers before, which makes it even more attractive as a case study for our research.

### 3.3 Data Collection

#### 3.3.1 Primary Data

The main sources used in our research project are people (face-to-face and phone interviews), written materials provided by the company or taken from the company website, literature on organizational culture, cultural change, knowledge sharing as well as identity work and self-identity.

The main source was in-depth face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with employees from different departments. We stopped decided to do the interviews since it is believed to be one of the best tools to study change in a processual way. The reasons why people are a popular source of research are because people, either individually or as a group, can provide a very wide diversity of information, and this information can be gathered in a relatively quick way (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 1999).

Interviews were semi-structured and allowed the participants to express their ideas, views, and experiences. Another reason for carrying out semi-structured interviews was to acquire more valid and reliable information, not to limit the interviewee by structured questions, and “to allow some flexibility and discretion” (McNeill & Chapman, 2005; Saunders *et al.*, 2007). Both interviewers and interviewees could ask questions during the interviews.

Qualitative interviews with open-ended questions gave us a possibility to receive in-depth information from the interviewees. This approach was used in order to increase the cooperation of the participants and motivate them to give precise answers. Moreover, while studying knowledge sharing practices as well as cultural change, interpersonal contact is the most appropriate method for collecting rich and intuitive data that reflects more closely what the individual's actual perceptions are (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

By conducting interviews, in combination with a study of all sorts of documents, we were able to gain profound insights into the way various processes take place in the organization, and the reasons why they develop in one way instead of another (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 1999).

We conducted 21 interviews, each of which lasted around 50-60 minutes. The interviews were based on 17 main questions with some additional or varying questions due to the different departments or locations. However, during the interviews we were flexible and changed these questions to fit them to the particular interviewee. All interviews were taped and afterwards transcribed. We read and re-read all the material that had been collected. In order to facilitate the interpretation process different categories have been defined and discussed. Interpretations have been based on holistic readings about related themes and sub themes, and great effort has been showed to constitute relations between them (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007).

The case study is based on the interviews of vice-president of P&C department, top managers at P&C, sales, service, operations department as well as other employees. People from different hierarchical levels as well as different departments were chosen in order to reach deeper and less biased analysis.

Three researchers were taking part in the interview process. Two people were conducting face-to-face interviews; however, mainly one person was asking questions, and the second researcher introduced the interview procedure to the interviewees and asked supporting questions in between main questions in case the need arose. The third person was focusing on taking notes during the interview.

It is important to note that interviews' material has to be considered in its social context and not be treated as a tool for collecting data on something existing outside the empirical situation. This is mainly due to the fact that the questions asked and answers received can have different meanings in different situations. Therefore, localism and also reflexive pragmatism take major roles during both the progress and interpretation of the interviews in order to make the research in a dynamic and flexible way (Alvesson, 2003: 24-26).

We name our interviewees using the titles of their departments (i.e. sales, service, operations, people and culture) as well as their position on the hierarchical level (i.e. director, manager, employee). Employees from sales, operations and service departments are sometimes called as business workers.

### **3.3.2 Secondary data**

In our paper, we also relied on secondary sources, i.e. previous studies in the field of organizational change, culture change, knowledge and knowledge sharing, identity and self-identity. We searched several databases, in particular ELIN (Electronic Library Information Navigator) and it has proved to be a rich source for our topic as we could find almost all articles that we looked for.

Documents as well as 'customer loyalty survey' provided by the company or found on the company website also provided information and knowledge for our research. We had access to welcome package of the company which only the employees are provided with. Within our scope of the research we consulted annual reports, quarterly reports and messages from senior executives.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The interpretation of the material was inspired by two orientations. One is interpretative and more hermeneutical. We focus on the meaning that people give to the knowledge sharing practices. We will try to reveal the hidden meaning in talks and statements, "bearing the variety of context in mind even when it is not immediately present in the text" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The second approach we use is a more critical one, since "reflexivity means challenging and reconsidering assumptions and beliefs of what data are all about"

(Alvesson, 2003: 26). We analyzed the data various times, (re)thinking about the meaning it can carry.

The interpretative analysis provides us with the possibility to combine various sources like interview transcripts, webpage sources and other related literature, to provide rich analysis. Throughout our study we combine both theoretical, textual context of the literature and empirical material collected from the qualitative interviews. In this way we interpret our data reflexively. It is important to mention that ambiguity, complexity of rules and procedures, and researcher's judgment and perception are always crucial ingredients in order to interact constructively between these various levels (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000: 248-287).

### **3.5 Validity, Reliability & Objectivity**

The term validity relates to the question "whether the data collected shows the true picture of what is being studied or not" (McNeill & Chapman, 2005: 9). Those interviewees could have had clear motivation for modifying their answers in order to suit the interest of the company they are representing. We considered these issues while planning the interviews. The language is also seen as one of the limitations when it concerns the validity of the study. Most of the interviewees' native language is not English as well as ours as researchers. Thus, misunderstandings between researchers and interviewees might arise. Although, we did not face any problems concerning the language, we recorded the interviews.

Furthermore, it is important to mention reliability issues. It means that if somebody else uses the same method, or the same researcher uses it next time, the result will be the same (McNeill & Chapman, 2005). In qualitative research, reliability means something different because it reflects reality at the time it is collected; it is not like a chemistry experiment that you can get the same result over and over again. Thus in qualitative methods, pre-understanding and bias of the researcher(s) are significant issues which affect the interview process and the interpretations of the empirical material.

Objectivity is one of the main tools in ensuring the reliability of the research. Objectivity means that when research is being conducted, the researcher should suspend his/her

personal values and biases (Macionis & Plummer, 1997: 68). Taking into account that we are not professional interviewers, and we are human beings, which makes it difficult to not be influenced by the environment, our beliefs, values and pre-understanding, we tried to be as objective as possible during the interviews.

### 3.6 Further Research

Due to the resource constraints we are unable to study knowledge sharing practices on the Wind global level. Although we conducted several interviews on the international level including Poland and the UK Celtic, the data is not sufficient to make objective assumptions and provide the reader with extensive analysis. Thus, further research could be conducted on knowledge sharing practices in Wind internationally as well as globally.

## 4 Analysis and Discussion

*The following section will provide a thorough analysis of the findings of the conducted interviews. The chapter commences with some relevant facts about Wind Group; the company used in this study to answer the proposed research questions. First, basic figures are given after which a more thorough introduction into the business principles, structures and corporate values are discussed. In the later part of this chapter, we take the models earlier discussed in the theory chapter to analyze the specific interview data. The analysis is based on the earlier explained identity work and regulation (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002).*

### 4.1 Wind Group: Prologue

Today, Wind Group is the world leader in providing wind power solutions. The Danish company's roots are traced as far back as the end of the nineteenth century and founded by H. S. Hansen, a local blacksmith who manufactured steel windows and industrial buildings. In 1945, Hansen's son, Peder, established Wind Technique, later abbreviated to Wind. The company first manufactured household appliances then later progressed to manufacturing products from agricultural equipment to hydraulic cranes. During the second oil crisis in the 1970s, Wind Group commenced experimenting with wind turbines as a potential source of alternative energy. In 1979,



they manufactured and delivered their first wind turbines. Wind Group became the establishment it is today. During 1987 after market adversities forced them to restructure, selling off large parts of the company and hence, reestablish themselves as a new company focusing exclusively on wind energy. Between the years 1987 to 1997, sequences of international expansion and technological innovation resulted in the organization's organically rapid growth. In 2004, Wind joined forces with a Danish wind turbine manufacturer, merging into one entity making them the largest wind turbine manufacturer in the world.

In mid-2005, Wind Group unveiled their "Will-to-Win" corporate strategy plan (amid an operating loss during that year) for the period until the end of 2008. The strategy aimed to create value to their main key stakeholders— customers, shareholders and employees— and continually expand their competitive situation in both global wind energy and energy market itself. The strategy seemed to be a success as Wind Group recovered its business health and experienced growth again. By the end of 2008, Wind Group augmented its net profit by 76% compared to the previous year (511 mEUR and 291 mEUR, respectively) resulting an augmented operating profit of 668 mEUR (up 50.79% from 2007). Further, its human resources tally rose to 20,829 (+36%) whilst its incidence of industrial injuries per one million working hours reduced to 24.5 (-22%) illustrating continual growth and improved safety. More importantly, such growth paralleled the company's ambition to expand and further develop its business in new markets.

At present, Wind Group owns 19.8% of the market share with 21,259 individuals employed and 38000 wind turbines installed in sixty-three countries encompassing five continents worldwide. It is no question why Wind Group declare themselves as "No. 1 in Modern Energy."

#### 4.1.1 The Organizational Structure of Wind Group

Wind Group's core business constitutes the design, manufacturing, sale, planning, transportation, installation, operation and maintenance of wind turbines. The headquarters, housing all corporate or "Group" functions, resides in Randers, on the Jutland peninsula in central Denmark.

The Wind Group manages its operations in seven distinct market regions through fourteen business units. Each market region has a sales and service business unit operating autonomously in coordinating its business activities within their respective geographical region. Distributed in twelve countries (including newly expanded facilities in U.S., Spain and China) are production facilities for every key structural component of the wind turbine and grouped to service each business region. Four production business units at headquarters govern all production facilities.

The other three subsidiaries serve as corporate business units for each of the following functions at the headquarters: People & Culture (human resources), research and development and spare parts/repairs.

Worth noting, several cross-organizational functions were brought under one roof in the group function, Wind Excellence, beginning January 2009. This contingent intends to improve and align structures and processes across organizational borders at Wind Group.

#### 4.1.2 Wind Group Strategy

*"The Wind, Oil and Gas vision express Wind's ambition of assuming leadership in the efforts to make wind an energy source on par with fossil fuels (Annual Report, 2009:16)."*

Wind Group market themselves as a global and hi-tech company whose "110 years of experience, willpower and passion" serve as proof for their market dominance. They are in business to "deliver customized wind-power systems on standard wind turbines and standardized wind options, which can produce the optimal power

quality at a very competitive price.” The company derives its business strategy from its vision, mission and core values.

Wind Group’s declaration as being “No. 1 in Modern Energy” is synonymous to the company’s current vision of making wind an important source of energy in the same league as oil and gas. The vision claims their intent in maintaining its forefront position within the industry by continuously seeking to ameliorate the performance of their customers’ processes. This vision came into effect post 2008, after Wind Group changed their business concept from being production-oriented organization to one that is more customer-focused.

As a key driver to making a reality of the vision, Wind’ mission that “failure is not an option” seems to stress significant attention and commitment to building a “world-class” safety culture across the organization through continually optimize our work processes, safety procedures and products.

From 2005 to 2008, Wind Group’s “Will-to-Win” strategy imposed four core values to their employees: trustworthiness, care, power to act and development. However in mid-2008, those core values were phased out and claimed to fame as merely possessing the attitudes, “the will to succeed and passion for what we do.”

Associating themselves as a having a “high degree of vertical integration”, management align their key success factors to its customers, colleagues, Cost of Energy and shareholders. Below are some of the company’s goals retrieved from their annual report:

- Improve communication & dialogue towards customers and suppliers to improve relations, loyalty and satisfaction.
- Boost wind turbine reliability and efficiency, and thereby, decrease the cost of energy.

- Develop the skills and professionalism of its current personnel living up to their “People Before Megawatt”<sup>1</sup> mantra.

Achieving those “battles”, as Wind Group states, shall actualize their financial priorities while striving to be the best and most trustworthy global supplier of wind energy.

#### **4.1.3 Wind Northern Europe (NEUWind)**

This research focuses on one of the seven market regions of the Wind Group, NEUWind sales and service unit in Malmö, Sweden. The headquarter serves as base for all operations within northern Europe since early 2008. The market region employs around 16,200 (on December 2008) in personnel and generates about 60% of Wind Group’s aggregate revenue through sales, projects, installation and service, together with its Central Europe and Mediterranean regional counterparts.

NEUWind’s relocation to Malmö consolidated four locally distinct subsidiaries that comprise the region into one business entity—Sweden, Denmark, Poland and Celtic (UK and Ireland).

#### **4.1.4 Conclusion**

One should bear in mind that the information presented above serves only as background information for this research. All particulars compiled were based on marketing materials made available by NEUWind. The information may depict a representation that is different from what is actually occurring. Generally, it should provide the reader a better understanding of the company in its processual context.

## **4.2 Analysis and Findings**

In this section, a more thorough analysis of the previously presented theoretical frameworks is provided. Commencing the analysis of interview data and

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<sup>1</sup> “A principle where new employees will be recruited before the company expands its business volume”.

supplementary material using Organizational Change, followed by knowledge sharing practices, and then identity. From this point on, we will refer to NEUWind as simply Wind. We will still consider the local subsidiaries outside of NEUWind by regional name.

#### **4.2.1 Organizational Culture Change**

In the theoretical framework from the previous section, we provided a background on organizational change, particularly, internal and external triggers that establish the desire for change. We embark this section by connecting the concerned theories on organizational culture change within the company context so as to shed light on the reasons why Wind has set forth on reshaping its culture to achieve its goal in being the company of choice in the wind turbine industry. For an organization like Wind to accomplish such change, we believe that institutionalizing knowledge-sharing practices are a key in shifting Wind's focus from being production-oriented organization to one that is more customer-centric.

#### **4.2.2 Capturing the Winds of Change — External Triggers**

Since exclusively shifting their business to wind energy, Wind's formerly encountered an array of political, economic, and market forces which saw themselves rise rapidly to the forefront of the industry today. To make sense of what Wind's current context for change is about, we looked a couple years back into our economic history.

In 2006, Al Gore's addressed the world about the "inconvenient truth" about climate crisis. Since then, enduring political debates persisted in finding applicable courses of action to reduce the environmental imprint. Hence, economies' demand for sustainable energy grew. In March of 2007, the European Union committed to tackle the climate change issue by mandating "20-20 by 2020," which states that by year 2020, renewable energy should account for 20% of the energy supply. Numerous industry and social factors were in effect. The general acceptance that wind is a clean, renewable, and competitive source of energy proliferated. Wind developed into a market leader today because of it; No. 1 in Modern Energy, as advertised. The company prides itself in that success by claiming to set the global energy agenda in

their home soil, during the upcoming UN Climate Change Summit in 2009. Wind ended their 2007 campaign on a high financial note and was in the position to expand their resources to position themselves for the future. That they did in 2008, recruiting more employees and overseeing major organizational restructuring, especially within the Northern Europe business region.

However, with increasing demands for renewable energy by consumers, rising oil and gas prices and social shift to “greener” thinking, competitive industrial players emerged in the process, growing in established markets such as United States and Europe and entering new markets such China (an unsecured market for Wind). Acknowledging those facts, Wind communicated that they will close down production in Europe only one year into their expansion in Northern Europe (leaving 1900 unemployed) because of the European market’s presently declined attractiveness. Further, unforeseen economic forces, i.e., global financial crash not only postponed or discontinued projects, but also forced the company to freeze their recruitment initiatives. With the economic gales no longer blowing at its back, Wind is forced to take a step back and regroup. One employee said it accurately at best, that NEU business unit “grew too fast, processes are not aligned” and is “immature”. The requirement for Wind to reshape itself is crucial.

#### **4.2.3 Shifting the Focus from Production to Customers**

Akin to any organizational change initiatives earlier researched, unravelling why political, economic, and market forces affect and drive an organization to change is key to answering the next question of how to contemplate and execute a change process. In this study, such forces mooted above dictated Wind’s requirement for change in the present to meet the industry’s future demands. Here, we make sense of Wind’s objective to improve relations with its customers and suppliers presented opportunities to address drivers of change found internally: The new broom to make sense of what needs to be changed contingent to Wind’s ambitions; articulate the insights to his network leaders in People & Culture business unit and make sense of it; so together, they create a shared perception on how to drive change through the future enlisting of the “right” recruits.

#### 4.2.3.1 “The New Broom” — Making sense and voicing the need for change.

Schein (1990) suggests that leaders create organizational cultures; that one of the most pivotal functions of a leader is the creation, management, and if found necessary, the destruction of culture. While Schein’s statement may very well be arguable, we accept that there is at least one individual that makes a deep sense of purpose to drive the intended change— a change agent. Palmer, Dunford and Akin (2006) refer to this agent, or change manager, as “the new broom,” i.e. a fresh leader, or administration that gets rid of the old and brings in new ideas and personnel. It appears that this was the case at Wind, with a newly appointed Vice-president to lead his People & Culture business unit.

The key figure to emerge in Wind’s story of change is the current vice-president for People & Culture. Back in early 2007, a year before the relocation plans for Wind the VP recalled his initial acquaintance with Wind for reasons outside his position today. His expertise was called upon by the Danish government, along with eight other experienced senior managers, to assess whether Wind’s organizational structure operated “growth-fully”:

*“...The whole project lasted 7 months, meaning that on the 5th October [2007], we did the final reporting. Our recommendations: what was good, what was bad, where we see holes and what they should do. This was a fantastic opportunity as you can imagine; to get to know what Wind is all about. I was called and told that we need good people in. This is how I ended up with the position.”* (VP, People & Culture)

Our findings above suggest that aside from his contributions before his employment with Wind, his credentials landed him the job. Coming from a liberated organization, where he worked for seventeen years, he is accustomed to having a high acceptance of the need for change and high availability of resources that can be utilized in processes (Nutt & Backoff in Palmer, Dunford & Akin, 2008: 259). We concur with Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) that the way managers see an organization’s context rely on their historical past, personal interests, vocational and educational experience; further, how they perceive managers in other organizations play their role in change. While following this thought, the VP made sense of the organizational context, when asked to interpret the situation:

*“The critical factors for Wind being successful and going forward [are] two things: supply from sub-suppliers and [our] people. And that’s it. If we do not have the right quality of suppliers, if we do not have the quality, if we do not have the right people, and competencies and a right culture— being team-oriented, high-performing and global team spirit— then forget about Wind.”* (VP, People & Culture)

His statement above about Wind’s situation seems to lack incisiveness, however, partly because his interpretation of where the company is and what needs to be done aligns what Wind preaches to accomplish through available marketing materials. However, the VP disclosed that he works in close contact with the upper management team, and particularly, the President of northern Europe. Taking that into account, we presume that all are aware about the need for change and working to being on the same page. Further, we suppose that given his open personality and bold sense of character, that he is formulating fitting solutions on how to enact change through Wind that could be further passed on to Wind globally.

*“We haven’t started yet, but it’s definitely the experience that I have. This would be my contribution if nothing else, my contribution to enforce this because I truly believe that it is vital for this culture change that I have to make. First you need to enforce certain disciplines [in the management system] within the organization. And they will scream and they will shout and they won’t know what it is. Then quite soon, after 6-9 months they will experience the benefit of it. They will see that you can get performance out from employees sitting in China, or far away that you never had anticipated beforehand. Because it is so far away, we wonder what that girl or boy is doing thousands of kilometres away. The whole take is to implement a very strict and structured way of communication and then occasionally bring the team together.”* (VP, People & Culture)

The extent on how aligned the VP’s thinking is with respect to that of upper management’s is still unclear. Based on our findings, the collective understanding of upper management is a work in progress:



*“I took an opportunity to talk about that. That the [President] and I were 100% right, totally agree. He is also in agreement that the [change initiative] is a huge piece of work to do to get where we should be. I tried to explain but [upper management] have never tried that and they do not understand what it takes. Our employee satisfaction is low, low, low and other things are low. This is my responsibility right. In order for me to correct that through the organization, I have to think of how to do it.”*  
(VP, People & Culture)

The VP also raised an intriguing point about how he perceives Wind as a company in contrast to what Wind is advertising:

*“Are we a global organization? I can say now we are not a global organization. You know, one thing we do not understand; operating in five continents [makes] us global. No, you are not, you are international. You have international coverage. [Wind] have subsidiaries in the globe, in sixty-five places. [However], a global organization, you find where the best resources are, place all [business units] there, and put the best people then operate across country boundaries with the highest levels of competence.”* (VP, People & Culture)

The VP is right, with their company structure serving as proof. A global company centralizes all operations, and treats all market the same whereas an international company aims to transfer knowledge from the parent company and adapt such knowledge to new markets (Jonsson, 2007: 9). Clearly, he is aware that as a subregion of international company, his local business region of NEU has more influence than in Wind Group. Further, it leads back to the question why Wind Group market themselves as global.

Another change initiative the VP fulfilled was minimizing the top-down approach of the Wind Group when passing on new initiatives for change to Wind. Wind Group apparently sent new projects concerning P&C on a bi-weekly basis. This restricted the VP and the two members in his team at the time in settling in the department. As a result, he questioned the underlying importance of those projects:

*“They don’t even know the cultural consequences of the decisions they took two months ago, they cannot grasp that. The Group came up with initiatives every second week, to take Wind [to] the next level in professionalism. However, it limited what*

*persons can do [while] at the same time business is happening. If we strangle the entire organization, we forget about everything. We have to have a second owner, to ask what is it that the organization wants to achieve with these initiatives. [P&C] will do this in a different way because we cannot do it [their] way. We are the only persons who can judge how much we can do. We will go from A to little B, not the big B. All the initiatives coming here, [P&C] adds to that everything is developed to something that fits the situation in northern Europe.”*

We believe that in the excerpt above, the VP insists that change efforts only matter when all parties concerned make sense of the efforts' importance. Every step an organization takes in change efforts must also fit the given context and prioritized. The VP's examination and sense-making of the context of change as a relative outsider of Wind suggest that the VP is in a position where he can identify and communicate both the sources of culture continuity and gaps. Since “context and continuity shape the starting point in which change processes emerge, falter, and proceed,” we identify that the VP's employment and discourses with upper management signaled the perceived starting point of change, ready to “sweep clean” (Palmer, Dunford & Akin, 2006: 234).

Following Palmer, Dunford & Akin's (ibid: 27,233) six images of managing change, we recognize the VP as a change manager who incorporates the role of navigator (though our findings later show that managers can take up multiple change manager images based on various situations). The navigator role maintains management control most of the time yet acknowledges that directing alone is not enough to proceed. Those who exhibit this image acknowledge that a bottom-up approach is also essential. During the change process, there are potential unpredictable obstacles that affect the plan of action and resources. Continuing with this metaphor, the navigator may change its course. This is where this change manager ensures that organizational members also are prepared to take charge as well, at any given time.

#### **4.2.3.2 People & Culture Business Unit — Communicating change initiatives.**

With only three individuals to run People & Culture business unit to begin with, it

seems clear that to enact and communicate change throughout Wind NEU, the business unit needs to scale up its workforce (especially to support subsidiaries outside headquarters):

*“What I am saying is that based on experience [in a different field], I want to this to be implemented throughout the organization. I cannot do it through the whole organization. I can maintain what I am doing in [my] P&C organization.”*

(VP, People & Culture)

The VP suggests that to realize his own vision of what Wind culture should be, it has to begin first from his local surroundings in hopes of creating useful practices and transferring those ideas throughout northern Europe, and finally, all the business regions under Wind Global. Fall of 2008 saw the VP hire operations managers for each of the subsidiaries, Sweden/Denmark, Poland, and Celtic, along with a few others to fill relevant positions working underneath the operation managers, making the human resources tally up to twenty individual. Senge (2006: 319) suggests that effective “line leaders” translate ideas into action and intentions behind change initiatives carried out. Further, “network leaders” who are helpers, and connectors, work along side line leaders in building capacity and integrating new practices. Following such notion, we believe that the navigating VP incorporated just that, insisting that operation managers (as network leaders) and the rest (as network leaders) create the “organizational channel and path to culture.” Generally, the combination of both is vital for spreading and encouraging new ideas and practices from one group to another, such in the case for Wind; from one business unit to another or between business regions (ibid: 320).

Making sense of the need for change by the new P&C workforce based on the context is already inherent in the processual implementation of change. Contingent to the change manager metaphor in preceding section, the VP admits that he will keep an eagle’s bird eye view on activities and keep constant communication to

dispose of any ambiguity in the communicated message to the organization. When asked whether he will have to continue being in charge in meetings and recruitment, the VP passionately replied that his direct control shall persist until the moment he is confident that his colleagues can do it the same way as he can, i.e., at least three years' time. Nonetheless, the key learning point raised is that implementing and communicating change throughout the organization requires co-creating a vision together both at a personal and group level.

It is worth noting that P&C business units seem to have a dual function: prioritize, adapt and execute human resource-related programs in-house on one hand; participate and represent their respective business region at global P&C meetings on the other. Building on the latter, each P&C business unit of every business region apparently contributes to the discussions of proposed project initiatives. We believe that this function provides the an environment to co-create a vision of P&C as a whole global P&C unit, which aligns with the VP's change ambition for Wind to succeed in the future.

#### ***4.2.3.3 Recruiting of the "Right" People — Driving and sustaining change.***

One change manager once shared that, "management does not change culture. Management invites the workforce itself to change the culture (Gertsner in Palmer, Dunford & Akin, 2009: 359). After 2007, Wind alone forecasted a workforce growth of two-hundred per year for the next three years. While recruitment was happening, our findings show that during this process the VP, along with his management team, executed change initiatives, getting rid of organizational members who the VP considered "not having the profile to jump into this journey." Of course the relocation played a huge role in the organizational changes and the dismissal of a significant amount of human capital. As a result, re-engineering of organizational roles and new recruitment procedures followed to reinforce and support the changes.

Since Wind did not have, as the VP shared, visible artifacts that outline Wind's policies, practices, and guidelines, how can the organization facilitate recruiting the ideal profiles to jump onboard Wind' journey of change? The VP had that answer:

*"When I came in there was no hiring process. Nobody knew anything. In order to make sure that all people are the right people, have the right mindset, the right team spirit, global-thinking mindset, everybody goes through me. [The prospects] go through the Wind assessment centre...many of them had a final interview with me or [the President]. Professional competencies have been tested already. So when they come to me, it's a matter of chemistry...the old saying, first impressions... it's the final interview [that] matter, do I feel that it can work. And if it can, I will hire them."*

When asked if recruitment is a crucial process for getting the right people, the VP excitedly replied:

*"Absolutely! The more people we get that have been scrutinized for really having the right way of thinking, the right spirit, the more we likely that the proportion of all these new people can significantly impact their [future] colleagues".*

Asked to motivate the reason why is necessary to recruit the "right" people, he countered:

*"Are [business streams of Sales, Projects and Service] so unique that [each] has to have a special structure in relation to other departments? What we are aiming for is common things. In the old days we had different flavours of everything and we want to get of that. Probably in the different flavours you had specific things for sales, projects, different instructions and practices because they are operating in a different way. What we are trying to achieve [however] is a minimum of 80-90% common practices in [all business streams] in Wind. For now we cannot see any reason why it is not possible to reach that target. It needs to be proved that it cannot be done. No one has been in any position to argue either."*

In the above citations we elevate that the hiring process post-assessment centre is highly dependent on top managements' tacit knowledge regarding who should fit in being part of organizational change efforts. Further, it seems that the VP has certain

criteria about what basic assumptions and how they explicitly reveal their mental models (the way one understands or act) or behaviours are acceptable to his ambition of how the organization should be. We later ascertain, however, that the recruitment process, aside from P&C, applies only top management of sales, projects and business streams To us, this implies that the VP cannot alone realize the culture change ambitions throughout Wind, nor with P&C. Hiring the right people (i.e., individuals who can make sense of the change) to occupy top management positions is also necessary to communicate the same message. These top managers are then responsible in employing their own line and network leaders for specific business streams. It suggests that the only way to achieve common practices throughout the organization is for everyone to be aligned with Nils' ideologies— Not easy.

#### *4.2.3.4 Summarizing Thoughts — Linking Vision and Change*

Is an organization's vision a crucial element in achieving organizational change? This is a question we would like to surface to recapitulate the analytical interpretation of the cultural change in Wind. Palmer, Dunford & Akin's (2008) text shared insight whether vision drives change or rather, vision emerges during change. Similarly, does vision help or obstruct change— an interesting dilemma.

Some researchers advocate that vision seems to be in widespread use. However, the effectiveness is not always evident, i.e., some people identify with the vision while others do not (ibid: 277). This was exactly the case based on our findings. Top management seems to be aligned and confident with Wind's vision of Wind, Oil, and Gas. In stark contrast, almost none of the P&C department feels the same sentiment, insisting that there is a lack of communication and that it is difficult to understand. This begs the question, if the "culture people" necessary to drive the change do not identify with the vision, then what is the justification for change based on?

We summarize this section by raising a key learning point that the desire for change within organization is context dependent, and it is a continuous process with no clear beginning or end. External triggers are just one part of justifying change efforts. The other crucial half is the internal triggers that follow in response to the external change. Generally, both internal and external triggers may change along the way. A change agent, who embodies a navigator image, acknowledges this fact, and that he alone cannot bring out change in an organization; both top-down and bottom-up approaches must coexist. We believe that this is what is happening at Wind. The organization has an ambition to achieve a safety culture and become more customer-focused, but with no practical use of values and vision, how is it accomplished? We believe that to shape a new culture paradigm to sustain as being No. 1 in modern energy, all levels of the organization learning together and from each other. Hence, co-create a shared vision through knowledge-sharing behaviour and practices.

### **4.3 Knowledge Sharing in practice at Wind**

This chapter will introduce the knowledge sharing practices within Wind in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the underlying processes. As an outcome of the interviews we conducted in 2008 and 2009 we could define various tools of the ICT infrastructure and knowledge sharing processes. Following the extended knowledge sharing model developed by Widén-Wulff and Suomi (2003) we will first introduce the various ICT infrastructure tools. Although in the model seen as a basis for knowledge sharing in process, we already see ICT infrastructure as a knowledge sharing tool itself and include documentations and technologies under this topic. After talking about these hard information sources, we will move on in the second part with the soft information culture sources, in particular in focusing on knowledge sharing processes within Wind.

#### **4.3.1 Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**

Wind uses many different documentations and technologies to support knowledge sharing. As one of the hard information sources besides organizational slack and

human capital the following tools support knowledge sharing which simultaneously also create knowledge sharing themselves.

#### **4.3.1.1 Documentations**

Upon entering the organization each employee experiences either formal or informal socialization processes. During this process new employees learn about the organizational culture and how to act within the new environment. Wind, like many large companies, puts substantial effort in guiding the socialization process. When a new employee enters Wind NEU, a welcome package is handed over by the People & Culture department (P&C). This package consists of several leaflets and brochures about the company, its policies, systems and procedures.

Typically the following information material is provided:

- Welcome brochure
- Introduction plan
- Brochure about the Performance and Development Dialogue (in Swedish)
- Leaflet stating e-learning courses which have to be booked in the Learning Management System (LMS, part of SAP)
- The NEU Newsletter: special edition P&C from December 2008 about PDD
- Wind Emergency Response Plan (in Swedish)

The brochures present artifacts, i.e., visible information about the company, its strategy, vision and mission. In terms of knowledge sharing, the learning management system, PDD and introduction plan are of importance. However, these tools do not belong to the documents paragraph and therefore we will come back to them below.

#### **4.3.1.2 Technologies**

Since the beginning of 2009, Wind fully integrated SAP into the work process of every employee or manager. This portal serves as both a work and development tool,



providing organizational members features that include employee profiles and online courses. It even serves as a tool to control the annual roll-out of PDD. The responsible P&C person can always check in SAP who already handed in such documents for the performance appraisal and can retrieve a list of those who are keeping up with their development track against ones who are not.

*“It’s a very complex tool; I am still in the same opinion as last year that you need to update it always. If you keep it updated, then it’s a great tool because you can get so many great statistics from it. Whenever you need to valid information you just log on and take it from there (P&C Employee, 2009).”*

However, updating SAP on a regular basis is time-consuming and thus Wind established a SAP team to run the tool and provide support. Additionally, all the employees had to participate in trainings to learn how to work with SAP. Most of the employees share the same perception that SAP is a very complicated tool that takes a lot of time to understand how to work with it efficiently.

*“We were all supposed to visit trainings in SAP. Although one course took eight hours, we were only able to learn how to use two functions of the software. It’s a horrible tool to work with, too complicated.” (Operations Employee, 2009)*

SAP seems a valuable control tool for P&C department; however, not all employees accept it. One sub-tool that belongs to SAP is the Learning Management System (LMS) which is a course platform where employees can participate in different online courses or sign up for group courses. Soon after employment at Wind, employees take two mandatory online courses: “LMS for employees” and “SAP Basic Navigation.” Additional courses cater to different business streams and professions like legal, logistics and finance to designate a few. Most of the employees really like the LMS as it gives them more flexibility in accessing information and they can plan their individual learning process.

Intranet is a tool which raises many different meanings from its users about its importance and usefulness. Each business unit within Wind has its own portal on the global website and employees can always find the latest news, job postings and information about different projects. However, the design of the intranet is reminiscent of a folder system instead of a real knowledge management tool with a consistent design. Additionally, many employees complain about the unstructured format of the intranet.

*“There is a lot of information on the intranet. Most of the information is claimed to be as one employee put it, “nice to know”, but there is no real need to know it. If you really need some information, it’s difficult to find. I rather ask some colleagues for help.” (Operations Employee, 2009)*

However, some employees from P&C perceive the intranet as their bible since they can find all the necessary information about the policies, routines, administrative documents, etc. online. It seems that the intranet is not used that frequently by the employees outside P&C department. P&C employees quite often receive emails from other employees about basic information which is readily accessible on the intranet. Unfortunately, intranet is very unstructured; it is difficult to find the essential information at the right moment. Its user-unfriendliness finds employees time-constrained and as a result, employees prefer to ask P&C directly for help.

*“We have the intranet which we should use a lot more than we're doing ... meaning, it should be an information system for managers and employees to get into instead of running around for the quick access.” (P&C Manager, 2008)*

Despite of this announcement in 2008, nothing really changed until we conducted further interviews in 2009. Apparently, our findings suggest that there are still no guidelines regarding the use of intranet and that it is not mandatory to share information with others through uploading documents on the intranet platform.

Following the above paragraph, it is not surprising that many employees complain about the email situation. As already mentioned above, instead of accessing information on the intranet, employees often ask P&C or other colleagues for help through emails. The amount of emails caused substantial dissatisfaction especially in the year 2008.

*“Sometimes just I need the information, but if it is something I want to share than if it is a lot of information I send an email.” (Service Director, 2008)*

The ideal common process, it seems, should include putting basic information online on the intranet platform to make it available to all employees and easily accessible to those who need the particular information. Instead, this Service Director directly sends an email to everybody increasing the amount of emails even more and creates dissatisfaction amongst others:

*“Where I spend my time most, it's not funny to say, email communication. I'm always behind time. Internal communication takes too much time. That's for the entire Wind. I would abandon the use of cc in emails. Then it's more behaviour level, meet and discuss instead of sending 50 emails.” (Sales Director, 2008)*

However, not all of the employees share this view. One P&C employee, who joined Wind only in June 2008, feel that the email situation in Wind does not differ, nor does it compare to other companies.

*“If you ask people who have been with Wind for a while, they have seen the development over time and if you are a company of 4'000 or 1'000 employees is of course a completely different situation then if you have a company of 20'000 employees .”(P&C Employee, 2009)*

This statement indeed sheds light on some reasons for dissatisfaction among employees. However, using the above quotes taken from the service and sales directors, the root of the email-overload issue seems to stem out from reasons that include organization's rapid-growth, unstructured emailing (not straight to the point

or too wordy), and ignorance of the intranet.

Furthermore, employees use phone communication as an alternative tool to receive the required information. In 2008, P&C conducted bi-weekly telephone conferences with the P&C coordinators to discuss daily agenda and share information about plans for the coming weeks.

#### **4.3.2 Knowledge Sharing Processes**

Wind's open-concept internal environment encourages knowledge-sharing through various knowledge sharing tools and processes. Additionally supported by intellectual capital and the learning organization metaphor, the processes lead to an effective knowledge sharing behaviour. Soft knowledge sharing processes refer to the person-to-person interactions which following Nonaka (1994) follow the personalization strategy. In the following section, we explain these practices by distinguishing them in more formal, planned meetings and informal meetings.

##### **4.3.2.1 Formal meetings**

According to the introduction plan in the welcome package, each new employee gets an assigned a department "buddy". The "buddy" is responsible for introducing the new employee to the department, tasks and colleagues as well as providing further support. However, many employees mention that they either did not get a "buddy" or their "buddy" was not motivated to support them. Most of the interviewed employees entered Wind during the rapid growth period, the office consisted of many new employees, and thus there was not possibility to have one buddy per each new employee. Albeit buddy system was not working as well as one would expect, the fact that they had an opportunity to ask other colleagues for support satisfied them.

Furthermore, the introduction plan includes a meeting with the department manager at the first day. In this meeting, expectations from the job and the agreement of common goals are the main point on the agenda. After three months, a review

interview takes place between the new employee and the manager in order to talk about each others expectations and experiences during the last three months. In addition, P&C sends out a questionnaire about the introduction period. The introduction days for the whole Wind NEU take place in Malmö, which include speeches from the local P&C Manager and various introductions to the departments conducted by the particular responsible manager of this department.

After the interviews conducted in 2008, P&C implemented regular informal meetings that take place each Friday to inform employees about the situation within Wind. The participation, according to one P&C employee, in these meetings is not mandatory. However, employees are expected to be present if they do not have meetings with customers then. Most employees think of the Friday meeting as being unstructured. Managers tend not to be prepared to share their knowledge and often just state that nothing remarkable happened during the past week. Therefore, employees are expressing their will to have these Friday meetings more organized and structured.

*“During these meetings, managers tend to look back and solely report what has happened during the previous week instead of giving us an outlook of the future. For me, these meetings are perfect for managers who can just stand there in front of the others and say “look at me and what I have done.” (Operations Employee, 2009)*

This opinion is also shared by other employees who feel that people could share much more information during these meetings.

Furthermore, team meetings including members from one particular department as well as cross-departmental meetings are seen as the most valuable knowledge sharing tool by P&C and other departments’ employees. All the departments conduct regular internal meetings where the employees discuss everything from daily business to future strategy and goals. Within P&C, all coordinators from the different countries (Denmark, Poland, UK and Sweden) meet on a quarterly basis in Malmö in

order to share information about what is happening in the organization, creating action plans for the coming months. In sales, the department holds sales meeting every second month, followed by a common dinner. In the service department, meetings are always flexible when some employees feel that they have some knowledge that should be shared. Once a year, each employee has appraisal talks with his/her manager where the past performance and future goals are discussed. In addition, possible improvements and essential trainings are agreed upon.

Cross-departmental meetings most often take place within a particular project. At the start of each project, employees from different departments, such as sales, service, operations and legal departments, come together to discuss about the project and how to make the strategy to make customers stay satisfied.

Moreover, several trainings for example in the newly introduced PDD, in leadership and SAP offer an optimal platform for knowledge sharing and strengthening the company culture.

#### **4.3.2.2 Informal meetings**

In Malmö, breakfast is inclusive in the meetings. According to the interviewed employees, each employee can go to the company kitchen, pick up some sandwiches and have a talk with other colleagues from different departments. This tradition originated from Falkenberg where common coffee breaks were a daily routine. After the relocation the P&C VP decided to retain this tradition. Furthermore, the daily lunch time in the cantina serves as an ideal platform for cross-departmental talks.

*“Most people socialize during lunch. There you are mixing departments. We are talking a lot about practical stuff around the office. People are having ideas, complaints and so forth.” (P&C Employee, 2008)*

Some employees claim that when the office was still situated in Falkenberg, much

more socialization activities took place. However, by 2009 employees began to organize those activities themselves; basketball games and jogging competitions to name a few.

#### **4.3.3 Conclusion**

Knowledge sharing behaviour is created using a variety of means, such as documentation, creating information database on the intranet, tools like SAP, PDD, trainings, formal and informal meetings. The internal open-concept environment influences the varying processes of knowledge sharing in Wind and hence, where knowledge is shared or encouraged to be shared among colleagues and not kept within each employee. In the next chapter, we provide analysis of identities within Wind and possible influences identities have on the perception of knowledge sharing practices.

#### **4.4 Relationship between identity and Knowledge-sharing**

Further deepening our analysis, this section seeks to elevate identity as a key role in promoting knowledge sharing to reshaping an organization's culture to meet its future ambitions. We argue that how knowledge sharing behavior materializes rests solely in the basic values and assumptions each employee brings into the organization and their potential to adapt to the given context.

The preceding section encompassed what happened in Wind in their process of ascertaining useful practices worth institutionalizing. It is indeed a work in progress. Hence, we briefly examine employees' identities because their own reactions reveal their own self-identity that is in the process of identity work, i.e. making sense of what is important for the organization to succeed. An organization can be a learning organization with a shared vision. However, one must inspect identity first, what are the determining factors whether they will or not understand the meaning of being "No. 1 in modern energy". Moreover, we examine how knowledge sharing practices influence the creation of work identity among employees.

#### **4.4.1 Identities at Wind**

In our research we could distinguish two main employee groups within the company: “new” employees who joined Wind post-relocation in 2008 and “old” employees who joined Wind pre-relocation. Members of these two groups have significantly different backgrounds; whereas the new employees have no previous knowledge about Wind and its culture, the old employees already have a deeper understanding about the company and a particular working identity living the organizational culture created in the previous years. This implies that to change the organizational culture through identity regulation, we consider two differing groups since the perception of cultural change differs among these groups; especially the way they react to the knowledge sharing tools.

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) talk about self-identity as well as sources of identity. In Wind, new employees came into the organization carrying their self-identities related to previous professions, families, social networks or other things they value in life. Different sources of identities form different identities within the organization which in turn may create clashes (sub-cultures within Wind, which will be referred to in the next chapter).

#### **4.4.2 Top Management Identity**

One of the main top managers, P&C vice-president is presented as the main example from old-employees. Every person has his/her own style of communicating which one has to adjust to the situation in order to achieve set goals. Each of the styles requires specific skills and is used in different situations. Since the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a century of change, situations always change and, therefore, one has to adapt his/her style of communication to the specific situation/context, environment or person (Palmer, Dunford & Akin, 2006). P&C vice-president is trying to manifest different roles, and he is realizing that he is not able to cope with several identities at the same time. We believe his role now is mainly navigating. Since he is not able to implement the change alone, he navigates people towards the organizational goal (one of which is to sustain Wind’s position as number one in modern energy). His self-identity as a navigator, discussed in the organization change section of the research, makes him identify with most of the knowledge sharing practices common in Wind.



#### 4.4.3 Departmental Identity?

According to some scholars, working with identity is to simultaneously be working with the individual and the collective, since they equally constitute each other. As a result, it is not essential to talk about individual identities due to the fact that individuals “identify by something and with something that is out there”, in the collective (Jørgensen and Keller, 2008: 529). Therefore, people from various departments within Wind can be characterized as having group identities.

One of the most distinctive identities of P&C department is that employees from P&C are always perceived as being “busy”.

*“Before I started they sent home this newspaper and they have a term in Wind saying “Wind is busy”. In Wind, people are Wind busy. It’s part of the culture that people are interpreted as busy and I think that is bad. It’s ok to be busy if you are busy but you shouldn’t be proud of it.” (Sales Employee, 2008)*

According to the interviewee, some people identify themselves with the concept ‘Wind busy’; however, there are also employees who resist:

*“I think it is meant as something funny. But I think you have to be aware that it could also be negative. But people I have met, no one seems to be passing out because they are so busy. People seem very relaxed and they are all very busy but they seem to have a certain surplus. So it’s not that you have to be worried that people are terrible under pressure all the time.” (Sales Employee, 2008)*

In addition, sales, service and operations departments had a combination of identities, i.e. some employees identified with their job as “a sales person”, or “a service employee”. On the other hand, some of the workers confirmed their identification with the whole department within Wind.

#### 4.4.4 Shaping Identities

Regarding new employees, their identity still has to be shaped whereas the old members of the organization embody Wind’ identity, which needs to be reshaped. This process of

changing the member's self-identity involves the active identity work from the employee (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 622). Furthermore, the identity work means the active "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising" of the employee's understanding of the current situation which changed self-identity (ibid: 626). As previously mentioned in the last chapter, Wind responds to the need of shaping identities by offering a well-structured introduction plan for the new employees as to support their identity creation. However, the remaining knowledge sharing processes influence both employee groups, i.e. new and old employees in Wind. Knowledge sharing practices, in any case, are tools to institutionalize practices and routines that can enable the employees to reshape their identity, and thereby company's culture.

First of all Wind introduces its new employees with the prior mentioned welcome package, followed with the assigned buddy. These processes are the starting points which lead to shaping employees' identities as well as to the creation of the identity work. On the paper, the above mentioned induction plan sounds very structured and well thought through. However, as a result of the fast growth in 2008, the induction process of new employees did not always follow the intended plan. New business workers were even warned, before starting their work at Wind, that the organization could be a little bit chaotic in the beginning.

This state of chaos in the organization caused the fact that some employees could not define their position, i.e. job description. Thus, identity formation takes place through the individual identification with the job they are doing. Sometimes, the position is linked to what the employee is thinking she/he is doing:

*"I call myself P&C All-around. I don't have a title in my email signature. I am just a consultant doing a lot of stuff so I will be supporting Sweden, Swedish employees" (P&C Employee, 2008).*

*"I am providing my service, my work, and P&C tasks for them .. sometimes they assess it in surveys, questionnaires .. it's analogy for what you ask ... and we are also sellers. We have to sell those P&C programs and initiatives."(P&C Employee, 2008).*

This in turn means that employees within P&C look for best practices and try to be role models for other employees.

The socialization process in the year 2009 does not seem to have sufficiently changed. However, due to the recruitment freeze in the company, new employees are likely to get more attention in terms of introduction into the company, which might have more influence on their identity creation. Some employees were not paying attention on the introduction process they went through, instead paying more attention to their own self-identity:

*“I had one on the paper. I had a very extensive introduction plan, I was really impressed but I don’t think anything in this actually happened. Other things happened but not the way it was set up in that plan so it was more like on the job training, thrown in the things and “take care of this”, “please grab here”. I was quite surprised and I was surprised because when I was in the recruitment process and all the contacts I had, they didn’t really say that this is a really structured and organized company. They rather emphasized the opposite.”*  
(P&C Manager, 2009)

#### **4.4.5 Communication Technologies**

As indicated by some of the employees, the intranet is really important for their understanding of the practices and principles within the company. However, for more specific information the intranet has not been a solution for shaping identities and it is used mainly by P&C employees. Emails also serve as an identity regulation tools. However, due to the big number of email received by all employees from P&C department, this only resulted in dissatisfaction among employees.

As mentioned in the previous section, Friday meetings are used as a new tool to make employees feel integrated and involved. During the meeting the group identity of the employees is shaped by promoting customer-oriented culture. Trainings and team meetings also serve as knowledge sharing tools within and across different departments where old and new employees share information outside P&C control. Furthermore, informal meetings, such as breakfast and lunch, talks with people from different departments and own department, also affect employees’ identity. The identity formation during the meetings depends on the facts discussed during the meetings. It might be that the meeting

atmosphere is shaping peoples' identity as they are one family, creating a feeling of oneness. However, on the other hand, some employees also mentioned the hierarchy factor, i.e. only top managers present the updates during the meetings, which might mean that people do not identify themselves with the company that much, but stick to their previous self-identity.

#### 4.4.6 Concluding remarks

While conducting the interviews it became clear that in each department particular identity existed. It is difficult to distinguish self-identities of each employee, since most of the employees identified themselves either with the department or with their job.

If the technology is an internal trigger for change, it thus changes the way people work, as well as the process. If people are accustomed to ways of doing it and are able to put that into their work flow, the perception of it takes a lot of time. For example, in the case of SAP everybody has to be part of it and the system is already forced on employees without them realizing that. Thus, SAP becomes a form of identity regulation. Learning process through workshops, trainings shapes the identity of the employees as well.

How can organization encourage people to exchange information? Organization can influence the way people think, shape their identity.

Exchange of information within individuals is essential for creating a collective knowledge. This collective knowledge in turn could be intellectual capital – ideas, collective knowledge of knowing how to set routines, etc. It is already changing the culture. If the exchange of information within the organization takes place, it creates a collective knowledge, collective identity, and then it signifies the changing culture. It changes the way how people work, since if they are in this process of finding out what routines are the best, then they are in this process of change.

To conclude, it is important to note that identity is lived and thus it is considered to be more complex than categories like personality traits or roles (Jørgensen and Keller, 2008). Identity is also negotiated which means that it is emerging and identity work is continuing through life and various settings. The whole process described in the above section can be seen as a circular one. Self-identity of employees has been created since they entered the company.

KS made its impact on identity work of employees, i.e. shaping their identities within the organization. Consequently, newly shaped identity of employees' impacts knowledge sharing behavior of employees, which also influences the change process.

#### **4.5 Discrepancies, Clashes and Alignments**

*Despite the communication about the need for more customer-oriented focus, as we know it from most of the interviews from 2009 as well as from the latest customer loyalty survey, the culture did not change in the desired way. It is important that people make sense of why they need to change their mindset from being production to customer-oriented company. While trying to understand the knowledge sharing practices and what was communicated, discrepancies and clashes arise, in particular resulting from identification difficulties among employees. However, there are also some alignments between what has been communicated from the top and the reaction of the employees.*

##### **4.5.1 Discrepancies and Clashes**

###### **4.5.1.1 Organizational Culture**

###### **Values – old versus new employees**

There are a lot of discrepancies in how the organizational values are understood by the employees. During the interviews we conducted in 2008, the employees had different views about the organizational values. Either they remembered them very well while at the same identifying with them:

*“Trustworthiness, development, power to act, and safety. They are good words if you are putting them in your brain elaborate a little bit what do they mean for you because then you can act and work with them.” (Service Director, 2008)*

Or they didn't remember them and were not convinced of their importance:

*“I don't remember the values. Values are of course always very strategic; sometimes it's hard to connect to them in daily work. I think values, depending on which values we are talking about...once you read them – you forget them.” (Service Manager, 2008)*

These two statements are particularly interesting as both employees work in the service department and hold a higher position. While the service director can identify with the values and sees them embedded within the company, the service manager does not believe in their contribution. In interaction with each other and the environment these different sense making, and as a result also self-identity, might lead to different understandings of particular tasks, complicating knowledge sharing and working together.

In the second half of 2008, the management was no more communicating the values to new recruits and removed them from the company website. Therefore, new employees are trying to make sense of what is going on within the company and develop their own understanding about the values while working in the company and interacting with colleagues. P&C employees who we interviewed in 2009 are the only ones in the company who are aware that the values have been removed.

*“We don’t have values anymore. They deleted them last year and did not replace them with new ones until now.” (P&C Manager, 2009)*

*“Are there values? I don’t know if we have any values, maybe I am wrong, but I think no values have been communicated.” (Operations Employee, 2009)*

As a result of the different perception of the values, the employees started to identify with the company in various ways. In addition, it becomes more difficult for the management to communicate about change since employees interpret the sent messages differently and thus react in different ways. One of the interviewed P&C employees mentioned the urgent need for new values, as lots of different interpretations exist within Wind.

### ***Mission – Failure is (not) an option***

The mission in Wind, “Failure is not an option”, is a source for substantial clashes between how the mission is explained on the company website and how it is understood by several organizational members. The explanation of the mission by the company is:

*“This sums up our commitment to continually optimize our working processes, safety procedures and products – and to chase up and correct any errors. And if wind energy is to fulfill its potential, we must significantly improve our supply chain performance, and we must*

*use systems such as Six Sigma to achieve even more efficient and reliable wind turbines.”*  
(Company Website, 2009)

It seems that many employees are not aware of this explanation and thus make sense of the mission in their own way. As a result, employees are insecure about how to react, and even criticize the mission for being not acceptable.

*“Failure is not an option. Actually, I would say right now ... it might be an option. But failure is not an option in a big meaning, means that we are provided of the best and we don't produce a fake turbine ... it's my interpretation.”* (P&C Employee, 2008)

*“The mission “failure is not an option” is ‘crap’. People make failures. I would rather be worried if a person doesn't make mistakes. This way you don't get people trying new innovations. The mission is not good communicated and people might not understand it. It's really bad.”* (Operations Employee, 2009)

These clashes between the understandings of the mission support the creation of different interpretations about the organizational culture of Wind and lead to different ways how employees identify with the company.

### **Subcultures**

*“The company itself has a culture and then there's an organizational culture which could vary depending on which department that you're working.”* (P&C Employee, 2009)

When different cultures within departments or groups which share the same understanding exist, one talks about subcultures. (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). As a result, each employee builds its self-identity in accordance with the culture he/she believes in.

*“Sometimes it feels like we are different, competing companies although we all belong to the same company. Everybody makes himself look good.”* (Operations Employee, 2009)

The employees identify mainly with their department and not with overall Wind. The identification with the departments seems to be even enough strong that some employees start to see the other departments with different cultural backgrounds as opponents instead

of partners. The employees developed very strong self-identities and become less prone to identity regulations (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). As a result, knowledge sharing across departments becomes a challenge and decreases the probability of influencing the culture change in order to create a customer-oriented company.

#### **4.5.1.2 Organizational and Individual Identity**

##### **Global versus international company**

When it comes to the perception of the organizational identity, further clashes appear. While the welcome brochure for new employees states that the company is a global one, the P&C vice-president says that the communicated organizational identity is wrong.

*“Are we a global organization? I can say: no, we are not a global organization. You know one thing we don’t understand – you are operating in 5 continents, you are global! – No you are not, you are international. You have an international coverage.” (P&C Vice President, 2008)*

According to this statement, the company is not global but international and therefore the employees have a wrong understanding of the organization’s real identity. However, an interviewed P&C employee suggests implementing the concept of being a global company in the values in order to improve the employees’ identification with it. This statement indicates that the concept of global company did not become a source of identification for the employees and no (self-)identity work took place (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Furthermore, lots of the employees might even not realize the difference between being global or international.

##### **P&C = People and Correctiveness?**

Wind has a unique approach towards Human Resources. The company perceives the term Human Resources as old-fashioned and not falling in line with the way Wind ‘does things’. The P&C vice-president clearly states that he does not want the department being referred to as solely caring about operative HR tasks such as recruitment and administration.

*“P&C should not be the department where people think about every time you need to hire someone, you have this department over there – the closet which you open and say you*



*need a contract, then you will close it again and get out.” (P&C Vice President, 2008).*

While conducting interviews with several business workers substantial clashes regarding the understanding of the role of P&C came to the surface. The business workers mainly see the P&C department as a recruitment unit, which they contact in case new employees or basic information is needed.

*“If there is an open position, we contact P&C and the supervisor together with the help of P&C does the recruitment.” (Sales Manager, 2008).*

*“In order to get specific information you have to network with people and ask around. Everybody is new and understands your situation, so people are generally very helpful. You can always also approach P&C if you don't know something. They will help you or give you a contact where you might get an answer.” (Sales Employee, 2008).*

Furthermore, since 2009 P&C is also seen as a controlling source:

*“The main task of P&C seems to be shaping people. We always get emails about what to do and what not, where we have to attend and so on. That is not really helpful. For me they are not People and Culture but Police and Correctiveness.” (Operations Employee, 2009).*

Following these statements from business workers, P&C does not seem to be perceived as different from the "normal" Human Resource department which does the operative tasks. Nobody mentioned culture as being part of P&C's daily work. In the end, it seems that the P&C vice-president's intention to avoid the HR title by calling the department People & Culture did not reach other employees' minds. If the employees from other departments see P&C as a unit doing recruitment and controlling people, they will interpret messages and actions from P&C differently than if the department was perceived as the one working with organizational culture and people. For instance, implemented Friday meetings are perceived in a different way by employees from other than P&C department. P&C sees Friday meetings as a way to share information with all employees and involve them in the company processes, the business workers interpret Friday meetings as a place where managers can 'show off' in telling what they have done but do not share knowledge about the future plans and strategies. Although the Friday meetings were created as an informal way of sharing knowledge, other departments' employees expressed the wish for a more formal structure, criticizing the meetings for not being informative enough. This example shows how different

perceptions of one's department identity can lead to misunderstandings and create clashes in interaction with each other. As a consequence of these misunderstandings, the employees do not take advantage of the Friday meetings. They do not accept the knowledge shared in these meetings as being new cultural raw material and therefore do not engage in identity work in order to reshape their self-identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Not only have managers less opportunities to regulate the employees' identity but also do the employees themselves miss the possibility to gain valuable insights and knowledge from the interaction with other participants.

### ***P&C – change agent versus service provider***

P&C employees changed their work identity after some months at their job. When asking the P&C Manager and vice-president about their understanding of the role of P&C employees they described them as follows:

*“We know how we would like to do it. We're not doing it yet. We've actually hired these new P&C employees with that cultural issue or change that we're going through in our minds. We actually see them as change agents, you might say ... we would like to have them setting the pace, talking to the managers, be on the spot ... participating in management meetings, being the face of the change.” (P&C Manager, 2008)*

This view has been communicated to the new P&C employees during the job interviews as well as during the introduction to the company. Consequently the identity of the new employees was shaped into the direction of being change agents. However, while defining the daily work tasks and interacting with employees from other departments, it seems that this identity has been shifted.

*“I am providing my service, my work, and P&C tasks for them (employees). Sometimes they assess it in surveys, questionnaires. It's analogy for what you ask ... and we are also sellers. We have to sell those P&C programs and initiatives.” (P&C Manager, 2008)*

Others see themselves not as sellers or service providers, but for example as consultants providing answers to business workers and helping them with their daily challenges. The interviews conducted in 2009 highlight that now, as there is more time for work tasks

outside recruitment, the P&C employees start reshaping their self-identity through engaging in identity work and perceive themselves partly again as change agents. However, business workers still interpret P&C as HR people and therefore perceive P&Cs' efforts to reshape their culture as controlling and not trustworthy.

#### 4.5.2 Alignments

Since several years, Wind gets bad feedback in terms of customer loyalty (Company website, 2009). This is interpreted by the management as being the result of a lack of customer orientation throughout the company. All of the interviewed employees shared the view of the management.

*"My ambition is to have personal relations with our customers... Wind is not good at building long-term relationships with customers and that has to be changed (Sales Director, 2008)."*

*"I also think we need to change our view of the customers. We had a Friday meeting last week, where one of our sales managers was talking about a tender they just issued and then he said the next step would be to negotiate with these bastards. And he said it in a funny way, I think people understood that it was a joke, but it's still somehow it reflects our view of the customers, I think." (P&C Manager, 2009)*

The perceived need for change already existed among the employees interviewed in 2008 although these days not much communication concerned this topic. As the customer loyalty increased from 2007 to 2008, but decreased in the fiscal year 2008, we could observe much more communication about shaping a customer oriented culture in 2009. As the employees already shared this need in 2008 but the customer loyalty index for 2008 did not improve, we assume the identity work is still in process and employees' self-identity not changed yet. Consequently, the customer oriented culture is not integrated yet.

#### 4.5.3 Conclusion

To sum up, although there are some alignments among Wind employees when it comes to the shared vision of becoming a number one in modern energy, or understanding of the need for change, there are many discrepancies arising within the company. Discrepancies

are found around vision, mission, perception of other departments, and identity of the whole company to name a few.

Next section provides the reader with possible explanations of the discrepancies. The effects of discrepancies on employees are also touched upon.

## **4.6 Reasons for clashes, discrepancies and alignments**

We identified three main areas for reasons explaining previously discussed clashes, discrepancies and alignments. These are lack of a discussion platform, inconsistent and unstructured communication, changing business environment, leadership and national culture.

### **4.6.1 Communication**

#### ***Discussion Platform***

Identity creation depends on how employees understand what is going on in the company and what they perceive as being the central characteristics of the company (Walsh & Gordon, 2008). In the previous chapter we have elaborated on the problems especially new employees face in making sense of the processes within company, of the company itself as well as its characteristics. One key trigger for sense making and self-identity is the interaction with other organizational members in order to exchange thoughts about the “cultural raw material” or “artifacts of culture” (Giddens, 1991 in Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Schein, 1990).

One of the employees who only joined the Wind six months ago claims:

*“It is quite difficult to get into contact with each other outside of the daily work tasks. And in addition, Wind does not offer any discussion forum where people could talk about what’s going on at the moment, to share thoughts about the financial crisis for example.”*  
(Operations Manager, 2009)

Most of the employees we interviewed in 2009 only joined the company less than one year

ago and face similar challenges. In case the organizational identity is too “ambiguous and less pronounced, the organizational members start looking for alternative sources of identity, i.e. “department, project, specific work tasks and professional affiliation” (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008: 39). The creation of subcultures for example was a reaction to the insecurities concerning the characteristics of the company.

### ***Inconsistent and Unstructured Communication***

A lot of the communication regarding organizational culture has been inconsistent and contradicting. In other words, Wind created multiple cultures (or culture-goals), which generate confusion among employees who are lost in the multiple identities of the organization. In 2008, the P&C vice-president stated that he intends to create a family culture.

*“The target has been to “build over these years [2008-2009] a fantastic team and when I say a fantastic team...the state where you are a family.” (P&C Vice President, 2008)*

A service employee which has been interviewed during the same period stated that the culture is “safety first”. Moreover, in 2008 the company published the newsletter with the title “Wind is busy”. The article identified Wind and its employees as ‘busy’.

Only one year later, the focus of the culture change seems to have been changed again:

*“We are trying to redirect our focus from...I don’t know really...to more customer oriented. We need to understand we are living only if our customers are thinking whether we are good company or not. There are a lot of talks from managers that we have to be easy to work with.” (Sales Employee, 2009)*

The newly communicated need for a customer-oriented culture seems to be shared by almost all employees within Wind as we already elaborated in the previous chapter. However, the employee does not know what the current focus of the organization is beside what it should be. This can be due to the inconsistent communication about the targeted culture, as the employee does not know anymore what is going on within the company.

Not only the business workers do not know what is going on within Wind, but also P&C managers and employees are not aware of the current organizational strategy and the next steps which have to be conducted.

*“I feel quite insecure about what kind of culture are we actually setting and how should we promote that externally as well.” (P&C Manager, 2009)*

*“In P&C we are supposed to change the culture but we haven’t really defined what the current culture is and what culture we want to have.” (P&C Employee, 2008)*

The lack of knowledge about P&C and company’s strategy leaves these managers and employees in the undefined position: firstly, they have problems in formulating their and Wind’ identity, and secondly, they cannot communicate appropriately about what is going on in the company to the employees outside P&C. One of the P&C managers clearly stated, “We are not good in communicating”.

#### **4.6.2 Business environment – from excess demand to financial crisis**

When we started taking interviews in 2008, Wind was a fast growing company, which was recruiting at the “speed of light”. In the Malmö office, more than 120 new employees began their work at Wind during this year. As a consequence, P&C department was mainly focusing on recruiting new employees and had limited time to think of improvements and new initiatives. This shaped their identity as seeing themselves as more ‘HR’ people than ‘change agents’ from People and Culture department. Due to this environment during 2008, business workers identified P&C employees as being just HR responsible. Thus, when in 2009, P&C department started its initiatives of the cultural change, they were perceived as controllers.

The new employees on the other hand, do not get as much support as communicated in the introduction plan. Often they have no buddy or the assigned buddy is not very motivated and as a result, they have to define their role themselves.

*“I think the problem is within Wind that people are extremely busy. Especially here, but in the other countries as well, we have a lot of new people. They have been focusing a lot in the*

*last months on understanding their job, learning about their position. Things change very fast within Wind, so it's quite hard for a lot of people to keep up with the changes. I think that affects our knowledge sharing because I don't think that people think they have really time for that." (P&C Employee, 2008)*

Employees need a sufficient amount of time to define their jobs, which holds back new employees from making sense of the company and reflect upon its characteristics. Combined with the lack of possibilities for interaction about these characteristics, they search for other sources of identification such as their department.

Employees who have been already working at Wind prior to the relocation are very busy as well. Therefore, they might not want to think about the changes going on as well as question their self-identity. Moreover, within one year after the relocation of the office from Falkenberg to Malmo several of the old employees that have been already interviewed in 2008 left the company. Most of them were holding the high position within Wind. Especially the case of the sales director who left the company early in 2009 raises some questions. During the interview he stated:

*"I never had such a good relationship with any other company. It's good and it's fair. It is working relationship." (Sales Director, 2008)*

Why did he leave then? There was no possibility to conduct follow-up interviews with the employees who left the company after 2008. Thus, we can only speculate when trying to find reasons. We mainly came up with two possible reasons: first the individual could no more identify with the changed corporate identity and as a consequence left the company. Second, he was asked to leave to organization because he was not able to communicate the needed change to his subordinates. Both of the explanations base on self-identity, how it influences oneself and the interaction with others.

In 2009, the situation changed. As a consequence of the forthcoming financial crisis, the management decided to stop recruiting new employees in the late fall of 2008.

*“For P&C it’s a great opportunity to have a look back and see how we did last year and to find what we have missed and to focus on things we didn’t have time to do last year. So we started very intensively working on the procedures, guidelines for example and developing the current processes, so lean processes and the process excellence these are things going on right now.” (P&C Employee, 2009)*

This statement explains why people from P&C department are perceived as being ‘controllers’. Instead of doing recruitment and administrative tasks, P&C starts to directly influence the business workers’ daily work routines in implementing procedures, guidelines and so on. The employees, who still identify P&C as operative HR, perceive their actions not as support for the creating of a new culture but as attempt to control others.

#### **4.6.4 Leadership**

“Individuals try to make sense of their conflicting and uncertain contexts in pursuing managerial activities” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003:1167). In Wind, top managers are expected to act as role models for other employees in order to be able to influence identity. The P&C vice-president has very clear thoughts about the cultural raw material and how to develop it further. However, the other managers are often perceived as ‘immature’.

*“In terms of leadership it has to be more mature. Strategic discussion should be taken a higher priority. There needs to be less focus on details. Grow into to being a big company. It is happening right now and it has to continue to happen.” (Sales Employee, 2009)*

Top managers are often criticized for not following their words with action. It seems that the other managers do not share the vice-president’s understanding of the needed change and therefore do not only have problems in communicating it but also in acting accordingly. Hence, it is difficult for employees to make sense of the new situation and reshape their identity.

#### **4.6.5 National culture**

Another reason for discrepancies among employees’ perception of knowledge sharing practices or cultural change in general, can be the influence of national culture. Pauleen (2007: 13) states that national culture can have an impact on knowledge-sharing behavior in



employees through its influence on values and attitudes. The office in Malmö includes people from more than 16 nationalities all over the world. Thus a multicultural environment is the characteristic of Wind, where employees communicate in English for a substantial amount of time per day. Coming from different countries, employees bring with them particular self-identities based on which they make sense of the organization and the context they are working in. Cultural gaps between members of different groups can influence the interaction with others as different use of language and sense making take place. The existence of different national cultures within a company can also support the creation of subcultures where the employees are able to speak in their native language and share similar backgrounds shaping their own self-identity.

#### **4.6.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, several reasons for discrepancies, clashes and alignments have been elaborated. Some of them can be influenced by the company (communication and leadership) while others are outside of managerial control (business environment and national culture). To sum up, the success of knowledge sharing practices to change organizational culture through reshape members' self-identity can only partly be influenced.

## **5 Concluding Remarks**

### **5.1 Key learning points from our research**

*Wind Group is the world leader in providing wind power solutions nowadays which led us to the main purpose of this research: to find out how knowledge sharing as a key component can change organizational culture and sustain development in a rapid growth company.*

We believe that institutionalizing knowledge-sharing practices are key aspects in shifting Wind's focus from being production-oriented organization to one that is more customer-centric. Following our research purpose we started with defining organizational culture and the triggers for change. We identified three triggers: The vice-president of people and culture as the 'new broom', the main initiator, the "guarantee for the planned change"; people and culture as communication agents and network leaders, and the recruitment of the right people. It was identified that in order to communicate the need for change,

knowledge sharing is essential. In the case of Wind, the new broom initiated the change and tried to implement it with the use of his employees. In order to achieve this goal, Wind uses variety of means to create knowledge sharing, such as documentation, creating information database on the intranet, tools like SAP, PDD, trainings, formal and informal meetings. Based on the knowledge-sharing model developed by Widén-Wulff & Suomi (2007), we presented deeper analysis of the knowledge sharing processes and the evolving behaviour in Wind. Organization influences the way people think through knowledge sharing by shaping employees' identities. It is essential to create collective knowledge in order to establish collective identity, which signifies the changing culture. It is in the case with Wind, where people try to find the best processes in order to facilitate the change, which takes a processual approach and hence, the time.

Moreover, the importance of sense making was identified. In Wind most of the employees do not make sense of the situation and thus might hold the change speed down. An organization must first analyze and understand its existing culture – taking into account the context it is in and it can change anytime – in order to assess what needs to be changed, which is not the case in Wind.

Due to the variety of identities within one organization, we identified several discrepancies and clashes in our concluding part of the analysis. Some of the reasons for current discrepancies in Wind lie within unstructured and inconsistent communication, rapidly changing business environment, triggers created by different national culture as well as 'immature' leadership. According to Anne Morrow Lindbergh, "good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after". The communication is seen as one of the main triggers for knowledge sharing which consequently influences the cultural change.

## **5.2 Recommendation for further research**

This research encompassed one year's worth of data and centres on two specific time periods, i.e., April 2008 and March 2009, both of which illustrated differing contextual factors that affect the culture-reshaping process. The most obvious recommendation for further research then is to continue this longitudinal study in light of the processual

approach. Other than that, the implications of this research suggest two of the many study areas worthy of further investigation.

- In our research we analyzed several reasons for discrepancies, clashes and alignments concerning identity. Among others, we mentioned national culture as one of the key sources for identity clashes. This area could be examined much further in asking the question how knowledge sharing and organizational identity in multicultural organizations or organizations who wish to internalization can be affected by complex nature of national cultures.
- Due to time constraints, the conducted research focuses on Winds' Malmö office. However, Wind consists of three different areas: Sweden/Denmark, Poland and UK Celtic (UK and Ireland). The research at hand focuses on Sweden although additional interviews with Poland and UK Celtic have been conducted. Therefore, an interesting additional research the question would be: How can knowledge sharing across borders be influenced by organizational members' identity? Which tools are able to support the process? And so forth.

### 5.3 Our `take-home` message

Employees realize shifting the focus from production to customer-oriented company is needed. What they do not know as of yet is that this shift in focus also requires employees to shift their way of thinking. Due to the existing clashes between employee's self-identities resulting in identity work, formed by the organization, time, presence and communication must be invested before employees make sense of their tasks, achieve common dialogue amongst their peers and adapt their behaviour. Top Management and business units like People & Culture, as well, should realize that there is more to reshaping an organizational culture than just implementing initiatives. Too much focus on culture processes and not enough on the people will only result to almost nothing. If the universal truth suggests that humans seek advancement, adaptation and development toward increasingly and harmony in their environment, give the employees the time and space to discuss and work their identity to meet the ambitions of the company. *Skip the culture change talk! Let employees do the walking!*

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