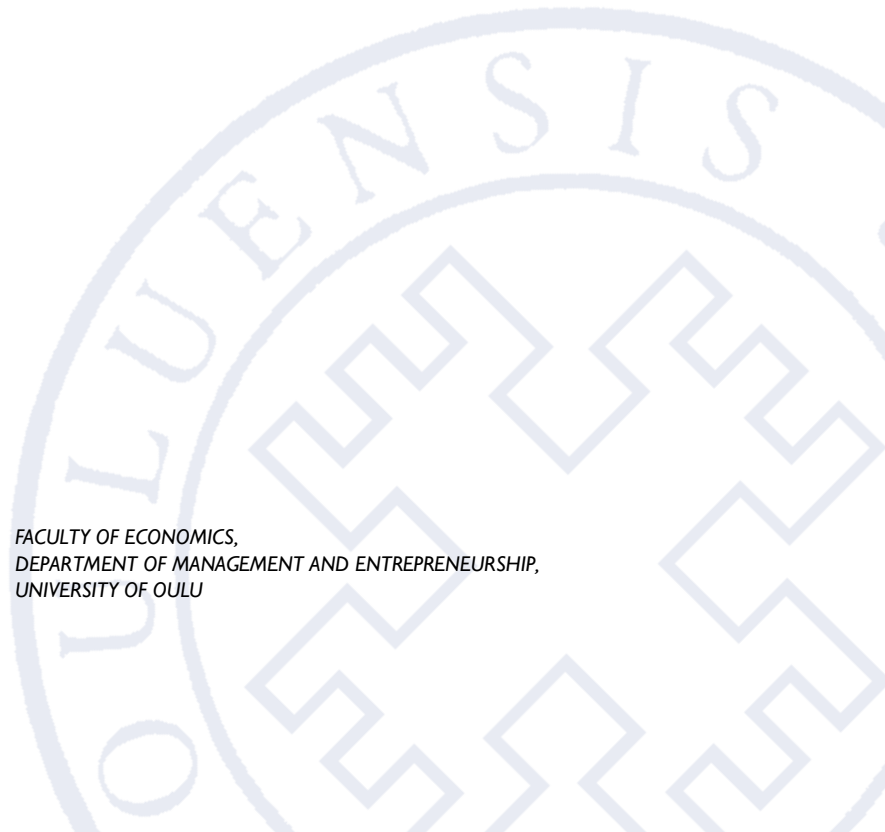


Jaana T. Kuusipalo

IDENTITIES AT WORK—
NARRATIVES FROM
A POST-BUREAUCRATIC
ICT ORGANIZATION

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS,
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
UNIVERSITY OF OULU



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JAANA T. KUUSIPALO

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ICT ORGANIZATION**

Academic dissertation to be presented, with the assent of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the University of Oulu, for public defence in Auditorium TA105, Linnanmaa, on December 5th, 2008, at 12 noon

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study identity construction in an ICT organization, which is generally seen as a flexible environment to be employed. The demise of a bureaucracy is generally seen as a positive thing. In new organizational forms employee participation is considered a central factor. The lack of boundaries in work brings not only freedom but also challenges. Organizations, tasks and people change constantly and employees find that they have to reconstruct their identities.

This study is inductive, meaning that any theoretical frame was not chosen before doing the empirical analysis. The paradigm underlying narrative research is similar to constructivism in that human knowledge is not regarded as a coherent view of reality but as a plurality of small narratives, local and personal in nature, which are always under construction. The constructivist paradigm is based on the idea that social reality is socially constructed.

This study contributes to identity narrative discussion and is thus current. Four different identity narratives are produced within this study: nostalgic, future-oriented, instrumental and chameleon narrative. Hence, the analysis resulted in four separate identity narratives. The relationship between the individual and the organization vary in each of the identity narratives. The empirical results also show that older employees produce more coherent identity stories and appear to be more committed to the organization. For younger employees the company is not as important, instead are more committed to their own career, family or something else. This is a significant result both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically it is interesting because it shows that in constructing identity, the organization does not have a central role. Empirically it means that the skilled employees might easily leave the organization if they feel they are not respected or if the organization does not support their personal careers.

The present study provides evidence of narrativity supporting the construction of identity in a post-bureaucratic organization. Maintaining open dialogue requires open communication, which is not present in traditional, bureaucratic, top-down management. A post-bureaucratic organization allows for open dialogue in principle, but the time and space needed for narration in this environment is fragmented.

Keywords: ethnographic, identity, narrative, post-bureaucracy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and overview

Theories of organization have developed from the ideas of Frederick Taylor (1914) in the direction of more flexible forms of organization (Grey & Garsten 2001, Heckscher 1994, Clegg 1990). At the same time bureaucracy as an organizational model for most industries has been replaced to more diverse forms.

The demise of bureaucracy is generally seen as a positive thing. The problems of bureaucracy above all are related to a poor utilization of human potential. In a bureaucracy, the actions of people are directed by roles and rules; thus, the work contribution of each person is determined and delimited in advance. There is no room for flexibility and creativity, causing employers only to be able to utilize a small portion of their employees' competencies.

In new organizational forms employee participation is a central factor. Teams are self-managing, tasks are cross-functional and a great degree of negotiation is needed between actors in order for them to successfully complete tasks. As a result, new managerial roles have emerged, e.g. leader, change agent, coordinator, broker and boundary-crosser (see Heckscher 1994). Status differences in flexible organizations are minimal, and significantly less importance is accorded (significantly less attention is paid) to strict classifications and lines of communication.

The flexible organization is also known as the post-bureaucratic organization. The term post-bureaucratic organization is used by Heckscher (1994) to describe an organization that is fundamentally not bureaucratic. The objective is for organizations to be able to react quickly and easily to changes in the environment. In this sense, the post-bureaucratic organization can be said to be the most adaptive form of organization. The terms 'ambidextrous organization' (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995), 'high performance' or 'high-commitment work' systems (Garvin & Klein 1993, Pfeffer 1998), and 'boundaryless company' (Devanna & Tichy 1990, Hirschhorn & Gilmore 1992) all refer to the same kind of 'new' organization, which is seen as being flexible and constantly changing. In a post-bureaucratic organization, bureaucratic compartments are replaced by changing post-bureaucratic interfaces. Howard (1995) defines a successful post-bureaucratic organization as one that strikes a balance between fragmentation and integration. Achieving this balance can be seen as leading to the end of

bureaucracy. Heckscher (1994) describes an ideal type of post-bureaucratic organization with the following features: decisions are based on dialogue and consensus rather than authority, and command and organization is a network rather than a hierarchy, open at the boundaries.

The lack of boundaries in work brings not only freedom but also challenges. People can no longer rely on lifelong posts at the same company or unchanging job descriptions. Organizations, tasks and people change constantly and workers find that they have to reconstruct their identities over and over again. The question arises as to how the relationship between the individual and the organization is constructed in an ever-changing environment.

Sennett (1998) asks how people can build narratives for their identities and life histories in such a fragmented, disconnected society. According to Sennett (1998), our work contributions lack reciprocity, which increases our feeling of redundancy. Sennett (1998) questions the possibility of commitment and trust being formed in the modern fragmented world and the new kind of flexible organization. People's trust and commitment are destroyed, for instance, when organizations are sold after being listed on the stock exchange.

Giddens (1991), on the other hand, sees the growth of individuality and liberation from bureaucracy as leading to an ever-increasing range of choices, which in this conception is seen as positive. According to Giddens, identity is a construction project formed out of constant choices in changing situations.

Thus, identity-building can be seen as an almost impossible challenge on the one hand, or as a great opportunity on the other. There is a case to be made for each of these views, which is what makes this debate interesting. *In this study, I seek support for either of these views by examining attitudes to work and working in a high-tech organization, which are generally seen as flexible.*

This is a relevant research subject in our society, which is undergoing a transformation of the labor market, clearly reflected in a changing relationship between the individual and the organization. In order to understand the relationship between the individual and this new kind of flexible organization, we need an approach that elucidates the view of employees themselves. A narrative approach allows for this, and therefore it is one of the central elements of this study.

Although narrative research has long roots in anthropology and sociology, the approach is fairly recent in organization studies (Gabriel 2000). Narrativity was not really legitimized as an approach for organization studies until the 1980s. Stories were initially handled very analytically by field researchers. Later on,

stories 'have been increasingly retold in a slightly stylized way in the belief that such stories can teach students the practices of the field much more successfully than texts written in a scientific mode' (Czarniawska 1998). More recently, a more constructionist view was taken and the process of storytelling is now generally seen as the never-ending construction of meaning in organizations (Boje 1991, Boland 1989 & 1994, Gabriel 1995).

Narrativity experienced a strong growth in popularity in scientific research in the 1990s. The appearance of narrativity was linked to a shift towards constructivism. This means our knowledge of the world and of us is thought to be formed through narratives. In narrative research, the researcher focuses on stories as conveyors and builders of knowledge. Narrative analysis strives to reshape research materials into a new story that brings out some of the main themes in the materials.

This study follows the narrative research tradition. It involves gathering stories from the field and constructing them through narrative analysis into new narratives. The focus is particularly on the role of narrativity in identity-building in a post-bureaucratic organizational context. I approach the issue by gathering stories and investigating whether a post-bureaucratic organization allows for the construction of harmonious narratives to be used in identity-building. I also seek to examine what forms these narratives might take.

This thesis opens up the question posed by Sennett (1998): 'How can a human being develop a narrative identity and life histories in a society composed of episodes and fragments?' Sennett has studied identity construction in different fields. In his writing (Sennett 1998), he gives numerous examples but does not delve deeper into any of the contexts. The present study makes it possible to study identity construction in one particular context and thus to enter into a more nuanced discussion of the issue. This study also applies narrative analysis. In order to study identities more closely, this study looks for answers for the purpose of coherency and consistency. Another important aspect in this study is to create a link between the discussions of a post-bureaucratic organization and identity theory.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of this study is the observation that younger and older employees build their identities in different ways and with different skills. Down and Reveley (2004) mention that generational differences have not been studied sufficiently in organization research. They also criticize the lack of emphasis on the views of the individual. This study approaches the issue with the tools of qualitative research, striving to bring out the views of

individuals. The results indicate that different generations have differing views on working life and work in general. Parker (2000), who also had engineers as his subjects, found a clear difference between generations. There are dissimilarities between the attitudes of older and younger employees towards technology and work. According to Parker (2000), older employees tend to emphasize the importance of practical experience and make a clear age-related distinction between “them” and “us”. Another central aspect of the present study is the fact that in answering the question “Who am I?”, the employees construct a relationship between themselves and the organization in the context of the organization. In other words, the relationship between individual and organization is a central factor in the narrative in which the individuals build their identities.

Another important observation based on the present study is that the range of identities is diverse, and that no high level of commitment to the organization can be discerned. Two main groups stand out based on the time spent in working life. Older employees seem to have a coherent narrative identity. However, this identity is weakened due to their changing posts and shifting companies. There is also a sense of hurt at what they experience as their history, knowledge, values and identity are being forgotten. The narratives of those with a short history in working life do contain narrative elements but they are built more on temporality than actual causality and intentionality. This means that they might be unable to shape their working lives into an ongoing narration. The other possibility is that the work for younger employees is not that important a part of their identity, which is why they do not construct stories with causality and coherence. Those with a short history in working life tend to be more focused on the future than on the past and that seems to be desirable from the point of view of the organization.

As seen above, a premise of this study is that the classical relationship between individual and organization is examined through identity discussions. In this study I view the above-mentioned relationship as a social construct, focusing on the language that employees themselves use in describing their relationships with the organization and with their jobs. The strength of this perspective lies in the fact that it brings out the individual and personal interpretations of the employees.

Thus, this study sets out to map the identifying differences between the ways in which different generations construct harmonious identity narratives. Therefore this backs up demands uttered within organizational studies of furthering the research of generational differences (Down & Reveley 2004). The theoretical implication of the study is that the relationship individuals have towards work and

to the organization differ between generations. In the case of those with a shorter history in working life, identities seem more fluid rather than stable and constant. Those with longer history have a more consistent identity but they are more focused on the past than on the future.

1.2 Research questions

This study was conducted in the research and development department (R&D) of an ICT company. There were about 100 people working in the unit.

The rules have changed in the world of work and, as a result, so have the relationships between individuals and organizations (Child & McGrath 2001, Parker 2000). Traditional bureaucracy relies on the presumption that the higher the organizational level of an actor, the more information they would have and the better qualified they would be to do goal-setting (see. Child & McGrath 2001). Bureaucracy rests on the idea that work can be divided between those who work and those who plan, organize, coordinate and control work (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004).

In a post-bureaucratic organization, hierarchical control and authority relations are more complex and they are not stable. Commitment may not be as strong on either side: employment terms are shorter, and work is characterized by constant change. Commitment to work is a relationship of trust, affected by the characteristics and actions of the employee and the organization alike. Heckscher (1994), in pointing out some characteristics of post-bureaucratic organizations, refers to the high need of internal trust and influence based on persuasion and/or personal qualities. Both of these represent aspects of new challenges arising from an identity point of view.

Sennett (1998) highlights flexibility when he writes 'it is quite natural that flexibility should arouse anxiety: people do not know what risks will pay off, what paths to pursue...flexibility is used today as another way to lift the curse of oppression from capitalism. In attacking rigid bureaucracy and emphasizing risk, it is claimed, flexibility gives people more freedom to shape their lives.' Here Sennett (1998) refers that flexibility usually carries positive connotations in people's minds, whereas bureaucracy tends to be seen as negative. In this study I seek to answer the question of how that is seen from the identity point of view.

I argue that studying identity narratives can help to understand the classical question of the relationship between the individual and the organization. The stories individuals tell about their working lives are needed to make sense of

identities at work. Considering the changes that have taken place in work and work relations, this would seem a highly topical issue for study.

The purpose, then, is to answer Sennett's (1998) question of how can a human being develop a narrative identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments? Sennett argues that the relationship between the individual and the organization has changed and there is no trust or commitment, which gives rise to the first research question posed in this study:

How is the relationship between the individual and the organization constructed in the ICT-sector?

The choice of an ICT company for this study is based on how, given the extent and speed of change in this sector, questions of identity would be more relevant in a high-tech ICT environment than in a bureaucracy. Polkinghorne (1988) specifies the idea of the narrative construction of identity:

...we achieve our personal identities and self-concept through the use of narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of the stories and cannot be sure how they end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be.

To find out whether narratives are indeed needed, and used in a post-bureaucratic organization, I posed a second research question:

What is the role of narratives in identity construction in a post-bureaucratic organizational context?

Putting it more simply, my mission was to find out how individuals see themselves as members of an organization. This question is closely related to identity theory (Ashforth & Mael 1989, Hytti 2003, Down & Reveley 2004), to theories of post-bureaucratic organization (Heckscher 1994, Grey & Garsten 2001), and to narratives (Boland 1989, Boje 1991, Gabriel 1995, Czarniawska 1998). In order to see if it is possible to construct a narrative identity I had to give consideration to the individual stories of employees. Identity, in the context of this study, is understood as a process – a process of becoming (Chia 1995). In telling the story of our becoming, we establish who we are.

1.3 Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to understand the relationship between the individual and the organization in a post-bureaucratic organization. At the individual level, practical workplace challenges under conditions of bureaucracy or flexibility are crystallized in the question of identity, as we look for an answer to the question “Who am I?” (Ashforth & Mael 1989, Gergen 1991, Giddens 1991). When it comes to studying identity construction, post-bureaucratic organizations can be considered as particularly interesting sites (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004, Beech & McInnes 2005). This study approaches the question of the relationship between the individual and the organization from the point of view of the individuals’ personal narratives.

A narrative perspective may offer a common way of structuring change and gathering up the fragments. Vilkkö (2000) comments that the postmodern way of life is becoming differentiated from the traditional generation chain by being determined by individual choices. Individuals describing their life stories create narrative connections between their current and future selves. In this sense, life events can be “taken charge of” by telling them, and a narrative identity is built through the telling. In contrast with the fragmented identity concept of the post-modern age, the narrative identity concept can be seen as an integrative philosophy. The charge-taking of life events that takes place through narration creates continuity between past, present and future. This kind of integration and reinterpretation of life through narration has been used for instance in narrative therapy (cf. e.g., Holma 1999).

Storytelling lies at the heart of this study; it is a central element of my research. Other important concepts are identity and narrativity. The context of the study consists of engineers in the ICT sector, but this core is surrounded by a wider debate regarding whether the construction of a narrative identity is possible in this sector. The study is described in Figure 1.

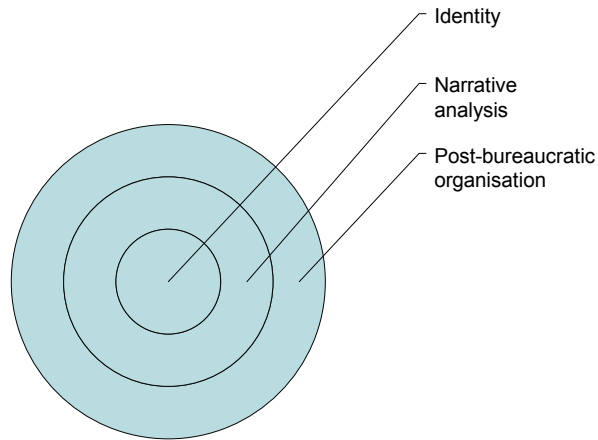


Fig. 1. The question of identity in a post-bureaucratic organization context

The term “narrative” in this study is applied both when referring to the research approach and in reference to methodology. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Identity, the second important concept in this study, is seen as related to narrativity, and a major observation is that identity-building often takes place through the “narrative methods” method.

To sum up, the aim of the study is to describe the relationship between individual and organization through narratives, contemplating whether the construction of a narrative identity is possible in a post-bureaucratic organization.

1.4 Structure of the Report

The thesis is structured as follows. After an introduction, I present the research questions in detail and give an overview of the structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 discusses the relationship between the individual and the organization, starting from Taylorism and ending with post-bureaucracy and the flexible organization. In the third chapter, the study is linked to the constructivist identity debate. In Chapter 4, I discuss another central element in the research, i.e. narrativity, contemplating whether the construction of a narrative identity is possible in a post-bureaucratic organization. Chapter 5 presents the philosophical and methodological principles of the study, and gives a description of the context and

research process. The company on which the research was centered is described in Chapter 5.

Before I can suggest any answers to the research questions, I must present the narratives constructed out of the interviews conducted with engineers. These are discussed in Chapter 6, comparing diverse identity stories and their styles, and using them to form an idea of the construction of identity in relation to the organization. The chapter describes different identity stories and how each story involves a different relationship to the organization and emphasizes different issues in the construction of identity. A further aspect is an examination of the tensions that seemed to arise in the narratives between the individual and the organization. Chapter 7 presents the empirical results and outlines preliminary answers to the research questions. Also in this chapter, the significance of the study and possibilities for further research are discussed.

2 Individual and organization

In this section I describe the study of relationships between individuals and organizations from the point of view of organizational theory, attempting to describe the development of research and approach methods over the decades. I focus on examining the relationship between individual and organization from various theoretical standpoints to create an overall picture of the subject. In this chapter my starting points lie in bureaucracy and Taylorism, and I go through different stages to investigate the relationship between individual and organization in a post-bureaucratic organization.

Bureaucracy is a concept created by Max Weber, who presented an ideal model in his 1921 work, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. By an ideal model Weber did not mean the best possible organization but rather the purest kind of bureaucratic model. By ideal bureaucracy he meant a kind of administration in which people work under clear instructions, and where the employees' power is based on their skills and positions rather than on personal characteristics. In a bureaucratic organization, decisions are made impersonally on the basis of rules in order to avoid problems of bias, such as nepotism. The aim of a bureaucratic organization is to operate in a rational and calculated way in order to fulfill the targets set by management.

Although the model presented by Weber comes under management studies, he did not mean for it to be used as an example to be followed, nor did he write the book for management researchers. Weber's intention was to describe the process of Western rationalization. Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy was one aspect of his overall attempt in understanding the features of Western civilization through the process of rationalization. One part of this process was the increase in bureaucratic power at the cost of charismatic power. In the latter, power is a personal characteristic and rules are made *ad hoc*. Weber was also highly conscious of the 'paradox of consequences', according to which, means often prevent us from reaching an end. For instance, rules help organizations to function up to a point, but the amount of paper and work created by these rules can be counter-productive and can actually reduce the initiative of the employees (Watson 1980).

Almost every company today has some qualities and targets that are characteristic of a bureaucratic, rationalized organization. Management is often hierarchical and targets are set top-down (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004). It is easy to see that practically no organization follows the ideal model. This can be a curse

as well as a blessing, for example when the positions of employees in the organization are not based on skills.

In practice, organizations wrestle with the issues of whether employees work independently or follow rules, and what kinds of relationships exist between the individual and the organization. The assumption is that organizations that operate in a stable environment follow the norms of bureaucracy more closely, whereas those whose environments are turbulent seek flexibility in order to adapt to changing conditions (Child & McGrath 2001).

According to Weber (1964), an organization is bureaucratic when the following conditions apply: 1) All functions are divided into highly specialized stages so that there is no overlap. This means that individual functions are easily exchangeable, which creates flexibility and efficiency. 2) The compatibility problems that arise from specialization are solved by centralizing decision-making and creating clearly defined manager/employee relationships. 3) Uncertainty regarding employee behavior is eliminated by creating strict orders and rules, which ensures the equal treatment of external parties (customers or other stakeholders) and consistent evaluation criteria for operations. 4) Employees, especially managers, must act as impersonally and formally as possible. Social distancing is used to ensure that friendships, family relations and other situations of co-dependence do not affect the efficiency of work. 5) Communication must take place through official channels, i.e. hierarchically in accordance with roles and responsibilities, preferably in writing. This is done with the aim of eliminating the possibility of conflicting interpretations, and, on the other hand, to facilitate the objective evaluation of operations required for controlled development (Handy 1985).

Later developments of the Weber bureaucracy theory have focused on Weber's concept of the position of the individual within the organization, which is deemed inadequate. They have also pointed out some of the drawbacks of bureaucracy. Merton (1940) discusses the disadvantages considered to be characteristic of bureaucratic organizations. Merton strived to demonstrate that bureaucracy will be destroyed by its own impossibility, because the objectives and targets related to efficiency are subjected to the absolute value of bureaucracy. In other words, bureaucracy is above everything else. All operations are focused on meeting requirements, which in turn prevents the organization from meeting its original targets.

Gouldner (1954) and Selznick (1949) also criticize bureaucratic administration, saying that many unpredictable consequences come from applying

the ideal model. Gouldner (1954) also emphasized that Weber's model is ultimately based on a highly undeveloped vision of how individuals actually operate in an organization. Increasingly, it was seen that bureaucracy could constitute a dehumanized world, a machine destroying emotions and individualities in order for it to attain its own goals of efficiency (Gouldner 1955).

2.1 Scientific management

Adam Smith (1776) presented a market economy model in which individual greed is turned into shared happiness. The main idea was that individuals worked to maximize their own benefit. The roots of organizational and management studies lie in Smith's (1776) observations regarding the efficiency of the distribution of work. Inspired greatly by Smith's observations, Frederick Taylor (1903 & 1911) created his famous principles of scientific management. Taylor and the scientific management movement which arose through him have made up one of the most heavily criticized management studies of all time, but Taylor may also have been the most widely influential theorist. According to Taylor, scientific study can identify the one best way of working, which can then be taught to the employees. The main objective of Taylorism was to optimize the use of the workforce and to eliminate 'soldiering' – i.e. workers' operating purposely below their capacities. Physical and psychological tasks were dissociated. Taylor's view of the organization is reflected in his having told his employees that they did not have to think, as others were being paid to do it (Morgan 1996).

In terms of recruitment, scientific management meant that people with the right characteristics should be appointed to the right jobs. A good employee was one who could cope with a monotonous job while working carefully, exactly and quickly. Any personal flaws could be mapped effectively, and training could be provided to address such issues. Taylor examined the physical abilities of employees using time study and motion study methods. Time studies subdivided jobs into the smallest possible tasks, whose duration was then measured. At the end, the work was reassembled so that it could be performed in the shortest possible time. In other words, Taylor supported a highly advanced division of labor and degree of specialization, believing that these led to efficiency.

According to Taylor, people are driven by purely financial motives, so he recommended the use of incentive wages. Employees were mechanical automatons, and managers mainly had to ensure that they came to work. The relationship between the individual and the organization was clearly financial;

people came to work in order to get paid, and work was done as efficiently as possible. On the other hand, benefiting the organization was also in the interest of the individual (Taylor 1914).

Taylorism began to lose its appeal towards the end of the 1910s, while the human relations theory began taking a hold in the 1920s. Industrial psychologists and personnel experts began to take part in labor studies alongside engineers. Research focused mainly on physical issues such as noise levels, lighting, and the duration of work and rest periods. The so-called Hawthorne Experiments, which began in 1924, were crucial in the creation of human relations theory. The research project, which went on until 1932, was led by Elton Mayo. For the first time, studies showed that social relationships between people affect the operation of organizations, and the quality of production. People do not function just as individuals but also as members of a group. Mayo's research team found that although working conditions worsened after they were initially improved, productivity did not decrease. Mayo explained that the attention directed by the researchers towards the employees made the employees feel important. He concluded that productivity is affected not only by scientific factors but also by human factors, which had systematically been neglected until then (Handy 1985).

2.2 Human relations

According to Mayo, people needed recognition, care and dignified treatment, and as they did not receive this from the organization, they enjoyed the attention received from the researchers. In other words, the organization must look after its staff because otherwise an 'unofficial' organization might be formed that would fulfill the employees' needs for attention and care. However, the great popularity of the human relations theory was not only due to the Hawthorne Experiments, but to the favorable social conditions created after the depression in the 1930s (Alvesson 1987).

Douglas McGregor (1960) presented Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X assumed that people inherently avoid work, shun responsibility, focus on fulfilling their basic needs, require management and are immature. McGregor's concept of humanity is characteristically self-fulfilling: having been subjected to management based on Theory X, many employees sooner or later begin seeing their jobs as a necessary evil rather than as a personal challenger or source of satisfaction. According to McGregor, management practices that avoid the specific rules of a modern society and advanced control functions, should be

based on Theory Y. This theory assumes people to be inherently mature, responsible, creative and self-directing, with a playfully enthusiastic approach towards work, and an ability to solve problems, to manage their own work, and to satisfy their needs for recognition and self-fulfillment.

However, McGregor did not claim that all individuals come purely under Theory Y, but that most people have the potential to become mature and self-motivated. In fact, McGregor would later publish Theory Z, after seeing that people erroneously understood Theories X and Y to be the only two alternatives. The idea behind Theory Z was to demonstrate that individuals could not be pigeonholed as either X or Y. McGregor was somewhat ahead of his time, however, and Theory Z was mostly forgotten. In any case, McGregor managed to emphasize the significance of the organization in developing the individual. His central idea was that all individuals have potential, which can be fulfilled with the right management methods. Incorrect management, on the other hand, can cause the opportunity to be lost.

Chris Argyris (1954 & 1957) emphasized the difference between people's attitudes and behaviors. He contrasted Theories X and Y, which describe attitudes, with behavioral models A and B, where model A is most often linked to McGregor's Theory X and model B to Theory Y. Argyris (1954, 1957 & 1973) criticized the inflexible structures of organizations, saying that this causes people to lose interest in work. The tension between the organization's requirements and people's subjective expectations causes various dysfunctions, frustrations and conflicts. In particular, rigid structures are surrounded by competition, envy, and unsociable thinking.

The common factor among all the different human relations theorists is the idea that the success of the operations of an organization depends on its ability to respond to the subjective expectations and needs of employees (Alvesson & Willmott 1992, Jackson & Carter 1995). Maslow expanded on this thought, because his view of human needs was more dynamic and extensive than that of previous theories. While Mayo, McGregor and Argyris emphasized social relations, Maslow focused more on the individual and the individual's mind. Maslow subdivided human needs into physiological needs (hunger, thirst), safety needs (shelter), social needs (belonging, love, recognition, status, approval) and self-actualization needs. Each need must be satisfied before moving on to the next level (Maslow 1954). Maslow's theory is more of a philosophy than an empirically confirmed model. Empirical studies have not been made to support it,

but it is still a widely used and well-known theory, perhaps due to the fact that it is easily applicable as a management tool.

Herzberg (1966 & 1968) expanded on Maslow's model, separating out hygiene and motivation-related factors. The idea was that improving hygiene factors will decrease dissatisfaction while not increasing satisfaction. Hygiene factors include salary, status, company policy, safety, supervision and work conditions. Satisfaction can be increased by increasing motivation factors, which include achievement, advancement, recognition, growth, responsibility, and the work itself.

Contingency theorists, on the other hand, have striven to show that 'human-centric' leadership is not always the right model, or at least the most productive model. According to Fiedler's (1967) contingency model, there are three main situational factors that determine whether a situation is favorable to leadership. They are: 1) the leader's personal relations with group members; 2) the clarity of the task given to the group; and 3) the position and authority of the leader. The first of these factors is human-centric, while the others focus on tasks. Fiedler (1967) made the following conclusions: 1) Task-motivated leaders perform well in situations that are either very favorable or very unfavorable to leadership. 2) Relationship-motivated leaders are most effective in moderately favorable situations.

Thus, demands for improved work conditions and leadership were made already before the Second World War. In the 1960s and 70s, as the affluent part of society grew, work conditions improved significantly as well in Finland. There was new talk of job rotation and job enrichment.

2.3 Organizational culture and quality

The 1980s brought a conception that each employee should be an active and intellectual participant in developing the company. Directors, as the official representatives of the organization, should set an example and act as social coaches. The growth of cultural studies gave rise to the concepts of symbolic management and creativity and innovation spanning a whole organization (Peters & Waterman 1982, Deal & Kennedy 1982, Schein 1985).

During the recession of the 1990s, Tayloristic efficiency thinking gained a new foothold. Quality and process control emphasized splitting work into small stages, whereas profit-oriented thinking focused on improving efficiency. According to Pritchett (1995), the rules of the labor market are changing, and

individual workers must learn to adapt. Pritchett sees the labor market as a tough playing field, where individuals must act in entrepreneurial fashions. The concepts of internal entrepreneurship and individuals' flexible actions played a significant part in the discourse of the 1990s. This leads to the question that if individuals begin acting as entrepreneurs, can the company trust them? To use terms pertaining to economics: What do entrepreneurs maximize? Their own benefits? What are these benefits and are they in line with the company's interests in a given period of time? According to recent studies, there are increasing numbers of a new, destructive kind of an employee: the calculating player (Dean *et al.* 1998, Kanter & Mirvis 1989). They do not account for a significant proportion of the workforce yet, but companies may have to face the challenge of organizing a number of individual 'businesses' (Reichheld 1996).

The latest developments have been in the direction of collaborative management and a focus on dialogue. Communalism, shared leadership and the joint construction of understanding are also emphasized in today's leadership. Employees are seen as partners of the organization, and it is considered imperative that each employee's skills are made use of optimally. Hierarchies are kept low by giving everyone the opportunity of participating. One major idea is that leadership skills lie less in rational organization and more in building solidarity and maintaining diversity. The allowance of diversity distinguishes today's leadership discourse from the cultural approach, which focused more on cohesion.

The field of psychology has also looked at the relationship between the individual and the organization. The 'psychological contract' is a set of beliefs based on explicit and implicit promises, which are considered to have been made between an individual and an organization (Rousseau 2004). The psychological contract motivates the employee to fulfill the commitments made with regard to the employer, when the employee can be sure to receive suitable compensation and contractual fulfillment.

2.4 Post-bureaucracy

The concept of post-bureaucracy may be traced back to a range of related developments over the last two decades, including corporate culture in the wake of Peters and Waterman (1982) and the promotions of 'enterprise culture' in the 1980s (du Gay & Salaman 1992). Post-bureaucracy is understood as an 'end of bureaucracy'. In that meaning it is seen as being positive. For example,

Heckscher (1994), Clegg (1990) and Howard (1995) find post-bureaucracy as liberating and see it as opening up new possibilities. The table below shows the characteristics of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic organizations.

Table 1. Characteristics of Bureaucratic and Post-Bureaucratic Organizations.

Bureaucracy	Post-Bureaucracy
Consensus through Acquiescence to Authority	Consensus through Institutionalized Dialogue
Influence based on Formal Position	Influence through Persuasion/Personal Qualities
Internal Trust Immaterial	High Need for Internal Trust
Emphasis on Rules and Regulations	Emphasis on Organizational Mission
Information Monopolised at Top of Hierarchy	Strategic Information shared in Organization
Focus on Rules for Conduct	Focus on Principles Guiding Action
Fixed (and Clear) Decision Making Processes	Fluid/Flexible Decision Making Processes
Communal Spirit/Friendship Groupings	Network on Specialized Functional Relationships
Hierarchical Appraisal	Open and Visible Peer Review Processes
Definite and Impermeable Boundaries	Open and Permeable Boundaries
Objective Rules to ensure Equity of Treatment	Broad Public Standards of Performance
Expectation of Constancy	Expectation of Change

Source: Heckscher (1994)

In a post-bureaucratic organization, bureaucratic compartments are replaced by changing post-bureaucratic interfaces. There are still managers and subordinates; hierarchical structures do not disappear, although they may be reduced. These structures do not limit people's actions or stop them from interacting freely in the organization. Other characteristics of the post-bureaucratic organization, as defined by Grey and Garsten (2001), are increased subcontracting, temporary contracts and the use of consultants instead of the organization's own employees for doing everything.

Heckscher and Applegate (1994) present nine features of the post-bureaucratic organization: worker participation through self-managing work teams; cross-functional task forces; multi-level consensus; information technology; decision-making capacity-building; partnerships across boundaries; horizontal and vertical information-sharing; negotiated solutions; and new managerial roles: leader, change agent, coordinator, broker and boundary-crosser. Heckscher and Applegate (1994) state that these definitions correspond well to Burns and Stalker's (1961) description of the organic organization, whereas bureaucracy is more compatible with that of a mechanistic view of organization.

Leadership is given new content when, instead of controlling work and giving orders to employees, the work of managers is to support employees in their daily work. This change in leadership is an essential part of the post-bureaucratic shift. While in a bureaucratic system people hold power in relation to their positions, in a post-bureaucratic organization, managers and employees meet at several authority-related interfaces. Leadership becomes more bidirectional; managers no longer know the answers to all questions, but strive to find them out together with their employees. The significance of managers is not reduced, however. They are still tasked with guaranteeing the existence of structures, rules and methods that make it safe and simple for employees to participate in the management process and in workplace events. Managers should also create opportunities for staff to participate in developing these structures.

The increase in employee-orientation and interaction raises the question of whether management is really necessary anymore. According to Hirschhorn (1997) post-bureaucratic leadership requires a stronger commitment to leadership on the part of the manager. The challenge of management increases as the system becomes more complex and employees and managers meet at many different interfaces. While in a bureaucracy power and responsibility are clearly defined, in a post-bureaucratic organization they are determined separately for each situation.

The breakdown of bureaucracy is generally seen as a positive thing. Colloquially, the word “bureaucracy” is mostly used in a negative sense. In the new post-bureaucratic organization, the impersonality required by bureaucracy is replaced by a greater personal presence. Instead of rules, work is directed and controlled by people. Everyone has the opportunity to participate deeply and apply their own personality more extensively.

This lack of boundaries in work brings not only freedom but also challenges. If in product development a product is found to be unprofitable, or the focus shifts to just a handful of core products, the people involved in development projects may have to give up on work that has become important to them and be prepared to move on to another project. Employees have to grasp situations quickly and adapt to them.

The work of employees is also interconnected – i.e. it is no longer enough for them to focus on their own work, but they have to know about the tasks of others as well. This means that “none of my business” is no longer applicable to anything related to work.

Relationship vis-à-vis managers may also change. The links between a manager and an employee are no longer tied to roles but become personal and

strongly tinged by dependency. Resource-sharing and work planning are carried out together by the manager and employee, which may cause envy in others. This can lead to various conflicts arising more easily than before. On the other hand, in a climate of openness conflicts can be handled so that they lead to development.

2.5 Relationships Between the Individual and Organization in Post-Bureaucracy

Above, I have discussed how management and leadership changes in post-bureaucracy. The difference compared to bureaucracy is so significant that it affects the relationship between individual and organization in many levels. For example as we have seen, post-bureaucratic organizations require more personal commitment to the organization and to work.

When reading Weber (1970), it becomes apparent that his work is not focused on optimizing, standardizing or controlling an organization; instead, the development of bureaucracy refers to and focuses on the development of the relations between the individual and the organization.

The problems of bureaucracy have been emphasized in recent decades. Bureaucracy is subjected to widespread criticism, and many researchers have listed employment-related and social changes in which bureaucracy no longer seems effective. For instance Heckscher and Applegate (1994) as well as Hatch (1997) have pointed out the threats to the effectiveness of bureaucracy posed by new organizational models, technologies and expertise.

The problems of bureaucracy are related above all to a poor utilization of human potential. In a bureaucracy people's actions are directed by roles and by rules; each person's work contribution is determined and delimited in advance. There is no room for flexibility and creativity, which means that employers only acquire a small portion of their employees' competence. An unchanging situation is also problematic in a bureaucracy. One cause of deterioration is the accumulation of rules. Bureaucracy is directed through rules, so the amount of rules related to each situation increases over the years. The suitability of the rules is seldom evaluated; instead, new rules are created to apply to changing situations. The result is a huge number of rules and regulations, which can at times be conflicting, and hinder each other, leading to inefficiency. In other words, a situation can come to a head in which the past and reasons no longer remembered by anyone try to control today's world (cf. Heckscher 1994).

This kind of effort is only possible when work is open and employees assume responsibility for their own work and productivity. According to Heckscher (1994), the underpinning principle of post-bureaucratic organizations is the shared responsibility for the functionality of the whole. Mohrman and Cohen (1995) also underscore the sense of responsibility.

Flexible organizations or post-bureaucratic organizations have undergone several changes. One is the increase in employee-orientation. They have moved on from the compartmentalization of bureaucracy to a dialogue-based work method. Employees are constantly present in changes, management and planning.

“In doing this, post-bureaucracy co-opts workers into accepting greater levels of responsibility for and engagement in organizational decision-making; higher levels of political stress due to having to negotiate such decisions with others whose views are likely to differ, and less time to do their work due to their involvement in meetings and committees where these collaborative negotiations and decision-making contests take place.” (Iedema 2003).

In Weber’s work, the individual is presented as being rational. While Weber does not directly pose a theory of the inhabitants of a successful bureaucracy, it can be interpreted from his observations. For a bureaucracy to be efficient, individuals must be motivated to move on in their career. Donnellon and Scully (1994) in their article present three features of bureaucracy: individual performance of tasks, managerial assessment of performance, and hierarchical allocation of reward. All three features are needed to change for an organization to become post-bureaucratic. These changes are not simple and several practical and political problems are associated with each feature. Donnellon and Scully (1994) in their article focus on how aspects of bureaucracy must change to support a new kind of way of working. From their description it is possible to study the viewpoint of an individual and the standpoint of organization relationship during its change from a bureaucracy to a post-bureaucracy. In table 2 some of the solutions to bureaucratic problems are presented.

Table 2. Assessing Solutions to Bureaucratic Problems (Donnellon & Scully 1994).

Post-bureaucratic requirements	Inhibiting features of Bureaucracy	Problems with these features	Popular solutions	Possible negative consequences
Efficiency and effectiveness	Individual Performance of Tasks	Most critical tasks now are reciprocally interdependent Inhibits flexible and fluid participation	Assign most critical tasks to teams Adapt individual assessment and reward system Assess individual 'team skills' as part of assessment of individual responsibilities	Lack of individual accountability for team work encourages lack of contribution to team Individual accountability for other work discourages contribution to team Individuals act strategically to maximize the visibility of their contribution Integrative team spirit threatened Team task not optimally performed
Coordination and Commitment	Managerial Assessment of Individual Performance	Arbitrary due to lack of observed data (on teams) Arbitrary due to interdependence of tasks Political; not useful in enhancing performance	Have team members assess each other Assess team members' contribution to team performance Assess team performance	Recognized individual accountability for other work and to manager may discourage team contribution and make this meaningless in terms of improving team performance Outcome measures too distant; hard to control and give incentives on annual basis With fluid team participation, distribution of rewards may be too difficult and wide
Incentives and Cost Control	Hierarchical Allocation of Rewards	Preserved attachment to hierarchy and individual performance assessment; creates a disincentive for team work May be a disincentive to many in organization May not be cost-effective	Flatten the hierarchy Pay for contribution/skills	Does not eliminate attachment to hierarchy and individual accountability Retains problems of individual performance assessment May lead to friction over total reange of pay within and across levels

Teams and teamwork are often presented as a solution to increase efficiency in an organization and move beyond the individual performance of tasks. The primary concern is the lack of individual accountability will create a disincentive for the individual to contribute towards teams. That is possible but according to post-bureaucratic organization theory this approach should be taken. One complication in the post-bureaucratic feature is that the performing of a single job requires both team assignments and individual tasks. From the point of view of the individual and organization relationship, the post-bureaucratic organization means a more interactive relationship and closer relations with coworkers.

The increasing complexity of a post-bureaucratic organization creates new, additional requirements for the manager. The role of the manager has typically involved the ranking of a group of employees and distributing performance ratings. In a post-bureaucratic setting this responsibility is handed out to other team members. As presented in table 2, this handing out of responsibility also has problems. This means that the employee has to be more capable in assessing the work of other people and being very open in giving feedback. In a post-bureaucratic organization this is described as dialogue.

A bureaucratic organization is based on the assumption that the hierarchical allocation of reward provides people with an incentive to develop their knowledge base and to work hard in the expectation of moving up to higher levels of responsibility and reward (Donnellon & Scully 1994). In a bureaucracy, commitment is demonstrated by doing the job well and upholding the rules. In a post-bureaucratic organization, commitment is displayed through active collaboration with others – a characteristic that is hard to measure and reward.

What is seen as positive in post-bureaucracy is not that decisions come from the “top” anymore, but that there is constant dialogue. While it can be perceived as an advantage, in practice it is also time consuming. From the viewpoint of the individual this means plenty of interaction and a tolerance for uncertainty. Hence, the demarcations between work and leisure become blurred as the dialogue continues on beyond that of the workplace.

As there are more interactive structures in a post-bureaucracy, this flexibility is perceived as being one of the primary reasons to debureaucratize organizations. Hecksher (1994) suggests that we could call this kind of organization the interactive type.

In a bureaucratic organization, duties are clearly defined and people are only responsible for completing certain tasks (cf. Rose *et al.* 1992); in a post-bureaucratic organization, employees must be multi-skilled, broadly competent

and verbally capable. While previously management used to determine who would do what, employees are now encouraged to participate in defining their tasks and developing their work methods. Hence, doing the work is not enough; one also has to be able to discuss and plan one's work.

According to Hirschhorn (1997), the biggest change in post-bureaucracy consists of increased opportunities for employees and managers in the workplace. Everyone has the possibility of participating more deeply as complete human beings, applying their entire competence to benefit the workplace. Bureaucracy prevents this, as only certain competences are acquired from people and everyone works towards a single, limited whole. A post-bureaucracy, on the other hand, empowers people by offering managers and employees more all-encompassing work, in which they can be present with their whole competence potential and all their emotions, strengths and weaknesses.

Hirschhorn (1997) emphasizes positive meanings, but also admits that post-bureaucracy contains risk factors. Involving the self in work makes both managers and employees more vulnerable. Emotional states become significantly more personal and therefore riskier. Iedema (2003) also mentions that when people's job descriptions and duties are less definite, constant interaction with others and joint efforts to determine what each person does become increasingly important. In other words, job descriptions are constantly renegotiated. Iedema states that work is increasingly about talking and writing about work. This is referred to in other literature by the term "textualization" (Scheeres & Iedema 2002, Iedema & Scheeres 2003). I argue that this is the biggest change in the relationship between individual and organization so far. Employees and managers have to negotiate the relationship again and again, and it is always changing. The capability of talking about one's work, and different ways of producing the self affect the identity constructed, which is something no one needs to do in bureaucracy. This change renders both identity and narrativity to the center of organizational life.

Trust can be seen as the expectation that the behavior of another person will benefit one's own activities. Trust generates social order, because in a complex society persons have to be able to rely on people in different roles acting in predictable ways. Trust is always built mutually, which is why it can take a long time (Creed & Miles 1996).

The culture of traditional organizations was not based on trust but on monitoring. The relationship between the individual and the organization involved a negative conception of humanity: people are naturally lazy and must

be directed to complete the right tasks and follow instructions. Therefore, trust was unnecessary. Management in a new organization requires new skills: encouraging independence and self-management.

In relationships of trust, the parties approach each other with positive expectations. The wielding of power, on the other hand, is based on negative assumptions (Hardy *et al.* 1998). Grey and Garsten (2002) consider it important that trust is separated from the use of power – i.e. to find out whether a relationship of trust is based mainly on reciprocity or on the survival of the strongest, because the nature and consequences of the relationship will vary.

Grey and Garsten (2001) investigate what generates trust in organizations that are characterized by temporary contracts, consultants, project work, etc. They state that predictability can no longer be based on routines, following orders or shared values, but that it must be in the employees' flexibility, adaptability to local interaction, independence and competences that are transferable to other organizations.

Hecksher (1994) presents several possible weaknesses for a post-bureaucracy. One is costs. There is an assumption that because everyone interacts with each other and plentiful discussion appears, it costs more. There is no clear evidence for that, as we can equally suppose that in a bureaucracy there are more costs due to loss of time from additional layers of rules and hierarchy. The second is slowness. Hecksher (1994) argues that this is also only an assumption. We assume that discussion takes time which is why decisions do not happen quickly in a post-bureaucracy. The third is mediocrity. It is assumed that the processes of consensus tend to wear down bold ideas and to pull everyone toward safe and noncontroversial positions (Hecksher 1994: 48). The fourth one is faction. Hecksher (1994) notes in a post-bureaucratic organization, discussion has to be organized at the strategic level for it to unify all parts of the system.

Post-bureaucracy is a new theme in organization research and there is not much of knowledge of its effects. Equally as during Weber's time, we are outlining a new time and new model of organization and the effects will be studied further. In this chapter, theories of post-bureaucratic organization have been revisited. To conclude I argue that many things that were self-evident in organizations are now questioned. No-one wants to go back to bureaucracy, but new challenges seem to be on the rise. Most the theorists seem to agree that more flexibility is required. That has a substantial effect to the relationship between the individual and organization.

The relationship between the individual and organization is a classic issue in organization theory, but it is also examined in political theory, social philosophy, social science and psychology. The problems in each field are different and arise from different viewpoints, but they are always related to the juxtaposition of individualism and collective visions.

Currently, identity-related studies are of central importance in examining the relationship between the individual and organization. I have also adopted an identity-focused approach in this study. Identity theory could be seen as a broader framework, within which the context of the organization resides. The next chapter is dedicated to identity theory, but I also keep in mind the relationship between individual and organization.

3 Identity

As pointed out in Chapter 1, identity-building in the context of post-bureaucratic organization can be seen as an almost impossible challenge on the one hand, or as a great opportunity on the other. As identity is a central concept in this study, traditional models of identity will be reviewed briefly to form the basis for further discussion. Another important viewpoint for the purposes of the present study is the concept of identity as a process and as evolving over time. To be able to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1, I use a social constructionist approach, which is also outlined in this chapter.

3.1 Traditional models of identity

Traditionally, identity was split into personal and social aspects. The first theorist to use the concept of identity was probably Erik Homburger Erikson (1956 & 1980). His roots were in psychoanalysis, and he used the concepts of personal identity and ego identity as early as the 1940s. Among other issues, his studies concerned the construction of a child's identity in relation to its parents.¹

Mead (1962) distinguished between the subjective 'I' and the objective 'Me'. When speaking of 'I', Mead is referring to the creative part of the person, which functions in unpredictable ways and forms the core of the identity. In a way, the subjective 'I' is the functional identity, living in the present moment. The objective 'Me' is made up of other people's attitudes, which direct behaviors. The 'Me' represents the rules and expectations assumed in communication. The objective 'Me' refers to a person's ability to reflect on oneself. These elements of identity are in constant dialectic interaction. The two elements are joined in the self, which according to Mead represents consciousness and allows for self-examination. Although these elements are distinguished from each other, they still form an entity, which functions as one process.

The significance of society comes up in the idea that identity can only be formed in relation to other individuals (Mead 1962). In other words, each person contains as many identities as there are significant social groups to belong to. Mead subscribes to this diversity-focused view, and does not see it as problematic. He has also investigated the relationship between society and

¹ In contemporary management theory, Manfred Kets de Vries's (1999) writings also rely on psychoanalysis

individual. In his 1962 work, Mead defines social institutions as a ‘generalised other’, in referring to the attitude adopted by the individual towards a social institution or group. As a ‘generalised other’ the institution’s thoughts and actions direct the individual’s social activities.

According to Goffman (1969), personal identity refers to a feeling of continuity and consistency in the individual’s concept of self during his or her lifetime. This concept is fairly constant. Social identity, on the other hand, refers to identification with various social communities or groups, and ways of acting in different social roles. Thus Goffman (1969) follows Mead (1962) in considering social identity to vary depending on the context, but places greater emphasis on the continuity of personal identity.

Ricouer (1994) determines two uses for the concept of identity: identity as sameness and identity as self. Sameness refers to the individual joining a community, whereas self refers to the individual’s own characteristics, which distinguish the individual from the community. Similarly, Fornäs (1998: 278, 280) writes about the dual mechanisms of identity, in which individuals are related to others on the one hand, but separate from others on the other. Social identity theory also includes the concepts of personal and social identity. Harré (1983) distinguishes these identity projects, defining them as social being and personal being. In the social identity project, the individual strives for identification and sameness with the community, whereas in the personal identity project identity is constructed through ‘otherness’, as the individual tries to convince others with his or her own characteristics. Thus identity construction can be seen as two separate, parallel processes.

Social identity theory is rooted in a sociopsychological perspective, mainly developed by Henri Tajfel (1981). In social identity theory it is argued that people belong to a certain social category and over time they develop an awareness of their membership and give preference to their own group over other groups.. According to Tajfel, social identity answers the question “Who are we?”, while personal identity answers the question “Who am I?”. Tajfel developed his theory in the 1960s and 70s, and it is still widely applied in various fields today. According to the theory, people classify themselves and others in accordance with several social categories. Individuals seek to organize and systematize their environments by classifying others. Simultaneously, they try to find their own places in relation to their environments by joining specific groups. According to Tajfel, membership of a psychological group has a cognitive foundation, as it helps individuals to form a concept of themselves and others on the basis of social

classification. Individuals internalize the social classification as part of their concept of self and begin acting in line with the model provided by the group.

Tajfel (1978) defines social identity as part of an individual's concept of self, which is determined by information provided about the individual as a member of a group, as well as by emotional meanings. Tajfel has carried out various studies on group formation and social identity, proving that group formation takes place very quickly even in artificial situations constructed for the purpose of research. When this happens, the members of the group begin acting in accordance with the interests of the group (cf. Tajfel 1978 & 1982).

Social identity theory is centered on categorization. Tajfel (1981) emphasizes that groups are not isolated, but operate amongst other groups. Social identity receives its attributes, just as social activity as a whole receives its significance from the relationships and comparisons between groups. Ashforth and Mael (1989) define the identification with an organization as a form of social identification. They consider the significance of the organization to be an important part of the construction of social identity.

In social anthropology, the identity concept has been used to describe tribes, communities and other collectives. In such studies, identity is seen as a label for a certain group, describing e.g. the national group, common language or ethnicity. By identifying people in terms of categories it is possible to explain their social behavior. For example Becher (1989) and Ylijoki (1998) consider engineers to be representatives of a kind of academic tribal culture. The idea behind this is that the representatives of each academic subject create a predominant moral order, which is maintained and communicated through the group's collective model narrative. As engineers communicate the moral order they start to act in a certain way and follow similar rules. Ylijoki (1998) investigated commitment to culture among students of different disciplines and found that students of the same discipline have different ways of committing to the predominant culture.

In all of these approaches, identity is seen as essentialist and realist. Essentialist in the sense that identity is taken to be something that is acquired either by birth or by joining some group; realist in the sense that there is assumed to be a correspondence between identity and some aspect of social reality.

3.2 Identity and culture

We can see identity from the point of learning. According to social learning theory, learning affects our ability to participate in the world. By affecting people's relationships with the world and with other people, learning changes people's identities as social beings. Learning is not just a question of acquiring specific skills, but of becoming a person who can participate in discussion and practices. It relates to adopting a new identity and seeing oneself in a new way (Wenger 1996: 23).

To become a member of a culture and society can be seen as socialization. Socialization takes place through social activity, and is therefore characterized as interaction with other people. Socialization (Van Maanen & Schein 1979) refers to a process in which the individual adopts the necessary social information and skills to "become one of us". Socialization helps to shape and define our thoughts, feelings, and actions, and it provides us with a model for our behavior. Socialization teaches us the cultural values and norms that provide the guidelines for our everyday life. Socialization in an organization allows the creation of understanding around issues such as what should be done and what should not be; what is valued, and what things are taken for granted or seen as dangerous or sensitive. Socialization is always linked to hidden curricula. Employees in an organization learn many things which are not included in a written curriculum or rulebook. Socialization comprises learning new words, assumptions, values and operating methods, as well as the divestment of old assumptions and values (Gabriel *et al.* 2000).

According to Weick (1995), each individual has several identities, which are constructed in interactive processes. In switching from one interactive situation to another, we also modify our definition of our selves. In other words, the individual constantly redefines his or her identity. This identity also affects our definitions of the external world. This causality works in both directions; i.e. each situation affects our experience of our identity. Our concepts of self and identity are partly also molded depending on what we believe others to think about, for example, the organizations in which we work. The organization can be seen in a negative or positive light, and the definition which is maintained socially is usually the one which shows the organization in a positive light, thereby supporting the individual's image of self and related experiences of efficiency and consistency. If a negative image of the organization threatens these elements related to self, the individual may try to create a new image, even if it means

having to redefine the organization's identity. If the new definition fails to work as well, the individual may choose to reflect his or her identity on something other than the organization where he or she works – e.g. a political association to which the individual can commit and where personal identity can be molded (Weick 1995).

Purposeful reasoning often comes into play when an individual's identity is challenged. Reasoning is intended to maintain a positive and consistent concept of self. Individuals learn about their identities by testing them in various interactive situations and observing other people's reactions and the consequences of their actions. In constructing their identities, people simultaneously try to modify the environment they encounter and react to it. They receive hints of their identities from the behaviors of others in relation to themselves, and actively try to provoke reactions in others. Reasoning is essentially linked to interpretation, the object of the interpretation being the self rather than the environment. Significance is attributed to events in the environment on the basis of the effects that the individuals are expected to have on the self and the identity. We use the most convenient identity to react to each situation (Weick 1995). In other words, each person has more than one identity, from which we choose the most suitable one depending on the circumstances.

Ihanus (1999) stresses that people's identities are built on and modified by narratives: we are our narratives. Heikkinen is more specific: the narrative identity is a continuously updated narrative consisting of a person's life and experiences. The narrative is used to describe and understand the world. We organize our experiences and build significance for our lives through narratives (Heikkinen 2001). From stories, newcomers in an organization learn what is important and worth keeping. They are socialized into the culture and learn how to interpret things and express themselves in the local manner and language (Weick 1995).

When an organization and its culture are seen as being founded on reasoning processes and the continuous creation of meaning, identity can be understood as a system of meanings (Salzer 1994). Similarly, organizations can be seen as networks of shared meanings, which are maintained through a common language in everyday social interaction. Suitable, shared meanings are created through socialization. Multiple meanings are drawn from an ambiguous environment on the basis of information gathered from diverse sources across the whole organization randomly and informally. In this approach, understanding and reasoning, construction of meanings, and the various aspects of culture are

starting points for learning in the organization. Narrative skills are crucial in terms of learning, because narratives bring together competence, tacit knowledge, and multidirectional causality into memorable storylines which assist in learning. Learning in the organization is a sense-making process, which relies on the construction of suitable stories, as well as the identification of the right times for narration. Thus meaning, culture and language are seen as mechanisms that facilitate comprehension, the search for coherence and the construction of identity (Palmer & Hardy 2000).

The focus of observation and research on identity has increasingly shifted from the individual to the social context, with a corresponding emphasis on the role of language. The above description of identity as the process in varied social context draws on ideas put forward in social constructionism, which will be presented in the following section.

3.3 Identity and social constructionism

According to Burr (2000) there is no one feature which could be said to identify a social constructionist position. Instead, we might loosely group as social constructionist any approach which has as its foundation one or more of the following key assumptions (based on Burr 2000):

1. A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge

Burr (2000) cites the example of gender: our observations of the world suggest to us that there are two categories of human being – men and women. Social constructionism would bid us to question seriously whether even this category is simply a reflection of naturally occurring distinct types of human being.

2. Historical and cultural specificity

This means that all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative.

3. Knowledge is sustained by social processes

What we regard as “truth”, i.e. our current accepted ways of understanding the world, is a product not of objective observation of the world, but of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other.

4. Knowledge and social action go together

These “negotiated” understandings could take a wide variety of different forms, and we can therefore talk of numerous possible ‘social constructions’ of the world.

In everyday conversation we often speak as if people have a specific identity. We seem to think that we have an unchanging core that we ourselves know and sometimes reveal to others. The prevailing concept of identity in cultural studies, however, does not include a constant core defined in an essentialist way. Identity is seen as a process, in which different identities struggle to confer within the person. In this view, identity is constructed and non-essentialist.

Today’s increased communication changes our concept of ourselves. We constantly deal with an ever-increasing number of people through technology. Our interactions are brief and our social relationships are impermanent. All social interaction affects our identities. A concrete example can be found in everyday life: when my husband is on the phone, I know who he is speaking to due to the changes in his manner of speaking. If there are three girls in a family, the middle girl is the older sister to the youngest, and a younger sister to the oldest. In a family, younger and older sisters generally have different social positions and identities. In other words, we form our identities in relation to others.

Naturally, we might feel that our identities are cohesive. But as our interactions increase in number and decrease in duration, our identities begin to consist of many intersecting and ever-changing narratives. According to Gergen (1991), we live in a constant identity crisis. He feels that the self is becoming a mixture in which we imitate many others. As we imitate others, we adopt their values, tastes and habits. A complex society sets obligations for persons and expects them to be fulfilled quickly. Often we feel inadequate and empty because we know we cannot respond to all demands.

The essentialist concept of identity focuses on the idea of one fairly clearly defined identity. This identity consists of a number of characteristics that the individual has and that do not change much over time. For example Finnishness is fairly easy to define and recognize. The hallmarks of Finnishness must be found in people who want to belong to the group “Finns” and to be defined as Finns. Such hallmarks often include language, sharing a common background (often mythical), and certain assumed psychological and physical characteristics. The

essentialist concept of identity is also based on the idea of one “pure”, unchanging core that must be protected and strengthened.

As was discussed in chapter 3.1, most identity theories separate the identity into a personal and a social identity. This contains the assumption that the personal identity is somehow more constant, while the social identity depends on the context. According to social constructionism, all identities are social and constantly changing. The identity is a process and not a permanent state. When people talk to each other, their identities constantly shift.

Watson’s (2002) differentiation of two approaches: the systems-control and process-relational views of the human individual; are very appropriate for describing the differences between the essentialist and non-essentialist approaches.

These approaches can be used as a kind of frame for how people relate e.g. to identity. With regard to identity, the constructivist philosophy is closest to the process-relational approach. Watson (2002) also describes how individuals are seen in this approach, and that description is appropriate to this study.

Table 3. Systems-control and process-relational views of the human individual (Watson 2002: 94).

The systems-control view of individuals	The process-relational view of individuals
The individual is a more or less fixed entity with a given personality	The individual is always in a process of becoming with an identity which is always “emergent”, never finalised
People perceive the world which is external to them and cognitively process the data which this perception “inputs” to the brain to enable a decision to be made about how to behave	People enact the world. In the light of the language and understandings of their culture, the individual actively makes sense of the ambiguous world of which they are a part, and then acts in the light of these interpretations
Learning involves acquiring knowledge or skills through experience and acquisition of knowledge from others	Learning is a process of changing – though experience, dialogues and “negotiation of realities” with others – understandings of how the world “works” and how one can skilfully operate within that world
Individuals acquire attitudes towards various aspects of the world as they are influenced by other people in society to be predisposed to act in certain ways with regard to those aspects of the world	Individuals have continuously emergent orientations towards various aspects of the world, which shift as individuals come to terms with changing situations and make sense of them in the light of their life-shaping and situational projects and in light of the discourses and linguistic resources available to them in the culture
Remembering involves recalling information from the memory, where it is recorded when the individual acquired it from direct experience or communication by others	Remembering involves reconstructing experiences or knowledge in the light of current circumstances and the narratives about the world which are available in the culture with which the individual engages
Individuals have both emotions and a capacity to reason they are capable of putting emotions to one side to enable rational analysis and decision making to occur unaffected by feelings and values	Rationality and emotion are simultaneously involved in all thought and action; rational analysis and decision making cannot occur unaffected by feelings and values – but reflective reasoning is possible which takes into account that feelings and values are part of it

Watson (2002) argues that we frame the world in different ways. As can be seen from this description of the two different views of the individual postulated by Watson, the frame used in the present study is close to process-relational view of individuals. This view is relevant to the present study also in terms of the importance it accords to narrative as a means of understanding and coming to terms with the world.

3.4 Two approaches to the study of identity within social constructionism

As seen above, in social constructionism identity is not presumed to be a fixed property of people nor is it assumed that identity terms are simply reflections of social and psychological reality (see Widdicombe 1998). Social constructionism is not one fixed theory but, rather, a loose collection of theoretical perspectives. In this section, two major approaches are described: (a) the discourse and power approach and (b) the narrative approach. Within the first of these, identity is seen as constituted through a person's positions in different discourses, which are related to different positions of power. Consequently, issues of power and political concern are the main focus of this approach. The narrative approach, by contrast, is based on the idea that identities are cultural resources and is interested in how they are constructed through cultural processes.

The first approach is concerned with how power is inherent in the availability of resources for identity construction. Foucault (1975) claims that knowledge is socially constructed and related to power. According to Foucault, discourse is not just language but it is also connected to social power relations and institutional structures.

Power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.” Discipline and Punish, p. 27.

Foucault sees power as an effect of discourse. He believes that there has been a shift in the way western societies are managed and controlled. We have moved towards “disciplinary power”, in which people are disciplined and controlled by freely subjecting themselves to the scrutiny of others. He cites the example of the prison “Panopticon” where cells were arranged around a central tower. In their cells prisoners could not be certain that they were not being observed, and they

gradually began to police their own behavior. In western countries, for example, women have so much information from experts on what is the proper age to have children, how many to have, how long to breast feed and stay home to take care of children that they start to control themselves to behave “normally”. According to Foucault that is the most powerful form of disciplinary action. Foucault claims that power is not a property of any person or group, but is something that anybody, in theory, can exercise through discourse (Burr 2000: 70).

In gender studies identity is often studied together in the context of power relations. The research method is often discourse analysis and the studies could be also referred to as critical. Discourses provide us with conceptual repertoires with which we can represent ourselves and others. Burr (2000) gives an example from feminist social constructionist writing: the discourse of romantic love, marriage and the family may be seen as ways of talking about lives. In practice, this could mean that we may be entering into forms of living which are not necessarily in our own interest because the discourses available are constructing our identity.

In a narrative approach human beings are seen as constructive agents, making up stories about themselves. In a way people are presented as more active in this approach and power is not the central focus in narrative studies. But we have to remember that we are not totally free to choose the narratives we tell and that the element of power also enters into these relations. As Burr (2000) notes, we are heavily dependent upon the willingness of co-actors in the construction of our narrative. To the extent that we construct our identity, our view of who we are, though narrative accounts, then our stories must be compatible with those of other people who feature in our accounts.

3.5 The role of narratives within identity studies

The concept of narrativity has been applied especially to the examination of human identity construction. Our culture can be seen as one which offers up ready-made narrative conventions – i.e. established ways of looking at ourselves.

Linde (1993) admits that narrative is effective in creating and maintaining the self. She views major characteristics of the self to be specifically maintained and exchanged through language. These characteristics are: continuity of the self, particularly continuity of the self through time; relation of the self to others; and reflexivity of the self, or treatment of the self as other, including moral evaluation of the self. Continuity means that the kind of self we recognize as self should have continuity through time. Furthermore, the past self should be relevant to the

present. Temporal continuity of the self is one of the characteristics of narrative. Linde (1993) points out that without a sequence of events, we do not have a story. To illustrate the functioning and the strength of this narrative presupposition, she gives two examples:

1. I got flustered and I backed the car into a tree.
2. I backed the car into a tree and I got flustered.

Narrative is thus structured around a temporal sequence and by telling stories we at the same time construct identities. Because of the temporal sequence we can also recount the past that is relevant to the present time fluently.

The second property of the self that is created by narrative is the distinguishability of the self from others. The self is portrayed in such a manner as being both different and unique, but at the same time in relation to others (Linde 1993: 101). According to Linde (1993) this is done with pronouns. We all distinguish among different persons who may or may not be participants in the speech situation: the first person (the speaker); second person or persons (the addressees); and the third person or persons (those not present or not participating in the speech situation) (Linde 1993: 112). The existence of pronouns establishes the existence of discrete, distinct persons. Linde (1993) argues that narratives of personal experience are frequently told as moral or behavioral exempla, suggesting how the addressee should behave in a similar circumstance in his or her life (Linde 1991: 113). Thus the narrator is maintaining a relationship with the other participants through the act of narrating. This point should also be kept in mind in this study: the interviews were told to me, to themselves and probably there were also messages sent to other addressees. Employees were aware that I am going to give some feedback to the company and be conducting a study for my Ph.D. so these addressees might be managers and other employees of the company; the academic community as well as some others. However, narratives also give information about the individual's action as a member of a group. Later in this study, when presenting these narratives, the membership in different groups can be easily noticed from narratives.

The reflexivity of self means an ability to relate to oneself externally, as an object or as an other. According to Linde (1993), the most pervasive way in which the self is treated as an other is in the determination of the moral value of the self. According to Linde (1993) there is discontinuity between inner experience and the presented self.

Although narrative allows speakers to present themselves as being one actor among others, there is in fact a radical difference between the experience of the self and the experience of others. First, at a conscious level, everyone believes that he or she has privileged access to his or her own plans, motivations, and intentions, whereas these can only be inferred for others. At a much deeper level, there is a more radical difference – a difference in kind between the experience of the self and the experience of others. In addition to, or perhaps prior to, the self we present in narration, we have a nonlinguistic or nonpresentable experience of consciousness as slippery, shifting from one sense modality to another, ungraspable when we try to touch it, unseeable when we try to swing around fast enough to see it. (Linde 1993:121)

It is possible in a narrative that the narrator tells that he or she acted badly. Thus the speaker is always moral, even if the protagonist of the narrative is not.

In social constructionism, the focus of narrative identity is not on the individual, but narratives are conversational resources which are always open to processes of interaction. The self-narrative is a linguistic tool used in interaction and relationships to maintain, encourage or limit various forms of action. It is a cultural resource which serves social purposes such as recognition, self-justification, criticism and bonding. We acquire these skills by interacting with others; in other words, their origin is social, not internal (Gergen 1994).

According to Gergen (1994), narratives can conceptually be classified as macro and micronarratives. Macronarratives can be seen as extensive contextual stories (e.g. descriptions of the recession of the early 1990s), comprising of several micronarratives (e.g. stories of unemployment told by people over a cup of coffee).

The narratives we construct about ourselves are not simply a private matter. All information (newspapers, television, personal discussions) affects our narrative as well. We might have problems with our identity construction if we do not “fit” to any narrative. For example when starting university studies at the age of 45, one might have problems constructing an identity as a student.

Narrativity can be seen as a form of human consciousness: narratives make us who we are. People structure their lives as narratives. Whatever cannot be included in the narrative fades away and is forgotten. Telling stories shows us how experiences, events and information relate meaningfully. Narrativity can be seen as a link between identity and culture. People tell stories and listen to stories,

and use them to construct a shared reality. Cultural stories are diverse and changing; we select appropriate ones (from those available) and adjust them to be part of our own narratives.

According to constructionism, narratives do not only reflect facts but organize and produce them. Our temporal narratives have obvious limitations, but they cannot be traced to the mind or to the events themselves. The limits of truth are set by cultural conventions and the linguistic resources with which the reality is constructed. Social constructionism can be seen as a loose framework for thoughts according to which definitions of good and bad are constructed in a continuous communicative process between people, which process makes use of existing cultural resources.

There are no absolute truths in a textual world; there are only local, historical and adaptable truths. The task of researchers is to find out how truths are generated, how permanent they are and how they can silence other truths – i.e. how they become singularized into predominant narratives (Curt 1994).

In the next section the narrative approach is described in further detail, examining the ways in which narrativity can be used in studying identity.

4 Narrativity

Above, I have discussed identity, the constructionist approach and the building of narrative identity in a post-bureaucratic organization. Narrativity has been mentioned at several points, and it is one of the central elements of this study. This chapter looks more closely at what is meant by narrativity in this study and how it relates to identity studies.

Narrativity cannot really be called a method or a school of thought; instead, it is a loose frame of reference for studies linked to stories as producers and transmitters of reality. It can be understood as a broadly theoretical approach, which involves views on the narrative nature of information and identity, and on the importance of language in structuring reality. Narrativity is seen as one of the typical ways for people to understand reality. It is also a typical way of giving information. Most of the information we impart to others is in narrative form rather than as clearly logical arguments. (Riessman 1993)

Although narrative research has long roots in anthropology and sociology, the approach is fairly recent in organization studies (Gabriel 2000). According to Czarniawska (1998) and Martin (1982), narrative research did not become established until the 1980s. More recently, interest in narrativity has grown and has been used productively in a number of areas of organization research. (Gabriel 2000) As Czarniawska (1998) points out, narrative forms of reporting will enrich organization studies by complementing, illustrating and scrutinizing logico-scientific forms of reporting.

Narrativity appears in organization studies in at least four different forms. Firstly there is organization-related literature written in a narrative voice (e.g. Van Maanen 1988). Secondly, there are organization studies in which researchers gather narratives from their objects of study. Thirdly, there are studies where the life of the organization is conceptualized as the production of narratives, and organization theory is interpreted through narratives. Fourthly, there are studies which emphasize that narratives are not free of the effects hierarchy (Boje 1991).

4.1 Key concepts and understandings of narrative research

4.1.1 Narrative, story and discourse

Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes between *the analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis*. The *analysis of narratives* focuses on classification and categorization; *narrative analysis*, on the other hand, strives to create a new narrative from the base material. This distinction is based on the two methods of knowledge defined by Bruner (1986). The *analysis of narratives* relies on paradigmatic information in classifying and categorizing information. *Narrative analysis* relies on the narrative knowledge method, forming a new story with a plot, somewhat similar to literature. Narrative knowing is connected to the idea that the world is socially constructed through language.

Researchers have differing approaches to narrativity in organization studies. Boje (2001), for instance, distinguishes clearly between story and narrative. To him, a story is less than a narrative: “Narrative requires plot, as well as coherence. To narrative theory, story is folksy, without emplotment, as simple telling of chronology.”

Czarniawska (1997), on the other hand, does not make major differences between stories and narratives, defining a story in a fairly similar way to how Boje (2001) defines a narrative: “a story consists of a plot comprising [of] causally related episodes that culminate in a solution to a problem” (1997). In this study, I follow Czarniawska and do not make a difference between stories and narratives. However, I mainly use the term “narrative” to avoid confusion.

Concerning the relation between narrative and discourse, narratives differ from other discourses in three main ways. First narratives are temporal: they have a beginning, middle, and an end. Second, narratives are meaningful. Third, they are social, in that they are produced for a specific audience. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, Elliott 2005)

As mentioned above, discourse analysis is often used when conducting critical research, and the choice of methodology in a particular study is dependent on the ontological and epistemological assumptions made by the researcher. Thus, identity construction could also be studied using a discourse analytical approach, particularly if the focus of interest were meaning construction or the use of power. Issues related to the choice of methodology in this study will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.1.2 Biographical Studies

Biographical research is closely related to research on identity construction. Narrative identity is understood as a “told” identity, and narratives of people are naturally structured in biographical form. While it is not a direct attempt to understand individual people and their choices by looking at the past, present and future, this study includes biographical elements, with particular focus on the working life of interviewees.

Biographical literature often uses the concepts of *life history* and *life narrative* with parallel and overlapping meanings. *Life history* can be seen as a more limited historical narrative of a specific event or community. A *life narrative*, however, is formed freely in interviews. Interviewees have the freedom to tell their narrative as they remember it or as they wish others to hear it (Atkinson 2002). Denzin also distinguishes between the concepts saying that *life history* can be seen as more factual, whereas the *life story* is a partly fictional personal retelling (Denzin 1989). Thus, as narratives, biographies are not constant but vary depending on the context of the telling. Events are awarded different meanings in different narrative situations (Hänninen 1999). Therefore research is tied to a specific context.

The narrative-biographical research method is located in the constructionist paradigm of knowledge. Knowledge and information are understood to be created in interaction between the researcher and the object of research, which means reality is built socially and experientially, and is local and specific in nature (cf. e.g. Guba & Lincoln 1994: 110). It is important, therefore, in biographical studies to consider the role of the researcher, whose own experiences influence the story being written on the basis of the research subjects’ telling. Narrative-biographical writings on another person’s life always reflect the researcher’s interpretation at the time. Written by someone else or at a different time, the interpretation could have a different emphasis.

4.2 The narrative approach to identity research

The narrative approach is considered particularly appropriate for identity research (Ricoeur 1984, Somers 1994, Somers & Gibson 1994). Narrative identity can be described as a continuously changing narrative on people’s lives and experiences, used to find meaning in life. As McAdams (1985) and Linde (1993) point out, describing identity in narrative terms may create coherence and consistency.

In narrative research narratives are seen as a mediator of reality and meanings. The world of a text is located between the worlds of action and of the reader, acting as a mediator and creator of understanding between them. The world of action is seen differently when it is conveyed through a narrative.

Narratives help us put our thoughts, feelings and personal views into words, and thus to construct reality. Speaking and writing helps us to clarify our own thoughts, often automatically leading to a solution. Narrative is essentially reflexive, and a narrative told for the second time is not the same as when it was told the first time.

Human identity is built and modified through the stories people tell of their lives. However, individuals do not own their stories; these are signified by culturally determined model stories, narrative conventions, the assumed audience, and the situation. It is essential to see identity as a cultural or social process rather than as a permanent characteristic. The environment in which people live offers up ready-made narrative conventions, i.e. established ways of looking at ourselves. As active players, we construct ourselves and our identities by selecting from the narrative resources available to us in our cultural environment.

Narratives can also be seen as the basis of being. Heikkinen (2000) considers the process of knowledge to be in great part based on hearing and producing narratives. People build their knowledge and identities through narratives. Our knowledge of the world is a constantly redeveloped narrative, which constantly changes its shape and form. Nevertheless in the constructionist view, there is no single reality shared by all; instead there are many realities that are constructed differently in the human mind and through social interaction (Heikkinen 2001).

4.3 Narrativity in this research

As Czarniawska (1998) notes, narrative forms of reporting are capable of enriching organization studies by complementing, illustrating, and scrutinizing traditional logico-scientific forms of reporting.

In this study narrativity is used in many different ways: in gathering data, in applying sociological imagination to interpreting employees' experiences (Silverman 1993), and in reporting the study narratively. Boje (2001) distinguishes between microstories and macrostories. Microstories relate to the lives of ordinary members of the organization, instead of its grand histories. This is the approach I have sought in this study – entering into an interviewees' narrative.

In agreement with others in the field of identity research whose work relies on narrativity, I see the narrative perspective as an interpretation or a way of constructing meaning and making the world understandable. Views on the relationship between life and narration have changed in that narratives are not considered to reflect or describe events so much as to interpret them. I also see narration as a process that produces stories with the help of specific culturally determined narrative models and forms of expression, in situationally appropriate ways. The most important questions addressed in contemporary research are related to *how*: how identity is constructed in relation to the organization. In a similar way, the present research is seeking to answer the question: *How is the relationship between the individual and the organization constructed in the ICT-sector?*

4.4 Narrative Identity in a Post-Bureaucracy

Following my discussion of the narrative approach and its relation to identity studies and constructionism, this section deals more specifically with identity construction in a post-bureaucracy, which is the research focus of this study.

For the purposes of this research, narrative identity is defined as a constantly remodeled narrative accumulated out of a person's life and experiences, through which the person awards significance to his or her life. As Heikkinen (2001: 33) points out, this includes not only stories about our lives, but also other forms of self-expression in our interaction with our environments. Thus, what and who we are is not conclusive (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). Or, as Giddens puts it: "Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual . It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography" (Giddens 1991: 53).

Giddens (1991) sees the growth of individuality and post-bureaucracy as leading to an even greater range of choices. He believes that our lifestyle is the sum of certain consciously chosen functions the purpose of which is to form a coherent narrative out of life. According to Giddens, identity is a construction project formed out of constant choices in changing situations. In practice, seen from a positive light, this could mean for instance that a farmer's son in Finland does not have to take over the farm from his parents; he can choose what to study and, having made his choices, could end up working for a global corporation in the Far East or Central Europe. He could take up downhill skiing in the Alps instead of cross-country skiing in the Finnish countryside. Giddens stresses the

opportunities are afforded by choice. Now that our families and traditions no longer determine our futures, we can turn our lives into the kind of project we want. Giddens also emphasizes the significance of consumption in identity construction: through our consumption habits we can create an image of who we are. However, Giddens does not seem to pay attention to that we are not totally free in our choices.

In Giddens's terms, the post-bureaucratic organization offers an outstanding environment for identity-building. A constantly changing environment offers opportunities for moving from one job to another, and career progression may be significantly quicker than before. This is apparent in my interviews, where some people had ended up managing people considerably older than themselves, and felt that this was a "somewhat strange situation", but they seemed to enjoy that. What is emphasized here is choice: those who make successful choices can create an advantageous identity-building project, but the making of right choices is largely up to the individual. On the other hand, Giddens' conception of life as a narrative can also be understood as people needing narrativity in order to structure constant change and their various choices, and to build a cohesive identity narrative.

Bauman (1996) describes postmodernity as a time of roaming in which the present does not determine the future. His metaphor is a city in which traffic is directed in different ways each day and street names change constantly. This kind of description raises the question of whether the narrative construction of identity is possible under conditions of constant change. According to Sennett (1998), capitalism has a devastating effect on the identity-building of individuals. The earlier axioms of the workplace no longer apply. In Sennett's opinion, the kind of work we do today, moving from one project to another in a more and more fast-paced environment, wears down and eats at our characters. Today's flexible capitalism breaks down the feeling of continuity which the post-war generation has been used to, and thus negatively affects our ability to build our lives and careers as coherent narratives. Because the market demands swift reforms, mobility and risk-taking of the workforce, there is no time for the formation of the long-term continuity that is essential to our feeling of security.

The post-war generation is used to long employer-employee relationships, sometimes lasting a lifetime and characterized by trust, commitment and security (Sennett 1998). Even in the 1980s, people could rely on long-term employment contracts. Sennett (1998) describes IBM and how in the 1980s its organization was typified by lifelong employment and a strong social contract between

employer and employees. Today's industry and commerce are often described as "flexible". Flexible production refers to new ways of using the workforce in highly developed industrialized countries. The ability to adapt products to meet the needs of customers, the availability of service, quality, and a quick response are important competitive factors. Flexible specialization refers to companies trying to bring more products to the market, more quickly than before. This makes them able to respond swiftly to changes in demand (Sennett 1998).

Sennett interprets these changes in the employment world within the context of globalization, saying that today's global capitalism has become an incredible system of power characterized by compliance to change and employees submitting to extreme risks. He believes that our work ethic has shifted to one that seeks flexibility and competitiveness. According to Sennett, our work contributions are disposable and lack reciprocity, which increases the individual's feeling of redundancy.

Sennett (1998) refers in his book to crumbling ethics. Work ethics are often seen as referring to a disciplined use of time and the ideal of deferring compensation for one's contributions. This kind of ethic requires continuity of the workplace and the world; otherwise putting off enjoyment is senseless. Without continuity, deferring compensation and working hard lose their significance (Sennett 1998). According to Sennett, the risk-taking that characterizes entrepreneurship is now permeating salaried employment. Although, employees have to take those risks without the possibility of profiting from them.

Sennett's view of today's workplace is bleak, but it is not seen by everyone in such a negative light. Although researchers argue about viewpoints and focus on different things, no one believes in the possibility of a reversal to continuity. Therefore, if we are destined to live under conditions of constant change, how then can we successfully build our identities in practice?

According to Bauman, identity-building is possible, but identity is more short-lived and more subject to change. Psychologists see people as having many different selves during their life cycles. It seems, however, that our changing culture is creating pressure for so-called simultaneous pluralism (Gergen 1991). This means that people have to have access to a kind of "identity bank" from which they pick out a suitable mask for each situation. In other words, we shift from one identity to another, with all of these identities co-existing in the same space of time. This is the only way to cope with conflicting and constantly shifting expectations.

Many researchers have pondered the significance of identity in relation to the changing environment. Anthony Giddens (1991) is optimistic about change. In his opinion we are now free to turn our lives into consciously constructed projects. He says that people now have the opportunity to choose, they don't have to settle for being a part of the collective community and defining themselves through it. The multiplicity and uniqueness of contexts mean that everyone can find their own solutions.

Zygmunt Bauman (1998) does not adopt as positive an approach to the changes. Bauman represents the post-modern school and feels that the constant rebuilding of identity is a burden. Perhaps the most common problems with the social identity arise from changes related to the concepts of profession, career and paid work. In modern times, once people had found a certain profession, they could define themselves very clearly through their secure jobs and trades. Changes in professional positions were linked mainly to predictable economic trends or progression through the career ladder. In today's postmodern times, we inhabit a world of systemic mass unemployment, and where even if employed it is not a job for life.

Identity is about making distinctions. According to Bauman, the distinction is between friend and foe, i.e. "us" and "them". "Us" denotes belonging, acceptance and support, being a haven of fulfilling security, clearly separated from "them". We feel our identities to be constant when the forces behind them are winning and the "foes", constructed in the identity reinforcement process, are losing. We become more conscious of our identities when our sense of security is shaken. Bauman assumes that we re-examine our identities particularly at times when we cannot relate to them easily. Our identities bring comfort in the form of self-confidence – assurance and the knowledge of where we stand.

4.4.1 Liberating or captive post-bureaucracy

Bauman emphasizes the significance of community. Identity debates that underscore communality imply that people must know their role and place in the organization in order to feel secure. In this sense, people are not free, but are motivated by a need for belonging. The post-bureaucratic organization contains the idea of constant change, which could be understood that no organization or community is constant. How, then, can communitarianism be achieved in the postmodern organization? At the same time, when thinking in terms of personal identity narratives, communitarianism might be seen to decrease in importance.

When all our life factors are connected in a unified plot, individual events become narrative episodes that carry significance in relation to a broader network of episodes.

Bauman (2001) believes that it is impossible for people to survive on their own. In his opinion, dependence is a fundamental element of being human. Sennett (1998) does not contest this; he too marks the importance of social relations and that we are dependent on each other.

“Trust”, “mutual responsibility”, “commitment” are all words which have come to be owned by the movement called “communitarianism”. It wants to strengthen moral standards, to demand of individuals that they sacrifice for others, promising that if people obey common standards they will find a mutual strength and emotional fulfillment they cannot experience as isolated individuals. According to Sennett, communitarianism has a very dubious claim of ownership of trust or commitment; it falsely emphasizes unity as the source of strength in a community and mistakenly fears that when conflicts arise in a community, social bonds are threatened. (Sennett 1998: 142)

According to Parker, Fournier and Reedy (2007) the usual starting point for communitarian arguments is the idea that human beings are inevitably influenced and formed by society and hence the free individual is not possible. This also leads to policy and organization debate with an emphasis on collective responsibilities.

Sennett (1998) believes that it is in conflicts that we really have to debate and bring out our own views. It is in this process that we learn to listen to each other, and can become a community. In that sense the concept of “us” is much deeper than that of shared values or teamwork. Sennett (1998) implies that in reality we don’t have enough time to form strong bonds; they cannot be created instantly, or even in the space of a two-day seminar.

In his opinion this is all due to capitalism and that we find no answers to the question, “Who needs me?” Because we cannot answer that question, it eats away at our characters and causes our ethics to crumble. Our feeling of uselessness destroys reciprocity, as we have no energy to do our best.

Giddens focuses on individuality and considers the avenue of thought that we do not have to belong to anything to increase our feeling of freedom. In Giddens’ opinion (1995), we have no option but to choose. Work, generation, family and gender all form an institutional field, and their interrelationships have changed through modernization. We use our lifestyles to modify our identities and we are

able to reconstruct our narratives again and again. So, in a way, reflexivity allows us greater flexibility.

4.4.2 Individual or Communitarian Narrative

Identity-building is seen as having been simpler – or at least more clearly signposted – in the past than in our postmodern context. Traditionally, individuals could build their identities according to routes determined by their families, villages or societies. In the postmodern environment, the individual's life is fragmented into several separate arenas in which the identity is built, and identity is constantly redefined in relation to the environment.

On the one hand, we do not just build our own stories, but our narratives are also linked to the narratives of others. Thus, narratives can act as tools for self-understanding and help us to boldly build individual and personal stories. On the other hand, we also listen to other people's narratives and they shape our reality. It is important to understand that our narratives do not just describe reality but shape it constantly. As Giddens (1991) writes, the very idea of personal identity 'is not to be found in behaviour, nor – important though it is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'narrative' about the self.'

The more people are buried in a mind-numbing avalanche of information, the greater the importance of stories in the organizational context become: "stories make experience meaningful, stories connect us with one another; stories make the characters come alive; stories provide an opportunity for a renewed sense of organizational community" (Boje & Dennehy 1993: 155). Thus, narrative identity can offer individuals a harmonizing experience and may be possible to achieve even in a post-bureaucratic organization. The narratives we construct of our lives also merge the individual with the communitarian, because the model narratives offered by our culture affect our interpretations of our own lives.

4.4.3 Narrative Identity and the Self-Narrative

According to Linde (1993), narratives express our sense of self - who we are, how we are related to others and how we became that person. Narratives are not only very important in sending messages to others, but also for negotiating group

membership and to understand moral standards. This means that narratives are a very powerful tool in social action. Linde (1993) also emphasizes coherence in life stories. According to her, coherence is both a social demand and an internal demand.

Although the life story as a linguistic unit is crucially involved in social interaction, it is also related to the internal, subjective sense of having a private life story that organizes a speaker's understanding of his or her past life, current situation, and imagined future. (Linde 1993: 220).

Thus, we tell narratives to both others and to ourselves. Narratives express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way. We usually have many versions of narratives and we tell them in different situations. If we tell life narratives, we usually do not tell them to strangers; but as we learn to know a people, in time we expect to know more about their life narrative. An individual's close friends might correct the life narratives he or she tells and thus causing the individual to construct a new narrative for oneself. For example if I would tell a story that I was so interested in management and that it why I decided to change my major subject to management and entrepreneurship for my postgraduate studies. Someone who has known me for years could say that I was always interested in qualitative studies, psychology and sociology but that I never talked about management. This could make me re-evaluate my life narrative again. The example showcases Sennett's (1998) ideas of problems of constructing identities. In the past long-term relationships and a stable environment made it possible to tell life narratives to each other (and at the same time to oneself) and learn to know others (and ourselves) better.

In social constructionism, the narrative identity and the self-narrative are not centered on the individual. Narratives are discursive resources – constructions that are open to the interaction process. When producing self-narratives, individuals do not follow an internal script or interpret the world through a narrative viewpoint. Instead, the self-narrative is a linguistic tool used in interaction and relationships to maintain, encourage or limit various forms of action. It is a cultural resource that serves social purposes such as recognition, self-justification, criticism, and relationship-building. We acquire these skills by interacting with each other; i.e. the origin of the skills is social, not congenital (Gergen 1994).

The viewpoint of social constructionism regarding the relationship between narratives and truth also differs from cognitive views. According to

constructionists, narratives do not reflect facts but organize and produce them. Temporally bound narratives have clear boundaries, but these do not translate to the mind or to the events as themselves. The limits of truth can be traced back to cultural conventions and the linguistic resources with which reality is produced (Gergen 1994).

In our culture we link self-narratives closely to personality, probably due to the powerful effect of psychology on our society. Psychology as a science has generated an expansive corpus of information for the peoples of western countries, leading to some strong assumptions in traditional psychology that are held as general truths. Already in school we are taught an emphasis of personal characteristics and identity is understood in essentialist terms. The effect of this teaching has a powerful effect on our development, causing us to know of Freud and psychoanalysis, but leaving us less aware of other fields in social science. Personal characteristics are to be emphasized, and identity is understood as essentialist terms, which is taught to us already in school meaning that the effect is powerful². We all know Freud and psychoanalysis, no other field of social science is that widely known.

Instead of personality, Sennett (1998) would rather talk about character. By this, he means the ethical value attributed to our desires and our relations to other people. In that sense character is much more constant than personality. Character is crystallized particularly in the continuity of emotional experiences. It becomes apparent as loyalty and mutual commitment, or for example as striving towards long-term goals. According to Sennett, we cannot decide what is of enduring value to us, when our society is so impatient and focused on the present moment.

There are many definitions of narrativity, but I am particularly fond of Hänninen's (1996) version, according to which narrative is one of the mental tools with which people navigate and find structure in the multiplicity of human experiences in order to understand their lives. What significance can narrativity then have in the context of an organization? In the light of Hänninen's definition, it would seem that narrativity can help in defining the self and finding meaning. But according to Sennett, narrative identity-building is impossible in a post-bureaucracy. Bauman sees it as possible but as requiring more communitarianism. Giddens, on the other hand, considers the post-bureaucratic organization to be filled with opportunities from which we just have to choose the right ones.

² In psychology there are tendency towards more social constructionism but that yet not too common.

The basic question, then, seems to be whether narrative identity can be built in a flexible, constantly changing environment, such as that of an organization in the ICT sector. Sennett, Giddens and Bauman start from different background theories. By now I have presented and compared their points of view. The aim of the present study is to investigate precisely this question, how narratives function as identity-building devices, and if narrative identity-building is possible in the ever-changing environment of a post-bureaucratic organization.

In the following chapter, I will present and discuss methodology and data.

5 Data, field and methods

5.1 Research paradigm

In this chapter I present the research paradigm, describe the research process in detail, and discuss the methods selected. For the readers and the writers own orientation, the ontological and epistemological reference points of the study are described at the outset. Ontology is a set of assumptions about the nature of reality; epistemology concerns theories about how we know about reality. (Chia 1996)

In the objectivistic view there exists only one reality, which is measurable and essentially the same for all. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), in the objectivistic belief system the ontology is one of realism, asserting that there exists a single reality, which is independent of any observer's interest in it and which operates according to immutable natural laws. Truth is defined as that set of statements whose natural or intended model is isomorphic to reality. The epistemology is one of dualistic objectivism, asserting that it is possible, indeed mandatory, for an observer to exteriorize the phenomenon studied, remaining detached and distant from it and excluding any value considerations from influencing it. The methodology is one of interventionism, stripping context of its contaminating influences so that the inquiry can converge on truth and explain the things studied as they really are and really work, leading to the capability to predict and to control. (Guba & Lincoln 1994)

Guba and Lincoln (1994) view constructivistic ontology as one of relativism, asserting that there exist multiple socially constructed realities ungoverned by any natural laws, causal or otherwise. "Truth" is defined as the best-informed and most sophisticated construction on which there is agreement. The epistemology is subjectivistic, asserting that the inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in such a way that the findings of an investigation are the literal creation of the inquiry process. The methodology is hermeneutical and involves a continuing dialectic of iteration, analysis, critique, reiteration, reanalysis and so on; leading to the emergence of a joint construction and understanding among all the stakeholders.

According to the social constructionist tradition, social events are socially and above all linguistically produced and not biologically or psychologically determined. Constructionism is in clear contrast to the realistic science tradition,

which assumes that external objects are reflected directly in human internal reality. In the constructionist view, people produce events by talking. Constructionist viewpoints have taken root not only in organization theory, but also in psychology and other social sciences. Bruner (1990) describes how psychology as science has produced methods that are more in line with the world view of the natural than the human sciences.

Table 4 describes some of the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of different paradigms. Ontological, epistemological and methodological assumption of different paradigms. (adapted from Guba and Lincoln 1994)

Table 4. Ontological, epistemological and methodological assumption of different paradigms.

Item	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theory and related positions	Constructivism
Ontology	Out there, apprehendable reality	Out there but only probabilistically apprehendable reality	Virtual reality shaped by power	Local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Objectivist findings are true	Objectivist findings probably true	Subjectivist value-mediated findings	Subjectivist created findings
Methodology	Verification of hypotheses, numbers support the truth	Falsification of hypotheses	Dialogue, emancipatory	Hermeneutics dialogue

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the research paradigm contains the ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments of research in conceptual terms, but not the actual methods used. Researchers can use both qualitative and quantitative methods in their studies, regardless of what research paradigm they are committed to. This does not, however, mean that the research paradigm is simply a philosophical construct with no practical dimensions. The research paradigm concretely influences what the research aims to achieve, how the reliability of the research is to be evaluated, and how the researcher interprets and presents the outcomes.

In the positivist paradigm, generalizations are drawn from perceptions, often applying statistical research methods. Positivism is also incapable of explaining the subjective side of consciousness, i.e. experience. Positivism involves a causal

theory – that is, seeing phenomena as a series of causes and consequences. The knowledge interest is prediction, control and proof; i.e. it is the technical knowledge interest.

Postpositivists consider that a human being's knowledge of reality cannot be certain (positive), but is always a conjecture or assumption regarding reality. Knowledge is not fixed, but constantly changing. Postpositivists consider all sources of knowledge (experience, observation and reasoning) to be important and valid ways of gaining information about reality. They consider knowledge to be always dependent on the knower. Karl Popper is perhaps the best-known exponent of this view.

Critical theory is based on antipositivism. It defines that social reality can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who participate in the activities being investigated, because there are no generally applicable laws that explain human behavior. Therefore our concept of reality is subjective and voluntary: we always have the opportunity in choosing and changing the world.

The constructivist paradigm is based on the idea that social reality is socially constructed; in other words, there is no one objective reality for the researcher to find (cf. positivism). The constructivist concept of reality is relativistic, which implies that there are several socially constructed realities independent of causal relationships. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 86), they are based on the experiences of individuals and are interactive in nature.

The approach adopted in this study is closest to the constructivist paradigm, specifically to social constructionism. It emphasizes the significance of language and speech as modifiers of social reality. Thus, one of the purposes of the study is to find out whether there is sufficient time for dialogue in order for people to build their identities. Often *constructionism* and *constructivism* are used interchangeably. However, they are distinct and the differences of key concepts are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Constructionism and constructivism (Beth Clark, Jessie Griffin, and Dana Turner 2007).

Constructionism	Constructivism
There is no meaning in the world until we construct it	Reality is constructed through human activity
We do not find meaning, we make it	Members of a society together invent the properties of the world
The meaning we make is affected by our social interpretation of the thing	People create meaning through their interactions with each other and the objects in the environment
The meaning we derive for objects arises in and out of the interactive human community	Learning is a social process. It occurs when people are engaged in social activities

The paradigm underlying narrative research is similar to constructivism in that human knowledge is not regarded as a coherent view of reality but as a plurality of small narratives, local and personal in nature, which are always under construction. Thus the objective of the research is not to give a picture of reality but views on reality. Researchers using the narrative approach assume that knowledge is narrative in nature, and that reality can be structured using language (Gubrium & Holstein 1997, Lieblich *et al.* 1998). Knowledge is seen as dependent upon time, place and the observer. Narratives produce knowledge that is constantly changing and, accordingly, we may find that identities are based on always changing narratives. In the narrative view, telling is a typical way for humans to produce meaning in order to understand the world. Thus, there is a close relationship or connection between life and narration, since language is used to make an experience understandable to one's self and others. The linguistic materials used in narrative research include both spoken and written texts, as well as nonverbal communication.

It would be simplistic to assume that the textual world should reflect the active world the way it is or has been. Text can bring out a new world and offer different possibilities. Narrative research focuses on stories as conveyors and builders of knowledge. Heikkinen (2001) describes the relationship between narratives and research, saying that on the one hand, research can use stories as materials, while on the other hand it can be understood as the production of narratives on the world. Narratives can also be seen as fictional and creative rather than as descriptions of what is real (Van Maanen 1988).

In the reality of an organization, practical information is often communicated in narrative form (Czarniawska-Joerges 1995). Long-lasting narratives are the mortar that holds rules and operating methods together. Each work community

generates a characteristic set of narratives which manifest its culture. They can either remain inside the organization or be spread publicly. Narratives are not static within organization, but rather they are constantly recycled, told and sold, produced and used, heard selectively and individually, read, interpreted and criticized. All these phenomena come up in interviews (Czarniawska 2004).

The narrative method allows researchers to access the meeting point of individuals, stories and the organization. One of the main researchers of the connections between individual and organizations is Czarniawska (1998), who states that an organization in itself can be seen as a socially constructed narrative that is significant and limiting in terms of interaction. Czarniawska (1997) demonstrates that narrative approaches to research on organizations generate a whole new kind of organization study. By examining narratives we can find out how they condition our behavior and how they are constructed. This kind of organization study is similar to cultural and literary studies. Czarniawska, for this part, combines approaches from anthropology, literary studies and organization studies.

Bruner (1986, pp. 11-13) distinguishes two ways of constructing knowledge and reality: the traditional, logical-scientific approach that aims to generalize; and the narrative approach that does not want to generalize but understands the uniqueness of each event. The postmodern, constructivist concept of knowledge challenges the modern idea of knowledge with its context-independent, objective generalisations. The scientific-philosophical concept of relativism emphasizes the existence of multiple individual truths. Lincoln and Denzin (2000) describe this paradigmatic stage as a move away from macro-narratives towards the individual point of view, which gives a voice to new, previously unheard views. This change is also evident in the researcher's position and in the interaction between the researcher and the object of research. The researcher is not an objective or neutral observer, but forms a collaborative work team of subjects of the study (Lincoln & Denzin 2000). Thus, in biographical research information is acquired subjectively and intersubjectively (Denzin 1996). The aim is that the researcher can grasp the meanings imparted by another person to his or her experiences (Denzin 1996: 56).

According to Bruner, however, reassurance focuses on different issues; the aim of the paradigmatic form is to reassure us about truth, whereas the purpose of the narrative form is to reassure us of its verisimilitude. Narratives allow us to understand the world in a different way – as a dialectically and gradually developing narrative, with a plot, which can be powerfully verisimilar (Heikkinen 2000).

Verisimilitude is not based on justifications or claims, but on the reader's ability to empathize with the narrative and experience it as a simulation of reality. Verisimilitude is a feeling of something that speaks to the listener through the listener's own experiences. The main content of narrative verisimilitude is the fact that readers receive a holistic emotional experience through the narrative (Heikkinen 2000: 56).

5.2 Methodology

In this study I have used primarily narrative methodology with some ethnographic elements. Narrative analysis has been the main approach to interpreting the data. Riessman (1993) distinguishes between ethnographies and narrative research based on their different focus of attention; ethnographic studies focus on events, not the stories people tell about the events, which is the focus in narrative studies. I give an overlook of the company and its operating environment using ethnographic description, which provides a good basis in the starting stage of research. It does not, however, provide insight into how people construct meanings. For this, stories and narrative analysis are needed.

Ethnography refers to a research methodology that has been developed for the study of cultures and cultural sense-making. The historical roots of ethnography lie in anthropological studies and it often involves intensive long-term fieldwork. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008) In this study I have used observation as a method for ethnography. The field notes are mostly short notices in my notebook about the things that were found interesting or surprising. I also kept notes from meetings participated in (I give examples from that in Chapter 5.7). All in all, field notes are 20 pages long and not clearly organized. Afterwards I have analyzed them further and used them in the descriptions of an organization.

However, I did not spend as long time with the case organization as is usual with anthropological studies, nor did I become a full member of the company as is usual in ethnographic studies. I stayed mostly as an outsider during the research. In business research it would be possible to work for the company to get an "insider view". However, this was not a pure ethnographic study, but the main focus was in the narrative approach. (see Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 144)

The majority of information we pass on to other people is not in the form of clear and logical arguments, but through stories (Riesman 1993). One major reason for the popularity of narrative in everyday life is that narrative enables us

to make sense of what is going on around us and to construct social reality (Berger & Luckmann 1966).

A life lived is what actually happens. A life as experienced consists of the images, feeling, sentiments, desires, thoughts, and meaning known to the person whose life it is...A life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context. (Bruner 1986).

Narratives are characterized by bringing the listener or reader close to the events at hand. This contrasts strongly with the view that science should look at things objectively, from a distance. The purpose of narrative research, however, is not to produce one definite, objective truth about something, but to offer one version of it, told by somebody from a specific point of view. In narrative research, facts are interpreted; therefore, it is always possible to narrate the same events in a different way (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008).

For narrative research it is important that the researcher is present in the research text. This can be achieved by writing with a clear and personal voice. This means writing in the first person and in a way that is recognized as a personal and distinct from the signatures of other writers. It can also mean that the researcher reflects on personal experiences concerning the issue being studied and the research process (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, Ellis 2004).

Reflexivity is the process associated with a researcher's self-awareness – of how he or she impacts and transforms the research engaged in. It is widely accepted as a methodological consideration with the researcher undertaking qualitative enquiry. Thus, it is important to describe the interview situation and the interviewer's personal feelings and expectations, so as to enable the reader to evaluate the impact of the researcher on the results. According to Burr (2000) social constructionism must recognize itself as just as much social construction as any other way of reporting. Reflexivity means that the researcher's emotions and moral judgments are not something to be hidden or omitted; instead, the reader is made aware of them. This makes the researcher visible and helps the reader to recognize the motivations and interests of the researcher.

Reflection and self-disclosure tend to be sought in statements and ascriptions about self, which can therefore be seen as markers of the researcher's identity. However, the context in which the research is carried out also forms a part of reflexivity. The results might well have been different if the interviews had been conducted at an informant's home or at a sports event or local restaurant. This is

why I have also included descriptions of the organization and the location where interviews were conducted.

Denzin (1997) warns about the risks of too much reflexivity. Reflexivity can turn into a narcissistic description of the researcher's personal life. This is not the aim of this study, and personal autobiography is another type of work. The following sections aim to fulfill the demands of reflexivity. My personal experience and background are described in Section 5.3, the interviews and the research environment are illustrated in Section 5.4 and 5.5 One specific meeting from the research diaries is included in Section 5.7 to give an idea of their format.

5.3 The study as a personal process

In the following, the research process of this study, which was inductive in nature, will be described in some detail to provide a context for the discussion of the empirical data obtained and the analysis carried out on their basis.

I studied Economics and Business Administration at the University of Oulu in the 1990's. Many of my fellow students now work in the ICT sector. What they have in common are long workdays, plenty of work-related travel, and the free use of phones and laptops. One of my acquaintances recently mentioned that whenever they log in to the Internet after 9PM, everyone else is already online. They have put the kids to bed and gone back to do more work. I have been wondering whether they do this voluntarily or because they have been brainwashed to accept it as part of the organization's culture.

I have observed this from the sidelines and like to think that I did some ethnographic work already years before I started this study. An ethnographical study traditionally requires the researcher to spend one year in the field and, in my case, I could say that I did the preparatory fieldwork well before I began the research proper. My personal impression was that these tireless ICT-employees were working a little too hard for the salary they were being paid. That was my own interpretation of the situation, and I decided to investigate whether it was correct.

My personal work experience was from the public sector and I had to face the fact that in the bureaucracy each person's work contribution is determined and delimited in advance. At the social insurance office, where I was working for two years, it was typical that a certain kind of work was allowed for employees that had stayed in the office for more than 10 years. When introducing themselves in any circumstances, employees first told their name and then how many years they

had stayed in the office. That determined their value in organizational hierarchy. So, I was aware that bureaucracy is not the ideal place to work and I wanted to look for an alternative. I decided to look at the ICT sector and the engineering staff working there to find out whether for them the organization was a workplace, a playground or a prison.

Engineers can be seen as a prototype of humanity. They seem to know where they are going and what they want to do; in other words, they see the world as a clear structure in which they fulfill their own clearly defined roles. At least that was my presumption at the outset, which turned out to be not entirely correct.

I now see organizations and management in a whole new light. At the beginning of my research project I wondered why people were so committed to their work, in the sense that it seemed more important to them than their families or pastimes. Now I understand their reasons a bit better; work is an important source of identity, and in a work community we constantly construct our reality together. It feels safe to be part of a community and a shared narrative. I now see that this is not necessarily a conscious choice on the part of the employees, but that people become socialized into the organization's culture (perhaps without noticing), such that the work and work community become a central part of their lives. This differs from the public sector where limits between work and leisure are more distinct.

The work has been more challenging than expected, leading me down new tracks. The end result I initially had in mind, i.e. the idea I had while collecting material, was nothing like what the work has turned out to be. The literature study, the discussions with my thesis advisor, and my attendance at Professor Hosking's lectures in University of Tampere in the spring term of 2004, i.e. the idea I had while collecting material, was nothing like what the work has turned out to be. This study and the literature study needed for it have also had an impact on my identity. While carrying out the research, I have often been compelled to ponder my own identity as a researcher, a woman, an ex-civil servant, a teacher, wife, friend and mother. I have also begun to maintain a diary again. Listening to the stories told by interviewees and the process of building narratives from it have had a harmonizing effect on me and my life.

5.4 Case organization and context

In this study the company will be referred under the pseudonym of Tekno. Tekno Oyj, in Oulu, is a telecommunications company established in 1991, which

produces software and services for mobile network testing and measurement. The company in its present form was created in 2000, through the merger of two small businesses. At the same time, a rapid process of internationalization was initiated, with the creation of subsidiaries in countries such as China and the United States. The quick growth and internationalization have posed great challenges to human resources management and, as a result, the management has begun thinking about the organization's culture, the role of HRM and different operating models.

Tekno's employees are highly qualified and generally young, with an average age of 33. As the company has grown, many experts with little management experience have been promoted to managerial roles. The company has a low-level, flexible organization without rigid boundaries between managers and experts. It has begun paying attention to personnel development and is investing in HRM. In the summer of 2002, Tekno initiated a development programme the aim of which was to develop the leadership skills of managers and to foster the ability of its employees to cope with work.

Many managers are confused about the human resource management aspects of their work, and a development project was set up to support their role. Workshops and lectures organized as part of the project brought together people from different positions and departments, and offered an excellent opportunity for sharing experiences and discussing issues. Junior employees had the opportunity of exchanging ideas with more experienced people. Most people felt it was positive and useful to notice that others shared their problems and challenges. Tekno's development project also used external consultants as sparring partners. Discussions with these external experts helped people to see the organization as a whole in a new way. Prioritization of tasks also came up as a major issue: many managers realized that managing their own work and time was essential in order to avoid burn out.

The project led to human resource management becoming more visible at Tekno. It demonstrated that HRM is a real job, which cannot be handled on the side, in amongst more important tasks. The project also led to new areas of development being identified. Other training efforts related to work ability and coping have been set up since, and the company now views HRM as an important strategic partner with its own development needs. In this sense, the context of the study is that of a particularly advanced ICT organization, and as such the study does not provide a generally applicable picture of the sector as a whole.

Oulu, where the company headquarters and R&D Department are based, defined itself as a center of technology some twenty years ago. Close cooperation

between enterprises, research, education and public organizations is leveraged for greater results. Today, Oulu is an internationally renowned centre of expertise in high technology, particularly IT and wellness technology. Alongside the new technologies, traditional industries such as wood, paper and steel continue to be strong in Oulu. In the future, Oulu will invest increasingly in information technology, content production, media, wellness, and in the biological and ecological sectors. The development of logistics and entrepreneurship is also central. While this strategy has been criticized in the media because the unemployment rate is higher in Oulu as the mobile technology sector is in a downtrend and too many investments into one field makes the area financially vulnerable.

In practice, the ICT sector helped Finland to recover from the depression of the 1990s, and is thus significant in terms of Finnish labor history. The new industry and its strong growth also increased demand for other services not only in Oulu but also in other ICT sectors. No sooner had the student intake for ICT related study programmes been increased that discouraging news began to be heard from this sector. The recruitment boom was replaced by a series of redundancies and downsizing measures. ICT specialists could no longer rely on their job security, and profits from options decreased to a minimum. Those still with a job were forced to realize that working was not a pleasant run of successes, but a hard battle with international competition. Meanwhile, a proportion of the employees in this sector have remained in it throughout their careers, thus raising the average age. Most of my interviewees were between the ages of 35 to 40. Thus, the sector is no longer dominated by “teenagers on skateboards”, as it was in the 1990s.

The job prospects of recently qualified ICT specialists have worsened. They are no longer self-evident success stories. Tough international competition and the constant drive for better cost efficiency are causing growing insecurity for managers. The sector is no longer “one big happy family”, but a commercially driven business.

Why did I select Tekno as my research context? For me, Tekno is a perfect example of a post-bureaucratic organization. Flexibility has been a keyword in all operations and the company’s activities are based on the idea of an “easy mentality”. The organization has not shown signs of bureaucratic employee control methods. This is clearly reflected in the interviews. Descriptions of the early days emphasize flexibility and how things could be decided over coffee.

Our relations were direct back then. We'd sit together over coffee and talk about what to do next. No administration was needed; one secretary handled all the practical matters, and she'd sit at the coffee table too. Somehow when we got up we could go straight back to work and there were no routines to take care of or things to think about.

I think this is a good place. If it wasn't, I wouldn't be here, anyway. I've been here long enough; of course it's changed since I came. There are many more people now, but I think I've been able to work in pretty small groups... now I've got 11 people on my team, so it's still quite small. Some wise men have said that when you've been somewhere well over ten years then problems start to appear. But I haven't had any. I've enjoyed my time here until now.

...it seems fine these days and the company is still flexible, not really bureaucratic. No rules that say things have to be done just so. At least in my work I've been given freedom to do things. I can decide how to do things, as long as they get done.

The company's internal relations are described as unreserved and sociable even outside work.

Of course we all have fairly similar backgrounds and we're roughly the same age. We have a fair amount of leisure activities like table hockey and chess. Like if something's not working we'll decide to go and play for a while. Quite often we'll stay after work to play a little... it's not work hours, but we spend it at the workplace.

Following this description of the environment in which the data were obtained I will give an overview of the data that formed the basis for the examination of my research question.

5.5 Interviews

I conducted sixteen interviews within the research and product development unit of an ICT company. The company produces equipment for testing mobile phones. In this study the company will be referred to as Tekno (not the company's real name). The identity of the company has no significance in terms of this study because it reflects changes in organizational culture that could take place in any organization. The interviews were conducted in the research and product

development unit since this was considered to be the unit with the most purely technically oriented staff and purpose of the research was to study whether they have coherent identity. That was because my original idea was to study engineering culture or identity within ICT-field. Also, R&D is said to be the most likely department to remain in Finland whereas production in the ICT sector tends to be relocated to other counties. During the research I noticed that there are lots of different kind of identities and not a clear engineering culture.

For the purposes of this study I conducted sixteen interviews within the research and product development unit of an ICT company. In the interviews I applied a narrative approach, i.e., I sought to direct discussions equally towards the past, the present and the future. Questions were formulated in such a way as to leave plenty of room for interviewees' own stories. Thus, a typical format for a question was, "Could you tell me about the time when you came to work here?" (a list of questions can be found in an Appendix)

R&D is said to be the most likely department to remain in Finland whereas production in the ICT sector tends to be relocated to other countries. In addition to the interviews with individuals, I also attended and made notes in three middle-management meetings.

The data for this study consisted of the voice recordings of sixteen interviews as well as notes taken at meetings and entries in my field diary. I organized my interviews by agreeing a few in advance (I received the names from the Human Resources department) and then going on to find further interviewees through the human resources department and the managers. I tried to find interviewees who represented the strongest possible extremes in order to gain as thorough a picture as possible of the unit's culture. I stopped conducting interviews when things started to repeat themselves; i.e. when I felt I had heard the same story before. I tried to give my interviews a narrative form, but in reality they were more like conversations. It would not be natural for an interviewee to speak continuously, with the interviewer listening in the background, although two of the interviews were pretty much carried out in such a fashion following the interviewees lead. These are also two of the longest interviews (almost two hours in duration). People have different skills in putting things in a narrative form. With some interviewees I had to ask a lot of questions and they had a clear expectation of the interview situation: I ask the questions and they answer them. Although I always did my best to make the conversation flow naturally, I was not as equally successful with everyone. In the analysis stage I tried to focus equally on the "parser" interviews to make sure that the topics of the more substantial ones

didn't take over and dominate the whole study. I started off my questions by asking about the time when the interviewee began working for the organization or in the sector in general. The start is very important, as it provides the framework for the narrative.

The company is located in a tall, steel-grey building which exudes cold efficiency. Externally it presents the image of a strong, successful, international company. It veritably jumps out from the snowy Oulu landscape. The building has seven floors, and each department is located on a different floor.

Although all my interviews were carried out in the research and product development unit, its employees were scattered in different parts of the building due to recent organizational changes, so I got to see different floors. The floors were almost identical in appearance, yet isolated to the point that the second floor had a fairly poor idea of what was going on the third floor. In other words, the structure of the building imposed limitations on the organization's internal operations.

Security was tight and I was not allowed to roam around the premises by myself. I always entered the building through reception, where a friendly customer service person would call that day's interviewee at their office to come and fetch me. The doors between floors were locked, so I always moved around with staff members. The premises were tidy and spotless; the whole office complex smelled clean and fresh.

The employees' dress code was in stark contrast to the building's appearance. Everyone was dressed casually; even the CEO wore jeans and a t-shirt. People's behavior was also highly informal. "How's it going" was a typical question between people meeting in corridors. The habit of lightly punching a colleague's shoulder reminded me of an ice hockey team's way of cheering each other on. The common areas for each floor contained sofas, tables, magazines for reading, a ping-pong table, and candy and soft drink dispensers, indicating that enjoyment of the workplace included informal activities.

The interviews went surprisingly well. I was prepared to account for the fact that interviewees would not tell me much – in fact, I was rather worried about that in advance. Instead, our conversations were startlingly open. I felt as if I were a wife or therapist with whom interviewees could share their feelings. They needed a listener and I happened to be there. Naturally, some people were less talkative and not all of my interview material is equally useful. In some interviews I seemed to do most of the talking in an attempt to kick-start the conversation. I will provide an example of this later when presenting my data.

The representatives of middle management turned out to be reluctant to talk too much, but were keen for me to interview their employees, even though they knew they would be critical. In other words, they seemed to want to convey a message to me, but were afraid to tell me themselves. This way they managed to maintain their loyalty to the organization and to save face.

I tested various interview-starting techniques. Often I started the conversation before switching on the voice recorder and would then slip the recorder onto the table without a pause in the conversation. This worked quite well. Things became more difficult when I noticed after the first interviews that the sound quality was quite poor and decided to use a microphone in my interviews. The microphone had to be clipped on the shirt collar, so it could not be put in place unnoticed. This made the beginnings of the interviews somewhat stiff, but that was overcome in time. The best strategy was to find a masculine topic of conversation such as sports, motorbikes or giving up smoking. Mostly the best way to get the conversation going was for me to discuss matters, but putting myself in a passive position. I would for example talk about my husband trying to stop smoking, without playing an active part myself. In other words, I put myself in the interviewee's position: that of an observer. This role suited my interviewees well, although that may have been one reason for which they related to me as to a wife or therapist. When I took on the role of a university researcher they approached me with greater care, somewhat suspiciously, asking a lot of clarifying questions. If I tried to adopt the role of a parent – as many of them are – and talk about children, it failed to start a normal conversation: either their families were so close to them that they were unwilling to discuss them with a stranger, or I was unable to talk about family and children in a way which could relate them to a different conversation. In other words, their way of talking about family was maybe different from mine and we did not find any common ground to discuss it.

5.6 Meetings

In addition to the personal interviews, I also attended and made notes in three middle-management meetings. The research process as a whole took three months, alternating between interviews and meetings. Sometimes I would spend a whole day at the office, whereas on other days I just popped in for one interview. In table 6 meetings participated are presented.

Table 6. Meetings participated.

Time	Attendant (s)	Duration
30.1.2004	Director of the Unit Managers of the unit HR-personnel (2)	2 hours
17.3.2004	Director of the Unit Managers of the unit HR-personnel	2 hours
21.4.2004	Director of the Unit Managers of the Unit HR-personnel CEO of the company (part of the time)	3 hours

The meetings at which I was present as an observer were interesting. People arrived bearing laptops and mobiles. The beginning of each meeting gave a very busy impression with many important people arriving in the same space. The meetings lasted for four hours, and at times it seemed as if the people in the room were more concerned with their email than with the discussions going on in the room. Mostly the meetings involved eleven men – all of them representing middle or higher management – and two women, one representing human resources management, and one who acted as the secretary.

In the first meeting I introduced myself and explained I was carrying out research for my thesis. I had prepared a presentation with a few overheads, so I asked whether they had an overhead projector. The lady representing HR management looked uncomfortable and said that it must be stored somewhere, and that someone could go and find it if necessary. The engineers were amused. I said I would manage without my overheads, and used a flipchart. I gave them a short presentation on organizational culture and research related to identity. Many were typing on their laptops, presumably sending email. Some looked amused. When I was stressing the confidentiality of our interviews, one of the engineers said he did not care who I told his story to. The rest laughed loudly. They laughed a lot in general, and their laughter was not humorous: they laughed especially when dealing with difficult or complicated things such as complaints from customers or cost-cutting measures. The role of laughter seemed to be to relieve the seriousness of an issue or to end a conversation – sometimes I felt that laughter acted as the chair’s gavel. End of story – laughter.

The meetings were held in Finnish, but the terminology used was largely English. The consequence was “Finglish”, consisting of plenty of three-letter abbreviations. The technical details were impossible to follow without in-depth knowledge of the subject. Those whose turn it was to present an issue projected their presentation onto the wall with the help of a data projector from their laptops, and others would follow it on the screen. There was hardly any face-to-face discussion; people’s eyes were constantly on their computers or on the image projected onto the wall. One of the meeting’s participants was in a different town but interacted through speakerphone and a network connection. He was also able to contribute by projecting the image of his laptop monitor onto the meeting room’s screen.

In the following, I will give a detailed description of one particular meeting I was able to observe, in order to illustrate the work culture at Tekno.

5.7 Meeting of 21 April 2004

The meeting began at 9 am. I have been given permission to participate in the meeting and have asked whether I could record the proceedings. The group leader promised to think about it. I have been to an earlier meeting, so my arrival does not attract attention. All the participants sit around a large rectangular table in the meeting room, typing on their laptops with their eyes focused on their monitors. As there are no free places around the table, I take a seat by the wall. I also feel I will disrupt the meeting less if I take my notes from this position. I ask about being allowed to record and the group leader answers: “Well, we would prefer if you didn’t make recordings...”. “OK, I will just take notes,” I say and open my notebook.

The chairman opens the meetings and the participants begin discussing the day’s issues. Firstly, they mention performance reviews, and the group leader – who is chairing the meeting – says he will conduct this group’s performance reviews in June and August.

A surprising message interrupts the meeting: the CEO will come to talk about the company’s strategy. First the chairman receives a call from the CEO: “Yes, hello, we’re in 134... OK, bye,” he says, then turning to the others: “Listen, Risto [the CEO] is coming in a minute to tell us about the new strategy.”

Risto walks into the room. He is wearing jeans and a t-shirt. “Hi, I almost couldn’t find you.” He looks at me, intrigued, but says nothing. I nod politely and smile. He decides to go on, even though the chairman looks uncomfortable and is

probably debating in his mind whether I should leave the room. I try to look as harmless as possible. The presentation begins. The CEO tells us that an event to communicate the strategy will be held for all employees in June. He runs through the mission and vision, the mission being “Improving mobile protocol testing”, and the vision “to reach a leading position in testing”.

The CEO describes the market situation by saying that research and product development volumes are falling whilst competition is becoming increasingly tough. Growth is taking place mainly in Asia, where engineers’ salaries are one third of what they are in Finland. The CEO still considers outsourcing to be a good option, though, as it may be that larger companies will decide to outsource their mobile testing to Tekno. The CEO emphasizes the customer’s point of view: ‘The thing is, boys, I don’t really care what you want to do; we’re going to do what the customer wants.’ He says this means that in future their operations will be market-oriented rather than technology-oriented as before.

They will look for growth by providing additional services rather than by deepening their core competences. They also need to take environmental issues into account in new ways.

Next, the CEO gives clear growth targets for each product group, with some suggestions for measures. He reassures the participants, saying that product development work is not going to be buried in the business units – this is a rumor that has been circulating at Tekno. He does want to decentralize decision-making, however; he says mistakes have been made at Tekno due to decision-making being too centralized.

The CEO asks for comments, but the participants don’t seem too surprised about the information and have no questions. The CEO ends with a joke and leaves, accompanied by a chorus of laughter.

The meeting goes on. Next, they discuss subcontracting and the possibility of transferring some work to subcontractors. It is considered to be a good solution, because it allows for flexibility in quieter times. Plenty of time is spent on discussing these issues in detail.

Finally, they discuss HR issues. The lady representing the HR department asks managers to appoint their own deputies. The possibility of going to China for short periods to acquire experience is discussed, as are the training needs for the autumn. Those present do not seem very interested. In fact they start packing their things and somebody even leaves the room when the discussion turns to HR issues.

The meeting ends and the next meeting date is agreed. I am happy that the CEO dropped in for a surprise visit so that I could get an idea of the top management's view of the strategy.

5.8 Analyzing the narrative material

Somers and Gibson (1994) understand narrativity as a method for conceptualizing a seemingly problematic relationship between the individual and a structure. If we consider organizations to have a narrative structure, it is interesting to view the data I have gathered as narratives – stories about the local truths at Tekno and how they have been formed.

I constructed the narratives on the basis of the data obtained from the interviews; i.e. I did not decide in advance what kinds of narratives I would be writing. The content of the interviews did not become clear to me until I started reading through them and investigating what they say about the relationship between individual and structure.

In qualitative research one cannot differentiate as such between the data-gathering and analysis stages. If conducting interviews, the analysis begins during the interview itself, while the interviewer chooses additional questions to pose. Silverman (2000) gives note-taking as a further example: the analysis has begun when the researcher begins classifying things in order to take notes. We could say, however, that the analysis stage proper is longer and takes more time than the data-gathering stage.

Writing also begins right at the start of the research period. Silverman (2000) shows some of the students' research diaries, which illustrate the progress of the research process in detail. Writing is not a separate stage of the research process, but begins right at the start and interweaves with the rest of the work.

A field diary is a detailed report of events and feelings. I began keeping a diary already before contacting the company for the first time, reporting on what were my expectations of the company and the employees, what were my plans to do the research. During the interviews the diary was also important because many of my interviewees gave their criticisms and thoughts – sometimes a kind of summary of our discussion – after I had switched off the voice recorder. This was related to my way of saying goodbye; when I switched off the recorder I did not jump up to leave the room immediately; instead, I gave the interviewees time to summarize his or her narrative. Many of them did that and in fact gave the main

point of their stories at the end. My interviewees also walked me down to the reception, all the while talking about the organization and their work.

Following this stage, I classified and organized the data by looking for similarities and differences. This led me to a list of dimensions which I called 'narrative characteristics'. On the basis of these characteristics I began creating a model narrative to describe the ideal engineer type. In addition, four distinct narratives (or types) that diverged most clearly from the model narrative emerged from the material. However, matching an individual's stories with a particular narrative was difficult, and it seemed to me to require excessive manipulation of the data. After this realization the model narrative began to feel too artificial and strong, so I decided to discard the model narrative and build my description around narrative styles instead. I grouped the issues that were emphasized in the stories and also placed whole interviews under different narratives. Each of the narratives describing a particular set of narrative styles is built up of different interviews, and narratives do not portray specific people at Tekno. At the same time, no one's identity can be clearly linked to one narrative only. People's identity is more complex and multi-faceted than that.

In analyzing the interviews I used Beech's (2000) narrative factors to begin with. But they did not work as such, and I had to change the names of dimensions and add new ones. This is likely to be due to the different theoretical background, given that Beech focused on culture and change.

The next step was to analyze the tone of the stories. Gergen & Gergen (1997) outline three forms of narrative: stability narratives in which change is minimal and either progressive or regressive narratives in which the central character(s) experience 'either increments or decrements ... along an evaluative dimension over time' (p. 166). Combining these forms could result in a tragic narrative, that is a progressive story followed by a rapid downfall; a comic or melodramatic narrative – a sad tale that has a happy ending; a happily-ever-after narrative that features progress followed by stability; or a romantic saga, a story of continuous, and perhaps noble, struggle. As Gergen & Gergen point out, "events themselves do not contain inherent valuational properties"; indeed, whether an experience is judged good or bad "depends on the framework one employs for understanding." Still, 'storytellers can scarcely remain unaffected by the narrative forms that are already imbedded in their cultures' (p. 167–168).

In terms of the analysis it is important to remember that both the interviewees, and myself as the interviewer, are tied to the place in which the information was given. Initially I was disappointed that the interviews afforded so

few surprises. Later I came to realize that the spoken identities and narratives were generated in a specific place and time and were therefore the products of collective activity.

Finally I conducted an analysis of each of the four narratives. The aim was to find out identities closer each at the time. I also analyzed the plot of each story.

In the background is one overall narrative that describes changes in working life, but that narrative was too restrictive to encompass all four narratives. I wrote a story in which country people come to the city and encounter a turning point in the world of work. This stage is missing from two of the narratives, those based on the interviews of workers below thirty years of age. This is the boundary that divides the group into two. The younger set do not describe the move from the country to the city, or a turning point in the world of work; when they entered working life, continuous change was already the norm, so they do not question it.

Once this initial division was made, the narratives came about almost automatically and immediately. They came to life and became clearly structured so as to encompass the diversity and multiplicity of the materials. Thus the process began by being fairly technical, requiring classification and hard work, but progressed towards a more creative flow.

5.9 Validity

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) refer to Riessman (1993) when writing about the validation of narrative research. Riessman (1993) suggests four criteria to evaluate narrative studies: persuasiveness (is the interpretation reasonable and convincing); correspondence (allowing the participant of the study to check the interpretations); coherence (to show that an interpretation is more than *ad hoc*); and pragmatic use (whether the study has use as a basis for the work of other researchers).

To find out if the results are found reasonable and convincing I went to present results to NokiaSiemens Networks at Oulu and to Elektrobit Oulu. Those companies can both be interpreted as post-bureaucratic with a workforce comprising mostly of engineers. In both of them I got feedback that narratives could be from their organization and my interpretations were found familiar for them. Finally I presented my results to informants at Tekno and they agreed with me. They told they actually had many problems in managing their sites at India because their leadership style is so interactive and managers are not really higher in hierarchy than specialists. So that is not the case in India. In fact they told they

had lots of problems to start with in India because they assumed they could work likewise in Finland.

In the table 7 the presentation of narratives are listed.

Table 7. Presentation of narratives.

Time	Company	Attendants	Subject	Duration
13.2.2008	NokiaSiemens Networks	HR Specialists	Presentation of the stories Discussion	1 hour
27.2.2008	Elektrobit Oyj	HR Specialists	Presentation of the stories Discussion	1 hour
27.4.2008	Tekno	Director of Unit Managers of the Unit HR Manager Engineers	Presentation of the stories and main results Discussion	1,5 hour

Coherence has been the most demanding part of the study and that is that the whole study should be coherent and easy to read. In this research there are so many different aspects that the exclusion has been problematic. To make a study coherent is one of the elements of a good study and something that one cannot learn by reading, one has to write to practice it.

I hope this work also has a pragmatic use. This could be a start to study identities which are transitional stage from bureaucratic culture to more flexible. That transition is happening in society and engineers are not the only group facing these changes. Nevertheless, we still do not have enough understanding how this transition affects identities and relationships to work. Increasing flexibility is usually seen as a positive thing but until now it has not been studied from the point of view of the employees.

In the following section, I present the narratives constructed from the data, and describe the findings of my analysis, with the aim of answering the question if and how identity-building is possible in a post-bureaucracy. To ensure that I interpret the data with the original informants always in mind, and that the narratives accurately reflect the initial data, I have also included direct quotations from the original interviews in the next chapter.

6 Engineers' narratives of culture and attachment

In narrative research there are two different ways of conducting research. The first one is traditional; emphasis is put on linearity, coherence and for example semiotic analysis. The other is antenarrative analysis (Boje 1991). As a narrative already has a plot and it is organized and coherent, 'antenarrative' is the previous state of affairs, i.e. a dynamic, non-static story before the researcher started to construct its stabilizing plot in their research (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 214).

This study follows the traditional approach. Narratives are studied from a structural point of view like investigating the actor closer getting the understanding of identity by studying narrative styles. The plot analysis gives further understanding of identity from different points of view. The idea is to study narratives from different perspectives to be able to identify elements of different identities and thus make an understanding of identities within a post-bureaucratic organization.

In this chapter the narratives of four of the interviewees are presented in their entirety. These narratives stand for typical experiences in the group studied. These narratives are followed by narrative style analysis. In this section, direct quotations from the interviews serve to illustrate the constructed narratives. Finally, four different identity constructions that emerge from the narratives are described.

6.1 Engineers' Narratives

6.1.1 Nostalgic narrative: we are one great big family

We started from nothing and everyone was ready to risk his own neck. We didn't have time to look at the time. There were nine of us crazy individuals who left Nokia to start our own company. The most important thing was that no-one gave in. Everyone did their best. We didn't have many alternatives: we all knew that if we don't do our work properly, there will be no work to do. Responsibility was a big word back then. We all knew each other and we were all prepared to do our best for each other.

We all had similar educational backgrounds as Bachelors of Engineering or Masters of Science. We also had a similar sense of humor. We were a small

enough group to fit into one room comfortably. Still, we weren't teenagers running around with skateboards; we all had several years of work experience, and many had degrees. We just wanted to do something for ourselves. We didn't need anyone to lead us particularly, we were all prepared to work and we didn't leave at four o'clock but continued working as long as we were able. Everyone took part in the work and no one counted the hours they put in.

The CEO has a Master of Science in engineering, too, and he went around doing the selling while the rest of us worked on product development. We had one secretary who took care of all administrative tasks. Percentage-wise, product developers must have formed a large majority – a proportion that we are unlikely to see again. It has changed since then, of course; we started making sales and back then even individual sales contracts were important, when we were making as many sales in a year as we would in a month later on. In other words, we moved on to a completely different category.

We all chatted around the same coffee table and didn't need any more hierarchy than that. If you wanted to speak to someone you could just raise your voice a bit from your desk so everyone could hear. Yes, it was an exciting time, life back there at no. 4 Technological Road. It was a terraced house where we would knock down walls to get more space or add one here or there when a neighbor moved out. I think there must have been six units in the same building, back at the time when units were at their smallest... At the end there must only have been one other company in the whole building and the whole rest of it, probably 80%, was ours. Then we moved out of there when we could no longer fit in it. With the move we lost our unity. Here we are on different floors and don't really know about what goes on the other floors.

Then we got to a point where we needed a bigger sales force. Initially, some of our engineers moved over to do sales work, but later on we had to recruit people. At that point cracks began to appear in our cohesion and the proportion of product developers fell constantly. We still had our core team, which kept up the cooperative atmosphere. As the company grew, though, the atmosphere changed. The CEO no longer had time to have coffee with us. Then, with the merger, the community spirit was lost completely and we got to a situation in which money was the most important factor. Now we have employees who are not committed; they just work here and will most likely change jobs as soon as the opportunity arises. We think it is sad. It is as if our big family had started to fall apart. The new employees don't have the right attitude; they lack the will to fight. It is as if

the neighbor's dog came to your food bowl: they don't belong to the family, and yet they eat at the same table.

Now we have got to a point where there's no longer a clear destination. Of course the company has a growth strategy, but it isn't enough to bring content to our work. It makes you think about what you should do next. You could start a new company or enroll at the university to write your thesis. I am starting to feel I could do something completely different, maybe invest in some studies. On the other hand I could try to get some postgraduate studies started while I am at work and then take them on full-time once they have got going properly. I am also attracted to the idea of my own company if I could start a small business and keep it small to regain that sense of purpose.

I think we 'old-timers' aren't respected enough. After all, we did start the whole thing. Now they seem to have forgotten that and that's not a good thing to happen. Everyone does his or her own thing and is interested only in personal benefit. That is not how a company succeeds. What new can we produce if we cannot work together?

We knew that if we didn't do our jobs well, we wouldn't have a job anymore. And that's what it's like. And back then a sense of responsibility was a big thing. Of course when you're in a group where people know each other well it feels like if someone doesn't do his job, he's letting you down. That's what it was like at the beginning.

There's not the same commitment. It's just not there. I feel it's a bit difficult to understand that some people come here just to work. What do you mean just work? We had a big family that's started to break down and we oldies find it difficult to understand how it can be like this.

I think it's one of those things, same as the quality certificate and IPO. When you do the things properly then you don't have to worry because it's possible. But you've got to figure out whether it's important to have the certificate and to be listed on the stock exchange, or is the listing an end in itself? For the shareholders it probably is but can it be the purpose of the company? A company that's well looked after will get onto the stock exchange anyway.

I think an organization is like family and you should be committed to that. Sometimes you shout, sometimes you laugh, sometimes you cry...but you don't just sit there like nothing has happened. The employees nowadays are too much alike, you cannot distinguish between them, there's nothing original or unique.

It is as if our big family had started to crumble. The new employees don't have the right attitude; they lack the will to fight. It is as if the neighbor's dog

came to your food bowl: they don't belong to the family and yet they eat at the same table.

Of course we have those new managers and I think that's a good thing. They have experience and viewpoints that this company needs. But the power thing...it's different. They might decide something but to make it really happen needs 'grey eminence'. You have to know whom to contact. It is not dependent on the position, not always.

6.1.2 Future-oriented narrative: professional leadership

Our Master of Science degrees should prepare us better for leadership tasks, because a large proportion of us end up in managerial roles. Of course we start our growth into managers from various projects and we get plenty of time for growth, receiving training while we work, so maybe the leap isn't that great after all. It is a kind of continuum, where at the beginning there is more technology and the further you get up the managerial ladder, the more your job involves working with people. Actually the difference is that whereas before you were responsible only for your own work, now you are responsible for others' work too. Before you had to do the work yourself, and now the others do the work while you look at the broader perspective. Of course even as a project manager I began to realize that once there were five people involved in a project, the administration and management took so much time that I had no time to do any programming myself. In that sense this managerial position came at the right time, because I had started to get a bit fed up with my work as a project manager. Now I work a lot with people and my own viewpoints are much broader. Previously all my attention was on one project, whereas now I can supervise several projects at a time and see their connections to each other.

Unfortunately, I cannot keep my technical skills quite up to date and I sometimes worry about that. On the other hand, the team members will still come to me to ask about technical issues so I suppose it means I still understand some things. Still, it seems that my career is now mainly about progressing from one hierarchical step to another. Specialists are paid less, however good they are. This is why many people apply for managerial positions even though they really want to work in product development. Then they worry about the fact that their skills go out of date, because they still think of themselves mainly as technical people.

Organizational changes are an inevitable part of modern life, so I don't understand why people make things so complicated. We are doing this for the

customers; that much is clear or it should be clear to everyone. If you're not happy with that, then the alternatives aren't that attractive. Some jobs have been moved to China, and the trend continues. Some of the product development work in this field will be moved to lower-cost countries within the next five years. People don't see that yet, but the process is unstoppable. We have to be globally competitive. We have to be responsible for our own work and our competitiveness. In the future there will be competition between employees, who will take on the role of entrepreneurs in a way. Engineers in India are paid one third of what Finnish engineers receive, and the next thing to be transferred there is development work. That means that every developer needs to be alert and look after his own professional skills, rather than waiting for the management to direct the company in the right direction and the salesmen to do the selling. In this situation the results depend on individuals. We all need to be looking in the mirror.

After redundancies have been announced it is difficult to get people to work as a team and to believe in this kind of entrepreneurship and presence. Many people wondered what was going on before leaving for their summer holidays. The same went on after the holidays; we have had to re-organize our teams and get people to trust that everything will be OK if they just do their jobs. The autumn was difficult, with tight schedules for everyone and more work than ever before. Luckily, we managed to make a product release for Christmas so everyone could take an extended Christmas holiday. We had worked so many extra hours that everyone was dying to go on holiday. The spring has started off on a different note; again there is talk of reorganization and that's when people start to lose their motivation.

Still, the future is full of opportunities. We all have the ability to influence things and we can turn this into something new, but that does imply that we must know what the customers want and be prepared to do it. It also means we have to have good product development which can respond to challenges and adapt to swift changes.

We have to cooperate with our customers, learning how to act as a customer-oriented company and adapting our operations accordingly. We have a lot to learn from our customers and that is the main thing we have to be aware of here. I see our company as a part of a network, which has to be known and used to our advantage. We have to know people and companies alike. When we operate globally that means there are a lot of them to know. Internationalization multiplies the challenges. Having worked with Nokia right from the start has taught us to be

international. Nokia forced us to operate internationally because it is a global company. We should be thankful for that. Although we largely compete for the same resources, we have done well in the competition so far. At one point Nokia head-hunted all the third year students, but that led to our having to recruit from overseas, which was positive. There are many skilled communications people in Spain, and we couldn't have dreamed of recruiting qualified Masters of Science from Finland – at least not in telecoms. At one point I had seven different nationalities in my team. When more than half of the team was foreign, my boss said that that was enough foreign people in that team. Of course, it is a benefit in some ways, but it can also cause problems in that things aren't as self-evident as they were before. As a manager you then have to do much more preparation work and make sure everyone understands. Their work ethic is different and they are different in other ways too... Of course, you then come to realize that they do the work just as well as we do. On the first occasions when we went out for lunch together, it would take two hours with everyone talking and no one listening. But after six months everyone was wolfing down their food in 15 minutes and had adopted other Finnish habits too.

Things do not happen if you just sit on your butt. You have to move forward all the time. That is how you get knowledge, how you learn and develop as an employee and a person all the time. There is nothing else you need to do and then success is all yours.

Of course everyone makes mistakes sometimes and you cannot always avoid difficulties, but they have to be solved. And then you should move on. Everyone should stop griping about management. Of course we need management. We cannot decide everything together and if we did, we would have no time for anything else. I'm totally for the management decisions made in this company. They were good, they were needed, and there is nothing to complain about.

However, everything is not in our hands. In the end, the success of the company is very much dependent on the market situation. That is something we have to accept. We still have to do our best but the market forces are very powerful. All we can do is to be alert and to respond quickly to changes in our environment and that management takes the responsibility. That is their job.

But it not just managers who need to develop and grow. It is the same for everyone. The global competition does not give benefit to anyone.

We have to be globally competitive. We have to be responsible for our own work and our competitiveness. In the future there will be competition between employees, who will take on the role of entrepreneurs in a way.

We need self-discipline to be able to reach the required results, and to meet our schedule. We have to work hard because we are being paid to do just that and it is everyone's duty. Wake up – we work here, this is not supposed to be just fun. Everyone has to do his/her duty. That is what work is and everyone has to take care of their own career. At the end that is the only thing each one of us has.

I have always taken work seriously and that hasn't changed. But of course there are so many things you have to do and take care of at the same time, some bigger and some smaller. I could be here every night, but I do turn off the lights at four. Of course you have to be flexible sometimes, but not all the time. I have a family too, and a life outside this company. Still, I am committed to doing this properly. It is a really interesting job and I want to see what becomes of it. The only thing I might change would be to go back to product development. To do some real work...

6.2 Instrumental narrative: disappointments

Many things have changed significantly for the worse...in the sense that you need many different people's permission even for a simple thing. And in the end, the decisions are made by people who don't understand anything about it. Before, we could agree on things together and work sensibly. Now we spend ages on agreeing on things when you first have to find out who has to make an agreement with whom and what about. And in the end the decision-makers make the wrong decisions because they don't know anything.

The redundancies were made in the wrong place. A more equal treatment would've been fairer. And I'm not that happy with the pay either; I am paid much less than the people who came to work here earlier or than people with other similar jobs here. The management's attitude is that you should be happy you've got some work. Now that the employment situation in this sector is worse they seem to think that people are queuing up at the door and they can just change people if their current employees are unhappy. So that's how willing they are to improve things. Or then they threaten to transfer your job to China.

In this situation we have adopted the attitude that this is just a job. We have a few years' work experience behind us and all in all this has been quite a disappointment. When I started studying we thought that the heavens would open for us. Even my relatives kept saying how easy it was to get a job in ICT. Our expectations were really high. First we thought we would be able to choose where we would work, and once we had chosen the best one of all the potential

employers we would have a good salary, a challenging job and a promotion within one year. Initially, we accepted lower salaries because we assumed they would rise fairly quickly once we could prove ourselves. We were also promised additional commissions to make the salaries acceptable. Now the company's profits have been so low, though, that no commissions have been paid.

In other words, the bottom line is that there is no money. On the other hand they keep recruiting new directors with high salaries. We keep getting messages that some new big boss is coming to work, and of course we know they aren't working for nothing. And down here we have to fight over every single penny of added salary, and there is so much discussion over whether the budget will allow us to buy one laptop. It just makes me wonder where the money comes from to pay those directors. From somewhere else, I guess.

My own goals have changed. I'm no longer after a brilliant career in ICT; now I'll be happy with a secure and regular job. It would be nice if I could take a day off sometimes if my kids are ill. Now I can't do that because I'm afraid then I might be the next to be kicked out.

The attitude that bothers me is that product development is just seen as an expense. Whenever sales are made there will be toasts and great celebrations. But when we release a new product nobody pays any attention. Although now that we have got a new director, some progress has been made here too. Still, we don't trust our own bosses. We always feel that they are leaving things unsaid and are acting as the top management's puppets.

Luckily, they do trust their employees quite a lot here. They don't watch what we do constantly, like they did at some of the places I worked while I was studying. Someone was always watching you. Here we have a bit more freedom, and that is a good thing.

Work is really important, and this is our chance to get the work experience we need. The only option is to keep working. I haven't looked at getting a job elsewhere, because it wouldn't make any sense to leave now. We just keep fearfully following the company's results and sales. It is really stressful to have to be so alert all the time, even if it doesn't help at all. But you can't help it, you still watch out all the time. And you definitely don't take on any projects like building a house or anything like that when you don't know how long you will have work for.

One new thing is that you have to be sociable and a good relationship-builder at work. Doing your work well is no longer so crucial; that became clear with the latest wave of redundancies. Those with the best relationships within the company

kept their jobs. So working isn't about doing your job properly but about convincing everyone that you are doing an important and good job. It's about credibility rather than skills. That's a bit scary, because I'm not that keen on chatting with everyone and asking how they are doing all the time. You just have to hope that someone at management level will appreciate your work. During my studies they were still emphasizing the importance of having the technical skills, but after all it doesn't seem to matter so much...

I entered the organization with high expectations. A couple of years after I started, the company's market situation wasn't as good anymore, no performance-related bonuses were paid, and most close colleagues were made redundant. They say it's getting better but I do not think so. I simply try to cope and make it from one day to the next.

The older employees have good stock ownership; they probably get good dividends from that. They won't change their workplace but those who have come later are more likely to change when they don't have shares and the salary level is that much lower.

I'm frustrated and I have to admit that there is not much commitment left. If the company is not committed how can the employees be?

My own goals have changed. I'm no longer after a brilliant career in ICT; now I'll be happy with a secure and regular job. It would be nice if I could take a day off sometimes if my kids are ill. Now I can't do that because I'm afraid then I might be the next to be kicked out.

I think there is nothing to be done. All those decisions were made, and we were not asked about our opinion. I feel like a puppet and that's not a nice feeling to have. Anyhow, it makes no difference what I do or think. Even though I did my best I could not prevent what happened. That makes me think that nothing matters.

But I still do the work. They do not pay me well but I still believe I have to do my work properly. I come at 8 AM and leave at 4 PM. And then I hurry homeward. The good thing is that I have spent more time with my family since there have been all these changes at work. At least they haven't left me, and I have noticed it is actually nice to get home earlier.

6.2.1 Chameleon in motion

Well, I started my career in the ICT field because I found there is a lot of money and possibilities for a great career. And this is a good place for quick movers and for a social guy like me. I worked at Nokia before and there I learned what is travelling and I had enough of that. That's why I came here. But my Nokia background was a good basis for negotiating my pay.

I went to an interview for a job at the State Technical Research Centre because I thought it might be a time to do something else. Anyhow that was not exactly my place so I did withdraw my application. Now I am just waiting for the next moves at the company, whether they give me a promotion or I might be leaving. I have been thinking what I can do best, and that is the managing of business operations. So, I can go to any place and make their business grow. So, I will leave the technical work for the others.

I understand very well that shareholders want to get their money's worth and it is good that we had those lay-offs. Actually, they were not doing anything, and I think it was very professionally done job to find those guys, free-riders as I would call them.. But we are here to do business so this is no place to cry. You can choose your career as a social worker if you want to take care of the losers. Just don't bother us.

I haven't stayed in one job longer than 2 years. So it starts to be time to move on. But this is okay for me; in this field no one really thinks this is the place for 30 years. Good, no-one even knows what the world will be like in 30 years. Anyhow, I have always done my best. At Nokia I worked 14 hours a day and it is about the same here. But I take the weekend off; last weekend I actually came here but that was unusual.

We are building a matrix organization here. And it is been a bit hard to get people involved after those lay-offs. I have analyzed my style as a manager a lot. I started here more like a team member, but after those lay-offs I had to take a distance to the rest of the guys. I have to admit that after that our relations have not been so close. But on the other hand it helps in decision-making. I mean that you do not exactly know how sick a employee's kids are, or that his wife is studying and they have a big mortgage. That helps me to make my decisions according to the business situation. On the other hand, I cannot take into account all those family situations and might give too much responsibility at the wrong time.

This is like a puzzle, we made these rearrangements a year ago and everyone knew their place and we had an agreement about what we are doing. We had to concentrate and we worked jointly. But now we break ranks. It happens as soon as the situation gets a bit easier. It seems like we have to make a new puzzle to keep people involved with their work. On the other hand (there always is another viewpoint) when there is movement and disorder, there is chance for new innovations. Innovation does not happen when we ask for it; it happens if there is a bit rebellion and liberty.

I usually say to young people not to take this too seriously, this is just work. I do not mean that they would not need to do their best. They surely have to. I mean by that this is a great adventure, a great chance to learn something new and do remarkable things with technology and services. But I also think that it is good to change a company after few years and not stick to the same situation if it does not please you. There are other companies in the world, go out and find the best one for you!

Of course this is not what I'm going to do the rest of my life. I mean, I will always work in the ICT sector, I love this, but probably I will let up a bit and do normal workdays and raise a family. I'm still the age of productivity but they say everything changes when you get to 35. Work does not mean that much anymore. Think of when Nokia rose to be a world leader, we were all around 25 and worked around the clock. When they get older they won't do that. And if the company wants success, it has to move to other countries because in Finland you cannot fire everyone over 40 and recruit youngsters. But you can recruit them in India or China. And even if they were older there, they work hard. Here fathers stay home and take paternity leave.

We have top know-how and we can achieve almost anything. But to be among the winners we have to have our heart set on winning. And we have to continuously examine our work and how to do it better. That's what it is today, I could say a cliché: take it or leave it. One has to be brave to work in this field. But there is a chance for big success and big money too.

In the past I worked in another company but I decided to leave. Or should I say it was time to move on. I do think that if you are not happy with your work, it is better to leave – and sometimes it is better to leave just if you have done same job for too long. I think work should be fun and always offer something new.

I got enough of that. There were trips when you'd have to go to Camberly for an hour's meeting during the day – get there in the morning and get back in the evening, ready for the next trip the next day. At the beginning we were really

excited about that but then you get fed up with travelling. When you go on ten different trips each month, it gets to be a bit much.

I appreciate individuality and the possibility to make my own choices. In this company we are supported as individuals. I also appreciate the possibility to take on different tasks and roles, and to learn something new every day.

I haven't stayed in one job longer than 2 years. So it starts to be time to move along. But this is okay for me; in this field no one really thinks this is the place for 30 years. Good, no one even knows what the world is like after 30 years.

I believe that the individual matters. Not everyone is suited to work within this field. You have to be a sort of gambler. And if you do not think this is something for you, change your career. Everyone should take action if they are not happy and not just complain.

To do your best you really need to enjoy this work. I am always passionate about my work. One day I want to do one thing, and on another day something different. With constantly changing tasks, you have great possibilities to see what you can do and what you are able to learn. It is great – you really can test your limits.

It is your career that matters. You should always think what the best move for your career is, and what that would look like in your résumé. Sometimes it is good to work in a big company where you have the possibility to change your job within the company. Sometimes you might need experience from a start-up company, so you would try that. It is important to be able to choose.

An excellent career path is your best insurance for difficult times. It does not matter so much what company you work for, you are not safe anywhere if you do not have a decent career.

6.3 Narrative comparisons

In his research, Beech (2000) interviewed managers and employees in an organization that was undergoing a period of cultural change. He classified the narrative dimensions which came up in the different stories. From these interviews he derived a number of narrative dimensions present in each individual story. The various ways in which these dimensions were realized in individual accounts he called “narrative style”. According to Beech, the narrative style is a consequence of the organization's culture as well as its subcultures. The narrative dimensions seemed familiar to me, and I was also able to identify them in my

data. The table below describes these dimensions and shows how they show up in the different narrative styles.

The narrative dimensions as proposed by Beech (2000) are presented in Table 8. These dimensions can be used as viewpoint to identify similarities and differences between narratives.

Table 8. Narrative styles in narratives 1 to 4.

Narrative dimension	Narrative style			
	1. Nostalgic narrative	2. Professional narrative	3. Instrumental narrative	4. Chameleon narrative
Moral of the story	Don't waste old skills and knowledge	You just have to move forward	Look after the employees	It is your own choice
Community spirit / estrangement	Strong solidarity	Solidarity with management	Estrangement	Individuality
Power dimension (cause/effect relationships)	The management makes the decisions but the grey masses make things happen	Operations follow the market forces; management has to take responsibility within the organization	The management makes the decisions	Everyone should do what's best for him/her
Significance of own actions	Can make a difference	Can make a difference	Cannot make a difference	Can make a difference
Time orientation	Past	Future	Present	Future
Narrative tone	Aggressive	Neutral	Depressive	Positive
Organization	Family	Factory	Exploiter	Theatre
Commitment	Organization	Own career	Commitment to family	Own career

Before moving on to a discussion of some key observations, a more detailed definition of the viewpoints needs to be given. The first dimension is the moral of the story. In a way it is a summary of the whole style. It is a kind of basic perspective or world view which is generated in the narrative. In nostalgic narrative the key point seems to be that 'the older' employees have knowledge and that is not respected enough. In professional narrative the message to be told is that one always has to move forward. Instrumental narrative criticizes the management about not taking care of the employees. In the chameleon narrative, autonomy and freedom are the central elements.

The second dimension describes different relationships between the individual and the organization, which can be characterized as a) close, b) selective, in the sense of belonging to certain groups only, or c) estranged. In nostalgic narrative the relationship to organization is very close and in fact in narrative there are comments which seem to give feedback to younger employees for being too passive. In professional narrative the management is mentioned several times and lot of solidarity is proven to them. In instrumental narrative the atmosphere is estrangement because of the ‘wrong decisions’ done in company. The chameleon narrative emphasizes individuality.

The third dimension might be called the “power dimension”, because it seems to relate essentially to the way in which authority relationships are portrayed in the narratives. Beech (2000) calls these the ‘causal factors’. This third dimension is related to the assumption of how things work in the organization, e.g. who is seen as a significant actor or participant. This is important in that it is linked to social issues and the power structure. It is also a reflection of whether the management is seen as being free to make decisions within the organization or whether operations are directed by technology, the competition, a public authority, or another such instance. According to nostalgic narrative the real decision-making happens if ‘grey masses’ are for them. By that the narrative refers to unofficial organization. The professional narrative highlights the central role of management and the official organization structure. The instrumental narrative admits that management does the decisions thought is not committed to those decisions. The chameleon narrative highlights individuality and everyone’s own decisions.

The fourth dimension, the effectiveness of actions, relates to the extent to which the narratives reflect a belief in the narrator’s own possibilities to affect what happens. Naturally, this is also related to the moral of the story and the power structures. According to nostalgic narrative, professional narrative and chameleon narrative employees are actors in an organization. Only instrumental narrative does not seem to have any active role within the company.

The fifth dimension is time orientation, which is particularly clear in data. Some interviewees are clearly focused on the past, others on the present and some on the future. The sixth dimension, narrative tone, describes the dominant mood in the narrative.

The seventh dimension refers to the way organization is presented in different narratives. In the first narrative, the company is constructed as a family all members of which have their obligations and rights. In the second narrative, the

organization is seen as a productive unit that produces certain goods and services, and where the relations between the employees and the organization are contractual. In the third narrative, the organization is seen as exploitative, with no obligations to the employee. In the fourth narrative, the organization is seen as a stage on which a drama is acted out, in which everyone has their own role.

The final eighth dimension, commitment, describes to what degree an individual is orienting his or her attention and resources towards the organization, their own career, or their family. Commitment to the organization is most obvious in the first narrative. There is also the hope of being able to change others' attitudes to work. In the second narrative there is also commitment, but it has different tone. In narrative two it is objective, business-like and there is no personal relationship to the company. In the third narrative, there is no commitment but there is a sense of longing for commitment. In the last narrative there may be commitment but it is commitment to one's own career.

This classification of narrative dimensions describes the organizational and work culture from different points of view. The styles are indicative of the different kinds of relationships which can form between the individual and an organization. The first narrative strongly emphasizes community spirit and the placing of the organization's interests ahead of the individual's. The desired situation is a kind of ideological family unit, in which everyone acts for the common good without separate agreements needed in each instance. The first narrative differentiates between new and older employees and tries to get new recruits to commit to the company as strongly as the narrator once did. The first narrative is characterized by emphasizing the importance of work. The second style – the Business Speech – represents professional leadership, in which more attention is paid to streamlining processes and focusing on customers than on changing people's minds. The relationship between the organization and the individual is seen as professional and based on agreements. The instrumental narrative, on the other hand, is not committed to anything and does not fight against the above cultures but rather pulls back from them. It is a style in which people can take shelter if they cannot feel at home in either of the major narratives.

People cannot be classified according to just one of these styles, however. Each person uses different styles in their narratives. The styles are indicative of the different kinds of relationships which can form between the individual and an organization.

The professional leadership and entrepreneurship discourses, on the other hand, can be seen as opposed and as fighting for supremacy within an organization. Professional leadership wants to determine leaders for each process and define each person's duties and responsibilities. The culture of entrepreneurship, on the other hand, wants the power to remain with the 'grey masses' – the people's own network, where authority is not determined officially but can be used by the strongest player when needed. The professional leadership culture sees the individual as an employee, with whom agreements can be made regarding tasks and their completion. In the entrepreneurship culture, the individual is seen as a family member who is committed to his job and gives his all without limiting his work to specific days or times.

According to the social constructionist view, the self is redefined as no longer an essence in itself, but as relational. In traditional communities relationships were face-to-face and continuous. An individual's sense of identity was stable and alternatives were not considered. In today's world, however, the organizational environment in which an individual works is central for shaping identity. It determines what form commitment takes and the identities that are built by those working there. At the same time, there seems to be a clear transition to a new form of work. People have different contexts for identity building outside of work, although the work environment is still important. In the corporate context, it is desirable for individuals to be hard working, committed and successful. The place of employment is not a prison and staff are free to leave, but if they do, a similar reality faces them in their new place of work.

6.4 Four different identities

To be able to answer the research question it is useful to examine what kind of identity is linked to each narrative. In this section, therefore, the analysis of the different identity constructions is deepened. In the table below, an overview is given of the kinds of identity that can be associated with the different narratives.

Table 9. Characteristic identity for each narrative type.

	1. Nostalgic narrative	2. Professional narrative	3. Instrumental narrative	4. Chameleon narrative
Identity	Charge taker	Forward mover	Paralyzed	Adventurer

6.4.1 Charge taker

The nostalgic narrative is regressive. It becomes increasingly negative over time and ends badly, even tragically. The discourse emphasizes the respect for the skills of days gone by, the importance of hard work and the product developer's role. Those elements, which are reflections of shared values, form a particularly strong theme in this narrative.

The charge taker has shouldered responsibility for operations since the company was founded and is used to looking after a broad spectrum of issues. He finds it hard to accept the ways of working brought on by the growth of the company, and he resents the presence of professional managers who, to the charge taker, represent a kind of lack of spirit or soullessness. The charge taker approaches all tasks with complete vigor and expects the same intensity from others. He is frustrated and annoyed by what he feels is other people's limiting approach to work.

In nostalgic narrative, several features of identity came up. In the following, elements of the narrative relative to identity will be discussed further and illustrated with quotations from the text.

In nostalgic narrative, the speaker frequently refers to people in the plural, giving an impression of strong socialization.

We didn't have time to look at the time. This means literally that they obviously were really busy. But we could also understand it like a message to the listener (i.e. myself as the interviewer) that nowadays employees are too particular about the time they use for work. Quite likely, in this statement there is also implicit the message that people are leaving the office too early.

...9 crazy individuals who left Nokia... They are presented as crazy but there is also a hidden meaning in this sentence. It gives an impression that they were brave and fearless.

None gave in...everyone did their best. They are presented as hard working and always doing their best. This is told in a nostalgic tone, and so it also gives an idea that this is not the situation anymore in the company.

We didn't have many alternatives: we all knew that if we don't do our work properly, there will be no work to do. From this sentence one can understand that they were really hard working. But that was because they did not have many alternatives. Maybe it also has the meaning that today employees have too many alternatives and that is for this reason that they do not do their work properly. One could also assume that this is a message directed at the chameleon identity.

Responsibility was a big word back then. Responsibility is illustrated as a one part of identity. This is a central issue in this narrative. For this speaker and this narrative, responsibility is the most important dimension in working life.

We all knew each other and we were all prepared to do our best for each other. ‘We’ and ‘we all’ is repeated often. That gives an impression of strong unity and a shared identity. There are frequent allusions in the narrative to this shared identity.

We all had similar educational backgrounds as Bachelors of Engineering or Masters of Science. We also had a similar sense of humor. We were a small enough group to fit into one room comfortably.

The CEO was a Master of Science in engineering, too, and he went around doing the selling while the rest of us worked on product development. We had one secretary who took care of all administrative tasks.

The narrative also tells the story of a company’s growth and how the identity of everyone (or most people) in the company has changed over time.

As the company grew, though, the atmosphere declined. The CEO no longer had time to have coffee with us. Then with the merger the community spirit was lost completely and we got to a situation in which money was the most important factor.

Growth is seen as negative, because it means a shift away from the ‘family’ ideal of the company. The change is seen very emotionally.

It is as if our big family had started to crumble

At the end of the narrative, there seems to be a shift towards a possible new identity, in which the role of the company might lose in significance or, alternatively, identity construction is continued in another organization.

To sum up the first narrative:

1. Start-up phase: one big family
2. Own identity based on belonging to this family
3. Family becomes a business
4. Work loses its significance
5. Search for new identity

6.4.2 Forward mover

Professional narrative can be seen as describing the progression of a personal career. It starts from the time of studying engineering and ends up with a managerial role, which is quite common according to this narrative.

Our Master of Science degrees should prepare us better for leadership tasks, because a large proportion of us end up in managerial roles.

In this narrative engineering expertise is seen as having superior value. The fact that an individual maintains engineering expertise even after moving into managerial positions is appreciated, and engineering knowledge is seen as worth keeping up.

Unfortunately I cannot keep my technical skills quite up to date and I sometimes worry about that. On the other hand, the team members will still come to me to ask about technical issues so I suppose it means I still understand some things.

The forward mover approaches problems as challenges and solves them determinedly. He speaks openly about the difficult situation within the company and the problems of motivation and team-building.

After redundancies have been announced it is difficult to get people to work as a team and to believe in this kind of entrepreneurship and presence. Many people wondered what was going on before leaving for their summer holidays.

He understands business and inevitable changes and does not go against them.

Organizational changes are an inevitable part of modern life, so I don't understand why people make things so complicated.

He is focused on the future, and although his narrative reflects the change from the old to the new narrative, he has processed it independently to some extent, and has succeeded in adapting to the new narrative. It was just another problem for him to overcome.

The second narrative is positive, infused with a sense of success. It implies that whatever difficulties may come up, they can be overcome. However, no major difficulties are presented in the narrative. In that sense it is not a heroic story in which obstacles are overcome time and again; it is a positive tale in which nothing major and life-changing has happened but things have gone well until now. The narrator is an active person who can effect changes and action.

To sum up the second narrative:

1. Critique of student days: not enough leadership training
2. Progress to management position at just the right time
3. Organizational changes have been positive and essential
4. Those who feel there is no progress must look in the mirror
5. Sackings/redundancies were challenging: difficult to motivate people after that
6. The future is full of opportunities

The second narrative is a clear coming-of-age story, where an engineering student progresses through challenging work situations to become a future leader with know-how on the global market.

6.4.3 Paralyzed identity

The third narrative is stuck in the present moment. Its tone is stationary. It could be called tragic. The narrative starts with complaints about decisions made in the company. The identity is not referred to explicitly, and the impression is one of passivity. The 'we' in this narrative refers to the group of younger employees.

In this situation we have adopted the attitude that this is just a job. We have a few years' work experience behind us and all in all this has been quite a disappointment.

In this narrative, career targets and the focus of work have changed. The narrative tells how work in the ICT sector once was seen as being full of opportunities and offering a splendid career. But faced with a different reality, people have adjusted their expectations.

I'm no longer after a brilliant career in ICT; now I'll be happy with a secure and regular job.

The paralyzed persona is in a stagnant state. Persons with this kind of identity lack enthusiasm for or interest in solving problems; they are withdrawn and unwilling even to work on their own identity. Although aware of the shared rules at work, they have been struck so violently by everyday reality that work has just become a source of income.

I haven't looked at getting a job elsewhere, because it wouldn't make any sense to leave now. We just keep fearfully following the company's results and sales. It is really stressful to have to be so alert all the time, even if it doesn't help at all.

To sum up the third narrative:

1. Graduating with high expectations
2. Everything has got worse at work
3. Sackings/redundancies came at the wrong time
4. I adopted the attitude that this is “just a job”
5. New leaders are recruited and paid too much
6. Designers/architects are not paid enough
7. I would like a secure job

All in all, the third narrative is a tragic story of worsening terms of employment and of disillusionment in work and the organization.

6.4.4 Adventurer

The identity played out in this narrative can be described as that of an adventurer. The adventurer is always ready to tackle a new undertaking. He is less interested in the current adventure, however, than the next one. He is an extreme example of a constantly changing identity. Work forms a central part of his identity, to the extent that we could ask what his identity would be without it. He is always ready to make a move and he is aware of his strengths.

In this story, power and status are highlighted. Individuality and personal freedom are similarly seen as significant. There is the idea that people want to learn and achieve more all the time. This is a typical ICT story, with people moving from one place to another without commitment to anything but their own career.

Now I just waiting for the next moves at the company, whether they give me a promotion or I might be leaving. I have been thinking what I can do best and that is the managing of business operations. So, I can go to any place and make their business grow.

He or she is very target orientated and appreciates hard work and success. A person with this identity is aware that success does not come without sacrifices.

But we are here to do business so this is no place for cry. You can choose your career as a social worker if you want to take care of the losers. Just don't bother us.

He or she works very diligently but has recently tried to limit that by keeping weekends free. This brings some humanity to his identity.

At Nokia I worked 14 hours per day and it is about the same I do here. But I keep weekends off, last weekend I actually came here but it is not usual.

Nevertheless, he or she seems to regard work as an adventure, and despite all the changes and the heavy workload he or she does not seem to experience stress.

I usually say to young people that do not take this too seriously, this is just work. I do not mean that they would not need to do their best. They surely have to. I mean by that this is a great adventure, a great chance to learn something new and do remarkable things with technology and services.

To sum up the fourth narrative:

1. Began working in ICT with hopes of a good salary
2. Worked at Nokia and travelled a lot
3. Got fed up of travelling and came to work here
4. Experience from Nokia was beneficial in salary negotiations
5. Was also interviewed by the Technical Research Centre of Finland
6. It wasn't for me, though
7. Now I expect to be promoted or I'll go somewhere else
8. Have never stayed at one job for more than two years

The fourth narrative is the story of a professional on the move who has internalized change to such an extent that he cannot even stop for a moment but is always considering the next move.

The narratives are very different and each has its own plot. Some narratives are more a history of the whole organization, while others focus more on the individual's work and identity. This springs from the background of the employees in the organization; those with a longer history in the company tell the story of the organization, placing their own story within it. Those who have come in from the outside tell their own career narratives, focusing on that.

None of these characters is ideally suited to the post-bureaucratic organization, but stories 2 and 4 perhaps contain the most appropriate features. Narrative 1 reflects a time that has passed, while the character in narrative 3 is too passive.

In this chapter I have made different kinds of analysis of narratives. To conclude I present the main results of this chapter in next table.

Table 10. Features of narratives 1 to 4.

	1. Nostalgic narrative	2. Professional narrative	3. Instrumental narrative	4. Chameleon narrative
Clearness of plot	Clear	Quite clear	Quite unclear	Unclear
Coherence	Coherent	Coherent	Weak	Weak
Character	responsible, hard working	realist, positive	unsocial, high technical skills	ambitious, flexible
Clarity of character	Clear	Clear	Quite unclear	Unclear
Identity produced	Charge taker	Forward mover	Paralyzed	Adventurer

The first narrative has a clear plot. It tells the story of the whole organization’s changes and how as a consequence employees must find a new identity.

The second story is more personal, to some extent a career narrative. It focuses on describing the employee’s career development and is crystallized in the ultimate idea that “we each make our own fortune”. In other words, opportunities exist for each of us, we must just seize them.

The third narrative has a plot, but it seems to be more of a description of a difficult work situation than an actual identity narrative. The narrative’s time frame is brief and the narrator focuses on criticizing the present and complaining about disappointments. This is not to suggest that a narrative must have a long time frame; it is perfectly possible to focus on a brief moment in time.

The fourth narrative seems to describe a chameleon, one who never stops changing places and always approaches tasks in different ways. The narrative could be taken to mean that the identity has not yet been found; that this character is still at the beginning of the “journey”, which will take shape in time.

As indicated in the discussion, a differentiating factor in the narratives is the age of the respondents. In the following sections this aspect is explored further.

6.5 From the past into the 21st century

A large part of the staff consists of men who grew up on farms. In a way, they are stuck between two narratives – a long-lasting, constant life narrative they have been growing since childhood, and a relatively short and hectic working life narrative. In the stories told by the interviewees, the past and the present are in conflict, which leads the people to worry, perhaps pointlessly, over things that are not within their power to resolve (such as the market).

The old rural narrative involves the notion that the farmer is independently in charge of the farm, and the results of his handiwork are directly proportionate to how big the input was. Farmers would work hard, often alone, according to traditional principles of hard toil and perseverance. Hard work was usually rewarded, or it was at least evident if duties had been neglected. The nature of the work stayed the same from one year to the next, from father to son. Skills were gained with age; old people had more knowledge than youngsters, and their knowledge was respected. Hard work was valued highly, and because the work was similar from year to year, things learnt as a child were applicable in old age. In the Finnish ICT sector, these basic work principles were applied up until the 1990s. There were few major changes, and a big company like Nokia was a fairly reliable customer for a small business. It was enough to work hard and do your best, and you could rely on the company's products finding buyers. Of course teamwork existed even then, but networking, "knowing the right people", and marketing were not the essential dimensions; the work consisted mainly of product development and software programming, and, as is evident in the narratives, these are still considered to be 'real work' by the older employees.

The new narrative is different, and it can be said to have emerged in the twenty-first century. In it, employees don't work alone but in constant interaction with others. Success no longer depends on how hard you work; instead you either get it or you don't, and its causes and backgrounds are hard for individuals to comprehend. The work is not constant but changes all the time, while people shift from one job to another. The new narrative is also characterized by the fact that young people know some things better than their older colleagues, i.e. age does not necessarily garner the appreciation it has in the old narrative. Instead of hard work the most important thing is who you know and how networked you are. Work consists of continuous learning where you cannot stand still; individuals must continuously develop.

The world of work has changed radically, and old rules no longer apply. Companies talk less about jobs in the traditional sense, and more about projects and initiatives involving people. The same person can be involved in several projects, being a leader in some and a subordinate in others. The job field is difficult to understand, and careers do not progress along traditional routes. Thus, older employees can metaphorically be seen to have traversed a long journey during their lives. Unlike younger employees, they have to come to terms with a change of narrative in the course of their work history.

Employees work has changed emergently and that has happened in 2000's. The rules also in ICT-sector have followed the rules of agricultural work before the change of decade. This means that older employees Narratives 1 and 2 are constructed from older employee narratives and they seem to have different attitude to the work than the younger ones.

Table 11. The old and new narrative of work in the organizational context.

Old narrative	New narrative
Lonely grind	Continuous interaction
Diligence was rewarded	Success depends on the markets
Same kind of work	Constantly changing job descriptions
Knowledge is accumulated with age	Youngsters know some things better
Hard work is the most important factor	Your connections are the most important factor
What you learn young, you can always use later	Continuous learning

Older employees identify a conflict between the present and their “country bumpkin” past; even in the ICT industry, the old norms used to apply at work and have only changed in recent years in the company in which the interviews were conducted, the basic rules and operating methods have changed only in the twenty-first century. The youngest employees did not start until after that, so they have only heard about the changes from other people’s stories. The company’s old history will live on for a long time, however, in the stories people tell and in the shared narratives that merge from their stories..

It could be said that the older employees build their narrative identity through stories, and that they succeed in doing this. This skill may be transferred to younger employees through the actual stories. They hear and repeat the stories and, through narrativity, they learn to discern events and come to understand their background and history. But whereas older employees have discontinuity within their work history, from country bumpkin to work in a constantly changing environment, younger employees do not have this kind of history and therefore more easily accept the new rules of working life.

Another possible conclusion is that for younger employees work is not as important a part of identity, which would explain why they do not construct stories of work fluently. For them, hobbies or other aspects of life may be more important, weakening their relationship to work and the company compared to older employees.

6.6 Discussion of the empirical findings

This section aims to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. Each research question is addressed in turn in a separate section (6.6.1. and 6.6.2.). When discussing the study's managerial implications and theoretical contribution, the results for both research questions are presented together.

6.6.1 *The relationship between the individual and the organization*

The first research question was: *“How is the relationship between an individual and an organization constructed in the ICT sector?”* Of the narratives identified in this study, only some indicate a strong identification with the organization, but that they all indicate identification with values of one kind or another. Work is an important source of identity in the narratives, but the employees also use resources derived from their families, their hobbies, studies, etc. The employees took a surprisingly realistic approach to their work ‘It’s just a job’, and were satisfied with this. Also, no clear professional identity could be identified in the material. Although their shared values make reference to their profession, these were not very clearly in view. The values could be ascribed to any work community, and not especially to engineers.

Later, though, I realized that the various narratives I had constructed on the basis of my interviews had different tones. When I adapted and classified the narratives and narrative styles according to Beech’s (2000) classification, a more detailed picture emerged. The first narrative was the story of the organization as a family. The second narrative involved the culture of bureaucratic or professional leadership, which favors an efficiently organized entity, where specific contracts have been made regarding people’s tasks and responsibilities. The third narrative represented alienation from the company’s culture and subcultures, as well as from any professional cultures. The fourth narrative is focused on the individual.

The relationship between the individual and the organization was formed differently in each narrative. The first narrative included the need to link the individual tightly to the organization and to create a shared family culture within the organization. The second narrative represented a contractual culture: agreements are made with the company regarding work input and output, and these agreements are adhered to. This was related with making sure that what had been agreed was actually done. The third narrative represented alienation: the organization was seen mainly as a source of pay, and the employee’s work input

was viewed as an input for which monetary compensation is to be received. In the fourth narrative, the employee had a personal rather than a collective relationship with the employer, which created a new dependence that becomes constitutive of the identity and selfhood (Deetz 1992; Wilmott 1990). Hence, the analysis resulted in four separate identity narratives. As can be seen in Table 12, the relationship between the individual and the organization vary in each of the identity narratives. This is reflected in how the organization is described in each narrative (for the complete table, see table 8).

Table 12. The relationship between the individual and the organization in the four narratives.

	1.Nostalgic narrative	2.Professional narrative	3.Instrumental narrative	4. Chameleon narrative
Organization	Family	Factory	Exploiter	Theatre
Commitment	Organization	Own career	Commitment to family	Own career

These findings are in line with Child and McGrath’s (2001) opinion that the relationship between the individual and the organization is different in a flexible organization. The present study adds a new perspective to this view by demonstrating that the relationship is different for each individual. Whereas in a bureaucracy the relationship may be standardized to the point that there are few deviations, it seems that flexible organizations provide the option of different kinds of relationships. It is important to remember that the narratives describe different relationships rather than people; different people can easily shift between the four narratives and incorporate individual elements of these stories into their own life.

It is this aspect that represents the wealth of these narratives. They describe the various viewpoints that coexist and interweave in the organization at any time. The organization I studied did not have a strong overarching culture, but rather several separate subcultures and cultural groupings, each with its own reality and views of the past, present and future. The narratives do not correspond directly to specific subcultures, because none of these can be definitively placed under one particular style classification. Nevertheless, the narratives reflect that the organization contains various cultural groupings and a degree of diversity. A constant struggle goes on within the company between the different discourses, particularly the entrepreneurship and professional leadership narratives. The

concept of entrepreneurship contains the idea that working is not about slaving away for the sake of a salary, but that it is rather a way of fulfilling one's identity. Entrepreneurship requires a high degree of independence and a positive and future-oriented outlook on life.

6.6.2 Role of narratives in identity construction

The second research question was “*What is the role of narratives in identity construction in a post-bureaucratic organizational context?*”

According to the narrative psychologists Gergen & Gergen (1998), identity can be seen as a narrative construction. Narrative identity can also be described as a narrative we are constantly retelling as regards to who we are (see Heikkinen 2001). In this study, two working life narratives were identified within the organization: an old narrative and a new narrative (see Table 11).

Although the identity stories are not individual, but a composite of individual stories, the narrative construction of identity splits the community in the case organization into two categories: an “older generation” that draws on a holistic narrative based on biographical history and social background (from country to city; from small business to international company); and a “young generation” that leans towards scattered descriptions from the outside in. The older employees tell more coherent stories, in which their country-to-city-style narrative plays a major part. The younger employees produce fragmented, semi-narrative descriptions.

According to Parker (1997), in developing an identity in organizational settings, individuals actively use visible ‘markers of difference’ – such as age, occupation, tasks performed, or spatial location – as identity materials with which to establish a sense of ‘sameness’ with some and ‘difference’ from others. When studying engineers, Parker (2000) identified differences between generations regarding attitudes towards technology and work experience. Parker (2000) also notes that in his study the dominant theme within an older generational identity was the idea that the organization was currently in danger of throwing away its past (its real mission). Also in the present study the older employees were worried about the past being forgotten. Parker describes the older *generation's nostalgia* for the time when things were more certain, when the organization produced quality products or services for grateful customers and really cared about quality (cf. Parker 2000: 197). In the present study, nostalgia is also present in the older generation's talk but it is more focused on the attitude to work. Nostalgia has

occasionally been mentioned in the literature before (Gabriel 1993; Anthony 1994). Parker (2000) studied three organizations, and in all cases it was as if the older members felt that they were happier in the old days, feeling that things may have been hard before, but that there was pride in a job well done and that there used to be a sense of community (Parker 2000: 198). There are yet other similarities between Parker's study and the present research. In Parker's study the older generations were keen on stressing that their years of experience were an asset that could not be gained through studies or shorter tenure within the organization (Parker 2000: 196.) In the present study many in the older generation had dropped out of their studies after starting to work, and many of them still had not graduated. Hence, they stressed learning from experience as an important asset. But the results also show differences. At Tekno, younger employees do not juxtapose their identity against the older identity. Instead, they direct their criticism at the organization and upper management. Some seem to be more interested in their own career than in the views of the older generation. This is in contrast to Parker who argues that the appeal of participants of an organization to generational differences is one way of classifying the identity of self and other (Parker 2000).

Down and Reveley (2004) have asked for more research to be conducted on generational differences. They studied how entrepreneurial identity is shaped by generational encounters within the context of a small organization. Their study bears some similarities to the case of Tekno. At Tekno, most members of the *older generation have created an entrepreneurial identity*, which is probably one of the reasons why they contrast themselves with the 'lazy' younger generation. However, in the case of Tekno, the younger generation had not developed an entrepreneurial identity. In Down and Reveley (2004), the situation was different because the younger generation had also created an entrepreneurial identity, and the younger members of the organization were criticizing the older generation for their 'old fashioned' ways of doing business.

At Tekno, *older employees showed themselves to be more capable of constructing identity narratives*, which is partly due to the fact that they have a longer work history, and have experience in talking about and reflecting on the changes in their work environment. At the same time, the fragmented post-bureaucratic environment at Tekno presents a problem for older employees in their identity construction. At the least, they criticize the present situation and think back with nostalgia. Younger employees, on the other hand, are not as skilled in constructing their identity, which might lead to a lack of ontological

security (Giddens 1991). It is also possible that they have not found their place at work hence work is not that as important a part in their identity construction. In this case, the situation should change with the passage of time.

The present study provides evidence of narrativity supporting the construction of identity in a post-bureaucratic organization. A central result of this study is that older employees are more capable of constructing their narrative identities. They also have a stronger relationship to the organization. Narrativity can be seen as a tool for the individual in constructing his or her identity. This is a process that takes place in a social context. Identity is not a private issue of the individual, but a social process. Thus, in the organizational context, it is also a question of leadership. Narratives help us put our thoughts, feelings and personal views into words, thereby enabling us to construct reality. In the organizational context, therefore, the question is how well this process is supported by leaders and to what extent they are qualified to do so.

7 Summary and Conclusions

In this study, I have examined the construction of identities in relation to an organization in the ICT context. The purpose of the study was to research whether identity construction is possible in the context of a post-bureaucratic organization (cf. Sennett 1998). The research questions were “How is the relationship between an individual and an organization constructed in the ICT-sector?” and “What is the role of narratives in identity construction in a post-bureaucratic organizational context?”

In the following, the findings of the study as they emerged during the research process will be summarized and the findings related to other studies. This will be accompanied by a critical evaluation of the research methodology and implementation. Based on this, suggestions will be made for further research.

The thesis started with an introduction describing the aim of the study, the research question and the structure of the project. The relationship between the individual and the organization is a central factor in this study and the relationship is conceptualized differently in different theories. Theories starting with Taylorism and ending with post-bureaucracy and the flexible organization are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Taylorism tried to separate the worker’s personality from the work, so that each work phase could be controlled and each employee was replaceable. The aim of an organization’s efforts was therefore to create a production process whose efficiency was constant. In today’s world of work, personality is an essential part of work, and often a major criterion in terms of recruitment. At the same time, the lines between the jobs of managers and employees have become blurred. Today, everyone is a boss and an expert to a certain extent. Everything is presented as being down to the individual; one can only blame one’s self and one always has to try harder (Bauman 2002). In this context, social interaction intensifies: the constant rebuilding of identity in the context of the work community and the organization. Workers can no longer shelter behind reliable constant professional roles. Work is carried out increasingly as a unique person, with the person’s personality being involved, always subject to social pressures. Work, therefore, has become a larger part of life, as it can no longer be limited to take place, e.g. between the hours of 8 AM and 4 PM. Everyone has to participate as an individual.

This study relies on identity theories. In the present study theories relating to identity are represented beginning with traditional concepts of identity and ending

with the constructionist view of identity as a process, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. In this chapter I present my own understanding of identity, as it emerged during the research process. Identity is understood as a process of becoming, which means that there is no stable or uniform identity. Identity is socially constructed, hence everyone has the possibility of choice and everyone's identity is transformable. People tell stories as well as hear stories, and use them to construct a shared reality. Cultural narratives are diverse and changing; we select appropriate ones and adjust them to be part of our own narratives. However, we are not totally free in selecting narratives, we can select only available ones and there is always the element of power present.

Narrativity was chosen as a tool to examine identity in this study. Chapter 4 discussed narrativity as used in identity research and in the form of narrative knowledge, and defined what is understood by narrativity in this study. I see the narrative perspective as an interpretation or a way of constructing meaning and making the world understandable. Finally, Chapter 4 summarized the links between identity and narrative, ending with questions regarding narrative identity in a post-bureaucracy.

My interest in the construction of identity was inspired by Sennett's (1998) question: *How can a human being develop a narrative identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments?* To address this question, in-depth interviews were conducted with engineers in an ICT company. From these interviews four different identity narratives emerged. These were analyzed from a variety of angles to find out how narrative identity is constructed.

Sennett argued that the relationship between the individual and the organization has changed and that we have reached a point where commitment and trust are no longer present. *The present study adds a new perspective to this view by demonstrating that the relationship with the organization is not fixed, and that identities are not constructed in relation to the organization's values and ideals.* Although there is a central element in each identity construction; careers, institutions, competence and working life, a specific organization does not take center stage.

Another conclusion of this research is that there is no evident professional identity. People seem to be constantly in motion, without strong commitment to any specific social category. Perhaps the key findings of the present research are the generational differences observed. *The older engineers construct more coherent narrative identities, which makes them feel more secure.* On the other hand, these more coherent narrative identities at times developed into a problem,

because of the contrast between their stable narrative and the fragmented environment in which they had to operate. The younger employees do not construct a coherent identity. That seems to be a problem for some but others are completely happy with their situation.

The older employees are more committed to their work and especially to the organization. The younger employees were either committed to future career possibilities, or were worried about their job security. They were in a different position than the older engineers as regards access to strategies or visions. They only had access to official information, while older employees had more access to informal information because of their personal contacts within the organization. The rules of working life have changed since the 1990s. Work does not seem to be such an important part of life anymore as it was before the turn of the millennium.

Narrative identity can be described as something that is constantly in search of coherence and consistency. However, if we think of identity as a process of becoming, it might be reasonable that coherency is not the issue anymore: coherency might belong to the 'old narrative of work'. Nevertheless, narrativity has a place in organizations, since it can provide opportunities for younger employees to choose from amongst different stories in constructing their own identities. If people are constantly involved in continuous process of becoming, the telling and retelling of events is necessary in enabling the construction of identities.

7.1 The theoretical contribution of the study

To the best of my knowledge, identity construction in a post-bureaucratic organizational context has not been investigated before using narrative methods. Hence, this study provides important, up-to-date information, and points to several interesting topics for further research.

Sennett (1998) proposes that the emergence of "flexible capitalism" is having increasingly negative effects on the ability of people to find cohesion and narrative in their lives. Although he provides numerous examples to illustrate his thesis, a deeper analysis of some specific context was missing from his work. The intent of the present research was to delve more deeply into a post-bureaucratic organizational context, which is generally seen as flexible. For this purpose, I chose narrative analysis and the coherency of identities as the particular focus of the study.

In his work, Sennett (1998) draws attention to generational differences. According to his study, the older generation is better equipped to produce narratives of their lives. Sennett (1998) also states that commitment requires lasting relationships.

“No long term” is a principle which corrodes trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment. Trust can, of course, be a purely formal matter, as when people agree to a business deal or rely on another to observe the rules in a game. But usually deeper experiences of trust are more informal, as when people learn on whom they can rely when given a difficult or impossible task. Such social bonds take time to develop, slowly rooting into the cracks and crevices of institutions. (Sennett 1998: 24)

The present study supports both ideas: older employees produce more coherent identity stories and appear to be more committed to the organization. One finding of the present study is that older engineers have more personal relationships with management and thus they participate more in conversations than younger staff members. They call their networks within the organization ‘grey eminence’. By that they seem to mean that they know whom to rely on in a difficult situation, and that their strong personal contacts to those people are such that they need not worry about losing their jobs. The younger engineers criticize the managers for being distant and e.g. not being open about the direction of where the company is going. This makes them feel like outsiders and therefore lessens their commitment.

Sennett (1998) writes about the corrosion of character. He describes character as the ethical value we place on our own desires and on our relations to others. To develop character, one must on occasion express emotion, break out of routine, and shape one’s own biography through personal acts of will. He describes that in the new capitalism, character also means the capacity of letting go of one’s past and to face fragmentation with confidence. This may be reflected in the present study in the two different narratives based on the responses of younger employees: the instrumental and the chameleon narratives. In the first one, disappointment is expressed that there is no place for shaping one’s own biography at work. However, interviewees are finding a place for that in their personal lives. The chameleon narrative is the identity story of someone who holds all the keys to their life in their own hands. Thus, the situation may not be as negative as Sennett suggests, although some people may need more support in their identity construction in a changing environment.

If the fragmentation extended to all sectors of life there would be reason to worry about corrosion of character. The present study suggests that other aspects of life than work are becoming more central. Sennett's study is based on conditions in the United States, which differs greatly both culturally and economically from the Nordic countries. *At Tekno, younger employees express commitment to their careers and their co-workers or, alternatively, receive satisfaction from doing a good job.* There would be more reason for concern if the constant change affected all aspects of life. However, as it only concerns work, it seems reasonable that people are not as committed to the organization as before.

Sennett (1998) also argues that the work ethic has changed from one generation to another. The work ethic asserts the self-disciplined use of one's time and the value of delayed gratification (Sennett 1998). The older generations in the ICT field seem to work hard and to be ready to wait for results. For younger staff it does not make sense to work long and hard since they might be moving on.

However, it is worth mentioning that the age difference between these two 'generations' is not more than ten years, i.e. not even a full generation. On the other hand, it could also be said that ten years does actually mean one generation in the ICT field, because of the rapid rate of change.

According to Sennett (1998), older, experienced employees tend to be more judgmental of their superiors than employees who are just starting out. This may well reflect the experience of managers in an organization. In the present study, however, with the narrative related to an outsider, the younger staff was more critical than the older staff. Another characteristic linked to age is flexibility. In Sennett's (1998) view, flexibility equals youth and rigidity equals age. When flexibility is seen as positive, young age is appreciated. However, there might also be a link to identity. When people are unsure as to 'who they are', they might be more willing to follow the lead of others in forming their opinions, which might be interpreted as flexibility.

The impact of generational differences within organizations is becoming an area of interest in organizational studies (Down & Reveley 2004, Parker 2000, Wenger 1998). Down and Reveley (2004) point out that younger people assert their identities by juxtaposing themselves against the dull routine of the 'old farts'. In the present study, the older employees supported their hard working identity by questioning the motivation and diligence of the 'youngsters'. The older crowd was also disappointed at the lack of ambition on the part of the younger employees. For their part, younger employees at Tekno do not juxtapose their current identity against their older identities. Instead they criticize the

organization and the upper management for their actions. Others seem to be more interested in their own career than in the thoughts of the older generation. One could also argue that the younger employees are continuously processing their identities, so that the identities are not consistent or stable.

In the present study, the main result is that narration varies between generations. When examining the identity narratives I found that the narratives of younger employees were not as consistent as the stories of the older employees. It is possible that they are more committed to other aspects of life than to work (and so their stories of their hobbies or family might be more consistent) but it is also possible that identities generally are not that consistent anymore. From an identity theory point of view, Beech and McInnes (2005) question the consistency of identity and suggest that both the self and others are in a dynamic identity-constructing relationship. In this process narrativity could be seen as a tool for an individual to construct his or her identity.

Sennett (1998) argues that people are having difficulty feeling that what they do each day is a cumulative experience, something that will lead them to new challenges and new levels of accomplishment in a predictable order that will allow them to have closure and meaning in their lives. This lack of meaning creates characteristics and reactions that challenge our notions of happiness. By contrast, in the present study when reading the narratives, it is obvious that at least some stories are positive.

Identity-building is a process with an uncertain ending. According to Czarniawska (1997), it is important for people to participate in constructing their own stories rather than having them forced upon them by organizations or other people. Maintaining a humane dialogue requires open communication, which is not present in traditional, bureaucratic, top-down management. A post-bureaucratic organization allows for open dialogue in principle, but time and space need to be made for narration in this fragmented environment.

Another implication in terms of identity theory in a changed working environment is the increased sociability. Employees are constantly subjected to change as they are building their future together through dialogue. Very few have the opportunity of maintaining a certain “persona”, as identities are prone to constant change.

It seems that people should be able to maintain continuity and sameness throughout all this change. Coincidences and the fast pace of life cause a feeling of detachment, and it would be the role of managers to maintain continuity. With respect to Sennett’s (1998) questions, regarding whether commitment and trust-

building are possible in this fragmented world, this study offers some indication that it is, although this might require more personal relationships and interaction. Managers have internalized the customer-orientation philosophy, and customer relations are close, but the building of relationships with the organization's own employees is often on a routine level. From the point of view of an individual's identity construction, the narrative approach – by providing opportunities of looking at one's own life in terms of a narrative – might be able to provide consistency over time.

7.2 Managerial implications

Sennett (1998) was questioning the possibility of producing narrative identity stories in a fragmented world of work. A finding of the present study is that the *older engineers produce more coherent identity stories*. Their stories seem to make more sense in 'their old world'. Thus some of them have problems with the new rules of working life. The younger employees do not produce coherent identities. While some of them find it stressful, others seem to be happy with the situation. If we see identity as a process of becoming, we might give up on the requirement of the coherency and consistency of identities.

This study shows that in the *new narrative of work, commitment is weaker than in the old narrative of work*. While some of the older employees are still highly committed to the organization, the younger employees show greater commitment to their own career or to other aspects of life than work. The question from the point of view of the organization is whether commitment is desirable. Organizations today seem to appreciate flexibility first and foremost, and commitment may at times be at odds with total flexibility.

The evidence of the present study suggests that both flexibility and commitment are needed. For older employees it would be good to give up their attachment to the past and the strong link between the organization and the individual. The younger employees, on the other hand, need to find a certain degree of commitment also in the work context. Interestingly, even employees with big changes during their career were able to construct a narrative identity and tell a coherent story, which seemed to be stable. In fact, they really enjoyed telling their story, and it seemed that it was not the first time they were telling it. They probably had told the same story several times (to themselves, to others in the company, as well as in private life). It was remarkable that the *importance of the organization was quite limited* in some stories. This was the case particularly

in the stories where the person had shifted jobs several times. It seems that the people who told these stories are more committed to their careers and jobs than to the organization. This is made possible by the flexibility of the job market: other jobs are available, it is therefore not necessary to put up with monotony or otherwise unsatisfactory working conditions. In other narratives, however, the main content relates to commitment to the organization and the desire for the work community to be like a one big family.

Perhaps the key finding from the management point of view is that younger employees feel that management is distant. The younger employees should be part of planning the future. This would help them in their identity work. Younger staff would also need more personal relationships with managers. In practice this means that one manager cannot fulfill his or her leadership role for too many subordinates.

Older employees are criticizing younger employees for being lazy and showing a lack of commitment. If younger employees were more involved in the planning processes they would feel more a part of the organization, and find their own place.

Many organizational development methods have been exhausted and given up on because they have failed to produce the desired results. The knowledge and experience that exists within the organization is often not made use of in development; instead, ready-made models are brought in from the outside. Narratives can be used to share information in a concise and interesting way, and to build and develop the organization, as suggested by Aaltonen & Heikkilä (2003) and Czarniawska (1998).

In the past, narrativity has been used very little in organizational development in Finland. Some narrative projects have been set up, in which employees have been given the opportunity to describe their own performance. These projects were aimed at increasing job satisfaction and providing ways of coping with stress. The method applied in these projects is that of storytelling circles. Researchers have found that narratives help people to move away from handling things in emotional and blaming ways, towards more objective and constructive processing. There is as yet no scientific proof of whether narratives increase job satisfaction (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003). But as Kenneth and Mary Gergen propose, it is regarding the construction of the self in a social context that the use of narrative has much to offer (Gergen & Gergen 1988). Stories seem to enable others to understand one's point of view and to build a shared understanding. From this point of view narratives would have many uses for organizations.

A key point emerging from the findings of the present study relates to that once organizations stop being constant points of reference, people cannot build their identities in relation to the organization. Therefore, management must be more interactive and personal than before. In a company such as Tekno, which started out as a small group of people working closely together towards shared goals, older managers look nostalgically back to the old times when relations were close and interaction straightforward. In the current situation, characterized by rapid growth and globalization, leadership becomes more demanding as managers have to be able to shift into the role of coach, and to provide meaning and stability in a changing environment. It seems that internationalization changes the operational environment so much that it affects the organizational culture. In order to be able to respond quickly and flexibly to changes, more personal support on the individual level is needed. This means that managers cannot remain distant and, more specifically, that the number of subordinates that can reasonably be led by one person is limited.

Judging by the responses received from interviewees, in the case of most employees there is no need for control. They work because they enjoy their tasks; the challenge for management is to limit the working hours rather than exert control to ensure that tasks are completed. In other words, there is the risk of burnout if managers do not involve staff in looking for alternatives.

Humanity vs. productivity and change management is also a risk area requiring good leadership skills. It appears that employees need more human support and interaction for their identity building, i.e. they need to feel that they have a personal relationship with their managers. Currently, managers are seen as distant and hiding behind roles. Companies ask employees for simultaneous commitment and flexibility, while managers retreat further away from the employee level in having to battle complex issues. The sense of responsibility of employees will not develop without trust.

As the new work culture involves an emphasis on independence and a strong professional identity, both aspects of which are individual characteristics, it may seem that the work community is losing in importance. The names and the management of organizations change, organizations lose their significance, and there is a conception of the self-management of experts. On the basis of the outcomes of this study, that conception is incorrect. *People need to be managed, perhaps even more than before, because there is constant uncertainty.* At the same time, managers should become personally involved and increase reciprocity.

Organizations may not have the significance they once had, but the need for management is even bigger than before.

If it is true that the motivation to do a good job, or commitment to one's tasks and work role, is nowadays more important than commitment to the organization, this clearly represents a major challenge for management: skilled employees might easily leave the organization if they feel they are not respected.

Gabriel (2000: 240) notes that :

Unlike the café and the pub, the village square and the family table, organizations do not appear to be a natural habitat of storytelling – after all, most people in organizations are far too busy appearing to be able to engage in storytelling. Nor is trust, respect, and love among members of organization such as to encourage free and uninhibited narration. Moreover, stories in organizations compete against other narrativities, especially against information and data, but also against clichés, platitudes, acronyms, artefacts small and large, arguments, opinions, and so forth. In such an environment amidst the noisy din of facts, numbers, and images, the delicate, time-consuming discourse of storytelling is easily ignored or silenced. Few organization are spontaneous storytelling cultures. Yet, there is storytelling going on in organizations, and some organizational stories are good stories.By highlighting the untypical, the critical, and the extraordinary, stories give us access to what lies behind the normal and mundane.

Thus we can consider stories for something not that ordinary and at the same time a very powerful tool in understanding organizational culture or identities.

7.3 Limitations of the study

This study focuses on a very narrow setting: an R&D department in a rather small corporation. Narrative analysis was applied in this study, which has its own downsides. In writing narratives, the researcher has to take certain liberties and create his or her own reality to some degree. The interviewees' comments must be removed from their original context, which can cause their voices to be lost. It would be a significant drawback in this study if the interviewees themselves would not have experienced my narratives as credible; fortunately, this was not the case. While a case could be made for discourse analysis as the method of choice, narrativity turned out to be well suited in describing the relationship between the individual and an organization. I also feel that I was successful in

conducting my analysis without using a ready-made pattern, although to others this might seem a limitation.

The relationship between the individual and the organization was examined through four narratives constructed from the interview material I obtained at Tekno. The interviews were conducted using a narrative approach. In practice this means that I directed questions towards the past and the future to an equal degree. My questions were general in nature rather than particular, e.g., ‘Could you tell me about the time when you started working for the organization?’ I did not tell the interviewees that I was investigating the relationship between the individual and the organization, but rather that I was looking at organizational culture dimensions in general.

I have endeavored to be neutral in describing the results of my research. I do not wish to express an opinion as to whether the decisions made by the organization were sound or unsound, or whether I judge the narratives to be good stories or not. My aim is to describe identities as closely as possible as to how they are seen within the organization. Ultimately, though, the interpretation must be mine. Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that cultures change over time. I carried out these interviews in the spring of 2004, and the atmosphere at Tekno is likely to be different now than what it was then. If I carried out a new study now, it would perhaps be different.

Narrative research also runs the risk of fulfilling its own presuppositions (cf. e.g. Gabriel 2000). It is a challenge in any study to let the materials speak for themselves without too much steering from presuppositions towards assumed results. I trust that I have given enough room for the original materials to tell their story.

As I tried to conduct the interviews in such a way that the interviewees would have as much room as possible to tell their stories, I did not have many questions to ask. Clearly some people expected a more traditional interview technique, which may be why some interviews produced fewer results than others. Some people talked extensively and related long stories and these may have had a slightly disproportionately large impact on the conclusions of the study.

The interviews were carried out in 2004. It might be interesting to do the same study now and see if the stories now told are different, as well as how they differ. This will have to be another study.

7.4 Avenues for future research

This study focused on a R&D department; investigations of other work groups might have elucidated the topic further. Another issue was that the case organization had already grown fairly large and become bureaucratized. Further studies could be conducted on large corporations that are more flexible as well as fragmented.

Generational differences could be looked at in more depth, perhaps with a cultural analysis of a suitable case organization. A family business, for instance, could be suitable for investigating the gap between generations, or there could be a broader examination of the differences between “elderly Finnish engineers” and “global business high-fliers”. It would also be interesting to study generational differences using biographies. When I presented my preliminary results at one seminar, a member of the audience asked: does a chameleon become a professional when he or she becomes older? From biographies we could see how the relationship to work changes over time. Another interesting question presented was ‘should we all be chameleons nowadays?’ This made me curious as to what kind of person would the ideal employee be in a given environment – this would be yet another area for future research.

Furthermore, the subject of generational differences as a theme for research also emerged. Because the younger employees do not seem to be very committed to the organization, it would be interesting to find out what kind of bibliographies they would produce. When interviewing people for the present study, I asked them to tell about the work and did not especially ask for life stories. Biographies would let them tell their own stories. Subsequently, the themes of how the stories are different from stories provided by other age groups, and what aspects of life are highlighted could also be analyzed.

As mentioned above, from the organizational point of view it would be interesting to explore the ideal match between different identities and work environment and requirements. It would be interesting to hear the stories of upper management and HR personnel, and to hear their story of the ideal employee to recruit to a flexible company. A related question is whether the meaning of commitment is decreasing and whether flexibility is found to be more important today.

Considering the issue of data collection, instead of using interview material as the basis of constructing narratives, an alternative would be to collect written data, asking subjects to write their own stories to make them genuinely narrative.

Such a study might further illuminate identity construction within the ICT industry. Analyses of causality and coherence would also be easier to conduct on written materials.

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Appendix 1 List of informants

Profession	Age	Gender	Pages	Hours
Engineer	43	Male	18	2 hours
Engineer	28	Male	10	1 hour
Engineer	40	Male	12	1,5 hours
Engineer	28	Male	5	45 minutes
HR personnel	x	Female	10	1 hour
HR personnel	x	Female	5	45 minutes
Engineer	28	Male	5	45 minutes
Engineer	38	Male	11	1 hour
Engineer	28	Male	4	40 minutes
Engineer	37	Male	9	1 hour
Engineer	47	Male	6	50 minutes
Engineer	30	Male	4	40 minutes
Engineer	43	Male	10	1 hour 15 minutes
Engineer	x	Female	8	1 hour
Engineer	34	Male	13	1,5 hours
Engineer	33	Male	6	45 minutes

Appendix 2 Questions presented

Starting your career

1. Could you tell me about the time during/after your studies?
2. What kind of time was that?
3. What happened next?

Working at Tekno

4. Could you tell me about the time you started to work at Tekno?
5. What kind of time was that?
6. What happened next?

Organization

7. Could you tell me about this organization?
8. Tell me something about employees at this company?
9. Tell me how things have changed here?

Future

10. How do you see your future?
11. Could you tell about your plans?

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