



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Control Through Freedom

A Qualitative Case Study of a Non-Managerial Organization

by

Hedvig Winsa

Linda Österdahl

May 2018

Master's Programme in Managing People, Knowledge and Change

Supervisor: Jens Rennstam
Examiner: Nadja Sörgärde

Abstract

- Title:** Control Through Freedom – A Qualitative Case Study of a Non-Managerial Organization
- University:** Lund University School of Economics and Management
- Course:** BUSN49 - Degree Project in Managing People, Knowledge & Change, Master Level, Business Administration - Spring Semester 2018
- Authors:** Hedvig Winsa & Linda Österdahl
- Supervisor:** Jens Rennstam
- Keywords:** Organizational culture, normative control, non-managerial structure
- Thesis purpose:** The purpose of this thesis is to explore the role of normative control by analyzing how culture is perceived and maintained, in an organization which is defined as non-managerial.
- Methodology:** The empirical part of this study was conducted through an interpretive, abductive and qualitative research method. The empirical data is collected through a case study of the IT-consultancy firm Brightside and involves eleven semi-structured interviews and a document analysis of Brightside's official, and the organizational members' private, social media channels.
- Findings:** Through our analysis we found that there are four key themes of the culture perceived by the organizational members, namely: community, open, supportive, and high achieving. We also identified five enablers for the identified culture to be maintained: social activities, preaching, participative decision-making, internal network, and recruiting. Lastly, we found four tensions in what the enablers result in, which are: inclusion vs exclusion, individualism vs collectivism, guiding vs steering, and lastly "be yourself" vs "be a Brightsider". Through these tensions we also identified normative control.

Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to thank all the organizational members of Brightside who participated in our study and contributed with interesting opinions and perspectives. We are especially thankful for the openness and help to find more Brightsiders for our study.

We also want to thank our supervisor, Jens Rennstam, who has supported us in the research process by providing us with guidance, insightful input, and feedback.

Lund, May 2018

Hedvig Winsa

Linda Österdahl

Table of Contents

1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Problem statement	2
1.3 Research aim and questions	3
1.4 Structure of the thesis	4
2 Literature review	5
2.1 Organizational culture	5
2.1.1 Culture management	7
2.1.2 Managers' role	8
2.1.3 How to manage culture	9
2.2 Normative control	10
2.2.1 Development of normative control	10
2.2.2 Defining normative control.....	11
2.2.3 Concertive control.....	13
2.2.4 Neo-normative control	13
2.2.5 Internal branding	14
2.3 Chapter summary	15
3 Methodology	16
3.1 Research context	16
3.2 Research approach	17
3.3 Research design	17
3.4 Data collection	18
3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews	19
3.4.2 Document analysis	21
3.5 Data analysis	22
3.6 Reflexivity	23
3.7 Reliability and validity	25
3.8 Chapter summary	26
4 Empirical findings and analysis	28
4.1 The perceived culture at Brightside	29
4.1.1 Brightside as a community.....	29
4.1.2 Brightside as open.....	30
4.1.3 Brightside as supportive.....	31
4.1.4 Brightside as high achieving.....	33
4.2 How the culture is maintained at Brightside	34
4.2.1 Social activities	34
4.2.2 Preaching.....	36
4.2.3 Participative decision-making.....	38
4.2.4 Internal network	40
4.2.5 Recruitment.....	41
4.3 Tensions at Brightside	43
4.3.1 Inclusion vs Exclusion	43
4.3.2 Individualism vs Collectivism	45
4.3.3 Guiding vs Steering.....	47
4.3.4 "Be Yourself" vs "Be a Brightsider"	49
4.4 Chapter summary	50
5 Discussion	52

5.1 The creation of a united “we”	52
5.2 Reflecting upon normative control.....	54
6 Conclusion	58
6.1 Research aim	58
6.2 Contribution to academia.....	58
6.3 Practical implications	59
6.4 Future research	60
References.....	61
Appendix 1: Interview questions	70

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

One way for organizations to be more effective and efficient in their performance and productivity is to focus on having a strong organizational culture with common beliefs, values, ideas, and meanings (Davis, 1984; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Goldsmith and Clutterbuck, 1984; Kanter, 1984, 1990; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale, 1985; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Waterman, 1988). Culture management, as a concept, developed when managers started to realize the value of putting time and effort into creating these strong organizational cultures (Keyton, 2011; Kilmann, Saxton & Serpa, 1986; Schein, 2006). An explanation of culture management is “shaping norms, instilling beliefs, inculcating values, generating emotions” (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 51).

Culture management is primarily written about as a managerial tool (Keyton, 2011; Ouchi, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982). A concept referred to as normative control is written from a more critical perspective of managing culture (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Kunda, 1992; Willmott, 1993). Normative control can be explained as “the attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions” (Kunda, 1992, p. 11). The concept differs from more traditional types of control, which focus more on rules, regulations, impersonal behaviors, and outputs (Etzioni, 1961; Mintzberg, 1983; Ouchi, 1977). In other words, early management studies concern control of bodies rather than controlling people’s minds, as in normative control (Kornberger, 2010). Some researchers view normative control as manipulation performed by management (Willmott, 1993) and others even claim it to be tyranny (Whyte, 1956). This control concept is sometimes presented as totalitarian in its nature, hence working hard is not enough but beyond that, employees must commit their souls and identities to the organization (Edwards, 1979).

Controlling organizations has traditionally been done by managers, however it has become more and more common that organizations do not have formal managers (Bernstein, Bunch, Canner & Lee, 2016). Already in the 1980’s, downsizing of middle managers was introduced in organizations (Willis, 1987; Tomasko, 1987) and in the 1990’s, the continual push towards flat and participative organizational structures received large attention (Eccles & Nohria, 1992). In these organizations, control is not emerged from rational rules and hierarchy, but instead

from value-based actions of the organization's members (Soeters, 1986; Ogilvy, 1990; Parker, 1992). Tompkins and Cheney (1985) presented the postbureaucratic organization, which represented a key shift in the formal control from managers to the workers themselves. These “new” postbureaucratic organizations were structured as “team based organizations”, where traditional bureaucratic control was downplayed (Barker, 1993, 1999). Team based organizations instead entail self-management, which means that all employees take part in the decision-making and have the authority to act on own ideas and also get held accountable for it (Barker, 1993; Bernstein et al., 2016; Stevens, 2017).

This “new” way of organizing, without formal managers, has continued to be an acknowledged and well discussed organizational phenomenon (Bernstein et al., 2016; Stevens, 2017; Tuvhag, 2014). Some argue that organizations without managers become more successful and perform better than organizations that have managers (Bernstein et al., 2016; Tengblad, 2003). On the other hand, some researchers claim that these self-managed organizations are impractical and not as democratic as people would like to believe (Naswall, Hellgren & Sverke, 2007).

1.2 Problem statement

As lot of research has been done on organizational culture and researchers write about it as something which managers are responsible for (Alvesson, 2002; Brown, 1995; Du Gay, 1991; Keyton, 2011; Kilmann et al., 1986; Kunda, 2006; Ogbonna & Wilkinson, 2003; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Schein, 2006; Willmott, 1993). This is exemplified in the claim that managers can create a strong organizational culture by “shaping norms, instilling beliefs, inculcating values, generating emotions” (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p.51). Normative control is also usually described by researchers as imposed by the managers in the organization (Mintzberg, 1989; Kunda, 1992; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). Kunda (1992) explains that normative control is made possible through various managerial actions, encouragements, and demands.

Thereof, it seems like research on organizational culture and research on normative control has been done from the managers’ perspectives, meaning that researchers assume that managers are the origin of control in organizations. However, Bernstein et al. (2016) argue that there is a distinct change in how companies are structured, and the non-managerial structure is emphasized as the innovative and modern way of organizing companies. Due to this change in

organizational structure, we are interested in investigating what the effects are when the component of formal managers, which is central in the organizational culture theory, is not prevalent. We are therefore curious to explore how strong organizational cultures are created and maintained in this non-managerial way of organizing companies. Consequently, we consider that there is a scope for us to contribute to the previous research on organizational culture by empirically investigating an organization which claims to have this non-managerial structure. As a result, it is relevant to relate the non-managerial structure to normative control, in order to investigate the role of normative control for maintaining the organizational culture.

1.3 Research aim and questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the role of normative control by analyzing how culture is perceived and maintained, in an organization which is defined as non-managerial. We use the word maintained instead of managed due to managers formally not existing in the organization. We find it relevant to investigate the role of normative control in these types of organizations, since non-managerial organizations are viewed as the innovative and modern way to structure organizations and there is a current trend among companies to organize in this way. We adopt an approach where we try to include several different aspects of the situation, by taking into account perspectives of employees with different positions and different length of time in the organization. The two questions which will guide our research are:

- *How is the culture perceived and maintained in an organization which claims to be non-managerial?*
- *How is normative control expressed in non-managerial organizations?*

To answer our purpose and research questions we have chosen to study an IT-consultancy firm, which we will refer to as Brightside. We chose Brightside firstly because they describe themselves as being decentralized and having no managers (Newspaper article, 2017¹), which is essential for our research questions. As the article further states (2017), “they [Brightside] do not view themselves as a company but rather a movement where the employees are both leaders and followers”, which refers to them not having formal managers. The second thing which

¹ In order to keep Brightside anonymous, we cannot write the names of articles/journalists/newspapers where we have found information about the company.

makes them interesting as research organization is that they are known for their strong culture. In another newspaper article (2014), it is written that, “At Brightside, everyone understands the culture in depth”. Their CEO explains “[we say that] when Brightsiders meet, Brightside happens” (Newspaper article, 2015), meaning that the organizational members take big part in creating the culture. A last interesting aspect is that Brightside also seems to have built a strong brand, with recognitions such as “5th Best Workplace in Europe”, “No 1 Greatest Place to Work of all big corporations in Sweden”, and “Sweden’s best employer” (Company homepage, 2018).

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The following section describes the structure and organizing of this thesis. The first chapter consists of a theoretical background, where we will discuss the concepts of culture, culture management, normative control, concertive control, neo-normative control, and internal branding. We then go through the methodology in order to explain how our research has been done. Included in the methodology we have research approach and design, data collection, data analysis, reflexivity, and finally validity and reliability. Our collected data consists of primary data, through eleven interviews with employees with different roles and length of time in the organization. We also have secondary data, from looking into their online social media channels. After the methodology, we provide the empirical findings and analysis. This is done to present the most prominent themes from the conducted interviews with the organizational members.

What we found is that the perceived culture can be divided into Brightside as: a community, open, supportive, and high achieving. We also identified five enablers for the identified culture to be maintained: social activities, preaching, participative decision-making, internal network, and recruiting. Moreover, we found tensions within these enablers, meaning that there are different ways of viewing the effects of the enablers. The identified tensions are: inclusion vs exclusion, individualism vs collectivism, guiding vs steering, and lastly “be yourself” vs “be a Brightsider”. Through the tensions, we conclude that the enablers also work in a constraining manner. The discussion comes next and this chapter of the thesis covers the research question in the sense that it connects our empirical findings with existing literature. Towards the end, we draw conclusions about the organizational culture and normative control at Brightside. We finish the thesis off by presenting our contributions and the identified limitations, and lastly make suggestions for further research.

2 Literature review

The following literature review will be used as a foundation for the analysis of our empirical data and will consist of two main concepts: organizational culture and normative control. We present existing literature and research on these concepts in order to outline and discuss key explanations.

2.1 Organizational culture

The organizational culture phenomenon, is one of the central organizational aspects that has received large attention since the 1980's (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Kilmann, Saxton & Serpa, 1986; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981, Peters & Waterman, 1982; Sathe, 1985). Culture is a focus in organizational theory where beliefs, values, and ideas are emphasized in comparison to the more traditional forms of bureaucracy and hierarchy (Alvesson, 2002). From there being a focus only on strategic organizing, researchers later on discovered that managers neglected the importance of ideals, norms, symbols, and values (Barley, Meyer & Gash, 1988). Moreover, they claimed that by paying more attention to these soft factors, organizations would be more effective in their performance and productivity. This was thereof when organizational culture started to attract researchers' attention.

Today there are various definitions of organizational culture but despite the diversity, many similarities can be identified. Researchers typically refer to culture as an expression for shared meanings in organizations. Goodenough (1970, p.35) describes culture as “in the minds and hearts of men - a learned body of traditions that governs what ones need to know, think and feel in order to meet the standards of membership”. Furthermore, when applied in the organizational setting, culture is typically considered as “shared rules governing cognitive and affective aspects of membership of organizations, and the means whereby they are shaped and expressed” (Kunda, 2006, p.8). The description is based on a “corporate community” and a membership that includes rules for how to think and behave in the organization.

The importance of shared meanings and values is also emphasized by Alvesson (2002) and Keyton (2011). Alvesson (1993, p.19) illustrates a metaphor of culture as a kind of “social glue”, which presents “organizations as integrated and controlled through informal, non-structural means – shared values, beliefs, understandings, and norms”. In line with his

metaphor, organizational culture is explained to be created and sustained by the use of shared symbols and through shared experiences in the organization (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2016). These symbols are specified as various actions, events, stories, and material objects. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2016) consider that these symbols are easy to remember, since they are great illustrations of the shared experiences. The importance of symbols has from the beginning been discussed and already in the 1970's, Geertz (1973) located culture as a vehicle to express the organizational meanings by the use of signs and symbols.

Another description of organizational culture is made by Schein (2009) who identifies culture on three levels, the first one being as artifacts, the second as espoused values, and the third as underlying assumptions. Artifacts is what you hear, see, and feel in an organization, thus, the visible manifestations and what you are able to observe. Hence, to know why the organizational members are behaving as they do, and why the organization is constructed as it is, the two deeper levels of culture, values and assumptions, are necessary to understand (Schein, 2009). Schein's description is supported by Keyton (2011, p.69) whose definition of organizational culture is "the set of artifacts, values and assumptions that emerge from the interaction of organizational members". What is important to highlight in his definition is how the interaction process forms the organizational culture. Keyton (2011) and also Alvesson (2002) contend that organizational culture is communicative, changeable, and stemming from the interactions between organizational members. Keyton (2011, p.71) even claims that "culture is not produced for people, but culture is produced by people through interaction with one another".

When reviewing the concept of culture, it is clear that organizational culture is a very complex phenomenon surrounded by confusion (Alvesson, 1993, 2002; Keyton, 2011). Consequently, for our analysis we needed to decide upon one definition to use as a basis. We decided to rely on the previous mentioned definition of organizational culture proposed by Keyton (2011, p.69) as "the set of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerge from the interaction of organizational members". Our research is based on this definition because it emphasizes the symbolic dimension of organizational life and how the use of signs and symbols creates the culture, and membership as Goodenough (1970) or Kunda (2006) would have framed it. Nevertheless, we know that organizational culture is a subjective phenomenon, and different researchers hold different perspectives of it (Martin, 2002).

2.1.1 Culture management

As mentioned, culture is described as an outcome of organizational members socially interacting (Alvesson, 2002; Keyton, 2011; Schein, 2009). But culture has also become a concept that managers are particularly interested in designing and changing (Keyton, 2011). Culture management has developed as a managerial tool, as a result of people starting to believe that culture could have important positive effects on organizations, such as building strength, pervasiveness, and providing direction (Kilmann et al., 1986). Furthermore, strengthening the corporate culture could enhance the organizational performance by securing greater commitment and flexibility from the organizational members (Davis, 1984; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Goldsmith & Clutterbuck, 1984; Kanter, 1984, 1990; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale, 1985; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Waterman, 1988). Managers are often particularly interested in design and management of organizational culture as means for improving productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency in the organization (Keyton, 2011; Kunda, 2006). Schein (2006, p.19) even expresses that “if we want to make organizations more efficient and effective, then managers need to understand the role that culture plays in organizational life”.

Culture management includes two main assumptions: to change the existing organizational culture, and to maintain the existing organizational culture through actions or interventions made by the managers (Brown, 1995). Likewise, Kunda (2006) refers to culture as a means for managers to influence the behavior and experience of the organizational members. To accomplish the organizational goals, the culture needs to be engineered, developed, and maintained. Kunda (2006, p.9) describes culture management as “what is in the ‘heart and minds’ of employees, can and should be managed in the organizational interest”.

It is questioned whether organizational culture can be managed, and if so, to what extent it is manageable. Du Gay (1991, p.53) discusses the concept of “excellence” within culture management theory, as an attempt to reconstruct and redefine the organizational culture, with the purpose of winning social subjects and turning organizational members into “winners, champions and everyday heroes”. The aim is to turn around the entire organization, from the highest executives to the lowest shop-floor employees and make them identify with the concepts of excellence in the organization. The symbolic dimension of organizations is highly relevant and Brown (1995) emphasizes that to implement a cultural change, managers are encouraged to use symbols, rewards, communication, and be role models.

On the other hand, many researchers also present challenges and difficulties with the culture management process (Casey, 1999; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002; Ray, 1986; Willmott, 1993). Managers who aim to change the organizational culture need to overcome subcultures, contradicting political interests, and communication challenges, to name a few (Brown, 1995). In line with the earlier presented definition of organizational culture by Schein (2009), Brown claims that it is easier to change artifacts and norms than the underlying assumptions in the organization. There are even researchers who mean that culture is beyond control and define it as a non-managerial matter. Ogbonna and Wilkinson (2003, p.1171) suggest that “attempts to impose top management derived values on employees are fraught with difficulties and unintended consequences”. Organizational members create meanings based on for example their own local culture, individual values, interpersonal interactions, and education (Casey, 1999; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002; Ray, 1986; Willmott, 1993).

Brown (1995) presents a more compromising perspective on culture. He considers that some variables and specific aspects in particular situations can be managed. To build onto his findings, Alvesson (2002, p.180) believes that managers have the possibility to affect organizational culture, but not all of it, “they [managers] manage within organizations and affect or negotiate the meanings and values of their subordinates, peers or immediate superiors”. The consequence of this is that the managers can try to steer the cultural direction but it is sometimes limited.

2.1.2 Managers’ role

In the concept of culture management, the manager's role is of high importance in the creation of organizational culture. Peters and Waterman (1982) argue that there is the possibility for managers to create excitement for organizational members about being part of the best, most qualitative and valued organizations. As described, culture is built upon the beliefs shared by the employees. From Schein's (1985) perspective, there is an observable and potentially manageable relationship between the behavior of the senior managers in the organization and the actual cultural outcomes. Schein (2009) later points at the importance of founders’ influence in young organizations, by initially imposing their personal values, beliefs, and assumptions on the organizational members who they hire. Managers have the position to create a “broad, uplifting, shared culture, a coherent framework within which charged-up people search for appropriate adaptations” (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p.51).

The role of managers is not only important in the creation, instead it remains central after that as well. Alvesson (2002, p.1) begins one of his books with stating that “senior organizational members are always, in one way or another ‘managing culture’, underscoring what is important and what is less so framing how the corporate world should be understood”. In a similar way, Peters and Waterman (1982, p.51) comment the “top performers” or senior persons in organizations and that their ability to “extract extraordinary contributions from very large numbers of people turns on the ability to create a highly valued sense of purpose.”. The sense of purpose, is essential in the management role and Brown (1995) suggests that managers who aim to manage organizational culture should manage the meaning, and how the organizational members think and feel about different aspects of organizational life.

2.1.3 How to manage culture

To be able to manage what is in the “hearts and minds” of employees, Kunda (2006, p.9) describe that researchers often recommend the combination of “freedom, commitment, and emotional involvement”. Hence, managers have the possibility to create a strong organizational culture by “shaping norms, instilling beliefs, inculcating values, generating emotions” (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p.51). This could be contrasted with less use of traditional control mechanisms, and instead use of techniques such as participative decision-making, rituals and ceremonies, management of symbols and meanings, and formulations of a “corporate philosophy” (Kunda, 2006, p.10). One concrete example of this is described as corporate cultural change programs, with the idea to strengthen the organizational culture. These cultural change programs could for example be training programs, mentoring systems, and to form formal socialization processes (Brown, 1995). These provide guiding for organizational members and create a sense of value among them, with something to believe in (Peters & Waterman, 1982). It is also a way to secure commitment among the employees (Alvesson, 1993) as well as satisfaction (Kunda, 1992).

Another way, especially to maintain the existing organizational culture, is to recruit the right people into the organization. Organizations, and especially the recruiting managers, are recommended to confirm that what the applicants value and believe is aligned with what the cultural beliefs are in the company. Brown (1995) presents this opportunity, to select new hires, as the most powerful means for managers, in culture management. By finding new

organizational members who support and accept the existing culture, it becomes easier for managers to maintain the desired organizational culture.

2.2 Normative control

2.2.1 Development of normative control

In addition to culture management, there is the concept of normative control. Whereas culture management is more of a managerial tool, research on normative control has a critical standpoint to managing culture (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Kunda, 1992; Willmott, 1993). The connection between the two concepts is that they both touch upon how managers create objectives which employees should commit to when developing self-images and work orientations (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). A definition of normative control by Kunda (1992, p.11) is as follows:

“Normative control is the attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions... In short, under normative control it is the employee’s self – that ineffable source of subjective experience – that is claimed in the name of the corporate interest”

Before the concepts of cultural management and normative control were established, other modes of control were spoken about. Etzioni (1961) defines the more traditional type of control as using power in order for employees to comply with rules and regulations, so that material rewards will be maximized. In 1983, Mintzberg identified five structures of control, all of them mainly concerned with impersonal and behavioral features. He did not include meaning, culture or ideology as factors in need of control. Ouchi (1977), in alignment with Mintzberg and Etzioni, defines organizational control as a way of evaluating behaviors and outputs in relation to a standard. Kornberger (2010) furthermore explains that early management studies were concerned with how to control bodies. Culture was viewed as a disturbing factor to the organization, not something useful.

Normative control, as a way of controlling people’s hearts and minds rather than bodies, later on developed as a different sort of control and takes into consideration that culture needs to be

controlled, channeled, and exploited (Kornberger, 2010). Etzioni (1961) was one of the early pioneers for this change, by claiming that the rhetoric culture which was prevalent implied a shift in managerial sensibilities and this is where normative control filled a gap. He referred to the church and political movements as ideal representatives of organizations with normative control. Furthermore, Etzioni (1961), claimed that two of the essential ways of performing normative control is through recruiting the right people and socializing them into the culture. Mintzberg (1989) further developed his five structures of control into six by adding the missionary structure. What characterizes this structure is the standardization of norms, which means that there are usually not many formal rules or regulations, and not much managerial control, techno structure, or hierarchy. In missionary structures, the leader plays a central role and is expected to be an inspiration for others in pursuing a certain mission. These characteristics, Mintzberg (1989) concluded, created a need for normative control. He figured that coordinating and controlling within organizations need to take meanings, values, beliefs, and ideas into consideration, not only impersonal and behavioral features as in the five other structures.

2.2.2 Defining normative control

As with many other concepts, normative control has been written about to a great extent. This part will therefore elaborate further on the description of the concept. Beyond the definition of normative control by Kunda (1992), mentioned earlier, the same author explains that this type of control is made possible through various managerial actions, encouragements, and demands. These activities then lead to a regulation of the insides of organizational members, how they view themselves, the feelings they have, and how they identify themselves (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Willmott (1993) describes that what happens through normative control is that employees internalize the values which the culture consists of, and even assess their own worth based on these values.

Furthermore, Barley and Kunda (1992) express that normative control can result in cultures where organizational members are fully committed to their organization, extending into them not noticing a big difference between the welfare of the organization and their own welfare. This will then lead to them doing what it takes to help their organization. Normative control is according to Barley and Kunda (1992) designed and manipulated by managers and they do this by implementing a sense of unity, trust, and shared beliefs. Kunda (1992) also claims that

normative control functions through organizational members determining each other's reputation. In order for members to have a good reputation and to find membership within the organization, they tend to internalize attitudes generally accepted by others and this affects how they think and act.

According to Ouchi (1980), normative control can be concluded as the attempt to create a "strong culture" or in other words, a clan. This strong culture can be established through a socialization process which aims to create an agreement between individuals concerning values, beliefs, and goals. This socialization process is done through value training and indoctrination. Right people also needs to be carefully selected for the clan (Ouchi, 1979). This selection should lead to people who wants to engage themselves in rituals and ceremonies which are likely to lead to successful results for the firm. Acquiring the right people for the organization equals finding those who share objectives with the ones of the organization itself.

Research into normative control is based upon critical management studies (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Willmott, 1993) and it questions the ethical aspects regarding desirability and possibility of managerial control of beliefs, values, and assumptions, held by organizational members (Ogbonna & Wilkinson, 2003). It is argued that normative control includes some scope of cultural manipulation (Willmott, 1993). Whyte (1956) even claims that this type of control is a sophisticated and manipulative kind of tyranny, conducted by management in the workplace. This then threatens the freedom, dignity, and privacy of organizational members.

Seeing as normative control concerns the total behavior of employees and not only what they actually perform during a day at work, it tends to be much more of a totalitarian sort of control (Edwards, 1979). This includes their demeanors and affections as well. Working hard is then not enough, instead organizational members need to put their souls and identities into the organization as well.

Following are three different versions of normative control, which will be explained based on existing literature. These versions are: concertive control, neo-normative control, and internal branding.

2.2.3 Concertive control

Tompkins and Cheney (1985) introduced a version of normative control called concertive control. This concept was later on developed by Barker (1993) and refers to normative control established by organizational team members in self-management systems, instead of imposed by managers in a bureaucratic manner. Within an organization where concertive control is prevalent, “team members make their own decisions within guidelines set by management and the company vision statement. Teams have shared responsibility for their own productivity” (Barker, 1993, p.417). According to Barker, this then creates a setting where organizational members, within their teams, control each other and decide among themselves how good, ethical, and rational work is done. Concertive control emerges through peer pressure and team members taking on the role of monitoring and directing others in the group. The control is executed in order to ensure that all team members base their actions on the communal and rational value system which is created within the group (Barker 1993). Tompkins and Cheney (1985) argue that concertive control is “unobtrusive”, meaning largely invisible to team members. They further argue that concepts such as teamwork and empowerment, which are typically associated with more autonomy, do not necessarily result in “less” control but instead other types of control. In addition, Barker (1993) claims concertive control to be even stronger than the visible managerial and bureaucratic normative control, since it becomes something natural and as it should be.

2.2.4 Neo-normative control

Fleming and Sturdy (2011) write about neo-normative control, which is yet another version of normative control. The authors define this concept as a type of normative control where employees are encouraged to bring aspects of their personal lives into their working lives, by “just being themselves”. By this they mean that organizational members should display their uniqueness when it comes to lifestyle, sexuality or diverse identity, to name some examples. Fleming and Sturdy (2011) furthermore describes this type of normative control as a way of diverting employees’ attention away from realizing that control is being performed on them. In other words, neo-normative control works as a distraction from normative control by deriving attention from the fact that organizational members’ behaviors, outputs, and norms, are being controlled. Some values that form discourses suitable for neo-normative control are authenticity, individuality, having fun. By putting great emphasis on such values which make employees feel that they get to be themselves, they become part of the actual set up of normative

control. This can then lead to employees finding it hard to resist the organization (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011).

2.2.5 Internal branding

Another concept, which has developed as a version of normative control, is internal branding. This has become a more common field of study within organizational studies (Burmam & Zeplin, 2005; Burmann, Zeplin & Riley, 2009; King & Grace, 2008; Mahnert & Torres, 2007; Punjaisiri, Evanschitzky & Wilson, 2009). The concept refers to activities organizations employ in order to make employees intellectually and emotionally buy in to the culture (Mahnert & Torres, 2007), brand values, practices, and behaviors (King & Grace, 2008). The end purpose of these activities is to make the organizational members “be the message” of the organization and their brand externally (Edwards, 2005).

To make employees be the message requires employees to act in accordance with the organization and there through, it is the latest solution to the problem of how to create normative control (Kornberger, 2010). The author further explains that management is said to have to perform certain activities for this type of control to be established. Such activities can be brand training programs on how to live the brand, or logos on clothes and other products. All in all, internal branding makes the brand become a part of one’s lifestyle and identity. Additionally, Olins (2002) argues that the staff has to love, live, and breath the brand so that they can manifest it externally.

Branding is traditionally practiced by marketing professionals, where internal branding proponents extend this by acknowledging that employees themselves are highly involved in the branding of organizations. This is considered a way of reaching competitive advantages through a strong brand (Burmam, Zeplin & Riley, 2009). Furthermore, Punjaisiri, Evanschitzky & Wilson (2009, p.217) have added to this field of study by finding evidence of internal branding having a “positive impact on employees’ brand identification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty”. Especially employees’ identification with the brand was proven to be strengthened, according to these researchers.

2.3 Chapter summary

In this literature review, we have presented previous research done on subjects which are relevant for us to use as a basis when analyzing our empirical material. We started with a section on organizational culture, in order to create an understanding of this concept which is an underlying dimension for the thesis. We then moved on to culture management as a managerial tool, meaning that existing literature touches upon it as mostly imposed by managers. In the third part of the chapter, we discussed normative control, a critical view of managing cultures instead of as a managerial tool. Within normative control, we brought up three versions that represent different ways of how normative control is implemented in an organization. These three versions were: concertive control, neo-normative control, and internal branding. In the following chapter, we will go through the methodology used for the making of this thesis.

3 Methodology

The upcoming chapter describes our applied methodology and motivates our decisions. First, we make a short introduction of our case company to get a better understanding of the research context. Secondly, we present our research approach, followed by the process of data collection and the data analysis. We end the chapter by reflecting on our methodological decisions, and discuss the reflexivity, reliability, and validity of the study.

3.1 Research context

The structure of the IT-consultancy firm Brightside, in which we have conducted our research, will be further described here. Brightside consists of about 1000 organizational members and is a Swedish company that is built upon three core functions: sales in the name of Engagement Search, consultancy, and recruiting named Talent Search (Company homepage, 2018). In addition, there is also an internal support function called operations, which includes the functions legal, IT-support, Human Resources, First Impression (reception), and finance (Information from interviews).

Brightside is known for their company structure and as previously mentioned, they describe themselves as being decentralized and having no formal managers (Newspaper article, 2015). Their structure is by themselves referred to as “Boid”, which is an old English word for bird and Brightsiders use it to illustrate how birds fly in a formation, with birds sometimes being in the front of the flock and sometimes in the back. The meaning of Boid for their structure is then that employees alternate between taking responsibility, being in the front, and following others by letting them be in the front. Who is at the front depends on who is closest to a decision (Newspaper article, 2015). On their homepage (2018), the organization explains that they use mentors, who do not have the power to make employees’ decisions but instead guide and help them to develop within the organization. Each organizational member has a personal mentor, regardless of how long they have been in the organization, and further the mentors have their own personal mentor.

3.2 Research approach

The aim of our research is to make sense of the multiple meanings, interpretations, and understandings of various organizational members concerning the organizational culture at Brightside. Therefore, an interpretive paradigm is suitable for our study. This paradigm entails that a situation can only be comprehended by individuals who take part in it (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013) and its target is to understand individual members' perspectives on what is being investigated (Scotland, 2012). The interpretive paradigm aims to crystalize hidden social forces and structures (Scotland, 2012). Hence, as we wanted to investigate the role of normative control in an organization such as Brightside, this paradigm is useful in finding something which was not explicit from the start. By the use of the interpretive paradigm, we as researchers interacted with the participants in order to understand their view of the situation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). We had to rely on the interviewees as much as possible (Creswell, 2009) and thereafter view ourselves as researchers as the primary instruments during the interpretation of the information provided by the organizational members (Prasad, 2005). We realize that since we are the sense-makers of the information, our subjectivity had an impact on the direction of the research process (Prasad, 2005). In the methodology section of reflexivity, we reflect upon how we believe the impact of our subjectivity was hopefully minimized. Our aim was to gain insights of the organizational members' behaviors, find explanations of actions, and to do so by not dominating the interviewees, which was enabled through open-ended interviews (Scotland, 2012).

3.3 Research design

In order to conduct our study on Brightside's organizational culture, how it is perceived and maintained, and the role of normative control, we used a qualitative research design. The key characteristics of the qualitative research design is to understand the meaning of people and we, as researchers, are the primary instruments in the process for data collection and data analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In addition, we applied an abductive approach to our qualitative research study. This implies that we combined both the deductive and inductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Adopting the deductive approach means that the researchers first establish their hypothesis, and then test it with the empirical data. On the other hand, adopting the inductive approach means that you first collect the data and then form your hypothesis, theory and important concepts (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

For our study to be performed with an abductive approach, we read information about potential theories and other studies related to the concept of organizational culture and normative control, before the actual data collection. This allowed us to be flexible and able to adjust our theoretical framework based on the findings in the empirical material. This is in line with the interpretive approach since it allowed us to constantly move between our pre-understanding about the phenomena and the understanding based on the empirical material (Prasad, 2005). Consequently, we were able to use the existing literature as a guideline and inspiration for our interviews, thus be able to contribute to the larger understanding of the phenomena of organizational culture by discovering new ways of interpreting the existing concepts (Alvesson & Sködborg, 2009). We believe the abductive approach is appropriate for us, since we already had pre-understandings about the theoretical concepts and about Brightside as a company. Therefore, the inductive approach would have been impossible to conduct.

For our research we decided to perform a case study. Eisenhardt (1989, p.534) explains a case study as a “research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting”, which is in line with Merriam’s (2002) description of case studies as in-depth analyses of a social phenomenon or unit. For our study, this specific single setting or unit is Brightside, and as described in the introduction it is a suitable organization for our study, because of their non-managerial structure and strong organizational culture. Furthermore, a case study was relevant for us since the analysis is based on one single organization in more depth and with more details and richness.

3.4 Data collection

Qualitative research examines how people learn and make sense of themselves and others and how they structure and give meaning to their daily lives. Therefore, methods of data collection which are flexible and sensitive to the social context are used (Hox & Boeije, 2005). In data collection there are two different types of data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is explained as “original data collected for specific research goals” and secondary data as “data originally collected for a different purpose and reused for another research question” (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p.1). In our research we applied both primary and secondary data, primary data as the semi-structured interviews and secondary data as the document analysis.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The first step in our data collection was to find the relevant sample for our study. Therefore, we set up guidelines for what type of interviewees we aimed to find. Based on these guidelines, we intended to find the employees at Brightside who met our criterial. Since our main purpose was to study the organizational culture, this was an important factor in the selection process of interviewees. For this reason, we wanted to interview organizational members from all the different departments at Brightside, and also with different length of employment in the organization, to be able to cover the entire organization and its culture. We therefore contacted one employee from each of the three main departments at Brightside: sales, IT- consultancy and recruitment, by LinkedIn to find our initial interviewees. Afterwards, we used a snowball-sampling, to find the additional participants, where our three initial participants helped us gain contact with colleagues of theirs who met our criterial (Bryman & Bell, 2007). All interviewees are actually named something else. For an overview of the participants in our interviews, see table 1.

CONSULTANTS	TALENT SEARCH	ENGAGEMENT SEARCH	OPERATIONS
Karen Employment period: 3 years	Monica (Partner) Employment period: 12 years	Robert (Mentor) Employment period: 5 years	William Employment period: 8 years
Laura Employment period: 2,5 years	Yasmine Employment period 1,5 years	Sofia Employment period: 8 months	
Sarah Employment period: 2 years	Miriam Employment period 0,5 years	Claire Employment period 8 months	
Maya Employment period: 0,5 years			

Table 1: Distribution of the participants

The aim of our interviews was to get valuable insights into how the different organizational members at Brightside perceive the culture and how they experience it to be maintained. We also wanted to investigate the role of the phenomenon of normative control in a non-managerial organization. To achieve this, we conducted eleven semi-structured interviews as our primary source of data for the study. This means that we as researchers used an interview guide for each interview, but we were also flexible and open to participate in the responses of the interviewees (Mishler, 1986). Before the interviews, we therefore prepared a certain number of questions, to ensure that we covered all the relevant topics we wanted to investigate in the interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow a certain degree of flexibility and freedom to also change and add questions, which gave us the opportunity to follow up on interesting and relevant opinions and thoughts that emerged during the interviews (Styhre, 2013).

In the semi-structured interviews, we asked questions about the themes we were interested in investigating, and we based our interview guide on three main themes, namely: organizational culture, organizational structure and organizational branding. We asked these questions to get an in-depth understanding of the whole organization and follow-up questions were added during the process. All the interviews followed these three themes, but since the interviews were held with people from different departments at Brightside, we also adjusted some of the questions so they were relevant for each specific department. We decided to conduct a first pilot interview with one employer at Brightside. The purpose of this interview was to get an insight into the organization and to help us develop our interview guide. This pilot interview was very valuable for us since it gave us the opportunity to pre-test our way of interviewing and the planned interview questionnaire, and furthermore the opportunity to develop it. For example, we conducted the pilot interview over Skype, and afterwards we decided to conduct the upcoming interviews at Brightside's office in Stockholm, to have a better interaction process, and to not be limited by the communication over Skype.

Furthermore, since the interviews were held at different times, we continuously reflected on the conducted interviews and modified some of the questions in order to gather the most relevant data for our research. One interesting question, where we aimed to get a new perspective of the organizational culture, was when we asked the interviewees if they could describe Brightside as an animal. This turned out to be useful for the following analysis, since the interviewees associated Brightside with characteristics they did not think of at first. As a result, this provided us with a deeper understanding of the perceived organizational culture at Brightside. Since we

are touching upon control in our study, a subject perhaps sensitive to the interviewees, we paid close attention to what people did not mention. In other words, what is called the missing data. (See appendix 1 for the whole interview guide)

The total amount of interviews was decided in relation to the size of our study. It was important for us that all the three departments at Brightside were represented, and that the amount of participants was evenly distributed between the three of them. During the interviews we also got the information that Brightside has a supporting function called operations, and therefore we also decided to interview one person who worked within this department.

One strength with our data collection is that we have used many different respondents to study the same phenomenon in the organization, which is defined as multi-vocality (Tracy, 2010). Therefore, our interviews were not conducted to identify one single truth of the organizational culture, rather we aimed for a broad understanding of how the culture was perceived and maintained, and how this relates to normative control. The main advantages with this research type is that it gives the possibility to hear diverse opinions in the organization. As a result, all the different perspectives give a better and deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon. On the other hand, what could be criticized is that all of our interviewees is still a part of the organization, and this could affect their answers and perhaps make them bias on the behalf of Brightside.

3.4.2 Document analysis

Besides the semi-structured interviews, we also analyzed Brightside's online social media activities, which included the company's Facebook and Instagram pages, and their company homepage. These social media channels were investigated to get a deeper and better understanding of the organization's way to express their brand and organizational culture both internally and externally. We also identified some hashtags that the company was using, which we also could see the employees of Brightside use in their personal social media channels to express the company values and culture. The document analysis gave us another perspective and worked as a good complement to the semi-structured interviews.

3.5 Data analysis

The first step in the data analysis process was to transcribe the material we collected during the interviews, which was done to prepare for the actual analysis (Kvale, 1996). Our analysis can then be divided into sorting, reducing, and arguing, in accordance with Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015). Sorting was the part of the process where the coding of data was done, which means that we sorted the collected material into different categories (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009) by searching for repetitions, theory related material, metaphors, similarities, and differences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The material was collected during the interviews and through the documents we looked at. To sort the material, we used the categories: culture, structure, and branding. These are the ones we based our questions on during the interviews. Following, we constructed subcategories within the main categories. For example, under the category of culture, we created subcategories such as “characteristics”, “expressions of culture”, and “impact”.

We then reduced the material, which involved selecting the parts of the subthemes which we found most interesting, not necessarily most frequent, and omitting the less interesting parts (Styhre, 2013). For example, within the culture category and the subcategory “characteristics”, we identified the key words “fun”, “friendship”, and “lifestyle”. These key words were then used to create a first theme of the perceived culture. This theme was community and this word was selected since we believe it sums up the meaning of the three mentioned key words. Through the reduced parts, we could establish our findings since those parts were the ones which exemplified the chosen processes and categories especially well (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015).

The reducing process finally resulted in our finding of how the culture is perceived, namely as: a community, open, supportive, and high achieving. We furthermore identified enablers which maintain the culture, defined as: social activities, preaching, participative decision-making, internal network, and recruiting. The last part of the identified concepts were tensions within the results of the enablers, namely: inclusion vs exclusion, individualism vs collectivism, guiding vs steering, and lastly “be yourself” or “be a Brightsider”. Lastly, we argued our findings by using the reduced empirical material and comparing it to existing literature (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015).

As previously mentioned, we are using the interpretive paradigm and aligned with this is the hermeneutical approach in the sense that the aim of this is to derive hidden meaning from collected material (Scotland, 2012). Hermeneutic philosophy concerns written and verbal texts and how to interpret these (Prasad, 2005; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2011), which is suitable for our research since it allowed us to understand the different meanings and interpretations conveyed by organizational members of Brightside. According to Kvale (1996), what the approach does is that it enables us to interpret the answers we receive and then go back and re-interpret them. This we did through constantly moving between our pre-understandings about the phenomenon and the understandings based on the empirical material (Prasad, 2005). Within the hermeneutical approach, we focused on the idea of there being links between the collected material and the wider context of this, since a phenomenon cannot be fully understood until it is placed in relation to its context (Prasad, 2005). In other words, we focused on the context in this situation, which was an organization with a specific culture and way of organizing.

3.6 Reflexivity

When conducting qualitative research, having a reflexive approach is needed. We tried our utmost to be as reflexive as we thought possible, especially during the interviewing process and the analysis where our own thoughts and actions had an impact on the outcomes. As Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) acknowledge, we as researchers brought pre-understandings with us into the process of making this thesis and these will more or less have affected the way we made sense of the material we collected through the interviews and documents. Before conducting this study, neither of us had been in contact with Brightside in person. We did not know anyone who works there and they have not been to our university for any student events either. This was probably positive for our distancing to the material in the sense that we had not been affected by earlier contact with them. However, since the company has become somewhat of a hype lately, we had heard and read a lot about them. There through we had made assumptions about them as an organization, which we brought with us into the research. We do believe we reflected upon these assumptions as the process went on, since from the start we had the image of Brightside being an extraordinary company. When doing the interviews and analyzing the data on the other hand, we were open towards other impressions and a more nuanced picture of the company could develop.

Reflexivity becomes essential in qualitative studies, where the researchers are always subjective in their interpretations of collected material (Stake, 2010). Since we knew about this risk of not being reflexive enough, we already from the start discussed what aspects of our way of conducting our study that would hopefully lessen this risk. In general, we tried to continuously take a step back in order to take in various interpretations of the material, in accordance with Alvesson (2003). To concretize our reflexivity process, there are three main points of importance.

The first point worth considering for us to be more reflexive, is the fact that we have conducted this research in pairs. From the start, we stated clearly that it was okay to question each other, something which we have kept as a rule throughout the whole process. Since we are two different people, we also interpreted certain things in quite different ways. This applies to the material collected during the interviews and how to connect it to theory. These different interpretations have led to several discussions in connection to pre-understandings and understandings. In this way, we have forced ourselves to question our own thoughts, in other words, be reflexive. Since there were always two of us in the interviews, we both asked follow-up questions so that the interviews did not simply go in the direction of one interviewer's pre-understandings. Both of us being in the interviews also made us able to read body language and bring this into our discussions.

A second way of trying to be more reflexive, which is connected to us being two researchers, is that we have read and coded the empirical data separately. We wanted to make sure that we first identified important parts and themes on our own and thereafter discussed it together. By doing this, we believe that we forced ourselves to reflect more upon our choices since we then had to tell each other what we had chosen and also make reasonable arguments to why. It was then not as easy to simply choose themes based on pre-understandings, since the other person had to agree with the choice as well.

A third part of it was that we during the interviews tried to get examples of what the interviewees were saying, which we did by asking follow-up questions where they had to exemplify what they were trying to explain. The reason to why we think this made us more reflexive is that if they gave examples of a situation, it gave us less space to be subjective. If you get a clear example of something, we would like to argue that it is more difficult to let pre-understandings affect your interpretation to the same extent. We still kept in mind however that

even though they gave clear explanations, there is not one way of viewing it and here the discussions came in handy.

Lastly, we would like to bring up the issue of ethicality within the qualitative research method. Kvale (1996) writes that an important factor in these studies, is that confidentiality is enabled for the participants of the interviews. We did two main things in order to secure this, where the first one was that we asked all interviewees if it was okay for us to record the interviews. Had anyone said no, we would not have recorded them but none of them had a problem with us doing so. The second thing we did was to give all the ones we interviewed anonymity, by changing their names in the thesis. Kvale (1996) identifies another ethical issue to consider, namely how far we as researchers interpret the answers provided. To lessen the risk of us misinterpreting points they made, we transcribed everything. Furthermore, the previously mentioned fact that we asked for examples as much as possible, we also believe made us less inclined to misinterpret what they were saying.

3.7 Reliability and validity

The concepts of validity and reliability is often associated with quantitative research studies, but despite this they can be convenient to use in qualitative research studies as well. These concepts are relevant since they affect the quality and credibility of the study (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). One crucial part to highlight, which also is one of the main disadvantages with only studying one company, is that our reached conclusions and recommendations are not possible to generalize to all other organizations, not even to all organizations in the same business area. Despite this, we believe that our final results could be applicable to other organizations with the similar organizational structure as Brightside.

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of the trustworthiness of our research is crucial (Seale, 1999; Tracy, 2010). This relates to the researcher's sensitivity, flexibility, skills and creativity in the analysis of data (Silverman, 2016). Furthermore, Silverman (2016) points to some factors that can negatively affect the reliability. These involve how we as interviewers are asking questions, in what environment we conduct the interviews, and also how motivated or stressed the participants are. To overcome these difficulties and reduce potential pitfalls, we always conducted the interviews with one interviewee at a time, for making the interviewee more comfortable and relaxed. We also recorded all the interviews, so

we did not have to take notes and both of us could participate in the interviews and ask questions. This to make the interviews more like open discussions than formal interviews. Finally, we also made the interviews at Brightside's office in Stockholm, an environment in which the interviewees feel comfortable and at home.

The next concept to reflect upon is the validity of the study, which according to Creswell and Miller (2000) is affected by the researcher's choice of paradigm assumption, or as Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015) explain it: if the methods we have used measure or represent our research topic. To achieve a high level of validity, it is therefore favorable to use different sources of data (Cohen et al., 2013). We achieved this by using both primary data from the interviews and secondary data from the document analysis. This could be categorized as a multidimensional approach, since we studied our research topic from different perspectives and took all parts into consideration in the analysis (Tracy, 2010). What could be criticized is that all of our participants were organizational members of Brightside, and that we only studied Brightside's, or organizational members', social media channels. Since the people we primary contacted were so enthusiastic to participate they could potentially be more positively influenced by Brightside. This also applies to the interviewees we were connected with, since the organizational members helped us find them. It is possible that they have chosen colleagues with the same positive attitude as them. We have tried to take this into account when we interviewed all the participants. On the other hand, this could also be an interesting perspective for us, since we wanted to investigate the missing data in order to understand normative control.

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, our used methodology has been presented. By performing a qualitative study in combination with the interpretative approach, we as researchers were able to gather interpretations and perceptions from employees within all parts of the organization, and then interpret our empirical findings. The data was collected through eleven semi-structured interviews with organizational members from the three main departments and from the support function in the organization. We also collected data through a document analysis of Brightside's social media activities, including the company's Facebook and Instagram pages, and the official company homepage. Furthermore, the data was analyzed through an abductive approach, and we divided the coding process into sorting, reducing, and arguing. Finally, we reflected upon

the reflexivity, reliability, and validity. In the following chapter we will present our analysis of the empirical findings.

4 Empirical findings and analysis

The following analysis will take us through our main findings from the empirical material, collected through the interviews and document study. The structure follows three main sections: how organizational members perceive the culture of Brightside, how the culture is maintained at Brightside, and tensions we have identified at Brightside. Within the first section, we found four themes which describe how the members’ experience the culture, namely Brightside as: a community, open, supportive, and high achieving. The second section concerns how the perceived culture in the first section is maintained by five enablers in the organization. We identified social activities and preaching as ways of maintaining the communitarian culture, participative decision-making as a way of maintaining the open culture, an internal network as a way of maintaining the supportive culture, and lastly recruiting as a way of maintaining a high achieving culture. In the third section, we present tensions due to expressions and missing data that make us think that the effects of the enablers could be interpreted in constraining ways as well. These became present through closely analyzing the contradictions we could find in the interviews. The tensions we found are: inclusion vs exclusion, individualism vs collectivism, guiding vs steering, and lastly “be yourself” vs “be a Brightsider” (these are illustrated in table 2 below).

PERCEIVED CULTURE	ENABLERS	TENSIONS
Community	Social activities, Preaching	Inclusive vs Exclusive
Open	Participative decision-making	Individualism vs Collectivism
Supportive	Internal network	Guiding vs Steering
High Achieving	Recruitment	“Be Yourself” vs “Be a Brightsider”

Table 2: Illustration of empirical findings

4.1 The perceived culture at Brightside

4.1.1 Brightside as a community

Brightside seems to have created a culture with a communitarian feeling. Fun working environment, friendship, and lifestyle are referred to during the interviews, which we believe are all aspects of Brightside as a community since these aspects create a feeling of togetherness.

Yasmine claims that “There are always fun things happening at Brightside”, and this fun part is something which all interviewees mention in different ways. Sarah touches upon the playful dimension of the culture as “We have a very playful side and we eat a lot of candy and we like confetti”. Furthermore, we asked the interviewees what animal they would describe Brightside as, and Maya picked “party ant”. The reason for this, she claims is “Ants work hard together, and let us say that party ants exist, they also have fun together ... it is not just work and grind, but there are the social bits to it as well”. This animal metaphor builds onto our understanding of the culture as a hard working, but fun, work environment.

The culture is described as a friendly environment by Yasmine and along those lines, Claire claims that Brightsiders become “more like friends than colleagues”. Connected to Brightside being both fun and a source to friendships, Miriam expresses “I love going to work because it is so much fun, I have friends here and I develop because of everything that is happening”. William explains that he has created many strong emotional bonds to members of Brightside, which he claims to be one reason to why there is no “us and them” within the organization but instead they speak about themselves as a united “we”. This sense of “we”, emphasizes the strong belongingness organizational members feel to each other and to Brightside.

Brightsiders do not only make friends at work. Karen tells us that she even met her boyfriend at an organizational event, something which seems quite common in the organization. This leads us into lifestyle as a third aspect of the communitarian culture. We believe that having both friends and a partner at work means that work is a big part of your life. Also, going to events in your spare time makes work become a part of your private life. Claire furthermore describes that “It does not really feel like going to a job, eight to ten hours a day, instead it feels like this is a part of my life and this is something that the culture contributes with”. According to Sofia, they are encouraged to have more in common than just the job itself. Related to the concept of work life balance, the lifestyle aspect makes us think that the balance is quite uneven,

where Brightside constitutes both work and private life for many of the employees. Additionally, Robert expresses that Brightside is more than just a job to many:

“It might sound cheesy but I think that Brightside is almost like a lifestyle to many ... You meet people similar to you so you make friends and it then turns into something bigger than just a job that you spend nine hours a day at”.

4.1.2 Brightside as open

The second theme we identified was Brightside as an open organization. Yasmine refers to this openness as the possibility to follow your own values and opinions within the organization, “there is always room for all types of opinions at Brightside and it does not matter if you have worked here for two weeks or two years, your personal opinion is always relevant and important”.

This openness is reflected through the opportunity to participate in the creation of the organizational culture. Laura describes that Brightsiders are keen to talk about their culture together, “We discuss who *we* are at Brightside, what *we* want Brightside to become and what values *we* have. *We* are the organization, and together *we* are the ones who create Brightside”. Once again, the belongingness to create a united “we” is present, and we identify this willingness to state “who we are” as an agenda setting activity and something important for Brightside. Furthermore, Laura’s description of openness and possibility to embrace your own values is emphasized by all the interviewees. For example, Robert states that “a company cannot have values, only people can, and therefore a company is people with values”. In addition, one of Brightside’s partners Monica, exemplifies Brightside’s openness as:

“We cannot tell them [the employees] what they should feel, think, or be. Their values will come from within, whether we like it or not ... Brightside is only a corporate identity number, we have the office and some phone subscriptions, beyond that Brightside is nothing without its members and their personal values”.

This implies that Brightside as a company does not have values, instead the values are rooted within the employees and based on what they bring with them into the organization. This is also

stated on the company homepage (2018) as, “We know that companies don’t have values, but people do”. We consider this to emphasize the united “we” as important at Brightside, and that Brightsiders, have the responsibility of creating the organization and what they stand for together. One example that illustrates this is given by Laura:

“On our latest conference we had an exercise where all of us Brightsiders were told to write down our own personal values and discuss them in groups, afterwards they collected all of our discussed values to be able to build and work with Brightside in this direction”.

This openness could also be demonstrated through transparency, “We have a culture where we strive for total transparency, the idea is that everything should work like home” (Karen). The idea of total transparency also appears through one of the annual themes Brightside has. Every year at the annual Christmas party, Brightside presents a concept that is supposed to represent the upcoming year and how Brightsiders should work together, and last year the theme was “Mensch”. We interpret these concepts as cultural artifacts, since they are visible ways of guiding the organizational culture in a desired direction. Mensch as a concept should remind employees of self-esteem and respect for others, and Karen describes it as:

“Mensch encourages us [Brightsiders] to be open and transparent, and it dares us to be ourselves and to be vulnerable. This is very important for us at Brightside and we talk a lot about it, since if you dare to admit your weaknesses, we could be stronger together. This is how we benefit from transparency”.

4.1.3 Brightside as supportive

The third theme which we identified is the culture as supportive. We base this theme on that Brightside is referred to as a family by several interviewees and feeling supported by other colleagues is brought up by all interviewees.

Yasmine chooses to describe Brightside as a dolphin, a symbol for the family aspect of the culture. In order to explain what characteristics dolphins have which can also characterize Brightside, she says “they are very caring and protective of each other, I mean their family.

They are much about belongingness and they stick with their nuclear family in a way that other animals do not”. Another animal used by Claire is the fictive dragon in the movie Mulan, named Mushu. This animal, or character, is according to her “so extremely funny and he helps Mulan all the time and he is Mulan’s true friend. A real fan bearer”. Hence, the animals that first come to Yasmine and Claire’s minds are ones that represent the family-like and supportive side of the Brightside culture. As Laura further mentions “I know a lot of people call us a sect, but for us it feels like a family”.

All four consultants we interviewed emphasize the support they experience from the organization in their projects. Karen remembers her first assignment and says:

“It is challenging and scary. One of my colleagues then told me that ‘Karen, do not forget that you are not alone, we are doing this together’ and I had not even thought of that because I thought I had to carry the whole responsibility on my own towards the client and Brightside”.

Laura tells us that when she had a period of stress at work, she received great support from the Human Resources department, her mentors, and colleagues around her since they all wanted to help out in order for her to feel better. William on the other hand, has a more nuanced image of Brightside as a family which shows that a family-like culture is not always supportive and problem-free:

“When I come to work, it feels like seeing family members. I mean, everyone has different relationships with their families and families can be functional and dysfunctional and sometimes it works good and sometimes bad. Some have really strong connections and some not at all”.

Building onto the theme of a supportive culture, according to Laura, there are no stupid questions within the organization. She says that people are very welcoming and curious in getting to know new people so if you ask a question, members of Brightside will most likely react with “Oh nice that you are asking a question, I am happy to help”. Robert acknowledges that the family metaphor might sound cheesy, but it is still something they find important to uphold.

4.1.4 Brightside as high achieving

The last theme we found interesting to analyze is how the interviewees perceive themselves within the organizational culture. The organizational members or as all of them call themselves, Brightsiders, are explained as very driven, highly ambitious, passionate, outgoing, and initiative. This could be summarized with Brightside as high achieving. Monica experiences that there is a “culture of performance” at Brightside and she believes that “many Brightsiders have always succeeded with everything they have done, and it creates this high performing culture”. This is enhanced by Claire who describes Brightsiders with the term “insecure overachievers”, a concept that is used to explain high performing individuals.

This way of describing Brightsiders also illustrates that there is one type of person and one type of personality that is best for the organization. William explains that there is one certain type of person who enjoy working in the organization, “Brightside is not for everyone, since it is so open and without clear guidelines you need to be able to handle it”. This perceived element in the organizational culture also results in a pressure for each individual to do a good job and remarkable effort in the organization. Claire explains that she experiences an inner pressure:

“Sometimes I need to remind myself, that 'of course they are not going to fire me because I typed that name wrong, nobody will probably even notice it'. I believe that many of us have experienced this pressure to make everything perfect all the time, but I do not think it is because of Brightside, it is just how we are as people, all of us are high performing individuals”.

The high pressure Claire experiences, could illustrate another side of Brightside, as for example pushing or judgmental. But, despite the high performing culture and high achieving individuals, people experience that they all support each other, and they feel that they can find support and help from their colleagues and in the organization, which is in line with Brightside as a supportive organization. Karen summarizes it well by explaining that:

“We work in an organization where people are extremely good at what they are doing, and as a result this creates a high performing culture, but on the other hand this also makes us able to help each other since everyone has so much to share”

4.2 How the culture is maintained at Brightside

Following we will present five enablers we identified as essential for maintaining the organizational culture at Brightside. These could be analyzed as cultural artifacts, since they are the visible factors which we can observe when studying the organization.

4.2.1 Social activities

In order to create the sense of a community with aspects of fun, friendship, and lifestyle, which Brightsiders perceive within the culture, we identify certain enabling social activities arranged by organizational members. These can be described as rituals and ceremonies. It became clear throughout the interviews that one such type of social activity is celebrating, since Brightsiders seem to take every opportunity they get to have fun and celebrate something together. We interpret these celebrations as integrating rituals, which employees ought to participate in to show their happiness about Brightside and thereof be integrated into the group. Yasmine explains the celebration phenomenon:

“We celebrate a lot and I think that is a very important part of the culture. We know we are good so then we drink bubbles and eat cake, it does not have to be big things. Every Friday we have Friday breakfast together because it is great that it is Friday, so then we have something to look forward to every week”.

Along the same lines, Miriam tells us that when they were awarded with the price for “Great Place to Work”, everyone at the Stockholm office were offered cupcakes. When they turned into 1000 employees, the talent searchers celebrated together through Skype, Europe wide. In this way, organizational members are brought together through having fun.

Several evenings a week, the members of Brightside organize different events in order to create opportunities to connect with your colleagues, share thoughts and learn new things. These events resemble rituals or ceremonies, in that the events are recurring activities that work to bring the group together both socially and knowledge wise. Examples of such events could be workshops on sustainability or equality. It was at a similar event that Karen, as previously mentioned, met her boyfriend. “We have seminars and workshops and I think it is so cool that it is Brightsiders themselves that get to organize them ... it is this communitarian feeling that I

like about Brightside” (Miriam). Connected to the organizing of events, this year’s theme is called “Moments”, which refers to that they “create moments together”, as Miriam explains it and this means that they should create memorable occasions that unite the organizational members. Here we see a difference to other companies, where it is often managers who organize events for the employees, instead of the employees doing it themselves.

The events seem to be arranged to unite people who value the same things. For example, Miriam joined the “Pride parade group” which is a group of Brightsiders who find Pride being an important initiative and together they will walk the parade, representing Brightside. The sense of Brightside as a “we” then shines through, in that they should bring the organization into initiatives such as this one. Moreover, we understand that the social events are fun but beyond that, they create a feeling of being a part of Brightside even though consultants for example spend most of their time at their client’s location. A big event once a year is “Summit”, when the whole organization travels to an unknown destination where they have conferences and build relationships, and as Robert says “they are also great fun!”. When looking at Brightside’s social media channels we find a lot of pictures and videos of their social activities and events, for example an after-movie of their Summit trip to Croatia last year. From what we have seen, it seems that it is fun to work for Brightside and that there is a focus on creating a united organization.

There are also the smaller activities which are part of work on a regular basis. According to Claire who works in sales, she “feels like a bird mum who is supposed to gather everyone and explain to them what is important, both by being fan bearers but also by making sure that everyone listens”. She claims to do this through having lunch with people, making friends, and by keeping in touch regularly. In others words, she takes on responsibility for making others feel included.

The celebrations and events arranged within the organization both seem to lead to a sense of community within the culture, meaning that they seem to create a fun working atmosphere, friendships and additionally, that Brightside becomes a part of Brightsiders’ lifestyles.

4.2.2 Preaching

Another enabler of the communitarian culture we found, is how Brightsiders become a part of the organizational brand through preaching. By preaching we mean sending out a message of everyday life at Brightside, which could be understood as branding activities made by the organizational members. We identified that through their strong organizational culture, the organizational members start to represent Brightside in their daily actions, which also makes the feeling of a united community stronger. By putting the organizational members in relation to the “outside”, it reinforces the community and feeling of “we” at Brightside.

When asking about the relationship to Brightside, all of the interviewees express that they are very proud to work at Brightside. In some cases, we even observe that this pride to be a Brightsider, affects how the organizational members contribute to the organizational branding. Robert declares that, “I am proud of working at Brightside, and of our brand, and I gladly show it to everyone”. Additionally, Miriam even expresses “I am in love with Brightside, I love everything we do. If I would start my own company, I would do everything in the exact same way”. These examples illustrate what Claire describes as “fan bearers” for the organization or Sarah as “ambassadors” for Brightside and its culture.

The concepts, fan bearers and ambassadors, indicate that the organizational members are involved in the branding process. When we analyzed how Brightsiders perceive the culture, we identified four themes, which are Brightside as: a community, open, supportive, and high achieving. When relating these to the branding process, Miriam refers to the description of Brightside as a community and how the members use the social media channel, Instagram, to show all the fun things the organization is doing together. “I love Instagram, and use it a lot, and since I am proud of Brightside I want to share all the fun things we are doing together” (Miriam). Further, Yasmine laughs a little as she tells us that “all of my friends want to work here [Brightside], and that is thanks to me since they see all the fun things on Instagram we at Brightside do together”.

In addition to the members personal Instagram accounts, Brightside also has their own channel where they post pictures of the employees and their everyday life at Brightside. When observing Brightside’s Instagram account, it is clear that the aim is to present the internal happenings in the organization. We see movies of the employees popping champagne bottles, them having “family-days” when the members bring their children to the office, and many pictures from

their social activities. Maya further explains that Brightside's official Instagram account often reposts² pictures from the organizational members and that, "it is a way to show what we as employees are doing at Brightside in our everyday life".

From our observations of social media we also identified different hashtags³ such as #Brightsidestockholm, #weareBrightside, #IamBrightside, #womenofBrightside. These are used both on the company's official social media sites, and employees also use it on their personal ones. When asking the interviewees about the hashtags, Maya describes them as a way to strengthen the internal culture, since they make it possible to see what other Brightsiders are doing, by simply searching on the hashtag through Instagram. This willingness to spread the brand through social media could mostly be identified among the "younger" members at Brightside. William expresses that "I do not feel the need to publish everything I do, but on the other hand I am very proud of Brightside and what we do and what we achieve, but if I would post something it would be something from Brightside". This could be connected to the fact that Brightside hires many young graduates to the organization, and these have a strong willingness to be shaped and also express Brightside.

The next element we identified in the branding process, is how people talk or preach about Brightside. This could be connected to Brightside as an open organization, where all the members have the possibility to speak up. Monica explains to us that Brightside as a company does not have a marketing department, or make any big public PR-campaigns, and therefore communication and "word of mouth" is essential. This is confirmed by Claire, who refers to Brightside as the "buzz of the town":

"Various awards, like the "Great Place to Work" Brightside won this year, have created a strong word of mouth for our company. I experience that there is a different awareness of Brightside as an organization after receiving this awards, since now everyone asks me questions and are curious about our business, but most of all about our culture ... I would say that Brightside is so good, that it even brands itself".

² Refers to a piece of writing, image, or other item of content that has been posted online for a second or further time.

³ Refers to a type of metadata tag used on social networks, allowing users to apply dynamic, user-generated tagging which makes it possible for others to easily find messages with a specific theme or content.

By making the organizational members involved in the branding, Monica illustrates Brightsiders as role models. The term role models is something she mentions several times during our discussion and the term is also stated on Brightside's official homepage (2018), where we can read that Brightside's ambition is to "go to the market" as a role model. In addition, Monica continues:

"We spread our values and brand through our employees. All our members are role models and when they act as role models we can use their actions to represent Brightside. We are 1000 members, and if we could affect 50 persons, each Brightsider has the possibility to make an impact".

She further describes their campaign of eating less meat, "Veggie First", and other members such as Sarah and Laura mention different campaigns of making the IT-business more equal. These campaigns could be related to Brightside as a community since it is clear that Brightside creates a lifestyle for the employees and a way for them to live. We consider this lifestyle as something which serves to strengthen the attachment to the organization.

4.2.3 Participative decision-making

When analyzing how the members perceive the organizational culture at Brightside, openness was a central characteristic. The openness is explained to be enabled through the possibility to always make your own decisions and the organizational members define their company as autonomous. Monica experiences a strong relationship to Brightside and expresses, "I have always had the feeling that Brightside is mine and I can be a part of creating it".

This is strongly in line with the fact that Brightsiders feel empowered in their daily decision-making:

"At Brightside we do not set any formal structures and this is to make sure that there are no stops and limitations. If you want to do something, there is no specific person who needs to give you permission, you just need to ask around and then you are all set to go. We are open, flexible and non-managerial" (Yasmine).

In the same way, Robert continues to describe the feeling of empowerment, “it is important for us that everyone has the feeling that they can affect the direction of Brightside, if you have something you are dedicated about, and you find followership among your colleagues, then go”, or as Monica expresses it, “do what you are passionate about, if it is good for you it is good for Brightside”.

Another important element in the participative decision-making is followership. Followership is explained by Robert as one central aspect of Brightside’s network organization,

“Brightside is a very flat organization and decisions are made with your closest colleagues and relevant people around you. The idea is to find different opinions and perspectives to make your final decision, not to ask a manager if you are allowed to do something. When decisions are taken by a manager, as in other companies, it only gives one perspective. We believe followership from colleagues makes a decision stronger and more integrated into the organization, into Brightside”.

To illustrate followership, Brightside uses the metaphor Boid. Boid is also one of the themes Brightside has presented one year and the concept is supposed to symbolize the decentralized decision-making at Brightside, “Boid is described as a flock of birds, where the Brightsider closest to the actual decision should take the lead. Boid means that you sometimes lead and sometimes follow, regardless of your position in the company” (Monica). Based on this description it is not surprising that two of the interviewees describe Brightside as a bird (Sarah and Miriam), when asked about Brightside as an animal. Sarah thinks the bird is an excellent comparison with Brightside:

“It is because we [Brightsiders] try to emulate the decision-making in a flock of birds. The one who is closest to the decision have the power to decide, but you also have to ask other persons for relevant input and advice, and this is the Boid concept. It is all about trusting each other and a balance between leading and following”

4.2.4 Internal network

For Brightside to create the supportive, family-like culture that the interviewees have expressed, we have identified an enabler in the form of an internal network around employees. This enabler makes members of the organization feel like they are part of a big family. The internal network consists of surrounding organizational members, who in different ways have an impact on the everyday work life of an employee. These people are key for others to understand how the organization works, help out in the daily work and with career paths, and support each other in good times as well as bad.

There are mentors within this internal network, meaning that every member of the organization has a mentor in the shape of a more experienced person within the company. This person is someone to meet up with regularly in order to receive advice and help regarding personal and career related development. Robert has been in the company for five years and is now a mentor for five adepts. He believes that the mentorship gets more and more important the more the organization grows:

“We have a deep understanding of Brightside and how we want to work and we take a great responsibility for the members. We know the culture and feel responsible for developing people and that everyone gets seen and heard”.

Maya explains that how much you meet with your mentor varies a lot, where she met her mentor every week when she had an intensive project and now it is less than that. From what she says, it seems as though she finds support in her mentor:

“We set development plans that we discuss, so then I can get feedback and reason with my mentor about what seems reasonable for me to focus on. Like ‘what do you think about these things? Who can I talk to about this? What do you think I should focus on?’”

When it comes to the internal network around organizational members, which is created in the organization, Claire thinks of a metaphor of Brightside as grandparents. She presents to us the image of Brightsiders as supportive but not demanding, which is an opinion that several of the interviews seem to share:

“It feels like you have a bunch of grandmothers and grandfathers that you can ask things such as ‘I do not know how to do this’. But they will never be the ones raising you or tell you what to do, instead they are just there for coziness and support”.

A way of getting in contact with other Brightsiders is the chat function “Slack”, which almost all interviewees explain that they use if they run into a problem or if they have a question about something. Since there are 1000 members of the group, quick answers can be found. Karen tells us that Slack is one of the ways in which Brightside succeeds in creating a “supportive, helpful, and warm culture”.

Support can also be created through exchange of feedback in the organization. Miriam says that “there is a feedback culture at Brightside. In the beginning when I had interviews, I always had someone with me from talent search who would give me feedback, and then I would give them feedback”.

Furthermore, they have a feedback process which the whole organization goes through twice a year. During this process, organizational members write evaluations on around five to ten other members based on the concepts of creativity, competence, and business sense. This together with the opinions of the mentors, then decide whether someone moves up in salary and work responsibilities. Sarah claims that this feedback process is a good way of “pushing people to get even better” and none of the interviewees refer to this as controlling. The feedback process illustrates the weight of feedback from the internal network, other employees, when there are no formal managers within the organization. It illustrates the impact the organizational members have on each other.

4.2.5 Recruitment

In the process of finding the right persons, with the desired personality, the recruitment process at Brightside is central for maintaining the high achieving culture. Many of the members describe that one key component in their strong organizational culture is to hire the “right” people for Brightside, the “ultimate Brightsider”. Just the term “Brightsider” is worth mentioning to understand how the members view themselves. Yasmine, who works with recruitment, expresses that “I explain in my interviews that, ‘if you would become a

Brightsider', and yes, Brightsider is a concept for us, and as a recruit you want to be one of the selected ones”.

Through their recruitment process, Brightside also strives for attracting a certain type of people who are suitable for the organizational culture. The recruitment process is built around giving the candidate an impression of how it is to work at Brightside. Miriam, who also works with recruitment, points at “as a part of our talent search team it is my responsibility to show how we work at Brightside, that we are a network organization, where we are open, helpful, and have fun together”. Yasmine further describes this as:

“I do not state in my interviews what Brightside stands for, since we do not have any company values, I want the candidates to go from the interview and feel Brightside. Therefore, I need to convey the right picture of Brightside, I try to do this by always giving the candidate a big hug and try to make us laugh together, this shows that it is important for us to have fun at work at that you actually want to go here every day. Thus, Brightside is an experience, and I need to deliver that feeling”.

One central element in the recruitment process is what Brightsiders call that you become “why lobbied”. This is described by Miriam as the process when you are recommended as a candidate for Brightside by a friend, or someone you know at Brightside. This is important since it illustrates how essential it is for Brightside to find candidates with suitable characteristics for the organizational culture. Miriam herself was recruited through a friend and the same for Claire, Sofia, and Maya. “It is a good way to make sure that the people we hire are the right match for the company, to find fun, motivated colleagues with a lot of energy” (Miriam).

Furthermore, it is also expressed that the recruitment process is essential in giving external parts the right picture of Brightside. When potential employees have a strong image of Brightside, suitable persons will apply for the company. Yasmine tells us that every year she and her recruitment team meet around 1500 potential employees, but they only recruit 100-150 of them:

“Since we meet so many people it is important for us that all of them have a positive picture of Brightside when they leave the interview, and we want them to talk about Brightside and spread our word to other possible

employees. Sometimes we even let a recruit pass to the next step in the recruitment process, only to make him or her feel a strong connection to Brightside. This is a strategy for us to make people talk about us”.

The statement that recruiters sometimes let candidates pass to the next step, shows that the recruitment process also is used as a branding strategy for Brightside, namely to make people talk positively about the company. It is therefore both a way to attract potential employees and as we see it, an important branding aspect to strengthen the organizational brand.

4.3 Tensions at Brightside

The identified culture is maintained through the above mentioned enablers. What we realized through the interviews however, is that there are certain tensions resulting from the various enablers. These represent different ways of interpreting what type of environment the enablers create within the organization. Through these tensions we realize that the enablers of the culture can work in a constraining manner as well as maintaining and furthermore, we become aware of the role of normative control. This control aspect will be further developed in the discussion chapter. Following is the last part of the empirical findings and analysis, where we will describe the four tensions and elaborate on how they can work in a constraining way.

4.3.1 Inclusion vs Exclusion

The social activities previously mentioned, celebrations and events, seem to be arranged in order for Brightside to maintain a culture as a community, where people have fun, become friends and also so that Brightside becomes a part of their lifestyle. All these aspects can be perceived as elements of inclusion.

Robert tells us about the importance of making Brightsiders feel included and connected with Brightside:

“Feeling belongingness is very important I believe, which is a challenge within the consultancy companies and especially when you are a new consultant and have been with your client for two years and therefore develop

a strong connection to that organization. That is why we have these events, so that you feel encouraged to keep the connection with Brightside”.

Laura in alignment with what Robert said, expresses that “I always feel that I belong to Brightside, because there are always fun things to do”.

Preaching is also identified as an activity which contributes to an inclusive organization. By being “fan bearers” or “ambassadors” for the brand, organizational members have the possibility to show external parts that they work and belong to Brightside. Consequently, external parts can also confirm members as Brightsiders, and as included members in the organization. For this reason, we see the use of social media and especially the use of hashtags, as ways to mark your membership in the organization. By posting a picture from work or using a hashtag such as #IamBrightside, organizational members can symbolize the organization and make other people consider you as included in the organization.

However, there are signs of the culture not always being as inclusive as some claim, which is where the constraining part of the enablers become evident. Sarah tells us that for the events there are specific mail lists which you can sign up to, as long as you know they exist and according to her, you do not always know that they exist. This issue of exclusion seems to be significant for consultants which Karen is aware of:

“I remember the first time one of us [a Brightsider] told me that they feel more part of the company they are doing a project for and I was like ‘what, how is that possible!?’ . It does not happen often that Brightsiders feel this way but there are those who do”.

William, Yasmine and Claire, who always work in-house, all tell us that it is easier for them to take part in celebrations and events, than it is for consultants. As Yasmine states:

“There are lots of things happening at the office and it is super easy for me to go to these things because I am here. But consultants need to transport themselves from their clients and do you then feel Brightside when you are with your clients? I do not know. I definitely think it is beneficial for me to be here at the office”.

Operations, the support function, is also expressed to be somewhat lacking in connection to the rest of the organization, which gives us the impression that there is a certain internal segregation of consultants and operations within Brightside. “Many do not know anyone at operations and a problem that Brightside is wrestling with is to develop processes to make operations feel more included in the whole culture and the core business” (Sarah). Yasmine claims that she has also noticed that people from operations feel less included.

Creating events is something which all interviewees have done at one point or the other during their time at Brightside. According to Robert, they are encouraged to network, get to know each other and involve themselves in various activities. As Claire says “the culture is very inviting and positive I think, it is fun that everyone is so positive and happy”. By contrast, Claire also conveys that there is no room to be negative or say no to things, because you should always be excited, happy, and curious. In other words, to be included, it seems as though you have to take part in as much as possible and there through, a sign appears of the social activities working in a constraining way.

Building onto that, simply organizing things does not seem to be enough. “You cannot say that you contribute to the culture simply by organizing things, you also have to participate and spread the word” (Yasmine). This statement emphasizes that the sense of inclusion is created through both social activities and preaching. Furthermore, Laura tells us that you always need to have the strength to take initiatives and move things forward.

Social activities and preaching seem to have the capacity to create inclusion and a communitarian culture in some ways. It does, however, become evident that for example consultants and operations might sometimes feel excluded. In addition to that, to be a part of the culture it appears that you need to be positive and excited, and find the strength and time to put on organizing or participating in the social activities.

4.3.2 Individualism vs Collectivism

The second tension we identified is the contradiction between strong individualism and on the other hand, collectivism. The individualism appears to be an important part in the description of Brightside as open and in the enabler of participative decision-making, where organizational members are free to make their own decisions. A central element which emphasizes the

individualism is the participative decision-making, involving empowerment, autonomy, and followership, instead of management. Some examples of the perceived individualism are: “Since we do not have any stated company values, we trust in the individuals’ engagement and willingness to create Brightside with their personal values” (Monica), or:

“It is a current trend today that all companies should have strong organizational values, it has become so diluting, and without any content. It is more interesting to do it our way, and let all the individuals investigate what they believe in” (William).

Later in the interview, William continues to describe the freedom he experiences at Brightside:

“We do not have any templates or guidelines for how things should be done, we trust in the individual and its capacity ... instead of saying what to do, we have this autonomous and fluid way of doing things, this creates involvement and engagement”.

However, it could be questioned if total individualism and freedom are possible to maintain in a business organization. Many of the interviewees state that Brightsiders have a unique mindset, a willingness to constantly develop and influence the organization. This is what makes the organizing of Brightside possible. On the other hand, these descriptions of Brightside are also contested by other opinions. William implies that the culture of Brightside could be seen as collective, “there are many people who think very much in the same way. This could be very powerful for making decisions, but also very risky since it could be too much along the same line”.

Another argument challenging the individualism, is whether you as a Brightsider really have the final word to say in the decentralized decision-making. The process of followership, and finding relevant perspectives and inputs, easily becomes a process of affecting each other in one direction. Monica even says that “in some questions there are some Brightsiders’ opinions that weigh very heavy, and other people’s opinions are not as relevant”, which is a fairly critical statement, limiting the individualism.

Robert describes another scenario, where the organizational members are searching for the input they aim for, “you could compare it with kids who want candy, you first ask your mother but when she denies your request you ask your father instead”.

It is clear that the participative decision-making is an important tool for emphasizing the openness and each Brightsider’s individual contribution in shaping the organization and its values. While individualism is central, we also see how it could turn into collectivism. The individual perspective is not always the most important, since there is a certain mindset of Brightsiders that easily turn the different perspectives into the same, which contributes to a collective way of thinking and acting. With that said, organizational members of Brightside might be somewhat constrained in their decision-making, even though it is also viewed as a way of creating an open culture.

4.3.3 Guiding vs Steering

The already mentioned internal network, which seems to create the supportive culture that Brightsiders claim the company to have, can be viewed as a guiding function. Guiding in the sense that the organization feels like a family where members can seek support and help.

Sarah defines her mentor as a person who “is not here to judge me but her role is to guide me. She will not grade me but she is just meant to support me and help me find the right way when I feel challenged”. William, in his role as a mentor, claims that he is there to perform “guiding, coaching, and helping my adepts to reach their aims”. Moreover, Karen appreciates having a more senior person around her who can guide her, have focus on just her and help her view herself from the outside.

Yet we have identified some tensions in the interviews regarding whether this internal network can be viewed only as guiding, or also as constraining through certain elements of steering involved. We think of guiding as something which people do in order to help others out and give recommendations of which direction to go, whereas steering is rather when people more or less explicitly tell others in what direction to go, without giving them much choice. Sofia for example, mentions that the internal network plays a large role in getting organizational members to “learn Brightside” and Sarah says that mentors are there to make “people stay on track”. William also tells us that “new hires are told do this and do that, otherwise you will

drive off the road. They need to find out how things work”. Quotes such as these indicate that there is a certain way that people get steered into, namely being a Brightsider.

Regarding the role of partners, Monica claims that they are very important as role models. They seem to work in a guiding way in the sense that, as she says, “if I experience that someone is heading in the direction of a mistake, it is up to me to make sure we reflect and try to prevent that mistake from occurring”. What seems to be more steering however, is how she claims to push people about 1000 times a day. She even refers to herself as a “steamroller”⁴ towards people, sometimes with meaning and sometimes not. Robert further mentions that some partners want to be a part of decisions more than what is perhaps needed. Sometimes they apparently have opinions from the side instead of actually getting involved in the question and instead of listening to the people fully informed about what is going on.

The feedback process, which as previously mentioned can be understood as something which helps people develop and learn what they can do better, could be described as a guiding function. As noted earlier, the organizational members base their evaluations of each other on the three concepts competence, creativity, and business sense. Sofia claims that these words are ones that people are aware of and says that “the one who helps and teaches others the most, receives the best evaluations and that is what you strive for in order to climb the salary ladder”. This we interpret as tough since the organizational members evaluate each other based on these words and the evaluations function as a base for the decision of whether one gets a higher salary or not, it steers the way people think and act. Mentors are also part of the evaluation process, in the sense that they discuss the evaluations with their adepts and also represent them in the meeting where the decision is made regarding whether someone moves up one level or not.

The internal network which we have identified seems to be a way of creating a supportive and family like culture. This could be seen as guiding, through organizational members being there for each other in different ways and also through the feedback they exchange. However, signs of this internal network working in a more constraining and rather steering manner also become prevalent.

⁴ A form of road roller – A type of heavy construction machinery used for leveling surfaces, such as roads or airfields. The levelling/flattening action is achieved through a combination of size and weight.

4.3.4 “Be Yourself” vs “Be a Brightsider”

Based on the description that there is one type of people, the high achieving, that is “right” or suitable for Brightside, we identify a last tension that makes this desire for a certain personality problematic. This is defined as “be yourself” or “be a Brightsider”. As observed earlier, Brightsiders are encouraged to express their own personal values, and the organization is described as very open, which is aligned with the possibility to be yourself. Miriam describes that it is one of the most important and motivating parts with the organization, the possibility to always be yourself. This is confirmed by Claire who explains that one of the main reasons she started at Brightside was because of the organization’s encouragement to be yourself.

On the other side, there are also people in the organization who express that Brightside has shaped them. Both Monica, who has been in the company for twelve years, and William who has been at Brightside for eight years confirm that they have been shaped by Brightside and by other organizational members. What we find interesting is that this could be linked with the recruitment process working in a constraining way. Robert tells us that about 50 per cent of all new hires at Brightside come straight out of university, which some of the interviewees regard as a good way of acquiring new energy, inspiration, and ideas to Brightside. Monica argues that they hire many young people because “graduates force the organization to be an attractive employer and to constantly change and be up to date”. However, Robert points at, “this can also be an easy way of shaping people, since they do not have much else to compare to regarding organizational cultures”.

William argues that “we [Brightside] strive for a heterogeneous group with all types of different individuals and perspectives to not make everyone schooled or shaped in the same way”. On the contrary, both William and Monica express that they have been shaped at Brightside. In line with Robert, they believe that employees easily are shaped since it is many people's first job, William continues that:

“Well, since we hire so many graduates with limited work-life experience people are shaped, I would say. Then, we try to employ different types of people, but I believe the majority of the people who start here have some kind of common fundamental values that they identify with”.

In line with the discussion about being a Brightsider, Brightside three years ago presented the theme “I am Brightside”, which can be observed as the balance between “being yourself” or “being a Brightsider”. Karen describes that the theme was a way to illustrate Brightside as a value based organization:

“I, with my values represent Brightside. When I meet my clients it is not only about making money, it is also about spreading our values and doing a better job through supporting what we believe in”.

The quote emphasizes that you have your own values but on the other hand that you as a Brightsider represent the organization. Monica further discusses the theme of “I am Brightside”, as Brightside as role models, for each person in their private lives, not only for those who work at Brightside but for everyone:

“Brightside works as a role model for me in my private life, and when we at Brightside talk about us and open up about our values, it is a strategy for us to make everyone become a Brightsider, even if you do not work here. We want our customers to feel like Brightsiders, we want people who quit at Brightside to continue to feel like Brightsiders, we want our yoga instructor to feel like a Brightsider, and you as well”.

4.4 Chapter summary

To sum up our empirical findings and analysis, this has resulted in three overall findings which respond to our research questions. The first one is that through the interpretive paradigm, we have gained an understanding of how the organizational members of Brightside perceive the culture within the company. This culture is characterized by the themes: community, open, supportive, and high achieving. There are no managers in the studied organization. This made it interesting to investigate how the organizational culture is maintained, since previous researchers generally write about culture as something which is imposed by managers. This leads up to our second finding which is that there are five enablers of the identified culture to be maintained, namely: social activities, preaching, participative decision-making, internal network, and recruiting. Our third finding is that we further identified four tensions which made us realize that the enablers also work in a constraining manner. These tensions are referred to

as: inclusion vs exclusion, individualism vs collectivism, guiding vs steering, and lastly “be yourself” vs “be a Brightsider”. What these tensions mean for normative control in an organization with no formal managers will be further investigated in the next chapter, by connecting our empirical material with theory.

5 Discussion

In this chapter we will present the main findings of our study by comparing the similarities and differences between our empirical material and the existing literature. We begin by discussing the role of normative control and continue by discussing different types of normative control, how these are aligned with our research and furthermore, where we make a contribution to what has already been written about normative control.

5.1 The creation of a united “we”

Up until now, we have identified the perceived culture of our studied organization and the enablers of maintaining such a culture. These enablers however, cannot simply be viewed in one way but instead we discovered that there are four tensions, representing different outcomes of the enablers. These tensions are finally what leads us into normative control. The definition of normative control by Kunda (1992) is “the attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions”. This definition sheds a different light on the enablers than when one views them as simply maintainers of the culture. Instead, through the tensions, we realize that there is an underlying dimension which is more controlling in its nature. The enablers could therefore also be viewed as constrainers, leading to normative control. Furthermore, normative control is the more critical research done on managing cultures and the identified tensions acknowledge the more critical side of maintaining the culture at Brightside.

Barley and Kunda (1992) claim that normative control is performed by managers through implementing a sense of unity, trust, and shared beliefs. What we have realized is that when managers are not there to implement normative control, non-managerial organizations might at a first glance seem to be free and non-controlling. Having no managers however, does not simply mean that the control aspect goes away. This leads up to one of our main findings, which is that the exclaimed freedom results in control in the end anyway. The existence of normative control instead of freedom becomes evident in all of our identified enablers, when looking at it from the perspective of the tensions.

Firstly, we have social activities which lead to the tension of inclusion vs exclusion. Ceremonies, rituals and team building activities are some of the most common managerial

means for maintaining a strong organizational culture (Alvesson, 1993; Brown, 1995; Kunda, 2006). The normative control in this situation is due to that organizational members become steered in their actions (Kunda, 1992) of organizing and participating in social activities. It is something employees are free to do, but it rather turns into a “must do” in order for someone to feel included instead of excluded. The tension of inclusion and exclusion is furthermore resulting from the cultural enabler of preaching. Organizational members feel willing to brand the company in order to feel included, even though there are no formal managers telling them to do so. We define this as normative control by relating it back to Mintzberg’s (1989) definition of the missionary structure, where missionary actions are expressed in the preaching activities performed by employees.

Participative decision-making as an enabler of the culture leads to the tension of individualism and collectivism, where the employees in the studied non-managerial organization are free to make their own decisions. What we found though is that there seems to be a certain way of making these decisions since you have to find followership and be empowered by others in the decisions you make. The organizational members acknowledge that many of them think in the same way, which we believe is established through members being normatively controlled by others into internalizing the values of the culture (Willmott, 1993) and make decisions based on those values.

The enabler referred to as having an internal network around each employee leads to the tension of guiding vs steering. This internal network enables normative control since it can regulate the insides of employees (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) by having many others participating in one employee’s way through the company. Even though it is said that having no managers should lead to freedom, this internal network controls that organizational members stay on track. Recruiting as a last identified enabler leads to the tension of “being yourself” vs “being a Brightsider”. Ouchi (1979) writes about normative control in the form of organizations aiming to create clans. A sign of this in our study is illustrated in the way recruiting is referred to as a way of finding the right people for the organization, the clan. What we identify is that it is about finding the right people who are said to be free to be themselves, as long as this fits into being how the organization wants them to be and this makes it controlling.

By identifying the four tensions in this non-managerial organization and realizing that it is through these we discover normative control, one main finding is that we see a common

overarching tension showing the prevalence of normative control overall. This overarching tension is between being free to create a strong “I” within the organization and on the other hand feeling controlled into being a part of the strong “we”. This is in line with the finding that freedom results in control. The “I” can be seen in the encouragement to organize social activities that you are passionate about, make your own decisions, be guided into self-development, and also that you should be yourself. These all refer to what type of culture the enablers are trying to maintain. The control into being part of a strong “we”, appears in the opposite of the tensions. In other words, in the more constraining aspect of the enablers, which are: the need to organize and participate social activities, make decisions based on the collective, getting steered, and lastly being a Brightsider.

This overarching tension will be further developed in the remaining part of the discussion, where differences and similarities to existing literature will be brought up for discussion. To understand how normative control appears in the organization, we are going to compare it with normative control as concertive control, neo-normative control, and internal branding.

5.2 Reflecting upon normative control

When analyzing the role of normative control for maintaining the organizational culture, we could identify many similarities with the perspective of concertive control (Barker, 1993; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). In a company with a non-managerial structure, the dimension of self-management is highly present. In line with Barker’s (1993) description of team based organizations, where employees have the freedom to develop their own norms and practices, our empirical findings show how the organizational members are encouraged to make their own decisions to affect the direction of the organization. Central elements that emphasize the participative-decision making is: autonomy, empowerment, and followership, instead of management. Tompkins and Cheney (1985) argue that concepts like teamwork and empowerment, which are typically associated with more autonomy, do not necessarily result in “less” control but instead other types of control. This becomes clear in the tensions we identified. The tension of individualism vs collectivism indicates that there are control mechanisms in the organization that result in a collective mindset among the members.

In spite of the self-managed teams, research on concertive control assumes that organizations have managers, and team members make their own decisions based on the guidelines set by the

manager and the vision statement from the company (Barker, 1993; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). This differs from our non-managerial organization without any formally stated company values. Despite the differences we still consider that the consequences are the same, since the control is established by team members instead of imposed by managers. As a result, this makes the organizational members participate in the control process, and Barker (1993) argues that this control becomes stronger since the concertive control is “unobtrusive”, or invisible to team members due to them controlling themselves.

However, we found two main differences where we consider that our findings distinguish from concertive control. The first difference is related to one of our main findings, regarding the overarching tension between the “I” and on the other hand creating a united “we”. Barker (1993) describes how organizations are built upon different autonomous teams, where different teams manage their own affairs. What we found is that different norms created by organizational members, is not only made on a team level, they are made on an organizational level and norms are shared within the entire community. The second difference concerns how Barker (1993) presents concertive control as a work related phenomenon. The team based norms and value systems concern how to perform the work task in the best way, and how good, ethical, and rational work is done (Barker, 1993). What we identified is a further dimension, namely how the development of norms also influences the organizational members private and social lives. We found many examples, especially through the social activities where the norms of the organization create a lifestyle for the organizational members. When analyzing the routines of the organizational members, there are non work related events where you can participate several times a week. The purpose of these events is to unite people who value the same things, which could be compared to the outcomes of concertive control.

The effects of the social activities could also be compared with another dimension of normative control, namely neo-normative control, developed by Fleming and Sturdy (2011). The researchers define neo-normative control as an extension to normative control where the organizational members are encouraged to “just be themselves” by bringing aspects of their personal lives into the work. As a result, neo-normative control works as a distraction from normative control by deriving attention from the fact that organizational members’ behaviors, output, and norms, are being controlled (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). Comparing neo-normative control with our findings, this type of distraction is highly present and related to Brightside as a lifestyle. The organization is described as something bigger than just a job, which could be

exemplified by celebrating and having fun together, and we see these aspects as distraction from the actual underlying normative control.

Moreover, we see how the encouragement to “just be yourself” (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011) turns into “just be a Brightsider”, and the “we” is more important than “I”. This observation aligns with our overall identified tension, and it differs from the basic assumption of neo-normative control where employees are fully encouraged to display their uniqueness (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). The organization mentions how it is important to be yourself and share your personal values but they also speak about themselves as a united “we”, and we consider that the agenda to please the group and create a united community limits the role of the individual. This could also be related to the recruitment process, and it is important for the organization to find the “right” individuals who are suitable for the community.

To summarize neo-normative control, we clearly see how fun happenings have the ability to distract the organizational members, and make it more difficult for them to see controlling aspects within the organization. But what characterizes our findings is that the distraction is made by focusing on the “we” in the organization and how Brightsiders should behave, instead of only concentrating on the individual.

The last extension of normative control we consider relevant for our findings is internal branding, with the purpose of making organizational members “be the message” of the organization (Edwards, 2005). In our findings, this is most apparent through the preaching and it is illustrated by organizational members as “fan bearers” or “ambassadors” for the organization and its culture. In addition to the discussed overall tension in the organization between “we” or “I”, internal branding could be seen as an element that strengthens the community, the “we”. Kornberger (2010) expresses that to make employees become the message, it requires the organizational members to act in accordance with the organization and its thoughts, and to make this become a part of the members’ lifestyles and identities. What we identify is that this willingness to show external parts that you are a part of the organization also makes the internal organization stronger, hence, the “we” becomes stronger by the internal branding.

Furthermore, the concept of internal branding refers to activities which organizations employ in order to make employees intellectually and emotionally buy in to the culture (Mahnert &

Torres, 2007). These activities could for example be logos on clothes or other products (Kornberger, 2010). Here, our study shows a new activity, namely how internal branding happens through social media, which we find relevant according to the increased use of social media in today's society. Instagram is used by the majority of the interviewees and it becomes an easy way to represent the organization in their daily life by just posting a picture.

In essence, we think that normative control appears through these three versions of normative control: concertive control, neo-normative control, and internal branding. What we consider interesting is that the absence of management, makes the normative control clear for us as external parts, but for the internal members the control could be “invisible”. We argue that this is because they instead of being controlled by a manager, control each other. This is aligned with Barker (1993) who argues that the control becomes something natural, and as it should be. This view of control as something natural also affects the freedom which the organizational members experience. As discussed, having no formal managers does not simply mean that the control aspect goes away but rather, freedom results in control in the end anyway. Since control is perceived as natural (Barker, 1993), this is not something the organizational members reflect upon or define as control.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Research aim

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of normative control by analyzing how culture is perceived and maintained, in an organization which is defined as non-managerial. Such organizations are becoming more common but little research has been done on this area, which made it interesting for us to see if we could make a contribution to previous research. For us to understand the overall culture and how it is maintained, we used an interpretive approach in order to gather interpretations and perceptions from employees within all parts of the organization.

Through our analysis we found that there are four key themes of the culture perceived by the organizational members. The first theme is the organization as a community, with aspects of fun, friendship, and lifestyle included. We then identified the culture as open, through large focus on own thoughts and opinions. Supportive is the third theme of the culture, with a family-like feeling as a main aspect. Lastly, we identified the culture as high achieving and by that we mean that the culture is viewed as ambitious and high performance oriented. Five enablers for maintaining this culture were also identified as: social activities through events and celebrations, participative decision-making, a so called internal network around each employee made up of other employees, and finally recruiting as a way of finding the right employees for the organization to be high achieving. Our analysis finally led up to four tensions representing different ways of interpreting the environment, since the enablers can work both in a maintaining and constraining way. These tensions were: inclusion vs exclusion, individualism vs collectivism, guiding vs steering, and “be yourself” vs “be a Brightsider”.

6.2 Contribution to academia

Based on our analysis, we reached two main findings of our study of normative control in a non-managerial organization. At first, an organization without formal managers may seem free and lacking of control. This because most previous literature touches upon culture management and normative control as activities which are imposed by managers. Our first finding however, is that this exclaimed freedom within an organization such as the one we studied, in the end results in normative control anyway. This control is implemented into the organization through

the enablers we found. Even though all five of them are referred to as ways of creating a free organizational culture, we can also see how they turn into controlling due to tensions in the results of enablers. We also claim that organizational members do not necessarily notice that they are under the impact of control, because the sense of being part of a free organization is so strong for them. The identified enablers for maintaining the culture are ones that occur on a daily basis, which adds on to the negligence of normative control.

Our second main finding, related to the first one, is that due to the insight that an organization does not have formal managers but control is still implemented, there is another way of imposing control on the employees than through formal managers. We see that the lack of formal managers leads to organizational members instead naturally controlling each other. This relates to what we identify as the tension between “I” or “we”, where the strong willingness to create a united “we” has the effect that people control each other. This finding makes us realize that for normative control to be implemented, formal managers are not necessarily needed but instead it is the enablers and the constraining effects of them, that are essential. Having organizational members controlling each other leads to the control perhaps being even stronger since there are more than one set of eyes working in a controlling manner.

6.3 Practical implications

As described above, the performed study provides contributions for the theoretical scope, additionally it gives some implications for practical use. We believe that our study primarily holds implications and contributes to organizations with a similar non-managerial structure, as in the one we studied. Since it is common nowadays to change organizational structures to less managerial, our study could be relevant to reflect upon. Furthermore, we present some implications that may be applicable for organizations with another structure as well.

From the study we identified two major practical implications, one for organizations and one for the organizational members to take into account. From the organizational perspective, it is important to consider how control exist in different shapes in the organization. Just because an organization removes the formal manager, control may still exist in the organization, and we identify how control instead appears between the organizational members. For you as an organizational member in this type of organization, or if you are becoming an organizational member in this type of organization, it is important to remember that control exists in different

shapes and not only through traditional bureaucracy and hierarchy. Despite an organizational structure characterized with freedom, there is a need to be observant to potential underlying control.

Nonetheless, we could also point at some limitations with the performed study, where the most essential one, is that the presented findings and conclusion are not universally valid. A consequence of performing a case study in one single organization, is the restricted possibility to generalize the results since the answers could be subjective. This also limits the theoretical contributions as well as the practical implications because each organization is unique and we need to take into account both its internal characteristics and its external environment when we are drawing the conclusions. However, we believe that our final results could be applicable to other organizations with the similar organizational structure as Brightside, since Brightside as an organization is not entirely unique.

6.4 Future research

We propose that it would be interesting to further investigate the non-managerial structure in other organizations. We consider it relevant to analyze the presence of normative control in other organizational contexts and see if reduced formal control often results in normative control between organizational members. By constructing similar studies, in other organizations, it is possible to reach more generalized results. For example, we have analyzed a quite young organization, with many young employees and graduates, and it would therefore be interesting to for example analyze organizations with an older average age.

Furthermore, while collecting and analyzing data, our findings demonstrated the importance of social media both in branding and to maintain the organizational culture. The non-managerial structure is expressed as innovative and modern, and the same applies to the use of social media. In general, the use of social media is related to democracy and freedom, as the possibility to express your personal values and opinions. We see however, some indications on that social media is used to control people. We identified a need to share what you are doing at work to participate in the organizational culture, hence, the sharing becomes an organizational norm. As a result, we consider the role of social media in organizational cultures and in relation to control, relevant to further investigate. Also since the use of social media is just getting more common in today's society, both for private and business use, it makes it even more relevant.

References

Alvesson, M. (1993). *Cultural Perspectives on Organizations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Alvesson, M. (2002). *Understanding Organizational Culture*, London: SAGE Publications

Alvesson, M. (2003). Beyond neopositivists, romantics, and localists: A reflexive approach to interviews in organizational research, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 13-33, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology*, London: SAGE Publications

Alvesson, M. & Sveningsson, S. (2016). *Changing Organizational Culture*, New York: Routledge

Alvesson, M. & Willmott, H. (2002). Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual, *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 39, no. 5, pp. 619-644, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Barker, J.K. (1993). Tightening the iron cage: Concertive Control in in self-managing teams, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 38, pp. 408-437, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Barker, J.K. (1999). *The discipline of teamwork*, Thousands Oaks: SAGE Publications

Barley, S.R, & Kunda, G. (1992). Design and Devotion: Surges of Rational and Normative Ideologies of Control in Managerial Discourse, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 363-399, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Barley, S.R., Meyer, G.R. & Gash, D.C. (1988). Cultures of Culture: Academics, Practitioners and the Pragmatics of Normative Control, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 24-60, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Bernstein, E., Bunch, J., Canner, N. & Lee, M. (2016). Beyond the Holacracy Hype, *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 38-49, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Brown, A. (1995). *Organisational Culture*, London: Pitman Publishing, New York: Routledge

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2007). *Business Research Methods*, New York: Oxford University Press

Burmann, C. & Zeplin, S. (2005). Building brand commitment: A behavioural approach to internal brand management, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 279–300, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Burmann, C., Zeplin, S. & Riley, N. (2009). Key Determinants of Internal Brand Management Success: An Exploratory Empirical Analysis, *Brand Management*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 264-284, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Casey, C. (1999). Come, Join our Family: Discipline and Integration in Corporate Organizational Culture, *Human Relations*, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 155-178, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 28 February 2018]

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2013). *Research Methods in Education*, New York: Routledge

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, London: SAGE Publications

Creswell, J. W. & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry, *Theory into Practice*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 121-131, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Davis, S. M. (1984). *Managing Corporate Culture*, Cambridge: Ballinger

Deal, T.E. & Kennedy, A.A. (1982). *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*, Reading: Addison-Wesley

Du Gay, P. (1991). *Enterprise Culture and the Ideology of ExcClairce*, London: Routledge

Eccles, G., & Nohria, N. (1992) *Beyond the Hype: Rediscovering the Essence of Management*, Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press

Edwards, R. (1979). *Contested Terrain - The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Basic Books

Edwards, M. R. (2005). Employer and employee branding: HR or PR? In S. Bach (Ed.) *Managing human resources. Personnel management in transition*, pp. 266–286, Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research, *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 532-550, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]

Etzioni, A. (1961). *A comparative analysis of complex organizations*, New York, NY: Free Press

Fleming, P. & Sturdy, A. (2011). ‘Being Yourself’ in the Electronic Sweatshop: New Forms of Normative Control, *Human Relations*, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 177-200, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretations of Culture*, New York: Basic Books

Goldsmith, W. & Clutterbuck, D. (1984). *Winning Streak: Britain's top companies reveal their formulas for success*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson

Goodenough, W.H. (1970). *Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, London: SAGE Publications, pp. 105-117

Hallstedt, N. (2016). Platt Organisation - Vad Säger Forskningen? Available Online <https://www.kollega.se/platt-organisation-vad-sager-forskningen#> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Hatch, J.M. & Schultz, M. (2001) Bring the corporation into corporate branding, *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 37, no. 7/8, pp. 1041-1064 Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Hox, J.J. & Boeijs, H.R. (2005). Data Collection, Primary vs. Secondary, *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement*, vol. 1, pp. 593-599 Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Kanter, R. M. (1984). *The Change Masters*, London: Allen & Unwin

Kanter, R. M. (1990). *When Giants Learn to Dance*, London: Unwin Hyman

Keyton, J. (2011). *Communication & Organizational Culture*. 2nd edition, London: SAGE Publications

Kilmann, R.H., Saxton, M.J. & Serpa, R. (1986). Issues in Understanding and Changing Culture, *California Management Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 87-94, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

King, C. & Grace, D. (2008). Internal Branding: Exploring the Employee's Perspective, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 358-372, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Kornberger, M. (2010). *Brand Society: How Brands Transform Management and Lifestyle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kunda, G. (1992). *Engineering Culture. Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press

Kunda, G. (2006). *Engineering Culture Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*, London: SAGE Publications

Mahnert, K.F. & Torres, A.M. (2007). The Brand Inside: The Factors of Failure and Success in Internal Branding - Special Issue on Irish Perspectives on Marketing Relationships and Networks, *Irish Marketing Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 54-63, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 3 April 2018]

Martin, J. (1990). Organizational Culture: A key to financial performance? In Schneier, B. (Eds.), *Organizational Climate and Culture*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 241-281

Merriam, S.B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Mintzberg, H. (1983). *Structure in Fives. Designing Effective Organizations*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

Mintzberg, H. (1989). *Mintzberg on Management. Inside Our Strange World of Organizations*, New York: The Free Press

Mishler, E.G. (1986). The analysis of interview-narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Eds.), *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*, Westport: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group, pp. 233-255

Naswall, K., Hellgren, J. & Sverke, M. (2007). *The Individual in the Changing Working Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Ogbonna, E. & Harris, L.C. (2002). Managing Organizational Culture: Insights from the hospitality industry, *Human Resource Management Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 33-53, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 3 April 2018]

Ogbonna, E. & Wilkinson, B. (2003). The False Promise of Organizational Culture Change: A Case Study of Middle Managers in Grocery Retailing, *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 20, no. 5, pp. 1151-1178, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Ogilvy, J. (1990). This postmodern business, *Marketing and Research Today*, Feb, pp. 4-20, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]

Olins, W. (2002). Branding the Nation - The historical context, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 241-248, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Ouchi, W.G. (1977). The Relationship Between Organizational Structure and Organizational Control, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 95-113, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Ouchi, W.G. (1979). A Conceptual Framework for The Design of Organizational Control Mechanisms, *Management Science*, vol. 25, no. 9, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Ouchi, W.G. (1980). Markets, Bureaucracies, and Clans, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 129-141, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Ouchi, W.G. (1981). *Theory, Reading*: Addison-Wesley

Parker, M. (1992). Post-modern organizations or postmodern organizational theory?, *Organization Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1-17, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]

Pascale, R.T. (1985). 'The paradox of "corporate culture": Reconciling ourselves to socialization', *California Management Review*, vol. 2, pp. 26-41, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Pascale, R.T. & Athos, A.G. (1981). *The Art of Japanese Management: Applications for American Executives*, New York: Warner Bros

Peters, T.J. & Watermann, R.H. Jr. (1982). *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*, New York: Harper and Row

Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting Qualitative Research: Beyond Positivist Traditions*, New York: Routledge

Punjaisiri, K., Evanschitzky, H. & Wilson, A. (2009). Internal branding: an enabler of employees' brand-supporting behaviours, *Journal of Service Management*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 209-226, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Ray, C.A. (1986) Corporate Culture: The last frontier of control, *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 287-296, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Rennstam, J. & Wästerfors, D. (2015). *Från stoff till studie: Om analysarbete i kvalitativ forskning*, Lund: Studentlitteratur AB

Ryan, G.W. & Bernard, H.R. (2003). Techniques to Identify Themes, *Field Methods*, vol. 15, no.1, pp. 85-109, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Sathe, V.J. (1985). *Culture and Related Corporate Realities*, Homewood, IL: Irwin

Schein, E. (2009). *The Corporate Culture: Survival Guide*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Schein, E.H. (2006). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

Schein, E.H. (1985). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the Philosophical Underpinnings of Research: Relating Ontology and Epistemology to the Methodology and Methods of the Scientific, Interpretive, and Critical Research Paradigms, *English Language Teaching*, vol. 5, no. 9, pp. 9-16, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research, *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 465-478, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Silverman, D. (2016) *Qualitative Research*, London: SAGE Publications

Soeters, J. (1986). Excellent companies as social movements, *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 299-312, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 April 2018]

Stake, R.E. (2010). *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*. New York, NY: Guildford Press

Stevens, G. (2017). Following in Zappos Footsteps: Is it Time to Shift to the Holacratic Workplace? Available Online: <https://www.business.com/articles/is-it-time-to-shift-to-the-holacratic-workplace/> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Styhre, A. (2013). How to write academic texts: a practical guide, Lund: Studentlitteratur AB

Tengblad, S. (2003). Den myndige medarbetaren, Malmö: Liber Ekonomi

Tomasko, R.M. (1987). Downsizing: Reshaping the Corporation for the Future, New York: Amacom

Tompkins, P.K. & Cheney, G. (1985). Communication and unobtrusive control in contemporary organizations. In R. D. McPhee and P. K. Tompkins (Eds.), *Organizational communication: Traditional themes and new directions*, Beverly Hill, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 179-210

Tracy, S.J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excClairret qualitative research, *Qualitative inquiry*, vol. 16, no. 10, pp. 873-851, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Tuvhag, E. (2014). Bolagen Som Skippar Chefen, *Svenska Dagbladet Näringsliv*, 16 January, Available Online: <https://www.svd.se/bolagen-som-skippar-chefen> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Waterman, R.H. (1988). The Renewal Factor, New York: Bantam Books

Whyte, W.H. (1956). The Organizational Man, New York: Doubleday

Willis, R. (1987). What's Happening to America's Middle Managers? *Management Review*, vol. 76, no. 1, pp. 24-33, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 18 April 2018]

Willmott, H. (1993). Strength is Ignorance; Slavery is Freedom: Managing Culture in Modern Organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 515-552, Available through: LUSEM Library website <https://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 20 February 2018]

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Part 1: Personal questions

- Describe your background in the company, how long have you worked there, your current position/ your tasks?
- How did you find Brightside from the beginning? What was it that made you want to stay?

Part 2: The organizational culture

- Describe the organizational culture at Brightside?
- Give one example or specific situation where the culture is expressed? (some situation you have experienced)
- What are Brightside doing to uphold the organizational culture?
- What are you doing in Talent Search/ Engagement Search/ IT-consultant to uphold the organizational culture?
 - Do you believe that you experience the organizational culture in a different way, since you at TS/ES, unlike the consultants, are “always” in the office?
 - How do you think it affects you as a consultant, that you are spending so much time at your customer? How do you take part in the organizational culture? (only to IT-consultants)
- What does the organizational culture contribute with at the workplace? (main factors/ effects)
- Do you consider the organizational culture at Brightside essential for you to want to work here?
- Does Brightside have any formally stated company values? If not, why not?
- Do you experience that your personal values are expressed in the organization?
- Do you have any example where you had the opportunity to express your personal values?
- Describe the social activities you have at Brightside? How do they work? Who arrange them? How often?
- Are the social events open for everyone in the organization?
- Are you engaged in some specific activity at Brightside? If you are, why?

- How is the relationship between the different departments at Brightside? Do you believe different departments are experiencing the culture in different ways?

Part 3: Structure

- Describe the organizational structure at Brightside?
- How do you experience to be self-managed? Do you have any example of being self-managed?
- How do you know what is expected from you? For example: Who you are going to interview/ What client are you going to contact/ What project should you take?
- What challenges do you experience with the organizational structure?
- How do you experience the feedback-process you have at Brightside? How many times have you gone through the process?
- How do you experience having your own personal mentor? What role your mentor has in your everyday life at Brightside?
- Could you compare the organizational culture/ structure with earlier work places?

Part 4: Branding

- How does Brightside brand themselves?
- What does Brightside want to show to their external parts?
- Do you participate in spreading the brand of Brightside? How?
- Do you use Instagram, Facebook or other social media channels to promote Brightside?
- Have you heard about hashtags for you who works at Brightside? Have you used them?
- Do you feel that you represent Brightside in your everyday life? How?
- What do you experience that external parts think about Brightside?
- What are the response you get when you tell people you are working at Brightside?
- Do you hang out with many people from Brightside?

Part 5: What do you think?

- What motivates you at Brightside?
- What is the best thing working on Brightside?
- If you need to compare Brightside with an animal, what animal would you describe Brightside with?

Additional questions to the partner:

- Could you describe the development of Brightside?
- What is the difference between a manager and a partner? What differs your work tasks with a formal manager?
- What are your responsibilities as a partner for Brightside?
- What are you doing as a partner to uphold the organizational culture?

Additional questions to the mentor:

- What are you doing as a mentor at Brightside? What is your responsibility?
- How do you experience being a mentor?
- What are you doing as a mentor to uphold the organizational culture?