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# Rumble in the (corporate) jungle – a case study

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The importance of personal identities, shared meaning and sense-making during change implementation processes

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## **Abstract**

In this paper the implementation process and personal responses towards a workspace change within a small subsidiary of a big energy conglomerate have been researched. Although much research regarding organizational change has been conducted, how softer aspects affect change is still underdeveloped. This case study will therefore provide an in-depth look at how employees react to, and perceive the change implementation process.

Research was carried using a qualitative case study with an interpretive standpoint using semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis.

Findings reveal that lack of involvement and communication at early stages of a change process result in cynicism towards change and that mis-logics stemming from different identities and a lack of shared understanding lead to fragmentation between organisational members and can hinder a successful implementation.

Our main recommendations include creating a shared organisational identity, hence a shared meaning, understanding and purpose. Another implication is the importance of involving employees in all stages of change to prevent the emergence of cynicism through resistance.

**Key words: organisational change, resistance, identity, sense-making and communication**

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## 1. Introduction

In what might seem as an everlasting fad, the topic of organisational change has been observed, discussed, and dissected for several decades (Palmer, Dunford, & Akin, 2009) and the field has grown to become one of the most researched topics in modern leadership and organisational literature (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). The importance of organisations' ability and willingness to change has been acknowledged as a fundamental cornerstone for their survival and success (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990; Burke, 2008; Hardy, 1996; Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2008; Palmer et al., 2009; Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2013; Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015).

Nevertheless, despite the thorough research that has been made in the field of organisational change, the field would still benefit from further research. This would be especially relevant in the areas looking at identity issues and sense making during the implementation stage of organisational change, as it is arguably underrepresented in the field (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). Secondly, Hardy (1996, p. S5) suggests that much attention has been given to planning, and less to what actually happens during the implementation process as well as the reception from employees.

Consequently, research has shown that nearly three quarters of the change projects launched are unsuccessful in accomplishing the predetermined desired outcomes (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996). One underlying reason for the many change failures stems from the inadequate attention towards soft aspects such as cultural, political and social considerations (Heracleous, 2003, p. 113; Jacobs & Heracleous, 2005). Henceforth, we agree with the argument that it is "central to also understand what change means amongst those who are engaged and what social dynamic [...] characterises the change processes" (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015, p. 9).

## 1.1 Empirical Background

The research was conducted in Nova Lunar, a wholly owned subsidiary of a major Swedish company, Nova Stella. The subsidiary consists of eight employees that work below the Managing Director - MD (See Appendix A for the organisational chart). In 2014, the MD of Nova Lunar decided to implement a major change process within the subsidiary. The change process entailed going from a traditional working landscape with personal offices towards an activity based workplace, ABW. Apart from the change being an attempt to improve the overall work environment of the subsidiary, it was also intended to be used as a pilot for the rest of the organisation.

With the arrival of the ABW-concept, personal offices or office landscapes with predetermined seats and personal spaces has been challenged. The idea of ABW can be seen in some core traits of the concept. The office landscape is divided by different types of office tasks such as meeting-rooms, quiet rooms, and project rooms. Moreover, the employees do not possess their personal desks but are instead supposed to decide what office area suits the tasks that are to be performed (Lennartsson, Bidegård, & Forsman, 2014).

## 1.2 Purpose of research

Alvesson & Sveningsson (2008) highlight the problems of solely ascribing ineffective and unsuccessful change processes to simple misinterpretations or lack of clarity regarding expectations. Instead, they argue that the sense-making processes amongst the various actors involved in the change project will be affected by “(1) the overall meaning of the project; (2) their own situated identities, e.g. how they defined themselves in this context; (3) ascriptions of positions to others (roles); and (4) their own models of how the organisational world looked and their own (limited) place in it” (2008, p. 156.). Lastly, an individual’s work identity – which is a construction of organisational, occupational, and other identities – is an important factor which moulds what role a person will adopt as well as the behaviour during work related performance, actions and reactions (Walsh & Gordon, 2008).

Consequently, softer aspects such as social dynamics, relations, and personal identities are highlighted as playing an important role in the possible success or failure of change implementations as well as how persons will act and react in work related situations. Hence, there is a need for a greater understanding in how softer

aspects affect change implementation processes, and thus to further contribute to the enhancement of the research field. With this in mind, the main purpose of this research is to explore how personal identities and varying sense-making processes amongst employees might affect the perception, level of resistance or cynicism towards a change implementation. This will be performed by observing the early stages of the change implementation within Nova Lunar.

### 1.3 Research formulation and rationale

The decision from the subsidiary MD of Nova Lunar to implement an ABW landscape made Nova Lunar a pioneer in Nova Stella regarding new and innovative solutions for working landscapes. After the first meeting with the MD of Nova Lunar, prior to the decision of what the research was to cover and three months after the change presentation to the employees of Nova Lunar, the MD explained that:

*“The employees are a bit hesitant to this change, and they need to change their way of thinking, working, and cooperating with the other ones. So this is a big test, both a test of sitting in this area and also testing how we can work in a different way in the future”. – Elena (MD)*

Hence, the management group felt from the beginning the variances in reactions coming from the different departments. The change implementation process has been ongoing from its start in December 2014 until the physical move to the new facilities in May 2015. The change process and its guidelines have been under the rigorous control and directives of the MD. Moreover, complementary actions such as seminars with self-leadership experts, workshops together with external ABW consultants, and field-trips to companies who already have ABW landscapes, have been carried out.

Regardless of the efforts towards creating coherence amongst the employees, the challenges regarding employee response to the change are still evident from the quotes of the MD:

*“So some departments, the sales for example they won’t have any problems, [...]. So yeah, different topics for different departments I would say, but overall I think it would be something that could be implemented for everyone but we need to take into consideration*

*some departments and their way of working, finance for example and legal I think are the best examples.” – Elena (MD)*

Consequently, the research will explore how employees within an organisation with different tasks and job-roles, perceive, make sense, and react to a change during the beginning of the change implementation process. This will be achieved by looking at meanings, identities, ascriptions of roles, perceptions of the organisation and their own positions within it (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008, p. 156). A special focus will be given to personal identities in accordance with Sveningsson & Sörgärde's (2015) claim that it is one of the most important aspects when observing and understanding organisational change implementation.

#### **1.4 Research outline**

Chapter two will provide a review of the literature that will be of essence for this specific research, depicting the foundations of the theories that will be used as well as the main contributions that have been made in recent years. Moreover, we will concretize our position within the literature where necessary.

Chapter three will be dedicated to present the methodology that has been used throughout the research. Hence, a description of the theoretical and philosophical foundations, epistemological and ontological groundings, the research methods, research design, data collection, data analysis, reflexivity and reflectivity, reliability and validity as well as the ethical considerations will be presented.

Chapter four will thereafter present the research findings made from the collected data. This chapter will more specifically be divided into three main themes; the individual perceptions regarding the change after the change presentation; the “moment zero” or the source of cynicism; and lastly the change in approach regarding the managing of the change.

Chapter five is devoted to the discussion of the findings that are presented in the previous chapter. The empirical findings will be analysed together with the literature presented in the literature review.

Lastly, chapter six will conclude the main findings made in the research analysis and present a conclusion to the research purpose presented in the introduction.



Moreover, theoretical contributions, practical implications, and recommendations for future research will be presented.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction to organisational change**

The topic of organisational change has a wide variety of different perspectives which have emerged and developed since research in the field was introduced. Understanding the topic of organisational change is essential in order to create a ground from which we will be allowed to arrive at a deeper understanding in how softer aspects affect change implementations. This section will introduce the major ideas within the area of organisational change which are of importance for this research.

One of the earliest contributors to research in the field of organisational change was Frederick Taylor with his book *Scientific Management* which was published in 1911. 'Taylorism', derived from the name of the author, viewed organisations as a machine, hence focusing on the cause and effect of physical aspects of the organisation rather than sociological and psychological considerations (Burke, 2010). In contrast with the work of Taylor, the idea of 'Human Relations' was later developed. Elton Mayo initiated the 'Hawthorne Studies' in 1924 and the idea was further established by Roethlisberger and Dickson (1950 in Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2007). Emerging from the growing collectivistic view on organisations, individuals within organisations and how they were affected by social contexts became essential (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). Henceforth, the 'Hawthorne Studies' along with the work of Roethlisberger and Dickson (1950 in Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2007) steered the focus towards sociological and psychological considerations of organisations (Burke, 2010).

Following the idea of 'Human Relations', further research with emphasis on the importance of group dynamics and group norms, as well as psychological and sociological aspects, has been developed. Findings included that the effects of training individuals was highly influenced by the cultural background from which the individuals came from, and emphasized the importance of affecting group dynamics and group norms when changing organisational routines and behaviour (Fleishman,

1953; Lewin, 1951 in Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). Furthermore, the ideas of a 'Socio-technical' perspective towards change, which argue the importance of understanding "the interdependent and interpenetrating nature of the technical and social [issues]" (Dawson, 2004, p. 33), came to gain recognition. One of the main contributors in this area was Dunphy & Griffiths (1998 in Dawson, 2004), along with Badham (1995 in Dawson, 2004), who emphasized the importance of embracing contextual factors in the change process.

Therefore, more recently, Organisational Development, OD, came to be one of the most dominating approaches when looking at organisational change (Palmer et al., 2009). The characteristics of OD research can be seen in its desire to understand the relationship between individuals and organisations in the context of organisational change, striving to involve individuals in the planning phase (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). The original basis of OD, diagnostic OD, views change implementations as supposed to follow pre-established plans. Furthermore, changes ought to be implemented according to sequential frameworks. Accordingly, change is realised through the collection and application of valid data by using objective problem-solving methods which are dependent on the desired change and specific situation (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). The positive additions that diagnostic OD brought to the field of organisational studies stem from its focus on individuals (McLean, 2005), as well as its applicability when simple decisions and changes are to be implemented (Bushe & Marshak, 2009).

Nevertheless, despite its early prominence, critics have come to contest the basic assumptions of diagnostic OD, thus forming the newer approach to OD, dialogic OD. Among the critique, we find questions regarding the generalizability of OD and if it is appropriate to all organisational settings. Furthermore, the classical OD approach has been criticized for being more of a descriptive and prescriptive nature, hence failing to consider the inherent limitations of its practices (Palmer et al, 2009). Voices regarding the limited addressing of aspects such as leadership, strategic change, power, and reward systems have also been raised. Lastly there has also been critique regarding; the relevance of OD's traditional values; the universality of those values; and the applicability of diagnostic OD when implementing large-scale changes (Palmer et al, 2009).

As a consequence, researchers have come to question if OD has outplayed its role (Cox, 2005; Golembiewski, 1998). As a reaction towards the above mentioned critique, dialogic OD adopts a social-constructionist view of change (Bradford & Burke, 2004). Hence, there is no need for frameworks which show the steps that are to be taken. Instead, its approach and methods include appreciative inquiry (Reed, 2007), sense-making (Bartunek et al., 2006; Weick, 2000) and positive organisational scholarship (Roberts, 2006). These adopt a collective approach to formulating change while focusing on understanding and interpreting the organisational setting and pre-existing positive conditions. Moreover, the dialogic OD approach emphasizes the changing of mind-sets in order to accomplish change, rather than explicitly changing employee-behaviour (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). However, dialogic OD had not been sheltered from critique. Objections have stemmed from the dangers with solely focusing on positive stories and experiences during the discovery phase. By neglecting and invalidating the negative organisational experiences from employees, valuable and meaningful conversations that need to take place will be ignored (Egan & Lancaster, 2005).

As discussed above, the evolution of the writings within the field of organisational change can be seen in the increasing number of variables that have been taken into consideration during change work. Since the 'Taylorism'-perspective was developed, more recent studies have come to highlight 'softer' variables when observing and understanding organisational change, such as culture, group dynamics, and individual sense-making which are highlighted in much of the newer OD research. The implications of an increased understanding of employees as individuals having their own socially-constructed perspectives reveals the complexity of fully steering individuals in desired directions (Leopold & Harris, 2009; Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2007).

## **2.2 Perspectives on change**

There are several perspectives on change that can be applied when observing it, varying from to what extent managers and organisational members are able to affect change processes, to the very nature of the change process. One distinction that is made emphasizes what ability change agents have to affect an organisation's adaptability to change. Thus, one perspective that is apparent in today's literature is

what Wilson (1992) refers to as 'determinism'. From a determinist-perspective, the manager and other organisational members are seen as unable to affect the change process. Inversely change is seen as affecting the change agents and stems from forces of economics, the surrounding environment as well as the context rather than being initiated by the agent. Hence, the core forces that determine change are detached from the realm which the manager is able to affect, and is closely connected to the idea of viewing organisations as open systems.

As a contrasting idea, Hayes (2002) elaborates upon the 'voluntarism'-perspective. Approaching change from this perspective has the implicit idea of managers being able to contribute and make a difference when implementing a change and having control over the whole process. Moreover, this perspective questions the rationale behind a best-practice of managing change, instead stressing that there are a wide variety of paths to successful change implementation. Henceforth, the role of the manager and other change agents becomes crucial as it plays an important role in enhancing or deteriorating the change that is to be implemented.

Moreover, the categorization of organisational change can be made by approaching the scale of the change. The first type of change is internally devised to develop an organisation without significant changes in terms of the overall strategy or corporate culture (Bate, 1994; Palmer et al., 2009). Inversely, the second type of organisational change is of a larger scale. Referred to as 'transformational' change by Newman (2000), the change is radical and fundamentally alters the core aspects of the organisation. Furthermore, scholars have made this distinction by addressing the former as a first-order, continuous, or incremental change, and the latter as second-order, discontinuous or episodic change (Newman, 2000; Nadler & Tushman, 1995 in Palmer et al 2009, Weick, 2000).

Nevertheless, recent research has come to question the validity of the perspective of change as episodic, stressing the importance of the interdependencies within the organisation, the idea that change cannot be seen as an on-off phenomenon, as well as the fact that change is more correlated to the idea of a spiral process rather than a linear one (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Kanter, Stein, and Jick (1992) argue that the current pace of the changes in the organisational environment diminishes the

possibilities for organisations to perform episodic changes, instead stressing that constant fine-tuning changes are of essence (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992).

### **2.3 Reasons for change**

It has been argued that a thorough understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of different change management approaches support both researchers and the organisations to better understand the company culture as well as its employees (Hofstede, 1994; Johnson, 1998; Palmer et al., 2009). Henceforth, in accordance with the dialogic OD approach, an exposition of different reasons behind decisions to change will facilitate to comprehend how different perceptions, identities, work roles and sense-making processes will alter the individual's understanding for why a change is necessary and hence, implemented.

There are several different reasons for which organisations change, the common idea is that external or internal factors are the basis from which the desire or urge to change stems from (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2007). Several authors have tried to map the external triggers for change and found that political, technological, cultural, demographical, economical, new knowledge, and changed competitive environment are the most prominent ones (Child, 2005; Patton & McCalman, 2000).

Secondly, internal triggers can stem from different sources such as internal pressures to grow, a desire to enhance organisational integration, collaboration, or identity, to signal a fresh start or as a tool to alter present power relations within the organisation (Palmer et al., 2009, p. 65-70). Moreover Sveningsson and Sörgärde (2015) highlight that internal triggers might also derive from organisational expansion which forces the organisation to change.

### **2.4 Change implementation, and change management**

Whilst the planning process of change has been given plenty of attention, the aforementioned gap in the research about the implementation process and how to implement change becomes more evident (Hardy, 1996). Nevertheless, there are some studies which sought to further deepen the understanding within this field (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008). One aspect that has been seen as important is the context in which change management is used as a tool for facilitating and enhancing change implementation success.

Observing how the ideas of change management have contributed in obtaining a deeper understanding regarding the possibilities to successfully implement change, one salient factor that becomes apparent is leadership. The perspective of leaders as the core attributors to successful change implementations has often been presented (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). Leadership, in popular field literature, is often thought to facilitate accomplishing changes in feelings, values, ethics, satisfaction, and performance of the leader's followers or employees (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012; Hardy, 1996; Mullins, 2010). Moreover, Barker (2001) portrays the role of leaders as strong, directive characters with the ability to convince subordinates to engage in change.

Inversely, Alvesson & Sveningsson (2012) argue that though the relational constructions are important, the depiction of leadership as exclusively important is misleading. They further argue that aspects such as cultural meaning-making, dominating discourse and power relations are factors of paramount importance. These considerations towards change management are further elaborated by Fincham and Rhodes (2005). Aligned with the ideas of Alvesson and Sveningsson (2012), focusing on all subordinates rather than solely on a single change manager is of essence. More specifically, understanding the individual sense-making process becomes crucial for aspects such as overcoming resistance. Henceforth, the above idea is closely correlated with the concept of the interpretive research as individual meaning making.

Heracleous (2003) further emphasizes the importance of the field of change management not only focusing on the "hard" structural questions of organisational change, but also on the significance of a thorough understanding of cultural and human aspects in organisations. The vast number of change failures often stem from overseeing these 'soft' aspects of organisations when implementing change (Heracleous, 2001). According to Heracleous (2003), change is more easily achievable with the help of understanding organisational discourse and communication, more specifically the use of communicative actions created in the social and organisational reality. Thus, effective change management according to Heracleous (2003) relies heavily on understanding the context and process of the change. Henceforth, a dialogic and thus interpretatively oriented change

management approach ought to facilitate change implementation processes as they pin-point barriers stemming from cultural and social aspects (Heracleous, 2003).

Furthermore, Palmer et al. (2009, p. 291) underline the importance of communication as a tool for a successful organisational change implementation. They highlight six different images of managing change which in various ways use communication as a tool for enabling and facilitating change implementation. Thus, the use of communication stretches from using it as a tool to ensure that subordinates understand the change, to using it as a sense-making tool to explain the rationale behind the change. Lewis (2000) further elaborates upon this by emphasizing that communication can be linked to facilitating understanding of vision, enhancing feedback, providing social support and facilitate in modifying change along the way.

Furthermore, Ancona (2012, p. 6) argues that communication should be used as a tool to enable the organisation to overcome the “fears of the unknown” and face the “complex and uncertain environment”. Moreover, she argues that this is crucial and will be enabled by enhancing the sense-making and making it “a core individual, team, and organisational capability” (2012, p. 15). Henceforth, communication becomes crucial for sense-making and identity work amongst employees. Lastly, a deeper elaboration upon managing organisational change and more specifically managing resistance or/and cynicism via the use of communication will be further developed further down the literature review.

## **2.5 Identity, sense-making and change**

According to Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003), identity themes can be approached on multiple different levels such as “organisational, professional, social, and individual identity” (2003, p. 1163). These different identities are furthermore linked to each other where one identity might become influenced by another (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Elsbach, 1999 in Alvesson & Sveningsson 2003). Identity is furthermore seen as “central for issues of meaning and motivation, commitment, loyalty, logics of action and decision-making, stability and change, leadership, group and intergroup relations, organisational collaborations, etc.” (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, pp. 1163-1164). According to Sveningsson and Sörgärde (2015), identity involves aspects which make individuals and groups distinct from each other and it becomes more prominent than normal during change implementations, particularly during

radical change implementations. Hence, an individual's identity will steer a person into a specific direction based on subjective feelings, values, and behaviour. Thus, personal identities construct how individuals make sense of and take actions (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008).

Henceforth, identity is today mainly seen as a dynamic process with ongoing sense-making about themselves, "understanding identity as becoming rather than being" (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, p. 1164). Furthermore, rather than having a singularity-focused view on identity, newer research has come to view personal identities as fragmented, multiple, and competing in different situations depending on the context (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008; Beech, MacIntosh, & McInnes, 2008). Thus, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) make an important distinction of two main processes of identity construction. Firstly, identity-regulation can be seen in the organisation's work in areas such as recruitment and promotion as well as in the response towards these actions from the individual employee, such as resistance or embracement.

Secondly Alvesson and Willmott (2002) describes that the process of identity-work is connected to the individual employee's ongoing moulding, reparation, maintenance, or revision of their self-perceptions. Identity-work is more specifically a negotiation between the identity-regulation from the organisation and the individuals' sense of self, stemming from current and prior work identities as well as other non-work related identities. Via these processes, individuals will react to different activities differently, depending on the match between the activities and their current self.

Additionally, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008, p. 156) emphasize that ineffective change work often stems from "mis-logics" amongst people that are involved in the change. According to them, the involved individuals mould their role and understanding of a change based on four main aspects: "the overall meaning of the project amongst the people involved, the individuals own situated identities, ascriptions of positions to others, as well as their own models of how the organisational world looked and what place they had in it". Henceforth, people's perception of the change and their identity comes to obtain a crucial role when an organisation strives to successfully implement a change within an organisation.



Recent studies have also focused upon work and professional identity other aspects which affect the personal identities of individuals. The individual's work identity is constructed from his or hers "life experiences, occupational skills, organisational context, work practices, and social memberships" (Walsh & Gordon, 2008; Martire, Stephen & Townsend, 2000 in Popova-Nowak, 2010, p. 3). Additionally, Elovainio and Kivimäki (2001) argue that individuals possessing a strong work identity become less vulnerable to stressful or ambiguous situations at work, as their self-image as professionals is strong.

Furthermore, as stated above, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) underline that individuals are continuously engaged in identity work, which implies an ongoing "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, p. 1165). Therefore, on a broader level, organisational identity refers to the unit's explicit interests together with the key points of reference that internal and external organisational stakeholders share (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Despite this, some literature suggest that the idea of an organisational identity is an intersubjective construction, arguing that it cannot exist if people have not acknowledged its existence (Ashforth & Mael, 1996 in Walsh & Gordon, 2008).

Moreover, the concept of identification covers the values that the organisation aligns with. More specifically identification from a process perspective becomes a "way of coping with the divisions within society and a means of positioning oneself within and apart from the cultural crowd" (Henderson, Cheney, & Weaver, 2015, p. 15). Organisational identification hence is the degree to which individuals within the organisation identify with the organisation (Dutton et al, 1994 in Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, 1164). Therefore, as personal identity and implicitly organisational identification are seen as crucial for commitment, motivation and loyalty (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), and moreover an important factor during change implementation, it stands to reason that identity and sense making will have a significant impact on the degree of resistance and/or cynicism.

## 2.6 Resistance and cynicism towards change

Commonly referred to as one of the major causes for the large scale of failure in organisational change, the topic of resistance towards change has been thoroughly discussed (Fleming & Spicer, 2007; Maurer, 1996; Palmer et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2011) and has by some researchers been depicted as devastating for organisational change (Geisler, 2001; Maurer, 1996). Palmer et al (2009, p. 162-169) draws upon several examples of reasons for why people resist change such as “dislike of change in general, discomfort with uncertainty, perceived negative effect on personal interests, attachment to the current organisational culture or identity, lack of conviction that change is needed, perceived breach of psychological contract, lack of clarity regarding what is to be expected, belief that the change is inappropriate, beliefs that the timing is wrong, belief that the change is excessive, a cumulative effect of other changes in the individual’s life, perceived clash with ethics, reaction stemming from the experience of previous changes, and disagreement with the way that the change is managed”. As seen, several of the above stated reasons for resistance stem from individuals perceptions and sense-making of the change. Henceforth, identity comes to play a crucial role when understanding why resistance occur.

Palmer et al. (2009, p. 169-173) further emphasize that despite the major focus on subordinates as those resisting, managers on different levels do have a tendency to resist as well and in particular middle managers. Furthermore, a distinction between the natures of different types of resistance has been provided by Fleming and Spicer (2007) who distinguish between resistance as “refusal, voice, escape, and creation”. The first form of resistance, “refusal”, involves concrete disregard of directive. Secondly, resistance as “voice”, as opposed to resistance as “refusal”, consists of an appeal towards “the legitimate organs of domination” (Fleming & Spicer, 2007) in order to counteract a directive. The third form of resistance, resistance as “escape”, is less visible than the two prior ones, involving the employee trying to evade the status quo through “cynicism, scepticism and dis-identification” (Fleming & Spicer, 2007, p. 39). Lastly, the fourth type of resistance named “creation” implies the employee trying to resist through the creation of a meaningful alternative self-identity, related to the object of resistance.

Furthermore, from a process approach towards change, resistance stems from individual interpretations. Therefore, the change process is dependent on how different individuals interpret and make sense of the change that is presented (Latour, 1986 in Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). From this perspective, resistance is not seen as something undesirable but rather a natural phenomenon. What becomes important is instead to understand how the change initiator and the change receiver make sense of the change that is presented (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). Furthermore, as individuals make sense of different situations such as change processes starting from their own identity (Weick, 1995 in Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015), understanding the very role of and the rationale behind personal identity becomes crucial.

Though closely correlated to resistance, some literature makes a distinction between resistance and cynicism (Barton & Ambrosini, 2012; Heracleous, 2003; Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997). Heracleous (2003) argues that cynicism often stems from prior failed change implementations. Apart from the explicit monetary and time losses that occur, a deteriorated trust in senior management emerge into a situation where employee cynicism will appear, hence making the organisation even more inflexible.

According to Reichers et al. (1997, p. 51), there are several other sources of cynicism apart from prior failed change implementations: “subordinates feeling of being uniformed, lack of communication and respect from supervisors or union representatives, lack of possibility to participate in the decision-making, and negative disposition”. The implications become a lower commitment, motivation, credibility in front of supervisors, job satisfaction, as well as a lower desire to engage in the actual change efforts (Elias, 2007; Reichers et. al, 1997). For example, Cunningham et al. (2002) argue that individuals with greater commitment at early stages of a change are more willing to participate in activities at later stages than individuals who were less committed. Jones et al. (2005) elaborate on this by mentioning that individuals showing readiness for change at pre-implementation stages have a higher contribution to successful change implementation at both the implementation and post-implementation stages. Henceforth, the importance of winning employee engagement to change at early stages of the change process is emphasized.

Cynicism is seen as a big hinder when implementing organisational change as it “is a feeling of almost complete loss of faith in the ability of the change agents to achieve change” (Heracleous, 2003, pp. 76-77). Observing the implications of cynicism amongst middle managers, Barton and Ambrosini (2012) found that the base from which cynicism occurs is from middle managers perceptions of senior managers’ intentions regarding the change. Moreover, Barton and Ambrosini argue that cynicism is difficult to overcome, but that senior managers ought to be open and sincere about the change rationale as well as strive towards involving middle managers by providing them with proper information about the change. Lastly, Fleming and Spicer (2003) develop their idea of cynicism as something which might act as a tool which reproduces the power structures within an organisation, despite its contrasting desire.

## **2.7 Organisational Discourse & Communication**

The idea of discourse is described as “communicative actions, both verbal and textual, that are patterned and underlain by certain structural features, and that are constructive of social and organisational reality” (Heracleous and Barrett, 2001 in Heracleous, 2003, pp. 115-116). Discourse hence is a variable from which individuals thoughts and actions are constructed (Sherzer, 1987). Whilst there is a distinction between different types of discourses according to Sveningsson and Sörgärde (2015), organisational discourse is described as the text and use of communication regarding a phenomenon which itself moulds the phenomenon. Moreover, at occasions, different organisational discourses might contradict each other, leading to clashes within the organisation (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015). Likewise, depending on what type of sociological approach is applied, discourse will engage differently in relation to organisational change (Heracleous, 2003).

If one understands the nature of organisations as possessing a shared culture and value system (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979 in Heracleous, 2003), then discourse will enable change agents to alter and affect the change outcome (Heracleous, 2003). Furthermore, Conger (1991) stresses that successful leaders have to master the craft of rhetoric and by that being able to communicate desired outcomes from a change in a compelling manner. Heracleous and Barret (2001 in Heracleous, 2003) were moreover able to prove that discourses amongst different stakeholders were

different, but relatively stable and guided their communicative actions. Henceforth, discourse from this perspective plays a crucial role in the interpretation process amongst individuals. The implications for change agents are therefore evident according to researchers (Heracleous, 2003; Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015); by grasping the idea of discourse they are able to understand the ambiguity of organisations and organisational change.

A contrasting view towards discourse is provided by Spicer (2013) who argues that the role of discourse is a double edged sword. Spicer (2013) goes on to stress that much of organisational discourse is “bullshit”, elaborating by arguing that it might be helpful when used moderately, but that a “constant presence of bullshit can be very harmful for an organisation” (Spicer, 2013 p. 665) as it will delude the organisation and erode the sight of the very purpose of the organisation.

## **2.8 Summary of literature review**

This chapter explored the existing literature that is of essence for our research as well as elaborated upon the positive and negative aspects of these different perspectives. A common denominator for all the theories that has been depicted above is the wide variety of perspectives that can be found in each field of literature.

The field of organisational change can be observed and researched upon from vastly different perspectives. Firstly, the nature of the change can be seen as either deterministic where change agents are not able to affect the change process, or from a voluntarism perspective where change agents are able to affect the change process. Secondly, a distinction can be made between larger, discontinuous changes and incremental, continuous changes. Due to the nature of our research the thesis will use the voluntarism perspective and look at both discontinuous and continuous changes. Considering our choice above, an understanding of different reasons for change was described above in order to contribute to an understanding of what forces enhance the eagerness to change, highlighting internal or external forces as the main reasons.

Thereafter, an exposition of literature within the field of change implementation and change management has been given, where the importance of softer aspects during change implementations has been emphasized due to our understanding of change

as described above. Henceforth, this chapter explored the existing literature that is of essence for this research in the fields of identity and sense-making. Subsequently, a description of different sources of resistance and cynicism towards change have also been discussed, where focus is mainly steered towards how identity and sense-making might affect resistance or cynicism. Lastly, organisational discourse and communication are discussed as these aspects heavily influence sense making processes amongst individuals as well as affecting both personal and organisational identities.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Theoretical and philosophic foundations**

When conducting organisational research, several important considerations regarding theoretical and philosophical foundations have to be taken into account. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p. 52), philosophic foundations are important, as disregarding them could have a negative influence on the quality of research. Therefore carefully choosing our considerations is of paramount importance as they will ultimately be the fundament for a qualitatively high, valid and relevant research.

According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, p. 8), ontology and epistemology are the determinants of high quality social science. They claim that these aspects are often better handled in qualitative research since it allows for ambiguity because of interpretive possibilities that make the researcher's perspective of what is explored become more visible. Although ontology and epistemology help the choice for research methods and decisions, underlying assumptions will result in there not being one best method for conducting research. This usually happens as research methods depend on the research aim (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996).

#### **3.2 Epistemology and Ontology**

“An epistemological issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline. A particularly central issue in this context is the question of whether or not the social world can, and should be studied to the same principles, procedures, and ethos as the natural sciences” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 15). Thus, Bryman and Bell mention two contrasting epistemological

positions: positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is an epistemological position that supports the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond it (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 15). Positivism argues that there is an objective reality independent of the observer and that given the right methods and research design, one can accurately capture that reality (Guest et al., 2013).

For our research however, the interpretivist position seems the most appropriate approach. Interpretivism focuses on finding “[...] deeper meanings in discourses that are represented in a collection of personal narratives or observed behaviours and activities” (Guest et al., 2013, p. 5). Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 386) further elaborate on this by mentioning the importance of understanding the social world through an examination of the several possible interpretations of that world through the participants’ ‘eyes’. This implies that there are multiple ‘truths’ that constitute reality through a collective agreement (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 56). It is thus appropriate for our research as we aim to study the different emotional and cognitive responses towards ABW. People’s experiences come from each individual’s mind and for this reason, there might be as many stories or versions – ‘truths’ – of emotional/cognitive response as there are individuals. For example, where one has a reluctant or anxious response, the other might be curious or positive. This all assumes that there is not one single ‘truth’ about reactions towards ABW, but many different ones. Therefore, in contrast to positivism, facts can be seen differently depending on the individual’s viewpoint, henceforth, we have to take into account an individual’s or organisation’s interests (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 57).

The social science as ontology is concerned with the nature of organisations. “The central point of orientation here is the question of whether organisations can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 20). Thus, Bryman and Bell mention two ontological streams, the objectivist and the constructionist.

“Objectivism is an ontological position which implies that social phenomena confront us as external factors that are beyond our reach or influence” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 21). Hence, it implies that social phenomena and the categories we use in

everyday discourse have an existence that is independent or separate from its actors. For our research, the constructionist position seemed as the most appropriate. Thus, constructionism is an ontological position that considers social phenomena and their meanings as being constantly created by social actors and in a “continuous state of revision” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 22). In other words, in a constructionist view, reality is subjective and created by people through their communication with others (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012 p. 64). Hence, it is the most accurate way to access different individual’s truths through organisational members directly sharing their cognitive and emotional responses towards ABW. Moreover, we should collect different stories from organisational members and interpret them, as their worldviews may differ and therefore reflect different meanings. We should however be aware of the difficulties and limitations in interpreting data as well as being conscious of it being a time-consuming process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 70).

### **3.3 Interpretive standpoint**

Taking into account our research goal, understanding organisational member’s cognitive and emotional responses to ABW and our epistemological considerations about social reality, the interpretive paradigm was deemed as most appropriate for our research purpose. Hence, as mentioned above, interpretivism focuses on interpreting deeper meanings within different discourses. These deeper meanings imply that data from interviews or observations could reveal more than one reality – what has been called ‘multiple truths’. As Geertz (1973, p. 29) explains: an interpretive perspective is based on the idea that qualitative research efforts should be concerned with revealing multiple realities as opposed to searching for one objective reality. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) support this argument by saying that the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole and vice versa, thus showing that interpretivism looks beyond the meaning of words and takes into account the importance of its context. It is therefore an optimum for our research design since we conduct interviews and observations as data gathering, which according to Geertz (1973) is an appropriate way of revealing different realities.

Therefore, this is applicable to our research design as we aim to get clear insight in the employee’s minds thereby acknowledging that each individual’s experiences are singular and unique therefore there can be as many different responses as there are



individuals. One organisational member could for example respond reluctantly towards ABW whereas another member will react positively. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) mention that social actors perceive the world around them in different ways and that these interpretations can only be understood in the examined context. Hereby our assumption is confirmed: different individuals could tell different 'truths' since their view about reality is different. For a manager, ABW could for example be less of an impact than for an employee thereby resulting in different reactions.

Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 24) elaborate on this by mentioning that the interpretive paradigm questions whether organisations exist in any real sense beyond the reality of the organisational members. This implies that the understanding of the organisation can only be done through members' experiences. This is fundamental to our research as we aim to uncover knowledge through understanding the realities of the organisational members affected by ABW – as described by themselves through both verbal and non-verbal communication in observation and interviews.

Henceforth, the interpretive perspective fits with our research since it is based on the idea that qualitative research efforts should be concerned with revealing multiple realities as opposed to searching for one objective reality. However, it is also important to be aware of the difficulty of interpreting data and that it is a time-consuming process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 70).

### **3.4 Qualitative research**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative research focuses on people's experiences and the meanings they place on events, processes and structures of their normal social setting. Such research may involve prolonged or intense contact with people and groups in their everyday situations. This provides a holistic view, through the participants' own words and perceptions, of how they understand, account for and act within these situations. To understand organisational member's cognitive and emotional responses towards ABW, it is important to take into account the context they are in. Qualitative research provides us with the methods to find people's meaning and experiences, thereby resulting in in-depth findings and information although our exposure to the organisation has been limited from a timeframe perspective.

According to Merriam (2009, p. 13) “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world”. This benefits our research because we want to know what organisational members think and feel about ABW being implemented in their workspace and their role in it. Qualitative research allows for interviews and observations which enable us to move into the organisational members’ world and understand their role in it. Parkinson and Drislane (2011) also mention that qualitative research uses participant observation or case studies resulting in a narrative, descriptive account of a setting or practice, thus further confirming observation as a method to explore people’s meaning.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer both in the world of the organisation and in that of its own construction. Hence, qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible, thus transforming into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3) which ultimately aid in the analysis process. In our opinion, the best way to understand individual’s cognitive and emotional responses towards ABW is by placing ourselves in their world. In that way we can observe situations in their natural settings and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This in-depth analysis of how the individuals perceive reality is fundamental in an interpretive study.

In this research, a qualitative, abductive approach to explanation and understanding will be used. Abduction is close to hermeneutics (Eco, 1990 in Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009 p. 4) since “it starts from empirical basis, just like induction, but does not reject theoretical preconceptions and is in that respect closer to deduction”. Furthermore, abduction allows us to combine an analysis of data from our empirical research with existing literature about our research topic (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009 p. 4). According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009), abduction’s starting point is in the empirical basis but it takes into account theoretical preconceptions resulting in us being more cautious and careful during the interpretation of our data.

### 3.5 Research design: Case study design

As a structure for guiding us through the execution of a research method we chose the case study design (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 41). Case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Stake, 1995). The case study is a highly popular and widely used research design in business research (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The difference between a case study and other research designs is the focus on a specific situation or system, an entity with a purpose and functioning parts. It emphasises an intensive examination of the setting and/or specific case which could be a community, organisation, or person (Bryman and Bell, 2011 p. 41, p. 60).

Knights and McCabe (1997, p. 60) suggest that the case study provides a vehicle through which several qualitative methods can be combined, thereby avoiding too great a reliance on one single approach. This allows us to combine observation, documentation and semi-structured interviewing. These findings can be used to identify insights into why change processes result in certain actors' behaviour.

Because the case study allows us to utilize multiple research methods: documentation, semi-structured interviews and observation, we are able to perform triangulation and thereby cross-check findings and ultimately increase validity. Denzin (1970, p. 310) mentions multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data and methodologies as approaches of triangulation. As multiple data sources and multiple observers were used throughout our data gathering, in this way, the credibility of findings will be increased because data can form a unified result (Yin, 2003).

However, questions arise about external validity or generalizability of case study research. How can a single case possibly be representative so that it might yield findings that can be applied more generally to other cases? Thus, how can the situation at Nova Lunar be applied and utilized for future corporations. It cannot. However, many researchers emphasise that they are interested in the detail of a single case, as they do sometimes claim a degree of theoretical generalizability on the basis of it. As mentioned by Guest et al. (2013) the main goal of a case study is to create understanding of a unique situation, knowledge from research can then be applied to other contexts or cases. Lee, Collier, and Cullen (2007, p. 61) however

mention that particularisation rather than generalization constitutes the main strength of case studies. They claim that the aim of case study analysis should be to focus on the uniqueness of a case and create a thorough understanding of its complexity.

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), the use of a single case requires a decision regarding the case type. Our research has characteristics of multiple case types, the longitudinal and unique case type (Yin, 2003). We mainly use the longitudinal case which is defined as the type of case that is concerned with how a situation changes over time. This fits because we aim to research actors' responses during a change process (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 62). However, our research also demonstrates some elements of a unique case type in the sense that the change project at Nova Lunar is regarded as a pilot for the global Nova Stella and thereby new for the organisational members.

Henceforth, since the case study as a research design implies taking an in-depth look at a company and/or a situation within a company, we believed that having a specific research question would have limited our analysis process and interpretation of data because it would have steer us too much in one direction. Instead, we chose to focus on a research purpose looking at the 'softer' aspects of organizational change. This allowed us limit our preconceptions and keep a more open mind when analysing the data thus insuring a more relevant analysis and hence more significant findings.

### **3.6 Data collection: Semi structured interviews**

An interpretive perspective is based on the idea that qualitative research efforts should be concerned with revealing multiple realities as opposed to searching for one objective reality. This means, as previously discussed, that an interpretive approach is more focused on comprehending deeper meanings in discourses that are represented in a collection of personal narratives or observed behaviours and activities (Guest et al., 2013). This shows a great opportunity for the interview method since people's perspectives, perceptions and meanings can be thoroughly investigated. Henceforth, according to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 467) qualitative interviewing allows much greater interest in the interviewee's point of view. It allows investigating what is seen as relevant and important to the interviewee, thus making qualitative interviewing more flexible and providing the ability to adjust the emphasis in the research.

Our primary source of data consisted of 9 individual semi-structured interviews entailing pre-formulated questions which were open and could be diverted from (Myers, 2009). By using semi-structured interviews, interviewees were encouraged to bring up new ideas. Furthermore, it allowed interviewees to divert from and elaborate on topics they deemed important and relevant for our research. Practical examples to illustrate situations were encouraged to get a more complete image of the interviewee's experiences with the change project. Individual interviews have been chosen because it provides a more in-depth knowledge about personal experiences (Myers, 2009). Four of the employee interviews were conducted in Swedish to take away possible language barriers and retrieve more valuable information. Interviews took about 40 minutes and were recorded with consent of the interviewees.

Interviews were conducted in three rounds, first with the MD, thereafter the management team as well as employees, and finally the external consultant. Firstly, the interview with the MD mainly revolved around gaining an understanding of the change project, her role in the change project, the rationale behind the change, her expectations of employee behaviour and attempts to avoid resistance towards change. Secondly, the interview with the external consultant revolved around understanding her role in the change project, her opinion about the MD's management style and employee attitude towards ABW as well as her opinion about the applicability of ABW at Nova Lunar. Thirdly, interviews with the employees and the management team revolved around 5 themes, feelings towards the change and their understanding of it, their opinion about the MD's role in the change project, expectations from the change project, and finally the change project's implications for themselves. These questions were asked in a flexible way, depending on how the interview developed, thus questions were altered and asked in a different order.

The first theme – the employee's feelings towards the change and their understanding of it – aimed on gaining information about what interviewee's believe is the reason for the change project and whether they clearly understand what the change is about. The second theme aimed on extracting feelings about how the change was imposed. Questions were aimed on visualising a timeline that explained step-by-step how the change was implemented, how it evolved and how the interviewees felt about this. Thirdly, we asked about interviewee's opinion about MD's role in the change process, the overall work of the MD and/or the MD's work as a

leader and the influence of her personal characteristics during the change process. Fourthly, we moved on to the interviewee's expectations of the change project. In other words, how does the employee see the organisation functioning after the change and which obstacles should be taken into account. The final theme revolved around the change implications for the interviewee – what result will the change project have on the interviewee's work, career and role in the organisation.

### **3.7 Data collection: Observation of feedback session and document analysis**

A few weeks after the interviews, the external consultant, organised a Nova Lunar Workshop aimed at providing feedback to the MD and the organisational members as well as discussing feelings towards the change and change process. During this workshop an observation was conducted aiming at exploring individuals' verbal and non-verbal responses to the matters presented and discussed. The observer's role can be defined as complete observer where the researcher does not interact with people and is not taken into account (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 437). The observer held a non-obtrusive approach, hence not being actively involved in the seminar. Instead, general feelings, amount of input, activity, perceptions about the change were being observed. By not being actively involved, the risk of steering the seminar into a desired path was diminished. However, prior knowledge and preconceptions, due to their nature, could not be disregarded.

Organisational documents in the form of PowerPoint presentation used during the EFAB workshop were studied in order to gain better understanding and insight in the change process. Charts and statistics about the office landscape and feelings towards the change provided valuable background information about the change project (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 550). PowerPoint slides from the EFAB workshop presentation can be found in Appendix C.

### **3.8 Participants**

Access to organisational members and the consultant was arranged by the MD. She informed all participants about our presence, our research goal, scheduled an interview day and invited us to conduct an observation during the EFAB workshop. Interviews and observation took place at Nova Lunar's office. The time, effort and

nature of interviews were carefully explained at the start of the interviews to ensure the organisational members' understanding of the scale and scope of interviews.

Participants include the Managing Director, Facility Manager, Financial Director, TBM Manager, external ABW consultant and four employees. This is a total of 9 participants, which is a small yet exhaustive sample since it includes all active organisational members that are affected by and involved in the change project. See Appendix A for the organizational chart.

### **3.9 Data analysis: Thematic coding**

The first step in data analysis was translating the interviews recorded in Swedish to English. Afterwards, the interviews were being transcribed and these transcriptions were utilized to perform thematic coding for data analysis. After transcribing, predefined categories were created. These categories would be our framework through which we would assign various codes to categories. Categories were established by scanning transcripts for relevant topics and themes that could be converted to concepts. Different theories from existing literature helped us in the process of creating categories by providing us with relevant concepts and theories. Categories included: resistance, managing resistance and leadership.

Thematic coding was used because it is based on comparison, thus it builds a thematic structure. The thematic structuring will ease the creation of groups for comparison which benefits our interpretive stance in this research. Furthermore, coding as a way of analysis allows us to reduce the size of data, organise data efficiently and speeding up analysis (Myers, 2009). The coding process was conducted sentence by sentence since we expected high context information that could possibly be assigned to multiple groups (Myers, 2009). Assigning codes to categories was conducted by scanning transcripts for repetition of words or synonyms, use of metaphors or differences (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Afterwards, repetition (Ryan and Bernard, 2003) was used to find whether multiple types of resistance, managing resistance and leadership reoccurred and thereby appeared to be dominant.

Codes were assigned to categories by the technique of cutting and sorting (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). This entails "identifying quotes or expressions that seem somehow important and then arranging the quotes/expressions into piles of things that go

together” (Ryan and Bernard, 2003 p. 94). These piles were the predefined categories discussed previously: resistance, managing resistance and leadership. A separate document with codes and categories was made for each interview, allowing us to find repetitions and reoccurring topics in the different interviews. After assigning codes to categories, categories were linked to concepts from our research purpose such as personal reactions, resistance and leadership. Henceforth, we were able to find the relationship between the change process and cognitive and emotional responses. In order to create a critical yet reliable and valid study, findings were constantly questioned, looked at and interpreted from different perspectives. Also, the research purpose was constantly being cross-referenced to check whether the data gathering and analysis were in line with the research purpose.

### **3.10 Reflexivity and reflectivity**

According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, p. 9) reflexivity entails paying serious attention “[...] to the way different kinds of linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements are woven together in the knowledge-development process, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written”. Basically, reflective research means careful interpretation and reflection; therefore, reflexive researchers are those who take a step back to question their own assumptions, the interests served by their research, the complication of their findings and the ethical foundations of their practice (Gabriel, 2013). For that reason, reflection can be regarded as the interpretation of interpretation (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). For example, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, p. 9) mention that in order to be reflexive, a researcher should be able “[...] to clarify their taken for granted assumptions and blind spots in their own social culture, research community and language”. These assumptions and blind spots include biases from preconceptions and experiences that may be relevant to their field of research.

During our study, reflexivity was taken into account by occasionally taking a step back and questioning our assumptions. This allows for finding biases that could result in a non-objective and therefore less relevant research. By reflecting on different research interests we were able to retrieve interesting, less evident information from the interviewees. Especially because both managers and employees will experience the change process in a different context it is important to interpret what interviewees tell us and relate this to their role in the organisation. However, we should not



disregard our own research interests, as writers we might 'force' ourselves to find something contrasting with existing literature, thereby losing objectivity and reducing relevance of our research.

Our biases and preconceptions about the MD's and the organisational members' views on the change project will be to some extent counteracted by us being aware of the political-ideological character of the research (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). This entailed conducting two independent analyses of the interviews in order to get a more objective and complete coding process. Consequently, this triangulation would benefit the research since a single analysis could mean disregarding or ignoring important information as a result of ignorance and thereby wrong assumptions about relevance to the research and misinterpretation of the text. Hence, this resulted in a more accurate analysis and might lead to contrasting views on coding and thereby a more valuable data analysis.

### **3.11 Reliability and validity**

One of the most salient critiques of qualitative research regards external validity or generalizability of case study research. A single case research's disadvantage is that yielded findings cannot effectively be generally applied to other cases, thereby reducing its relevance for future change projects and change projects in other organisations. However, a case study's strength is that it leads to a very detailed study which could result in theoretical generalizability. As Guest et al. (2013) mention that the main goal of a case study is to create understanding of a unique situation, this knowledge can then be applied to other contexts or cases. Lee, Collier, and Cullen (2007 p. 61) mention that particularization rather than generalization constitute the main strengths of case studies. They claim that the aim of case study analysis should be to focus on the uniqueness of a case and create a thorough understanding of its complexity. Our sample might be small, yet exhaustive since it includes all active members of the company thereby reflecting a high degree of validity.

Case study research allows for triangulation since multiple research methods can be utilized. Denzin (1970, p. 310) mentions multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data and methodologies as approaches to triangulation. As we use documentation, semi-structured interviews, observation and multiple observers during the data gathering and analysis we are able to conduct triangulation in

multiple sources of data and methodologies thereby cross-checking findings and increase validity. Ultimately, as multiple data sources and multiple observers were used throughout the data gathering, the credibility of the findings will be increased because data can form a unified result (Yin, 2003).

Another topic regarding reliability and validity is authenticity. According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), authenticity aims to aid in the gathering of authentic and credible understanding of individual experiences. In our opinion, the use of semi-structured interviews is the best method to study meanings and understandings from organisational members and their context. Especially because it allows participants to steer the interview towards areas they deem important, thereby adding authentic and credible findings from participant's experiences. Moreover, the interviews and the observation were performed in the participant's natural setting and honesty was encouraged by stressing the anonymity of our research thereby taking away fear for repercussions.

To conclude with, our research might not be generalizable to practical situations, but this is a consciously chosen disadvantage which is in the nature of our research method. In our opinion the benefits of case study research outweigh its disadvantages and allows us to gain deeper understanding of individual's meaning in its context. Especially since we believe there are multiple realities, thereby implying that there is not one objective reality as quantitative research depicts.

### **3.12 Ethics - confidentiality and anonymity**

Ethical issues cannot be ignored since they directly influence the integrity of research and the disciplines (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Ethical standards and practice are becoming increasingly more important in today's business research and should therefore be carefully considered (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). We would like to stress that no harm was done to participants in terms of creating stress or causing harm to career prospects or future employment. Several steps were taken to protect participant's anonymity.

Access to employees and consultants was arranged by the MD, she informed all organisational members about our presence, research goal as well as stressing the importance of honesty during the interviews. Participation in interviews was voluntary but encouraged by the MD. Before the interviews, consent was asked for recording

the interviews and full anonymity was stressed. This shows our commitment towards informed consent, full disclosure was given in terms of our purposes in order to allow organisational members to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in the study. In this way we hoped to create trust, which could result in honest and thereby credible findings. In accordance with the MD, all participants and the organisation were anonymised. Pseudonyms were used when any findings and data containing easily identifiable links to individuals or sensitive information were reported. Furthermore, the company's name has been anonymised to protect sensitive corporate information and confidentiality. Sensitive information about the company was removed from documents in the appendices to prevent it being shared publically. However, we are aware that despite our efforts to anonymise and protect the individuals and the company, the use of quotes makes it impossible to guarantee full anonymity (Sarantakos, 2005).

## **4 Research Findings**

In this section we will be presenting the data collected during the research consisting of, as mentioned in the above methodology, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. For the purpose of this research project the following chapter will be structured into three main parts, which broadly coincide with the main themes identified following the analysis of the data: individual perspectives regarding the change, the 'zero moment' or the source of reticence and lastly the post-'moment zero' changes in approach. Each main section will be further divided into smaller corresponding parts for clarity purposes and ease of understanding.

### **4.1 Individual perceptions regarding the change**

#### **4.1.1 Personal reactions**

From the very beginning of our research it became apparent that although the company was small, the reactions to the coming implementation of ABW were ranging from diverse to conflicting, even within the same department. At the beginning, the first interview which was with Elena, the MD, allowed us to gain valuable insight into the motivation for this change and how this decision was made. For example, we assumed that the trigger for the change came from the top management of Nova Stella but Elena was quick to correct us, the whole initiative was her idea:

*“No, it didn’t come from top management, it was rather my idea, because I have been to different companies and saw how this works. [...] so I’ve heard about this and everyone is implementing it and my question was: Why don’t we do that at Nova Stella?” – Elena (MD)*

She also explained why she came to the decision of implementing ABW which is closely related to the purpose of her company, Nova Lunar, within the parent Nova Stella:

*“And from my point of view I would like to do this first because up until now my company is a benchmark for managing real-estate within Nova Stella, so I think that we need to take the next step in our working part in refurbishing the office spaces, and how we would like them to do in the future”. – Elena (MD)*

The MD’s positive feelings towards the imminent change are also mirrored by Fredrick, Gustav, Carla and Dan (please refer to the organisational chart in Appendix A). However, unlike Carla and Dan who express both keen interest but also concerns, the former two’s feelings towards the change are overwhelmingly positive. They both express excitement and curiosity as well as a belief that this change will have only beneficial results in the end, once the initial struggles will be dealt with. Both the former’s and the latter’s feelings are exemplified through Fredrick’s and Carla’s quotes presented below:

*“I’m for this, I want to do this, I’m used to working in open areas” [...] I don’t feel pressure because I want to do work and I’m looking forward to go down there because I am curious of what it’s going to happen”. – Fredrick (Facilities manager – FM)*

*“ABW is pretty new as you know so one is a little curious as well. It should be pretty fun to try this new thing and get out of old patterns.” – Carla (Marketing Assistant)*

However, while the MD and the heads of sales/marketing and facilities management are very positive and looking forward to seeing the changes unfold and the team moved to the new open office areas, not everyone seemed to be that positive. An

overtly reticent reaction has not only been made evident during the interviews under conditions of full anonymity, but also towards the MD and the rest of the department. Henceforth, during our first meeting with the MD she spoke to us regarding the more unforthcoming colleagues and gave her honest and unembellished view of what she thinks are the reasons for these less positive reactions:

*“The consultant people you can do whatever you want with them (Laughs), but the employees are much more difficult to change because they have been with Nova Stella for a number of years and they are ‘fat and lazy’ if you want to say it like that. They are satisfied with the working situation, they don’t need to do more than what is required from them so they don’t like changes”.* – Elena (MD)

While the MD seems to be blaming commodity for some of her employee’s reticence, during the conversations in the interviews the other colleagues pointed out completely different reasons for their scepticism towards the change, mainly in terms of purpose, implementation, suitability to the different job roles and applicability. In this section we will be covering the issues reflecting the purpose and applicability of the change while implementation and suitability will be discussed later on in section 4.2 and 4.1.2 respectively.

While there were no negative comments directed at the concept of ABW, which everyone found interesting, the purpose of its implementation within Nova Lunar was subject to some critique. The reasons for this change provided by the MD were focused on the human factor such as better team-work, more communication and increased flow of information. However, some colleagues perceived those reasons as deceptive and meant to hide the more practical reasons which are economic:

*“It’s not the main reason but it’s always money in behind why you do it.”* – Henrietta the Financial Director (FD)

*“They would not have done it if someone would say that “this is great for the employees but it is twice as expensive as your current solution”. Money talks, that’s always the case more or less.”* – Anna (Economist)

Moreover, a second but not less important reason for the reserved attitude showed towards the change was its perceived applicability. While some in the department, such as the FD, regarded the change as a very good idea for both the department and himself, others thought it incompatible to Nova Lunar's situation, as well as impractical for the purpose of a pilot for the whole of Nova Stella:

*"I could see the reasons but I couldn't fit the reasons into our situation. [...] I knew [what ABW entails] but I didn't know it for Nova Lunar, because in our case we are not moving right now, we are in our home, our own building and we have space for single rooms." – Henrietta (FD)*

*"But then from what I have understood from the theory behind the change, maybe we are too small a group to be a pilot [...] you cannot statistically prove something of a small group of seven or eight people [...] Also it does not really work [ABW] on this few people I think, because it is quite often that everyone turns up for work." – Anna (Economist)*

#### **4.1.2 The 'US' versus 'THEM' theme**

During the interviews what became quickly apparent was the poignant difference both in initial response and expectations regarding the change process between the finance department and the rest – facilities management and sales/marketing. The difference became only clearer following the thematization and data analysis processes.

Following the analysis, it prevailed that members of the same departments were displaying the same response patterns in terms of both verbal and non-verbal communication – choice of words, facial expressions, mannerisms and manner of speaking – as observed during the interviews and the Nova Lunar Workshop observation. Henceforth, while the latter were positive, optimistic and looking forward to the change, the former were more cautious, curious and pessimistic rather than looking forward, and regarded the change as a stress factor. Similarly, while the latter expected the change to increase their working efficiency, the former expected it to decrease due to the stress factor and the subsequent lack of private, quiet space:

*"We have not had time whatsoever for the finance unit to sit and discuss how we could solve this. [...] Unfortunately maybe this positive feeling*

*becomes a bit “shadowed” because one sees this as a stress factor”. – Ben (Finance Assistant)*

*“Change is sometimes difficult and it felt like a big change. [...] I’ve learned you know and I like my workplace today so I didn’t need the change.” – Henrietta (FD)*

Furthermore, while Ben and Henrietta express their individual concerns regarding the change and how it will affect them personally, Anna tends to generalise. Throughout the research she has consistently proven to have the most negative feelings towards the change, and it often prevails from her quotes that through her personal lens, she perceives everyone to be just as stressed as she is:

*“In the actual conversion process, I feel I will become less effective. [...] Everyone is very stressed!” – Anna (Economist)*

Consequently, the comparison of reactions and feelings towards the change looking closely at similarities, differences and patterns, lead us to identify a clear separation theme between the employees from the facilities management, sales/marketing departments and the finance department. The found theme has also been supported and reinforced by the way in which the interviewees from the two ‘teams’ spoke of each other and the terminology used – “those sales people”, “the others”, “finance people”:

*“I still need to keep some aspects of my current way of working... that’s the difference, I mean if are you working as a salesman for example, then you are inside the office for two hours, then you sit in your car, then you sit at the client, like, it’s not as difficult as for us”. – Anna (Economist)*

*“We work with economics so it’s often that you need to be very focused, so that is why single rooms feel like a good way to us. [...] So some are more like, can easily change and others are on the other side of the scale, change for them is like a big step”. – Henrietta (FD)*

*“I saw there were some difficulties in the group, some didn’t like it, and some liked it. [...] I think everything can be managed but with some people*

**[referring to the finance colleagues]** *you have to educate them in a different way for them to feel comfortable with a situation*". – Gustav (TBM)

*"I would like to see one or two people from finance sitting next to me in the open space and accepting that 'Ok this actually works!' Because if I can get there, I think that even if we haven't reached our goal, we are quite far on the way to doing it."* – Fredrick (FM)

## 4.2 "Moment zero" or the source of cynicism

### 4.2.1 The meeting in Ystad

Subsequent to the analysis of the data it prevailed that there is one specific moment to which most reticence regarding the change can be tracked as having originated from. At the end of 2014, following the announcement made by the MD that Nova Lunar will make the change from traditional office spaces towards ABW, the company had a meeting in Ystad where the plan in its entirety was presented to everyone involved.

Here the MD together with Dan – the office design consultant – gave a presentation to their colleagues in which they briefly explained the concept of ABW. After the explanation they presented to the group a blueprint of how the new offices in which they would move in, in May, were going to look like, complete with furniture and IT equipment. Henceforth, the employees were expecting a meeting in which to discuss the 'how's' and 'why's' of the imminent change, and instead were presented with a detailed map of their future office space – refer to Appendix B for the final version of the office layout plan.

### 4.2.2 'The blueprint incident' – reactions

The interviews demonstrate that this specific moment – 'the blueprint incident' – constitutes the first implementation gaffe. In regards to this specific moment, every interviewee except the MD stated that it was "a big mistake" (Fredrick). The presentation of the blueprint was regarded to have been "too much, too soon" (Henrietta). It becomes apparent that the general reaction was to feel not included as a detailed blueprint felt as a definite plan which was devised in their absence:



*“I told Elena that this is totally the wrong way to do this, that went wrong totally 100% because everyone felt ok ‘woooooah’, this is not what we are supposed to discuss!” – Fredrick (FM)*

*“And also that we had this meeting together and suddenly they just showed the blueprint from the room we were going to sit in. Before we didn’t know anything almost, we didn’t have the background and then there was a blueprint, and we hadn’t talked about or decided that this is what we were going to do. [...] I think they were just eager to do it because they thought it was a really good idea and they were eager to do it fast and wanted to show others. And thus they were so much ahead of us that they didn’t think of that. It was too fast, and too much, and no clear idea and goal that you could give to people and say ‘we are going to do this because of this and that’. – Henrietta (FD)*

Furthermore, Dan expresses his concerns regarding how this process was initiated in terms of matching the design with research on applicability of ABW to the desired space at Nova Lunar:

*“The experts [Ines] say that the design that is brought forward should be based on this process that one must go through regarding how we work, what are our needs. It is not possible to really develop a proposal if one has not made the process beforehand.[...] So when we presented how it could look like we got a setback because then people thought: ‘Why have you developed it when we have not done the process?’”. – Dan (Office Design)*

His concerns are further mirrored by the consultant’s quote regarding how the decision to implement ABW in Nova Lunar was made:

*“[...] From the beginning they made the decision to go in ABW before actually doing any studies and collecting any results. [...] We prefer as consultants to investigate facts and take measurements before deciding what solutions to go for”. – Ines (External ABW consultant)*

## 4.3 The change in approach

### 4.3.1 Changes in implementation following Ystad

Henceforth, at the meeting both the MD and the office design consultant were faced with open resistance from the rest of the staff. Subsequently, the necessity of a change in approach which would help reduce resistance and convince the employees of the positive aspects of the change was becoming apparent. Both the MD and the office design consultant had extensive discussions and arrived at the conclusion that the best strategy to counteract the initial negative response would be increased involvement of their colleagues in the process:

*“The only thing that we have done [to reduce resistance] is by involving them. Because in the beginning I steered this project totally on my own and I had a meeting with them in early December last year and I presented the project and how I would like it to be, and they were very mad at me for doing that. So they were not happy about it (laughs again). And then I said ok, let’s stop and involve them and I think it’s much more positive now but we still have people that don’t like it and still won’t like it even when we move in, and I don’t know if we can ever have them on this road and happy and satisfied, BUT we will do this anyway.” – Elena (MD)*

Secondly, more communication to increase awareness and understanding of the final goals and purposes of this change, further aided in reducing resistance and gaining the approval and support of the rest of the employees:

*“The big key was probably when Elena summed up why we do this. She clarified it. [...] When she explained ‘why do we do this’ then people understood that”. – Dan (Office Design)*

*“So they tried to have a very tight schedule and timetable. And all the others in the company didn’t know what was happening, ‘why are we doing this’. [...] And Elena and Dan knew, but we didn’t know, so you didn’t get all in, you didn’t get the people to accept the idea because we didn’t have the facts and the ‘why’ and the goal really clear for us.” – Henrietta (FD)*

For example, one clear advantage that increased understanding brought in terms of raising positivism towards the change within the department, was the acknowledgment of ‘the bigger picture’: implementing ABW in Nova Lunar was a pilot for the whole of Nova Stella. The esteem associated with this pilot position could often be observed during interviews when interviewees expressed how knowing to be an example for the entire group raised the general morale during the process:

**[On what was crucial for the change]** *“Maybe that Elena's message went home among employees. That there was a higher purpose that we should sit in an ABW and we'll be a pilot case in Nova Stella. That one department must be first and it is us. It gave us a bigger meaning to this, so that has also sunk in”.* – Ben (Finance Assistant)

*“When she explained that we will do this as a test for her boss and explained for others that this is a test for the whole Nova Stella organisation, then it will be more acceptable so to say”.* – Anna (Economist)

Following the decision that a shift in approach was necessary in order to achieve increased involvement and communication, an important decision was made: an external consultant, expert in ABW was brought in to help with the implementation process and any concerns the employees might have. The main actions taken by the consultant were to hold meetings with the entire group and then with each individual employee and hold self-leadership seminars.

The group meetings had the purpose of discussing any concerns, expectations and input regarding the change in an open environment. Secondly, during the individual interviews, the consultant gathered information about the particular requests, desires and necessities that each employee had in order to design a new map of the office which would include the necessary facilities for everyone to be able to work under optimum conditions. Lastly, the self-leadership seminars were meant to prepare the employees for the challenge of working under ‘clean-desk’ rules: how to prepare and carry out their daily tasks with minimum paper usage, limited storage space and leave the desk empty at the end of the day. Please refer to Appendix C for graphs

displaying the data collected by the consultant regarding activity patterns, desk usage, employee's main expectations/goals and required focus per activity.

*“Firstly, we have listened into what the different employees had as desires and what concerns they have seen. And there we have actually done an interview, a study along with Ines [the consultant] that she will present to us. She's the one who will guide us. To develop how one can help us to understand, how will this work, how will we be able to work more digitally, how to work more openly and across borders. So it is her ... she will guide us through this”. – Dan (Office Design Consultant)*

*“After the meeting, as I said, we did a recapture of this, said that that was totally wrong and how should we do it. After that one we are very structured, we have had different trainings, discussions and in every department meeting we had, we talked about this, it's on the agenda. [...] People, are getting more aware of what is happening, we are talking about this, we want to talk about this and I know I told Elena that: “we as a management group have to show a joint face to the other guys”. – Fredrick (FM)*

Henceforth, to aid the implementation process, the MD stepped down as change agent and followed the lead of the consultant. This allowed the management team within Nova Lunar – Gustav, Fredrick and Henrietta – to feel less detached from Elena (MD) and subsequently reinforced the team-work and ‘we are all in this together’ discourse.

#### **4.3.2 Reactions following the changes**

As it could have been expected, the reactions to the changes brought to the implementation process could be loosely divided into three categories: positive, neutral and restrained. The previously mentioned ‘Us versus them’ theme could once again be singularised as most members of the facilities and marketing departments had positive reactions to the changes:

*“As I said before we are different people, but if you asked me that question 6 months ago and today we are in an ongoing process that is positive, you have more acceptances. [...] I like Elena's leadership, she knows what she*

wants and she can more or less say “I was wrong, let’s back up and do it again and do it the right way”. And I think that is a quality that everyone likes because everyone is not perfect. She wants to have everyone involved, and that is one key to do this, to have people involved. Even if they don’t like it but still involved, having the discussion and listen to them”. – Fredrick (FM)

“I think Elena is on track with the consultant now. [...] After they adjusted the plan, I think it was good leadership because the group felt that someone is not pushing too hard and the group also accepted to make it her way [...] I’ve already seen a change in people’s mind-sets, in the first place it was a little bit more like this but now it’s a little bit more comfortable.” – Gustav (TBM)

A neutral category was deemed necessary as two interviewees’ responses lacked the definitive optimism marking the ones presented above. They expressed positive feelings regarding the direction of the change efforts, nevertheless they also talked about what they thought was still being done wrong or what should have been done and it is still missing:

“So really, it is perhaps more the behaviour that we should have put more effort into. Now we have some things booked in regarding that. It is the behaviour that is difficult. You do not change the behaviour just because you move around. So if you could you ask for anything more, it would perhaps be that some behavioural scientists would have talked, it is extremely interesting. [...] Now we will crawl out of our rooms, where one has their own space to a further extent. [...] We will be much closer to each other now and maybe go and annoy each other ha-ha, some of those pieces have been missing”. – Carla (Marketing Assistant)

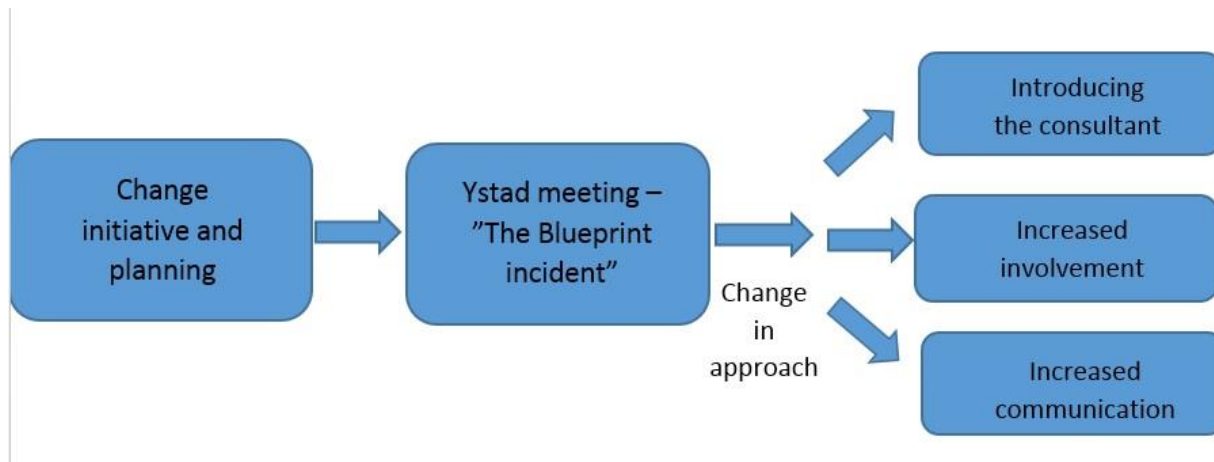
“We didn’t have the background, then we had to restart and now I think it’s much better on track. [...] Last week we were visiting another company with ABW to see how it is working live, but it was ONLY last week. We should have done that months ago if you look in the mirror”. – Henrietta (FD)

Last but not least, in conformity to the previously mentioned ‘finance versus facilities and sales’, the least positive answer came from a member of the finance department. She expressed her doubts in regards to the sincerity of the MD’s efforts to include her and her colleagues in the process together with her dissatisfaction with the timeframe allocated for the change:

*“I do not think there has been enough time for the simple reason that we have to work in the meantime. So we've not really had time to discuss what we have in front of us, or how it should be, or what we need to consider [...] She has not really listened to any real feedback since they have decided that it is a test, then you really do not have to listen to feedback as it is included in the basic idea of a test that if it does not work then we will drop the change [...] Elena does not quite feel that our feedback regarding things that we might be concerned about is important. [...] Personally I think that she has not really taken up many pro’s or con’s”. – Anna (Economist)*

To summarise the research findings, we identified three main timeline moments as depicted in *Figure 8* below. The first moment is represented by the situation before the meeting in Ystad where Elena and Dan were working on the design of the ABW and there was little information around for the rest of the employees. They only had a vague idea of what ABW would mean to them. The second moment is represented by the ‘blueprint incident’ where their lack of involvement became clear and thus both the employees and the managers felt disregarded in the planning process. The third and final moment is represented by Elena’s change in approach entailing increased employee involvement, increased communication and the use of an external consultant to ease the implementation process:

Figure 8: Change Process Timeline



## 5 Discussion

This section of the discussion will be dedicated to elaborate upon our findings regarding the individual perceptions and reactions to the first step of the change implementation process. Moreover, this section will strive to depict if and how the different employees make sense and react to the change in different manners and where these differences stem from. The section will be constructed by drawing upon the empirical findings made and connecting these findings to the literature that has been presented in the literature review.

### 5.1 Individual perceptions regarding the change

#### 5.1.1 Personal reactions and identity creations

As seen in the quotes presented in the research findings chapter, the reception and reactions towards the first presentation of the change vastly differed amongst the employees within Nova Lunar. As mentioned in the research findings Elena (MD) was eager to implement the change and Fredrick (FM) highlighted his willingness and curiosity towards working in an open area. Moreover, apart from the quotes in the research findings, Gustav (TBM) described his positive feelings in a similar manner stating that:

*"I am curious towards the change. I have a good feeling about it... I said that we have to be a good example and you cannot know if you are good at something but you can try as hard as you can."* – Gustav (TBM)

In accordance with the above positive view on the change, though with a more hesitant mind-set, both Carla (Marketing assistant) and Dan (Office design) described their feelings as predominantly positive. Nevertheless, as discussed in the above chapter, not all views were positive. As Henrietta, Anna and Ben highlighted, the lack of transparency regarding the overarching reasons for the change as well as the lack of joint group discussions were mentioned.

Henceforth, from our findings following the analysis of the data it became apparent that the different employees within the organisation made sense of the change implementation in very different ways. However, observing highly different reactions to a change within the same group, irrelevant of its size, should not be seen as surprising. Firstly, Alvesson and Sveningsson's (2003) argue that identity will work as a guideline for individuals when making sense, taking actions, and committing to different tasks. Secondly, personal identity works as a tool from which individuals understand situations (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008), henceforth our findings are in line with the conclusion that people with different identities will react to changes differently

Moreover, as presented in the literature review, more recent perspectives on personal identity and work identity highlight that personal identities are dynamic sense-making processes which are heavily influenced by different contextual situations that individuals find themselves in as well as their prior life experiences, job skills and roles, as well as their social membership (Walsh & Gordon, 2008; Martire, Stephen & Townsend, 2000 in Popova-Nowak, 2010).

Henceforth, our above argument gains strength as during the analysis process it became apparent that all the interviewees, to various degrees, have had different ongoing creations of their personal identities which have been moulded by different contexts, but predominantly by the job role. At the beginning of the analysis process, for clarity purposes, we decided to use metaphors for describing the identity creations that each individual within Nova Lunar had. However, it soon became clear that it was a fruitless endeavour as the best metaphor describing each interviewee, especially in the case of the managers, was their job role. For example the management group can be very easily described by what they do, and to some extent they don't hesitate in describing themselves. If we take the example of



Fredrick, his personal identity is strongly related to the manager role. He sees himself as a 'problem-solver' and henceforth highly appreciates honest communication spending a significant part of his interview describing situations in which he tried to find solutions to the issues other colleagues had with the coming change to ABW:

*“Well I am part of the management group [...]. As I said I'm part of the management [...]. We as a management group [...]. If you have a person doing like “I don't care”, I think you can see quite clearly that you are either in the project or you are starting up or moving together that there is going to be issue rising saying: “I don't like this”. “Ok, why didn't you tell me before, we've been doing this planning for 5-6-7 months? But people are different, some are easy to talk to and others are like clams, and that is the tricky part.” – Fredrick (FM)*

Following the same pattern, Gustav's actions and reactions are also in line with his job role. Although he is currently the technical manager his background is in sales and marketing, which becomes very relevant when analysing his approach to the change. From the very beginning he seems very optimistic about it and talks about how he tries to transmit his optimism to his colleagues.

*“So with my colleagues and every person I meet I try to send good signals from myself and there is a very true signal also, I am true to myself so I can be truthful to the other people I talk to. So I try to send positive signals that everything is possible, we have to see if we can fly, maybe not [laughs].” – Gustav (TBM)*

Henceforth, it can be concluded that he is demonstrating a 'selling' approach towards the change, in line with his last role within Nova Stella in sales and marketing. Furthermore, not only does he try to 'sell' the idea to his colleagues, but also to us. During the interviews he used the word 'positive' in regards to the change for a total of 13 times and spent a significant amount of time describing the possible advantages of ABW.

On the other end of the spectrum, but still very influenced by their job roles we find the finance department, or the “clams” like Fredrick (FM) chooses to describe their communicational skills. Although there have recently been many studies looking at

the truthfulness in the personality and identity construction stereotypes associated with the finance/accounting job roles (Miley & Read, 2012; Warren & Parker, 2009), in the case of Nova Lunar the stereotypes are to some extent confirmed. When looking at the stereotypical image of the accountant as described by Warren & Parker (2009, p. 212), and comparing it with the finance staff in Nova Lunar, two salient attributes can be observed, the tendency towards seclusion and desire for quiet, familiar work environments:

*“I’m the CFO in the company so all we work with is economics so it’s often that you need to be very focused so that is why single rooms feel like a good way. [...] Yeah, [laughs] it’s going to be very close I guess. [...] Yeah, and we are joking about it, you know about how we are going to hate each other after one week and things like that.” – Henrietta (FD)*

*“And I think of what I mentioned that one should be able to work anywhere **[they feel more comfortable]**. For me as an example, then **[important]** it is aspects as: can one see properly, does one have enough light, does one sit properly or comfortable. I’d say that it is somewhat of a question of age. I think it’s a bit tough that I might not feel comfortable with sitting anywhere, but rather want to sit in one place, where I know the light will be like this **[demonstrates with her hands]**, and the chair fits me.” – Anna (Economist)*

While we are not making any claims regarding the personality of the interviewees, we found a clear correlation between the nature of the job-role, and actions and personal preferences shown by the interviewees, with even more clarity in the finance department. Disregarding the individual personality discourse and looking strictly at the analysis of the data, there is clear evidence of the professional identity creation actually stemming from the job itself and what it implies: working with numbers, the need for deep concentration, attention to details and so forth.

Therefore, the differing responses and reactions ought to be seen as a natural consequence when people within an organisation are faced with a change. This idea is moreover strengthened by Sveningsson and Sörgärde (2015) who argue that the

construction and development of individuals' personal identities will play a crucial role in how people react to organisational changes.

### 5.1.2 The 'Us' versus 'Them' theme

Whilst the section above focused on the individuals and how they perceived the change differently due to their personal and professional identities, this section will take a more collective approach. Here, the connection between the department and the respective reaction, which was approached with the aid of the 'us versus them' theme, will be discussed. Henceforth, a deeper look into whether the different job roles have affected the reactions towards the change proclamation will be attempted.

After a thorough dissection of what job roles the different individuals' had and their perceptions towards the change we were able to observe a pattern throughout the interviews that were conducted. From the empirical data presented in the research findings there is a clear distinction between on one side the employees connected to the financial work and on the other side the employees working with sales, marketing, and facility issues.

From the discoveries presented in the research findings, it is evident that the people working in the financial department, Ben, Henrietta, and Anna, all felt a bigger scepticism towards the change than the rest of the organisational members. Henrietta described her reluctance towards the change as:

*"I'm the CFO in the company so all we work with is economics so it's often that you need to be very focused so that is why single rooms feel like a good way, now, but I haven't tried the other one so maybe that is better. I don't know ... I could see the reasons but I couldn't fit the reasons into our situation"* – Henrietta (FD)

This sceptical perspective was shared by Anna who also brought up some problematic aspects with the change implementation and the change itself:

*"It will affect me because I have to cut down on paper (work) and just work through the computer, so to speak. And this I do not experience just as positive for me ... If you have a job as an accountant you sit more or less*

*90% of the time in the same place so it is not only positive feelings” –*  
Anna (Economist)

Henceforth, the quotes from the employees within the financial department depicted above, as well as the quotes in the research findings chapter, expose reluctance towards the ABW implementation. All three employees within the financial department show reticence towards the change and question the applicability of ABW for their type of work as well as the lack of time for a joint discussion regarding solutions for the group’s shared files and binders. However, by solely observing the reactions from the financial department, it becomes difficult to compare the perception amongst employees with different job roles and hence difficult to draw conclusions regarding our research, as this solely depicts one group within the organisation. Therefore, it was of importance to observe how individuals outside the financial department reacted to the change.

From the data collected from the interviews presented in the research findings, it was apparent that employees that worked with marketing, technical support and facility management possessed a far more positive perspective towards the change implementation than employees within the financial department. As previously mentioned, despite the fact that the degree of curiosity and positivism varied amongst these employees, the data clearly shows that their mind-set was more positive than that of their finance colleagues. Thus, as mentioned in the research findings, despite being predominantly positive about the change, Carla and Dan were not as positive about the change as Gustav and Fredrick and raised some concerns that they felt existed such as the vague description of the change at an initial stage. Nevertheless, unlike Carla and Dan, Gustav and Fredrick did not show any signs of reluctance towards the change at an initial stage.

As described in the literature review by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003), understanding identity is a dynamic process where ongoing identity work creates a situation where personal identities are continuously influenced by several factors of which one is the individual’s job role. When met with different situations, particularly radical change implementations, the group (in this case the profession) that individuals feel connected to, will influence their understanding of that particular situation (Sveningsson & Sörgärde, 2015).

Consequently, in our case the different job roles seem to have functioned as an influence on the employees' individual identities. With the concept of identification raised by Henderson et al. (2015) in mind, our findings show that the employees identify themselves to the work group that they are located in rather than with the organisation as a whole. This group identification is further strengthened by the research findings which visibly depicted a discourse where the employees referred to co-workers in other departments as "the others", "those sales people", "the finance people", "clams" and "fat and lazy".

However, as described in the literature review, the concepts of identity work and personal identity are not solely affected by singular aspects. Therefore one needs to keep in mind that the different sense making processes and perceptions of the change do not exclusively stem from the influence of their professional role and their job. But from the findings made in this research, where there is an evident discrepancy between employees in the financial department versus the others, we argue that it should be possible to conclude that the job roles seem to have affected the employees' personal identities.

## 5.2 The repercussions of the meeting in Ystad

As discussed in chapter 4, the meeting marked a turning point for the whole implementation process; in the words of Fredrick (FM) it marked an entirely new start:

*"Then we took two steps back and said: ok hold on, this was totally wrong, let's do it again, re-try this time"*

Before the meeting, albeit everyone didn't have a very clear picture of what the new offices will be like and what exactly ABW entails, most of the employees, with the exception of the finance department, were quite open to the change and didn't have any objections. However, after the 'blueprint incident' every interviewee felt that the process was not going in the right direction. They thought it was rushed and that they had not been involved in the planning process of a change that would completely alter their work environment. Subsequently, while doubts and disbelief regarding the purpose, suitability and applicability of the change resulted in cynicism, the initial failure to involve employees in the design phase created trust issues, and thus increased reticence towards the change.

Furthermore, as stated in the literature review, Fleming and Spicer (2007) identify four forms of resistance, of which one is “escape”. The authors described the “escape” type of resistance as taking the form of “cynicism, scepticism and dis-identification (Fleming & Spicer, 2007, p. 39). Henceforth, when analysing the previously described data we came to the conclusion that in the case of Nova Lunar, the employees, and especially the financial department, have engaged in this specific form of resistance – “escape”. All three described forms – “cynicism, scepticism and dis-identification” – have been identified when interpreting the data gathered through the observation of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Firstly, an example of “cynicism” can be observed when both Henrietta and Anna question the official given purpose for the change (increased flow of information and team-work) which becomes evident from the quote below:

*“It’s not the main reason but it’s always money in behind why you do it.”* –  
Henrietta (FD)

Secondly, “scepticism” was also apparent from the data presented in the research findings, and again within the financial department – further sustaining our theme of “Us” versus “them”. All the employees within the financial department explicitly stated the applicability of ABW was questionable considering both their job tasks and the relevance of their department being a pilot due to its limited size.

Thirdly, the third and last type of resistance as “escape”, which takes the form of “dis-identification”, became apparent in the evident lack of “organisational identification” amongst all the employees as well as the absence of an organisational identity. As previously discussed, individuals within the company have strong personal identities, closely related to their job roles, which were made even stronger by the state of their current work arrangements: individual offices. Thus, as stated, following a detailed dissection of the interviews there was no evidence of an organisational identity and/or culture discourse which could have provided the basis for a common sense-making. In addition to the lack of shared organisational identity, there was also no evidence of “organisational identification” (Dutton, 1994). The lack of “organisational

identification” was no surprise from the consultants, Dan and Ben, who despite having been with Nova Lunar for several years, are not yet officially employed:

*“We have some consultants that work, we have one guy for example, he works with office design, [...] he is a consultant, he is not employed and it is basically because I cannot employ him because Nova Stella had this stop and we are not allowed to employ people for the moment so we hire them in. He has been working here for 5 years now, and he has been a consultant all the time, mostly because I am not allowed to employ him, but he could have been an employee. [...] But the ones that are employed, they are employed because they have been with Nova Stella for 100 years now [laughs], some of them for 25 and they have just switched tasks during this year, but they have been with Nova Stella for a long time.” – Elena (MD)*

Henceforth, considering also Elena’s quote, there were no questions as to why the consultants did not appear to feel any degree of ‘organisational identification. Nevertheless, we felt it was quite interesting that neither did the employees that according to her have been with Nova Stella for “100 years”. Consequently, considering the strong personal identities and the lack of a common organisational identity as well as any form of “organisational identification”, it became apparent that this meeting contributed to an even greater fragmentation within Nova Lunar, both departmental and individual – which is of great consequence in a company with only 10 employees.

## **5.3 Repercussions of the change in approach**

### **5.3.1 Increased Involvement**

After the Ystad incident, a change in approach was deemed necessary to overcome increasing resistance from employees. The need for a different approach is shown by Fredrick and Henrietta’s quotes that everything was going too fast, indicating misalignments among the MD, her management team and employees.

As a first step in overcoming resistance, Elena decided to increase employee involvement in the change project. Using employee involvement as a measure to increase commitment to change is a crucial step in overcoming resistance as

according to Cunningham et al. (2002) there is a direct positive link between participation in change implementation and individual readiness for change. The research shows Elena's approach worked to some extent as she mentions:

*"[...] and then I said ok, let's stop and involve them and I think it's much more positive now [...]" – Henrietta (FD)*

Fredrick acknowledges that Elena's shift in approach had a positive effect on employees and was necessary for successful change implementation. However, not everybody felt more positive towards the change and new approach. This remaining resistance and dissatisfaction with the change project is clearly displayed by Henrietta who mentions that:

*"Last week we were visiting another company with ABW to see how it is working live, but it was ONLY last week. We should have done that months ago if you look in the mirror" – Henrietta (FD)*

The quote suggests that according to some employees, Elena's change in approach from non-involvement to involvement in the change process was too late, thereby losing credibility. This is supported in research by Cunningham et al. (2002) which showed that individuals who felt more committed to change at the early stage of a change initiative participated in more activities at later stages than those who were involved later and thus less committed to change.

Henceforth, Elena's decision to involve employees in this late stage of change implementation did not result in the most desired outcome. Jones et al. (2005) agree upon this by mentioning that individuals who reported higher levels of readiness for change at the pre-implementation stage contribute more to the success of change implementation both at the implementation and post-implementation stages. Our research suggests that this is the case at Nova Lunar as well considering that even though Elena's change approach has been modified – for example the increased involvement – there is still not a unified acceptance and commitment to the change project.



These feelings of loss of credibility are further depicted in Henrietta's interview when she stresses the short timeframe for the change and the MD's sincerity in efforts to include employees in the change process.

*“She has not really listened to any real feedback since they have decided that it is a test [...]. Elena does not quite feel that our feedback regarding things that we might be concerned about is important.” – Henrietta (FD)*

This clearly depicts cynicism, or what Fleming and Spicer (2007) would deem as resistance through “escape”, towards Elena's change in approach that is grounded in her failed initial approach of non-involvement, which eventually resulted in resistance.

Heracleous (2003) elaborates on this assumption by saying that cynicism often stems from prior failed change implementations. His study argues that apart from the explicit monetary and time losses that occur, a deteriorated trust in senior management emerge into a situation where employee cynicism will appear, hence making the organisation even more inflexible. Our research supports Heracleous' assumptions since Elena's prior failed change implementation resulted in cynicism amongst the finance department, which is reflected by both Henrietta and Anna not believing Elena's sincerity in presenting the purposes of the change.

Further cynicism created through non-involvement also becomes apparent when looking at the evident lack of a common understanding. Henceforth, it prevails that employees did not understand the rationale behind the change and the suitability and applicability to their company, especially considering the initial lack of employee involvement in the change project which ultimately created trust issues and resistance towards the change. This is in line with Reichers et al. (1997, p. 51) who argue that subordinates' feelings of being uninformed, lack of communication and lack of possibility to participate in the decision-making processes often result in cynicism and thereby lower commitment and motivation. Eventually this could lead to a lower desire to engage in actual change efforts (Elias, 2007; Reichers et al. 1997). According to Barton and Ambrosini (2012) this type of cynicism is difficult to overcome, one way is by senior managers to be open and sincere about the change rationale as well as strive towards involving middle managers by providing them with proper information about the change. Our research shows that employee

engagement and commitment increased after Elena's changed approach, where communication played a significant role.

### 5.3.2 Increased Communication

As a second measure meant to overcome resistance, Elena increased communication within the group in order to increase awareness and understanding of final goals and purposes of this change. An important argument that enhanced the understanding of the change project and its relevance to Nova Lunar is clarifying the bigger picture: the fact that ABW at Nova Lunar is a pilot for Nova Stella – as discussed in the research findings

As highlighted in the literature review, this is a clear indicator of sense making as a strategy for increasing employee commitment and overcoming resistance as seen in the study by Ancona (2012) where a positive link between communication and sense making was emphasized.

This study argues that communication should be used as a tool to enable the organisation to overcome the “fears of the unknown and face the complex and uncertain environment” (Ancona, 2012, p. 6). Moreover, she argues that this is crucial and will be enabled by enhancing the sense-making and making it “a core individual, team, and organisational capability” (2012, p. 15). Our research demonstrates that sense making through increased communication is used as a tool to increase awareness and aid understanding of the final goals and purposes of this change, thus ultimately reducing resistance and gaining approval.

The following quote shows that not only Elena, but the whole management group has to understand the importance of sense making for the other colleagues in order to gain employee commitment to the change. As Fredrick highlights:

*“I know I told Elena that: “we as a management group have to show a joint face to the other guys”. – Fredrick (FM)*

Evidence however shows that even though the understanding and meaning of the change project is improving due to increased communication and involvement, the relation between the finance department and sales and marketing remains fragmented, as depicted in the research findings.

This suggests, as previously discussed, misalignments in the understanding of the relevance of the change project for Nova Lunar. As the sales and marketing department deem ABW as interesting and an opportunity to work closer together, the finance departments sees ABW as an impediment in their ability to work effectively. These misalignments can be related to conflicting identities as demonstrated in section 5.1. As Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008, p. 156) mention: “ineffective change work often stems from mis-logics between people involved in the change”. In this case, a clash in how the organisational world looked to the finance department and what place they had in it is evident (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008).

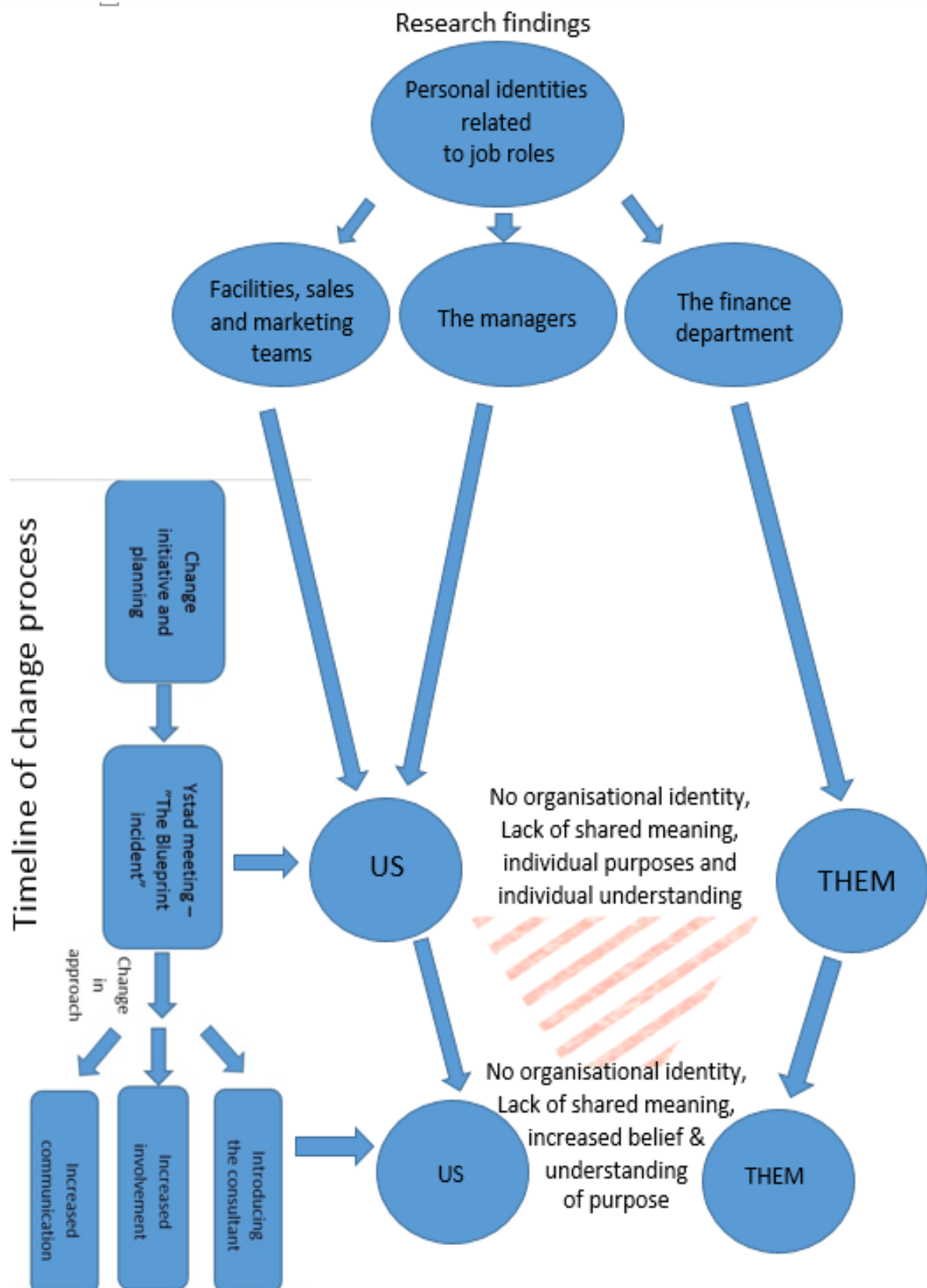
Another important player in sense-making is the external consultant. She was brought in to help with the implementation process and concerns of employees. Ever since the external consultant came in, Elena decided to step down as a change agent, allowing the consultant to lead. Carla, Ben, Dan and Gustav stress the importance of the external consultant as clarifying the situation, way of listening thereby being characterized as a sense-making tool.

*“So I think the consultant, she can guide through this and say this can be difficult and this cannot [about expectations of ABW]” – Gustav (TBM)*

Dan mentions the importance of the Tetra Pack visit as a milestone in understanding the change. Henrietta and Ben on the other hand argue that the consultant was brought in too late and that the Tetra Pack visit should have been done earlier, again showing their cynicism towards the change in approach.

For ease of understanding, we developed a scheme – *Figure 8* below – connecting the timeline of the change process with our findings, highlighting how the different moments impacted the group dynamics. Furthermore, the problems identified within the group are incorporated twice, to emphasize the impact of the change in approach:

Figure 9 - Scheme of research findings:



## 6 Conclusions

### 6.1 Theoretical contributions

Following the analysis and discussion of the data, we argue that the findings made will contribute to existing literature in the field of organisational change. The results from our research show that the fragmented, or to some extent the lack, of an organisational identity seem to have functioned as a disturbing force for the change implementation. From the findings made we argue that the strong personal identities seem to have diminished the alignment in coherence and perceptions amongst the organisational members. Instead, strong group identities stemming from the job roles have come to overtake the role of organisational identity as a guideline when facing changes at work, hence deteriorating the possibility to present and implement a change process where a majority of the organisational members made sense of, and reacted to the change in a similar manner.

Henceforth, our findings show that despite some research arguing that a strong work and professional identity will enhance the ability for individuals to tackle ambiguous situations (Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2001), the importance of a strong organisational identity when implementing changes should not be overlooked. From the discoveries made in our research, we argue that by having a strong organisational identity, the employees within the organisation will create a deep coherent understanding and matching key reference points (Hatch & Schultz, 2004).

Furthermore, the results of the research further contribute to the literature by providing useful understanding of the importance of early employee involvement during a change process which to some extent has been presented by Cunningham et al. (2002). As depicted in the discussion, the cynicism and problems that rose during the early steps of the change process were to a great extent connected to the top management proclamation and planning of the change without the involvement of the employees.

Moreover, after reviewing our findings we believe that our conclusions further strengthen the argument of Kanter et al. (1992) and Weick et al. (1999) which argue that constant fine-tuning is needed within an organisation to ensure its success. A singular transformational change not followed by small constant alterations will

ultimately result in failure which can also be exemplified through our findings and recommendations for Nova Lunar. We argue that, no matter how many efforts have been made to ensure that the ABW implementation would be successful, if they will not be complemented by constant team building efforts and an incremental effort to create a shared organisational identity, the employees will never fully adapt to the new open office landscape

Lastly, it is of importance to stress that our findings regarding the importance of early employee involvement when implementing a change are rooted in a context where the organisational identity is vague. Hence, the significance of early employee involvement might differ in different organisational contexts.

## **6.2 Practical Implications**

One of the most salient findings of our research is the lack of shared meaning amongst the organisational members. Without shared meaning it is hard to implement changes in general and specifically changes that have a direct impact on the company as a whole, as ABW implies everybody working together closely. Our research argues a shared meaning and common understanding is fundamental for organisational change to be successful and sustainable. After the Ystad incident, the increased fragmentation led to a more individualistic perspective. This became even more pronounced after the individual interviews with the external consultant. Whereas the MD attempted to make the change process a team effort, organisational members' personal identities became even more apparent resulting in no joint understanding of the change and mis-logics.

We suggest more emphasis should be exercised on the very beginning of the change process. As Cunningham et al. (2002) mention, commitment in the early stages of change is crucial for future engagement and participation. Jones et al. (2005) mention that a high level of readiness for change at pre-implementation results in higher contribution to change implementation and post-implementation stages. The most effective way of increasing commitment is through employee involvement in the change process, which seemed to lack in Nova Lunar's first change approach and thereby resulted in resistance as cynicism.

Employee involvement at early stages of change can also prevent the emergence of cynicism, as cynicism often stems from prior failed change implementations (Heracleous, 2003), which is in our case caused by resistance against change. We suggest change agents carefully decide upon the right moment or employee involvement and the extent of involvement according to the scope of the change project (for example transformational or incremental). As our research shows, ABW was seen quite transformational by organisational members, which implies a high degree of involvement was desired to prevent resistance.

Communication is another crucial part for creating shared meaning. As Reichers et al. (1997) mention, employee feeling of being uninformed and lack of communication often result in cynicism and thereby lower commitment and motivation. Thus, the fact that Elena withheld information until Ystad, resulted in a shock and overwhelming of information at once, leading to further mistrust issues. According to Barton and Ambrosini (2012), transparency and open communication at early stages of change could prevent this.

### **6.2.1 Recommendations for Nova Lunar**

Since the change project at Nova Lunar is a pilot for Nova Stella as a whole, this section is mainly aiming on providing recommendations for future implementations of ABW in Nova Stella.

One of the most salient findings is the lack of shared meaning. This missing organisational identity and understanding resulted in fragmentation amongst organisational members and departments in the company, thereby impeding the change process. This could be solved by creating a shared meaning, also called organisational identity. We suggest in next ABW implementations emphasis should be exercised on developing a shared meaning where a common goal is set, in this way mis-logics and identity clash can be prevented. Our recommendation is to utilise team-building as a means to create a shared organisational identity.

The importance of being a team is of significant importance for creating an organisational identity and thereby becoming successful in change implementation. As clashing identities between finance and sales and marketing lead to fragmentation, resistance became even harder to overcome. Even though ABW

might be more transformational for the one department than the other, each department should be aware of the importance of commitment to the change project in order to make it succeed. Here we suggest a major role for teambuilding to take away borders, enhance teamwork and create a common understanding.

Another way of creating a shared meaning across the company is by communication and sense making. In our research, the role of communication and sense making has proven to be essential. A clear direction and goal should be communicated and the rationale for the change should be explained. Our research shows that Elena clarifying the bigger picture, namely ABW at Nova Lunar being a pilot for Nova Stella, was crucial for employees understanding the change and becoming interested in ABW. This shows that a high degree of transparency and openness is needed to create shared meaning and a sense of urgency. An example of Nova Lunar successfully increasing understanding is the visit to Tetra Pack, who already made the transition towards ABW. Findings show this visit was the key to employees understanding ABW by experiencing it.

Also, we would like to stress the emergence of resistance from non-involvement in the change project. As this cynicism against change is difficult to overcome, we suggest Nova Stella to carefully plan the different stages of change implementation and involve employees in this change. Even when the change is deemed incremental, involvement should be considered since the scope of change might be perceived as transformational to some organisational members and/or departments, as it was in our case the finance department.

As a concluding remark, the outcome of this research show that Nova Lunar would have benefited from what Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) call a stronger “identity-regulation work”. By emphasizing actions which enhances the organisational identity, “mis-logics” (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008) will be diminished and as a result, change processes such as the implementation of ABW would have been facilitated.

### **6.3 Limitations**

Case study as a research design in general often implies taking an in-depth look at a company and/or a situation within a company. Our research however encountered some limitations with regard to accessibility to the company and time-frame of our



research. Firstly, because the change project takes months to implement and finish, we were not able to conduct research throughout the whole process and thereby see the final result. Instead, our research focuses on a short, yet hectic period in the change process.

Secondly, the short time-frame for our research impedes our ability to conduct ground-breaking research. A more prolonged case study would therefore have benefited our findings and recommendations. Also the fact that Nova Lunar's marketing manager was on paternity leave meant missing a person for interviewing which could have given us more insight into marketing department's perspectives on the change project. Lastly, the study of documentation and observation were hindered by corporate confidentiality and anonymity. However, we were impressed by the sincerity and honesty of the interviewees during both the interviews and observation.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for future research**

Following the conclusions drawn from the literature review, research analysis and discussion above, we have identified two areas where we deemed appropriate to recommend further research.

Firstly, one area which we found intriguing and we thought would benefit from further research is the connection between personal identities and reactions to change scenarios. Despite the evident differences in reactions observed throughout our study, there were some similarities regarding the perceptions and reactions towards this specific change which could not be explained through either of our two main causes: job role and department. As depicted in the literature review (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Elsbach, 1999 in Alvesson & Sveningsson 2003) there is a linkage between different types of identities as different identities impact other, for example personal, organisational, and professional identities. It therefore becomes interesting to understand what the similarities in the reactions might stem from.

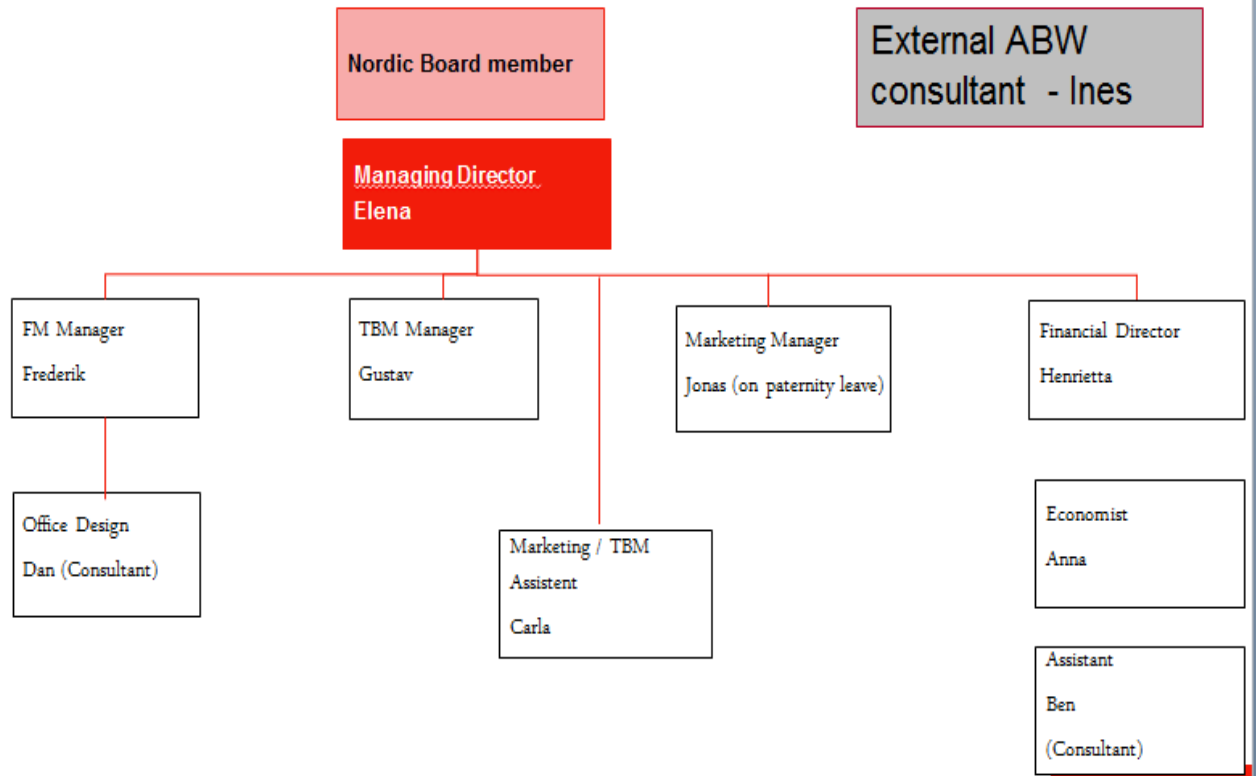
A second area which we found intriguing was the apparent lack of "organisational identification" (Dutton, 1994) within the Nova Lunar employees. Referring the quote by the MD presented on page 50, we discussed that there were no questions as to why the consultants did not appear to feel any degree of 'organisational identification

– although they have been with the company for several years they were still working under consulting contracts. Nevertheless, we felt it was quite interesting that the employees that according to the MD have been with Nova Stella for “100 years” showed the same characteristic of minimal to none “organisational identification”. Despite the employees had a far greater degree of position security and experience within Nova Stella – all sources deemed to increase loyalty and motivation (Mullins, 2010) – than the consultants, their identification with the company was virtually non-existent. Henceforth, future empirical research on the topic could aid in understanding the underlying reasons for higher or lesser degrees – as well as the lack – of “organisational identification” within employees of the same company.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Organisational Chart (Figure 1)

NOVA LUNAR| Line organization since  
January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015



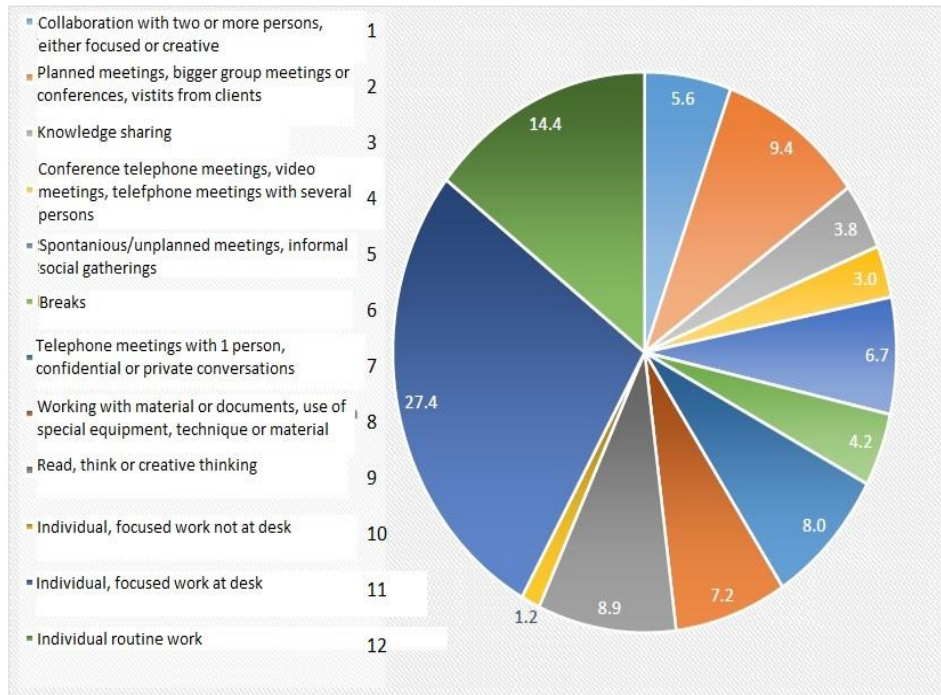
## Appendix B – Final plan version of office layout (Figure 2)



## Appendix C – Data from the external consultant

- Daily activity patterns at Nova Lunar (Figure 3):

### Today's activity pattern (%)

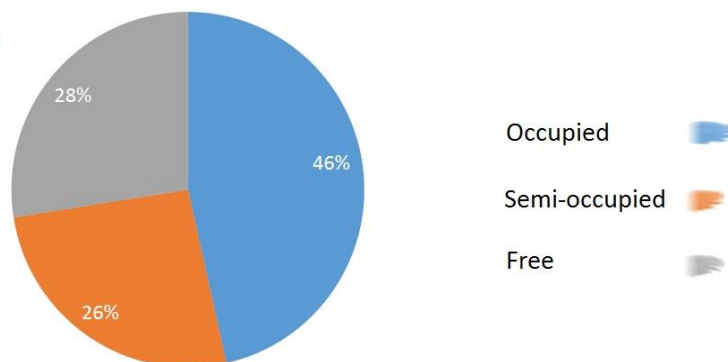


- Average desk usage at Nova Lunar (Figure 4):

### Use of desks

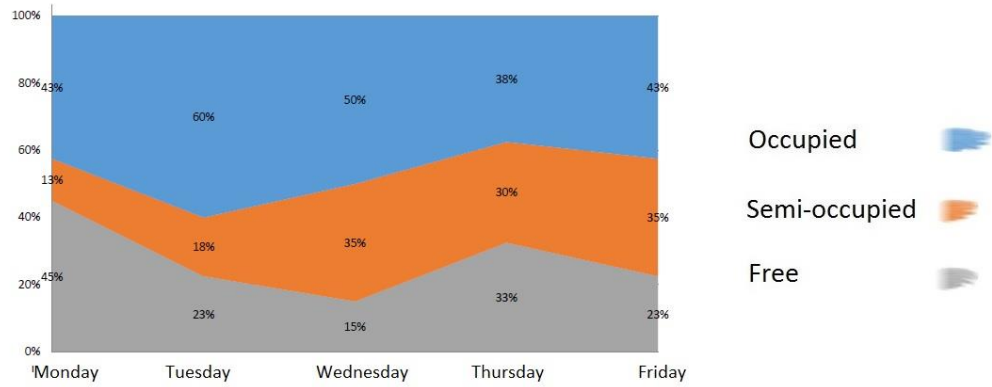
10 rooms are single workspaces in rooms

On average, 0 out of 10 office rooms are completely empty (28 %)



- Weekly desk usage at Nova Lunar (Figure 5):

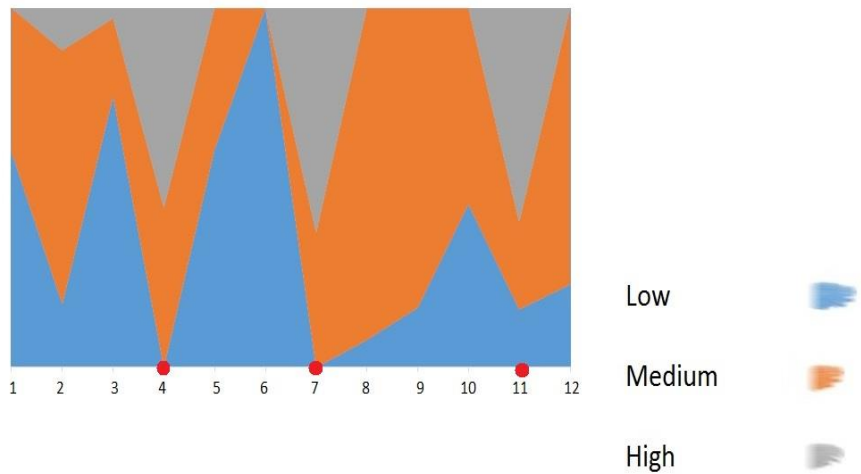
Use of desk spaces per day



- Focus level required per activity listed in Figure 3 (Figure 6):

Focus per activity

- Conference telephone meetings, video meetings, telephone meetings with several persons
- Telephone meetings with 1 person, confidential or private conversations
- Individual, focused work at desk



- Goals and expectation from the change (Figure 7):

Goal



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