



LUND UNIVERSITY

School of Economics and Management

Who am I When New Public Management Comes to Town? - A Study of Professional Identity Work in the City of Malmö

BUSN49 MASTER THESIS FOR MSC IN MANAGING PEOPLE, KNOWLEDGE AND CHANGE
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Abstract

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| Title: | Who am I When New Public Management Comes to Town? - A Study of Professional Identity Work in the City of Malmö |
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| Keywords: | Identity Work, Professional Identity, Change Process, New Public Management, Public Sector, Roles, Titles |
| Thesis Purpose: | The purpose of our study is to explore how NPM principles introduced through the ‘HRut’ project at the City of Malmö have affected the professional identities of their HR practitioners and how they work with these in light of the change. The aim is not to empirically generalise, but rather to gain a deep understanding of individuals’ professional identity work in this particular organisation. |
| Methodology: | This is a case study of a qualitative nature. It takes an interpretive approach rooted in a social constructivist worldview. The research is inductive. |
| Theoretical Perspective: | Relevant research concerning the public sector and identity has laid the foundation for the literature review. More specifically, literature regarding professional identity and roles, identity work and the HR occupation have been outlined and explained. |
| Empirical Foundation: | The empirical material for this thesis has been generated through ten semi-structured interviews with HR practitioners at the City of Malmö, representing both the central Strategic HR Department and separate administrative offices. Furthermore, organisational documents and unstructured observations respectively, added to the background and presentation of our study. |
| Conclusion: | Professional identity is both stable and fluid. A post change professional identity work matrix has been developed, outlining and exemplifying four different types of identity work using the metaphors: Preservers, Escapers, Translators and Hibernators. |

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1. Setting the Scene - An Introduction

In this chapter the background of our thesis is outlined. Subsequently, the problem is identified and the contribution of our thesis is addressed. Additionally, our study purpose and research question are highlighted and the disposition of the thesis is displayed.

1.1 Background

The public sector has been the subject of significant attention for the past thirty years. Dramatic changes in public management have been made, many of which have attracted considerable amounts of controversy (Almqvist & Wällstedt, 2013). The economy and efficiency of publicly run organisations has been the main focus of the discussion, and arguments favouring a more business-like managing of the public sector have been made. Modernising public administration has been the focus of public organisations worldwide and has been accepted with varying degrees of success (Lapsley, 2009). Given this attention, academic research in this area has intensified and theories and philosophies concerning public management abound. While some research is driven by practical problems others, including ours, take a more theoretical approach.

One of the most recognised philosophies surrounding the public sector is that of New Public Management (NPM). Starting in the late 1970's and early 1980's a number of reforms tending toward modernisation and marketisation were globally introduced into the public sector (Greuning, 2001). These were conceptualised by the British scholar Hood (1991) however, the US experience was also significant in the coining of the term (McLaughlin & Osborne, 2002). A number of factors contributed to the need for this kind of reform. The increased use of IT called for better and more efficient electronic information systems that would allow for better communication. Additionally, politicians recognised that taxpayers had the right to know that their money was being used economically, efficiently and effectively. Finally, changes in public sector accounting towards auditability and measurement also contributed to the introduction of NPM (Almqvist & Wällstedt, 2013). Together, these factors contributed to the trend of moving away from the traditional bureaucracy that had previously characterised the public sector toward public organisations influenced by market mechanisms and competition.

Today, NPM is widely influential having gained recognition and support from both the OECD and the World Bank and NPM principles have been and are being implemented in public

organisations worldwide (McLaughlin & Osborne, 2002). Simply put, NPM promotes the implementation of business principles into public sector management; arising from a perceived need for greater accountability, cost savings, efficiency and effectiveness of public organisations (Almqvist & Wällstedt, 2013).

Given that the public sector is traditionally seen as serving the public good it may be assumed that the introduction of business principles can give rise to a certain amount of tension. Change processes that introduce such principles into a public organisation therefore are likely to have considerable impact, particularly on the professional identities of the employees involved (Horton, 2006; Van Bockel & Noordegraaf, 2006). Moreover, employee roles are typically altered as a result of change. Such career transitions allow employees to renegotiate how they are viewed both privately and publicly (Ibarra, 1999). This is done using identity claims that convey images to others and signal how an individual views him/herself and how they want to be seen by others (Ibarra, 1999).

Due to the size of the majority of public organisations, central functions play an essential role. Human Resources (HR) is one of these vital functions also within the public sector, and therefore one of the functions affected by organisational change processes. The HR function is particularly interesting and especially relevant since it is seen as ambiguous and its organisational role is sometimes questioned. This is partly due to changing demands placed on HR employees, who have moved away from their traditional personnel function and are now expected to play a more strategic role in organisations (Truss, 2008; Lindström & Vanhala, 2011). With these new requirements, HR employees are obliged to adapt to more business-minded thinking whilst remaining true to the unique character of public service (Brown, 2004). In turn, the ambiguity of HR makes it difficult for these employees to develop and work with their professional identities (Alvesson & Lundholm, 2014). It is valuable therefore to go a step further and contribute toward an understanding of how the professional identities of HR practitioners are affected in light of an extensive HR change process.

It is argued that identity work is highly intensified during organisational changes since reactions such as curiosity, contingency and anxiety is often a result. This in turn destabilises identities and creates a need to actively work with them (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Moreover, Nicholson (1984) states that organisational changes in relation to newly allocated roles is highly important for the development of individuals and their organisations. This is

further backed up by Ibarra (1999) who states that new roles often require new skills and mindsets which intensify the individuals identity work. Hence, studying identity in relation to a major HR change process, which involves allocation of new roles is highly relevant. Furthermore, the fact that the organisation under scrutiny is within the public sector only strengthens the interest since they are increasingly subject to change. Moreover, identity work during major change processes is crucial both for managers and workers involved. The workers are affected in many ways during a major change process and therefore need to emotionally adapt to the new situation and match their identity with the new 'reality'. Furthermore, managers can use identity as a control mechanism that limits or directs workers. However, identity work can simultaneously regulate managers by for instance creating resistance. Awareness for those involved is therefore of great importance (Barinaga & Kärreman, 2013).

In our opinion, the study of the effect of a NPM change on HR employees' professional identities and identity work is a valuable and important contribution to the field of identity studies. We consider this area particularly important considering that the trend of implementing business-like principles in the public sector has spread rapidly, and embraced organisations worldwide. In countries where many organisations have been affected by these changes, almost all public sector workers have been influenced. Sweden is one of the countries where such principles have been very popular and widely introduced (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000). Therefore we find it crucial to facilitate understanding of the effects on employee's identities in light of such changes as we believe that such processes will continue to be introduced in years to come.

1.2 Research Problem

The majority of studies concerning NPM and its effect on public worker identities focus on health- and educational sectors and front-line public service workers (Aulenbacher & Riegraf, 2008; Berg, 2006). However, few studies have been conducted on professional identity in relation to central functions such as HR. Therefore, we have identified a gap in the existing literature with regards to those being studied. Through our study, we thus seek to contribute to the wider academic community by taking a different perspective by looking at HR employees in particular. In light of the increased introduction of NPM principles into the public sector and the effect of change on professional identity, we find it important to study these in relation to one another. This is not only important for the employees affected, but also for

managers who must find strategies to handle the ways in which HR employees work with their professional identities. In this sense, we assert that our study has the potential to contribute also practical insights for organisations in addition to the more evident theoretical take. Moreover, few studies have been directly connected to recent change processes. In order to contribute to this gap in the literature and provide practical understanding our study is based on research conducted at the City of Malmö in Sweden.

After attending a particularly inspiring guest lecture with a public sector manager, our initial interest in studying this sector was created. After researching public sector reform, it became evident that the City of Malmö had recently undergone an extremely large change process within its HR function. Our enthusiasm was sparked further by an interesting conversation with employees from the City of Malmö at a career fair, where it became evident that NPM principles were used to guide the change process. In this particular organisation, a major HR change process, named HRut, has been undertaken. This change process was initiated in 2007 when the municipal executive board in the city decided that the IT support system previously used by employees needed to be replaced. During this time, it was also decided that the change process would include the development of a new joint way of working. The project itself has been underway since 2008 and has affected all employees. A more detailed explanation of the HRut change process is given in the empirical chapter.

Although the HRut change project was officially completed in 2013, work with maintaining and developing the HR function and the project's processes continues. The change process therefore is fresh in the minds of all study participants, increasing the likelihood of interesting and valuable insights. Since our aim is to achieve in-depth understanding, we have chosen to conduct a case study within the central HR function in this particular city. Moreover, the access interview with our main contact at the City of Malmö revealed that previous studies of the city have solely been quantitative in nature. Our qualitative approach therefore offers a new perspective on the change process and its effects.

1.3 Study Purpose

The purpose of our study is to explore how NPM principles introduced through the 'HRut' project at the City of Malmö have affected the professional identities of their HR practitioners. Their central HR function has over the last years been restructured based on NPM-thinking, and has thus formed the empirical basis for our study. In light of the change

process, the roles of many HR practitioners have been changed, and we therefore seek to understand how this has affected the participants' identity work. Our primary aim is to explore how they subjectively understand and work with their roles and professional identities, and how the change process has affected these. Thus, we seek to understand if and how people work with their professional identities in light of the HRut change process. We do not wish to empirically generalise, but rather to gain a deep understanding of individuals' professional identities in this particular organisation. Through this case study we seek to introduce ideas that can be applied to analyse future organisational cases, thus providing analytical generalisation.

Based on our study purpose described above, the following research question was formulated and used as our overall guidance throughout the study:

How does the implementation of new public management principles affect HR practitioners' identity work in regards to their new professional roles?

1.4 Chapter Overview

In *Chapter Two* the assumptions that guide our study and the choices behind our methodology are addressed. Moreover, how we conducted the research is outlined and the specific methods used to generate and analyse the empirical material are accounted for. Finally, the trustworthiness and limitations of our study are discussed.

In *Chapter Three* we initially describe the public sector context and NPM in order to facilitate understanding and provide a backdrop of our study. Predominantly, we have devoted this chapter to outlining relevant theories surrounding identity. These, form the theoretical framework for our study. Particularly the concepts of professional identity, identity work and roles and identity are highlighted.

In *Chapter Four* we present the empirical material generated. We provide descriptions of the City of Malmö as an organisation and our interviewees. Furthermore, we present the interviewees' perceptions of their professional roles and identities through the central themes we identified. In order to richly illustrate our material, we give specific examples through quotes from the interviews and observations.

In *Chapter Five* we discuss the empirical material generated throughout the research process in light of relevant theories presented in chapter three. The primary focus of this chapter is on the main findings produced through our study. These are presented through the professional identity work matrix we have developed, showing four different types of identity work revealed through the empirical material. This chapter also provides reflections about possible further research within the field.

In *Chapter Six* a short summary of our study is provided along with an outline of our main findings and academic contribution. This section draws the previous chapters together by looking at the bigger theoretical picture and possible practical implications of our findings.

2. What We Did and How We Did It - Our Methodology

In this chapter, the choice and justification of our methodology is presented. Firstly, we outline and explain our metatheoretical starting point which forms the methodological framework of our study. Secondly, our chosen research method is described. Thirdly, an explanation of our methods for generation of empirical material and the corresponding protocol is provided followed by a description of our approach to the analysis of our empirical material. Lastly, we discuss and reflect upon the credibility of, and limitations to, our study.

2.1 Metatheoretical Starting Point

The metatheoretical starting point forms the basis of research and its design (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). There are many ways to label this starting point, paradigms and worldviews are just two examples. For the purpose of clarity we will use the terminology worldview and paradigm synonymously throughout the remainder of this thesis. One's starting point is made up of ontological (nature of being) and epistemological (nature of knowledge) assumptions in addition to views regarding human nature. Together, these factors influence the methodology of a study (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Since worldviews have important consequences for both practical issues and the interpretation of empirical material (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) it is vital that these elements are aligned with methods for material generation and analysis. This ensures both coherence and increases credibility in addition to facilitating understanding for both the researcher and the reader of the study.

Our overarching paradigm is that of interpretivism. We acknowledge that there are numerous ways of labelling paradigms, and that different authors use different labels to describe the same paradigm. We have used the terminology proposed by Burrell & Morgan (1979) as we find them to be main scholars in the field, and their work to be a widely used source. There are many variations within the interpretivist paradigm. In our opinion, the essence is that the world is subjective in nature, and that meaning is created and recreated by individual consciousness.

In line with our interpretive worldview, our ontological standpoint is that the world is subjective rather than objective, and constructed through people's different perceptions and interpretations (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Individuals construct their own meanings and interpretation depending on context, experiences and backgrounds (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, our interpretivist worldview is aligned with the epistemology of practice in which knowledge is created through individual consciousness and transferred through social interaction (Alvesson & Skjöldberg, 2009). In our study, new knowledge has therefore been created based on the differing understandings of identity portrayed by the participants in interaction with us as researchers. In addition to the aforementioned assumptions, we believe that human nature is largely based on free will, however we recognise that in some contexts we behave through automatic response, for example when conducting routine tasks.

2.2 Choice of Research Method

In order to answer our research question effectively, our study is qualitative in nature. The aim of qualitative studies is to gain deep understanding about processes and meanings rather than measure results (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Moreover, Merriam (2002) writes that the purpose of qualitative research is to examine how people make sense of their world and experiences, and what it means to them to be in a certain setting and situation. This is in line with the objectives of our research and therefore an appropriate approach to our study. Additionally, an inductive approach has been taken, which is in line with our qualitative research method. Our aim has thus been to gather material from which concepts and theories will emerge.

There are many different ways to conduct qualitative research however, we have chosen the case study approach. According to Yin (2009, p. 13) case studies are particularly appropriate when a “how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control”. In addition, a case study is suitable when the aim is to give “an intensive description and in-depth analysis of a phenomenon” (Merriam 2002, p. 8). Typical techniques for case studies include both semi-structured interviews and observations and the object can be to portray the organisation as a whole or, as in our study, to trace the effect of particular strategic decisions (Ferlie & Mark, 2002). Case studies can be explanatory, exploratory or descriptive (Yin, 2009). Our study is exploratory by nature in that it seeks to explore the effect of the implementation of NPM principles on the professional identities of HR practitioners.

One of the most salient critiques of the case study as a method is the perceived lack of ability to generalise findings (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009, p. 15) writes that a single case study “is generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.” The goal of

case study research therefore is to “expand and generalise theories” (Yin, 2009, p. 15) Since our aim is to gain deep understanding of a particular phenomenon in a particular organisation we therefore seek to provide ‘analytical generalisability’ from which theories and concepts can be developed as opposed to ‘statistical generalisability’ which is more common in quantitative research.

2.3 Generation of Empirical Material and Protocol

When conducting a qualitative study, there are many different ways in which the required material can be retrieved. Commonly, this phase of the research process is referred to as data collection (Creswell, 2003; Bowen, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In an interpretive qualitative study like ours however, it can be argued that the empirical material is generated as opposed to collected. Knowledge is created through interaction with the study participants and the qualitative researcher is never truly ‘outside’ the study since his/her pre-understandings and experiences colour the research material. The researcher therefore, influences the material which is thus not objectively ‘collected’ in the same way as in for example quantitative studies (Alvesson, 2003). In light of this, we will therefore use the terms ‘empirical material’ and ‘generation’ rather than ‘data’ and ‘collection’ when describing our research process.

There are many ways in which empirical material can be generated. The most common methods are interviews, document analysis, observations or a combination of these (Merriam, 2002). For the purpose of our study, we have chosen to generate empirical material mainly through interviews, supplementing with field notes from observations when found valuable. Furthermore, we have used organisational documents as a backdrop for our research. Our methods of generation are outlined in the sections below. These sections will moreover explain our protocol in regards to the various methods.

2.3.1 Organisational Documents

Organisational documents can be useful, particularly in case studies, in enabling researchers to describe the organisation or phenomenon under scrutiny (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In order to gain background information for our case study of Malmö Stad, we read a variety of organisational documents. This allowed us to understand both how the organisation is structured and the HRut change process. The documents used to create a backdrop for our study included the official HRut end report from 2013, Malmö Stad’s Service Level

Agreement (SLA) for 2014, organisational brochures and the Malmö Stad official web page. This secondary material provided us with knowledge about the organisation on a descriptive level. As Malmö Stad is a public organisation, the documents that we were provided with are publicly available by law and are not of a sensitive nature. When using organisational documents, there are some considerations to keep in mind. The information provided does not necessarily give an accurate view of the organisation representative for all its employees and is usually of a subjective nature (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, organisational documents are often extensive and written with another purpose than the one of a particular study (Merriam, 2006). Despite this, we found that the selected documents provided us with good background information considering they only served as supplementary sources in our initial research stage. The end report for the HRut process was particularly useful for us, and provided us with an overview of the HR restructuring made in Malmö Stad and its practical implications.

2.3.2 Interviews

Interviews have been our primary method of generating empirical material. Kvale (2007) argues that to be able to understand and get to know people, conversation is optimal. Thus, interviews give the opportunity to examine more deeply how interviewees feel and think about specific subjects and situations (Kvale, 2007). Through interviews, our participants have provided their perspective of the implemented change and explained how it has affected their role and professional identity.

Initial contact with the City of Malmö was gained through contacts at Lund University. This resulted in an access interview with a top HR-strategist and a key player within the change process: HRut. This meeting provided good insights into the research topic and gave access to additional interviewees. Having understood the new HR structure it was decided that the focus of the study would be on two out of three HR functions at the City of Malmö: the Strategic HR Department which consists of a HR Director, Strategists and Specialists, and the HR division at two particular administrative offices which consist of a HR Manager, Consultants and Administrators (Wallinder, 2013). Since the third function, HR Service, have a pure IT support function, they were not considered a good fit for the purpose of our study as the aim has been to go beyond the implementation of the new IT system. As a result of the access interview we conducted six interviews with practitioners at the strategic HR department and four with practitioners within two different administrative offices. Our aim

was to have a wide sample with participants with different backgrounds, experience, age etc. Our final sample consisted of six HR Specialists within different fields, one HR Manager, two HR Consultants, and one HR Administrator. All the interviews lasted on average forty five minutes and were held in Swedish in order to facilitate for the interviewees ability to express themselves clearly.

To be able to gain as rich material as possible, our interviews were semi-structured. Hence, the questions were open-ended to allow for follow-up questions. Before the interviews, an interview guide was created. This contained two main themes; the individual and the HRut project. In each section several suggested questions were covered (see Appendix 1). The interview guide was developed throughout the interview process as interesting topics were revealed. For instance, the question *“Can you describe your educational and working background?”* was developed to include the sub-question *“How did you come to work in the public sector?”* as we found it interesting to see if working within the public sector had been a conscious choice by the participants in our study. Alvesson (2003) emphasises that different responses and interpretations from the interviewees can be triggered depending on which context they are interviewed within. Answers may be different if asked as a ‘professional’ as opposed to a ‘mother’. With this in mind, we were reflexive in designing our questions so that the focus was on the interviewees within their professional roles.

The interviews were conducted in the participants’ daily working environment, in offices and meeting rooms at the City of Malmö. Kvale (2007) states that the scenery of the interview should make the participant feel comfortable to encourage him/her to express feelings and perceptions of the subject of research. In order to create an atmosphere that was as relaxed as possible, we made sure to conduct small talk with each interviewee over a cup of coffee prior to each interview. This enhanced the relation between us and the interviewees. Before starting each interview we explained that all responses would be anonymous. This further encouraged interviewees to speak freely and give open and honest answers. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in alternating pairs since we believe that three interviewers might be intimidating and uncomfortable for the participants. Additionally, to gain as much as possible from each interview the primary interviewer asked questions whilst the secondary interviewer took notes. To ensure the validity of our material, each interview was recorded and thereafter transcribed within twenty four hours.

2.3.3 Field Notes and Observations

In order to complement the material generated through what was said during the interviews, the secondary interviewer took field notes. These notes consisted of the secondary interviewer's thoughts, feelings and initial ideas about what was being said as well as the impressions gained from the interviewees' articulation and intonation. This allowed us to be reflexive and pick up on what was not being said and recognise for instance when a topic was particularly sensitive. As a consequence of this, we were able to alter and review our interview questions throughout the process. Although this was not structured or extensive as such, it provided us with valuable complementary material. Furthermore, we also took notes of the perceived office environment during our visits to the City of Malmö in order to be able to provide rich descriptions in our analysis.

2.4 Analysis of Empirical Material

We took a structured approach to the process of analysing the empirical material in which we used the steps outlined by Creswell (2003, p. 191) as guidance; for example through organising and preparing the material, reading through the material, coding and interpreting our findings. Prior to organising and preparing the material, the interviews were printed to ease the process of analysis. Furthermore, each interviewee was given a pseudonym that is used throughout the remainder of the analysis and writing process. The transcribed interviews were read through several times without further processing in order to familiarise ourselves with and gain an overview of the material. To ensure nuanced and valid ideas this was done independently before discussing potential themes and findings. In order to make sense of our material, specific strategies of textual analysis were used when coding. We primarily looked for repetition and keywords to identify salient themes and enable greater understanding; this was done using highlighting, margin notes and colour coding. Moreover, the technique of identifying missing material through being sensitive to what is not said (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) was used. This is particularly important given that interviewees may attempt to portray themselves in a positive light when answering our questions rather than giving open and truthful accounts of their experiences (Alvesson, 2003). In order to counter this challenge and thus minimise this risk, we took a reflexive approach during our interviews. For example, we considered our biases and assumptions carefully when constructing the questions in order to not lead the interviewees in a particular direction. In earlier interviews, we noticed that our spontaneous follow-up questions often led to generation of 'ideal' answers as they did not provide the interviewees with an open starting point for responding. Post interviews, in order

to deal with such challenges, we discussed this and kept this in mind in order to prevent similar occurrences in coming interviews.

Generation of empirical material and analysis are to some extent simultaneous in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). The process of analysis therefore was inductive in nature, the purpose being to create broader meaning from the specific material generated (Creswell, 2013). In our interpretation of the interview material, a hermeneutic approach was used to conduct a detailed analysis. Hermeneutics refers to the idea that “the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole” (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009, p. 92). This is particularly appropriate to our study as we seek to gain a subjective understanding of the texts whilst also considering context in the interpretation process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

In order to ensure the validity of our findings we employed three of the eight strategies described by Creswell (2013). Firstly, the material was triangulated, by investigating and comparing themes found through different sources. Secondly, the findings are conveyed in a rich and descriptive manner in order to set the scene for the reader and facilitate understanding. Finally, and most importantly, a document of biases was created to ensure the honesty of our accounts.

2.5 Trustworthiness

The most common way of assessing quantitative research is by evaluating its reliability and validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) however, these standards are inappropriate when conducting a qualitative study given the inability to find absolute truths through social research. Moreover, since reliability and validity are based on measurement, they are unsuitable to assess qualitative research as measuring results is of little concern to social theorists. Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue for an alternative way of evaluating a qualitative study. They propose the concept of trustworthiness. This consists of four factors; 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability and 4) confirmability. Given the qualitative nature of this study therefore, in order to remain paradigmatically appropriate, focus has been placed on ensuring trustworthiness through the four criteria mentioned above.

The primary method used to ensure credibility in our study was triangulation. This involves using a number of different sources to gather empirical material (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In our study, interviews, organisational documents and field observations were used to generate

material. In addition, Denzin (1970, p. 310) writes that triangulation also includes the use of “multiple observers”. This was particularly important during the process of analysis. When we, as researchers, interpreted interviews differently, we held a discussion to establish the most accurate reading of the material. This enhanced the reflexivity of the study and ensured that the material was analysed appropriately in addition to giving a more nuanced view of the empirical material. The participation of three researchers as well as the variety of sources used thus increased the credibility of our findings. Additionally, in order to ensure the credibility of the theoretical foundation of our study, the secondary sources that we used were retrieved from reputable academic journals and seminal works related to our research topic. Moreover, the scholars referred to are well recognised within the broader academic community and are highly influential in their field.

As previously mentioned, since the aim of our study is to gain a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon, our main concern is not to provide findings that can be empirically generalised. The issue of transferability however, has been approached by providing rich and accessible descriptions of our research process and findings (Tracy, 2010). This allows readers to make their own judgements about the ability to transfer our findings to other arenas.

To ensure our study’s dependability, we have made sure to keep structured and easily accessible records of all field notes, interview transcripts and interview recordings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By doing this, we allow for deeper justification of our findings if requested by co-students, participants or others. Through commenting on our study, our co-students will also contribute towards its dependability, as they will be able to thoroughly investigate our process, generation of material and analysis. To further enhance the dependability of our study, we have explained our process in detail and been transparent when writing up our thesis.

Moreover, to secure our study’s conformability, we applied reflexivity throughout our research process. According to Gilgun (2010, p. 1) “Researchers are reflexive when they are aware of the multiple influences they have on research processes and on how research processes affect them”. Furthermore, Tracy (2010, p. 842) describes it as “honesty and authenticity with one’s self, one’s research, and one’s audience”. Hence, we were conscious about how our preconceptions and own experiences could affect our study e.g. in interview

situations. Furthermore, for our own reference, we made sure to document our biases and assumptions going into the study and kept these in mind throughout the process. It is believed that our reflexive approach increased our study's trustworthiness by presenting our findings more accurately.

2.5.1 Limitations

The time constraint associated with our research process was identified as the main limitation of our study. The limited time provided thus affected the selected method of material generation and the amount of material upon which our findings were based. An extended research period would have allowed for more interviews, possibly supplemented with structured observations. Structured observations could enhance researchers' insights through the discovery of topics that are uncomfortable to discuss during interviews (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, interviewing a larger quantity of employees could potentially have enabled us with deeper and broader insights. This was however not considered feasible within the given time frame, and the focus was therefore put on finding interviewees of a broad sample. In addition, in order to not let our biases influence the interviews, we took on a reflexive approach.

Furthermore, all interviews for our study were conducted entirely in Swedish. Thus, all translations into English are our own. A limitation to our study therefore, is the risk of valuable material being 'lost in translation' and/or mistranslated. Translation is subjective in nature, and faulty translation may have a large impact on the interpretation of material (Wong & Poon, 2010). An example of this is when corresponding words are difficult to find. In our case, an example is the word "förvaltning" which we have translated as "administrative offices" for lack of better alternatives in the English language. In order to decrease the risk of inaccurate translation as much as possible, all researchers involved discussed the material to achieve the most accurate translations available.

3. What Others Have Said Before Us - A Literature Review

In this chapter, the literature used to frame our research is presented. The first part of the chapter describes the public sector context in which our study is set. It provides our working definitions of the public sector and important theoretical concepts and philosophies tied to our study. Furthermore, the field of identity is explored and relevant concepts are presented. Moreover, the theories surrounding professional identity and identity work are highlighted as these form the main theoretical basis of our study.

3.1 The Public Sector - Original Purpose and Current Direction

The word ‘public’ originates from the Latin expression for ‘people’, and is the concern for people as a whole through provision of governmental services to the community (Oxford Dictionaries ‘public’, n.d.). Thus, the main purpose of the public sector is to provide services which are equally available to all people in society. The public sector is mainly associated with governmental bodies, although organisations that are partly public and partly private also exist (Perry & Rainey, 1988).

Public sector organisations differ from those in the private sector in three fundamental ways; ownership, funding and control. Unlike private sector organisations, those in the public sector are owned by the government and are funded by taxes. Moreover, public organisations are controlled by political forces rather than market forces as in the private sector (Boyne, 2002). Furthermore, the primary purpose of the public sector differs substantially from that of the private sector. Traditionally, the main purpose of public organisations can be illustrated through the expression ‘Res Publica’, meaning ‘public good’. The accustomed mindset of those working within public organisations is thus to serve as protectors of ‘Res Publica’, and work with this in mind at all times rather than pursuing individual goals (Van Bockel & Noordegraaf, 2006).

NPM serves as a main discourse for this study, and thus as a contextual basis to be kept in mind alongside the notions of public sector organisations.

The New Public Management (NPM) began life as a conceptual device invented for purposes of structuring scholarly discussion of contemporary changes in the organisation and management of executive government. (Barzelay, 2002, p. 15).

Although there is no universal definition of NPM, a number of characteristics common to most conceptualisations can be identified. These include but are not limited to; accountability, strategic planning and management, decentralisation, increased use of IT, changes in management style and performance measurement (Greuning, 2001). In short therefore, the NPM movement can be seen as the application of business principles in the public sector. Van Bockel & Noordegraaf (2006) explain how the introduction of NPM principles in public organisations may create tensions with the previously explained notion of “Res Publica”. According to them, contemporary public officials tend to prioritise individual interests, which contradicts the fundamental purpose of serving the public good. This tension may affect the identities of public sector workers (Horton, 2006). It is towards identity therefore that this chapter now turns.

3.2 Identity

Identity has become an increasingly popular part of organisational studies. Much has been written about this topic, however; much is yet to be explored. With this being said, some scholars, when critically examining the field, suggest that the popularity of identity studies has led to an overconsumption of such theory (Marks & Thompson, 2010; Alvesson, 2010). Marks & Thompson (2010) further argue that identity tends to overshadow other parts of subjectivity. Identity should thus be seen only as a part of this broader theoretical area. We acknowledge that there is more to the area of subjectivity, however; we suggest that some aspects of identity remain underexplored and are therefore still of interest to the academic community.

The conceptualisation of identity is difficult given that the literature and theories surrounding identity are vast and scholars use the concept in different ways (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001). Although various definitions of the concept exist, some definitions are more appropriate for our study. Firstly, Alvesson (2009, p. 188) states, “identity is broadly seen as crucial to understanding how people relate to their working world and how organizations function”. Secondly, Barinaga & Kärreman (2013, p. 243) describe identity as “a construction of oneself (one’s group or organisation), typically in a favourable light, in terms of key orientations, distinctiveness and some degree of continuity/coherence”. These broad conceptualisations of identity are used in guiding our theoretical framework.

In addition to the differing conceptualisations of identity there are also various levels and sources of it. Broadly, identity can be seen from an individual or an organisational level (Alvesson, 2009). For the purpose of our study, we will concentrate on identity on an individual level. This identity is based on the individual's experiences and subjective understanding, and concerns "how a person constructs a particular version of him or herself and can be seen as the response to the question 'Who am I'" (Alvesson, 2009). Further categorisations of identity include but are not limited to; organisational, professional, managerial and self-identity (Alvesson et al., 2008). Moreover, identities can be constructed from different sources such as work, family life, religion, ethnicity and gender. An individual can thus have a variety of coexisting identities (Collinson, 2003, p. 534). For example, a person can have a professional identity as a manager whilst simultaneously having a self-identity as a mother and wife. The focus of this thesis is on the professional identities of those studied.

While some scholars see identity as fluid and evolving (Collinson, 2003; Ibarra, 1999; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) others argue that identity is fixed and possible to describe definitively (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Judge et al., 2002). Others still, argue that identity can be stable and fluid simultaneously. Dunne (1996) suggests that while certain factors can alter identities, thus it is fluid, he also states that there is a core to one's identity which cannot be shaken. In line with this, Marks & Thompson (2010) propose that individuals have an essence of self which is continuous and lays the foundation for their identity work. Even though differing opinions evidently still exist, the main tendency in contemporary identity studies is to acknowledge the concept as constantly evolving (Alvesson, 2009).

Identity has also been studied through a wide variety of theoretical paradigms; most commonly those of functionalism, interpretivism and constructionism (Barinaga & Kärreman, 2013). In our opinion, identity is constantly constructed and reconstructed, and thus of a developing nature. Moreover, we believe that identities are shaped through social interaction and discourse (Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Alvesson et al., 2008). In line with this, interpretivist and constructivist views on identity form the basis of our study (Barinaga & Kärreman, 2013).

3.2.1 Professional Identity

Professional identity can be seen as the attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences that influence the way people define themselves in a professional role (Schein, 1978). Schein (1978) argues that professional identity is relatively stable, however much literature on the topic highlights that identity is changeable all be it to varying degrees. Abbott (1998) for example, argues that professional identity is constructed through academic qualifications rather than practice. As such, an individual brings a professional identity when joining the workforce; however, this is altered and reconstructed through becoming part of an organisation. Therefore, in this view, identity is not solely fluid.

Ibarra (1999) also stresses that professional identity changes, however highlights that identity adjusts in line with changes in work role. In this sense, professional identity is seen as a fluid and ever-evolving concept. Since new roles inevitably require different types of skills and behaviours, how people define themselves unavoidably changes (Ibarra, 1999). Furthermore, Ibarra (1999, p. 765) argues, “professional identity is more adaptable and mutable early in one’s career”. As previously mentioned, experiences may influence the development of professional identity. Additionally, insights into one’s strengths, weaknesses and preferences, gained over time and through feedback from others can also play a significant role in identity development. This can further be linked to Handley et al. (2007) who write that the community of practice one belongs to influences one’s identity. In our opinion, this is of value here. A community of practice is characterised as a group of people who share the same craft or profession and gives an opportunity for individuals to learn from each other (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In our case, HR practitioners at the City of Malmö constitute the community of practice. When individuals join a community of practice they develop from ‘newcomers’ to ‘oldtimers’ through the length of their participation in the community (Handley et al., 2007). This transition affects the identity of individuals who increasingly become part of, and are shaped by, the community. Together, these theories suggest identity of an adaptable nature, however the more experience one possesses, the less adaptable one’s identity and vice versa.

As with the general notion of identity, there seems to be a trend amongst more recent scholars to see professional identity as a changing phenomenon. Collinson (2003) for example, argues that people’s professional identities are faced with more uncertainty and ambiguity now than before, as such identities are no longer ascribed by birth. Rather than being born into a rather fixed professional identity, this is now something that is open and developed through practice

and individual choices linked to who people are and want to be. He further argues that this is not only positive, as it may lead to increased vulnerability and identity struggles.

The above arguments evidence that, in existing literature, authors have different views regarding the fluidity or stability of identity. We will approach this discussion with an open stance with the aim of letting our empirical material speak for itself. We will position ourselves in the debate and in the final and concluding chapter.

3.2.2 Identity Work & Control

In light of the nature of identity, the notion of identity work comes into play as a central concept. Given that the contemporary work life is increasingly complex and ambiguous, how individuals deal with their identities has become an important question (Alvesson et al., 2008). Identity work can be seen as the process through which identity is formed, maintained, amended, strengthened and repaired (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). More specifically, Alvesson et al., (2008, p. 15) write that identity work describes “the ongoing mental activity that an individual undertakes in constructing an understanding of self that is coherent, distinct and positively valued”.

In contrast to identity construction, identity work is a more reflective and active practice which is grounded in an element of self-doubt and a perceived threat towards the notion of ‘who one is’ (Alvesson & Lundholm, 2014). The purpose of identity work therefore, is to hold on to certain elements of identity that constitute its essence with the aim of reaching a “secure and stable sense of self” (Marks & Thompson, 2010, p. 321). Identity work may be undertaken to a greater or lesser extent based on a variety of factors however, more concentrated identity work is common during times of crises, specific events and general transitions (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Ibarra (1999) particularly stresses the factor of changed work roles. Moreover, identity work may be more salient when there is a perceived misalignment between who one is and what one does. A common method of identity work is the use of discourse to attempt to answer the question of ‘who am I’ within the organisational context. The way people talk about and thus define who they are, and are not, often constitutes their own and other people’s professional identities (Alvesson & Lundholm, 2014).

Watson (2008) stresses that organisations are the optimal settings for researching identity and identity work. In corporate settings employees are required to take on a variety of personas, which inevitably change in accordance with “variations in global, societal and organisational changes” (2008, p. 122). However, he also argues that identity work is underexplored and therefore seeks to develop and give more analytical power to the concept. Primarily, Watson (2008) suggests that it ought to be recognised that identity work is both an internal and external process resulting from the conflict between how we see ourselves and how others see us. Although he recognises that the intensity with which individuals conduct identity work varies, Watson (2008) stresses that all individuals undertake identity work even though they are active or passive in this endeavour to varying degrees.

Alvesson & Willmott (2002, p. 622) argue that identity work “is a significant medium and outcome of organisational control”. How an employee sees him/herself can be regulated by the use of control mechanisms such as discourse and titles that influence how people feel about and identify with their roles (Alvesson et. al., 2008). Managers can purposefully regulate the identities of their subordinates by limiting the identities ‘available’ in the organisation. Thus aiming to convince employees of identities that are suitable in the eyes of management (Alvesson et. al, 2008). While this may be perceived by subordinates as something positive, it may also restrain employees and their identities as they are trapped within set frames, also known as identity cages (Alvesson et. al, 2008).

3.2.3 Roles and Identity

Although identity and role are often used synonymously, Alvesson (2009) argues that they differ significantly in meaning. This is important for our study and therefore we follow Alvesson in distinguishing between the two. A ‘role’ is often created through external expectations and is defined by a person’s title and professional position compared to others’. A role can be temporary and something a person can take on without necessarily feeling that it is in line with his/her identity. In contrast, a person’s identity is, as mentioned above, how a person views him/herself. A central part of a person’s role is his/her professional title. Contemporary professional work titles are becoming increasingly ambiguous. Alvesson (2013) argues that currently, particularly in relation to knowledge work, there is an inflation in job titles with an increasing number of people named ‘Managers’ and other more traditional titles being replaced by more attractive ones. He refers to this as grandiosity, and states that such changes often lack substance. We think this is closely connected to

professional identity and identity work as new and seemingly improved titles often portray employees in a more positive light, holding a higher status (Alvesson, 2013). We suggest that this can in turn affect how individuals think about, portray and understand their roles.

Ibarra (1999) stresses the importance of understanding the emotional processes of identity construction particularly in connection to change of roles in work life. When a person is assigned a new role, new skills, attitudes, behaviours, and patterns of interactions are often required. Accordingly, a person's self-definition and professional identity may be questioned and further changed. Another influential scholar, Nicholson (1984), also discusses how a new role induces personal and/or role development. He states that an employee's adjustment to change in his/her role can be both reactive and proactive. Reactive when a person tries to adapt to a new role through for instance developing a new skill-set and proactive when a person tries to change role demands in order to better match their identity, expertise or needs. In light of this, identity and role can be seen as interrelated factors, which evolve in tandem (Ashforth & Saks, 1995). We acknowledge this, however; still emphasise that the two expressions should not be seen as synonymous.

3.3 The HR Occupation

The market is increasingly characterised by knowledge as a primary resource. Therefore, it is increasingly important to retain, maintain and attract employees with relevant knowledge (Newell et al., 2009). Consequently, the traditional personnel function in organisations has developed from a pure administrative to a more strategic role and is now known as human resources (HR) (Leopold et al., 2009). Alvesson & Lundholm (2014) describe the HR profession as a support function, which includes areas such as recruitment, employment law, competence development and compensation. HR professionals therefore may have a variety of different work tasks. Although the need for administrative support remains and is supplied by HR departments, some HR employees can now be defined as knowledge workers. They have developed from a passive to a more active and developmental role which requires future orientation and change in responsibility (Alvesson & Lundholm, 2014). Knowledge workers perform non-routine tasks and have a problem-solving focus and their work is characterised by a high degree of ambiguity (Alvesson, 2009). Therefore, their need for identity work increases. The distinction between their profession and their self often decreases in comparison to non-knowledge workers and the personal stakes for such employees thus become greater (Alvesson, 2009).

The HR occupation is also characterised by a certain amount of ambiguity (Alvesson & Lundholm, 2014). While HR professionals are eager to portray themselves as central to the strategic development of organisations, others still view HR as a support function only (Leopold et. al., 2009). Diverging notions of what HR is and should be therefore, in turn complicates the identity work of HR professionals, as it is difficult to find a clear platform from which their professional identity can be developed (Alvesson & Lundholm, 2014).

The theory outlined throughout this chapter has highlighted significant philosophies, theories and concepts that are significant for the upcoming empirical chapter. Throughout this chapter, we have established that professional identity is seen as fluid by some scholars, whilst stable by others. Furthermore, we have made a clear distinction between the notions of roles and identity. Additionally, we have highlighted the importance of identity work when faced with organisational change, particularly in regards to the HR occupation that is evidently of an ambiguous nature. Ultimately, this chapter forms the foundation of our understanding and interpretation of our empirical material. This will in turn aid us in gaining insights as to how the HR practitioners in our study work with and portray their roles and professional identities in relation to the recent change process in their organisation. It is to this that we now turn.

4. What the Interviewees Said - Our Empirical Material

This chapter starts by outlining and explaining the change process at the City of Malmö and the structure of the HR function. It goes on to present the empirical material generated during the interview process. The alignment with NPM principles is addressed and a number of salient and relevant themes are identified and elaborated on. Each theme is explained using a range of examples from the interview material. These examples highlight a variety of views and opinions in order to ensure a nuanced study.

4.1 City of Malmö and HRut

The City of Malmö employs 20000 people, making it the second largest employer in the Skåne region (Malmö Stad, n.d.). Of these, 200 people work daily with HR related tasks, all of whom were affected by HRut, the change process. When the change process was implemented, the city decided to take a holistic approach. Their goal was to change their approach towards HR by moving ‘with’, rather than from, personnel administration (PA) to a more strategic, proactive and integrated HR function. Additionally, a new HR structure was established. This was re-organised using a ‘HR triangle’ (see Appendix 2). The triangle consists of three main functions: 1) HR service, which is an IT support function, 2) HR divisions at each administrative office and 3) a Strategic HR Department. Moreover, joint HR processes were implemented across the entire organisation and a new IT system to aid HR work was introduced. The change process was lengthy and complex and although HRut has been officially completed it is continually being developed and maintained (Wallinder, 2013).

As mentioned in our methodology chapter, we interviewed ten employees from the City of Malmö for the purpose of our study. As previously mentioned, these are referred to in the remainder of this chapter by the use of pseudonyms. The below table provides a brief overview of our interviewees and their respective pseudonyms. We believe that this information will make it easier to follow the presentation of our empirical material and our discussion, and relate it back to the individual stories behind our findings. In turn, we find that this helps to set the scene of our case study.

| Pseudonym | Gender | Title | Department | Length of Employment at the City of Malmö (Years) |
|------------------|--------|------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Anna | Female | HR Specialist | Strategic HR Department | 16+ |
| Ben | Male | HR Specialist | Strategic HR Department | 0-5 |
| Christine | Female | HR Specialist | Strategic HR Department | 11-15 |
| Daniel | Male | HR Specialist | Strategic HR Department | 16+ |
| Ellen | Female | HR Specialist | Strategic HR Department | 11-15 |
| Fiona | Female | HR Specialist | Strategic HR Department | 0-5 |
| Gemma | Female | HR Consultant | Administrative Office | 0-5 |
| Helen | Female | HR Consultant | Administrative Office | 0-5 |
| Ingrid | Female | HR Administrator | Administrative Office | 16+ |
| Juliette | Female | HR Manager | Administrative Office | 0-5 |

4.2 Ticking the NPM Boxes

Our initial research regarding the City of Malmö indicated that the HRut change process was built on NPM principles. The access interview with our main contact strengthened this suspicion despite the fact that the label NPM was never mentioned. In order to confirm that HRut was conducted in line with NPM principles all interviewees were asked to “explain the reasoning behind HRut”. Although it became clear that one of the driving forces behind the change process was the need to replace an outdated and expensive IT system, other more proactive reasons were highlighted. For example, words such as modernising, standardising, cutting costs, becoming more efficient and becoming a more qualified support system were mentioned multiple times. Additionally, interviewees stated that:

It was a development in line with the times (...) the nature of the HR question needed to change. - Ben

It was something that happened in the whole of Sweden (...) we weren't alone (...) but I think we were early on (...) I think we were part of a trend as well. – Daniel

All interviewees in some way mentioned principles that are in line with NPM philosophy. Thus, the existence of such thinking in the City of Malmö was strongly evident.

4.3 Key Themes

During the process of analysis several significant themes were identified as particularly relevant to answer our research question and engage in fruitful discussion. The first three themes are the result of key tensions found at the City of Malmö and lay the foundation for the fourth and main theme of identity work. Each theme is explained and evidenced below. In order to gain deep understanding a variety of examples, from different perspectives, are given to provide well-rounded material.

4.3.1 NPM or Public Good - That is the Question

An important theme highlighted during the process of analysis was the underlying reason why employees worked at the City of Malmö. While some interviewees had worked only in the public sector, others had a mixed background with experience working both publicly and privately. Moreover, while some made an active choice to join the public sector, others were attracted purely to the role and the work itself or found themselves working in the City of Malmö by chance. When asked whether they sought work specifically in the public sector, interviewees answered:

I wanted to work in the public sector (...) I readily applied [for jobs] in the public sector. I believe in the public sector and I want to work for an organisation that contributes to society whether that means working in the public sector or for a charitable organisation (...) I value organisations with societal and humane values. - Gemma

Yes, kind of actually (...) I think there are clear core values. – Helen

It was almost the opposite if I'm being honest. When I was studying I thought, that [the public sector] seems boring. – Christine

I got a call that there was an interesting job here and I was interested, but I didn't think that I wanted to work in the municipality specifically. – Ben

From the interviews undertaken, we found it evident that there were clear distinctions in the reasoning behind the choice of the City of Malmö as an employer. As shown in the examples above, two main types can be identified: those who primarily were drawn to the purpose of serving the public good, and those who were drawn to the work itself.

4.3.2 Titles Do Matter

Our findings indicate that job title is something the respondents find important. However, it was not something they clearly wanted to admit. When we asked the straightforward question: “Is title important to you?” almost all of the respondents immediately answered “No”. Despite this, it eventually became clear that titles did play a major part in their professional identity work:

It [title] is not important for me personally, but I have noticed that it can be important for others and therefore can be significant during specific co-operations. – Juliette

Juliette did not want to portray herself as someone who values titles, however emphasised that it became important in relation to others, confirming its significance. Moreover, she expressed that she would have tried to change her title if it had not represented her true professional identity. In addition, she stated that she would not have been comfortable if her title for instance referred to personnel administration rather than human resources.

Christine also stated that title was something that was not vital for her. However, she expressed some dissatisfaction with her title, saying that it was only “okay” and not entirely perfect to portray her professional identity. This implies that title is something that does in fact matter to her. Moreover, Daniel showed evidence of a similar way of thinking by saying that:

I think it [his title] is okay. It is not so important for me. I think, actually I think it should be something more strategic.

Although we found that the majority of the interviewees did not want to be perceived as obsessed by titles there were also those who directly admitted that title can in fact be of value. For instance, Fiona stated that they communicate what a person actually does and can therefore be useful. However, she would not portray herself as a “title fascist who is chasing titles”:

However, it does in fact mean something, so, mm, but it is in fact important what title you have.

Although the importance of titles varied, a pattern could be found that the interviewees found titles significant.

4.3.3 Internal and External Portrayals

Another theme identified when analysing our interview material was the tension between how the interviewees’ roles and professional identities were portrayed internally and externally. Several responses show a clear difference between the two, and ambiguity connected to the presentation of professional identities exists. For instance, when we asked how the interviewees would describe what they do for a living HR Specialist Daniel stated:

It is very difficult. Sometimes I can feel that it is (...). I can hardly explain to my child what it is that I do (...). Hmm... I think it depends on who you meet.

When answering this particular question, Daniel was very reflective and took time to think about the meaning of the question. It seems clear that he finds it difficult to describe his work to people outside the City of Malmö, thus his professional identity is of an ambiguous nature. Similar to Daniel’s response, the HR Specialist Anna talked about this difficulty, explaining:

It works, I guess it’s more when you have to explain to someone outside our organisation. When you are a part of our organisation everyone knows what the titles mean.

By this, she expressed how a role can be perceived as something different internally and externally. This further implies a need to justify the actual work tasks and areas of responsibility when talking to people outside the organisation.

Furthermore, we asked the question “How well do you think your title as _____ aligns with what you actually do?” This was found to be one of the most fruitful questions in our interview guide. It contributed some interesting responses indicating a difficulty in portraying roles and professional identities to different people. Examples of these were:

It [the HR Specialist title] could be misleading to outsiders, but it works in our organisation, as we know that a HR Specialist has this role. – Ben

If I am in contact with an [external] consultant or another company, I sometimes explain that I am sort of [names a title describing what his work tasks are]...so that they understand what I am (...). So... I am a bit indecisive in this. - Daniel

From such questions, we obtained valuable insights into how the different interviewees portray their role and perceive their professional identities. There was great variation in how they described their work, from describing their work tasks or field of knowledge, to stating their title. A common denominator for the majority of our interviewees however, was that they expressed a need to portray their roles and professional identities differently depending on whether they spoke to someone within or outside the organisation. It therefore seemed that most of the interviewees perceived a higher degree of clarity with their roles and professional identities within an internal context.

4.3.4 Professional Identity Work

The three themes presented to this point have highlighted the most central topics that were revealed through our research. The three above themes are all connected to how the participants in our study described their work and roles and thus uncovered different ways in which they worked with their professional identities in light of the HRut change process. These have therefore formed the basis of our final and predominant theme, that of professional identity work. The professional identity work theme is in our opinion the most important. This theme generated the most interesting responses; it was what the interviewees

mainly talked about and where we found the most differences and similarities between participants. We found that interviewees conducted identity work in a variety of different ways and for a variety of reasons. While some expressed that their roles and titles reflected who they are and what they do, others felt that their role and title did not adequately convey who they are as HR professionals. The following section will provide examples and descriptions of the different responses given by the interviewees. Several different ways of conducting identity work are presented.

Some of the interviewees portrayed an active type of identity work. These respondents showed content with their titles and did not evidence any desire to distance themselves from their title nor clarify what they do in practice. Rather than doing this, they expressed a need to portray themselves through the use of their titles and to promote this. Through doing so, they actively work on their identity by upholding the professional identity currently held. It thus seems as though they are comfortable in their professional identities as their new titles are perceived as a good match to these. For example, when we asked HR Consultant Gemma to describe what she does, she said:

I work as a HR Consultant (...). My mission is to provide consultative support to managers in regards to HR matters.

Furthermore, when we asked if Gemma could explain her feelings about HRut, she answered:

I have a positive approach [to HRut] (...). I think we have come far. There has been a change (...). I am positive.

We find it evident that Gemma thinks there is a clear correlation between her title and what she actually does. This is further backed up by her stating that she would not have felt as comfortable in her role if her title had included the word “administration” as this would not mirror the broadness of her work. Overall, Gemma expressed positivity towards the change process, and that HRut has been favourable to her role as HR Consultant.

HR Consultant Helen also came across as content with her new title. When asked what she would call herself if given the opportunity to choose freely, she confirmed that her current

title as HR Consultant would be most suitable, indicating that she is very satisfied with where she currently stands.

The same thing was found when interviewing the HR Manager. She also expressed contentment with her title, and if given the opportunity to choose would keep the title she has now. When talking about her new title as HR Manager as opposed to her previous role as a Strategist she expressed the view that:

If you are a Manager, you are a Manager. It entails a straightforward leadership [it is very clear] (...). Those around you know it too. To have the same responsibilities (..) but to not be [named] a 'Manager' (...) becomes more complex for others and for oneself, I experienced it in that way.

Moreover, she claimed that she would not be content with the title Personnel Manager that her role had prior to HRut since it is less appealing. Since these interviewees are pleased with their titles, it seems that they engage in active identity work, where upholding their current roles and titles are the main features.

Furthermore, a number of interviewees indicated that they work with their professional identities in a different way. Similar to the interviewees mentioned above, these respondents also took an active approach to identity work. However, as opposed to the others showed discontent with their current titles. The discontent was evident in different ways. Firstly, by longing towards a title other than the one currently held and secondly by creating a new 'ideal' role more in line with the interviewees' personal view of his/her professional identity.

An example of longing toward a new identity was found through the interview with Anna, who replied the following when we asked how she related to her current title as HR Specialist:

I think that I am quite much of a HR Strategist as well (...), but this title was already occupied by our managers. However, I think that we, as HR Specialists, also work very much with strategy. We also do many things that we are not specialists in.

Through this interview, it appears that Anna is not comfortable with her current title, and that she is more connected to the strategist title as this describes her work and competencies in a more suitable way. She is therefore focused on portraying herself as a strategist despite the title she has been given.

Ellen conducts her identity work in a similar way to Anna. She also expresses the view that she lacks the expertise implied by the specialist title:

I was hired as HR Strategist. This then changed, so that only our managers got this title, whilst the rest of us became HR Specialists, with a few exceptions. I think that HR Strategist is a better match. I cannot say that, even if I have a certain work field, I am not a specialist in that sense.

A desire to have her old title is therefore evident. However, in contrast to Anna, Ellen creates her professional identity around her sub-role as Process Manager rather than her title as HR Specialist. We therefore asked if she identifies more with the title Process Manager or HR Specialist and she answered:

Uhm, (sighs), that was an interesting question actually, it really was. Because I am a pronounced Process Manager (...). But sure a big part [of my job] is [about being] a Process Manager, so maybe a bit more Process Manager than the other role [HR Specialist]. I often introduce myself as a Process Manager [for my specific field of work].

Ellen is clearly distancing herself from her title by presenting herself through her other role. Daniel, another HR Specialist, also actively conducts such identity work and creates a new professional identity for himself. He often uses another title when explaining what he does for a living. He told us that he had discussed his discontentment with his title with his manager, however; his title was not changed as a result. Furthermore, when we asked if he thought that his title was a good representation of his daily work his answer was:

Sometimes not, because I think I am a Leadership Strategist or something like that.

Daniel is clearly engaged in identity work by distancing himself from his title as HR Specialist. He made an attempt to change his title, however with no success. Consequently, he built his professional identity around a new title that was more in line with his interpretation of his professional identity.

In contrast to the previous examples, the following respondents seem to conduct identity work in a less intense manner. They express contentment with their current titles. However, these interviewees evidenced a need to describe what their work actually entails, as their title does not sufficiently explain this. Thus, they have a need to clarify their 'practice'. An example of this can be seen during the interview with the HR Specialist Christine. When asked what she works with she replied:

I work with HR issues...and...ehhh...I usually say that I work with project management...for some reason it is easier to say that I work with project management because people can understand it in some way...so I usually say that I work with project management of different development issues within HR.

Although Christine does not seem to have an issue with her title as a HR Specialist, it appears as though it does not fully describe what she does at work. It is thus important for her to clarify what it is that she actually does rather than solely stating that she is a HR Specialist.

Fiona also feels the need to clarify what her role actually entails however; she does so by adding a specific field of competence to her existing title. She explains that:

I am keen to add "Negotiation" to my title as HR Specialist, because I think that, I feel more, I readily add that in my e-mail signature for example.

Again, Fiona does not express discontent with title as a HR Specialist however, she adds additional information in order for her role to be sufficiently clear to both herself and others.

A third example can be pinpointed in the interview with Ben. Rather than focusing solely on his title, he states that he works with:

Policy, strategy and development issues within HR.

In a similar way to Christine, he needs to explain what it is that he does, in addition to using his formal title.

Finally, the interview with the HR Administrator stood out as very different from all others and revealed yet another way of working with professional identity. Unlike for example specialists, who we understood to be very close to the HRut process, we perceived the role as HR Administrator as much closer to front-line service personnel. Although HRut meant that the administrators work with different tools, the content of their role was not greatly changed. In turn, this did not influence identity work to the same degree. HR Administrator Ingrid stated:

For me, there hasn't been a very big change [as a result of HRut] there is not a big difference in what I did before and what I do now.

Although her title changed as a result of HRut her role remains largely the same even though it is characterised in a different way. When asked to describe her work, Ingrid gave a concise answer:

I explain that I work at the City of Malmö, with personnel so to speak. Yes. It's as simple as that.

Furthermore, when asked about if her title matches what she does she stated:

It matches quite well, because I am an administrator and work within HR. So I think it matches well. Mm.

For Ingrid therefore, there does not seem to be any need to conduct identity work to the same extent as other interviewees. Throughout the interview, it was clear that she did not relate to the HRut change process in the same way as the interviewees in different roles. Most of the

answers gained from this interview were solely related to the change of IT system, and it did not seem like the HR Administrator role had been as involved in the HRut process as other roles. For example, when asked to describe what she works with, Ingrid answered that she works with personnel and administration. Furthermore, when asked if her role entailed more of a control function, she confirmed this.

The empirical material that we have presented describes and exemplifies the various responses gained through our interviews and have led to different ways of talking about and working with professional identities. We will now turn to our discussion where the findings from our empirical material is analysed more in-depth and connected to the relevant theories from chapter three. In this coming chapter, the different ways of working with professional identity are further conceptualised.

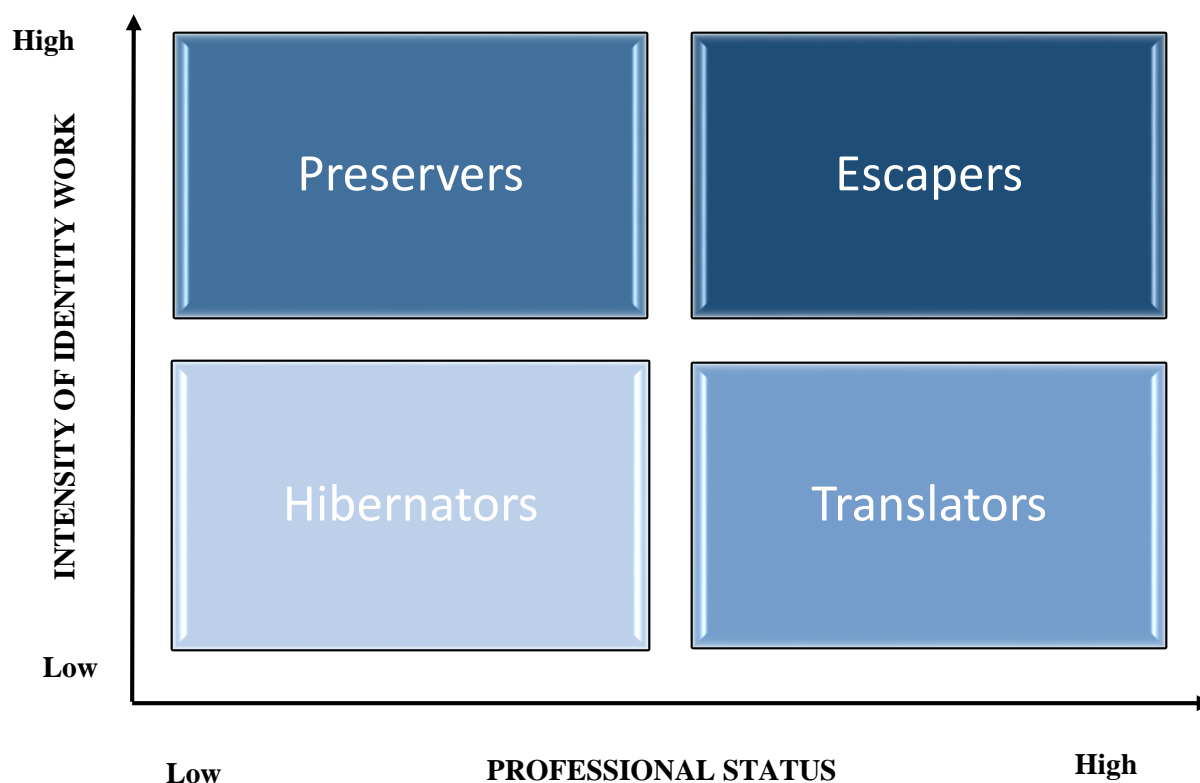
5. What We Say - A Discussion

In this chapter the empirical material generated is discussed through our theoretical lens and connected to the theory outlined in chapter three. An identity work matrix is presented and explained and our empirical material is analysed through it. Our main findings are accounted for and elaborated on. Additionally, the broader applicability of the identity work matrix is presented. Finally, suggestions for further research are provided.

5.1 The Post Change Professional Identity Work Matrix

In our empirical chapter, we described and exemplified different types of identity work found present at the City of Malmö after the HRut change process. In this chapter the different types have been placed in four distinct categories and have been given names describing the way in which identity work is conducted: Identity work as 1)'Upholding', 2)'Distancing', 3)'Clarifying' and 4)'Resting'. Each of the four types have then been exemplified by the use of a metaphor. Alvesson (2010) writes that metaphors act as platforms from which to develop thinking about empirical material. We have therefore used metaphors to facilitate understanding. These metaphors have further formed the basis for the creation of our two by two matrix displaying identity work in relation to professional identity as a result of change.

The matrix, as presented below, maps out the four distinct types of identity work and is rooted in two axes. The horizontal axis represents an employee's professional status under scrutiny, and the vertical axis represents the intensity of identity work undertaken. Both axes range from high to low. For the purpose of our case study the two axes have also been attributed with more specific denominators relevant to our study. For example, in our case, identity work refers specifically to that surrounding titles however; if applied to other organisations identity work could take other forms. The two axes and the thought behind these are further explained in the following paragraphs. Additionally, at the end of this chapter, we elaborate on the matrix' applicability across different organisations going through change processes similar to the one studied in our case study. Through this we aim to show the broader usability of our model.



The horizontal axis shows the respondents' professional status ranging from low to high. When developing the horizontal axis, we found that several factors influence whether one employee has a higher or a lower professional status in relation to another. In our opinion, and evidenced through our empirical material, position in the organisational hierarchy is the predominant factor influencing the professional status of the respondents. In our study, participants that are part of the Strategic HR Department are placed on the right side of the matrix where the professional status in the organisation is described as high. These are closer to the decision-making organs, have greater influence on the change process and a higher degree of organisational power. Interviewees that are members of a specific administrative office and therefore are closer to front-line services on the other hand, are placed on the left where professional status in the organisation is described as low in comparison. With this being said, it must be highlighted that the horizontal axis ought to be seen as a continuum. As such, the interviewees have high or low professional status in the organisation to varying degrees and have been placed in the high or low category depending on where they most accurately fit. Therefore, further distinction within the high or low professional status can be made through the use of factors such as work experience and length of employment. For example, we suggest that even though the HR Specialists hold the same title and hierarchical position, their professional status can differ internally based on for instance their experience.

The vertical axis of the matrix demonstrates the intensity of the identity work that the respondents are undertaking. This axis was developed based on the perceived concentration of identity work, which differed between the respondents in our study. Our empirical material revealed that whilst some interviewees actively worked to change their new roles in line with their 'ideal' professional identities, others were indifferent to the change and therefore did not have the same need to do intense identity work. Hence, intense identity work represents respondents who actively work with their professional identities through various approaches. Identity work in our specific case study mainly focuses on adaption to new titles since all interviewees were given new titles as a result of the HRut change process. Reasons for intense identity work could for instance be due to a mismatch between new titles and current identity or the need to actively sustain and uphold a current title. Comparatively, less intense identity work signifies the respondents who do not show the need to work actively with their professional identities to the same extent as the others. For instance, their titles are a good match to their professional identities and therefore do not require intense work. This axis should also be seen as a continuum. Respondents therefore, can perform identity work more or less intensely even when placed in the same category.

Having outlined the axes, it is important to discuss each individual box in our matrix. The Escaper, Translator, Preserver and Hibernator categories are discussed clockwise in turn and the respondents placed into each group are highlighted. After this, general points of discussion regarding the matrix are turned to. The axes of the matrix represent continua and the four boxes should be seen as 'ideal types'. "An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view" in which concrete phenomena are organised "into a unified analytical construct" (Weber, 1949, p. 90). As such, each box within our matrix highlights particular characteristics common to most employees placed within the box. Weber (1949) emphasises that 'ideal types' do not refer to something perfect and they do not exist in their extreme forms in practice. They amount to tools used in determining similarities and differences between phenomena. There are varieties within each box, however clear characteristics for each box exist, separating the four. In our matrix, each participant is categorised within one particular box, an 'ideal type' and therefore does not straddle them. However, since the axes are continua, if all interviewees were to be pinpointed within the boxes, respondents would be placed in different spots within their respective box.

5.1.1 Identity Work as Upholding - The Preservers

The group of employees who, in our empirical chapter, expressed contentment and a wish to promote and uphold their current titles are categorised as performing ‘identity work as upholding’. These respondents are named ‘Preservers’ in the matrix. Those who conduct their identity work as Preservers are located in the top left corner of the matrix, thus at the lower end of the professional status axis and at the higher end of the intensity of identity work axis. Preservers therefore represent employees who are closer to front-line services in the organisation, and who actively engage in identity work in relation to maintaining their titles. Three of the interviewees from our case study have been placed within this category. They hold the titles ‘HR Consultant’ and ‘HR Manager’. These employees are not part of the central decision-making organ of the organisation, and have therefore not been as close to the design of HRut as those working in the Strategic HR Department.

The main feature found in relation to Preservers is that they actively undertake identity work in order to maintain and uphold a title and professional identity that they are pleased with. Alvesson & Willmott (2002) state that much organisational activity is concerned with active identity work conducted as a reaction to uncertainty in one’s identity. They state that identity work can be undertaken through “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (2002, p. 9). In our opinion, Preservers can be seen engaging in active identity work consisting of a combination of maintaining and strengthening their existing identities that they are content with. Using the Preserver metaphor was therefore very natural in order to portray their main characteristics in an easily understandable manner. To ‘preserve’ stems from the expression to “keep safe from harm”. A person who works as a Preserver thus strives to maintain things of historical or social value in its existing condition (Oxford Dictionaries ‘preserve’, n.d.). In the same way that a historical Preserver finds something of value that strengthens a city’s identity, Preservers within identity work find their title of value and as contributing towards a positive professional identity that they want to sustain. Consequently, hard work is required to keep the professional identity that they feel comfortable and content with.

We have identified certain distinct characteristics common to those who perform this type of identity work. We have found that Preservers are content with their work titles. They do not wish to change their title in any way, and like portraying themselves using their current title.

Therefore, they work actively in order to uphold this title as they find that it matches their professional identity well. Furthermore, a common denominator to the employees who came across as Preservers in our particular case study is that as a result of the change process they all received titles that were perceived as better. Their titles were 'upgraded' from administrative ones focusing on personnel, to more strategic ones such as 'Consultant' or 'Manager'. We find it interesting to note that the new titles introduced through HRut are traditionally associated with those found within the private sector. In our view, one reason behind this may be to strengthen the image of NPM-thinking both within and outside the organisation. Within the organisation, such business-oriented titles may be used as a good signifier that a change has taken place and as a result, employees are expected to behave differently. In our opinion however, this may result in difficulties when working with external parties. In fact, several interviewees stated that confusion had arisen when collaborating with external parties who thought that those labelled HR Consultants had been brought in as third party consultants from the private sector to assist and contribute to decision-making. In light of this, we argue that the new titles given to employees are not optimal however; this discussion is elaborated on in later sections of this chapter.

Alvesson et al. (2008) describe how managers can attempt to regulate and control employee's professional identities to match 'ideal' organisational identities and discourses. This can be done for instance through corporate training programs. We argue that this can also be the case with the introduction of new titles, and can be seen as a form of managerial identity control. In light of this, we argue that the new titles introduced by management through HRut at the City of Malmö can be seen as a way of shaping employees into becoming more strategic in their HR work as these titles imply more than merely 'administration' and 'personnel'. This can again be seen as part of the current trend of public organisations becoming more business-oriented and modern. This is however found positive for Preservers who seem to prefer their new titles to those their roles previously held. For instance, the consultants explained that the previous title of their role was 'Personnel Secretary'. We suggest that the managers who have implemented the consultant title have done so because the notion of 'Consultant' is normally associated with more responsibility and strategic thinking than that of 'Secretary'. Even though this is done purposefully by top management in order to move 'with PA to HR' and these employees are required to act differently, the affected employees still express contentment. We argue that it is a natural reaction to see this as positive and prefer the new title over the old since the title 'Consultant' has a higher status and is more recognised, both

internally and externally. Additionally, we assert that titles such as ‘Consultant’ are very timely in a contemporary organisational context, and they therefore seem more modern and relevant. We therefore suggest that the new titles given to these employees can be a way of portraying that the City of Malmö are ‘up to date’ in their thinking.

The majority of the Preservers found in our case were relatively new to the organisation and entered after the initiation of the HRut change process. As explained by Ibarra (1999), professional identity is found to be more adaptable early on in people’s careers. Given that many of the Preservers in our study are organisational ‘youngsters’ and their professional identities have been diagnosed as adaptable, our case study confirms this theory. However, we argue that this point ought not be limited to length of career, but could also be developed to include the length of presence in one particular organisation. The fact that people are newer to the organisation makes it easier for them to adjust their professional identities according to the roles given rather than vice versa. Based on this, we therefore argue that it is easier for Preservers to feel content in regards to their titles than it would be for instance for Escapers who have worked in the same organisation for many years.

As our specific case study is set within the public sector context, the mindset of those within the different boxes of the matrix has also been found of interest, and closely related to the professional status axis. All of the interviewees named Preservers in our study worked with HR at a specific administrative office, and were thus closer to the front-line public services than those working in the central HR department for the entire organisation. Being closer to the front-line service, we argue that Preservers are also more closely connected to the core purpose of the organisation, serving the public good. According to Van Bockel & Nordegraaf (2006), the main purpose of public organisations is to protect the public good and prioritise this in their work. When defining and creating our matrix, we identified that Preservers also have a common denominator in that they emphasise the purpose of the organisation. The interviewees that fell within this category were concerned with preserving the idea of the ‘greater good’ in their work. Hence, the notion of the deeper meaning is something that is a large part of a Preserver’s professional identity, which they work actively to uphold. In relation to this, it is further argued that there is a trend amongst contemporary public sector workers to focus more on individual aims rather than the purpose of serving the public good (Van Bockel & Nordegraaf, 2006). Contrary to this, we find that those conducting identity work as Preservers in fact manage to balance individual aims and serving the public good

without one being done at the expense of the other. The original purpose of their work is preserved, evidenced by their passion for organisational values, whilst they also appreciate and preserve their titles, which enhance their portrayed professional identities.

5.1.2 Identity Work as Distancing - The Escapers

The respondents who showed discontent with their current titles, and thus worked on this through longing for or creating a new and more desired professional identity for themselves are categorised as conducting ‘identity work as distancing’. In general, these interviewees showed an uncertainty in regards to their professional identities and clearly wished for a different title in order to feel more comfortable in their role. These respondents have been described using the metaphor ‘Escapers’ and are placed in top right box of the matrix. The Escaper metaphor is used since such employees have a need to distance themselves and escape from the unsatisfactory titles bestowed upon them as a result of HRut. These interviewees have both high professional status in the organisation and conduct identity work of high intensity and are therefore placed in the high/high corner of the matrix. The three participants placed into this category all work in the Strategic HR Department and are titled HR Specialists. Their specialisations vary however; these are not included in their formal titles. These interviewees can all be said to have been close to the decision-making organ that developed and implemented HRut. As evidenced in the empirical chapter, the specialists conducting this type of identity work come across as discontent with their titles.

The Escaper metaphor calls for an explanation. According to the Oxford Dictionary to ‘escape’ is to “break free from confinement or control” (Oxford Dictionaries ‘escape’, n.d.). We use this metaphor to illustrate that the interviewees placed into this category want to break free from their unsatisfactory title; hence, they conduct identity work as distancing. The titles implemented through HRut can be seen as a type of managerial control attempting to regulate the professional identities of the employees (Alvesson et. al, 2008). It is important to highlight that we do not wish to suggest that these employees show weakness and do not take responsibility for their work tasks. Rather, we use the ‘escape’ metaphor to show their strength in trying to break free from the identity cages (Alvesson et. al, 2008) which they have been placed in by HRut decision-makers. As a cause of the change process, we observe that Escapers express discontent with their titles. In order to compensate for the sense of being restrained and limited by set frames associated with their title, we find that Escapers therefore build new professional identities of their own. We suggest that by using other discourses

when portraying themselves, they manage to stay strong within their roles and professional identities despite their official titles.

Escapers are similar in a number of ways. As explained in the empirical chapter all of the specialists placed in this category show high alignment with NPM-thinking. This allows us to draw the conclusion that there is a correlation between professional status and mindset. Interviewees all evidenced an awareness and acceptance of NPM-thinking and recognised that the HRut change process was implemented as a result of the need to reform the HR function to become more integrated and strategic in its nature, and in order for the function to be more effective and professional. This is perhaps not surprising, since these specialists were close to the management team and had a greater possibility to influence the change process during its development. We therefore find Escapers to be in a very different position from the types on the opposite side of the matrix, Preservers and Hibernators, who evidence a smaller amount of alignment with NPM. Alignment with NPM-thinking therefore differs between the professional specialists in the Strategic HR Department and the front-line generalists working with HR at individual administrative offices. We argue that the professional status held by Escapers requires a closer connection to such a mindset in order to be able to drive an organisation forward and move along with current trends. We suggest that this is more essential to a central HR function whose role is to serve the organisation and contribute to its effectiveness.

These HR workers are also similar in regards to the fact that they have all been employed at the City of Malmö for a considerable amount of time and are nearing the later stages of their careers. Since professional identity is more adaptable early on in one's working life (Ibarra, 1999) we suggest that prior to HRut the professional identities of these workers were relatively stable and secure. Being employees with long experience within the City of Malmö, we argue that Escapers have established a significantly stronger professional identity core over their years as employees in the same organisation. Dunne (1996) argues that a stable core is hard to shake and our case confirms this theory. In fact, we argue that Escapers conduct identity work with greater intensity because the strength of their professional identity core leads to a more potent need to cling on to their core. Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) write that general transitions and specific events are likely to initiate identity work. In line with this, we argue that HRut amounts to such a transition and this instigated the identity work evidenced by Escapers. In our opinion therefore, identity work was necessary for these

respondents in order for them to feel more comfortable with their title and role at work. In line with Alvesson & Lundholm (2014) the misalignment between 'who they are' and 'what they do' has led to increased identity work. Actively creating new titles or ways of expressing their work reality in line with the more stable core of their professional identities is therefore a way of staying strong in the game and attempting to better relate who they are and what they do.

An additional similarity is found in the fact that these interviewees have been employed at the City of Malmö since before the implementation of HRut. These respondents may therefore have a greater understanding of the impact of the change process and the effect it has had on their roles and titles. Employees who are newer to the organisation are less likely to complain about their titles if they have nothing to compare it to. Escapers on the other hand, were at times hired as for example HR Strategists. Being renamed therefore may be particularly sensitive for these employees as they may regard their new title as a demotion of sorts. In light of this, conducting identity work and constructing a new professional identity may be more of an emotional process than for others.

It is also interesting to highlight that Escapers were the only interviewees who suggested that they had discussed their new titles with top management. Marks & Thompson (2010) argue that individuals have an essence of self and the goal of identity work is to hold on to that self. We argue therefore that Escapers were willing to show discontent and resistance to the titles to a greater degree than other employees because their professional identities have a relatively strong core. If the essence of one's professional identity is strong, we argue that the incentive and need to hold on to that essence is greater. Furthermore, we suggest that the security held by these individuals because of the strength of this core makes it easier for them to show resistance and dissatisfaction. The likelihood of their professional status being compromised therefore is decreased by the unspoken power they hold.

Alvesson & Willmott (2002) argue that identity work can be a way to facilitate and increase organisational control. Management are able to limit the identities available to employees using discourse and titles for example and this in turn prompts identity work in employees. Our case confirms this theory as this type of identity control can be said to exist particularly in regards to Escapers who long for a different title. Escapers are evidently discontent and explain that top management occupy the titles they desire. Since the interviewees state that conversations with top management regarding titles failed to lead anywhere we suggest that to

some extent, HR Specialists are being held in identity cages (Alvesson et. al, 2008). The exact reasons for this are unclear however, possible explanations could be that management want to keep the HR Strategist title for themselves and ensure that HR Specialists know their place in the organisational hierarchy. Strategists may also want to avoid the tension that could arise if some HR Specialists are renamed strategists while others are not thereby creating a hierarchy within the role. Although not all specialists were discontent with their titles, the possible existence of identity cages remains. The titles and therefore the identities provided by top management may be perceived as positive by subordinates (Alvesson et. al, 2008) meaning that employees may be unaware that they are being held in set frames.

5.1.3 Identity Work as Clarifying - The Translators

The interviewees who, in our empirical chapter, show content and also have a need to specify their role have been identified as conducting 'identity work as clarifying'. In further development of this category, they have been given the metaphor 'Translators' and are located to the bottom right of the matrix. These interviewees' identity work is of less intense nature and they have high professional status. In our opinion, Translators do not conduct identity work to the same extent as the others since there is no need to actively distance themselves from nor change their titles, only to clarify them. Their current titles represent their professional identities well, however they often have a need to supplement them with specific skills or work tasks. To 'translate' is to "express the sense of (words or text) into another language" (Oxford Dictionaries 'translate', n.d.). This metaphor was considered appropriate for this category therefore, since Translators need to decipher their titles and give a more accurate sense of what is meant by them by adding a twist, to facilitate understanding.

In our specific case study all the respondents identified as Translators are HR Specialists and work in the Strategic HR Department. They were all content with their titles as HR Specialists and used them when they explained what they do for a living. However, as explained in the empirical chapter, the main denominator in their responses was that they all clarified their HR Specialist titles by adding something to it. When further analysing our empirical material, additional similarities were found. These are outlined below.

Similar to Escapers, Translators show evidence of a high degree of NPM-thinking. They all explain the HRut process in line with NPM principles and emphasise characteristics that correlate with this philosophy. Again, similar to Escapers, we argue that this is due to the fact

that these employees are part of the Strategic HR Department and are therefore closer to the decision-making organ that has evidenced a higher degree of 'business-orientation'. A higher level of 'business-thinking' than for example Preservers and Hibernators is also evidenced by the underlying work motive of the HR Specialists in this box. All respondents within this box indicated that they were drawn to the City of Malmö due to the work tasks rather than the core mission of the public sector; serving the public good. This verifies that employees on different levels have different objectives and missions. The objective of Translators is to proactively work with strategic HR issues and facilitate work for those beneath them. They are not as close to the front-line services as Hibernators for instance. A reason for the difference in mindset could therefore be the nature of their work tasks.

The respondents placed in this box have not worked at the City of Malmö for long. They became a part of the organisation when the change process was already underway and therefore never experienced the organisation 'pre change'. Although the Translators in this case are not young in age, compared to others in their department they are relatively young to the organisation. This could in turn be associated with the fact that they do not actively protest against their titles as, for instance the Escapers do. They are still working on finding their role in the organisation and do not possess enough 'unspoken power' to freely express discontent. Instead, they express contentment and only passively adjust their titles. As noted earlier in the discussion, Ibarra (1999) argues that it is easier to change and adapt one's professional identity early in one's career and that more experience means a more stable professional identity. We agree, yet want to develop this argument further. Our empirical material indicates that employees who are young to the organisation have a more adaptable professional identity in comparison with employees who have worked in the same organisation for a longer period. In our opinion, the theory is thus not only true for employees who are young in their career in general but also for employees who are new and therefore young to an organisation. This can be connected to the writing of Handley et al. (2007) who state that evolving from a 'newcomer' to an 'oldtimer' has an effect on individuals' identities. In line with this, we suggest that once Translators have transitioned into 'oldtimers' their professional identity may be different and more similar to that of Escapers for example. With the above arguments, we do not suggest that the professional identities of employees are adaptable to the same extent as when new to working life when joining a new organisation. However, we do argue that their professional identity is more easily shaped during this period.

Furthermore, we suggest that this type of identity work can be an undeclared way of controlling identity work. Alvesson et al. (2008) explain how managers can restrain employees' identity work by creating set frames for, for instance, titles. However, we argue that, in the case of Translators, the organisational climate can also be a way of controlling identity work. In this case the managers *per se* do not restrain employees' identity work, rather the unspoken hierarchy that is present does. Although Translators in fact are on the same hierarchical level as Escapers, they have not entered the same comfort zone nor built the same degree of power that gives them the mandate to express dissatisfaction. Thus, we argue that the unspoken organisational hierarchy is a way of controlling identity work in this case evidenced by Translators performing lower degrees of identity work compared to Escapers.

Before moving on to a discussion of the fourth and final box, a general comment regarding all three of the matrix boxes above must be highlighted. The respondents in these boxes can all be described as knowledge workers. Knowledge workers are characterised as workers performing non-routine tasks that demand high intellectual skills (Alvesson, 2009). Out of the three, Escapers and Translators in particular can be characterised as such since high autonomy and a problem-solving focus are central for their specific roles. As seen in the literature review, Alvesson (2009) argues that identity work for these types of employees is greater as a result of the ambiguous nature of their work. Our case study confirms this theory. Moreover, the literature review highlighted the theory of Alvesson & Lundholm (2014) who write that the HR occupation in general is characterised by a considerable amount of ambiguity. In our case, this is in part evidenced by the interviewees who expressed that the optimal titles for employees in the HR occupation in general were yet to be found. Thus, we suggest that the nature of the HR occupation and its standing in contemporary organisations contributes to the levels of identity work undertaken by those described in study.

5.1.4 Identity Work as Resting - The Hibernators

Only one interviewee evidenced indifference to the change and has therefore been categorised as performing 'identity work as resting'. Employees that fall within this box are named 'Hibernators' and are placed in the bottom left corner of the matrix. Their identity work is not as directly influenced by the change process and therefore they do not conduct identity work as noticeably as the others. They are placed in the corner distinguished by low professional status in comparison to the others and their identity work is evidently less intense. Given that the matrix' axes are demonstrated as continua, Hibernators are placed at the lowest ends of

both in relation to the other boxes. In accordance with the definition of ‘hibernation’ the Hibernator metaphor represents those who remain “in inactive or dormant states during extended periods of time” (Oxford Dictionaries ‘hibernation’, n.d.). They remain in this state until they experience a strong need to act. Thus, in our matrix the Hibernators’ dormant state is represented by their inactive identity work. They stay in this frame of mind until something within their specific role radically changes and jolts them awake. As evidenced in our case, the title change was not sufficient to awaken the Hibernators and therefore, something more than a change of this kind is needed to spring these workers into identity work action.

In our opinion, there are several reasons why Hibernators do not conduct identity work to the same extent as the others. Primarily, Hibernators are not directly influenced by the change process in the same way as other respondents. This is evidenced by the fact that they do not indicate that they contemplate the effects of HRut to any greater degree nor do they, in our opinion, reflect upon the titles they were given. Hibernators have a lower professional status in relation to others, and their work tasks are mainly of a technical and administrative nature. Therefore, their role does not require the same strategic mindset as those placed within other boxes. Consequently, their focus is on operating and solving practical issues, which are present independently of the strategic direction of the organisation. Thus, the change process undergone in the City of Malmö did not affect their specific work tasks. Rather, it only affected the Hibernators in the sense that their main work tool, the IT system, was changed. Their mindset was therefore in no need for transformation but rather, could continue as usual. Hence, the change was not of major importance to their specific professional role, and therefore did not require active identity work. Although, as for everyone else, their title was changed, it did not seem to influence how they identified with it. It seems as if the Hibernators do what they are supposed to do, and the title they have is of minor importance.

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), argue that identity work accelerates when undergoing major transitions. In our case however, even though the all-embracing change process, HRut, had an effect on every HR employee, it did not influence the Hibernators to the extent that they currently need to work with their identities. Thus, as we can see it, Hibernators are relatively undisturbed by the introduction of NPM principles through the HRut change process. Alvesson & Willmott (2002) state that identity work is about reforming, maintaining, amending or repairing ones current identity. Compared to the others, Hibernators show no need for this ongoing mental activity since they seem to be rather indifferent when talking

about the change process. We can therefore draw the conclusion that more intense forms of identity work as a result of major change is dependent on for example, hierarchical position and professional status. Although Sveningsson & Alvesson's (2003) argument rings true for other interviewees, in this specific case identity work did not increase as a result of the change.

We argue that Hibernators can be seen as having a more stable professional identity core than the other identity work types (Marks & Thompson, 2010). This can be connected to the fact that their work tasks are not as ambiguous as those of other HR employees' participating in the study. Their role in the organisation is relatively clear and thus makes it easier to answer the question 'who am I' in this organisation. In this sense, we argue that Hibernators are not knowledge workers. Knowledge work demands high degree of intellectual skills and problem-solving focus is vital (Alvesson, 2009). Compared to the others, Hibernators' work is thus not characterised in line with this. Consequently, identity work in general is not needed to the same extent. Additionally, there appears to be a clear correlation between what they do and who they are, which Alvesson and Lundholm (2014) argue diminishes the need for identity work. Hence, the distinctiveness of their work tasks are well aligned with their professional identity and reduce the intensity of the identity work. Furthermore, as mentioned above, HRut resulted in a title change for Hibernators. Yet, it did not require any new skills, attitudes, behaviours and patterns of interactions, which is often a consequence of this (Ibarra, 1999). Additionally, no further considerations or reflections concerning titles were expressed. In our opinion, this strengthens the fact that the Hibernators are almost unconcerned about the change and have no current need to actively undertake any identity work.

In light of the above discussion, it ought to be noted that we do not wish to argue that Hibernators do not conduct any identity work at all since we believe that individuals to some extent constantly undertake identity work and only parts of a professional identity are ever truly stable. Nevertheless, we do reason that the HRut change process did not influence the Hibernators to the extent that active and intense identity work was underway at the time of our study. A possible explanation could be that their core identity is stronger or larger than other interviewees. We argue that a greater change that would have for example, altered the work tasks more significantly or would have required a more radical change of mindset in relation to their work role may have rocked the essence of the Hibernators identity, thus creating the need for identity work. Presently, these employees can in our opinion not be

classified as knowledge workers, which reduces, if not discards, the need for identity work in general.

5.2 Looking Beyond the Boxes

In light of the matrix outlined above, some general points must be made. It is important to highlight that classification into each of the four boxes in the matrix is not necessarily permanent. Furthermore, the intensity of the identity work presented is likely to change over time. As a result, those categorised as Preservers for example may not feel the need to uphold and protect their professional identity to the same degree once the new ‘work reality’ introduced by the change process has been fully established.

As has been seen in the discussion regarding the four types of identity work, several factors influence where in the matrix an individual is placed. It is therefore possible to move from one box to another as a result of changed circumstances. For example, it has been shown that Escapers as a general rule have more experience within their role than Translators, which is why we argue that they feel comfortable expressing discontent. It is possible therefore that had a change been initiated when Translators had been more established in their roles, they too would have shown discontent more clearly and had attempted to escape from their identity in order to create a new, more appropriate one. Similarly, Translators were commonly relatively new to the City of Malmö and began work only after the HRut change process had begun. Therefore, they had nothing to compare their new title and role to. Had they worked at the City of Malmö for longer however, it is again possible that they had conducted identity work as distancing and been classified Escapers.

5.3 Professional Identity - Both Stable and Fluid

It is evident through the four metaphors that professional identity can be stable and fluid simultaneously as previously argued by Dunne (1996). The answers given by the respondents all indicate an established professional identity core that they want to hold on to. When this core is threatened due to external pressure, in this case an organisational transition resulting in changed titles, professional identity develops. However, our case study shows a more nuanced reality. We suggest there is a great difference in the extent to which the four matrix types have stable versus fluid professional identities. For example, Escapers indicate a strong and stable core, which is not easily modified. When their new title failed to align with their professional identity, they objected and tried to change it. Translators on the other hand, show proof of a

more changeable and fluid professional identity. They adapt their identity to their new title instead of the other way around. Nevertheless, a core professional identity of some sort has proven to be ever present. Thus, we argue that professional identity is continuously developed as opposed to renewed and that various factors such as length of employment within a particular organisation, affect the extent to which professional identity is influenced.

In general, there is a clear distinction between roles and identity; the former referring to external attributes such as titles, and the latter referring to the subjectivity of “who one is”. We therefore agree with Alvesson’s (2009) reasoning, however; evidence indicates that there are major differences in the degree of distinction between the two. Some types within the matrix show a clear need to separate professional role from identity whereas others do not. Hibernators for instance, do not signify any misalignment between their role and identity and do therefore not separate the two to the same degree as for example Escapers. Escapers clearly separate the two by having a certain role and title but identify themselves with something else. They are trapped in the identity cage created by the managers, and do not feel alignment between the given title and their true professional identity.

5.4 Bringing Business to Town

NPM has served as a major discourse and contextual backdrop for our research and the analysis of our findings. Through the interviews undertaken in our study, the NPM discourse has proven evident at the City of Malmö through statements related to questions about the purpose of the HRut process. The discourse surrounding NPM, with its many agreed upon characteristics such as accountability, strategic planning and increased use of IT (Greuning, 2001), therefore can be seen as consistent. Thus, we claim that NPM principles have undoubtedly played their role before, during and after the change process. Due to the strong presence of this particular discourse, we maintain this claim despite the fact that none of the interviewees used the specific label of NPM in describing these reasons and features. In light of this, we argue that, seen on an organisational level, the City of Malmö has moved from ‘old’ public management to NPM. This transformation has been done through the HRut process, and is found evident through a strong focus on factors such as effectivisation, cost savings and increased efficiency throughout the organisation (Almqvist & Wällstedt, 2013).

In our opinion, the City of Malmö has not only implemented what is traditionally known as NPM principles. In fact, we suggest that they have developed NPM as it is traditionally

known and extended it to include other and more contemporary aspects for their particular organisation. Examples include, a strong focus on the HR function as a strategic partner within the organisation and the introduction of titles traditionally associated with the private sector into the public sphere. It can thus be argued that they have taken NPM a step further. Our empirical material also implies that the City of Malmö was among the first public organisations in Sweden to undergo a change process of this kind. In light of this, we believe that they now feel a need to constantly be ahead of the game and keep up with external changes.

It is interesting to bring up the underlying reasoning behind the decision to rename the titles. While some interviewees stated that the new titles were the result of discussions within the City of Malmö, others believed that external consultants had played a significant part in the decision to implement more business-oriented titles. Irrespective of who made the ultimate decision in our opinion, the titles were applied to further strengthen the image that the City of Malmö has become more business-oriented. Given the apparent confusion surrounding the titles however, evidenced through the need for identity work, it may be questioned whether the titles amount to window dressing and fashion. Several interviewees stated that change was important however failed to specifically explain why this was necessary at the City of Malmö in particular. Moreover, some interviewees questioned the need for new titles, expressing that their mission remained the same irrespective of title. Therefore, we suggest that the current climate of grandiosity which Alvesson (2013) explains as the need to enhance status through more positive sounding titles, influenced and encouraged change. In our case, the new titles may have been introduced to portray a modern and more business-related mindset, both internally and externally however, when examined closely seem to lack substance.

Furthermore, we find it important to discuss the NPM discourse in relation to the two different parts of the organisation that have been under scrutiny. Based on the analysis undertaken, we identify a clear discourse difference between the central Strategic HR Department and the HR departments at the administrative offices specialised toward different public services. Thus, the connections to either old or new public management differ. Based on our empirical findings, we argue that HR practitioners at the administrative offices are generally closer to the old public management, whilst those working at the central HR department are closer to the notions of NPM. We believe that the reason for this is that the workers at the administrative offices are closer to the public services themselves and therefore

closer to the original purpose of serving the public good. Thus, it becomes natural for HR employees at this level to hold on to certain parts of the old public management ethos in order to ensure that the larger purpose is kept central.

The HR employees at the central department on the other hand, are further away from the services as such and therefore more easily embrace NPM. This is not to say that these employees do not care about the purpose of public organisations, only that they do not work so closely with public services as others on a daily basis. Their work therefore is more in line with what HR practitioners at other large organisations do. Hence, we argue that HR practitioners at the central department do not differ much from those in similar positions within the private sector. We suggest that this can have both negative and positive effects on the organisation. On one hand, it can create a larger gap between the central HR function and administrative offices, which can work against the intention behind HRut of gathering the employees around similar work philosophies. On the other hand, it can be seen as positive that the two parts of the organisation deal with the two different requirements laid on the public sector. They are concerned both with the public good but also have a justifiable and modern way of running the organisation. Despite the possible negative effect of creating a gap, we argue that the different mindsets strengthen the organisation and create a good balance ultimately making the organisation more productive.

5.5 Broader Usability of Model

In order to highlight the value of our identity work matrix, its broader applicability will now be turned to. As mentioned in the introduction to the matrix given in the early pages of this chapter, the ‘intensity of identity work’ axis of the matrix can take a variety of different forms. In our case study, identity work surrounding titles was particularly relevant and therefore was determined as most appropriate for our study. In other organisations however, identity work may take different forms in which case the axis ought to be adapted to suit the specific organisation. Given that the ‘intensity of identity work’ axis is relatively open, an adaptation, or rather specification, of this kind is entirely possible. Moreover, although in our case the organisation studied was going through a general transition, the model could also be used to examine the identity work of employees working in an organisation during or after a time of crises or other significant event (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

Although our case study is set in a public sector context, in our opinion the matrix can be used to explore the identity work of employees in any number of organisations that have undergone a change process. As mentioned previously, the public sector provides a backdrop for the study, yet given that the matrix itself is not limited to the public sector, it can also be used in other sectors. The dominant prerequisite being that the organisation has undergone a change process. Evidently, in order for the matrix to be applicable it is also important that various hierarchical levels are found within the specific object of study to ensure that a variety of organisational roles can be identified. Moreover, it is important that the implemented change within the particular organisation has affected the majority of the workforce in order for the matrix to be used as a suitable tool for examining the different types of identity work undertaken by employees. With the aforementioned limitations in mind, we argue that the matrix we have presented is a highly usable and adequate tool for the greater research community with an interest in exploring identity work post change processes.

Although our thesis has mainly sought to contribute to identity theory as opposed to solving a practical organisational problem, we have also reflected over possible practical implications for managers in the organisational context. A change process like the one seen in the City of Malmö through HRut affects an organisation and its employees in many different ways. Managers therefore need to be proactive in light of such changes in order for the change to be implemented and stabilised as efficiently as possible. Good organisational communication is often emphasised as crucial in order to be successful in change processes, however; we find that less focus is placed on how managers should approach and deal with individuals' professional identity work intensified by change. We thus argue that managers need to consider this carefully, and that our post change professional identity work matrix can be a way of facilitating understanding and awareness about this amongst managers. Through our matrix, we believe that managers can be able to map out the reactions of their employees post change through placing them within the different boxes. This could be based on for instance appraisal talks revealing their professional identity work characteristics through the way they talk about their new roles. In turn, we assert that managers expressing awareness and care about this could possibly lead to a decrease in resistance towards the incurred change.

Furthermore, the matrix can possibly lead managers to valuable information about which employees to put most focus on post change. For example, it could be beneficial to give Escapers more attention since they are discontent and are also likely to have a greater

organisational influence due to their experience. It could therefore be recommended that they are given the opportunity to speak their minds and are involved in the process as much as possible. Preservers on the other hand, could be given less attention by managers and simply monitoring this group would be sufficient as they are content with their new roles. Conclusively, we argue that the proposed matrix could be a useful tool in order for managers to become more aware of their employees post change professional identity work and thus create a basis for development of strategies to work with these different employee types. The specific strategies however are believed to differ between organisations and therefore only some general examples are suggested here in order to exemplify the practical implications of our model.

5.6 Further Research

Throughout the research process and in light of our main findings, other interesting thoughts have arisen. These form the basis for the following suggestions for further research. Our case study was conducted solely after the change process' implementation and did not last for a longer period. It would therefore, be interesting to conduct a longer and more extensive case study, following participants prior to, during and after the change process. This would have allowed for deeper understanding of how their identity work has developed during the entire process. For example, it could be interesting to investigate the further development of the four types of identity work conducted by the different individuals. For instance, what happens to a Preserver in a five-year period after a change? Have they become another type or do they work with identity in new and unexplored ways? In light of this, there is potential for the matrix to be further developed.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative case study in order to exemplify the matrix' broader applicability. Such a study could have considered change processes in two different organisations. For instance, a comparison between two seemingly similar public organisations or between the public and the private sectors would have been possible to provide more nuanced insights. With the suggested practical implications of our study in mind, it could also be of interest for future researchers to look at how managers could use the matrix in order to develop strategies to work with the different types of professional identity work. This could possibly include exploring specific strategies used by managers in organisations post change.

6. Tying Up the Ends - A Conclusion

This chapter starts by reflexively looking back on our research process as a whole. After this, we provide a short summary of our study. Subsequently, the main findings revealed through our empirical material and discussion in previous chapters are identified and tied together looking back at the presented literature. Additionally, the academic contribution offered by our study is presented.

6.1 A Reflexive Look Back

When now concluding our research process, we find it valuable to look back on our study with a reflexive view and evaluate the project as a whole. Considering the qualitative and interpretive nature of our study, we have been aware from the start that our preconceptions have held the power to contaminate the process of knowledge creation and thus our findings. We have therefore discussed this before, during and after the research process and formulated our biases and assumptions in order to keep them in mind when framing questions, conducting interviews and analysing our material. We assert that being three equal researchers involved in the project has strengthened our study and the robustness of our findings and claims. This triangulation has provided us with the opportunity to reflect upon our choices through discussions and through continuously questioning each other's ideas. We believe that a reflexive mindset has allowed us to be 'in' our project, and to interact with our participants in an open way. Moreover, we think that, through reflexivity, we have been able to present our material in a pure form, which in turn has minimised the contamination of our knowledge creation.

6.2 Summary, Findings and Implications

In this study, our aim has been to gain a deep understanding of how a change process affects the professional identity work of HR practitioners. This has been done in a public sector context where the implemented change concerned the introduction of NPM principles. Through the development of a new identity work model we have contributed to the existing identity literature as well as created a tool that managers can use in order to better understand and deal with their employees post organisational change. Our study has been conducted with the following research question in mind: "How does the implementation of new public management principles affect HR practitioners' identity work in regards to their new professional roles?" Having examined the ways in which identity work is conducted by HR employees after a change, a matrix has been developed where four types of identity work are

outlined and exemplified using the metaphors: Preservers, Escapers, Translators and Hibernators. The categories are based on the intensity of identity work and the professional status of practitioners. Further distinction within the four types are based on factors such as hierarchical position, length of employment, work objectives, mindset and nature of work tasks.

Throughout our thesis, we have related to the theoretical framework in different ways. Whilst we have confirmed some theories surrounding identity and identity work, we have developed or contradicted others. Our study has confirmed the argument that identity work is triggered by major organisational changes. Although the intensity of identity work conducted by the participants in our study varied, all but one of our interviewees indicated that their professional identity was affected as a result of the change. Furthermore, our research has developed the theory regarding the adaptability of professional identity early in one's career and has extended this to also include individuals who are new to an organisation. Additionally, our research has contradicted the tension between individual aims and serving the public good highlighted by several scholars and has shown that it is possible to balance between the two. In fact, our study shows that the HR practitioners at the administrative offices can act as connectors between the central HR department and front-line services. We believe that this balance is not only possible, but also necessary in contemporary public organisations moving towards more business-like states.

The ambiguity of the HR occupation has been highlighted throughout this study and has contributed to the need to discuss these practitioners' professional identities in order to be able to work with them. In our opinion, the ambiguity surrounding the contribution and role of the HR occupation is likely to remain, continuing to make it difficult for HR employees to establish their professional identities. As we have found that the introduction of NPM principles increases the need for identity work for HR practitioners, we consider it crucial to facilitate understanding of the different ways in which this is conducted. Since we believe that the introduction of NPM principles into the public sector is also likely to continue, an understanding of the effects of this on identity work is important and we believe our matrix contributes to this in a clear and applicable manner. Additionally, our study shows that ambiguity regarding titles is also present in the HR function. We believe that the current climate of grandiosity contributes to the difficulty faced by HR practitioners' professional identities. As we connect this to an increased amount of identity work, the creation of a

framework such as ours, creates awareness around a contemporary topic of great importance for academics as well as for practitioners.

When looking at the broader theoretical implications of our study, we must return to the discussion surrounding the nature of professional identity. Our aim has been to contribute to this academic discussion. As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, we approached the research process with an open stance regarding the fluidity and stability of professional identity with the goal of letting the empirical material speak for itself. While many scholars argue that identity is constantly evolving, our empirical material suggests that professional identity can be fluid and stable simultaneously. As such, we oppose the current trend of regarding identity as something that is entirely fluid, arguing rather that one's professional identity is partly constituted by a core or essence. The strength of this core in turn affects the intensity of identity work undertaken since the stronger the core the greater the need to hold on to it. Our material also suggests that in order for identity work to be triggered, a change process must directly rock the core of professional identity. Hence, we extend the current literature, which states that identity is affected by change in general. We have argued however, that in order for change to have an effect, it must be directly related to the type of work conducted by individual employees. With this discussion in mind, we conclude that professional identity develops and evolves as a result of changes in work life however, is still composed around an essence or core.

As the effects of change on professional identity work for HR practitioners has not been studied to a great extent, we have sought to contribute to filling this gap. Although our study has not been driven by a practical problem, practical implications of the developed matrix exist. It is our belief that our matrix can be used to facilitate understanding of how future change processes of a similar kind affect employees' professional identity and identity work. The practical implications are mainly concerned with how managers can use our matrix to create awareness about their employees' professional identity work post change. By this, we believe that they can better ensure that the implementation of change runs as efficiently as possible. Change is vital in today's organisations and is often all embracing and complex. Consequently, the employees involved undergo major transitions concerning both hard factors such as work tasks but also soft aspects such as identity work. Our study indicates that professional identity work post change is important to highlight. We believe that a mismatch between for instance new titles and employees' core professional identity can lead to

implications for performance if cases of uncertainty and discontent are ignored. Managers need to be aware that the identity work of their employees is conducted in different ways and therefore need to be handled differently. The matrix can thus be used as a tool to map out employees' professional identity work and to develop suitable strategies to work with the different types. This can in turn encourage further academic research in the area as well as be of help to contemporary organisations.

7. References

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8. Appendices

8.1 Interview Guide

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Interviewers: | |
| Interviewee pseudonym and title: | |
| Department: | |
| Age: | |
| Employed at Malmö Stad: | |
| Date/time/duration: | |
| Location: | |

The Interviewee as a Person

1. Can you describe your educational and working background?
2. How did you come to work in the public sector?
3. If you meet a person that you have never met before, and he/she asks what you do for a living; how do you answer?
4. What does a normal workday look like for you?
5. Which qualities are needed in order to succeed in your job?
6. How do you think your colleagues would describe you?
7. You have the title _____, how do you think it aligns with what you actually do?
8. Have you always held this title?

HRut

9. Can you tell us about HRut?
10. What was the reason behind HRut?
 - a. Why was HRut implemented?

11. Can you tell us about how HRut has changed your specific role in the organisation?

- a. Have your work tasks changed?
- b. Have you received more or less responsibility?
- c. Do you work with new colleagues?

12. What are your feelings about HRut? (Positives/negatives etc.)

- a. How do you work with this?

We will ask interviewees to give examples where appropriate.

8.2 HRut HR Triangle

