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LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

The Insignificance of a Value Ground

A Qualitative Research at Lund University

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Abstract

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Keywords:	Value ground, Organisational Values, Normative Control, Organisational Culture, Identity, Legitimacy
Thesis purpose:	The main purpose of this research is to critically examine a value ground in organisational practice.
Theoretical perspective:	The incorporation of a more processual theoretical perspective and understanding provides a means to go beyond the functional perspectives in previous research, which concerned 'Why' and 'What' a value ground is.
Methodology:	This research concerns an exploratory study, conducted from an interpretative and qualitative approach.
Empirical foundation:	The empirical basis for this research was a case study at Lund University. Triangulation of data sources is applied, although semi-structured interviews are the main empirical basis.
Conclusion	The understanding of the relevance and meaning seems ambiguous and ambivalent. The value ground adds little value due it being so generic. Although organisational members feel they embody the value ground, this seems to be disconnected from the value ground, and more entrenched in culture and close to typical standards of behaviour.

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Definitions

Core values	See organisational values.
Isomorphism	An inhibiting process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (Hawley, 1986).
Legitimacy	“The process whereby an organisation justifies to a peer or superordinate system its right to exist, that is to continue to import, transform, and export energy, material, or information” (Maurer, 1971, p.361).
Normative control	Normative control is an attempt to gain and manage the required effort of members by having control over their underlying feelings, thoughts and experiences that guide actions (Kunda, 1992).
Organisational values	The ideology held by a group with connection to the means and ends that organisations ‘must’ identify in the directing of the organisation, in establishing goals or in determining which organisational actions are preferable to alternatives (Murphy & Davey, 2002).
Organisational culture	“The way we do things around here” (Palmer et al., 2017, p.150).
Organisational identity	An organisation’s identity can be understood as ‘Who are we’ (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011).
Personal identity	Making sense of ‘Who am I’ (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011).
Values	Values are a form of guideline or criteria that aid in action guidance and the setting of goals (Kluckhohn, 1951).
Value ground	A value ground consists of a collection of specified values which within the framework for a democratic community was designated as the basis for human relations (Franck, 2005).

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The creation of shared values within organisations in modern times has proven to be popular (Malbašić & Brčić, 2012). The assembly of a so-called value set allows organisations to demonstrate what they believe in, their standards of practice and most importantly their overall values (Osborne, 2001). Underlying, the concept's popularity, not only in organisations but also in academia and society at large, there is a strong awareness that organisational actions in the contemporary moral and critical world have complex social consequences (Hooghiemstra, 2000). Often, a value ground is put in place in order to guide practices and processes in an organisation (Devero, 2003). Franck (2005) refers to a value ground as consisting of a collection of specified values which within the framework of a democratic community are designated as the basis for human relations. In other words, what is considered to be an acceptable way to be an individual in daily work practices (Colnerud, 2004).

While recognising the concept's ambiguous nature (Murphy & Davey, 2002), it creates uncertainty around its practical significance, it is, however, relevant from an academic perspective to create an understanding of what is taking place. Referring to the fact that organisations nowadays engage in a value ground (Philipson, 2004), their actions being carefully examined by others (government, civil society, academia, organisational members) and its popularity makes the concept an inviting subject to study in our view.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

According to Osborne (2001), organisations construct a set of values as a way of creating a foundation of attitudes and practices that will lead to enduring long-term successes. On the contrary, Carucci (2017) sees the creation of a value foundation as little more than an attempt at cosmetic window dressing. In general, there is sparse literature in existence around the value ground and of that available, the majority of it is in Swedish (Kirkhaug, 2015; Philipson, 2011; Trollestad, 2000). Moreover, the available research around the concept seems to be predominantly centred on value-based leadership (Kirkhaug, 2015; Philipson, 2004), ethics (Trollestad, 2000; Fejes & Nicoll, 2014) and organisational culture (Philipson, 2011; Hansson, 2015). Nevertheless, a closely related concept, organisational values,

addresses popular questions concerning content (what are values), drivers and forces (why organisations should engage in shared values) and measurement (aims and results) (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Perrow, 1986; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Schwartz, 1992; Collins & Porras, 1998). As well as with organisational values research, value ground research seems primarily practical, focussing on intentions and outcomes (Kirkhaug, 2015; Philipson, 2004). As for example, illustrated in more recent work by Philipson (2011), who investigates if a value ground can create success. There do not appear to be many studies concerned with attempting to investigate how a value ground is received and interpreted by those whose behaviour and attitudes are intended to be influenced. In order to make a significant proposition about how to best practice a value ground, we argue for a distinct dimension; namely how organisational members understand the relevance and meaning of a value ground in organisations.

In addressing the proposed question, a research gap becomes apparent. While the above approaches and questions contributed to research in the value ground field, a more interpretative perspective looking at individual's understanding about the relevance and meaning of a value ground in practice seems to be lacking. Accordingly, this creates an opportunity for this study to bring new insights to this theoretical area, through examining the value ground in a real-life organisation. This is, of course, not to say this study is dealing with an entirely new matter. However, to our knowledge, these studies do not deal with targeted explicit management initiatives such as a value ground as studied in this particular case. We aim to narrow this research gap in value ground theory by shedding light on how the relevance and meaning of value ground processes are understood, drawing mainly upon organisational theory of normative control (Kunda, 1992; Ray, 1986) and institutional theory of legitimacy and isomorphism (Perrow, 1970; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Our theoretical contribution with this study is to place organisational members and their subjective understanding in the centre when looking at a value ground in practice. This generates new insights into impact and outcomes of the value ground and provides an in-depth view on normative control and behaviour. Our aim is not to reach generalisations but rather to gain theoretical insights and understandings. Therefore, a detailed case study of Lund University, which will be referred to as LU, forms the empirical basis for our analysis.

LU appeared as the prime organisation in order to conduct research as the value ground is an integral component of their recently updated and released 10-year strategic plan. There

appears to be a scarcity of feedback regarding the value ground and its implementation effort. Therefore, there seems to be a lack of familiarity around the impact and accomplishments on a profound level, relating more to organisational members' understandings of the relevance and meaning of the value ground. This research will, therefore, be conducted as a micro study on the value ground's relevance and also significance at a local level and allow for insights to be gained at crucial levels. In that sense, this study's practical contribution is to provide a mode of feedback to the organisation, inherently informed by the theoretical gap mentioned earlier. All in all, to provide a practical understanding for the organisation.

The guiding question for exploring this study:

“How do organisational members understand the relevance and meaning of a value ground in higher education?”

Additionally, a few sub-questions emerged throughout the exploration, from moving back and forth between theory and empirical material. These sub-questions helped to structure the findings and inspired our analysis and discussion.

- How do organisational members understand the value ground?
- How do organisational members relate towards the value ground?
- How do organisational members interpret the purpose of a value ground?

1.3 Research Purpose

Overall, our aim is not to reach empirical generalisations but to gain practical and theoretical insights and understandings value ground concept in organisational life. As organisational values are phenomena capturing the interest of researchers, practitioners, social critics, and the public at large (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998) it is beneficial for all to study this and moreover to broaden societal relevance.

1.4 Lund University

Lund University is a Swedish University which was founded in 1666 (Lund University, 2016). Today, it is one of the foremost universities, in an internationally leading position. LU is ranked in the world's top 100 universities. The university has 40,000 students and 7,400

staff based in Lund, Helsingborg, and Malmö. In our study, we will focus mainly on the Economics and Management faculty due to the numerous faculties. The overall vision of LU is:

“Lund University's vision is to be a world-class university that works to understand, explain and improve our world and the human condition” (Lund University, 2016).

The values of LU are placed within the ‘värdegrund’, which roughly translates to ‘value ground’ in English. A value ground is a Scandinavian term, constructed in the 90’s and it focuses on areas surrounding the ethical groundings and values of a collective, or LU in this case (Colnerud, 2004). The value ground is seen as one entity rather than a collection of different matters, the foundation is built upon the core values or ‘grundläggande värderingar’ in Swedish (NE Nationalencyklopedin AB, 2018). In this study, we will focus on the value ground and the following core values of LU. Within Figure 1, the most recent value ground, from the strategic plan of 2016 is presented. Here, the English version is presented where reference is made to core values. The Swedish version of the strategic plan cites it as ‘värdegrund’.

Core values

Lund University is part of a worldwide academic community and stands behind the basic core values on which European universities agreed in the Magna Charta Universitatum. This document establishes the importance of autonomy and academic freedom. Universities are to be free of pressures from wider society and to defend the freedom, integrity and quality of education and research.

The core values are also based in the laws which a Swedish public authority is obliged to follow. The organisation is to safeguard democracy, legality, impartiality, freedom of opinion, respect for the equal value of all human beings, efficiency and service as well as democratic principles and human rights and freedoms. Gender equality and diversity are fundamental principles in every part of our organisation.

Further values characterise Lund University and have done so for a long time: a critical and reflective perspective, objectivity, nonpartisanship, curiosity, engagement, compassion and humour.

Figure 1. Lund University’s value ground (Lund University, 2016)

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The outline of our thesis is as follows; after presenting the departure point of our study within this introductory chapter we present our literature review in chapter two. Within this chapter,

a deeper explanation of the key concepts within our research will be offered. We will discuss values and organisational values and continue with the value ground concept. The remainder of the chapter draws mainly on organisational theory of normative control and institutional theory of legitimacy and isomorphism. We would suggest this chapter to be the key to understanding the following parts of this thesis.

A chapter of the methodology, as well as methodological considerations on which the research is based, will be addressed in chapter three. Here, an interpretive paradigm, following a qualitative approach is taken. We choose an abductive approach and use the literature more as an inspirational guide, aiming at opening ourselves up to new understandings. For this purpose, we conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews and a document study. After explaining our data analysis, we look at the issues of reflexivity, reliability and validity and the method for addressing them.

In chapter four, we will present our main emerged findings from our fieldwork. In particular, we elaborate on the understandings of the organisational members. In the latter degree of our thesis, we will discuss our findings more deeply. Finally, we will conclude, outline the main findings, give theoretical and practical contributions, reflect upon limitations, and provide suggestions for future research in chapter six.

2 Literature Review

In this chapter, an overview will be provided of the theoretical background that we have used as a basis for our research. We present values, organisational values and the value ground and explain the importance of them. We will explore some key identified literature in light of normative control and the resulting forms, cultural and identity control. In addition, we present institutional theory related to the concepts legitimacy and isomorphism.

2.1 Values

2.1.1 Introduction to Values

Value phenomena have a wide scope of application and the literature available around the concept is incredibly expansive (Rokeach, 1973; Kluckhohn, 1951; Schwartz, 1992; Thyssen, 2009). Murphy and Davey (2002) refer to the point of values being ambiguous, and it is important to make sure this is acknowledged in this study. Kluckhohn (1951) shows this by outlining that values are attitudes, objects, areas of behaviour, measurable quantities, affect-laden customs or traditions, and relationships like those between parties, people and intended targets. Within recent work, it has been an arduous task across the different social sciences to come to a firm conclusion on what values actually mean (Murphy & Davey, 2002). As a result of this, issues arise around the interpretation and results of already conducted studies (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Today, most theorists working within the field of values agree values are a form of guideline or criteria aiding in action guidance and the setting of goals (Kluckhohn, 1951). Further, the manifestation of these values and attitudes are seen in behaviour and Rokeach (2008) lays out that behaviour within organisations is no exception to this. Within this research, we elaborate further on this behaviour within organisations and make a distinction between one's personal values and organisational values (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). It can be observed that values belonging to individuals and organisations are similar but also differ. So, this might lead to clashes between individual's values and those of the organisation, which often results in conflicts (Thyssen, 2009).

2.1.2 Organisational Values

When values are anchored and/or shared by multiple individuals they can become common, thus creating a common base of value (Rokeach, 1973). When this is the case within an organisation, these are termed as organisational values. Organisational values are described as "the most distinctive property or defining characteristic of a social institution" (Rokeach, 1979, p.51). According to Enz (1988), organisational values are defined as the ideology held by a group with a connection to the means and ends. The values 'must' identify in the directing of the organisation, in establishing goals or in determining which actions are preferable to alternatives (Murphy & Davey, 2002) and employees are often taught to accept these values without question (Bardi et al., 2009). Furthermore, Devero (2003) claims the key to having an organisation grounded on shared values has to do with the values that are actual guidance for organisational members and not values that are pronounced as empty words. Often organisations consider values in a too highly symbolically way or risk forgetting about their symbolic significance altogether. They may forget to take stock of the fact and continually re-evaluate that values are primarily idealisations (Mowles, 2008).

2.1.3 Värdegrund

Within our research context, organisations often do not refer to core values or organisational values but their värdegrund, which means value ground. Värdegrund is a Swedish and Norwegian term created during the 90's focusing on discourses regarding ethical groundings and values of a collective (Colnerud, 2004). A value ground is seen more as the foundation that is built or framed by their 'grundläggande värderingar' or so-called 'core values' (NE Nationalencyklopedin AB, 2018) Franck (2005) refers to the value ground as consisting of a collection of specified values which within the framework for a democratic community are designated as the basis for human relations. So, the values celebrated within a culture determine what is considered an acceptable way to be an individual (Colnerud, 2004). On the value ground concept, there is not an extensive amount of literature. Moreover, the available research around the concept seems to be predominantly centred on value-based leadership (Kirkhaug, 2015; Philipson, 2004), ethics (Trollestad, 2000; Fejes & Nicoll, 2014), organisational culture (Philipson, 2011; Hansson, 2015) and is mostly not available in English.

2.1.4 Why a Value Ground

After looking at what a value ground is, one can question why an organisation chooses to work with it. One of the main reasons, within our research context, is that a value ground is mandatory for publicly funded organisations (Lund University, 2018). However, organisations might utilise a value ground for other purposes.

According to previous research, organisations have a foundation of values to establish a shared identity (Padaki, 2010). This is often triggered by uncertainty, anxiety, questioning or self-doubt, as the lack of confirmation by significant others is a major driver of identity work aiming to lead to a restoration of a non-confirmed identity. (Collinson 2003; Knight & Willmott 1989; Alvesson & Sveningsson 2011). In the instance an organisation is seen as successful and distinctive in a number of respects, employees usually start to view themselves as part of the overall 'we' (Palmer et al., 2017). One of these distinctive factors could be the value ground (Palmer et al., 2017), as mentioned by Thyssen (2009), organisational members take on the values, which contain identity, transmitted from the environment they participate in actively.

Another reason according to Osborne (2001) might be that organisations construct a value base as a way of creating a foundation of attitudes and practices that will lead to enduring long-term successes. As according to Weick (1995) values play a significant role in control as they hold influence over people when diagnosing situations and in decision making. So, one can also assume a value ground is created as an attempt to align people with a form of control.

Further, the intention of a value ground might be for public relations (PR) and marketing reasoning. As stated by Malbašić and Brčić (2012) attention is paid to the way in which a value ground is communicated to various stakeholders. As PR is the practice of managing the transmission of information between the individual or an organisation and the public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and marketing is the process whereby an organisation creates value for its customers (Silk, 2006), one can connect the value ground to PR and marketing. As Thyssen (2009) states, the approach an organisation takes to values has an impact on their reputation and earnings, even though it is not directly linked to money. Moreover, Urde (2003) became interested in the use of a foundation of values as a way of corporate brand building.

Another consideration why organisations have a value ground can be to safeguard their legitimacy. According to Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), if organisations are unable to fulfil a value commitment their legitimacy often comes into question. Therefore, organisations often

embed values in mission statements and within organisational guidelines; they set out the most favourable goals of the organisation and, as such, directs organisational members' understandings and responses to the world around them (van Quaquebeke et al., 2014). Churchman (1961) aligns this argument, by stating that an organisation is expected to be able to legitimise its existence and provide reasoning when questioned around the way it does things, as a means of justification in decision making (Thyssen, 2009).

Despite the value ground being mandatory, organisations may possess a value ground for other reasons, as previously stated. As demonstrated above, there could be four other purposes. In this study, we will elaborate further on the purposes of aligning organisational members via control and the purpose of legitimation. Therefore, within the literature review, the main focus is on organisational theory of normative control (Kunda, 1992; Ray, 1986) and institutional theory of legitimacy and isomorphism (Perrow, 1970; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

2.2 Normative Control

2.2.1 Introduction to Normative Control

Surrounding the discussion pertaining to a value ground, there is discourse around the impact and functions of values (Philipson, 2011). One viewpoint is that organisational values can work as a sort of form of control (Perrow, 1986). As Cardinal explains, the term control alludes to “any process by which managers direct attention, motivate, and encourage organisational members to act in desired ways to meet the firm’s objectives” (2001, p. 22) and a value ground is referred to the values being celebrated within a culture determining what is considered to be an acceptable way to be an individual (Colnerud, 2004), one can see the connection. Therefore, we propose conceptualising a value ground as a form of normative control, as norms are found to be crucial as they award meaning to one’s behaviour (Cardinal, 2001). The normative control literature helps to clarify and problematise a value ground; it does so by highlighting the effects of managerial efforts, which attempt to target organisational member’s responses, view of themselves and organisation as a whole.

Normative control is a term used to describe forms of managerial influence that are seen to work beyond bureaucracy, technological control, coercion or financial rewards (Barley & Kunda, 1992). The concept of normative control is ambiguous which makes it incredibly difficult in forming a firm definition. According to Kunda (1992), it is an attempt to gain and

manage required effort of members by having control over their underlying feelings, thoughts and experiences that guide actions. Functioning as a form of discrete control, those whose actions are intended to be controlled may not even consider the fact they are or the way in which they are being controlled. If normative control is a successful strategy, Kunda (1992, p.11) argues this means employees will perform in alignment with the organisation's interests because "they are driven by their internal commitment, strong identification with company goals, and intrinsic satisfaction from work". Furthermore, organisational members are not merely objects within normative control but rather "active participants in the shaping of themselves and others" (Kunda, 1992, p.21). Consequently, this is achieved through different forms of acceptance or resistance to the practices and values in hand. As Kunda (2006, p. 11) understands the 'transaction' between workers and their organisation as experiential and emotional rather than economic or behavioural. Overall, Kunda's definition gives a broad umbrella for the different perceived soft practices of management aiming to achieve compliance from members (Pfeiffer, 2016).

The literature around forming normative control is often connected to culture and identity (Murphy & Davey, 2002). According to Alvesson and Willmott (2002, p.622), normative control centres on "regulating employees 'insides' – their self-image, feelings, and identifications". One can link this to identity regulation. Further, the association between normative control and management of culture is, for example, discussed by Kunda (1992) and Ray (1986). So, in this literature review, the distinction between cultural control (control through belonging) and individualised approaches (control through one's identity) to exercise normative control, is applied. This differentiation is not typically straightforward, but it helps to work out wider trends in the literature debating normative control. Within the next paragraph, the first orientation is discussed, namely cultural control.

2.2.2 Normative Control and Organisational Culture

There are different approaches to studying the working of normative control. Within this section, a more culture-oriented approach is taken (Kunda, 1992). There is a general managerial belief (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Willmott, 1993) that cultural artefacts are able to be "used to build organisational commitment, convey a philosophy of management, rationalise and legitimate activity, motivate personnel, and facilitate socialisation" (Smircich, 1983, p. 345). A value ground can be considered as such an artefact. Additionally, Schein (1985) argues values are a fundamental cornerstone of organisational culture. The central idea

here is that normative control is formed through fostering common orientations between organisational members and giving the individual a feeling of belonging (Barker, 1993). Comparing Kunda's (1992) definition of normative control (controlling underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide members' actions) and Palmer, Dunford and Buchanan's (2017, p.150) definition of culture (the way we do things around here), one can see why the link can be made between culture and normative control. Often those who believe culture can be used as a control mechanism see culture as a tool management can use for manipulation (Welch & Welch., 2006). So, when practising normative control, it is thus important for the manager to control culture through affecting the basic assumptions of the organisational members. For example, an organisation can display who it is or how we do things here (Palmer et al., 2017) through referring to its values and using them as a means of justifications within decision making (Thyssen, 2009).

Despite the followers of cultural control, not everyone shares the same view. For example, Meek (1988, p.470) argues "culture should be regarded as something an organisation 'is', not as something it 'has'". Another researcher who relates sceptically towards cultural control is Willmott (1993). He outlines that culture enthusiasts see corporate success developing from organisational cultures that consistently recognise and reward individuals for identifying with created organisational values. Further, Anthony (1989) argues the values, belief systems and meanings of the managed organisation are basically never successfully transmitted beyond the boundaries of management to the organisational members. Hochschild's (1983) stance towards these forms of cultural and emotional capitalism uncovers profound scepticism of organisational attempts to govern the emotional life of their members. Her critique is in line with the authors presented in this section who overall challenge the promises of culture management. Overall, these critiques demonstrate culture management initiatives have emotionalised work relations. Managers who attempt to establish cultural-control evoke specific themes to intensify emotional significance to achieve collective integration.

2.2.3 Normative Control and Identity

Others highlight how normative control efforts shape organisational members' self-definition and how they 'regulate' individual identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). These studies demonstrate how managerial practices and discourses target people's 'aspirations' of who one wants to be (Costas & Kärreman, 2013). Thus, the idea of identity control implies that practices and instruments of control target a person's identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Identity is defined in different ways. Here, identity is referred to as making sense of ‘Who am I’ (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011).

Whereas the traditional corporate culturalism continues to play a significant role in contemporary organisations, several researchers started focussing on more individualistic normative control forms. As Fleming (2013) underlines, legitimation of large organisations has experienced substantial changes. He argues it seems no longer adequate to assemble familial relationships and ‘cult-like socialisation tactics’ in an organisational environment where members often develop a pessimistic awareness of what is culturally ‘done’ to them (Fleming, 2013). In line with these developments, managers and leaders have created novel, more individualised, modes of normative control (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009). The focus shifts here to the individual and ‘Who they are’ and what makes them distinct, instead of the community individuals belong to. This concept is referred to by Fleming and Sturdy (2009) as neo-normative control.

Likewise, in traditional culture management, people's work identities have been a significant control target to achieve cultural unity. However, a concept such as ‘identity regulation’ (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) highlights it is not only compliant ‘work selves’ that are the targeted by normative control efforts. This merger of targeting people not only as compliant members of a particular organisational culture, but in addition, addressing individuals' 'non-work' identities is one of the main cornerstones for the established critique of identity control, and/or neo-normative control modes. As there is a considerable degree of insecurity faced by individuals (Collinson, 2003), it makes them more receptive to managerial identity regulation efforts (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

To sum up, illustrated within this chapter normative control is being exerted by various cultural means, and overall broadly oriented towards creating cultural coherence in a workforce on the one hand, as well as rewarding and promoting individualism on the other. Despite the sometimes ambiguous distinction, it helps to theoretically unpack literature describing various sides of normative control. Most authors discussed so far suggest normative control has become increasingly powerful to affect workers’ emotions, thoughts, and conducts. Yet, to better assess this statement, we need to scrutinise more in-depth how individuals respond to such control efforts.

2.2.4 Reactions to Normative Control

Often management sees a value set as something that eventually turns into a tick of the box exercise or as some sort of window-dressing (Carucci, 2007), therefore, they jump into culturally founded values and assume they have the power to do something. They are shocked when cynicisms, resentment, eventually settling on indifference, are how organisational members respond.

With increased precedence of normative control forms as set out in the previous paragraphs, academics began to point out that questions of resistance and conformity are fused. As several comprehensive studies illustrate, people do not only resist openly or otherwise obey to normative control efforts. Rather, individual responses are inclined to be inherently 'ambivalent' (Kunda, 2006; Casey, 1999). Frequently, responses display a broad collection of micro-actions that can (depending on the overall context in which they are ingrained) be interpreted as movements of resistance and simultaneously as actions cementing dominant power relations (Westwood & Johnston, 2012). Kunda's (2006, p. 21) study highlights "members are never passive objects of control", they might accept, deny, react, reshape, retie, acquiesce, rebel, conform, and define and redefine cultural control demands, and they possibly respond towards this attempt with all of this simultaneously. Other empirical studies (Costas & Kärreman, 2013) also claim workers never completely adopt, nor entirely reject, given designs of 'ideal' identifications. Additionally, studies of normative control and workplace subjectivity signify people's wishes to become 'one' with the collective might be one side of the story (Barker, 1993). To illustrate, people's responses towards normative control overall appear contradicting. For example, the responses are revealed in micro-actions as humour (Butler, 2015; Westwood & Johnston, 2012), explicit over-identification and cynicism (Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Collinson, 2003), or greater ironic, satiric or festive responses towards management control (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999).

2.3 Legitimacy

Within this section literature on legitimacy is addressed. For the reason that, contemporary, in order for an organisation to remain stable and avoid being challenged, it needs to adapt to the legitimacy of modern norms, assuming one of these forms might be a value ground. Legitimacy is "the process whereby an organisation justifies to a peer or superordinate system its right to exist, that is to continue to import, transform, and export energy, material, or information" (Maurer, 1971, p.361). Legitimacy occurs at the institutional level of

organisations as conformity between values of society and the organisation in the social system, which the organisation is part of (Thompson, 1967). When striving for legitimacy, the organisational changes align with societal norms, which means that an organisation's actions are restricted by this (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009) and homogeneity presents itself. If an organisation does not have legitimacy, its reputation will be tarnished when it becomes exposed to criticism from the external environment (Meyer & Rowan, 2012).

One of the theorists that is critical of this phenomenon is Perrow (1970). He has pointed out that legitimacy is problematic for organisations, and it is likely organisations will take steps to ensure their legitimacy (Parsons, 1960). According to Perrow (1970), an organisation is able to do three things to develop their legitimacy. Firstly, the organisation can modify its output, goals, and operational methods in order to conform to prevalent definitions of legitimacy. Secondly, the organisation can try to, using communication; amend the definitions of social legitimacy so it aligns with the organisation's current practices, output, and values. Lastly, the organisation can try, once again through communication, to be identified with symbols, values or institutions that possess a strong base of social legitimacy. Since the changing of social norms is a complicated process, nearly all organisations will either adapt to the constraints imposed by the requirement to be legitimate or will attempt to identify their present output, values, and method of operations with institutions which are believed to be legitimate.

Overall, organisational legitimacy is the outcome of, on the one hand, the process of legitimation carried out by the organisation in question, and on the other, the actions affecting norms and values taken on by other groups and organisations. Changing social norms and values establish one motivation for organisational change and one source of pressure for organisational legitimation (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975).

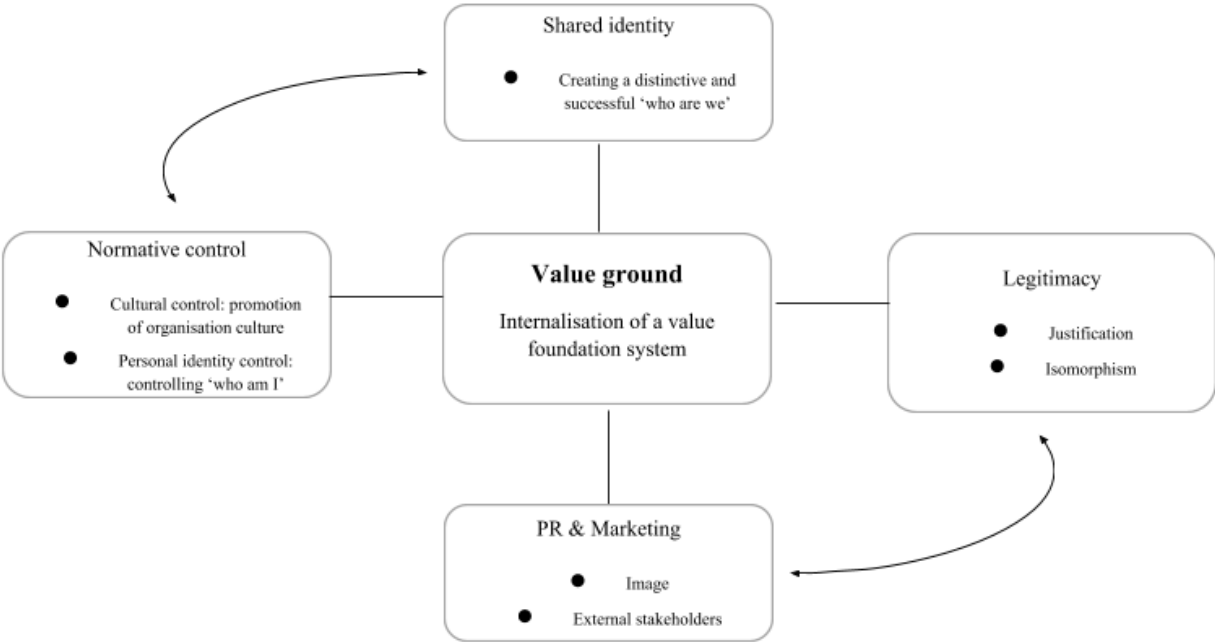
2.4 Isomorphism

As touched upon above, contemporary organisations become more similar. One of these forced similarities might be the creation of a value foundation (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). The concept that captures the homogenisation of organisations best is isomorphism, as neo-institutional theorists call it (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Hawley (1968) refers to isomorphism as an inhibiting process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions. The prevalent concern of this perspective is not to explain the change, but to understand “the startling homogeneity of organisational forms and practices” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148).

Isomorphism is categorised as competitive or institutional. Competitive coercive pressures arise when interdependent organisations persuade, perhaps force, each other to behave in particular ways. Although not formally or legally required conformity is expected. There are three distinct types of institutional isomorphism that produce institutionalisation by influencing the organisations. The three are coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Coercive isomorphism includes social and cultural expectations and government-mandated changes. Mimetic isomorphism is when organisations imitate or model themselves on the structures and practices of other organisations in their field, often those they consider more successful and legitimate. Normative isomorphism is the influence through the professionalisation of work such that managers in different organisations adopt similar values and working methods that are indistinct from each other (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Not all organisations bow to these pressures; they are what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call ‘deviant peers’. However, the assumption is these external forces are inexorable and individual managers have only limited ability to implement change outcomes that are not consistent with these forces. At best, managers are caretakers with little influence over long-term direction.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review serves as the theoretical background that will be used as the basis for our research. Within Figure 2, the overall literature is illustrated, to create a better



understanding how it relates to each other and the value ground.

Figure 2. Theoretical framework

In summary, there is much debate around the true meaning of a value foundation, some argue around their use as a management tool, whilst others describe them as a means of identity. However, many agree these values are a means by which to influence the behaviours of members of an organisation and encourage conformity. Further, it is discussed why organisations choose to have a value ground. Here one can assume this is due to the following reasons; shared identity creation, as a form of normative control, PR and marketing tool, and legitimacy. The concept of a value ground and how it is intrinsically intertwined with normative control has been presented and discussed. We utilised resulting forms, namely, cultural control (control through belonging) and identity control (control through one's identity) and their different viewpoints. Furthermore, we scrutinised literature on how individuals respond to such control efforts. After discussing the concept of normative control we delved into institutional theory. Considering legitimacy entails organisations resembling one another, a value ground could be one way in which organisations attempt to achieve legitimacy. This leads to the concept of isomorphism, which best captures the homogenisation of organisations. There are three distinct types of institutional isomorphism, being; coercive, mimetic, and normative.

Overall, this research examines the value ground of LU, and reports on a study investigating the value ground in practice, as understood, and related to, by organisational members. Considering the above literature review, the following research question guides the study:

“How do organisational members understand the relevance and meaning of a value ground in higher education?”

3 Methodology

In this chapter, we will motivate and present how we addressed and executed our study in a reflexive way. We start with our paradigm, as the set of our ontological and epistemological considerations that informed our methods and our conducting of the study as a whole. In order to allow readers to understand how we got to our findings, we provide details of our methods for constructing our set of data and our research process including our participants, as well as with how we analyse and interpret our empirical material. Finally, we present our thoughts on and our method for addressing reflexivity, reliability, and validity issues.

3.1 Research Approach

Methodology concerns fundamental questions about how to design the study and the methodological choices (Styhre, 2014). It contributes to constructing clarity (Rabinow, 2003). A methodology is informed by ontological and epistemological considerations. The ontological consideration is whether social entities can and should be considered as objective, or should be considered as social constructions, which are subjective and unstable (Bryman, 2008). In line with this, is our take on the methodology which Law and Urry (2004) speak of as an ‘enactment’ of perceived realities. That is, according to Rorty (2007 cited in Styhre, 2014), that we can never fully access the really real. We aim to keep this in mind as, for the purposes of our study, it is important to gauge how organisational members relate, understand, and interpret. This is in line with Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) and their understanding of reality that there are no objective facts, values, interviewees’ pre-understandings, and contextual factors possibly influence all data. However, within our methodology, we intend to construct, a methodological framework that helps us to obtain empirical data that may be subject to theorising. So, we view reality as being socially constructed, however, we do not argue it does not exist. Otherwise, empirical studies would not be meaningful. This is taken into account within our choices within our study.

As previously mentioned, a methodology is also defined by what and how can we know (Bryman, 2008), the epistemological consideration. The epistemological position held for this study is interpretive since we focus on understanding human behaviour, considering social action is characterised by subjectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Our interpretative stance means we view reality as constructed by individual interpretation in a certain social context

and at a particular point in time (Merriam, 2002). It further means we recognise there is no single truth and no one method that leads to pure knowledge (Spender, 1985). So, in light of our interest in gaining an in-depth understanding of the meaning-making processes of the (inter)subjective individual, we will work along the assumptions of an interpretive epistemology and a social constructivist ontology (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Subsequently, the interpretive paradigm we hold underlines the way in which we formulated our research questions, how we carried out our research and how we engaged in our empirical material, as we will elaborate on within this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

As previously stated, we tend to base our ideas on how the world is understood and known. The research method will be qualitative in nature, as we conduct a study within the interpretative paradigm. We did not choose a quantitative approach as this would not provide us with the depth we aim for. As the concept of value ground is ambiguous, we believe a qualitative approach is needed to provide the study with more meaning.

Further, we want to focus on an abductive approach, with regards to how we chose to treat our data and link findings to theory. Abduction has features of both deduction and induction (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), and suggests there is still something to be further explored (Swedberg, 2014). Stated otherwise, we use previous theory as a guide as well as a source of inspiration to find new interpretations in the empirical material, and thus, to develop new understandings.

3.3 Data Collection Method

Within our study, we focus on interviews and a document study to conduct our empirical material. As Bowen (2009) argues, qualitative researchers are expected to use multiple (at least two) sources of evidence when carrying out their study. In order to explore how members of LU talk, think and relate to the value ground, we had to ask them questions. This is why we utilise interviews as our primary source of data collection to gain insights and perspectives. These interviews will be semi-structured to allow interpretation of meaning and to create knowledge via interaction (Kvale, 1996). As we will have some knowledge within this area, with using the abductive approach, it helps us to ask relevant questions and prepare for our interviews (see Appendix A). The semi-structured interview style offers us the opportunity to guide conversation in the direction of themes we intend to cover while not

inhibiting the possibility to flexibly and spontaneously react to other hints the interviewees present to us. If we would use completely structured interviews we would not have this room to manoeuvre. Another motivation for using semi-structured interviews and an interview guide, which is often used in this approach (Bryman & Bell, 2003), is that it gave us an essential structure as our interviews were booked on a tight schedule.

For qualitative research it is important to select purposely, it should not be random or left to chance (Polkinghorne & Urry, 2005). So, we will carefully select a cross-section of interviewees which encapsulates a broad spectrum of people. It is important to focus on people performing distinct roles within the Economics and Management department, considering gender and age. Further, we will focus on organisational members who were involved in the process of designing the strategic plan and thus the value ground. All in all, this will allow us to gain a balanced and expansive perspective on the value study.

Interviewees' statements about the usage and meaning of a value ground are treated as subjective and context related rather than taking them as hard facts, as we are attempting to capture their understandings. That is why a reflexive approach is important in our study (Alvesson, 2003). Additionally, within Schaefer and Alvesson (2017) they refer to the aspect of being reflective conducting the interviews and to the idea that interviews are often less reliable than they appear. This is part of their concept of 'source critique'. Which we aim to take into account during the interview process with the use of probing, evaluating and deeper questioning. We will attempt to do this in our interviews by paying strong attention to what are we looking for, be specific and seek examples and to acquire substantial proof for derivative knowledge claims. By doing so, we hope to challenge common lines of thought about the value ground and provide new insights into how organisational members attach understanding and relevance to the value ground. Overall, fieldwork may appear romantic from the outside, however, we try to be careful with cultural oversight, misunderstandings, and embarrassments in our data collection process (Van Maanen, 2011).

Further, a document study will be performed and we centre on online university documents, emails and other documents deemed relevant to the research area. The documents will be used as a data source in our qualitative research, as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). According to Denzin (1970, p. 291) triangulation is a mix of methods in the study of the same phenomena. A document study is an uncomplicated way to obtain empirical data, that is less obtrusive and reactive, and which we use to gain inspiration from and help us understand the

organisational context better (Bowen, 2009). The document analysis will be used as an instrument to get a better understanding of the macro- and micro-practices at the site of study, and later, when writing up, be used as anecdotal material to contextualise our findings. In using this method, we should be careful as documents are always written with a purpose, produced in a certain context and have a particular audience (Bowen, 2009).

This combination of methods provides us sufficient freedom in exploring participants' perspectives related to the organisational context and allows us to conduct an in-depth analysis. We aim to keep in mind that these methods do not offer us different perspectives on a single reality but instead enhance the enactment of different realities (Law & Urry, 2004). At first, we also wanted to use the method observations. As our topic is ambiguous we concluded it was overly complicated to observe this concept, as the main language is Swedish within our case study. Which we both, unfortunately, do not speak.

3.4 Research Process

We conducted fifteen interviews as illustrated in Table 1, presenting an overview of the interviewees. For a more extensive characterisation, see Appendix B. As previously mentioned, a variety of interviewees were interviewed in terms of gender, age, and hierarchical position. Furthermore, we agreed with the participants to use replacements for their real names when quoting them in our findings to protect their anonymity, this was also to facilitate openness and trust between the interviewee and researchers. To ensure we did not miss anything important and to be able to listen to the interviews afterwards, we audio recorded the interviews with the participant's permission. We also transcribed the interviews so we could analyse them in more detail. Throughout the process, the empirical material was successively organised under various categories in a separate document – moving from parts to the whole, from pre-understanding to new understanding (Prasad, 2005). While, in parallel, reviewing literature (cf. 'abductive approach' in Swedberg, 2014) and (re)sorting (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Interviewee	Position
David	Senior Staff
Bertha	Teaching Staff
Anna	Administration Staff
Johan	Teaching Staff
Cherell	PhD Candidate
Johnny	Communications Staff
Boris	Administration Staff
Tim	PhD Candidate
Lucas	Master Student
Jacob	Bachelor Student
Olivia	Senior Staff
Chris	Teaching Staff
James	Teaching Staff
Alexander	Teaching Staff
Erik	Senior Staff

Table 1. Overview interviewees

We did not give the interviewees anything in preparation or information around the value ground before the interview since we have a broad topic and did not want to steer organisational members in a certain direction. Although, during the interview, we read the value ground to the interviewees after addressing their current knowledge of it. Further, the interviews were all conducted in English. The longest interview took 87 minutes and the shortest 20 minutes. One of the interviews was conducted via Skype since it was not possible to meet with the participant in person. Except for the Skype interview and an interview within a café, we found it important to conduct the interviews at a neutral and secluded place to avoid interruptions and disturbances (Cohen et al., 2007). Apart from two interviews, we were both present at all the interviews. Before starting the interviews, we choose one of us to be the interview leader, asking the semi-structured questions, while the other one had the opportunity to listen more actively, ask well-timed follow-up questions and observe. After each conversation with students and teachers, we summarised our reflections, interpretations, and observations in a document, which later turned out to be useful for our data analysis.

As previously mentioned, a document study was executed to get a broad picture of the concept. We used the strategic plans over the past few years from LU, e-mail contact with certain main actors within the creation of the strategic plan and were provided with unpublished data around the strategic plan. This data contained interviews with the vice-chancellor, deans, and professors, who were intimately involved in the process of designing the strategic plan and thus with the creation of the value ground. As our aim was to be able to

compare different views on the concept, we read a substantial number of documents, related to our topic.

3.5 Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2002), one should analyse the gathered data simultaneously with the collecting. This makes the data more reliable and valid. We must investigate themes and subthemes, and gradually narrow down to constructing codebooks and link them into theoretical models, as identification is significant within qualitative research (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). To discover a theme, we will look at repetitions, similarities, differences, and missing data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

With our abductive approach, we determine our themes via a combination of secondary data and our obtained empirical material. Using the empirical material as our starting point, and on the other hand, informed by our previous research, we will use the theories as sources of inspiration during our analysis (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). We aim to go back and forward from the particular to the particular. This process is well illustrated by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003, p.968) who state they “work with the challenge of accomplishing a good trade-off between theoretical inspiration and openness toward empirical material, between reading into data a certain vocabulary and certain preferred results and a naïve empiricism in which theory-free data are believed to lead the researcher to the truth”. We hope this reflexive approach will facilitate an understanding of the data and help us find interesting patterns and insights. Overall, we want to focus on consuming our empirical material in such a way that is interesting rather than obvious (Davis, 1971). Analysis of the interviews and document study must be carried out. The interviews are transcribed in order to allow useful data to be found and, finally, the documents studied during our research process need to be scrutinised.

3.5.1 Analysis of Interviews

When analysing our interviews, we first go through them several times to find broad themes that seem most interesting; we scan the interviews and write down the subjects that catch our eye. Then, we transfer our interviews to Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis programme. Here we carefully start reading our interviews and label sentences and slowly start creating codes and overall themes. As mentioned before, here we look for repetitions, similarities, differences and missing data. After finishing reading all the interviews, we start bundling codes and select the outstanding ones; we select themes and included codes appearing to be

most relevant to our study. After selecting, we read through all the codes again and identify the quotes in the codes which seem most ideal suitable within a text and paste them into the paragraphs, which came forth from the themes.

3.5.2 Analysis of Documents

Within the document study, we first decide which documents appear important in our study. Then, we both scan the documents and underline parts which appear as most interesting. After this, we transfer the documents in the programme Nvivo, which we also use for analysing the interviews. Here we utilise the same themes and codes to find the interesting matters within our documents. Finally, jointly with the interviews the quotes from the documents are picked and pasted underneath certain theme paragraphs.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

We recognise and accept that qualitative research is characterised by a prominent level of subjectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Mason, referring to qualitative research, suggests that “validity, generalisability and reliability” (2002, p.38) are various kinds of measures for assessing the quality, rigour, and wider potential of research. Thus, reliability concerns how one can repeat the research and would get the same empirical research outcomes (Mason, 2002). We are fully aware this is different when using a qualitative approach, acknowledging the ambiguity of interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). From our ontological standpoint, we agree on the non-existence of absolute truths. Thus, we acknowledge that our findings cannot be replicated or generalised, since they cannot be detached from their context and up to a point they have been filtered through our lens (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Within our study, we would not claim our interpretations are necessarily more suitable than others. Rather, we attempt to provide valuable insights and contribute to theoretical development.

Validity contains the quality of the study (Mason, 2002). Hence, conducting our study, we try to manage our biases and develop the quality of our research by engaging in multiple sources of evidence as explained in the previous section. Using different data, interviews, and a document study (Silverman, 2010), is an important method for not only checking on and challenging our biases and discovering our ‘blind spots’ (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009) but also for addressing the issues of reliability and validity. Additionally, what plays a significant role in the quality of our research are the time and resource constraints, which limited the

breadth and depth of our research to a certain extent. At last, conducting research with two researchers might contribute to our quality. With distinct roles, we were able to pay attention to the fullest within our interviews. However, subjectivity and underlying values are questioned to a greater extent when there are more researchers.

We are aware this methodology is constructed step by step, however, our study is not straightforward and actions get intertwined. All in all, this raises the importance of being reflexive, having a consciousness of biases and assumptions within our study. With that aim in mind, we will work on providing transparency on our study through thick description both of our empirical data and of what we do during this research. We believe through methods of triangulation and providing thick description it adds to the quality of the study, although not to a generalisation of it.

3.7 Chapter Summary

Following our interpretative paradigm, we developed a qualitative study seeking to interpret how organisational members understand the relevance and meaning of a value ground in higher education. To achieve this we use the methods interview and a document study and consumption of triangulation for data collection offers us broader insights. Drawing upon an abductive research strategy, we work simultaneously with theory and empirical material and analyse our findings by continually shifting between parts and whole, preconceptions and interpretations of theory and data. Further, we recognise the subjectivity of qualitative research, influencing the validity and reliability. So, throughout the process, we emphasise self-reflexivity and awareness of our biases.

4 The Story around the Value Ground

This chapter describes the results that emerged from our qualitative research. Here we aim to explore organisational members' understandings and how they relate to the value ground. We address why there is a value ground and the impact it has on individuals and the organisation. We follow hereby our research questions and the empirical data will help to shed light on this, we use quotes to create a deeper understanding of the concept.

4.1 Knowledge of the Value Ground

As a starting point, it is interesting to investigate how much people know about the value ground of LU since it plays a significant role in how organisational members understand the value ground. We discovered in general, interviewees have limited knowledge regarding the value ground, apart from a few exceptions. Although several interviewees were exposed to it during their daily work, almost all struggled to verbalise what it includes. Even interviewees who participated in the formulation of the value ground have little to no knowledge about it. The ones who had knowledge about it started to sum the values up at the beginning of the interview. However, nearly all responded like this:

To be honest nothing. (Lucas)

Well before this interview, I knew nothing in terms of what the value ground is. (Alexander)

The only part of the value ground several interviewees knew was humour.

I remember humour, blah, blah, blah, but no, being honest and that is a little indication. (Johan)

The only thing people used to remember is humour because it is fun to be here in Lund. (Johny)

Johan blames people's lack of knowledge on the fact he feels the value ground in 2006 was meant to be a foundation of the university, whereas with the new value ground, in 2016, was more of an obligation to provide an updated version.

The values were less prominent in 2016. The values were intended to be the foundation in 2006 and they were not in 2016, so, it is not surprising that the finding you will have is that people do not know them.

Even though many did not know what the value ground is comprised of, the majority reacted in the way Cherell responded, not all that explicitly but many indicated the same. With ‘it’ she refers to the value ground:

I must admit I do not even know what the values are. So embarrassing. I wanted to look at them this morning. So, it is kind of funny that I do find it important.

Anna also illustrates this:

I do not know the exact parts of it actually.

I think we need some kind of common sense why we are here and what we are doing.

Bertha indicates the importance and belief in the value ground as well, after reading the value ground to her during the interview:

No. Actually, I hear them in this final version now. I was not clearly aware what they were.

I very much believe in such documents, because, I think that makes sense.

Even when inviting people for our interviews it showed in the responses that people did not have much knowledge about the concept. For example, one employee advised it was better to contact the corporate communications department if we wished to discuss the university’s values. Further, this indicates some employees see it as something separate from their work. As the value ground is not fully known by interviewees, Anna explains that:

So, it is maybe not so that everyone knows the value ground by heart. But somehow, I think in a way share it.

So, there seems to be a lack of knowledge by the majority of the interviewees until the value ground is read to them, which affects the way in which organisational members understand the value ground, as illustrated in the above. One can question why this knowledge gap exists.

4.2 Transmission of the Value Ground

As many interviewees have little knowledge about the value ground, the reasoning why comes into question. One explanation might be that in the day to day work most participants find the communication of the value ground absent.

I would say there was not an implementation plan for this; I would have liked to have that as well.
(Johnny)

I do not think I ever had the value ground presented to me. (Jacob)

Because of the poor communication, it is a logical consequence that the participants do not have much knowledge about the concept. The present value ground is available to all the organisational members within the new strategic plan of LU 2016. As Chris states:

Information, or rather the compilation and presentation of it has been remarkable. Remarkably low key, remarkably absent, remarkably you know; what the heck?

In general, interviewees experience that there is not any sort of communication regarding the value ground of the university, even for organisational members who recently joined LU. One can even say here that people find the value ground absent. As also indicated by Johnny there was a lack of significant communication around the current value ground, however, there were some seminars and presentations when presenting the strategic plan of 2016, but no specific discussions around the value ground. Some of our interviewees attended these, some ignored these, and others had no clue of their existence. One can ask here why people missed or ignored this.

Overall, the participants talk more about the general day to day communication regarding the value ground. According to Olivia, the value ground is indirectly transmitted:

By and large, in our daily decision making, I would say. It is absolutely hopeless to try to get the faculty to a meeting saying "today we are going to discuss the value ground", [laughs] no one will come.

So, as Olivia is stating, it might be intended that there is a lack of communication of the value ground. Despite this fact, the value ground of LU is not actively communicated and several interviewees indicate it would be significant to communicate it more. One might say this indicates that employees, despite the lack of communication and knowledge, do find the concept important. Which is also indicated by Cherell's previous quote, where she mentioned her lack of knowledge but still emphasised the importance. As Lucas and Cherell mentioned:

If it would be communicated more it is kind of creating awareness as well. (Lucas)

For me, it would be nice to know them a bit more and maybe have a little poster or something in the kitchen, just so you remind yourself. (Cherell)

Overall, the majority of the interviewees related to the concept of the value ground in a positive way. It is worth noting how little talk there is of negative aspects of values on an abstract level. However, before reading the value ground for them in the interview, the majority of interviewees did not know what the value ground consists of. As illustrated in the quotes, there are strong contradictions in how interviewees relate towards the value ground.

There is low key communication and a lack of knowledge of the value ground for nearly all the interviewees, so one can question why LU put all this time and effort in creating this value ground. Within the next paragraphs, we dive deeper into how organisational members relate towards the value ground and their thoughts on why it exists.

4.3 How Organisational Members Relate to the Value Ground

In this section, we will focus on how the interviewees relate towards the value ground of LU. This is interesting to understand how organisational members are affected in their emotions, thoughts, and conducts (Kunda, 1992). To explore this in practice, it is interesting to scrutinise in-depth how they relate towards the value ground. After reading the value ground to the interviewees there were several who took it seriously, laughed about it or even showed scepticism.

4.3.1 Serious Faces and Positivity

Within this paragraph, we refer to the interviewees who took the value ground seriously and the ones who related positively towards it. When the interviewees are given the chance to talk about the value ground the majority are positive, on an abstract level. This is also demonstrated in the previous paragraph about interviewees' knowledge. As David, one of the main creators of the previous value ground, states with a serious face:

Our university should stand for goals and visions that are giving people hope.

Here he also refers to the value ground. Further, a few interviewees see it as a positive way of bringing the university together.

So that I think it is... It is such a large organisation, such a diversified organisation, and one still has to try to take any collective action. (David)

I think it is a good way of kind of bringing people together, maybe having this kind of togetherness from at least top management's point of view. It is a good way to say that like having an umbrella so to speak and you can kind of reference that in your meetings and developments like what we expect of people but also what you can expect of us. (Cherell)

Several interviewees discuss that they can refer back to the value ground within their work and therefore indicates positive connotations towards LU's value ground.

In a way to have something to refer to. (Lucas)

It is something to go back to, something to refer to. It is something to remind us all that okay “please think about this when you do your own work or when you develop your own strategies and policies within the university” and that sense it is good to have something to refer to. (Johny)

Cherell relates to the value ground in a more specific way. She mentions it is not about having a crisis, where problems need to be fixed, but something participants aspire to. The value ground is much more of a burning desire than a burning platform; the value ground helps to bring people up. Further, a few interviewees relate to the value ground positively but still in a sceptical way, which indicates some ambiguity.

It turns out that we are going to be good human beings. (Anna)

It is actually perhaps good to have it even if it sounds stupid in a way. (Bertha)

I think it is a little exercise, it is relatively harmless and it can actually do a little good. (Johan)

Overall, many interviewees tend to be quite positive, some even serious, about the value ground on the surface. This is illustrated in introducing the value ground as creating a sort of togetherness and as something to refer to, as an anchor of the university or creating a sort of whole. However, some ambiguity should be taken into account as some indicate positive scepticism.

4.3.2 Scepticism and Giggles

The majority of the interviewees are positive on the surface. However, when one starts talking about how they relate to the value ground in their daily work or if they ever consider the value ground, many participants tend to take another standpoint. So, when asking more detailed questions, people tend to become more sceptical and even pessimistic, with sometimes a sarcastic giggle.

The majority find the value ground broad and sometimes even meaningless, ending up with safe overall values. James sees this as the reason organisational members are also not against the value ground. By pointing the value ground out to the interviewees, many responded that the value ground makes sense. However, as Alexander said they could have used twenty other words as well. They are predictable and safe.

Gustaf emailed, “what I can say is that the values per se are ok in the sense that they emphasise the things we think are important (plus some other less relevant issues, including ‘humour’, which is outright embarrassing but totally in line with our 19th century image, on the other hand, and as a consequence,

they have no extrinsic meaning and they do not drive our aspiration. They mean close to nought to me”
(personal communication, 28 February 2018).

I mean if I just hear them like those buzz words I cannot really do much from them, so they do not really affect me. (Lucas)

So, like such a more radical statement would never enter this kind of documents. I think maybe you know defending academic freedom is as radical as it gets these days which you know in a way is also not radical at all [laughs]. Yeah. (Alexander)

A few interviewees find the broad formulation of the quotes pleasant, which provides room to manoeuvre within. However, another interviewee finds this highly problematic, referring to the value ground as ‘the document’:

It also means that it can be used in very many different ways and it can be interpreted to the right and left and it becomes a rather elastic document that you can jiggle and use when it fits. (James)

Johan, who participated in the previous value ground creation, felt like the Associate Vice Chancellor who was in charge of the group creating 2016’s value ground just took the previous one and lifted it – copy and paste, which he found to be a disappointment. Alexander also believes the value ground is a copy and paste job.

Some people just get assigned that job. You know, make up some words and then they do not make up words, they go to other websites I imagine and they kind of do more or less the same thing. But then I would say that you know the things that they put there, that they do fit, kind of in a well-established image of the modern university.

Anna is even more cynical. According to her, the value ground is more abstract than direction and action.

I mean, what do these words tell us anyway?

So, the value ground is created around overall broad terms, which could have been from Copenhagen University, for example. The values seem like obvious ones for an educational institution, and the only value that stands out to people is humour. Further, not only the formulation but also the amount of values is surprising.

That is a lot of values [laughs]. (Jacob)

I would have liked to have written it a lot shorter. (Johnny)

According to a few interviewees, it would be easier to have fewer values in order to work with them actively. As one interviewee mentioned, the values cannot be too narrow due to

them having to apply to everyone. Olivia, one of the main creators of the present value ground, substantiates:

You know what it is difficult with written down values because it needs to be quite broad for all of us 45 or 50 thousand almost to be able to say ok I can agree on this, it cannot be too narrow.

What many also tell us is they find the value ground is more embodied than known. As Chris states he embodies the values himself, he is the one person who finds it is the university's job to criticise the values which are adhered by oneself. So, it is the university's 'duty' to problematise assumptions and the way people live.

I can subscribe to everything here you know, and it is not that I do not think this is important. I would say you know gender is very important and diversity is very important. I like it you know it is something that I think about a lot. But then again you know so how do I relate to this. So I take it for granted, I work with it you know and so I think that these are from an institutional point of view I think it is important that one encourages people to problematise these much more and create a context why you know you allow people for problematising much of what we take for granted rather than having a value ground.

Following many of the interviewees' view, one could say the value ground is felt as an abstract formulation and does not trigger scrutinisation. As David said, it is abstract on a high level, but still important to discuss. Only when asking deeper questions on the linkage of the value ground to their daily practices, interviewees tend to become critical towards the overall values. However, what is interesting is that many of the participants seemed not to reflect upon this turning point because when ending the interview, several emphasised their positiveness towards the value ground. For example, James did not show a great deal of positivity towards the value ground of LU, although he still ended the interview with: "it is more a solution than a problem". Apart from criticism being voiced towards the value ground of LU, most interviewees were still generally positive. Following on from this, the next section of our findings looks at why our interviewees think there is a value ground.

4.4 The Interpretations as to Why a Value Ground

After investigating how organisational members relate towards the value ground, it is important to explore in order to understand their thoughts about the reason for having a value ground at LU. Forthcoming, when asking the participants why there is a value ground, they come up with different interpretations. The main interpretations are shared identity regulation, as a form of control, marketing or PR effort, and as a way of creating legitimacy.

4.4.1 The Value Ground as a Shared Identity-Shaping Effort

The first view is that interviewees see it an effort to create a collective identity. A value ground as an organisational identity, a way of identifying oneself with LU, is mentioned by almost all interviewees. As an effort to bring all the different faculties and departments together, a foundation, as something held in common and to make clear who LU is.

But I think, overall, it is to gather universities... and feel like we can do something in common and harness the breadth we have together. (Erik)

I think it is good, to be honest about what you actually consider yourself to be, so that is what I mean by foundation. (Johan)

Further, as Anna also indicates it is to show ‘who we are’, it is interesting that she also mentions a value ground demonstrates to organisational members how one should behave.

I think that is to show who we are, to show the staff how we should be or behave.

Johny and Chris are two of the few people who are more sceptical towards the attempt of creating a shared identity via the value ground. They argue it is not in the power of the management to decide ‘who we are’.

We are probably the most decentralised University in Scandinavia so it was really difficult to say to people because the central management does not have the mandate or the power to say to all the people this is who we are today. (Johny)

All in all, the majority of the organisational members see it as a potential to create a shared identity, as a way to identify oneself. Here, one can question if interviewees try to find something that makes them distinctive. Out of the many interviewees who discussed this, it seems almost like a signal that people would like a shared identity with the usage of the value ground. If it has such an impact will be discussed later on.

4.4.2 The Value Ground as a Control Effort

The second view is that several participants relate to the value ground as an effort of control. They think the value ground could be used as a control mechanism:

Maybe as a way to identify with the organisation to kind of say okay there is a congruence between my own values and values of the organisation, but also to make sure for the organisation that this is the way to go, kind of a control mechanism. (Lucas)

Since it is one big institution they sort of have to have something to control or something to say that this is what we believe then to sort of tie-in everybody so that every place does not just go off and do their own thing, so they follow the laws and they follow this mind-set. (Boris)

What is interesting is that several interviewees express a desire of having an element of control through the value ground. This is voiced by the following sentiments:

I think it is important that there is some kind of control and also to encourage people in the right direction. (Bertha)

So, I think to lead an organisation, to lead people, we need to work in other ways than having a policy or regulation to get people to do what we have agreed upon. You need to work with them. What is it called? Insight people? Give them carrots instead of whippings. Do you say that? Whips and carrots? That is a Swedish expression. You have to motivate them instead of giving them regulations. This is usually a much better way to get things done at the university. (Johny)

I would hope there is a normative control. (Bertha)

So, as demonstrated several interviewees made the correlation between the value ground and an element of control. They seem to relate to an effort of control via underlying feelings, thoughts and experiences that guide actions and therefore we will refer to this control as normative control (Kunda, 1992). As indicated by several participants they see the value ground as some sort of control. However, one can question if it is actual control when people talk about it or if one can only speak of control when the effects leave traces behind. We will touch upon the effects as a form of control later. Moreover, the above-addressed themes, around identity and control, seem to pertain more towards internal purposes of the value ground. Within the next section, our participants address the external.

4.4.3 The Value Ground as a PR and Marketing Effort

A third reason, as mentioned by several interviewees is the value ground is purely a marketing and PR effort to position LU in the market.

It was a PR exercise, and no one is really confused about that. (James)

I think it is basically more a marketing PR attempt. (Chris)

Anna sees it as a combination of communicating to several stakeholders but also as creating something distinctive from other universities.

So, I think it is important that this shows somehow in the communication. I think that is an important aspect in the communication to external stakeholders. It is a big competition between different universities and I guess they are trying to differentiate in different ways and this could be one way.

According to a few interviewees, this marketing- and PR effort of the university is applied as a recruitment tool to attract particular employees and students. So, when the organisation manifests their value ground it might attract people with aligned values.

I think again it has to do with signalling, you want to attract faculty staff and students that are interested in standing up and developing in certain directions and you want to have faculty staff and students that somehow are inspired to change things in the world at large. (Olivia)

However, Johny who works in the communication department of LU does not see it as a marketing effort, which he, on the other hand, would like to see more of.

We do not work/use them to position ourselves on a market, but this is, of course, something we really need to go back to the core values of... more in that sense more important now than for a really long time because I think we have taken that position for granted, we could not take that anymore.

Overall, several interviewees believe the value ground is created as a pure marketing and PR stunt to distinguish LU from other universities. As mentioned by Johny, marketing is important in today's society and organisations must work with it, likewise universities. One can call this marketisation of academia. So, as several mention, one could talk about a marketing and PR effort. Whether this has a significant impact is however criticised and will be discussed later.

4.4.4 The Value Ground as a Legitimacy Effort

The final view is that it is seen as an effort to create legitimacy for external stakeholders as a way of demonstrating, with the use of value ground to the outside world, that LU is considering these values in their everyday procedures.

Kind of to gain legitimacy in a way. Because I mean, especially nowadays like if a situation arises that kind of causes conflicts and people would, I do not know, go public with it. Then it would be really bad for the university like in terms of the public image. (Lucas)

It is not problem oriented or fashion oriented, it is more legitimate oriented and more symbolic institutionalise oriented. (Chris)

Contemporary, almost all universities have a value ground, so several interviewees mention the value ground is created because others also have one, as a sort of tick of the box exercise to create legitimacy.

Because everyone else does, I think that is why. Is it not the case? (Lucas)

I mean it is always a bit of a thing if you just state values like it does not matter if it is a university or a corporation or a company or whatever but if you just state values it always seems a bit like. Just having those buzz words because you need to have them. (Lucas)

A few other interviewees relate to the creation of legitimacy by following certain trends and fashions and then implementing these in the value ground.

We should not subject ourselves to fashions by what is right or what is wrong in a society at different stages. (Chris)

We should not adopt this value ground ourselves considering we should be beyond or outside the particular square which adopts different fashions. (Anna)

So, by a few interviewees, it is seen as something important to communicate to the external stakeholders, who are referred to as investors, government, and other external parties. Further, what is stated by Olivia:

I also think that especially Swedish universities automatically have a value ground in the sense that we are a governmental agency, so we are very tied to - our values, are in many ways very tied to the legal framework.

What is interesting is she is one of the only persons referring to the fact a university should have a value ground, according to the government. As she mentioned herself, her knowledge about the value ground is more extensive than others because of her position. So, overall the interviewees do not make much reference to the fact that the value ground is a compulsory entity set down by the government. As for example, Boris refers to the value ground as something that can be used as a safeguard. Additionally, what a few interviewees also mention here is they see the legitimacy as the main reason for scoring on accreditation.

With these values, it is difficult to have the ranking lists be more important than the actual work. What should be most important? Just to tick the boxes or to look at the work we need to do here? Right now, for me, I see that the ticking of the boxes is more important than what needs to be done. It almost goes against the core values that we listen so much to these rankings. (Anna)

Maybe it is because you really want the place to become more diverse, or it is because diversity is important in those rankings and accreditations and so on. Unfortunately, the latter is often the case and

I think that is also one of the motivations here. I know management is very much interested in accreditation and these kinds of things. (Alexander)

Overall, a considerable amount of interviewees agreed that this is pure legitimacy creation. Whether this has a significant impact is more complex. Overall, as demonstrated in this section, participants conceptualise that the value ground can be used for four different purposes. How its efforts are experienced in practice will be presented in the following segment.

4.5 The Impact of a Value Ground

It is important to understand how interviewees experience the impact it has on them and the organisation, in order to determine the influence of a value ground in practice. As previously demonstrated organisational members break down the value ground into four purposes, we dive deeper into whether the value ground actually works like this.

4.5.1 The Impact as a Shared Identity-Shaping Effort

The majority of interviewed organisational members see the value ground as having the potential to create a shared identity, as a way to identify oneself, and if it has such an impact will be illustrated. Due to the fact of the ‘broad’ value ground statements, which are in a sense open to interpretation, one can always find a way to identify with this value ground according to several participants. As Olivia states, it would be difficult to find people who would say “oh no, I oppose this, I am against”. What one can question here is if these statements are so open to interpretation, how do they help to create a shared identity. However, according to some other interviewees, the value ground is something everyone can relate to:

There you can imagine that a thought can be also that you enable people to actually identify with this and you feel that: Yes, I agree... I do the right things. (Erik)

On the other hand, some interviewees are sceptical about what is so distinctive regarding LU’s value ground in comparison to other universities. Here one can debate if the value ground, therefore, creates more of an academic identity than a real distinctive LU identity.

I mean what can you say that is different from any other universities is that we do not do it differently than others. (Anna)

Further, as mentioned by several interviewees, they think the value ground is there to create a ‘who are we’; one could call it some sort of identity regulation. However, Cherell does not experience it has such an impact within LU:

So, in that sense maybe it is a positive thing we do not overly talk about it in everyday life because then we do not feel like it is a form of control or they want us to identify or you know. Like identity regulation.

Surprisingly few participants talk about the value ground as having an impact on the shared identity. Further, as demonstrated in the above the value ground as an effort for an intended shared identity seems limited in the actual impact. So, one can question why almost all people still feel the value ground helps to create a sort of shared identity. One can assume these interviewees want to believe the value ground creates a certain togetherness on a deeper level as Johan states. However, this idea according to Johan, appears to be more idealistic rather than entirely feasible in practice.

The idea was that there was a perfect, almost like an economist would think, a perfect match between supply and demand. So everyone would be interested in, who am I, what am I doing, etcetera. I am not merely here for the money or for the career opportunities that will await me when I depart from the Masters programme in Managing Knowledge, People and Change, or whatever I happen to be, but I am actually part of a bigger, meaning creating community.

4.5.2 The Impact as a Control Effort

Several of the organisational members see the value ground as an effort of normative control and if it has such an impact will be presented. As a focus of this study centres on normative control, this section of findings will delve into this concept in more detail. The interviewees were not initially asked outright regarding normative control via the value ground. It seemed interesting to, first of all, see if anyone mentioned the concept of control without prompting and if they did not then it would be softly introduced and continue to be discussed in more detail. As normative control is a way of guiding people in terms of norms, it is hard to pinpoint what the actual impact of the value ground is, if used as a form of normative control. Throughout this paragraph, we attempt to elucidate on how participants experience the impact upon themselves at an individual level. When questioned about how the value ground affects their daily work several of the interviewees stated that it does not influence them. This is exemplified by the following statements:

I think it is not affecting my work and also should not affect my work in any way. (Alexander)

I do not think Lund University influenced me to work in a certain way. (Tim)

I do not feel like it is something that directs me in my everyday life so to speak. (Cherell)

Therefore, in the opinion of several interviewees, any attempt at control through the value ground has fallen flat for them, as none of this group mention they experience there is an impact upon how they work. Boris adds to this sentiment by noting his knowledge of the values is limited and states:

If I do not know them then I am just doing it automatically by just being a good Swedish citizen who has been brainwashed to believe these things. You know what I mean?

This highlights from Boris that instead of sensing an impact of control over the way he carries out his work that it comes internally from being a good Swedish citizen. This sentiment is echoed and further personalised by Anna when she notes:

I think it is because it is a similar value ground for me and the university. I do not think about it so much. I just act accordingly but I do not think so much as to whether it is the university's value ground or if it is mine. (Anna)

During Cherell's interview, she notes that:

But I do think I live them just by the person that I am in this sense not just here but anywhere. So, I do not feel like it is control. Yeah, I do not feel it is control.

I do feel you have freedom, to kind of manoeuvre and navigate inside the values.

For Cherell, she feels she embodies the value ground by being the person she is rather than any source of control, as also indicated by Boris and Anna. Notwithstanding, Chris and Johnny indicate they would never change the way in which they work just because they had read the value ground.

I am reading these now and. Oh, what the hell, we need to do this now, we need to change now, we need to do this now, that never happens. I do not think I ever heard anyone relate to this in that way. So basically, something to ignore [laughs]. (Chris)

It is not that I have learned and I accept the core values of Lund University and therefore I work in this way. (Johnny)

Chris displays that he almost sees them as more laughable than something to be explicitly followed. He notes he has not at any time heard of anyone read them and decide they must be more aware of how they act in line with them. Interestingly, Olivia makes reference to the dismay displayed when she tries to talk about the value ground. This is significant as several people have pointed out that they do not feel controlled, yet whenever the value ground is spoken about they suddenly voice that it is a form of control:

Whenever you try to talk about value ground within the university you get all the faculty are against, it is just so funny, because they think somebody is trying to control them, and then, here again. comes academic freedom, the right to think whatever you want to etcetera, etcetera, and it is nothing in the value ground that says you should not, but as soon as you try to, um, work with anything that could be perceived as managerial, faculty are against.

As demonstrated above, we directly illustrated the guidance and influence on the organisational member of the value ground. Overall, organisational members do not feel influenced by the value ground.

4.5.3 The Impact as a Cultural Control Effort

As mentioned by authors of normative control (Kunda, 1992), normative control is a hidden method and if successfully applied the organisational members may not even consider the fact they are being controlled. This lack of enlightenment can be shown partly as people do not refer directly to control but they refer to elements illustrating changes or the lack thereby in thoughts, feelings and experiences that guide their actions. Within this study, one way in which this is exemplified is the concept of culture. Culture proved to be a recurring theme within conversations with the interviewees. Although it was not specifically alluded to in the line of questioning, many interviewees mentioned a link between the value ground and culture. This was partly focused on the thoughts of creating a culture, however, a couple of interviewees elaborated on the impact of the value ground on culture within LU. One of the few employees who believes the value ground has an impact on the culture is Boris.

In my belief, anyway, the value ground also has an impact on the culture of the university and the workplaces at the university.

Another organisational member who believes in impact on the culture is Olivia:

I think the values are some sort of foundation of our culture, so the values you develop and keep over time, that filters up into the organisational culture but then again, it is very difficult to know what are values and what is culture.

Conversely, according to Johan, the only thing that brings people or the faculties together is the art of complaining.

The only thing that unites faculty in universities is complaints about the heating system and the grievances about the parking situation.

On top of that, one can assume James recalls it does not influence the culture because there is a case of such monoculture within academia.

One of the surprising things about academia is that it is such a monoculture.

Almost all interviewees are not hugely forthcoming with how they feel the value ground has an impact on the organisational culture. However, many display it by referring to the value ground as embodied by the organisational members. As embodying something is referred to “as a long-lasting disposition of the individual’s mind and body” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243) and culture “the way we do things around here” (Palmer et al., 2017, p.150), one can say that embodying certain thoughts and ways of executing actions is part of one’s culture.

*I think people I see many colleagues, who somehow embody this, I think they share this sort of thing.
(Bertha)*

Noticeably many interviewees compared their own values to LU’s value ground. For example, James stated that the value ground overlaps with his own values but the ones that do not, he is apathetic towards them and they do not change much in his work. Further, Chris finds that due to these already being embodied values; the value ground does not have such an impact:

I do not think it is going to be any impact at all nothing whatsoever. One reason is we all really live very much by these. People already hold many of these views. I do not think anyone at the University, I do not think anyone in Sweden at the university level would say that this is something wrong. I think everyone would say yes, yes, I agree I agree I agree totally agree totally with everything here. Okay, let us have a coffee.

As has been shown, some of the interviewees do not note that they think there is a sense of control transmitted from the value ground. Although they see it more as a way to guide people rather than a form of control, several interviewees state they embody the values by being who they are, rather than having been influenced to do so.

4.5.4 The Impact as a PR and Marketing Effort

The PR and marketing effort, using a value ground, is according to many, to distinguish LU from other universities. Whether this has a significant impact is criticised and several interviewees mentioned that management copied and pasted values to create a value ground like everybody else’s. LU’s value ground could easily be replaced by another university.

I do not know what is so special about Lund University that it needs specific values that would be different from, I do not know, Copenhagen University or something like that. (Alexander)

I mean you could easily replace Lund University with many other universities. They are not unique enough. (Johny)

The only real distinctive part of the value ground is seen as humour, the core value people tend to remember. As suggested by many interviewees the formulations are not distinctive for LU, therefore the impact as an external marketing tool would be limited.

4.5.5 The Impact as a Legitimacy Effort

If the legitimacy effort is truly of impact is complex and will be presented here. According to Olivia, the value ground helps the transparency and decision making within LU:

We want our decision-making and major decisions to be transparent so that means we will have to be able to explain why we make certain big, bigger decisions and then the heads of department will not necessarily agree with us but, we will try to communicate and explain why and then we will automatically touch into different value dimensions even if we are not using those specific concepts.

One can question here that the value ground, not directly applied, might be used as a safety net to base their decisions on. This led to questions from several interviewees about the genuine intentions of the value ground. As such, the promise of the value ground looks hollow and might inevitably lead to decreased legitimacy.

I feel and my guess is that is also what other people feel is that perhaps there is not a real genuine interest in gender diversity but that is more of the interest in accreditation and doing good in the numbers and on paper. (Alexander)

We have a gender problem I would say or the management says we have a gender problem [laughs]. They want us to be ranked to be on ranking lists different ranking things which means we have to do things accordingly. We had to tick the boxes checkboxes according to whatever ranking we want to be in. (Anna)

As many interviewees thought of legitimacy as the reason for having this value ground, only a few, as demonstrated, went into how this is reflected upon the organisation. One might say this does not stimulate further internal interests. However, one can surmise that the value ground has potential to create legitimacy in relation to the external environment.

When asking the interviewees what the impact of the value ground is on LU, the response was anonymous on the exterior. The real effects are queried by many participants. As people have expressed difficulty in seeing a manifestation of the impacts of it, they may, therefore, struggle to understand the point of it altogether, the question remains then why people still display a level of light-heartedness on the surface level. Furthermore, as participants

experience little internal impact, one can question what the reason for this is. One reason might be that several interviewees address the matter of the value ground not being created around problem identification. Within the next paragraph we present the provided ideas around this theme.

4.6 The Value Ground and Problem Identification

As the majority of the participants display little influence over their actions by the value ground, one can argue this has to do with several interviewees addressing that the value ground is not created around particular problems. As mentioned previously, the value ground is seen by some interviewees as a copy and paste exercise. The main creators or actors of the current value ground (and also the previous one) are dubious as to whether it is created around certain problem identification. Erik makes the point that they discussed future challenges, but no manifestation of real problem identification. As one of the other main actors mentioned:

It is very difficult to isolate an issue and then relate that to a specific value. (Olivia)

Olivia is stating that it is hard to develop a value ground around problem identification.

I will say we are not trying to make sure each and every faculty member or staff member knows exactly what is in the value ground. Again that comes with decision making, that comes with more the kind of organisational culture that we want to create and maintain and develop in a sense.

On the contrary, an effort of control is demonstrated since she refers here to developing and maintaining a certain culture. Furthermore, she points to implementing the value ground in practice rather than illustrated on paper.

Many participants felt that when hearing or reading the values, that problem identification was not the case. The value ground does not target important problems within the university.

We do have problems at university but they are not targeted by the value ground. (Chris)

This is also exemplified by an interviewee who participated in the creation of the value ground:

It was not based on a list of let us say – shortcomings or tensions or contradictions of the experience of being in a university. (Johan)

This is additionally underlined by several interviewees who refer to the value ground as a stable entity.

Or at least the value ground is because that has survived. So, it is basically the same. (Johan)

It has been since they were founded. I hope most of them. (Bertha)

Alexander mentioned they might have a discourse about problems within LU, although as previously stated they end up with broad overall statements.

They are talking about certain problems within society and having certain opinions about it but not really state it, certain problems for a university and they end up in kind overall terms.

So, there were no problems, weaknesses or risks identified, no focus, allocation of resources or clear change are pointed at, according to the statements above. Those issues that would possibly be calling for attention, clarification, and a plan for dealing with are not addressed at all.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrates the emerged findings from our empirical research, as interpreted by us. Primarily, the apparent lack of knowledge from interviewees was illustrated and the assumable reason for this; low key communication. After displaying organisational members' understandings, the way they relate to the value ground is addressed. In general, organisational members seem positive on an abstract level. However, when going into more detail they tend to demonstrate more scepticism and cynicism. Subsequently, how participants conceptualise the value ground was outlined. It is said that the value ground can be used for four different purposes; a shared identity, control, PR and marketing, and legitimacy. When illustrating the impact of these purposes, they display limited impact on the individuals as well as the organisation, and seemingly legitimacy highlighted a potential influence on the external environment. Finally, after demonstrating the relatively small impact, the matter is addressed by participants that the value ground is not created around issues that would possibly call for clarification.

5 Discussion

This chapter discusses themes which emerged from the findings section. Here we examine organisational members' understandings and how they relate to the value ground. We discuss why there is a value ground and the impact it has on individuals and the organisation. We will follow this in terms of our research questions.

The empirical material that has been presented in the findings chapter has displayed that examining the relationship between the value ground and organisational members is of ambiguous nature and hard to come to firm conclusions, as underlined by Murphy and Davey (2002) by referring to the point that values are ambiguous. We have constructed a fuller picture of the complex relationship between the value ground and its impact in practice.

5.1 Value Ground Know-How

The empirical data revealed that two years after the inception of the value ground, in general, there is limited knowledge around the value ground and markedly even those who were in touch with or close to it lacked a firm understanding. The ones holding management positions were the only ones possessing substantial knowledge of the value ground. So, significantly, recollections of the value ground were poor.

The empirical material indicates there was a distinct lack of communication around the value ground. As communication and knowledge are intrinsically linked, this lack of communication seems to be the explanation for a knowledge gap (Sales & Fournier, 2007). As indicated, this lack of communication may be intentional in order to ingrain the value ground through daily practice. Nevertheless, one must take into account that communication plays such an important role when implementing 'changes' (Palmer et al., 2017). Further, it was noted by some it would be significant to communicate the value ground more and that there must be more of an effort to create awareness, therefore one can detect some positivity towards the value ground. Generally, there is little talk of negativity around the value ground

on an abstract level. One can question here, why one still finds the value ground of the organisation important. If there is not much knowledge and communication, one might live without them. Arguably, it can be uncomplicated to relate positively to the value ground when one has little know-how other than on the surface. One can query here whether organisational members are more attracted to the term 'value ground' rather than what it entails. Overall, after two years, the transmission and absorption upon the organisational members, as the know-how seems relatively weak, is debatable. One can question why the organisation put time and effort into creating this value ground if communication is sparse.

5.2 How Organisational Members Relate to the Value Ground

It is interesting to scrutinise in depth how the organisational members relate to the value ground in order to understand how they are affected in their emotions, thoughts, and conducts (Kunda, 1992). As discussed above, positive connotations are attached to the value ground on an abstract level. This abstractness is shown when referring to the value ground as a mechanism to bring people together, and something to refer back to in their work. Even though relating positively towards the value ground, when the value ground comes closer to one's daily practices, criticism tends to creep in. This is manifested through notes of scepticism, some pessimism and even a few sarcastic giggles. This confirms the arguments of several researchers that organisational members tend to react with humour, irony, cynicism, satiric or festive responses towards management control actions (Butler, 2015; Westwood & Johnston, 2012; Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999). These responses are referred to by Westwood and Johnston (2012) as micro-actions of resistance. Furthermore, the value ground seems to be more abstract than providing direction and guiding actions. It possesses the usual fashionable wording with little significance beyond it and as the formulation is abstract then scrutinisation is limited. It is good sounding, vague, and leaves a feeling of "what does it tell us?". Nevertheless, when returning to the concept of a value ground on an abstract level, even those who had been critical finalised the argument with "it is more of a solution than a problem". So, individual responses to the value ground seem inherently ambivalent (Kunda, 2006; Casey, 1999). This may have been interrelated to the failing of the organisation to ingrain the value ground, further limiting exposure of organisational members to the value ground due to the lack of directly working with them.

5.3 The Limited Impact

5.3.1 The Impact as a Shared Identity-Shaping Effort

The value ground is interpreted as an effort to create a collective identity. This is in line with Padaki (2010), who refers to organisations creating shared values in order to establish a shared identity. Strikingly, almost all referred to the potential of using the value ground as a means to create a 'Who are we' (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011). This might indicate that organisational members are uncertain, have self-doubt and a lack of confirmation by significant others, which are major drivers of identity work, aiming to lead to a restoration of a non-confirmed identity (Collinson, 2003; Knight & Willmott, 1989; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011). However, if the value ground stimulates the establishment of a collective identity is questionable. As emphasised by Thyssen (2009), organisations who choose to work with values in such a manner, should not imagine the doors to perfection are opened. As demonstrated in our case study, due to the value statements being broad, it makes it less arduous for one to find a way to identify with the value ground. One can question though how the value ground can help to create a shared identity when the value ground is so open to interpretation. Again, this is also questionable as some ponder what is so distinct about the value ground and therefore one can argue it helps to create more of an overall academic identity than one distinctly pertaining to the organisation. As Palmer, Dunford and Buchanan (2017) stated people tend to identify oneself with the organisational identity, the overall 'we', if the organisation is distinctive in terms of material practices, symbolic expressions and most importantly in our study; values, that are experienced as successful and unique from its environment. The outcomes of our study indicate this does not seem to be the case. Moreover, the shared identity with the use of a value ground seems to be more of an idealisation than a feasible concept, the doors to perfection do not seem to be opened (Thyssen, 2009). Nevertheless, the value ground seems to be anchored and/or shared by multiple individuals, thus creating a common base of value (Rokeach, 1973) although this does not seem to be the result of the value ground as it is not seen as "the most distinctive property or defining characteristic of a social institution" (Rokeach, 1979, p.51). One can assume participants have the desire for a shared identity, as this is evident in the way they relate to it.

5.3.2 The Impact as a Control Effort

Another interpretation identified by organisational members was that of control. When addressing the 'guidance' of the value ground, it was noted that some organisational members would never change the way in which they work just because they had come into contact with

the value ground, even alluding to the idea that it is rather weak. As according to Weick (1995) values play a significant role in control as they hold influence over people when diagnosing situations and in decision making, this might be the case with one's personal values, however, this does not seem to be the influence of the value ground. Although, reference is made to the outcry displayed in the instances when trying to talk about it, as soon as the value ground is addressed, immediately voices are raised about seeing the value ground as a form of control. One can assume this shows a level of resistance. As Kunda (1992) points out people are not passive objects of control and shape themselves and others via acceptance and resistance to the values in hand. A reason of resistance might be that individuals experience they should accept this value ground without question, as organisational members find that there was not huge discourse around the creation of the value ground (Bardi et al., 2009). Overall, when addressing guidance via the value ground directly, it seems to have a weak impact.

The interpretation of control indicated a link to normative control. As normative control is a hidden way of guiding people, and the concepts values (Murphy & Davey, 2002) and normative control (Pfeiffer, 2016) are ambiguous, it is difficult to pinpoint what the actual impact is on the individual. Moreover, when normative control would be successfully exercised, using a value ground, employees would not feel they are being controlled (Kunda, 1992). Therefore, one should look at the concepts of feelings, thoughts and experiences guiding their actions, to scrutinise normative control on a deeper level (Kunda, 1992). When examining this, the concepts of culture and identity are addressed without a push in this direction. There is much discourse around a link to a shared identity and the influence on culture, which is interesting as within literature the distinction is often made between these two in the relation to normative control (Murphy & Davey, 2002; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Although when digging into these more indirect forms of control, the impacts from these influences do not seem so substantial.

As previously mentioned, one makes the link between the value ground and a shared identity, however, almost none towards one's personal identity. Costas and Kärreman (2013) state managerial practices target the inspirations of who one wants to be, but when looking at the responses of how interviewees feel, it seems only to be an aspiration that goes no further. Additionally, Fleming and Sturdy (2009) argue modes of normative control shift more towards the individual rather than towards the 'community' they belong to, whereas in this

case study, the focus is strongly on the 'Who are we' instead of 'Who am I' (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011). Therefore, linking it to one's personal identity, control seems weak.

Furthermore, many refer to the value ground as helping to create organisational culture, however, only a few directly address that it has this particular impact. Others are much more sceptical towards the idea that there even is such a thing as a shared culture. One question here is if this is even possible, as Welch and Welch (2006) denote managing organisational culture is not a simple task to accomplish. On top of that, notes of this scepticism were demonstrated when mentioning that academia is such a monoculture and that the only thing that unites people is complaining. Nevertheless, many do refer to embodying the value ground and also possessing similar personal values, without having much knowledge about what the value ground consists of. Organisational members generally felt certain that they themselves were living the value ground. As illustrated by Thyssen (2009) individual and organisational values can be similar but also different, which can lead to a clash between values and ultimately conflicts. However, within this case study organisational members tend to overlap their values with the value ground, which is regarded with some cynicism and scepticism, nonetheless, it does not seem to lead to clashes. Although, it does seem to reduce personal significance, as the value ground was seen as unremarkable. Still, one of the main reasons for the light-heartedness towards the value ground seems the congruence with individuals' personal ones. Further, reference is made to the value ground as creating some sort of togetherness, as Barker (1993) argues normative control is exercised by giving individuals a feeling of belonging, this statement seems confirmed. However, due to the value ground already being embodied, it is debatable as to whether the value ground is the reason why people experience togetherness. A value ground is meant to be comprised of values that are celebrated within a culture in determining what is considered as an acceptable way to be an individual (Colnerud, 2004). This impact seems weak as the value ground fails to capture the imagination since the values were inherent in the culture and obviously too close to normal standards of behaviour. Overall, as shown within identity as well as culture, the working of shared values as a form of control on organisational members (Perrow, 1986), seems relatively poor.

5.3.3 The Impact as a PR and Marketing Effort

Another interpretation is that the value ground can be used as an effort for PR and marketing. It is noted that no one was particularly in doubt about this effort. Urde (2003) interestingly argues that a value foundation can be used as a way of building or maintaining a corporate

brand, although there does not appear to be any evidence pertaining to this within this study. This is substantiated by one of the communication members who notes the value ground is not intended for that reason. Still, a substantial number of people think this is the reason for the value ground's existence, as contemporary organisations have to work with marketing to be on the map and attract people with aligned values, therefore charming the desired people to their doors. On the contrary, reference is made to the value ground as being meaningless, broad, safe, predictable, a copy and paste job, buzzwords, and that twenty other different words could have been used to the same ends and the only value that stands out for people is humour. This partly indicates many of the values are hollow and dispensable as many cannot recall them. Although, Thyssen (2009) states the approach an organisation takes to values impacts on earnings although not directly linked to money, therefore their effective utilisation could be a way to gather external interest and potentially increased investment. In this case study though, as many interviewees suggest, the formulation of the value ground is homogeneous and could easily be replaced with, for example, Copenhagen University. Thus, the value ground seems therefore to create little value for its internal and external 'customers' (Silk, 2006). Arguably, if the value ground were to be used in this way it would be somewhat vague and ridiculous. Still, it creates a certain image which can be projected to the external environment.

5.3.4 The Impact as a Legitimacy Effort

The value ground is also interpreted as a legitimacy creation effort. This idea is in line with Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) who infer that if organisations are unable to fulfil a value ground their legitimacy often comes into question. Contemporarily, many Swedish universities have a value ground due to possessing one being mandatory. So, reference is made to the idea that it would be out of the ordinary if LU did not have one. This, in turn, perpetuates the idea of institutional coercive isomorphism whereby the state constructs controls and rules and organisational uniqueness begins to blur due to value homogeneity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The other way of pursuing legitimacy is to follow certain fashions according to several participants. Therefore, the value ground is seen as important for communicating to the external environment, to legitimise its existence and provide reasoning when questioned around the way it does things (Churchman, 1961), as a means of justification in decision making (Thyssen, 2009). So, the value ground is associated with pure legitimacy, or as one could call it: window dressing. By this, we refer to the attempt to make the public face of an organisation look good, to impress external groups (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016). As noted, to

pinpoint the exact the role that the value ground plays with legitimacy seems difficult. The actual impact of the value ground as a form of legitimacy is mainly left to be judged by the external environment. One summarises this line of thought with “it is difficult to live up to them but at least it has legitimacy”.

5.4 The Value Ground and Problem Identification

As the majority does not seem to be influenced in their actions, one can argue there is a correlation to the notion of the value ground not being created around certain problems. This may be a crucial factor in understanding the weak impact of the value ground when used in parallel with normative control, as they can supposedly work together. One mentioned using a value ground as a way to maintain the culture, and Welch and Welch (2006) refer to maintain a culture one should internalise organisational values before they can be practised as a source of control. So, this illustrates the creation of the value ground as a way of maintenance rather than ‘changing’ it. The value ground hardly exhibits a logic of identifying a variety of significant problems that subsequently motivates a plan of prioritisations and decisions and leading to improvements. Further, almost all mention it is not around any problem identification, one can surmise this also indicates people do not feel it is there as an effort of ‘changing’ them. As underlined by main actors, the value ground is not created around problem identification; assumedly the organisation did not direct effort to control or ‘change’ organisational members. As this can be linked back to the lack of integration and communication, it seems confirmed once more that there was no intention for ‘change’.

5.5 The Interpretations as to Why a Value Ground

As discussed above, it is outlined how organisational members understand the relevance of the value ground and come up with four interpretations for which it could be used. To provide a quick roundup, there were two internal purposes interpreted, namely shared identity and control. The value ground was noted by many for its potential to be used as an effort to create a collective identity. However, as the value ground is so open to interpretation it is difficult to draw conclusions on how to align organisational members. Noted earlier, people will identify with the ‘we’ (Palmer et al., 2017) if the organisation is distinctive in terms of its values although here this seems to be an idealisation rather than a manifestation.

The other internal interpretation identified by organisational members was that of control. When directly addressing guidance of the value ground, organisational members indicate it

has little to no impact on them. When diving deeper into normative control, the concepts of culture and identity come to the fore. The impact on the individual identity seems weak due to focus being strongly on 'Who are we' instead of 'Who am I' (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011). Further, several refer to the value ground as helping to create organisational culture, although only a few indicate that it has this particular impact. Overall, as Perrow (1986) argues, shared values working as a form of control does not seem to be substantiated by this case study since the necessary degree of control is achieved through the more powerful and all-pervasive cultural norms. As the majority do not seem to be influenced in their actions by the value ground, arguably there is a correlation to the idea of minimal problem identification. On the evidence of this study, it is concluded that there was little effort to address critical issues and embed the value ground.

We now addressed the two interpretations by organisational members pertaining to internal purposes. Anthony (1989) argues values of the organisation are virtually never fruitfully transmitted outside the borders of management to the organisational members. This standpoint suggests strong a commitment of management to a set value ground exclusively designed to control organisational members, as we refer to as normative control. Within this case study, however, this appears to be more intricate, as management seems ambivalent in its commitment to the value ground. An adjustment of Anthony's (1989) standpoint is suggested, whereby organisational members may not only reject the executed value ground but they also merely ignore them as the value ground has little salience.

Furthermore, external purposes for the value ground were interpreted by interviewees, namely PR and marketing, and legitimacy. Interestingly, no one was particularly confused about the value ground being used as a tool for PR and marketing. Although later many stated that the values are pronounced as empty words and somewhat meaningless, indistinct from other universities. It, therefore, seems to create little value for internal and external 'customers' (Silk, 2006). Thus, as shown, the usage of the value ground as a means of shared identity and control seems weak and effectiveness as PR and marketing is limited, as displayed in Table 2. Further, organisational members' understanding about the relevance and meaning of the value ground seems ambiguous and ambivalent as illustrated by the congruence with one's individual values, instrumentality, scepticism and light-heartedness, and embeddedness. So, one can question why the organisation has a value ground. Seemingly, the last external interpretation provides the most logical explanation, the value ground as a form of legitimacy. Considering the linkage of legitimacy to isomorphism, one can argue that some of the distinct

types that produce institutionalisation influence the organisation within this study (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Moreover, coercive isomorphism is an influential factor as the government mandates a value ground (Lund University, 2018). Additionally, it seems the organisation feels the need to do it, as one could refer to a pure imitation trend, so-called mimetic isomorphism. Overall, as once shown again organisations always tend to conform (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), which seems to enhance functional stupidity as the aim is to do what everyone else does and avoid standing out from the pack (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016).

Purpose	Interpretation	Meaning/Impact
Internal	Shared identity	Weak
Internal	Control	Weak
Internal/External	PR and marketing	Medium
External	Legitimacy	Medium high

Table 2. Value ground's efforts

6 Conclusion

Within this chapter, we discuss our main findings and the contributions of our study that we have drawn from our research. Finally, we discuss our encountered limitations and provide several suggestions for future research.

Our study centred on scrutinising a value ground in practice. This was done through a case study, where the values and their significance are critically examined. This investigation was guided by our research question: *“How do organisational members’ understand the relevance and meaning of a value ground in higher education?”*. An interpretive and qualitative approach was employed throughout this research, adding to more functionalist studies by providing an in-depth understanding of the value ground. Overall, our aim was not to gain empirical generalisations but rather to advance practical and theoretical insights. The main findings of our research are below elaborated.

6.1 Main Findings

6.1.1 Attractive Words

The value ground’s transmission and absorption upon the organisational members, as the know-how seems relatively weak after two years, is minor. A knowledge gap is encountered (Sales & Fournier, 2007). Although there is significant positiveness illustrated towards the value ground, this seems however due to the little know-how other than on the surface. Organisational members seem more attracted to the term ‘value ground’ than what it entails. When the value ground comes closer to one’s daily practices scepticism and cynicism creep in (Butler, 2015; Westwood & Johnston, 2012; Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999) and micro-actions of resistance are shown (Westwood & Johnston, 2012). Nevertheless, when returning to the concept on an abstract level, it is indicated that it is more of a solution than a problem. This substantiates that organisational members’ understanding of the relevance and meaning of the value ground is ambiguous and ambivalent (Kunda 2006; Casey, 1999).

6.1.2 The Limited Impact

As illustrated through our study, the value ground appears to be a weak basis for normative control, PR and marketing, and the creation of a shared identity. It is also debatable how

much change was desired by management as the impact on the organisation as well as the individual seems to be rather weak. This is not to say the values were nowhere evident, but rather that they were not seen as major drivers of attitudes or behaviour. Further, the value ground seems to be a formalisation of the already existing shared values and appears somewhat self-explanatory to organisational members. Perrow (1986) argues shared values can be used as a form of control and our research illustrates behaviour is generally in line with the value ground; however it is not mainly guided by it. Rather, the already established culture and traditions in the organisation seem to impact organisational members first and foremost. Therefore, a value ground is not something that organisation has, but rather something 'is', since behaving according to the shared values is inherent in the culture (Smircich, 1983; Meek, 1998). In this case, the organisation failed to add value for its organisational members as the value ground is so generic. Rather than creating significant meaning and relevance, the value ground looks to be more about rhetoric (Silk, 2006).

6.1.3 The Interpretations as to Why a Value Ground

The value ground's content and usage seem to be rhetorical (i.e. related to image and legitimacy) rather than an individual internal impact. So, the formalisation of the value ground, which are already the embodied shared values is associated with the organisation exercising legitimacy to reassure their image in a surface-loving society (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Alvesson & Spicer, 2016). The value ground seems to have been formed due to pressures of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). According to the government, coercive isomorphism, it is mandatory to have a value ground (Lund University, 2018). Another pressure seems everyone else does it, and so do we, so-called mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This enhances functional stupidity as the aim is to do what everyone else does and avoid standing out from the crowd (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016). Consequently, the value ground turns vague and all-encompassing which leads to as Bertha says: "it is difficult to live up to them but at least it has a legitimacy" (interview, March 27, 2018). Overall, the value ground is found to be a safeguard as well as a possible means of inspiring discussion to create an overall togetherness which embodies the values.

6.2 Contributions

Based on the different insights outlined above, we suggest that our study contributes in our enveloping themes as outlined in the literature review, as well as to a better understanding of

how a value ground works in practical terms. In our study, we have shown that a value ground provides researchers with a powerful lens through which they can develop the concept.

6.2.1 Working with a Value Ground

We want to address the question of what practitioners can gain from the insights generated in this study. However, this is not a hands-on account giving advice on how to best manage a value ground. This study mostly has been descriptive and analytical of social dynamics rather giving action orientations. Nevertheless, we think practitioners can give direction for how to implement and practice a value ground in organisations from this thesis as we provide insights, a mode of feedback, on how organisational members understand the relevance and meaning of the concept in practice. Therefore, it provides new understandings for interested practitioners about the complexity of a value ground and possible unintended dynamics.

6.2.2 Theorising the Value Ground

The practical implications of our conducted study illustrate that ‘how’ a value ground is understood is a significant question for further research in developing value ground theory, to place organisational members and their subjective understanding in the centre when looking at a value ground in practice. In that sense, our research findings contribute towards closing the previously outlined research gap. Picking an interpretative processual methodology allowed us to gain important understandings into the complexity of a value ground in organisational practice. Therefore, an interpretive viewpoint, as opposed to more functional approaches, seems to be a beneficial perspective to disclose significant insights about how a value ground is understood in practice.

In general, the formalisation of the value ground that already seems to be embedded might lead to micro actions of resistance. It is thus important to add value to the concept for organisational members. Although acknowledging this might be complicated, it indicates as being vital for a positive enduring impact of a value ground.

6.3 Limitations

We acknowledge that our study does not come without limitations. Since we only had a brief period of time, our scope is limited. Our empirical material offered the possibility for further interpretation and unravelling, in which we could not indulge. This fruitfulness of our empirical material is demonstrated, for instance, by some citations which lent themselves

toward clarification in connection with various other insights. Further, when studying this for a longer period, we would have the opportunity to conduct more interviews and gain perspectives, and that may have provided us with a deeper analysis of the concept value ground. Additionally, we might have also studied another university. This could have offered us the opportunity of comparing examples and might have provided us with intriguing perspectives or on the other hand, could have given our study more substance to draw upon stronger general practical insights. At last, it was difficult to get closer to the concept as it is Swedish, and we are both unfortunately not. Therefore, we missed certain literature and the method observations were not particularly feasible. It would be useful for future research to observe organisational members during their daily routines and interactions to capture the value ground even more in practice.

6.4 Future Research

Throughout our research, we came into contact with several findings and areas which we feel are worth considering for future research. For example, as many indicated their personal values were the same as the value ground; it would be interesting to pay more attention to how these differ as our study focuses more on the overlap and alignment of organisational and individual values. Additionally, it would be fruitful to look at an organisation which uses a value ground for a certain intention, such as PR and marketing. Examining this would provide insights into the impact of a value ground with a strong particular aim, whereas in our study the aim of the value ground was left to our interpretation. At last, it would also be interesting to study and compare how a value ground is understood and put into practice by organisational members within another context. For example, we feel it would be insightful to examine a start-up company without a strong established culture, where the shared values are not yet common sense and thus requires a change of mind-set and behaviour.

In essence, we think that future research on a value ground can particularly help to further enhance theoretical and practical understanding by questioning what it means to people in practice. As organisations often imitate one another (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and value work is popular (Malbašić & Brčić, 2012), these studies would be beneficial in a long-term perspective when implementing and using a value ground.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

These were the questions that we used during our interviews. However, as we had an informal atmosphere in the interviews and let the interviewees talk about what they wanted at times, these questions were used as guidelines.

Personal

- Background information (tell something about yourself)
- Name:
- Age:

Introduction

- Introduce ourselves and thanks for participating
- Goal of our research
- Time
- Ask okay to make notes and record
- Guarantee anonymity
- Free to stop at any time within the interview

Probing questions

- When you say _____, what do you mean?
- Would you explain that to me in more detail?
- Can you give me an example?
- How do you feel about that?
- How did you react?

Interview questions

- Did the person participate in the creation of the strategic plan?
- Why did they change value ground? What changed in the value ground?

1. Should universities have a value ground?
2. What do you know about LU's value ground?
3. Where did you hear or read about the value ground?

In which way is the value ground communicated to you? (Report/presentation/email etc.)

Can you recall the university's official values for me?

Are they clear? (Show them the values)

4. What does the formulation of the values mean to you? How do you feel about the value ground of LU?
How do you interpret them?
5. How do you use the value ground within daily work? Concrete situation.
Like how do you think about them, if at all?
How can one talk about the relevance of the value ground for your daily work?
6. In what situations played the value ground a significant role for you?
7. How do they help to guide your daily working life in LU?
8. What plays a significant role in using/not using a value ground?
9. What for impact does the value ground have within LU?
Where can you see the effects of the value ground?
10. How would you describe the relationship between the value ground and LU?
11. What are big problems in LU today?
What kind of role does the value ground play in this?
Is there a particular problem, where does a value ground help to fix?
Is the value ground created around certain problem identification?
12. What do you think the reasoning is for LU having a value ground?
What is the rationale or background for working with these?
13. What is a value ground not for you?

What else

14. Are there any questions/things around the topic value ground where you have not had the change for this far but would like to elaborate on or talk about?

End

- Any questions?
- Transcribe the interviews (would you would like to have a copy?)
- Can we contact via email if we have any further questions?
- Guarantee anonymously
- Thanks again

Appendix B: Interviewees

Interviewee	Description
Alexander	Alexander is a member of the teaching staff at the university and has worked there for some time now.
Anna	Anna holds an administrative role within the organisation and has done for a few years. She has a wide scope of experience stemming from various industries.
Bertha	Bertha has been teaching at the university for around a decade and has a particular interest in the value ground.
Boris	Boris works within the administration at the university and states his knowledge of the value ground is limited.
Cherell	Cherell is a PhD candidate and had no experience with LU prior to becoming an organisational member.
Chris	Chris is a member of the teaching staff and holds strong views regarding the value ground and its linkage to normative control. He is very vocal about his opinions.
David	David holds a senior position within the university and was one of the creators of the previous value ground.
Erik	Erik is a senior member of staff and has wide and varying experience within LU. He was also involved in the creation of the strategic plan.
Jacob	Jacob is a bachelor student at LU and is close to gaining his degree. He notes that his value ground knowledge is minimal.
James	James is a member of the teaching staff and keen to share his opinions and thoughts on the value ground. He has interest in organisational control.
Johan	Johan is part of the teaching staff and has direct experience of the value ground as one of the previous creators. He is incredibly willing to share his thoughts.
Johny	Johny is a member of the teaching staff with broad experience of European universities. He is positively indifferent towards the value ground.
Lucas	Lucas is a master student who chose to come to LU due to the uniqueness of his study programme.
Olivia	Olivia holds a senior position and has a broad understanding of the value ground.
Tim	Tim is a PhD candidate from outside of Scandinavia. He does not feel the value ground has influenced how he works.