Management of Knowledge-Intensive Companies

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Mats Alvesson

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Knowledge-Intensive Companies

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With 4 tables and 20 figures

Preface

I commenced the study which resulted in this book after having worked at a theoretical level for several years with symbolism and the cultural perspective in organization research. This background has influenced my work considerably, although the theoretical framework of this book encompasses several other perspectives and theories which can hardly be classified as organizational culture. The book looks at "knowledge intensive companies" and, in particular, focusses on a specific example in the form of Enator, a computer consultancy company. The book, too, combines an attempt to describe this type of company in general, and the case of Enator in particular, with a more theoretical aspiration of making a contribution to the development of cultural and symbolism theories in a corporate context. I have not been prepared to give one of these ambitions priority over the other.

June, 1994   Mats Alvesson

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1   Introduction

The starting point for this book is a case study of a young, rapidly-growing computer consulting company, Enator AB. Enator has attracted considerable attention in Sweden, both on the stock market (primarily in the mid 1980s) and in the mass media. In the latter case, this attention has been largely due to the company's somewhat spectacular characteristics: for example, its unique headquarters building and unusual corporate celebrations.

Enator is an example of a knowledge-intensive, professional business service company having the problem-solving competence of its employees at its core. This study examines Enator from a corporate perspective and from the perspective of managers and other employees. The study provides specific knowledge of Enator and a more general perspective on knowledge intensive firms.

From an organizational point of view, companies of this type are normally regarded as adhocracies, as the organization of work is set up in the form of temporary groupings in line with the varying nature of the tasks to be performed. An adhocracy is characterized by project organization as a working principle in contrast to traditional bureaucracies where the emphasis is on a more stable hierarchy, a clear division of labour, the specialization at tasks, and a clear distinction between task planning and execution. As a result, the adhocracy is a popular subject with many writers, and is claimed to be an increasingly common organizational form in business. The adhocracy deviates from conventional organizations in its management, its strategies and its working conditions. As a case study, Enator provides a basis for obtaining knowledge about an organizational form on which there has hitherto been relatively little systematic research.

Enator is interesting in itself, as a unique phenomenon and some of the aspects dealt with in this book concern circumstances which are specific for the Company. The purpose of this book is however, to illuminate broader phenomena. The company illustrates important trends in Swedish and international business, working life and management. Today, it would be almost banal to state that the service sector has expanded or that the number of companies and employees dealing with skilled semi-professional or professional services has increased. Sometimes such operations are spoken of as "knowledge-intensive" or "know-how" companies, and

this is supposed to indicate that there are considerable differences between them compared with traditional, mass production service companies. Naturally, there are major differences between a computer consultancy company and, for example, railway or airline corporations, McDonald's or other typical service companies. The service sector per se, even if one is excluding professional services, is rather heterogeneous, despite current ideas about "service management" and "service marketing" as specific concepts.

Quite apart from this, the concept of corporate culture has, since 1980, attracted attention as a somewhat diffuse but crucial phenomenon in organizations. Popular management books have described corporate culture as a phenomenon which affects everything from management style, decision making and collective awareness of corporate objectives, to job satisfaction and everyday priorities and social interactions. Closely related to corporate culture is what is sometimes referred to as "new forms of management". These new methods are based on the idea that the purpose of management is to create a feeling of shared community and identification between the company and its employees. This state of affairs is achieved by means of soft personnel-oriented management methods which appeal to the employee as a "whole person", rather than merely to the employee as a wage earner. Management is increasingly used to state ideals and ideas which lead to action, rather than to exercise concrete, detailed control (Alvesson and Berg, 1992; Beckérus et al., 1988; Kunda, 1992). Many optimistic things have been said about this style of management, primarily by management oriented consultants and academics (e.g. Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982). It is scarcely surprising that sceptical and critical comments have been made by union representatives (e.g. Eriksson, 1986), by radical management theorists (Willmott, 1993), and by working-life researchers (e.g. Sandberg, 1987).

However, there is still not much competent empirical research in this area, at least not of a deeper nature as required by the subject – ethnographic case studies. I will review the exceptions later in the book. Since the case study object of this book constitutes a clear – and perhaps even extreme – example of a company endowed with these "new management philosophies", it follows that this case study may be able to throw some light on this phenomenon. This book provides descriptions and interpretations of management and control structures and processes and their consequences for employees. While it primarily focusses on the case of Enator, it also applies to other places of work with similar management and organizational conditions.

This case study focusses on a number of aspects of the company. Various themes are dealt with at a general level including socialization in the workplace, organizational structure, corporate culture, organizational cli-

mate, management, leadership, working conditions, the business concept, strategies, and marketing. Perhaps this appears to be too many themes for a single book. However, as discussed here, the various facets of the company are closely related. This is true to a greater extent in a consultancy company than in many other types of firms, such as most manufacturing corporations. For instance, in a consultancy company, marketing and strategy cannot be clearly separated or distinguished from organizational and production activity. Almost all at Enator's employees interact with the employees of customer companies (the market). This contrasts with conditions in many other companies where, for example, marketing constitutes a specific, distinct function which does not necessarily concern the majority of personnel directly.

The use of culture theory and symbol theory as a framework for interpretation also serves to facilitate a broad approach, encompassing many different aspects and questions. I will be discussing this frame of reference in most of the chapters in this book, thus making it possible to handle and integrate in an acceptable manner the wide range of conditions which are discussed.

1.1 Theoretical Objectives

The objectives of this book may be usefully understood in terms of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) distinction between "substantial" and "formal" theory. Substantial theory is concerned with a given empirical area, while formal theory operates at a more general theoretical level.

The substantial area has been hinted at already. It involves contributions to the development of empirically oriented knowledge about management, organization, strategies and marketing in knowledge-intensive companies (primarily in the service sector), i.e. in a particular empirical area. The formal objective (i.e. at a more general theoretical level) involves, on the one hand, discussion and attempts to qualify some elements of organizational structure, leadership and strategy theory and, on the other hand, a contribution to organizational cultural research. The first of these two formal objectives, which is about different dimensions of the manner in which the company functions, is a matter of developing general knowledge about socialization processes, organizational structure, the way corporate culture is built up and its consequences, etc. The empirical case, for instance, provides a basis for discussion which is not confined to organizational structure in the type of company under consideration, but which is also concerned to some extent with how we can approach the subject in general terms which are independent of specific case study organization. It

is thus not a question of attempting empirical generalization but rather of working with concepts, ideas, and dimensions which are of general interest. Contributions in a formal, theoretical sense make considerable demands on the researcher. I am well aware that in some sections of this book I have not succeeded in doing very much more than describe and interpret the specific case, even though this, in itself, may be of interest.

The second formal (theoretical) objective has been primarily to contribute to organization research from the perspective of culture and symbol theory. This theory is referred to in the next section, but is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3. At this stage, it suffices to say that this perspective constitutes a fundamental frame of reference which is intended to stimulate understanding both of the object of research in a substantial sense (Enator, knowledge-intensive companies) and of the theoretical themes which are dealt with. In this study, the theory of culture and symbols partly functions at a metatheoretical level. I hope to contribute to cultural research in a corporate context, primarily through showing the broad (wide) range of application of culture theory in management studies.

I will, instead of the conventional approach of developing/adapting one framework which guides the interpretation of the empirical material, sometimes alternate between culture theory and the more traditional management theories (see below) in relationship to interpretations of the case study. Culture theory also inspires re-interpretations of ideas in (conventional) management theories, e.g. on organizational structure and business concept. This means that I engage in a kind of "theory game" – going back and forth between culture theory and other (management) theories.

1.2   Theoretical Frames of Reference

Most of the literature and theories that I will be using in this book will be indicated and discussed in connection with the chapters dealing with the various themes. In other words, the discussion of the theory and the description of the empirical data from the case will alternate. (The only exception is in Chapter 3, where culture and symbol theory are reviewed. However, at this point I would like to focus briefly on the principal theoretical inspiration on which this book is based.)

First and foremost, the perspective adopted in this book grows out of theories of culture and symbols. Both anthropological and organizational culture and symbol theories are employed. The main point is that collective action presumes repetitive common meanings and symbols. A crucial aspect of social structures, action patterns, material objects, the language

used, etc. is that they can function as collective symbols, in addition to purely technical, objective and rational aspects, and are given intersubjective meaning in the organization, thus providing a basis for coordinated action. Organization is thus basically defined in terms of shared meanings.

A second important source of inspiration is what could be described in rather approximate terms as a moderate version of non-rational organization theory.[1] By non-rational I mean ideas and arguments which focus on the contradictions, ambiguities, and discrepancies which exist in organizations and which point to the lack of clear, consistent and properly cohesive patterns of action. It is assumed that the social world is complicated and contradictory. Understanding companies and organizations does not only involve a search for systems, cohesive patterns, and well-arranged structures and functions but also the reverse: loose couplings between what is said and what is done, between different actions and structures, ambiguities, contradictions, confusion, etc. (cf. Brunsson, 1985; Calás and Smircich, 1987; Gray et al., 1985; Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992; March and Olsen, 1976; Martin and Meyerson, 1988; Weick, 1976; Orton and Weick,1990; etc.)

In examining the organizational form and strategy of Enator, and of other organizations of a similar type, Mintzberg's ideas about organization structure and strategies in adhocracies are an important starting point (e.g. Mintzberg, 1983; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Giddens' (1979) theory of "structuration" and the organization research inspired by Giddens will also be dealt with (e.g. Ranson et al., 1980).

In the marketing area, general ideas about service sector marketing are of primary relevance (e.g. Grönroos; 1984, Normann, 1983). At the same time, there are significant differences between mass-produced services for consumers and the professional services, which may frequently be of a problem-solving nature, offered by Enator to industrial and other companies. In this case, the literature on industrial marketing is also of interest (e.g. Håkansson et al., 1981).

A certain inspiration provided by critical theory also surfaces occasionally in this book. This focuses attention on how different conceptions and forms of consciousness are spread and institutionalized. In other words, the natural, self-evident and taken-for-granted nature of some circumstances and arrangements are deeply anchored in the ideas and beliefs of a group. Attention is also focused on possible limitations on the freedom of thinking and action which certain ideas may involve. In other words, the ideology concept is regarded as important. Amongst other things, the concept of ideology indicates that certain definitions of social circumstances and certain ideals, which are considered worth striving for and which are therefore given priority, tend to supplant other definitions and ideals. Sometimes this occurs less as a result of careful reflection than as a result

of the power-base of dominant groups and the dominant logic of society (which defines "common sense" and "rationality"). Critical theory emphasizes that the encouragement of a reflective, critical approach to the dominant ideologies and definitions of social reality is an important function of the social sciences (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, 1995; Deetz, 1992). However, I only make use of this tradition explicitly to a very small degree. Its influence on the book can be seen more in a general awareness of these aspects. It is hoped that this awareness permeates this book.

1.3 Knowledge-intensive Companies

The concept of the knowledge-intensive company has come to the fore in the late 1980s in both practical and academic circles in Sweden and to some extent in other countries. (In Sweden, people talk about knowledge companies, but the English concept which appears to be increasingly utilized is knowledge-intensive companies or firms.) There are different opinions about how to define this category. Sveiby and Risling (1986), for example, regard almost all companies which are concerned with sophisticated operations as knowledge-intensive companies, while others regard the category as more exclusive. Many writers (Gummesson, 1990; Hedberg, 1990; Starbuck, 1992) consider that knowledge-intensive companies are characterized by factors such as:

- significant incidents of problem solving and non-standardized production;
- creativity on the part of the practitioner and the organizational environment;
- heavy reliance on individuals (and less dependence on capital) and a high degree of independence on the part of practitioners.
- high educational levels and a high degree of professionalization on the part of most employees;
- traditional concrete (material) assets are not a central factor. The critical elements are in the minds of employees and in networks, customer relationships, manuals and systems for supplying services;
- heavy dependence on the loyalty of key personnel and – this is the other side of the picture – considerable vulnerability when personnel leave the company.

There is an emphasis on knowledge-intensive operations, as opposed to labour-intensive or capital-intensive. Human capital is the dominant factor in knowledge-intensive firms.

One variation of this idea is to refer to knowledge-intensive operations as an overall category, subsequently making a sub-distinction between "pure" knowledge companies and high technology companies (Ekstedt, 1990). In both cases, personnel with a high degree of competence and experience may be central factors but, in high technology companies, knowledge and innovation are embodied in products and technology which transmit and incorporate the knowledge in question. In "pure" knowledge companies, individuals are the primary bearers of knowledge, even if this knowledge may be *partially* institutionalized and localized at the organizational level in the form of collective frames of reference (cultures), systematized methods of work, manuals, etc. (Bonora and Revang, 1993; Starbuck, 1992). For the most part, I employ the concept "knowledge-intensive company" in accordance with accepted usage, but I want to stress that my case study involves a company in which the focus is completely on human capital and, as a result, some discussions are centred on this (major) subgroup in the overall knowledge-intensive firm category. However, comparisons with research into more capital-intensive knowledge-intensive companies, i.e. companies with technology which requires greater capital resources (high-tech companies), indicate that in important aspects there are considerable similarities between the two categories (see in particular Chapter 14). Therefore, many of the ideas and results of this study thus have a broad relevance for a wide range of knowledge-intensive organizations.

One problem with the concept of the knowledge-intensive company is that considerable prestige is attached to the term. Sometimes I get the impression that almost every company wants to be seen as a knowledge-intensive company. This means that the term may often be employed because it sounds good rather than because it is a satisfactory means of describing important phenomena. The fact that it sounds good is probably a more important reason for the success of the concept of the knowledge-intensive firm (knowledge company) (in Scandinavia, at least) than its descriptive value. Of course this is a good (intellectual) reason for avoiding the concept. A related reason concerns the political implications of representing some companies and some work as knowledge-intensive, thereby implying that other companies and work are not knowledge-intensive. If knowledge workers are understood to be highly qualified individuals who belong to, or form a distinct component of a group of professional and managerial employees, a certain social division of labour is reproduced and legitimized in a way that "overlooks their common positioning as wage labour within a capitalist mode of production" (Knights et al., 1993, p 976). This problem can be handled by emphasizing partly that knowledge-intensive firms and workers are loose categories and that they do not necessarily encompass "more sophisticated" knowledge or more ad-

vanced or "sexy" operations than can be found in many other types of organizations and occupations. If we look at the "true" professions – medicine, dentistry, psychoanalysis, etc. – they are not normally particularly concerned with creative problem-solving; instead they are more likely to apply relatively standardized methods based on "science and proven experience" (cf. Mintzberg's professional bureaucracy). From the point of view of the criteria presented above, it is not clear whether organizations dominated by these professional groups can be automatically regarded as the best cases of knowledge-intensive companies. From the management aspect, many purely knowledge-intensive firms are rather small and thus less complicated to manage and organize than most companies with complicated technology and with multi-faceted production and distribution arrangements. Thus it would be a mistake to automatically associate knowledge-intensive firms with know-how and management arrangements which are regarded as the most prestigious in society. At least this is true at least if we give the concept of the knowledge-intensive firm a more limited definition, in line with the criteria above, and do not equate such firms with all types of knowledge-intensive operations.

The fact that knowledge is such a diffuse and all embracing concept is another problem (Alvesson, 1993c). Of course, all firms are based on some form of knowledge. The fact that knowledge, in knowledge-intensive firms, is primarily related to individuals rather than associated with organizations (routines, organized work processes) or built into machines and material technologies gives some indication of what is involved. Another clue is that a significant proportion of the personnel in such firms have advanced education and experience. A possible criterion of knowledge-intensive firms might be that half the employees should have university or equivalent education. (However, as is the case with a criterion of this type it should be used with the above characteristics, and with discretion.) One problem with this criterion is that it reflects social class factors. As Starbuck (1992) points out, higher education corresponds with upper middle-class interests as to what should be considered prestigious or regarded as expertise. Probably, many craftsmen might be regarded as more advanced in terms of knowledge than college graduates if an alternative approach to knowledge were to be applied. However, I will not enquire into the extent to which activities which are not based on higher formal education can be described vis-à-vis the activities of knowledge-intensive firms partly defined by the long formal education of the employees. Another open question is what talent-based activities – for example creative work in the advertising world or in theatres – fit into the concept of the knowledge-intensive firm.

Thus, as I am somewhat doubtful about the knowledge-intensive firm concept, I originally considered giving this book another title, which used

the concept of a professional service company. The latter term is somewhat better demarcated but has a number of disadvantages, including the fact that it also has prestigious overtones. It is even more important to consider the problem of defining the professions and professional organizations. Computer consultancy is not really considered to be a traditional profession and it is difficult to determine the limits which distinguish an extended professional concept from occupations which lie beyond this limit. A term such as semi-professional is not helpful. However, there are certainly considerable differences between skilled services, such as computer consultancy and simpler services, such as cleaning and security services. (The difference becomes even more noticeable if we do not merely confine ourselves to producer services, but also examine the entire service area, including consumer services.) Nonetheless, the knowledge-intensive firm concept does indicate a distinction of this type in broad outline without going into detail regarding particular criteria of professions or semi-professions such as autonomy, restricted access to the work area (monopolization of a part of the labour market), specific education, professional associations, a code of ethics etc. (Alvesson, 1993c). These criteria are not very helpful for understanding most service work carried out by well educated and highly paid workers in business contexts. Yet another alternative might be to speak of consultancy companies, but here there are similar definitional problems in distinguishing between simple and complex services. In addition this term would result in a narrower focus than I intended in this book. Many of the topics covered are probably of much broader relevance than would be the case if we confined ourselves to the term consultancy companies. Many sections of this book, for example, are of considerable relevance for universities and high-tech companies. As already mentioned, many of the concepts and ideas discussed here are intended to provide more general contributions than those which are only relevant to understanding computer consultancy companies. Comparisons between my case and high-tech industries documented by Kanter (1983), Kunda (1992), Martin (1992) and others will clearly show this in the chapters that follow. (To a certain degree, I sacrifice empirical details for the benefit of broader theoretical arguments in this book.)

For these reasons, and in view of the fact that the term knowledge-intensive company and knowledge workers seems to be becoming more widely employed, I have chosen to refer to knowledge-intensive firms or companies, even if I am aware of the disadvantages of this concept. I shall try not to reinforce the prestigious aura which surrounds the concept. Rather than emphasizing the special nature of knowledge-intensiveness in relation to mass production companies and "professional bureaucracies", I will endeavour to apply a more subtle approach to themes of significance for understanding this type of organization, for example, ideas about the

ad hoc character of (many) knowledge-intensive firms (see Chapter 6) and the significance of regulating images in the knowledge-intensive service sector (Chapter 10).

In this study I focus on a single company which probably represents a typical example of a knowledge-intensive firm, irrespective of exactly what definition among those expressed in the literature is employed. In fact, computer consultancy companies seem to be one of the most commonly utilized examples of this category. The case study attempts to focus on aspects and dimensions which are relevant for a broader understanding of such companies, but it should be said that different sections of this book vary as to the manner and the extent that they express ideas which have broad relevance. The generality of issues on marketing treated in this book are largely confined to consultancy companies, while issues related to corporate culture appear to be of significance also for many knowledge-intensive companies outside the service sector.

When conducting research into a specific knowledge-intensive firm -and this also applies to many other categories of organizations – it is important to note that it is generally difficult to focus on a single type of organization. This applies in the present case too; a case study also encompasses elements which are associated with the category but which cannot be reduced or equated with it. Often, for example, knowledge-intensive firms have an adhocratic form (Sveiby and Risling, 1986) but, as Chapter 6 indicates, other organizational forms may also be present or even be more salient. If the primary concern is to focus exclusively on understanding knowledge-intensive firms – if such an "purified" objective is at all possible – caution should be employed in equating knowledge-intensiveness with adhocracy. Knowledge-intensive firms are quite often characterized by rapid growth, success and a certain type of labour market, etc. At least, these characteristics have often characterized what have been termed knowledge-intensive firms in Sweden in the 1980s. This also applies in the present case. The extent to which this study and other studies describe knowledge-intensive companies "as such", or to which knowledge-intensive companies appear in a certain historical epoch and in certain specific development conditions (e.g. an expanding market and a certain lack of competent personnel) must be regarded as an open question. Clearly, this question can only be answered in a more extended historical perspective than that applied in current literature in this field, which has largely described this kind of organization in relatively favourable industries in the late 1980s.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that I have *not* consistently referred to knowledge-intensive firms in this study. The type of company which has been studied may very well be described in this manner, but my interest is not confined to describing precisely this type of firm. As already

mentioned, this study also has broader theoretical interest. In addition, I will be dealing with phenomena which are of relevance in understanding at least a considerable range of knowledge-intensive firms (irrespective of exactly how this concept is defined), but which cannot be limited to or totally subordinated to or equated with this category. The great advantage of the term "knowledge-intensive" firm is that it draws attention to a loosely defined group of organizations. But it is not always as useful when looking more closely at specific management, organization and marketing problems as many of these may be salient in a number of companies of this type, but not necessarily be significant for all organizations in this (ambiguous) category or exclusive for it. In this study, therefore, I refrain from consistently emphasizing the concept of the knowledge-intensive firm and will be content, instead, to apply it in a looser manner.

1.4   Constraints

Although this book offers a broad description of the case-study company and raises a number of different theoretical themes, there are naturally a considerable number of factors which are not considered. The main emphasis is on general management, organization and marketing. Financial aspects of the company are hardly treated at all. Similarly, formal control associated with result requirements and follow-up are only dealt with at a marginal level. Naturally, traditional management is an important aspect of the operations of the company described in the case study. As in other companies, management is concerned with budgets, other forms of planning, supervision, coordination and control. I choose, however, not to look at these aspects to any great extent. This does not imply that these aspects are unimportant. However, in comparison with most other companies, normative forms of control – influencing ideas and feelings – are more prominent and, in combination with my theoretical interest in cultural aspects, I have therefore tended to ignore administrative and financial control.

In addition, I will refrain, for the most part, from considering purely production aspects or from describing the content of work, etc. Thus, technical computer questions and the conduct and management of projects are not considered here. I do examine working conditions to some extent but only in connection with the social situation of personnel, not in regard to the work content or the physical work environment.

Of course, it would have been preferable if I could have also studied these aspects and, no doubt, insights into themes which have been neglected would have contributed to an understanding of many of the phe-

nomena dealt with in this study. But it would hardly have been possible to cover more than is already encompassed in this book, which is already quite voluminous.

1.5   The Structure of the Book

As already mentioned, most of the chapters in this book cover a theoretical theme, for example socialization, organization structure, etc. Specialized literature and theory within the field are discussed and relevant empirical documentation from the case study is presented. An attempt is then made on the basis of interpretations of this material and discussions of a more theoretical nature to say as much as possible about Enator as a typical example of a knowledge-intensive (professional service) company and then, about the theoretical theme itself. Cultural theory as a meta framework is invoked here to enrich the understanding of the empirical material as well as the theoretical theme of the various chapters. As the reader no doubt realizes, it is relatively easy to make pronouncements about Enator, but somewhat more difficult to say something more general about the type of company concerned, and even more difficult to provide new theoretical contributions of a general nature.

My presentation starts with a brief overall description of the object of my case study, that is to say Enator. This provides a skeleton structure for later chapters, in which various aspects are gradually built up. In case studies, it is often tempting to provide detailed descriptions of the object of research – which is easy – but my aim has been to subordinate empirical descriptions to ideas, arguments and conclusions of a more general nature. This means that I have attempted to limit the purely descriptive aspects of this book. It also means that there is no cohesive history of the firm, apart from an extremely sketchy outline in Chapter 2 and a strategy-focussed description in Chapter 11. Unfortunately, this makes it more difficult for the reader to interpret the case himself or herself.

Chapter 3 looks at organizational culture theory research. Chapter 4 discusses qualitative methods and questions of the philosophy of science. Some of the theoretical and methodological considerations which underlie this book are presented in these two chapters.

Chapters 5-12 take up various themes, the first of which is socialization. The reason for selecting this starting-point is that the socialization process also says a great deal about the company, its understanding of itself, etc. By presenting the company's picture of itself in a concentrated form – and by attempting to minimize the influence of my own interpretations – I hope that the reader may get a dynamic picture and an initial understand-

ing of operations which are presented primarily in management terms. But obviously, in the book as a whole, the perspective is the author's, even though the meanings of the people that have been studied are taken seriously. Chapter 6 covers organization structure and design and a culture perspective on formal structure. Chapter 7 deals with corporate culture and organization climate, while Chapter 8 goes on to look at management and leadership. These three chapters treat management and organizational circumstances in a broad sense. Chapter 9 turns to the work situation of personnel, where, for example, I examine some potential problems faced by staff which are implicit in the types of management and social control which characterize Enator.

Subsequently, Chapters 10 and 11 discuss the company's business concept and strategy. In Chapter 12, the focus is on marketing – both external and internal. The result is that chapters 10-12 constitute a section in which the focus is on the business aspects of operations.

Finally, in Chapters 13 and 14, an attempt is made to weave various themes together employing the arguments and results covered in various previous chapters. In addition, a number of conclusions are formulated. Chapter 14 is an attempt to contribute to organizational symbolism theory as well as to summarize and further clarify some insights on knowledge-intensive companies.

This book is designed to permit independent, separate reading of most chapters, even if this may not be altogether straightforward. However, the two concluding chapters require prior reading of much of the rest of the book. For the most part, the reader is free to select chapters which are of particular interest and skip sections which appear less relevant. However, if the aim is to obtain a reasonably clear picture of Enator, Chapter 2 and the first half of Chapter 5 are required reading. Those who are not familiar with culture and symbol theory should also read Chapter 3, at any rate the two final sections, if they wish to understand the principal perspectives of this book.

Note

[1] The fact that I make use of the concept non rational organization theory does not mean that I am rejecting the idea that (many) organizations function in a goal-rational manner at an overall level, i.e. they are mainly characterized by effective activity which leads to the realization, to a greater or lesser extent, of the objectives and goals for operations which the principal has established (see e.g. Abrahamsson, 1986). On the contrary, this is a reasonable idea which is not contradicted by my case study. Regarding the organization as predominantly an instrument, as in rationalistic organization theory, and

treating it as "a planned and established structure which is constructed by an individual, a group or class with the conscious and decided purpose of realizing the achievement of certain objectives which are in the interest of the principal" (Abrahammson 1986, p 53) means, however, that there is a focus on the more formal overall aspects. I am interested in a deeper penetrating analysis of the more "living" dimensions of the case company's "real" manner of working. Thus what I have termed non-rational organization theory does not contradict a rationalistic view such as Abrahamsson's. It is more a matter of a different level of questioning and analysis.

2 Description of Enator AB

I undertook my field-work at Enator AB during a six-month period in 1987 and the descriptions presented in this book date back to this period unless otherwise stated. For the most part, I have used the present tense (which then refers to conditions in the late 1980s. However, the past tense has been employed when dealing with circumstances which change rapidly (e.g. the number of employees). This chapter is mainly an attempt to present certain basic facts and a brief account of some general characteristics of the company.

2.1 Enator's History: 1977-87

The company was founded in 1977 by three people with experience in computers, management and consultancy. At that time, data processing was expanding rapidly and both programmers and people who could relate computers and overall corporate issues were in great demand. Enator defined its niche as the linking of computer and business (top management) operations. The three founders had an extensive social network and, in combination with an expanding market and an easy-to-sell business concept, this led to a rapid growth. Enator employed one hundred people by 1980, and by 1987 it had a staff of five hundred.

Enator originally concentrated entirely on administrative data-processing. A few years later, however, the company became more involved in technically oriented projects and began to provide customer companies with consultant services for the execution of computer application projects in industrial corporations. For example, Enator became involved in the development of industrial products in which mini or micro computers were components. While the administrative sections of Enator are concerned with the adaptation of computer systems to final users such as banks and transport companies, Enator's technical arm assists industrial companies in the computer and electronics industry.

Shortly after its formation, Enator's technical wing established its own subsidiary within Enator and called it Mikrotell. Right from the start, one of Enator's basic principles was to minimize the number of employees in

each subsidiary, with a limit of not more than 50 individuals. When employees exceed this number within any Enator subsidiary, a new company is formed. Over the years, several new corporate branches have opened up within Enator. In 1980, a subsidiary was formed on the administrative side to concentrate on the maintenance of existing computer systems, while in 1983 a new company was created which specialized in mini and micro computers. On the technical side, Mikrotell subdivided on three occasions between 1983 and 1986 and formed new subsidiaries. Thus, when my study was carried out in 1987 there were three administrative and four technical companies.

A number of joint venture companies were also formed by Enator in the 1980s. These joint venture companies were formed to market computer systems which had been developed in cooperation with certain customers. All these subsidiaries are located in Stockholm.

As time passed, regionalization of operations occurred, in parallel with continuing expansion in the Stockholm region. Local companies were set up in Malmö and Gothenburg. At the same time as it was moving into the provinces in Sweden, Enator also set up operations on an international scale. Between 1981 and 1985 subsidiaries were established in Britain, Norway, West-Germany and Denmark, and subsequently in Switzerland and Finland. The two latter companies were joint ventures with Swiss and Finnish companies.

Enator was launched on the Swedish Stock Exchange in 1983, where it attracted considerable attention for a time thanks to a rapid rise in share prices. Utilizing its accumulated profits, Enator purchased the Prospektor Group which included a major consultancy in the construction industry (Skandiakonsult). Prospektor was much larger than Enator but had not been particularly successful for some years. This Group rapidly changed its name to Pronator, with Enator as one company among a group of subsidiaries within Pronator. Since Pronator subsequently acquired all the shares in Enator, Enator was withdrawn from the Stock Exchange in 1987. Enator's founders (owners) also dominate the Pronator Group.

Enator's three founding members made their mark on the company's operations, particularly in the first 6 to 8 years. However, one of the founders gradually bowed out in the mid-1980s and his shares were ultimately acquired by his two companions. One of the remaining founders was Managing Director of Enator until 1985, when he was promoted and became Managing Director of Pronator and was simultaneously Chairman of the Board at Enator. Enator's new Managing Director was recruited externally, having previously been MD at one of Enator's largest customers for a number of years. In 1987, when my case study was carried out, the third founder member was still partially involved in Enator.

In 1987 Enator celebrated its 10th anniversary. The company's 500 employees and a number of other guests flew to the island of Rhodes where Enator's success was commemorated for three, apparently highly memorable days.

2.2 Enator at the Time of the Case Study (1987)

Enator's product continues to be consultancy services in the computer area. Enator offers a comprehensive range within this field – everything from strategy studies to the implementation of computer projects on a large scale. There is a special emphasis on Enator's ability to manage projects, and to implement computer development projects in line with agreed time schedules and budgets.

In 1987, the Enator group consisted of some 20 subsidiaries each with 1 to 50 employees. Half of the total staff of 500 were working in the seven administrative and technical companies in Kista near Stockholm. Somewhat more than 50 were located in regional companies in Sweden, while approximately 150 were working in companies abroad. The remaining personnel were employed by the parent company, Swedish joint-venture companies, etc.

Much of the crucial data about Enator's financial status, personnel, etc. are presented in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, which also indicate developments in the period 1982-86 in terms of turnover, financial results, etc.

2.3 Something about Enator's Functioning and Management

The following is a brief outline of how the various corporate functions of Enator are related to each other. This will make it easier for the reader to understand how Enator functions "as a whole" and how the various aspects presented in Chapters 5-12 are related.

In companies like Enator the technological core is weak. Operations are not held together by a cohesive production process. Instead production takes the form of hundreds of projects each year which are carried out relatively independently of each other. Thus, compared with most manufacturing companies or mass-production service corporations, it would be misleading to represent Enator's organization as a machine in which different individuals or sections of the companies are cogs in the works. Instead, Enator consists of separate projects which are very loosely linked to each other.

Turnover, million kronor
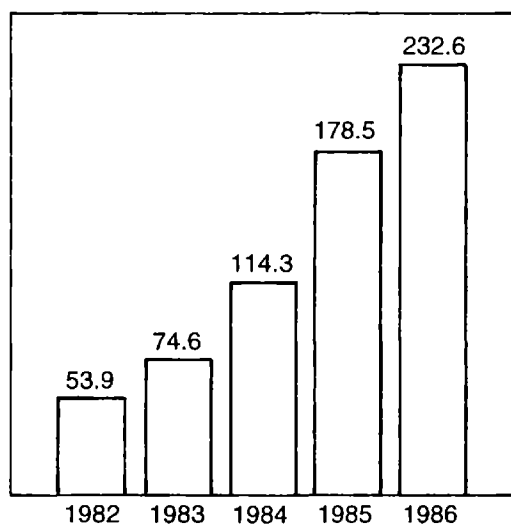
Financial results (after deduction of
financial items), million kronor
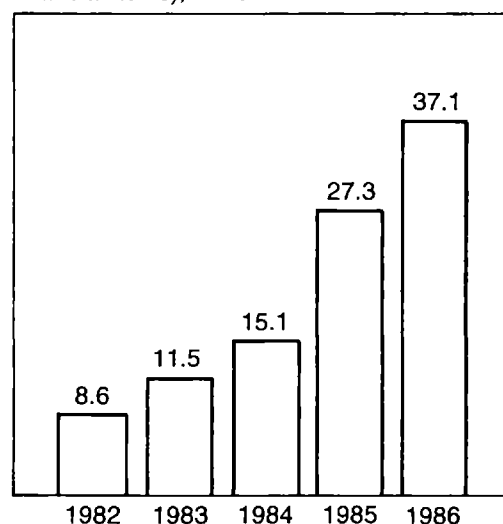
Equity, million kronor
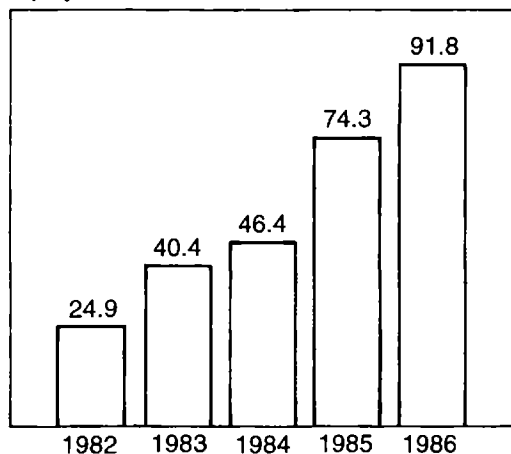
Total capital employed, million kronor
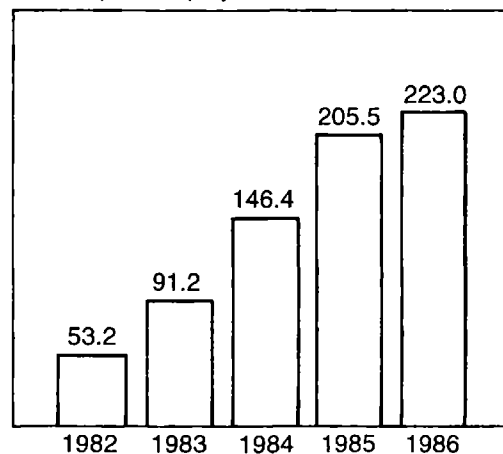
Equity, assets ration, %
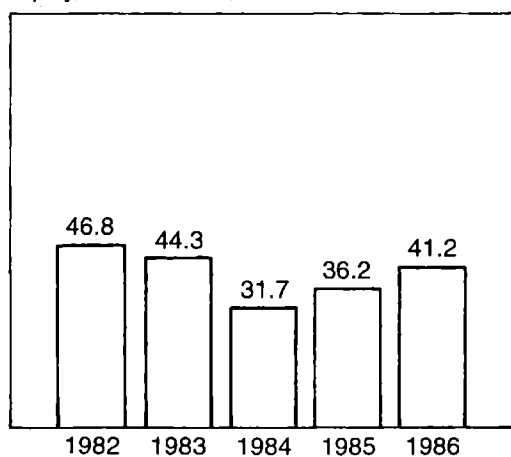
Average number employees
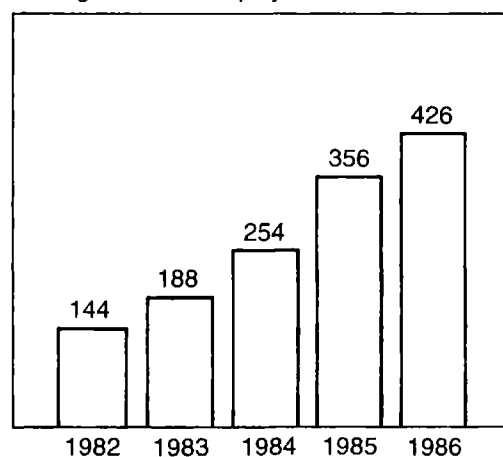
Source: Enator´s Annual Report 1986

Figure 2.1: Data about Enator, 1982-86

Period of employment

1- 3 ys (34%) | < 1 y (20%) | 3 - 5 ys (19%) | > 5 ys (27%)

Invoiced debiting kronor / hour for Enator staff

< 400 kr (18%) | 400 - 600 kr (67%) | > 600 kr (15%)

Enator staff age structure

< 30 år (32%) | 30 - 35 år (38%) | > 35 år (30%)

Enator staff distribution by sex

Male staff (74%) | Female staff (26%)

Education

University (65%) | Other education (35%)

Volume of consultancy assignments measured by annual fees

100 Tkr- 500 Tkr (33%) | < 100 Tkr (26%) | > 1 Mkr (19%) | 500 Tkr- 1 Mkr (22%)

Size of client (annual turnover)

50-250 Mkr (23%) | (7%) < 50 Mkr | 250 Mkr- 1 Miliard kr (39%) | > 1 Miliard kr (31%)

Average debiting for Enator staff: 460 kronor / hour

Debiting loading (invoiced time as proportion of working time): 90%

Consultant assignment / assignment category

Management / project management (13 %)
Data processing information strategies (16 %)
Pilot studies (12 %)
Requirement specifications (8 %)
Systems analyses programming (31 %)
Maintenance (8 %)
Training documentation (8 %)
Other (4 %)

Consultancy assignment / industry

Transport / tourism (16 %)
Retail and wholesale business (13 %)
Electronics industry (18 %)
Other industry (23 %)
Public sector administration (9 %)
Banking and finance (13 %)
Insurance (3 %)
Other (5 %)

Figure 2.2: Data about Enator, 1986

At the same time, Enator is also operating in a market which demands flexibility. For the most part, the planning horizon is brief and set-up times for consultancy projects are normally minimal. Technology is flexible, since it consists of the consultants' competence and know-how.

The nature of the consultancy assignments means that operative control is largely exercised by project managers and consultants in the field. Top and middle management have rather limited opportunities to exercise direct supervision and control. All they can do is to issue general guidelines for the methods to be employed and follow up the tasks by means of occasional talks with project managers and consultants. Since projects involve the solution of more or less unique tasks, control is often a matter of adapting to the particular assignment and to local circumstances.

The fact that projects mainly involve relatively sophisticated problem-solving and that almost Enator's entire labour force consists of well-trained consultants means that a traditional organization hierarchy can only function in a limited sense. Management can hardly be said to direct the work-process in any detail. Self-supervision is far more important than hierarchical control. In some contexts one might speak of competence hierarchies, which clearly deviate from the organization hierarchy. This means that people at low levels in formal terms may have competence and skills which are essential in dealing with a specific question and their influence may therefore be substantial.

These characteristics play a crucial role in the manner in which the company is run. The fact that the means of production are in fact identical with the competence of the personnel and that the production processes are heterogeneous and decentralized implies that traditional "structural" control can only be partially utilized. It also means that a centralized "top-down" formulation and implementation of strategy can only be applied to a limited extent.
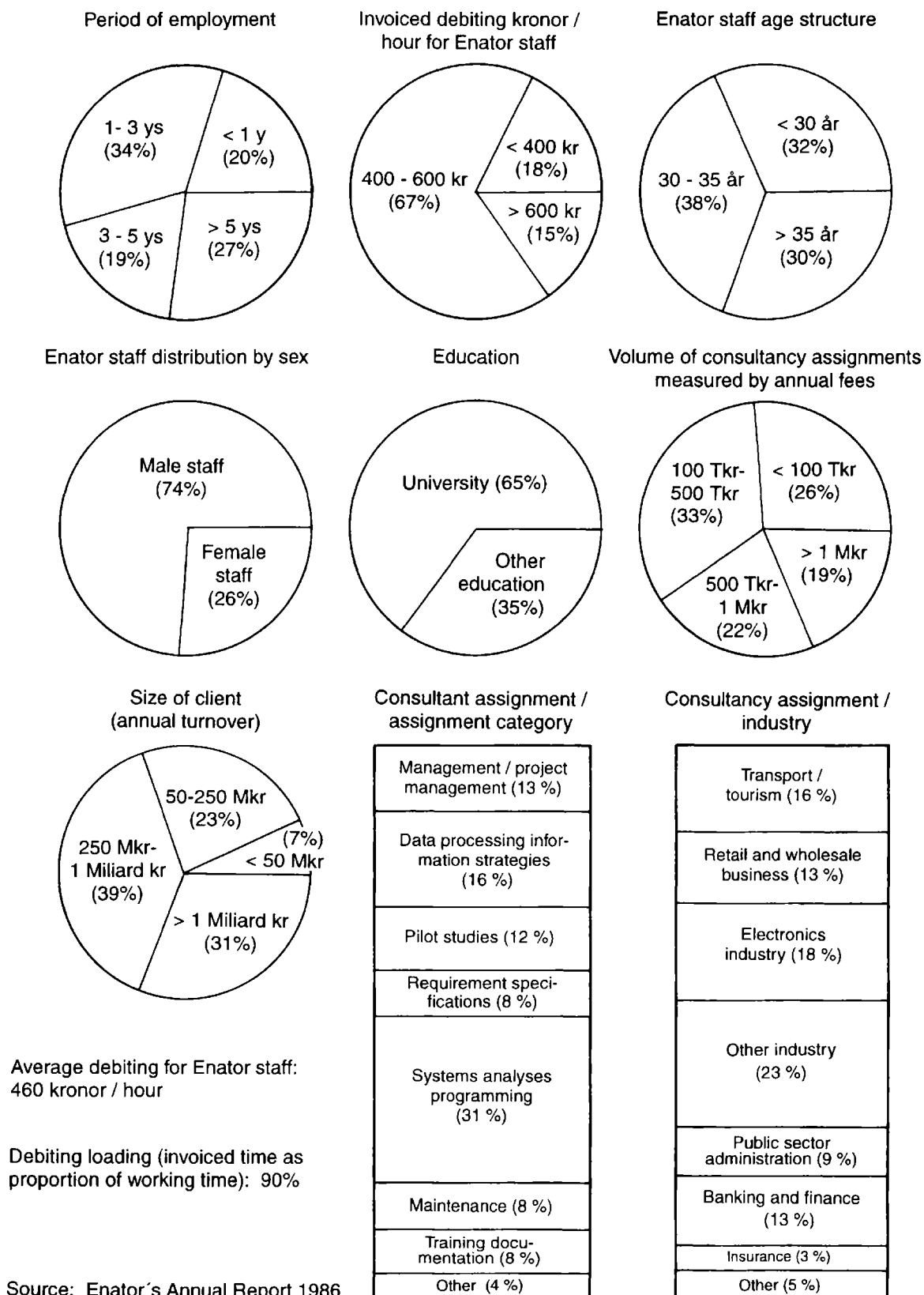
In order to get the company to work as a whole – even if only as an entity with partially independent components – other means of control are required. Traditional and formal instruments are not sufficient. This applies internally at the organizational level, externally at the market level, and strategically with respect to long-term development. It is important that all members of the organization understand and accept certain fundamental guidelines for operation. It is not sufficient – as to some extent is the case in most traditional companies – for this to be understood exclusively by management and senior executives, with overall ideas, objectives and plans subsequently translated into concrete action by means of the allocation of resources, formal goals, standardization of tasks, etc. In organizations like Enator, the company's overall ideals, methods and exchange relations with its environment must be based on the decentralized functioning of its personnel. (Of course, this applies to many service

companies and manufacturers of advanced products, as it does to some extent to all types of companies. In the case of knowledge-intensive companies, the need for a strong basis of support for overall ideas and guidelines for operations, running right through the organization, is particularly important.)

In organizational terms, structural arrangements and formal authority relationships are of somewhat lesser importance than in other companies. However, social ties, a common understanding of the nature of work, shared values and other "non-substantive" means of control and co-ordination of operations are all particularly crucial for this type of company. The ambition is to employ what is known as "corporate culture" as a means of control.

In marketing terms, traditional marketing methods play a relatively small part in building up and stabilizing exchange relationships with customer companies. It is difficult to demonstrate and sell professional services in advance either by marketing-mix strategies or by the use of special salesmen. In the professional services sector, consulting personnel, especially project managers, are themselves responsible for major aspects of marketing. As a result of their current and previous projects, such personnel have a long-standing and close contact with their customers. These contacts constitute an important base for sales and for the supplementary selling of new project assignments. Thus, the marketing function is partly built into the production function and integrated into the organization as a whole, rather than separately delineated and centralized in organizational terms.

Since a high proportion of consultancy assignments are undertaken at customers' places of work, in close cooperation with the customers' staff, most Enator personnel have close contact with the market and often have long-term interaction with customers. And since the personnel constitute Enator's total marketing offer, the manner in which they carry out their assignments and their ability to establish contacts and to transmit a picture of the company's methods and competence are of the greatest importance from a marketing point of view.

Thus, most personnel have an important marketing function and the crucial point here is that, as in the organizational context, what the company represents is well-based in the conceptual world of the employees. This is an important aspect of the identity. The interest and involvement of personnel in their work and their ability and willingness to transmit a good and cohesive picture of their company are thus central factors from a marketing perspective. Work performance that is only technically satisfactory is insufficient on its own, according to top management.

Major areas of the development and execution of the strategy are delegated to the consultants in operations of this type. Thus, it is not possible

to regard consultants as simply the instruments for the realization of the objectives of top management. The personnel cannot be treated simply as foot-soldiers who are carrying out the general's plans. The consultants' network of contacts and their initiative is of critical strategic importance.

Strategic development and change in this type of organization are thus intimately linked with the way in which the organization and its personnel work as a whole, how employees define and redefine operations and their frameworks and also what initiatives and priorities employees take and apply. There is no doubt that top management functions as a central strategic actor and that a certain amount of strategic change takes place as a result of control exercised from the top down. But at the same time, major initiatives for strategic reorientation and general, collective tendencies for change coming from the bottom up may also be highly important.

In particular, I would like to emphasize how the three functional areas of organization, marketing and strategy are more closely linked than in traditional bureaucratic organizations. In business operations of this type, most of the company's personnel participate in intimate contact with the market. It might be said that the organization and the market are directly related to each other in several ways. Customer assignments determine how the work is organized so that Enator's organization overlaps with customer companies when projects are implemented in cooperation with customer personnel.[1]

As a result of the decentralized nature of operations, the project manager and other consultants have considerable market contact and can also demonstrate a considerable degree of freedom of action. The net result of this at subordinate levels within the company contributes significantly to determining the company's strategic development. Thus, the whole organization is involved, since, apart from corporate management, there are a considerable number of potential strategic centres. Attempts to give the entire company a common reorientation are also largely dependent on the extent to which certain central guidelines and ideas have been successfully anchored in the organization as a whole.

I have indicated several points which provide an overall perspective on the manner in which companies such as Enator work. Since this is a question of situationally adapted professional production of services, the pattern is markedly different from that in the dominant bureaucratic corporate form. Some aspects of my perspectives have been hinted at. As this book progresses, it is hoped that this will make it easier for the reader to form an overall picture, based on the various dimensions and themes which are covered. However, I would not wish to conceal that the breadth of the approach applied in this book, and also my attempts to link up with a broad range of general problems and theoretical orientations beyond the limits of the actual case study, mean that this book makes certain demands

on a reader. Readers must be able to link up various lines of thought and form a total picture.

2.4   The Pronator Group

As already mentioned, Enator is part of the Pronator Group. Pronator's business concept is "to create, develop and run a knowledge-intensive service company" (Annual Report, 1985). At the time when my study was conducted, there were five operating companies: Enator, two technical consultancy companies and two financial services companies. In addition, Pronator has an "assets arm" which included properties and major share holdings in various companies. The reason for this relatively extensive aspect of total operations is to compensate for the consultancy companies' lack of physical assets in the form of stocks, machinery, plant, etc. Moreover, it may be noted that Pronator has made considerable profits on share holding and property dealings.

Pronator's strategy is to strengthen subsidiaries (sub-groups) by supplying business concepts and by endeavouring to achieve cooperation and synergy effects. In the long term, Pronator wishes to achieve a situation where 50% of its revenue comes from operations abroad. It has been stated that the parent company should be small.

Naturally Enator holds a special position in the Pronator Group since the Group's principal owner and Managing Director built Enator up and was an active participant in the company for many years. Enator's method of operation is regarded as a model for other parts of the Group. The Enator influence is reflected in Pronator's Board since three of the eleven directors in 1986 worked at Enator. Enator operates independently from the rest of the Group. Enator is treated in this book as an independent unit and I will only consider the Pronator Group as a marginal phenomenon in this context.

2.5   Market and Competitive Conditions

In Enator's line of business, there are a number of larger, and very many smaller, computer consultancy companies in Sweden. However, as far as Enator is concerned, the company is mainly competing with four other major companies: Programator, Cap Gemini, Data Logic and WM-data. In 1986, Enator and the three latter companies each had between 270 and 430 employees. Programator, on the other hand, had 2,400 employees, al-

though a considerable number were in areas other than computer consultancy. However, computer consultancy companies also compete with the computer departments of customer companies. Pressure on consultancy companies has increased as the supply of competent programmers has increased. Consultancies feel that the market has become tougher in 1986-87. Growth has begun to slow down. Consultancies have to demonstrate that they are so much more proficient in the execution of assignments than their customers' own staff so that customers can justify the higher costs of consultants.

There is a considerable market for consultancy services in this field. No great degree of market differentiation is employed, either by Enator or by its major colleagues. The service sold is flexible and the assignments vary. The market is heterogeneous. Almost all organizations above a certain minimum size are potential customers.

Note

[1]   Cf. Beckérus et al. (1988) who speak of assignment logic. Assignment logic differs from production logic and market logic which normally characterize the functioning of companies. Assignment logic denotes a certain perspective on the nature of operations which means that business is developed in close cooperation between the company and its customers: "In accordance with the assignment logic, products and services are defined in the actual interplay between the customer and the supplier. High quality in assignment activities depends on mutual confidence where joint ideas, beliefs and evaluations have considerable importance for decisions. This assumes an organizational and social competence to initiate, structure and deal with the interaction between the customer and various parts of the company's own organization" (p 56).

3 Culture Theory

In this chapter, I will review and discuss the culture concept and culture theory. Initially, the level of discussion is rather general and inspiration is derived from anthropology, ethnology and sociology. Subsequently, I will touch on some aspects of organizational culture and symbolism research.

I present culture theory in this early chapter since cultural and symbolic interpretations are a consistent theme throughout this book. Other theories are described and discussed in connection with the presentation of various themes such as socialization, organization structure, corporate strategy, marketing, etc. For the most part, my presentation of the literature, empirical description and interpretation of various themes are interwoven. In the various chapters, cultural interpretations supplement and provide deeper insights into conventional analysis of the different themes covered.

3.1 The Culture Concept and Theories about Culture

It is hard to define the culture concept in precise terms. There are many intermediate ways of using the concept between the two extremes of either equating culture with a form of life and thus including most social life in the cultural concept, or defining culture as a narrow sector of artistic activity. Two examples of intermediate forms might be culture as collective consciousness and culture as common values, ideals and norms.

The culture concept has an interesting history which provides an excellent illustration of the many different meanings of the term. Williams (1977) notes that terms such as society, the economy and culture have changed dramatically in meaning over the centuries, even if these terms are not particularly old. "Society" at one time denoted active companionship, social contacts and joint action. (Cf. another meaning of "society" in English is when it aspires to a form of association.) "Economy" represented the management of a household and later of a small township or community. Both concepts have, of course, subsequently come to represent a general system or order of comprehensive social circumstances or of production, distribution and exchanges. "Culture" originally denoted the

growing and cultivation of plants and animals and, in a wider sense, the development of the human soul.

In the 18th century, "culture" was equated with "civilization". Attacks by Rousseau and the romantics on civilization as something superficial and artificial, helped to give the concept of culture an alternative meaning as an "inner" or "spiritual" process, contrasting with "external" development. Its meaning was then extended further to include both "inner" development and also all the various means and mechanisms which supported this development, that is to say religious, artistic, literary and other institutions and practices which involved meanings and evaluations. The latter are societal institutions, and the relationship between culture and society – whose changed meaning also contributed to the varying fates of the concept of culture – became problematical. However, the difficulties were to some extent surmounted since the social forms of culture were primarily linked with the "inner" life. As time passed, the religious aspect of culture diminished in importance. The further development of the culture concept meant that it became a social concept with varying sociological and anthropological meanings. The tension which arose between this meaning and the traditional idea of culture as an "inner" process (including art, etc.) has become crucially important. Williams summarizes this as follows:

The complexity of the concept of 'culture' is then remarkable. It became a noun of 'inner' process, specialized to its presumed configurations in 'whole ways of life'. ... In any modern theory of culture this complexity is a source of great difficulty (Williams, 1977, p 17).

As Williams points out, the relationship between "social" and "inner" life presents a problem in cultural analysis.

In anthropological culture theory, there are various approaches to the relationship between the social and cultural spheres. The cultural sphere is often understood as ideational, a matter of ideas and meanings. The following account is partly based on Keesing (1974).

The kind of definition of culture contained in an encyclopaedia might be presented as follows:

the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, quoted in Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

Definitions of this type are applied, especially in current corporate culture research, but according to many modern anthropologists they are far too broad and uninformative. A traditional, comprehensive meaning for culture should be restricted to cover less but reveal more. The question then

is what culture should refer to – in other words what should be the focus of culture research. One approach is to start with the object of study (society or appropriate aspects of society – for example organizations) as sociostructural systems, and look at culture as permanently anchored in social conditions and manifested in a way of life, behavioural patterns and outcomes of action. It is assumed that there is a close and harmonious relationship between culture and social structure. Culture is viewed as a common functional mechanism for citizens in a society, which guarantees an integrated societal life, stability over time and adaptation to the physical environment. This approach is not so very different from the encyclopaedic definition quoted above. However, defining culture as a comprehensive control and integration mechanism is less all encompassing than "the integrated pattern of human behavior".

This intimate, well integrated relationship between the material world (the social structure) and its cultural equivalent means that both reflect one another. It is considered possible to deduce the cultural components in the sociocultural system on the basis of observations of patterns of behaviour and social institutions.

This rather broad view of culture has been common among anthropologists of an earlier epoch and it is still applied. It also appears to be popular amongst many who study the culture of organizations. There are two main orientations in anthropology – social anthropology and cultural anthropology. The former focuses on social structures and the latter on cultural patterns (Singer, 1968). Both social anthropology and cultural anthropology employ more specific and more narrowly defined concepts of culture than those cited above. Social anthropologists do not say much about culture explicitly, even if they employ an implicit culture concept in their descriptions and analysis. Instead, the focus is on the social structure, that is to say a network of systems of social relationships, social classes and roles which are of a relatively stable nature. Various types of social phenomena – moralities, laws, labels, ties of kinship, religions, upbringing, languages, customs, etc. – are not studied in the abstract or in isolation but, instead, in direct and indirect relation to the social structure. However, phenomena such as listed above are regarded as symbols and expressions of the social structure – and hence are considered to be links with the concept of culture (Singer, 1968).

Social anthropology is rather closely related to sociology but differs, for example, in that the object of study is primarily alien or exotic societies, particularly societies which are (or were) regarded as "primitive", "simple", demarcated and stable. (See e.g. Leach, 1982, for an introduction to social anthropology.) Although a great deal of traditional and more recent organization theory has clear points of contact with this anthropological approach (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984a, Smircich, 1983a) there are rela-

tively few explicit references to such links in organizational culture research. Normally, links are made with a somewhat imprecise sociocultural concept or cultural patterns are emphasized in the sense of *conceptual or ideational phenomena*.

In this book, I employ the latter approach, focusing on the ideational level, but not too strictly. This approach is dealt with in the remaining pages of this chapter.

In recent decades, increasing numbers of those studying culture seem to be employing a more limited cultural concept and are primarily becoming more interested in ideational phenomena when they speak of culture. One approach emphasizes the knowledge aspects of a culture. The most frequently quoted representative of this cognitive theory of culture is Goodenough, who states that:

A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is viewed as not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them.
Culture ... consists of standards for deciding what is, ... for deciding what can be, ... for deciding what one feels about it, ... for deciding what to do about it, and ... for deciding how to go about doing it (quoted in Keesing, 1974, p 77).

According to Keesing, this approach has had only limited success, since it is too narrow to act as a guideline for anthropological studies conducted on a broad front. However, in organizational culture research there are a number of approaches which have points of contact with this cognitive anthropological school (see Alvesson and Berg, 1992, for an overview).

Another approach emphazises that cultures are symbolic systems. Culture is in this case defined as a system of common symbols and meanings. The central source of inspiration here is Geertz (1973). Like the cognitive anthropologists, culture is placed on a conceptual level but not, in this case, "inside" people's heads, but "between" their heads where symbols and meanings are general, collective phenomena. They can be seen in human patterns of action – at funerals, in cockfights, in Christmas festivities and in board meetings.

The following quotation illustrates 1) the ideational (conceptual) orientation, and 2) the difference between the symbol perspective and the cognitive perspective:

In attempting ... to reach ... a more exact image of man, I want to propose two ideas. The first of these is that culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters – as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes,