HOW IS THE CONCEPT OF LINE-STAFF PERCEIVED IN THE COUNTY OF NORRBOTTEN?

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ABSTRACT

The concept of line-staff has had a very big impact of how organizations are governed and how they are built up. Few recognize the immense influence of Fayol’s perspective on daily work within organizations and the notion of line-staff perspective is seldom brought into discussion. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007, Drucker 1998, FISCH 1961, Wren 2005) With the County of Norrbotten as empirical context an exploratory case study was performed to find out: “How the concept of line-staff is perceived within an organization with the County of Norrbotten as a model?” Fourteen semi-structured interviews were performed among six different groups: politicians, senior management, middle management within administration, middle management within a clinical setting, staff work without a management position or clinical work with subsidiary activities and productive work without administrative duties. The results from the interviews showed that the issue of line-staff is well known and is described as vital for the organization. The classical notion of line-staff consists of traits from machine bureaucracy (Wren 2005) and attributes related to a machine bureaucracy was also described within all groups interviewed. However, the notion of a professional bureaucracy was also brought forward; many times perceived as existing in parallel with the machine bureaucracy. Even if many of the images related to the concept of line-staff was related to the classical view of the concept some of the perceptions in practice were contradictory such as how far responsibilities of staffs are stretched. Since this is an exploratory case study the practical image of line-staff was studied for an increased understanding of the concept and the results could be used to better understand for example tensions and coordination issues within different groups in an organization. In addition, the perception from this study could build a framework for further research in for example a survey study.
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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The members in the drug and therapeutic committee discuss how current metrics could be improved to achieve a more rational prescription of drugs. The suggestion is to focus on five out of sixteen already existing parameters to make it easier for the clinicians to focus on the most important areas.

"Could we select five parameters out of sixteen, which we will focus more on?"

"What is the reason for that?"

"Clinicians can’t have sixteen parameters in their head. Actually it is hard for us working on the parameters to keep track of them all. Maybe we can help them out by selecting five out of the sixteen for extra focus?"

"Isn’t that a staff-line issue? We are staff and should just come up with some parameters and then it is for the line to take care of them!"

"Do the clinicians at the center where you work use the parameters?"
"No!"
"Does the clinic know about them?"
"No!"

"Is it a problem?"
"No it is a line-staff issue! We give the parameters to the line and it is their job to do the priorities and get them used."

In another part of the organization the manager at a health care center tries to get through and sort up the parameters and get the doctors interested in them. A bit from that health care center a pharmacist at the administrative building prepares how the parameters will be presented in a report.

Really, a person looking into this discussion from the outside wonders: “What is going on and what is all that fuss about?” The members of the drug and therapeutic committee are, however, referring to an organizational scheme. A scheme usually referred to as line-staff, which during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, have had an enormous impact on how organizations, preferably big ones, are built; regardless if it is in mining industry, retail or health care. (Wren 2005)

The theories behind line-staff are primarily created by Max Weber and Henri Fayol. (Wren 2005) Line-staff as the right model for all circumstances has, however, been challenged by prominent thinkers like Peter Drucker. (Drucker 1998, Kantrow 1980) In the example above, the members of the drug and therapeutic committee refers to the concept of line-staff when a decision is made about how much the committee indeed should do. In the case above it is easy to see the disadvantages with how the concept of line-staff is used. The end result of the parameters seem to be less important than how it best fits into the organizational scheme in the way it is perceived and witnessed from outside it can seem that the members of the drug and therapeutic committee refers to the concept of line-staff as a sacred cow that should not be questioned regardless how much it gets
in the way of progress. Is it then a slavish adherence or is the concept misunderstood and exaggerate?

The example above is from one organization and only from a certain part of it. However, is the scheme of line-staff vivid within organizations and if so how is line-staff affecting the thinking in different levels within an organization? In the discussion above at the Drug and therapeutic meeting the perception of line-staff actually decides how the issue is dealt with.

Business administration has long propagated for a rational attitude to organizations with the outset in Max Weber’s theories about the ideal bureaucracy where professional work in a disciplined way with rules. (Bluedorn 1991, Wren 2005) However, the metrics should be used for improvement close to the clinicians in their daily work. The introductory example can also be seen as an example of when an organizational scheme, here the one of line-staff, is put in foreground or with other words the issue of the organizational build up becomes the overriding question not the issue in itself. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010) With this example in mind it is not difficult to see the inherent problems and contradictions when the focus of the organizational scheme takes over the inherent problem of the question that should be solved.

The traditional theory of organizations has been criticized for its overreliance on rationality and order. (Kantrow 1980, Koontz, Harold, O'Donnell, Cyril, 1968) The life within the organization can, however, not be reduced to what seems to be well-ordered. Instead, other perspectives might be necessary to achieve organizational goals. The complexity of an organization makes it many times difficult to reduce how work is done into a theoretical frame work such as line-staff. A distance exist between the perfect organization and what is real existing within the organization. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007, Corvellec, Holmberg 2010, Drucker 1998) If the longing for order and how to fit
into an organizational scheme becomes the main goal it might not be surprising that the parameters themselves not are known by the clinics. (Wuolo, Rinander 2014) However, the pharmacist puts a lot of emphasis and work into describing the parameters that will appear in the annual report. This is well in notion with how the Drug and Therapeutic committee perceives the work within the organizational scheme and is also according to the classical theories about line-staff. (Wren 2005) The manager at the health care center expected to be line tries to sort up the different parameters into a hierarchy about which of them that appears more important. Sixteen parameters to the doctors will get them confused. The middle manager lacks thorough knowledge in drug treatment though and would rather have had the parameters differently structured into a hierarchy and wonders who will help her with that? Here the perception of line-staff that the Drug and Therapeutic Committee refers to can be seen as different with the classical and theoretical notion of line-staff. (Wren 2005) However, the theoretical notion does not steer an organization in itself and can be very different from the perception and how the organization in reality functions. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010, Alvehus 2012)

As described in the example above the notion of management does not seem straightforward as many times described in textbooks about organizational theories. Hence, the general notion of management often is set up for disappointment and can differ from what in reality is perceived within an organization. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010) Drucker describes in his works that management is a social discipline and has no natural laws like the physical sciences. In that aspect and within continuous change within organizations and their surroundings Drucker proposes that there is no “one right organization” for all purposes and circumstances. (Drucker 1998) As described previously the theories of line-staff are of big importance in the management of big organizations, although, they are not without problems. (Wren 2005, FISCH 1961) This paper will address the issue about line-staff in organizations and what it means to different groups.
1.2 Background and problem discussion

Many theories about the optimal organization have been developed with a dream of one right organization for all purposes. In his work “Management’s New Paradigms” Drucker proposes that there is no one right form of organization for all purposes. Instead, the theories that constitutes the right organization changes over time. That contrasts the management theorists of the earliest days where Henry Fayol and Walter Rathenau worked towards the assumption of one right organization.(Drucker 1998) Even if it seems easy in theory to identify the one right organization, practice has shown otherwise. (Mintzberg, Quinn 1991) Management is a social science and what seems true in management is often the result of the prevailing paradigm and persons that do not adhere to the assumptions made within that paradigm are often understood to infer wrong statements. Social sciences, however, do not have “any natural laws” like physical sciences. Instead social sciences deals with the behavior of people and human institutions with the result that what was wrong yesterday might be right today. A good example is the theories of Mary Parker Follet (1868-1933), who was one of the most insightful early management scholars and her ideas even preceded the Hawthorne studies. Philosophically and intellectually she was a member of the paradigm of the social era with her thoughts of conflict resolution through integration or authority with “power with” instead of “power over”. Her ideas were, however, ignored since they differed from the assumptions that determined the truth of that time.(Wren 2005, Drucker 1998)

Follet’s ideas, however, contrasted the thoughts of the time where the paradigm of the bureaucratic and administrative school were prevailing, hence, they were not considered in the paradigm of the time where the notion of the one right organization was prevailing. After the assumptions laid by Follet many different theories have emerged about how an organization should be built for different conditions. (Drucker 1998, Wren 2005, Mintzberg 1979)
However, with the introductory example in mind the question appears if the solution to that problem was based on a misunderstanding of the concept of line staff or if the prevailing view was that it, indeed, work perfectly and no more actions had to be taken into consideration. Or could it be that the concept of line-staff is applicable in dealing with certain circumstances whereas it in other circumstances is has to be considered in another way? (Drucker 1998, FISCH 1961) The “traditional” or “bureaucratic” management is what has been taught and even popular management recommendations are addressed as recommendations made under the notion of general management since it would otherwise be a too different story from what previously has been learned. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007) This paper will be about the notion of line-staff and how it is perceived within an organization today.

1.3 Research question

How is the concept of line-staff perceived within an organization with the County of Norrbotten as a model?

1.4. Purpose
The purpose of this study is to get an increased understanding about how the concept of line-staff in reality is perceived and used within an organization. Since it is likely to differ between different subgroups the concept will be further explored in different groups within the empirical context. Apart, from finding out how well known the concept is within organizations, a conceptual model to further explore notions that can be found in the literature in connection to the concept of line-staff is proposed. In addition, concepts within the empirical context that can influence the perception will be taken into consideration when building the conceptual model for a better understanding of the perceptions explored. Example of such perceptions are attributes related to machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy. Hence, this study aim to get an increased understanding for how the concept of line-staff in practice is perceived within an organization in practice.

A database search of the concept of line-staff does not render many results and research about the concept seems even rarer in modern times. (See discussion of theory on more on this.) That could either mean that the notion does not render any interest or that a lack exists between the concept in practice and academic research? However, is the notion of line-staff well known and if so how is the perception of it? To know more about the perception about line-staff is important, since it can affect daily work as it did in the example described in the introduction. With that in mind and concerning the sparse research documents on the theme in modern time it is the aim of this study to bring additional knowledge by getting a deeper understanding about how the concept of line-staff is perceived within an organization. In addition, what seems obvious in theory might not be so in practice. Propose that the theme is well understood within an organization and obviously influence everyday work then it is obvious that a more thorough understanding is of value. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010, Holmblad Brunsson 2007)
1.5 Structure of the thesis

In the introduction an example of the influence of the conception of line-staff in daily work is presented in its empirical context. In addition, a discussion is held about different types of organizations and perceptions of organizations not at least in practice leading to the research question and purpose of the study. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010) In the following theory chapter different organizational theories with importance to the concept of line-staff is discussed together with other management theories that in some ways also can be contradictory to the classical notion of line-staff. The purpose of this is to achieve a background of classical as well as modern management theories that can influence how line-staff is perceived and develop a theoretical framework for the research question. The method chapter describes the semi structured interviews and how they are performed to reliably explore how the concept of line-staff is perceived within different groups in the organization. To answer the research question and to achieve the purpose of the study the results from the interviews are presented and analyzed. Questionnaires from the interviews as well as tables are presented in the appendices.

1.6 Research ethics

Each of the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study prior to the interviewees and that it was voluntarily. In addition, the interviewees were informed that they could avoid to answer a particular question or at any time stop their participation in the study. The interviewees were also informed that the interviews were anonymous and that the information written down and published in the report should be anonymous as well.
2. THEORY

The fundamental idea of an organization is that goal can better be reached with cooperation than by individual work and that the whole of the organization is more productive than each of its single parts. However, organizations are not without problems and through history different theories have emerged about how an organization should be constructed to be as effective as possible. For that aspects like cooperation, division of work, specialization, governance, hierarchy, professionalization and leadership are of big importance. Also goals and results are important: who formulates the goals and are the overall goals of the organization the same as the goals of the individuals within the organization. (Bruzelius, Skärvad et al. 2011)
Organization theories can be seen as a notion for theories about organizations with the aim to describe, analyzing and understand how organizations work. Management on the other hand deals with the notion about how organizations should be organized, governed and changed, hence how the theoretical framework is used in practice. (Bruzelius, Skärvad et al. 2011) However, recommendations for how organizations should be built up and management usually lack enough empirical evidence. In fact, the notion of general management with its foundation in the theories of Fayol and Weber are rarely questioned. Instead, their theories are taken as facts and people within the organization, who do question the notion are taken for less knowable about how an organization should be built up and function. It seems then unfeasible to question the ideas of Fayol and instead of a vital discussion of management the notion is solidified and other aspects are put forward instead. Hence, the fundamental question of general management is distracted and a necessary discussion of the notion is hampered. In such circumstances the notion of general management will never serve as a theoretical concept which adequately describes managerial practice. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007)

One of the aims of this study is to get a deeper knowledge into the concept of line-staff, which, in many ways developed and refined by the theoreticians Weber and Fayol. (Wren 2005) Hence, it is important not to leave this theories aside with their close connection of line-staff to machine bureaucracy and the notion of general management. In addition, other notions that are supposed to influence the thinking and perception of line-staff are described.

### 2.1 Weber and bureaucracy
Max Weber was during his lifetime more famous for his political ideas than for his ideas about the bureaucratic organization. Actually, his book “The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation” was published first four years after his dead. His ideas of the bureaucratic organization would, however, have an enormous impact of management. Attributes from Webers form of bureaucracy can be seen as the need for a staff of administrators to execute ordinances of the leader, hence creating orderly, routine and day-to-day execution. Further, a strict hierarchy with a top-down perspective where the hierarchy is “monocratic” i.e. its apex is one person not a college and the conduct of business is tight and ram-rod straight. Officials are grouped into departments or sections. Knowledge and professional qualifications should be the essence of how officials owe their positions and officials should be selected by superiors not elected. Promotion is by “next in line” and not merit. Salaries relate to status not performance. Records are central as an instrument of power and much emphasis is on rules and formal documents. With those prerequisites such an organization would, according to Weber, run with machine-like efficiency. The military is an example of such an organization. For the machine like organization to be effective Weber stressed the necessity of formal rules to reach set goals and procedures. With that way of work the leader could always refer to set rules instead of having to use his or hers authority. (Höpfl 2006, Hindle 2008, Nilsson 1999)

The bureaucratic organization is often referred to as an organization with order and structure where fair and uniform decisions are made with little risk for arbitrariness. Critiques, however, refer to an organization where impersonal rules can lead to inefficiency: “You do what the rules say – not more”. Rules also need monitoring and control which can lead to conflicts between those controlling and those being controlled. Moreover, rules cannot be designed to cover all situations that will appear. (Nilsson 1999)

2.2 Fayol and administration
Fayol is by many regarded as the person who laid the framework for management theory and is the founder of what has become known as the Administration school of management. He presented his ideas in the book *Administration Industrielle et Generale* which was published in 1916. Essential to the teaching of Fayol is the five-point breakdown of managerial responsibility into planning, organizing, co-ordinating, commanding and controlling. In many aspects this division has pervaded management thinking since. Like Taylor, Fayol was an early management thinker, however, he had another perspective. Taylor propagated for a bottom up perspective with focus on the workers actions and trying to apply what he learned at lower levels of hierarchy. Fayol, on the other hand, had a top-down approach where he looked at the organization from the view of senior managers. To lead is for Fayol to plan. It is necessary with concrete goals to plan around and when the planning is done activities should be executed by order and coordination. When the results of the organization is studied it is in itself a process of control with comparisons, assessments, discussions and critiques. A process that then will stimulate further planning, strengthen the organization and increase the possibilities for control and coordination. (Hindle 2008, Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005)

From Fayol’s five points, described above, he formulated principles for a good administration and here we will look a little closer on some of them. In the principle, division of work, Fayol advocates that specialization of labor will lead to an increased output since the workers skill will increase. Tasks should not be transferred to other employees since that would lead to decreased productivity since the tasks has to be learned once again. (Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005, Nilsson 1999)
Another principle is authority, which for Fayol means the right to lead and give order. Fayol
distinguishes between formal and personal authority. Formal authority is received by the position
in the organization, whereas personal authority is received by personal knowledge, experience,
character and ability to lead. Both formal and personal authority is necessary for a manager. As a
natural effect of authority comes responsibility. Fayol’s principle of discipline propose that it is
important that discipline is imposed to everyone within the organization. Obedience, good manners
and respect for what are agreed on are important. Sanctions should be delivered to those that do not

Unity of command is another of the principles that often is referred to in Fayol’s teaching. Each
employer should only take orders from one superior. Close to Unity of command is the principle of
Unity of direction. There should only be one program for all operations that are necessary to reach
a given objective. With the principle Scalar chain Fayol describes the chain of superiors from the
ultimate authority to the lowest ranks. In addition, Scalar chain also describes the channels for
communication. In order to counter eventual delays Fayol developed his gangplank which allowed
communication to cross line, but only if agreed on by all parties and only if superiors are informed
Centralization is another and for Fayol central principle, where orders are transferred from the top in the organization to all its different parts like a nervous system, where impulses are brought to the brain from the periphery. In the brain or at the organization’s top the impulses converge. Then order are transferred back to the periphery to set the body or the different parts of the organization into motion. However, Fayol also proposed that the degree of centralization should take the employers qualities into consideration in order to continuously use their abilities in the best way possible. Hence, the degree of centralization should be of right proportion to optimize personal and in some cases a more decentralized organization could be appropriate. According to Fayol, everything that increase the role of the subordinate equal decentralization. (Nilsson 1999, Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005)

The principle Order refers to that people and resources should be used in their appropriate place. Each task should fit neatly into the structure of activities. Equity represents a principle for employee relations, which, should be based on fairness, kindliness and justice. The principle, Stability of tenure of personnel, focus on the importance that the employees will remain within the organization and provides for orderly personnel planning and provisions. The principle Esprit du Corps describes workers morale and that there is a duty to managers to fulfill that an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding is created. (Wren 2005, Nilsson 1999)

The other principles of management according to Fayol that will not be mentioned in greater detail are: subordination of individual interests to the general interests of the organization, individual remuneration to keep and motivate employees and initiative to encourage energy and zeal throughout the organization. (Wren 2005)
Fayol’s view of mankind was mainly mechanistic and emphasizes the formal organization, although, he is aware of that some informal relations is needed among employees. The top manager leads the organization and has a staff to secure the competency that the top manager lack. The staff has, however, no right to give orders, instead, the staff should function as a consultant, secretary or examiner. It is the teaching of Fayol that builds the fundament for the line-staff system in the modern form of organization with its notion of general management. (Wren 2005, Nilsson 1999, Holmblad Brunsson 2007)

2.3 The line-staff organization

Although the teaching of Fayol and Weber have had a big impact of the modern form of line-staff organization it was not a totally new concept where for example the teaching of Emerson has been important. In addition, many authors attest that the line-staff concept arose in military organizations. For example general Von Moltke had made the Prussian army tremendous efficient with his general staff concept. In that concept each subject that was vital to the military effort was studied to perfection by a separate staff specialist. These specialists formed then a supreme general staff to advise the commander. In the military line refers to those in line, whereas staff refers to two distinct functions: general staff, which is somewhat analogous to the board of directors where policies are formed and where mayor decisions are taken; the other function is to support activities like the Medical Corps, Ordnance Corps and Signal Corps. As was very apparent in the teachings by Fayol it is in the latter form the staff concept is seen from his view. Hence – support organizations for the main line activities. (FISCH 1961, Nilsson 1999, Wren 2005)
The line-staff concept has been criticized for being a breeding ground for conflicts between staff and line. The answer by Fayol is that it should be taken care of by the principle Unity of command. However, divorcing staff from all authority over the line respects Unity of command, but violates in some extent the principle of specialization. Hence, decisions cannot be made by the people most qualified to do so. (Browne, Golembiewski 1974) One other reason to conflict can be the close linkage between service and control. Opposing views might exist between staff and line and if the staff did the underlying work the risk is that they then also control the decision being made. (Belasco, Alutto 1969) McGregor sees that the conventional line-staff concept might waste human resources, lead to increased friction and antagonism, a need to develop elaborate and costly control mechanisms and a lowering of commitment to organizational objectives. (Browne, Golembiewski 1974) Another important aspect is that different perceptions and expectations often exists between staff and line role performers. Not at least in this paper that will be one important aspect to investigate. (Belasco, Alutto 1969)

2.4 The human relations movement

Even though the notion of general management in practice in many ways seems untouched or at least its theoretical framework, the notion of general management and its call for one right type of organization has, however, not been without critics. To understand other aspects of organizations and management some other schools will be discussed beneath. Although, other practices in reality often is seen more as recommendations under the prevailing paradigm of the concept of line-staff or notion of general management (Holmblad Brunsson 2007). Not at least in a knowledge organization it becomes interesting to see how the perception of line-staff is in reality not at least since not one single notion of line exists. (see below the discussion about machine bureaucracy and professional bureaucracy).
In the introduction to this paper the contributions of Follet to management was discussed. Follet can be seen as belonging to the Social Person era. The Social Person era can to some extent be seen as an answer to the mechanistic view of the organization represented, among others, by Fayol, Weber and Taylor. During the era of human relations movement focus was drawn to sociometry, group dynamics, participation in decision making, leadership and motivational appeal to group members as well as tools and models to explain formal as well as informal aspects of organizations. The notion of this era might, however, more reflect an emerging philosophy than a settled criterion for managerial action. A number of amendments to the previously held concepts were delivered and among them were an increasing emphasis on the social needs and importance to belong to a group. In addition, a desire emerged to enlarge the contents of jobs to dispel the discouraging side effects of overspecialization of labor. A bottom up perspective was put forward in contrast to the earlier emphasis on hierarchy and authority. Participative management; an increased recognition of the informal side of the organization, the role of worker sentiments and informal activities were other important aspects in the human relations movement. Management came during this era to draw attention into how to get people involved and thereby increase worker satisfaction and reach higher productivity. Hence, with the human relations movement came a shift in emphasis with increased concern for people rather than production and a concern for the illogic of sentiments rather than the logic of efficiency. A hierarchy of human needs, and viewed leadership of group-interactive-situational problems were put in foreground. An increased understanding of problems concerning an integration of formal system with informal system were in focus. As an example Barnard presented a model where he attempted to synthesize the formalists and the human relationists. The Human relations movement emphasized values of the group where work is performed and proposed and that those aspects are more important for production than the values of top management. In addition, in studies it was revealed that informal groups existed within the organization with own leaders and norms parallel to the formal organization. A remark made by representatives for the Human relations is that these informal groups always will exist within an organization and in some way or another effect the work being performed and it is important to have that aspect in mind when governing the organization. In the mechanistic types of organization governing by formal documents is important. However, differences in the perception about what in reality has to be done and what is written on formal documents can vary. In addition, an organization cannot be clear cut from human relations, hence, it is obvious that theories from the “human school” of
organizations cannot be put aside if the perception of line-staff in practice within an organization shall be understood - even if the concept line-staff initself belongs to the more mechanistic aspects of organizational building. (Nilsson 1999, Wren 2005, Holmblad Brunsson 2007)

2.5 The professional bureaucracy

If Weber’s bureaucracy often is referred to as the machine bureaucracy, the professional bureaucracy was brought forward by the works of Mintzberg. According to Lamond: “Fayol gave us management as we would like it to be and Mintzberg gave us management as it is”. (Lamond 2004, Jacobsen, Thorsvik 2008)

The professional bureaucracy is characterized by specialization and that employers in the operative work has a fairly big mandate and latitude in their daily work. Decisions can to a big extent be decentralized since most of the people in the operative work consists of experts. Hence, the specialists are front line and through their education they are taught how to solve problems in a standardized way. Whereas the machine bureaucracy creates prerequisites for coordination through governance by rules and administrative routines; the professional bureaucracy instead try to achieve coordination through standardized work and through recruitment of people who holds certain skills. In the professional bureaucracy decision-making is delegated to the employees in questions, which, represents their area of knowledge. The structure is specialized and therefore horizontal complex. Usually hospitals are referred to as an example of professional bureaucracy. (Jacobsen, Thorsvik 2008)
Proposed advantages of the professional bureaucracy is that delegated decision-making provides good quality in work that has to be done and enables that in a more efficient way. Proposed disadvantages are that rivalry and conflicts can appear between different professions, which in turns leads to problems with cooperation and governance. In addition, management of economy can be difficult since professional rules and put their norms above economic realities. Hence, organizations based on the professional bureaucracy often has problems to control costs. (Jacobsen, Thorsvik 2008)

2.6 Modern management theories

For an understanding of how the concept of line-staff is perceived within an organization it is important to get some insight into more modern management theories that can be important in an organizations build up. However, to take an approach into more modern management theories is complex due to its diversity and volume. Therefore, just a short presentation of some of these theories will be reviewed in this section. In the scope of this paper it is, however, interesting to note that one of four broad management areas in modern management theories is devoted to extensions of the activities that can be contributed to the work of Fayol. (Wren 2005)
Business process reengineering can be ascribed to Michael Hammer and James Champy and is thought to enable activities to cross through organizational units. In addition, it suggests that created processes are best understood at the activity level. The concept of Business process reengineering proposes a radical redesign of the organization to achieve improvements and the concept has become very popular. The main message is to organize activities from the processes that can be identified within the organization and then abandon the principles of division of labor and specialization. To exemplify its popularity one study in the 1990s showed that it had been adopted by almost 80% of Fortune 500 companies. Hammers once wrote: Process improvements come from “walking in the customer’s shoes”, finding out what it is the customers really want and then designing processes to meet that demand. Business process reengineering involves analyzing a company’s central processes and reassemble them in a more efficient fashion and in a way that rode roughshod over long-established (but frequently irrelevant) functional distinctions. Slicing the silos into their different processes and reassemble those in a less vertical fashion enables corporations to look into new ways how to streamline themselves. Some commentators saw, however, business process reengineering differently and as a return to Taylors scientific management ideas. One fault of the idea of process reengineering, which the creators also recognized, was that managers were happy to impose the concept on others but not on themselves. In the concept of process reengineering it is not enough to focus on “How can we do things faster or how can we reduce costs?” Instead the question should be asked: “Are we doing the right thing at all?” Business process reengineering refers to how we want to organize ourselves due to the current circumstances with respect to current market demand and technologies. In that case it is irrelevant how people and businesses operated before, hence, we could forget titles, divisions and clusters. With business process reengineering work diminishes from limited functions to multidimensional. Some different roles can be defined within the reengineering process: The leader, who should have visionary role and motivate to create an atmosphere that will lead into reengineering; The process owner has the responsibility of a certain process and shall make sure the work is done, hence, the process owner shall create a reengineering team and motivate the team to do the work; The reengineering team do the actual work including planning, two kind of members should be in the team – insiders and outsiders where the outsiders should view the process objectively, the steering group should decide in between the different reengineering processes and how resources should be allocated, in addition, the group should function as a sounding board for the process owner and team; The reengineering
tsar should support the process owner and the reengineering team to do it possible for them to fulfill their duties and, in addition, coordinate all current reengineering activities. (Hindle 2008, Nilsson, Olsson et al. 1997)

The next concept is Change management, which, goes back to the work by, among others, Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Central in Change management is the aspects that companies goes through cultural changes due to changes in technology, behaviors of customers and changing economic realities. The changes surrounding the company also requires the activities within the company to change. With a surrounding world in constant change it is hard for a company’s organization and strategy to be fixed. Should the elements of an organization fit together in set ways to create known images or should they be used to creatively build new images? The configuration of the organization has in change management to change in accordance with the changes in the surroundings. Critique to change management bring the point that managers tend in the concept to use to much focus on discussions on how to achieve change and how the world really is constituted rather than mobilizing action among individuals. In change management it is important to have a bottom up perspective and that an atmosphere is created of open communication and cross training. (Hindle 2008, Tanner, Oakland 2007)

Toyotaism is another management theory that has appeared with increased focus since the 70ties and forwards. By some Toyotaism is seen as contrasting the previously hold notion of Fordism, which therefore, here is used as a reference point. The focus in the assembly line or the organizational model at Ford was “just in case”. The assembly line could not be stopped since that would lead to supply shortages down the line, hence, inventories had to be stockpiled “just in case”. In Fordism quantity was emphasized rather than quality. With increased change not at least in technology the system became more and more rigid and costly. To withstand the increased concurrence not at least from low cost countries that could mass produce to a lower cost focus was transferred to quality and an interest to develop higher quality production. If Ford in the early days of management was the role model Toyota has now become the model for quality and productivity. The management methods used by Japanese companies were ascribed as the reason to their success. Human relation strategies were used to engender the creative involvement of workers in the task of
production and quality control. Production workers should be integrated into the areas of managerial concern, and responsibility for productivity and quality should be spread among a broader cross-section of the workforce. The aim is to get the workers to view their interests as consonant with those of managers, and thus comply with managerial efforts to promote greater productivity and efficiency. The key structural components of the Toyotaism model can be described as: Structures that facilitate participation with expanded opportunities for input by workers in the decision-making process with the aim to gain consensus on the goals and methods of production. In addition, divisions and hierarchies should be cross-cutted to get workers integrated into the organization. Bureaucratic control techniques like constellation of mobility and career ladders should be used to engender long-term organizational attachment, motivation, and loyalty. What is achieved in Toyotaism compared with Fordism is to decrease some of the tensions built-into Fordism between differentiation and integration. Fordism places a great emphasis on a rigid division of labor, extending horizontally across positions in the production process and vertically between production workers and managers. In Toyotaism communication is an important feature with focus on interaction and exchange of ideas between workers and managers. The objective for that is to improve the production process, eliminate wasteful work practices and establish total quality. This increased communication between workers and management allows management to access valuable information termed tacit knowledge. The understanding the workers have about their work tasks are usually beyond the easy comprehension and formalization of management. However, if the managers gain access to the intricacies of the labor process they can convert that knowledge into explicit knowledge that informs the reorganization of production and further rationalizes and streamlines the production system. For Toyotaism it is then important to facilitate vertical integration and communication between workers and Managers. (Jaffee 2001)

Lean production refers to a wide array of organizational techniques designed to minimize waste, continually improve the efficiency and quality of the production process, and eliminate bottlenecks and slack in the production system. Lean production requires job switching, cross-training, multiple skills and teamwork to enhance communication among team members so that knowledge and information can be used for problem solving. To achieve continuous improvement “Kaizen” a labor-management communication system is needed that provides formal channels for discussing and
acting upon production-related issues. By continuously exploring new ways of doing things there is no tradeoff between quality and cost. The key is to do it in a new way so both perspectives are achieved, hence focus is on creativity instead of fixed production processes. Lean production is then thought to force organizational members to rethink their premises and operate in a more creative and innovative fashion. Individual skill and knowledge should be joined into a system of collective intelligence with an integration of research into development and manufacturing. The disadvantages of specialization and differentiation gave way to a holistic integrated organizational unit. To strengthen innovation, failure should not be as easy applicable to a certain person or unit as under an organizations which work under a more formalized and rigid divisions of labor. Under the Lean production system workers are not so tied to a single task. Hence, diffuse forms of attachment and commitments based on normative appeals play a greater role than in an organization with strict job classifications and task specifications and where human control is shaped under the formal structure. Integration is based less on formal directives and more on common sentiments and values. In comparison with Fordism it is important to remember that Lean production system does not do away with the assembly line. Instead, it eliminates rigid divisions of labor and single-task specialization in favor for multi skilled teams. Technical control is still, however, a key feature. One aspect of that is that the agency of managerial intervention and techniques is constrained by the structural conditions in which organizations operate.

Critiques to Lean mean that it has not been as successful in western countries like in Japan. One reason put forward is that it concentrates on aspects, which, businesses always have concentrated on. In addition, the concepts many times are only used for certain specific procedures. Since lean work to eliminate waste with diminishing inventories it might fit in some elective areas, however, with reduced inventories in an unpredictable environment it can lead to uncertainness. There are also concerns that employees feel that the burden is increased with stress when lean is introduced. What does “teamwork” in its essence really mean? Are the “teamwork” merrily a rhetorical advice to obscure the dominant role of supervision or is it a worker centered group that wield genuine authority? Other aspects put forward are that the success in corporate Japan in the 70ties and 80ties could be described to other factors than management techniques such as interfirm relations and access to capital with an expanding market. From the 90ties and forward the economy of Japan and lean manufacturing firms have experienced a down turn. (Jaffee 2001, Nilsson, Olsson et al. 1997)
2.7 Centralization and decentralization

One aspect as previously discussed about organizations are centralization and decentralization. In a centralized organization decisions are taken higher up in the organization, whereas in a decentralized organization more decisions are taken further down in the organization. There are benefits as well as disadvantages with too much centralization as well as with too much decentralization. Pros with a centralized organization can be that decisions taken can create increased coordination between different activities and gives a comprehensive view over a larger sphere. Hence, it works in the direction that different individuals get an equal treatment of the same type of issue. Decentralization, on the other hand, is beneficial for informal solutions and increases influence from individuals further out in the organization. Decisions are taken closer to where the daily activities are performed. In a decentralized organization there are less specialization and division of labor, hence, an increased need for multiskilled individuals. (Nilsson 1999)

2.8 Discussion of theory
In the introductory example the drug and therapeutic members takes up one perception about the notion of line-staff. That perception is, however, from their practical image of line-staff within the context the Drug and therapeutic committee is active. That existing perception about line-staff is, however, different from what is written in textbooks. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010, Alvehus 2012) One thing is obvious, though, and that is that the perception of line-staff has a thorough impact on the decision the Drug and Therapeutic Committee makes and how their image of the organization is. That image is most likely influenced by the classical theories that usually are referred to when describing the notion of line-staff, but it can also be affected by other management traits that affects an organization be it Human relation school or more modern management theories.

The concept of line-staff, however, does not seem to be reviewed very much in the literature (see next under Conceptual model) and if the perception of line-staff is as vivid on a general basis, within organizations, as described in the introductory example; it is important to get an increased knowledge about the different images that exists of line-staff in practise. Fisch writes: “Variations come and go, while the L-S concept remain”. (FISCH 1961) A similar view appears in Holmblad’s book about general management. In addition, before start of this study representatives from other organizations were asked if they are familiar with the notion of line-staff and all unanimously were (see the methodololgy chapter about generalizability).

Why is then the notion of line staff not more frequently discussed in the literature? One reason could be that the concept of line-staff is not known among others then by a few people within an organization, although, the discussion in the previous paragraph makes that less likely. Another explanation can be that line-staff is dealt with under other theories and that is another reason for why such broad descriptions are done about some other management theories in the theory chapter.
A selection of the huge amount of different management theories had, however, to be done where for example the administrative school with its base in the line-staff system is one of the theories more thoroughly reviewed whereas Taylor’s scientific principles of management is not reviewed since the connection to line staff is not so obvious. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007, Wren 2005) It is, however, important to note that some theories without a clear connection to the classical view about line-staff are reviewed. The reason for this is, as previously mentioned, to achieve a better understanding of influences from other management theories that can affect individuals’ image of how line-staff is perceived in practice. The more modern management theories that are described are those, which, commonly are referred to in the context where the study takes place. (Nilsson 1999, Hindle 2008). Although more management theories could have been described in detail for example Contingency theory, it is without the scope of this study to describe all management theories that one way or another can influence the perception of Line-staff in practice. In regard to Contingency theory that notion is to some extent also covered in the introductory discussion about Druckers view about that there is not “one right organization” for all purposes and circumstances. (Martinsons, Martinsons 1994, Drucker 1998, Miner 2011). Moreover, for the same reason a review in the theory chapter will not be performed about what in organizational theory is called “Critical management studies”. (Adler, Forbes et al. 2007) The theory is in itself interesting in understanding the perception of line-staff, however, somewhere the line has to be cut about which theories that are possible to review more in detail and since a number of authors do not mention the concept it is not reviewed in detail in the theory section. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010, Forssell, Ivarsson Westerberg et al. 2007, Drucker 1998). In addition, “Critical management studies” is not mentioned when discussing organizational theories close to the context studied (Nilsson 1999) and is seldom discussed in popular management discussions (Alvehus 2012). That said the theories is not proposed not to be of importance in the discussion about modern management theories that can affect the perception of line-staff in practice.
If the selections of different management theories in the theory chapter are too narrowly described it should be obvious after the interviews have been performed and then presented in the analysis of the data. This is a case study with the aim to explore the perception of line-staff within its current context and some theories are more connected to the concept of line-staff than others. Fayol with his notion of general management and Weber with his machine bureaucracy have had an immense influence in the development of the notion of line-staff. (Wren 2005, Holmblad Brunsson 2007). The Notion of general management as a twin to the line-staff concept with its background in the machine-like way of building up an organization has been successful and prized for its orderly structure with a central role in the structure of most organizations over a certain size. (Bluedorn 1991, Forssell, Ivarsson Westerberg et al. 2007) However, the machine-like structure and order has not been without critics and although the notion of general management with its line-staff thinking has been of immense importance reactions to the mechanistic views were already in the early days of organizations eminent with the appearance of the human relation school as a reaction to the mechanistic view and instead an increased concern about factors like how human interacts within an organization. (Wren 2005) As mentioned previously in a discussion about how an organizational scheme is perceived within an organization these factors has to be taken into consideration since it is likely that they in one way or another affect how an organizational image is perceived in practice. What kind of different views exists within an organization with the different schemes building the real conceptions within organizations and not only the organizational themes from textbooks? How are for example the perception about formal and informal images within an organization and how do these different images interact with the perception of line-staff. Here the notions of the machine bureaucracy in many ways contrasts for example the professional bureaucracy. (Drucker 1998, Mintzberg 1979, Corvellec, Holmberg 2010).
As described above the notion of line “line-staff” does not seem to be reviewed very much in the literature. If a search is performed using the word “line-staff”, at the search engine available at the University Library at Blekinge Institute of Technology, it is obvious that the field is not in foreground, hence, probably not subject to extensive research at the moment or during the last decades. The reason for that could be that it is studied as an integrated part of the preferably mechanistic management theories developed during early days, further described in the theory chapter. Another, explanation to the spare amount of articles about the notion of line-staff could be that the notion is of no value to organizations. This is, however, contradictory to the information given when discussing the matter with representatives from other organizations for example the County of Västerbotten and Västernorrland in the public sector and SAS and Telia in the private sector.

Propose that the concept of line-staff is of big importance and vivid within an organization as it is for the Drug and Therapeutic Committee in the introductory example. In such a case it is obvious that an increased understanding of the topic is of interest not at least since it seems to affect an organization and at the end the subsequent results from it. Theory and practice within an organization differs (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010), hence, it is the intention of this this study to get a further understanding for how the perception is about the concept of line-staff within organizations and the aim is to get a further understanding in what the concept of line-staff means in big organizations today.

2.9 Conceptual model
As described in the previous chapter this study tries to approach important concepts for the scheme of line-staff. With its connection to other theories preferably the notion of mechanistic views in close connections to Weber’s machine bureaucracy and Fayol’s notion of general management line-staff can in itself seem like a problematic concept to understand. Hence, the concept is in need of clarification not at least in regard to how it seems to be used in practice. According to the literature the line-staff concept also risk to render frictions within an organization with loss of productivity. (Koontz, Harold, O'Donnell, Cyril, 1968) Another notion that can strengthen the need for further research about the practical finding to the concept of line-staff is that human tend to construct theoretic models in the social systems they are active and act accordingly to these, hence, that an organization are understood as it is perceived by the members of that organization. If the notion of line-staff is vividly known it is important to further understand the practical perceptions of the concept for an understand about the forces which shapes the organization. (Simon 1952, Litwin, George H., Stringer, Robert A., 1968) Another important notion is that the perceptions of an organization among the members can differ depending on which subgroup that is studied, hence the images of an organization can differ between groups. (Lawrence, Garrison et al. 1986) For the conceptual model we assume that individuals within certain groups develop certain images of the organization which are different or overlaps the images of other subgroups, hence, rendering various degrees of differences and similarities. Components with relevance to organizational images in the theories of line-staff and these characteristics will be studied. Although not in the conceptual model connections to more modern management theories will be studied as well. Although it might seem distant from the research question, which, studies the perception of line-staff; a description of more modern management theories is important for a better understanding of the context studied. In addition, this is a case study to explore; hence, it is of value also to get a deeper understanding of more modern management theories for a better understanding of the concept, although, not being part of the conceptual model proposed. The components in the conceptual model were chosen in accordance to the description of line-staff in accordance with other mechanistic theories.
3. METHOD

3.1 Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to get an increased understanding about how the concept of line-staff in reality is perceived and used within an organization at different levels. Apart, from finding out how well known the concept is within the organization, a conceptual model to further explore attributes that can be referred to the organization and perception of line-staff is proposed see the Conceptual model. In addition, by coding and using conceptualization other images of importance for the concept of line-staff within the organization will be explored. Hence, the aim of the study is to gain an increased knowledge of the concept of line-staff within an organization in practice and for a better understanding the general view of the organization is also explored. The perceptions of an organization among different subgroups can differ, hence, the perception of line-staff will also be explored within different subgroups. (Lawrence, Garrison et al. 1986) Although, the concept of line-staff might not be known by all employees in an organization, the characteristics of the models that form an organization will be studied further described in the conceptual model.

The purpose of research can be either exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. Since the purpose of this study is to find out how the concept of line-staff in reality is perceived within an organization the study will be exploratory. Information will come from relevant literature and by conducting focus group interviews. In exploratory research the answers are rarely specific since the focus is broad; however, it often leads to a better understanding of the issue. The aim is to get a better understanding of how line-staff is viewed in reality and how it interacts with areas of importance
in an organization such as decentralization contra decentralization or newer management theories such as process thinking and lean management. (Satyaprasad, Krishnaswami 2009, Hindle 2008, Nilsson 1999, Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)

### 3.2 Research approach

It is the nature of the research question that will determine the methodology which should be used and there are different ways to approach the subject that will be further investigated. A distinction can be made between deductive and inductive methodology. Since we want to find out more about how the concept of line-staff is perceived in an exploratory way and not draw any clear conclusions between variables an inductive method will be used and we will collect data to analyze so a theory can be built. If of a deductive approach was used a theory and hypothesis would instead be developed to design the study with the aim to test the hypothesis. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)

In addition, the methods to collect data are classified into qualitative and quantitative methods, although, a combination of the methods often are used. Characteristic for the qualitative method is that data often is provided in words, whereas in quantitative research data is provided by numbers. Hence, qualitative methods are used as synonym for collecting and analysis of non-numerical data whereas quantitative methods are used as synonym for collecting an analysis of numerical data. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008) This study will use a qualitative method since it will use non-numerical data. The study will be a case study since it is a useful tool when studying an area where the existing theory seems inadequate and it is therefore a useful tool in early stages of research when a theme needs to be further explored. Case studies are useful in answering the question how and are suitable for a deep and detailed investigation about contemporary phenomena within real life context. Case studies enable a valuable way of looking at the world around us and it is not necessary to be able to replicate the phenomena in an experimental setting.
Hence, a case study is useful in connecting the micro level with its actions of individual people to the macro level and large-scale social structures and processes. Taken the prerequisites referred to above a case study is for this study a good way in development of new thinking about how the line-staff is perceived in reality within an organization. The study will be of a single case design, which can be used if the case represents a testing of a well-formulated theory. Since the concept of line-staff is not new a single case study would be appropriate. (Yin 1994, Eisenhardt 1989)

A case study enables to get deeper into a subject explored and contrasts in that aspect a survey study, which enables a more broad perspective with an increased number of participants. A survey study requires, however, a more specific theory to be developed beforehand in order to accept or discard a hypothesis. In this study the real perception of line-staff is not known well enough for developing a hypothesis why a survey study will not be performed. In addition, a survey study is not suitable for inductive theory building, instead it is suitable for theory testing. The purpose of the study is to get a deeper insight in the real perception in an exploratory way within an organization; hence, a survey study would not be suitable to answer the research question. (Yin 1994, Greenhalgh 2010). Why was a case study chosen and not another qualitative method such as for example ethnographic, narrative, phenological or grounded theory? An ethnographic methodology would require the researcher to participate and observe the phenomenon researched during a certain period of time. Since it is proposed that the perception of the concept of line staff can differ between subgroups using an ethnographic methodology would give a too narrow perspective and require the researcher to participate in all these groups in one war or another. (Lawrence, Garrison et al. 1986, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007) A narrative method is based on storytelling and using a narrative methodology would, therefore, be too deep to allow the amount of interviews that are needed to catch different perspectives within the different subgroups studied. In addition, a narrative methodology tries to reconstruct the original history that is told by the interviewee and new perspectives that does not exist in the story should not be brought in. Instead the interviewee should respect what the interviewee self brings up. Since organizational theories and their attributes are not in all persons everyday working focus a risk would exist that vital information to understand the perception of line-staff in reality would risk to be left out. (Kvale, Torhell 1997, Trost 2005). A phenological approach would not fit the purpose of the study in the best way either, since
phenomenology is focused on individuals’ meaning of the human experience and are more suited for studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences. (Merriam 2009). A grounded theory could seem adequate to use, however, a grounded theory is more connected for the research of emerging objects where an inductive understanding is created in the process during which events unfold. Even if a part of this study could be thought to use a grounded theory method to study phenomena that appears during the interviews the notion of line-staff is not new and the conceptual model does indeed propose predetermined perceptions. When using grounded theory preconceived ideas should be minimized what is not the case in this study. In a case study the research question can be formulated beforehand what is the case in this study where the perception of line-staff is within an organization is further explored, hence, a case study is a suitable methodology for this explorative study (Hesse-Biber, Leavy 2008).
3.3 Research setting and design

It is important that the study is designed properly for the answer to the research question to be as close to reality as possible. This study will be a case study since it is a good methodology to get more knowledge into a phenomena within its current context. The research method that best answer the research question and meet the objectives of the study should be used. (Baxter, Jack 2008, Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)

Semi-structured interviews were used, which makes it possible to have a list of themes and questions to be covered. However, it also gives the flexibility to vary some questions in particular interviews for example in a specific organizational context. In exploratory research semi-structured interviews is a common method. To better catch the image of the organizational image primarily open questions were used to achieve a description of the organization by the interviewees. However, to get more knowledge about specific attributes for importance to the research question even more closed questions were used such as how the interviewee perceived there work within the organization. The reason for this is that it will provide a better understanding of the subgroup within the organization that is interviewed and also if that subgroup is correctly described. There are a variety of research interviews and when the interviews take place it will be emphasized not to lead the interviewees in any direction. In addition, after the questionnaire was created it was discussed and previewed with some colleagues within the organization that the subject of line-staff previously has been discussed. The purpose for that was to check if the questions did catch the necessary images of the research question. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008, Yin 1994)

For the findings to be close to reality it is important to consider the reliability and validity of the data. A proper research design from the beginning is important to decrease the risk that data will not be credible. In quantitative research reliability can be referred to repeatability, hence if a measure produces the same result when used repeatedly it is said to be reliable. In qualitative research, however, the same data collection techniques and analysis should give the same yield if similar prerequisites exists regardless of which person
that perform the research. It is, therefore, important that the research set up is done properly. Since many of the questions had more of an open character and the interviewees were not led into any direction in the interviewing process; the interviews tended to differ in that way that certain themes could appear beneath different questions asked. To not miss out on any information given the transcripts were analyzed with use of computer software for enhanced reliability. With that approach the same premises should have existed to catch information from the different interviewees regardless of where the information appeared during the interviews. In addition, transparency in how the conclusions are drawn is important why citations from the interviews are presented in the result chapter. To reduce participant bias the respondent will be anonymous, although, it will be mentioned from which of the interviewing groups the data has its origin. In addition, the questions will be structured and prepared in advance in order to reduce observer error. The other consideration, validity, describes if the findings are what they appear to be or in other words if we are measuring what we set out to measure? Validity can be divided into external and internal validity. In qualitative research internal validity refers to the study design and how the research methods are carried out whereas external validity refers to transferability and also if the results are generalizable. For validity it is important how the interviews are structured in order not to lead the interviews in any direction. The goal is to come as close to the real empiric image as possible, hence keep out influences that can steer the interviewee in any specific direction. For that purpose the questions will not be sent out beforehand.

The study will be cross-sectional since it is the opinions given of the respondents when the interviews are performed that will be the data for the theory used. The interviews will be performed in a time frame of two weeks at the beginning of 2015. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008, Kvale, Torhell 1997, Svenning 2003)
The primary data will come from telephone interviews due to practical reasons. Telephone interviews might have some drawbacks in a non-structured interview where the opinions of the subject might be harder to explore. This might also be the case in semi-structured interviews although to a lesser extent. Here the questions are standardized, however, with the structure of open questions. (appendix A). In order not to disturb the interviewee’s image of the organization the questions were not sent out to the respondents beforehand. Such a procedure could have led to an interest of the topic with for example discussions with colleagues before the interview was held, hence, a risk that the perception of that individual respondents image of the organization would be influenced and for example more connected to the theoretic notion, hence, giving a view closer to what is learned in textbooks about organizations than the true image of the organization within the group studied. The intention is to achieve descriptions of the interviewees in order to understand the images of the organizations that are described. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008, Kvale, Torhell 1997)

However, since additional questions might be necessary to explore the objectives a structured form of interview will not be performed. As mentioned before the interviews will be anonymous for increased reliability so the interviewees feel secure to give the image that they really perceive about the organizational issues asked. Although, it mostly is suggested to record interviewees so nothing is missed; the judgment done in this case were not to record the interviews. The reason for that was to get the interviewees to feel more secure since it is important to get the real image of the subject studied, hence, lay the foundation for even controversial things to be said and avoid anyone to feel embarrassed if they for example feel that they do not to know so much about organizations. Hence, it was decided not to record the interviews. However, for the transcripts to be reliable so no important information were missed when typing during the interviews, non-important information was left out and not, in addition, when necessary the interview was asked to take a short pause.
The respondents were informed before the interviews that it is possible to avoid answering a certain question. The respondent might also be unfamiliar with the concept of line-staff and therefore difficulties exist to answer some of the questions. Appendix A will show the explanation for the persons who are not familiar with the concept of line-staff (Question 3). Question 4 will not be asked to the politicians. All the participants in the interview will at the time when the interviews take place either be employed or recently had their employment within the County of Norrbotten. (Kvale, Torhall 1997, Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)
The research purpose is to get at deeper understanding of how the perception of line-staff in reality is used within an organization at different levels. For this six different groups were defined: politicians, senior management, middle management within administration, middle management within productive work (clinical setting), staff work without a management position or productive work (clinical setting) with subsidiary activities and productive work without administrative duties (Appendix A). In each group three persons were contacted. According to Kvale in a study like this it is appropriate to interview between five and twenty-five persons depending on time and resources for the investigation. The number of persons that needs to be interviewed is depending on the character of the research question and the proposed variation between the interviewees. The specific interviewees were chosen as being a source that could be representative for the views within that group and be able to bring important information about the images of line-staff within the organization to the study. Hence, a strategic selection of the interviewees were performed. (Hjerm, Lindgren et al. 2014, Kvale, Torhell 1997) Before the interview all interviewees had written information about the purpose of the study (appendix B) as suggested by literature (Svenning 2003), however, three persons got the information presented by mouth before the interview. The invitation material (appendix B) was sent by email except for three interviewees who were reached by telephone and got the information presented that way. All interviews were performed by telephone and headphones was used to keep both hands free so the answers to the questions and any additional information easy could be printed down. Although it generally is recommended to record interviews (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008) in this case it was not done, since the respondent in that case could have felt more insecure with a risk of decreased reliability. The questions in the questionnaire were designed to reveal the images of the concept of line-staff within the organization as well as connecting characters to it and how it interacts with newer management theories as well. See the themes under the conceptual model and hypothesis discussion as well as the research question to get a clear picture of the background to the questions created in the questionnaire (appendix A).
3.4 Data analysis

Data were collected by semi-structured interviews as well as from secondary sources as articles, reviews and books. Short discussions to get an additional insight into the theme were also held by representatives from two other private as well as public organizations.

The interviews were transcribed; however, not necessary information was left out in order to be able to type down all necessities during the interview so no information was lost. The transcripts were then read and marked with the themes which appears in the conceptual model and in addition other relevant themes of importance to understand the image of the line-staff concept in in its current context practically. In addition, if a theme not thought about repeats itself or if it seems of interest to the perception of line-staff or the organizational image in itself was also marked. This process is usually referred to as coding. In this analysis of the data coding were preconceived as well as open-minded with the aim to conceptualize underlying pattern.
Codes on a similar themes were brought together to categorize the data. QDA-miner, a program to analyze qualitative data, was used with the different codes. (QDA Miner 4 Lite ver. 1.4). The specific codes found from manually going through the transcripts were then used as an extra check to find out so the themes were not missed out from other parts of the texts. Hence, propositions were first drawn from reading the scripts from the interviews and then further analyzing the themes found with help of QDA Miner 4 Lite for better reliability and validity. QDA-miner was of help to find different themes that were coded not at least since themes appeared on the same theme under different questions, which, was according to plan since the questions had a form of open character and the interviewee was not supposed to be led. Hence, when a certain question brought up a theme that theme could already have been answered in advance. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)

The different codes were grouped to form categories that then were used to conceptualize the data. As mentioned in the previous paragraph the conceptual model and theoretical themes builds the framework in labeling the categories although other categories that appears also will be taken into consideration. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)

As described previously, not only primary information from the interviews were used to find ways how the data should be categorized. Also the use of secondary data together with the research question was used to find themes. Secondary data in this study is based on scientific articles, reviews and books of relevance. These have primarily been acquired by searching databases at the library of Blekinge Institute of Technology. In addition, the services of the library of the Luleå Institute of Technology has been used.

3.5 Empirical context
The County of Norrbotten was chosen as setting for the empirical context. The reason for that was that it can be an advantage to know the organization where research takes place. After several years of work in the organization at the clinical level as well as in the administration a knowledge exist from within about which structures that form the organization. That will give an extra understanding of which groups that are relevant to be focused on to answer the research question. Although it is an advantage in many ways to be close to the subject that is studied it is, however, in such a case important to be extra aware of how your own assumptions and preconceptions about the organization can affect your research findings. Hence, observer bias has to be avoided to strengthen the reliability of the findings. For that each interview was hold with a focus not to lead or guide the interviewee into a certain direction. When selecting interviewees, persons that the themes for this study had been discussed with before the study were not asked to join the study since that could have led to a decreased reliability since then image of the concepts of the organization studied could have been influenced. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)

With health care as the context for the study it is important to note that public organizations are regulated. In Sweden health care is regulated by the health- and medical services act and the responsibility to deliver health care is divided between the government, 20 regional counties and 290 municipalities. The state and government are responsible for the overall healthcare policy and the counties and municipalities are responsible to deliver health care. The Swedish health care system is characterized by a high degree of decentralization where the counties and municipalities have a high degree of autonomy. Although private health care has become more common, it is still the duty of the counties and municipalities to secure that health care is delivered regardless if it is private or public. (Sverige. Patientmaktsutredningen 2013, The Swedish Government Website).

The County of Norrbotten provides health care to around 250 000 inhabitants and employs around 7000 mainly in health care activities. The County Council Assembly is the highest decision making
body and sets visions and strategic goals. In addition, the County Council decides on budget and various proposals concerning operations and objectives. As a political body the assembly governs on behalf of the inhabitants. The assembly appoints the County Council Executive board, which is both principal and operating. The County Council Executive board manages and coordinates operations within the county. In addition, the executive board is responsible for the economy. (Norrbottens Läns Landsting)

The County Council Director has the overall responsibility to ensure that the politically defined objectives are reached. Civil servants work towards results in line with the politicians’ objective within the established framework. (Norrbottens Läns Landsting)

To the County Council Director is a management staff connected. Beneath the County Council Director is five divisions: dental care; culture and education; service; technic; local hospital- and primary care and specialized hospital care. Each of these divisions have their own staff. (Norrbottens Läns Landsting)

The management staff is connected to the County Council Director. To the management staff belongs also the County Council Director’s management team, which has a coordinating function. The management staff consists of different subunits: Communication, HR, R&D, Strategic support and Common County Commitments (Verksamhetsavdelningen). (Norrbottens Läns Landsting)

In the beginning of 2014 a reorganization took place when the two divisions: local hospital- and primary care and specialized hospital care were formed from earlier five existing divisions. The desire was to enable more advanced centralized treatments on the same time as ordinary conditions should be treated locally close to the patient. Hence, two divisions were created one for highly specialized care “Division for County Specialized Care”; and another division that should be closer to the patient “Local hospital- and primary care”. With primary care and parts of local hospitals in
the same division the desire is to achieve an integration in the local care regardless if the patient is treated in primary care or a hospital discipline like internal medicine. (Norrbottens Läns Landsting)

The division for County Specialized Care is divided into eleven areas. Each of these areas have their own director. To support management, there, is a staff to take care of accounting, HR, planning and development, in addition, secretaries and communicators are also in that staff. (Norrbottens Läns Landsting)
The division for Local Hospital- and Primary care is divided into five geographic areas. Each of these areas has their own manager. Since many different disciplines exist within the division there is a focus on coordination of common processes between the different disciplines. Hence, a common coordinator exist for emergency care, primary care and psychiatry. The disciplines that coexists within the area is primary health care; internal medicine, emergency care and psychiatry at a local level and rehabilitation. In addition, there are knowledge centers to support the division from the medical areas that belongs to the division for County Specialized Care. To support management there is a staff to take care of accounting, HR, planning and development as well as a secretaries and communicators. (Norrbottens Läns Landsting )

Generalization
The aim of the study was to understand real images of the concept of line-staff and connected theories. According to Svenning one of the main purposes to use a qualitative method is to exemplify rather than generalize. A qualitative method was chosen in order to explore the perception of line-staff among different groups of employees rather than defining them as set variables beforehand, hence, it was not in the scope of this study to perform a survey. (Svenning 2003). For the empirical context The County of Norrbotten was chosen. It is however likely that the notion of line staff is important in other settings since the notion of general management with its concept of line-staff has an immense influence on how organizations are built. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007). As one of the interviewees said: “But what kind of alternatives are there to line-staff and are there any organization, large one, built up in another way?” (Forssell, Ivarsson Westerberg et al. 2007, Holmblad Brunsson 2007). Therefore, it is very likely that the images described within this study is a cut-out from the real perceptions within large organizations since examples in accordance with the phenomena studied can be found elsewhere. (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010, Alvehus 2012, Norbäck, Targama 2009). However, it has to be mentioned that generalizability even if support exist in literature is likely to decrease the further from the empirical context the generalizability is made be it difference in geography, size of the organization or ownership such as a public contra private organization. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)

3 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

All the interviewees were employed or had been employed within the organization studied after the 1st of January 2014. This date was used because it was important that the interviewee had been in connection with the reorganization that took place the 1st of January 2014. The age of the interviewees differed between 39 and 63 years of age and 7 women and 7 men were interviewed. Everyone had been employed at least three years within the organization.
All persons who got an invitation to the study accepted to participate except three where the email invitation was not answered. In the invitation letter it was estimated that the interview would take 15-20 minutes. However, that estimation proved to be too short since the average interview lasted almost 30 minutes with a variation in length from half to almost double that time. Hence, the subject studied rendered a lot of thoughts and curiosity. The questions were asked in an open form and it was important that each respondent had the possibility to expand the issue without feeling that a limited time frame existed. Therefore, in just one exception no interviews were scheduled closer than one hour between in time.

Many interviewees did answer some of the questions before they were reached. This was also according to plan since the question had an open character. Not to miss any of the concepts proposed under the conceptual model or themes that were explored during the interviews the material was thoroughly scrutinized as described in the method chapter.

The questions in the questionnaire were unchanged over the course, however, process was added to question eight since it was obvious that discussion of work in processes had a bigger relevance for many interviewees than for example Change management. A case-study enables such a flexibility. (Yin 1994) Open questions were used and issues were transcribed even if they were spontaneously mentioned and not specific related to the question asked. By coding this could be used in developing different categories during the study. It is however important to keep in mind that if a theme was not mentioned it did not mean, that the person did not accept that certain theme or had an opposing view. The same approach was used for all interviews without leading the subject into any direction for increased reliability. The results from the interviews are presented appendix C.
The concept of line-staff was not mentioned frequently, however, when asked for the concept was almost unanimously known. All respondents did know about the concept of line-staff except for one person in the group representing middle management within a clinical setting and the group representing productive work without administrative duties. When these persons had the concept described according to the Questionnaire one of them knew about the concept, hence, only one interviewee was not familiar with the notion of line-staff and that in the group representing productive work without administrative duties. (Table 1)

The categories that appeared during the coding process are described in the conceptual model on next page. It is important to note, however, when coding for different categories that each word is evaluated in its context, hence, governance can apply for example too line or staff depending in which context it is given. In addition, it has to be pointed out for clarity that it is the perception of each interviewee that is evaluated; hence, it can differ from what is said in textbooks.
After coding and conceptualization it was clear that the issue of staff rendered more interest than the issue of the line. A lot of different views and contradictions also existed about the staff issues. By many of the interviewees the staff was seen as supportive in theory, however, the perception was that it many times got a governing role and by many interviewees it was seen as a risk if the staff function got too much governing power. The circles defining line, line and staff, staff and politicians describe how the different persons defined their work according to question four. Since the groups already very well are described the different groups are not described further in the model.

The first group within the organization studied was the subgroup of politicians. The empirical context is that of a public organization politically governed (see empirical context under methodology). The organization was unanimously by the politicians described as hierarchic, however, the need for horizontal thinking was highlighted and to avoid downpipes and fragmentizing. One of the politicians brought up the notion of professional organization not at least from a traditional perspective where registered personal and the legislation gave this group a lot of unstated assignments that affects the organization as a whole. In describing the staff functions it was unanimously put forward that staff is important for top management for support, in addition, by one of the politicians the notion of external monitoring was put forward. “The politicians experience that they decide most things, however, they are influenced by external factors and an advantage with staff is that they can work impartially with external environmental monitoring”. Unanimously it was also mentioned that it is important for the staffs also to have a decentralized perspective: “More staff support should be moved out into the periphery where first-line management is a key group since they have the possibility to solve things in a more flexible way and it is important that the organization does not tie up their perspectives”. In addition the following remark was made: “ It would be desirable if there existed more opportunities to catch ideas and thoughts from a bottom up perspective”. “It is important for the staffs to not be perceived as the tool of the top management in the periphery of the organization since it can lead to a missed dialogue downwards in the organization with a decreased possibility to understand certain issues in the periphery of the organization.”
In the organizational context described above mechanistic traits were most used in describing the concept of Line-Staff and the concept was unanimously known. Staff was more in focus during the interviews than line questions and staff was perceived as having an important role in support of top management, but also to support front-line work and supervisors. The problems which often occur in a mechanistic organization of integration were put forward. (Jaffee 2001)
The next subgroup studied was higher management. In this group hierarchy was not mentioned for the line-structures, however, the perception was those of a mechanistic organization where instead attributes like traditional or centralized decision making is described. One of the top managers took up the notion of Unity of command: “It is important not to go by middle management and directly reach the level below”. In addition, one of the top managers put forward the complexity of the organization: “Three power centers exist one political, which governs overall policies; the second power center is the civil servants with a managing role; the third power center is described as the professional organization. Hence, a very complex organization between geography, between professions, politicians and civil servants with many dimensions for conflicts. Strong interests are represented with different views”. As in the other groups staff was more in focus than line and was described as having a supportive role and one of the interviewees brought forward the code word expert. Unanimously it was put forward the importance that the staff does not take a governing role: “When the staff does not perceive themselves as support and starts directing and commanded in a way that is not agreed on a lot of irritation will be created in the operative units; the worst is when the staff starts acting like an agency and re-examine the commitment of the line”. Another perspective that was put forward was the importance of a balance between the line and staff perspective: “The staff does not have an operative responsibility; however, many times their perspective can have a big influence in how the operations are governed. A balance is important between the perspective of the line and the perspective of the staff and it is important that they work close together and it is important that they do not get disconnected from eachother”. Unanimously the importance of communication between staff and line was put forward. “It is important that for example the accountants can translate their issues so it is understood in the line”. By one of the top managers the role for external monitoring was put forward. In addition, by one top manager as by the politician an increased focus for support in the periphery of the organization was put forward: “As a staff person it is important to be sensitive about what is happening in the operative activities and too much focus towards the center of the organization can lead to work being done that is not useful.” The specific juridical prerequisites in a County were also put forward: “More decisions can be taken further out in the organization in the Counties compared with the Communities, where, many decisions can be appealed.
The concept of Line-Staff was well known in the group of higher management and in many ways it was seen as a natural part of the organization with many aspects close to the classical description of the notion of general management. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007)
The next subgroup studied were middle management within the administration. In this group the machinistic traits of the line were described by three of the interviewees, however, one of the interviewees did not develop the theme further than saying: “The organization of line is in the operative activities and the smallest unit is a medical ward”. However, this interviewee focused on advantages with a more centralized decision making and central control, hence traits from more machine like images of the bureaucracy. One of the interviewed referred to the classical view of line functions and the importance to follow decisions taken by a supervisor (Unity of command and Unity of direction): “A good civil servant follows the managers decision next above in line and it is in that spirit the continuing work is performed. In documents exist support for actions that can be taken to realize the overall will of the manager next above in line”. Unity of command (orderkedja) was also brought up as important when describing line by one of the interviewees. The work of the lines was seen as more operative in comparison with the staffs and staff work were seen as less regulated. As in the previous subgroup of higher management the complexity of the organization was emphasized by one of the interviewees and this notion was also shared with other interviewees in this group: “Two management systems exist one of the politicians and one of the civil servants and these two structures merge in a flow and that is important to relate to. Among the civil servants the structure does not always seem so articulate and many times it is not as clear as by the politics who gets a certain task, however, it does not seem like it is the main thing either; instead, focus seems to be on which level the decisions shall be taken”. Moreover, the issue of coordination was put forward and as an example it was put forward that sometimes a proposal is prepared within one function and reaches the political level from this function without enough coordination with other functions in the organization. “Which decisions are political, civil servants and from the profession?” In process thinking one of the interviewees brought up that a conflict can exist between the classical line function and managers of the process. “The money is in the line and as long as a process does not have any resources a lot of goodwill becomes necessary. In addition, everything cannot be a part of a process thinking either; some parts have to be in the line”. In contrast to many other subgroups this group did have a more thorough discussion about line issues. As described above the problems of coordination was put forward by two of the interviewees and they asked for a clearer meeting structure and enhanced the importance of clear communication not only to the line, but also between different staff functions to avoid double work. “The staff functions must fit into the line and it is important that we know what to support.” One of the interviewees mentioned
external monitoring and another mentioned HR and accounting. Support for higher management was mentioned unanimously and unanimously was also the perspective to be open and “available” toward also lower levels in the organization brought forward. As one of the interviewee’s put it: “A good staff should have a listening activity in the field so the issue is already known when it comes to the boss; hence, an informal dialogue is necessary as well”. However, a perspective of inadequacy also existed: “You want to serve upwards and downwards and commitments can arrive from both areas and it can be hard to know the focus. Many tug you in different directions and roles and responsibilities seems sometimes unclear. By two of the interviewees a perspective was put forward of the importance to digest information to help the line-activities do the right things: “I am worried when routines are developed and a staff person gets a hold on this routine and sends it out broadly to the operative units instead for trying to get that routine integrated in a coordinative way. For example a governing text cannot just be sent out like that; each level of the staff function has to make the text understandable for the recipient at the level where it is sent. Thick tomes have to be broken down to what they really stand for in practice. You have to know who the recipient is” That perception of a staff function is of extra interest since it is contradictory to the perception of the line-staff concept that was presented among the members of the Drug and Therapeutic Committee in the introductory example. One of the interviewee put forward that the staff, in addition, to a supportive role also had a governing and controlling role. One person also described the staff as made up by experts.
Overall this was the group that had the most thorough discussion about line and also coordination issues about the staffs. The perception of line-staff as a concept was viewed with necessity and the staff functions were seen as very important for top management. However, it was also unanimously seen as an important to serve all aspects of the organization even in the periphery. Although it was not mentioned by a majority the aspect of the staff as having a governing role in addition to supportive role was mentioned within this group. The contradictory perception to the concept of line-staff in comparison with the introductory example and the perception of the Drug and Therapeutic Committee described was an interesting notion. Hence, describing that the perception of line-staff different in communicating information than from the Drug and Therapeutic Committee.
The next subgroup studied were middle management within a clinical setting. One of the interviewees in this group was familiar with the notion of Line-Staff. The organization was unanimously described with machine-like traits and that the organization during the last years has moved in a direction of more machinistic structures. Before the organization was seen as having more traits of a professional bureaucracy and unanimously “Bosse” was described as a code for a flat organization: “When Bosse was a supervisor more degrees of freedom existed as long as the budget was kept. It was a change since before that many more levels of management existed. Now we are heading into that direction again” or “I am confident that I was part of a culture before where my suggestions were listened to and that was important for my leadership - it has been important in my view of leadership” or “Now these functions have been centralized, although, we still have the responsibility” or “I don’t see the need for many issues being dealt with by civil servants; it is their will to govern and there is no need for it within the operative activities, instead, the organization comes in focus for them” or “The politicians listen to the operative activities too little and too much to the civil servants and that gives the politicians a filtered view about the operative activities”. One of the interviewees did not know about the concept of Line-Staff and the Line-Staff concept was by another interviewee described as something that was unknown when the work as a middle manager was started. Instead, the notion became obvious after a while: “I did not understand that there was something like line-staff first, however, I have understood that the line should be deciding and the staff is there for support for example to prepare issues for good decision making and that line-staff has to be in all organizations.” It was also put forward by one of the interviewees that the staff function should be more concerned about general activities like HR, recruitment issues and IT-support and not concentrate on so many other things that already can be taken care of in the line-functions. The focus on “health-talks” were put forward as an example of an idea from the staff functions where the politicians did not got the issue prepared in a good way. The importance for staff also to listen to the periphery of the organization was also put forward: “A good line-manager must listen more to the areas beneath than to the staffs directly and it is important that staff does not start to act independently.” One interviewee had the perception that the staff functions took decisions and that these many times were not rooted enough in the operating activities”. Although, the perception in practice of the staff function was differently perceived by this subgroup it was unanimously defined as in theory having a pure supportive function.
The perceptions of line-staff in the subgroup of middle management in a clinical setting were that the line had got many traits of a machine bureaucracy. Overall the organization was described as hierarchic and centralized where decisions are taken centrally, although, the responsibilities remains in the periphery. The staff was seen as having a pure supportive role and should also have a perspective to the periphery of the organization, however, the staff was described as important for general functions like HR, recruitment and accounting. However, the perception in practice was that the staff often got a governing role. The system of line-staff was of one of the interviewees described as a natural phenomenon that is well established within all organizations.
The next subgroup was staff duties without a management position or clinicians with subsidiary activities. The concept of line-staff was unanimously known and the organization was described as hierarchic with traits from the machine bureaucracy: “There is a pronounced line where you are supposed to speak to the supervisor next in line above you. If I want to talk to another person in another line I have to go upwards until the lines emerge and then the issue has to be taken downwards again; hence, ambiguities exist horizontally”. Bureaucracy was also described as when staff drives over lower levels of the organization. Even if the formal hierarchic organization was put forward by all interviewees one of the interviewees proposed that the real power is not in the formal organization: “There are two organizations one that concerns the health care aspects and where ambiguities exist about who really governs and in that part of the organization the professions have a lot of power. In that part of the organization which is the reality in where many professionals work they do not care so much about what happens in the formal part of the organization”. The more formal part of the organization is referred to where formal decisions are taken. The notion of the professional power was further by the same interviewee put forward: “In a fabric decisions over operations can very much be in the line, however, in health care many decisions that are taken by line-supervisors are taken by the floor-people instead”. Hence, traits of a professional bureaucracy were put forward as well. Unanimously the line was put forward as the formal part of the organization where decisions are taken and the staff was seen as supportive. One of the interviewees, however, took up the notion that some room had to exist for the staff to take decisions in not at least since there are not line-functions for all issues to be dealt with and a too rigid structure would give coordinating problems: “if the bureaucracy is used in its negative aspect it can be stiff and lock up processes. There has to be some room for critical thinking for staff people and a difficulty exists if the staff person only does what the boss says. Of course that is also true with a staff person who criticizes everything the boss says. Both approaches to 100% are problematic, instead, there has to be a balance for example 70-80% what the boss says and the rest for critical thinking”. The same notion was put forward as a way to lock up newer management traits like lean: “If the concept of line-staff is used and lean or process thinking is put forward by higher management in a classical line way the process thinking or lean can be hampered and the line-staff concept can in those situations be too rigid and lock up other management processes.” One interviewee put forward that it was important for the line-staff functions to be active in process thinking since someone has to allocate the resources so the processes becomes optimal and the
processes does not allocate resources to themselves. Process thinking and line-staff was, however, not seen contradictory, instead, processes were seen as a way to integrate different line-functions and avoid down-pipes. One of the interviewees put forward that the staffs had a coordinating function and it is important for processes to have support from staff and be directed by a line function; otherwise, there is a risk for we and them mentality. As was mentioned in previous groups one of the interviewees brought up the issue of communication: “When higher levels within the line are reached the messages are not so clearly defined because different languages are spoken and there is an ambiguity between different roles. Staff-people say that the line decides, whereas, the line-people say that the line decides. The language is not the same between line and staff and between different hierarchical levels. One reason for this could be different professional background among the people working in line at different levels and people working in the staff functions. By all the interviewees in this subgroup a line-staff system was viewed as a necessity, although, it was put forward by one interviewee that line-systems in its pure form cannot exist in health care where so many decisions have to be taken in the front-line: “It is not line-people, who do the distributions, but doctors and nurses”. Another of the interviewees put forward that there is a feeling that staff people decides and makes it possible for the staff functions to grow and some of the work they do generate work in the operative activities instead for the staffs to be pure supportive. It was, however, put forward that staffs has important roles at different levels although the support in general issues like accounting and HR was seen as most vital: “Decisions close to the operative activities are needed by line managers and it is not a good situation when staff people dictates towards the operative activities to do what the staff has decided”. On the other hand it also was unanimously agreed that one form of line-staff system was needed although problems of integration and governing role of staff function was put forward by two of the interviewees. One of the interviewee would like to see more civil servants on active duty in the operative activities part time. It would give more understanding for the different aspects of operational frontline work and administrative activities.
The perception of line-staff in the group of staff work without decision making positions or clinical duties with subsidiary administrative activities gave a fragmented picture. Unanimously it was put forward an important role for the staff functions as supportive, however, by one member a governing role by the staff was seen as a problem in practice, whereas, another of the interviewee brought up the notion that a staff without any possibilities to take any decisions were seen to risk processes to be locked up. The difficulties of integration in a machine bureaucracy was put forward by all the interviewees, however, one of the interviewees saw an enhanced process thinking as one way to overcome integration and another emphasized the issue about communication where different “languages” are spoken between staff and line activities. Traits from a professional bureaucracy put forward by one of the interviewees and it was put forward that in practice two parallel organizations in fact existed.

The last subgroup described is concerning the perception of Line-Staff in practice among employees without administrative duties. The concept of line-staff was known by one of the interviewees. The organization was unanimously described as hierarchic and that staff had a part in governance: “Although they do not take decisions staff people are governing anyway, instead staff should be more supportive to the line”. One of the interviewee said it was difficult to get to talk to higher management and decision making was perceived as taking long time. Line-functions were discussed less in this group and instead the professional role was put forward and that being a professional leader is not always easy since the professional hierarchic traits are seen as being opposed at the same time as the medical responsibilities are far stretched. One interview described that it was not clear where decisions are taken: “Who really has right to take decisions, operations or staff?” The issue of coordination was also brought up by one interviewee: “It becomes easy we and them in a broad organization where you feel you are far away from the decision making with little participation and a risk for alienation and isolation”. Information go up and down instead of between the different operational activities.
In this subgroup without administrative duties the perceptions of the professional bureaucracy was put forward and this was in many ways contradictory to the hierarchic notions that were perceived on the same time. A distance from the top layers of the line was apparent as well as problem with integration. The staff was perceived as having a role in governing the organization.

In the previous section the results were presented without any analysis and the following sections will try to discuss how the different aspects in the perception of line-staff were seen with more analysis taken into consideration. The view about what was considered being staff and line was further explored in not at least by letting the interviewees explain where they considered there work to be performed in line or staff. One respondent said that patient work was neither a line nor a staff function. In the literature operative work is considered being in the line, however, by this interviewee line was seen as something performed in the organization as such and not part of direct frontline work. (Wren 2005, Nilsson 1999) On the other hand, a doctor who functions as a medical advisor to the local manager at a health care center counts that advisory work as staff. More than one respondent put forward that it is not that easy to appreciate what is a staff and what is a line function. One took up the notion that duties of staff work requires things to be done in the line, especially if there is not a function existing in the line already. Others appreciated their work as being part staff and part line. Generally people if they had a supporting role they counted it as a staff function regardless of where in the organization their position were. Although exceptions existed described above for clear line and staff functions the majority did count themselves as either line or staff. The politicians were not seen as having neither a staff nor a line function why that particular issue was not further explored in that group.
As described in table 1 the concept of line-staff is well known. During the interviews, however, it was obvious that the interviews focused to a great extent on staff issues. One reason to that could be that the questions took more staff issues in consideration, however, another explanation could be that the issues of staff rendered more interest. Focus was open question without leading the interviewee, hence, the concepts that emerged during the process of conceptualization took more staff related issues than line issues into consideration.

What was then the specific answers to first question about which organizational structure that seems most vivid within the organization? As described in table 2 some different concepts appeared. The different views of the organization that are described in the concepts of the machine bureaucracy and professional bureaucracy appeared in almost all groups and any clear differences in this perception was not obvious. For example hierarchy was mentioned in all groups and in all groups but one were the issue of co-ordination mentioned.

One of the interviewees working preferably with clinical work although with some administrative duties described the concept of line staff in the following manner: “For me line-staff is the tree with its branches, which enables some sort of structure, however, the professions are the leaves that bloom and give life to the things that should be done. There is a symbiosis that here is enabled. It is, however, very important that there is a balance between the branches and the leaves.“ These thoughts are very much in line with the work by Fayol further described in the theory section. (Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005)
In all groups the concept of line-staff was seen important to reach clear areas of responsibilities and identified structures where decisions can be taken. In addition, it was almost unanimous that staff had an important role in vital functions like HR and economy and that could not be foreseen. Especially from the areas closer to the clinics these aspects were more in focus, whereas, at the political level and by senior management focus for the staff should be broader and for example follow trends and be supportive for more strategic questions. (Table 3).

Returning to the conceptual model and the specific proposals made there about the different concepts of an organization as mechanistic contra professional. The mechanistic aspects with its traits from machine bureaucracy can be seen more in the classical notion of line with its Unity of direction and Unity of command. (Wren 2005) It was obvious during the interviews that many discussed the organization from this notion as being hierarchic, however, on the same time many referred to a professional organization (table 2). Two organizations were proposed to exist in parallel; one formal with structures of the machine bureaucracy together with a more informal professional organization. Hence, when describing the organization notions from machine bureaucracy as well as from professional bureaucracy was described. According to the literature machinistic traits are common within public organizations with high demands for accountability and health care is many times seen as an organization where the professional bureaucracy is of big importance. (Jacobsen, Thorsvik 2008, Nilsson 1999) The professional bureaucracy was, however, not mentioned by middle management in a clinical setting, however, the reason for that is probably that it is expected as a natural law and that notion could maybe be explained by the fact that it is common that managers in a clinical setting previously had had one form of work or another at the “floor”. One of the interviewee described that the informal power over decisions is also enhanced the more informal power your professional group holds: “Doctors can always vote with their feet’s”. As a positive notion of a formal more machine like structure in accordance with a machine bureaucracy or notion of general management was that many saw it as enabling distinct areas of responsibilities, or in other words, and identified structure for where decisions should be taken. On the other hand, generally the issue of fragmentation and problem with coordination was mentioned as well as long distances for information and decisions. In the literature these are often referred to as known pros and cons of the machine bureaucracy. (Nilsson 1999, Wren 2005)
The conceptual model also lifts the issue of coordination that is supposed to be common in complex organizations. Fayol also referred to this in his discussions about gang-plank. (Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005) Problems with coordination was often referred to as a result of different agendas where the agenda from the politicians, civil servants and professional workers had to coexist. It was more common that groups with more administrative duties took up concepts such as Unity of command. That the organization is perceived as complex and that different agendas is common is not surprising with the professional character on one hand of a health care organization (Nilsson 1999) and on the same time typical with clear messages and rules that are important for public organization, which, operates under a strict legal framework. (Forssell, Ivarsson Westerberg et al. 2007, Karp, Helgø 2008) Coordinating issues were also discussed in relation to different staff functions in the administrative groups. It was suggested that a role to coordinate the work of different staffs could be necessary to avoid the risk of parallel work, hence, coordination for different staff functions should be emphasized. Such a coordinating role could also ease the work of top executives. Another point that was put forward were that a more clear structure for meetings should be created also to avoid parallel work and to coordinate the work towards the same direction.
The classical view about line-staff is that of the staff being of a pure supportive role and where all decisions are taken in the “line”. (Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005) In the conceptual model the concepts of supporting, we-them mentality and governing role is put forward. Even if the majority of the interviews described staff as supportive, by many the staff functions was perceived as having a governing role. This notion was proposed from persons more at lower levels within the organization and more towards the clinical settings. From higher levels of the organization, however, it was described as a problem when the staff functions got into an governing role or as one interviewee put it: “took power”. One reason for this was discussed from one of the interviewees as a way for the staff to market its own importance. In addition, at higher levels of the organization it was also proposed that different agendas of staffs could lead to a fragmentation. A strong staff function can better put forward and market its own agenda, whereas, other fields in that respect can be left out. In many groups a perception existed that staff in many ways sets the agenda and also takes decisions in one way or another and that staff people then get too much influence over how activities are executed or in other words: “The staff people takes over”. Or as one respondent said: “The role of the staff should not be that of an agency, instead, it is important that their role is supportive, hence it can disturb the rhythmus at the work places.” The necessity for the staff to have a supportive role even in reality was emphasized in many of the interviews and the staff as having a pure supportive role is also according to the literature. (Wren 2005) The pure supportive function was more pronounced towards the groups with more administrative duties and those who described themselves as having a staff function. The same was true for higher hierarchical levels within the organization. We and them mentality was not mentioned in the same frequency as the notion of the staff as having a role in governance instead of a pure supporting role.

Other, aspects that were put forward were also that a too strict focus of the staff to support top management can lead to a situation where staff becomes the extended arm from top management and the dialogue downwards in the organization can then be missed. Hence, thoughts from top management can be seen as natural and the discussion with people at the “floor” can be missed.
From staff people it was put forward that often different agendas appear from different places within the organization and it can be difficult to steer between different requests with limited resources. It was put forward as important to always think about the necessity to be available and see to different needs within the organization before focus is set to which agenda that is perceived as the most important one.

After the establishment of the new organization everyone has not really found their role yet and since then these problems are said to be somewhat more pronounced. From the floor level, it is also mentioned that before you knew who in the staff to call when a certain problem appeared. Another aspect that was discussed were that the line and staff does not always understand each other - they speak different languages. Sometimes the staff function was described as bureaucratic and that some information communicated through the staff gets filtered between the different staff functions. Another notion that was put forward is that sometimes there is a feeling that higher management seems more connected to the staffs although their prime function is within the line. The members of the Drug and Therapeutic Committee in the introductory example clearly had an opinion of where the duty of what is expected in their activities cut the line. However, that was different from many of the opinions given during the interviews. As can be seen in Table 1 many of the interviews took up that the staff should be a support at many different levels within the organization and that was extra pronounced in the group with interviews, who work with clinical work as well as work with subsidiary activities. Hence, contrasting that it would be a line issue to make the priorities which parameters that should be used.
What was then the current image about how the image of line-staff should evolve to the better in the organization? When it comes to the staff function both at the political level and among senior staff the view was generally to get more support out into periphery of the organization for example to front line managers. One reason for that is that it would enable a more flexible system. Another reason was that staff support were proposed to be needed closer to the people in the production line. This was also something that was asked for by frontline managers in clinical settings, where the feeling could occur that many functions are created far from the patient and that these functions in themselves created administrative duties that they also had to take care of. By those considering themselves as staff another picture was given. Instead a wish to support frontline managers was obvious, however, they also felt that requests to get into different issues appeared from many different directions with a feeling that some form of prioritizing process had to be done and that it not always was easy. One respondent put up the idea that some staff people could work part time with clinical duties and part time with administrative duties. Hence, a better understanding for the different functions would emerge and proposed administrative burdens would easier be understood. When the disadvantages of line-staff was described, Table 4, as expected according to the literature long distances for information and decisions were described.
How was then the notion about how well the concept of line-staff was in accordance with more modern management theories like lean or change management? It has here to be noted that after three interviews process thinking was added to the original question since it seemed to be of much more relevance not at least concerning that change management did not seem to be a big issue among most interviewees.

Some of the respondents took up the top down perspective described to the notion of general management (Holmblad Brunsson 2007) and that when directives about lean comes from above only around half starts working with lean, hence, it would be better if an effective system instead could be created to catch the ideas from beneath and then ground them down and take them upwards in the organization in an effective way. Maybe then lean would be more effective to reach its goal. Other aspects that were discussed is that it is important to have a focus on the frontline work and that can sometimes be conflicting since that space does not really exist within a machine bureaucracy where rules play a big role and where a lot of things has to be secured with different documents. The will to do things in a proper way can then hammer inspiration at the local units. The necessity to avoid a top down perspective when working with lean was emphasized and that lean is not just a tool for line activities, instead, it was put forward that it is also important for staff people to work with lean. Some did feel, however, that lean is coming from the staff and something that the staffs have time to think about and then spreads downwards towards the line activities. It was mentioned by one interviewee that you can never really plan for the next day since you do not know if four or twenty patients will arrive with the notion that it is important that resources are fairly distributed between different processes. It could be easily thought that the respondent were referring to the small inventories that some critics say exist in lean for unforeseen occasions, however, the respondent were referring to that no contradiction exists between the different levels. Instead, the message was that the both line and staff has to develop the processes at different levels to locate resources and that the processes in themselves would lead to better integration between different areas of activities. Even if some exceptions are described above, generally not much conflicts were put forward when discussing lean contra line-staff. One of the reasons for that could be that lean only has been tried in certain areas and limited to production. In addition, it was put forward that the time necessary could be hard to achieve in a line-staff organization, which is also proposed in the literature. (Jaffee 2001)
When processes as another notion of more modern management theories were discussed some of the respondents made a notion that the resources for process work are somewhere else. “In a process there will be a process leader, but the financial responsibility is somewhere else.” In addition, it was put forward that in the line with the concept of Unity of command and direction, although those words not specifically was used, ideas in the processes can be hammered. Instead, it was put forward that it was important to have room for horizontal thinking and that can sometimes be hard in a line-staff organization. It was also put forward the importance that staff has a coordinating role for different processes and has a role to lead the processes. “The processes do not get structured by themselves”. The staffs can then put the different processes forward between line managers at different levels, hence, ascribe the staffs as having an important role in process thinking.

For process thinking where a form of radical change is suggested the issues that came about was more of a financial conflict than that of the concept in itself. Hence, it was proposed that the people in charge of the processes does not have an influence of the funds that are necessary. With many supervisors involved it was also put forward that there is a risk that the process gets hammered with a risk for silo building. This is an interesting notion since that is what process thinking in its essence tries to avoid. (Hindle 2008)
How was then centralization contra decentralization perceived within the organization? In the political group the following two perspectives were presented. One as economics of scale to be able to give more health care for less money and that it would fit some activities, whereas, some activities are better done in a less centralized way. The patient perspective was put forward and it should be steering; not the organization, when deciding how centralized contra decentralized the organization should be in different areas. It should not be necessary to govern smaller health care units in detail as long as they deliver what they are supposed to deliver. That discussion would be in line in a discussion for a more professional bureaucracy. The organization feels, however, more centralized than decentralized. From the areas closer to the front line aspects were given about that there is a big responsibility in the periphery of the organization, although, authority there is not on the same level.

The new organization Närsjukvård was by some groups, preferably higher up in the hierarchy and those more towards administration, described as an organization that is more decentralized than the previous organizational model. However, further down in the organization and closer to the clinics the new organization is perceived as more centralized with less mandate for own decisions and more control.

Another aspect described is the need for centralization in a public organization. Different legal frame works put restrictions on how decisions can be handled. It can give a sense of bureaucracy since it requires that the decision process take some time. On the other hand it is also a professional organization that leads to a lot of informal power and decision making in the periphery and in that aspect the organization is decentralized.
Another aspect that were lifted in groups closer to frontline were that authority and responsibility did not follow each other. The organization is not perceived as flat as before instead it has developed towards an organization with more control. “Before I could do a lot of decisions myself, however, that is not more the case” Instead there is a sense of increased administration and less possibility to really have power over what is decided. This discussion would then suggest that the image of the organization is getting more towards a machine bureaucracy. There were, however, also persons closer to the floor, who had another meaning and had a perception that the organization was more centralized before although that was not the general view in the organizations periphery. Getting more towards the clinic the issue about a flat organization got more in focus and a wish existed of an organization as flat as possible without that some of the administrative duties had to be taken over.

One argument for a centralized decision making that was taken up is that it would secure a more equal health care in different areas within the county. It would also enable a more standardized way of working. It is not good with a mentality where “we can do this ourselves”. Another person described it as: “What can be decided centrally, but the how should be decided decentralized.” What can be the same, however, Kiruna and Sunderbyn are different so the how has to differ.
DISCUSSION

This study found that the issue of line-staff is well known within the organization and is described as vital. The practical perception of the notion of line-staff consists consisted of many traits from machine bureaucracy (Wren 2005) and attributes related to a the machine bureaucracy was described within all groups interviewed. However, the notion of a professional bureaucracy was also brought forward; many times perceived as existing in parallel with the machine bureaucracy. Even if many of the images related to the concept of line-staff was related to the classical view of the concept some of the perceptions in practice were contradictory such as how far responsibilities of staffs are stretched.

It is important to note when the results are deciphered that the opinions in the individual groups can be different from what is put forward in the tables. Many questions measured what spontaneously was referred to when responding directly to the questions asked. Hence, a direct question about a theme that later emerged during the process could have given another result. In addition, since fourteen interviews were held it would have been without the scope of this study to perform deep interviews with all the interviewees to see if a not spontaneously mentioned issue was related to the practical perception of the interviewee. It would, however, be a possibility for further research to get more information about opinions that were not mentioned spontaneous in some groups and see how important these issues are in those groups. Some of the themes explored here can function as basis for further research to get more deep information in a specific issue that emerged. Example of such questions could be how many see the line-staff to be only supportive in theory and in practice within the organization. A survey study could be appropriate to study such a question. This study could also be seen as a feasibility study for further research. (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, Adrian Thornhill. 2008)
In this study we found that the concept of line-staff within the organization is well known (Table 1). However, when asked to describe the organization in a general sense line-staff was only mentioned by two persons. Hence, the concept seems to be well-known but nothing that really is thought about. By many interviewees line-staff was seen as something natural and something that just are there and nothing that is thought about. This notion also has support in the literature that we do not really think so much about line-staff. It is a natural ingredient or as one respondent put it: “What would there be for alternatives?” In the introductory example the members of the Drug and Therapeutic Committee took it a step further. End of the question it is a staff-line issue – period. The suggestion that line-staff is seen as a natural thing has also support in the literature. (Drucker 1998, FISCH 1961, Holmblad Brunsson 2007)

With the introductory example in mind it was interesting to see how different the notion of line-staff can be perceived. One of the interviewees from one of the administrative groups, without knowing the discussion from the introduction, had a fundamental different view. The respondent took up fear about when staff people send out for example a big law text to the units, without previous necessary work to digest the information and make it understandable for the next recipient. In a sense that was the proposition to the Drug and Therapeutic Committee in the introductory example. As the respondent described it: “Something cannot just be picked up and sent out without a reflective process. To whom is the document for and how do we digest what should be in there. We cannot just send out a big document that no one understand. The document has to be digested and made understandable at the levels where it is sent. Big tomes sent out does not fill a function.” Hence, a complete opposite view of line staff was presented than in the introductory example.
Since the setting was in a public organization with high professional demands that can have had importance for the findings. That was also obvious for many of the interviewees in different areas within the organization. Three areas of power were described one political sphere, another sphere of the civil servants and the third sphere is the professionals like doctors and nurses. This could also be expected considering the notion that a public organization works under a strict legal frame work with high demands for accountability. Hence, public organizations usually have many mechanistic traits with a tendency to formalize operations with a central decision making. (Mintzberg 1979, Rainey 2014, Boyne 2002). On the other hand, it is was obvious during the interviews that an informal structure with respect to the professional bureaucracy was very vivid. (Jacobsen, Thorsvik 2008) It was not mentioned by middle management in a clinical setting, however, the reason for that is probably that it is expected as a natural law. One reason for that can also be that the managers in the clinical setting has previously had one form of work or another at the ground. One of the interviewee described that the informal power over decisions is also enhanced the more informal power your professional group holds: “Doctors can always vote with their feet’s”.

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Henri Fayol’s ideas about what managers should do at works presupposes that the same type of managerial activities should be equally valuable to all kinds of organizations, hence, accepting Fayol’s notion of general management. Instead, by means of organizational arrangements and a – perhaps vital – discourse on management, professional and their organizations sustain and solidify the notion of general management and distance themselves from the fundamental question whether or not the notion of general management will ever serve as the theoretical concept, which adequately describes managerial practice. Organizations are made up of people and as soon as relations with people appear many kinds of problems have to be dealt with. In such situations management or leadership recommendations might not be very instructive, but make unwarranted claims to success, while neglecting important prerequisites for success. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007)
The concept of line-staff was not seen as contradictory to for example process thinking and lean in the study and maybe that is because it was perceived as such a necessity. In the 1990-ties during the economic downturn in Sweden several methods were developed to improve the activities in the health care sector. Mapping of processes and methods were developed with the industry as a model and lean has become very popular in Sweden health care. (Kärrsten 2012) However, for many lean is not a group of tools that can be used independently. Instead, lean must permeate all aspects of operations. It is not only about working procedures, but also about culture and values. (Rognes, Svarts 2012) Others contrast that opinion and argues instead that lean is a broader concept where it is sufficient to introduce parts of the concept. (Kärrsten 2012) This is an interesting notion since that can affect how the concept of line-staff in reality can interrelate with line-staff in a smooth way. With the perception that was found in this study the smooth relationship between the concept of line-staff could probably attributed to the fact that lean most likely is introduced in parts and not on a broad scale. For mapping of processes although not unanimously line-staff was seen as a necessity and the reason for that could be that a lot of power such as possibilities to allocate resources are not in the process itself and instead a function of the line, hence, in the practical perception being necessary for the process to work.
Drucker emphasizes on the difference between the manual worker and knowledge worker and brings up the concept of technologists. The technologist refers to workers that do both knowledge work and manual work. In Drucker’s view the technologist should be treated as a knowledge worker. In dealing with the technical workers it is not sufficient just to tell them what they should do instead the crucial question is “What is the task?”.(Drucker 1999) Hammers work of business process reengineering with information and activities that cut across organizational units to get rid of functional silos tries to solve some of the problems with line-staff where horizontal communication can be problematic. (Hammer, Stanton 1999) Although the perception of the line-staff was brought forward as problematic in integration; it was often not the line-staff function in itself that was seen contradictory and the staffs were often described as having an important role in achieving coordination.

McGregors theory X and Y and Kanters work about empowerment in the decision process deals with the top down perspective of line staff. The hierarchic notion of the line and the problem with the top down perspective was more in focus the further to the clinic and at lower levels within the line. (Hindle 2008)
Health care is complex in many different aspects and how change in such a complex environment is not easy. For example in the private sector a survey shows that less than 10% of change programs were successful. (IBM Business Consulting Services 2004) The relationship and market conditions in health care are often very different from the public sector where the patient (customer) is only financing the service indirectly through taxes. (Culyer, Bergström et al. 1992) Taken that into consideration together with the internal and external complexities of many big public organizations with its demand for high accountability and a certain need for formalization and centralization; it is likely that many conflicting views exist about how public organizations are built and perceived not at least among different groups, hence, the perspective can be different from that of a private organization. More research is needed towards the private sector increase the knowledge to what extent the practical perception of line-staff is transferable to the private sector, although, the theme seems vivid also in the two private concerns referred to in the chapter about generalizability. (Boyne 2002, Karp, Helgø 2008, Rainey 2014).

The classic line-staff organization is built on the principle of unity of command. Each person has only one supervisor above and issues such as problems with coordination between different units should be brought up to that person for decision. That supervisor then informs the person above in line until the level is reached where it can be dealt with and thereafter it is communicated back to the unit that first brought up the issue. This can lead to long distances between the people who actually do the work and the people who decide. The problem of integration was also something that was put forward in many of the subgroups, however, the suggested solutions differed from for example process thinking having an increased role to that of the staffs being more coordinating. One thing that especially staff people brought forward were the need for a coordination between different staff functions. (Forssell, Ivarsson Westerberg et al. 2007)
Maynard Keynes put it in one of his work forward the idea: “The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood”. (Keynes 1936) That aspect really shows the importance of the practical perception and not being stringent to what is written in textbooks. The staff was often perceived as being a big part of governance in the periphery of the organization. It is unclear, however, if really the staff people were referred to or higher management with close connections to the staff. This issue could also be who is listening to the most or as one interviewee close to a clinical setting in a middle management position developed the theme: “Where are the loyalties towards the local units in the periphery or towards the broader national level of the cooperation organ SKL for the counties.

The line-staff concept has been criticized for being a breeding ground for conflicts between staff and line. The answer by Fayol is that it should be taken care of by the principle Unity of command. However, divorcing staff from all authority over the line respects Unity of command, but violates in some extent the principle of specialization. Hence, decisions cannot be made by the people most qualified to do so. (Browne, Golembiewski 1974) That notion was in its pure form only put forward by one person, although, it was more common that staff people were regarded as experts.

One other reason for conflict can be the close linkage between service and control and that was also a notion that was put forward not at least because of the perceived close connection between higher management and staff put forward from subgroups closer to the clinical setting and in the periphery of the organization. Opposing views might exist between staff and line and if the staff did the underlying work the risk is that they then also control the decision being made. (Belasco, Alutto 1969)
McGregor sees that the conventional line-staff concept might waste human resources, lead to increased friction and antagonism, a need to develop elaborate and costly control mechanisms and a lowering of commitment to organizational objectives. (Browne, Golembiewski 1974) Another important aspect is that different perceptions and expectations often exists between staff and line role performers. (Belasco, Alutto 1969) The perception of line and staff in some subgroups took these aspects into consideration.

This study is not limited to health care specifically, however, since the research setting is health care a few words will be mentioned about New Public Management (NPM). In the notion of NPM a shift from activities governed by rules to activities governed by results were proposed. In a study by OECD the public activities in Sweden was seen in comparison with other countries as being more fragmented and less prone to management by rules and regulations. However there are aspects that show that governance in health care is shifting back to management by rules in a detailed way. (Ahlenius 2005, Almqvist, Stockholms universitet Företagsekonomiska institutionen 2004) In the subgroup of middle management within a clinical setting this view was put forward on a local level.

Most big organizations are or have been built up by the concept of line-staff. (Forssell, Ivarsson Westerberg et al. 2007) Public organizations also operate under a strict legal framework in a complex internal and external environment. (Forssell, Ivarsson Westerberg et al. 2007, Karp, Helgø 2008) Hence, public organizations tend to formalize operations and centralize decision making in order to avoid risk. (Mintzberg 1979) This view was seen as evident in many of the subgroups.
In regard to centralization contra decentralization some different perspectives emerged. One was the issue of economics of scale where centralization could do more for less money. The perspective that was put forward, however, was that a more centralized decision making would lead to a more equal health care given in the different geographical areas within the County. Generally the view from higher management was that the new organization would lead to an organization closer to the patient and that centralized decisions would enable a more equal health care in the County. This view was, however, contrasted in the groups closer to the clinic where the burden of governance and administration had increased due to what was perceived as increased control and regulation. Some longed to the past when things as they described it were not so complicated and the organization, at least in practice, was perceived as more flat. Aspects like these were put forward: “I am happy I was active during the time when you could decide something yourself. Now we are responsible, however, the decisions are taken somewhere else. I believe that additional layers has been created within the administration and that the organization is not so flat anymore.” Other frontline managers had the same view that it is an increased level of control. Also these notions can be found in the literature where organizations can be perceived differently in practice and in theory and not at least regarding to different perspectives which also was put forward in one interview. The different perspectives about how the organization is perceived in reality and in the textbooks are put forward by Corvelled et al, who also discuss the notion that an organization can be totally different on paper when it is described compared with how the organization is perceived in practise (Corvellec, Holmberg 2010)
CONCLUSIONS
The aim of this study was to get an understanding of how the concept of line-staff is perceived within an organization with the County of Norrbotten as a model. Semi-structured interviews were performed among six different groups at different levels within the organization to get a perspective about which perceptions that were more general within the organization and which perceptions that were more attributed to a specific subgroup about the concept. The results showed that the issue of line-staff is well known and is described as vital for the organization. The concept of line-staff was mentioned spontaneously only by a few of the interviewees. One explanation for that could be that it is viewed as a natural thing within an organization. (Holmblad Brunsson 2007) The classical line in the notion of line-staff consists of traits from machine bureaucracy (Wren 2005) and attributes related to a machine bureaucracy was also described within all subgroups studied. However, the notion of a professional bureaucracy was also brought forward; many times perceived as existing in parallel with the machine bureaucracy. Even if many of the images related to the concept of line-staff were related to the classical view of the concept of line-staff and its close twin notion of general management (Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005, Holmblad Brunsson 2007) some of the perceptions found in practice were contradictory to the classical notion of line-staff for example how far responsibilities of staffs are stretched where the staffs in practice were perceived as having a role in governance, although, the general desire was that the staff should be more supportive. The staff was by many perceived as a support to top management, however, many subgroups from different areas studied took up the importance for staff to be more focused towards front line activities. The perception of staff rendered in most subgroups more interest than the line aspect. One of the reasons for that could be that the perception of line was seen as a natural thing or that the staff issue brought more tension (Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005) The perceptions of line-staff within the empirical context could have been influenced by the fact that the setting for research was a public organization where traditionally governance by rules and regulations are important. Integration is often referred to as problematic in a machinistic organization and that was also put forward in this study. The perception of line-staff within this setting could also have been influenced by the strong professional views of registered personal and that aspect was often referred to about the perception about the concept of line staff in practice with one more formal and one more informal part of the organization. (Ahlenius 2005, Abrahamsson, Andersen 2005, Nilsson 1999) Before deciding if a single case study could be performed a discussion was held.
with representatives from other organizations public as well as private. Unanimously the concept of line-staff was known. Hence, a generalization of the perceptions even in other organizations of a certain size is likely. However, the further from the empirical context the prerequisites are in regard to public-private, big-small, close culture, old-new the less generalizable the perceptions will be. There is, however, likely that the findings in this study can build a framework to better understand organizational views of the line-staff concepts and bring additional themes for a better understanding of organizations with some distance to the empirical context in which this study was performed.

Implications

The exploratory character of the study with the aim to achieve an increased understanding for the perception of line-staff gave an insight in how the concept is perceived in practice within an organization. That knowledge will be important for a better understanding of the different forces that shape the culture within an organization, but also increase the knowledge of important issues to focus on when evaluating different aspects within an organization such as problems with for example tensions within the organization between line and staff people. Some other perceptions and special prerequisites such as described as important were for example coordination issues, process working in a line-staff system are with the results from this study can give a better understanding of the functions within an organization not at least between different subgroups. In addition, the perceptions from this study could build a framework for further research with another method for example a survey study.
REFERENCES


Appendix A, Interview questions

Swedish version

1. Vilken grupp tillhör du?

2. Med organisationsstruktur avses här hur olika delar av verksamheten ska grupperas och
samordnas.
a. Vilken organisationsstruktur upplever du vara den mest uttalade i landstinget för närvarande eller om du inte kommer på någon hur skulle du vilja beskriva den organisationsform du upplever finns i landstinget?
b. Finns det några andra organisationsstrukturer eller former som Du upplever gör sig gällande?

3. Känner du till begreppet linje-stab och hur skulle du vilja beskriva det?
   - Om begreppet inte känns till ges följande korta förklaring: "Linje-stab beskriver strukturen för en organisation och har sitt ursprung i Webers teorier om den ideala byråkratin och byggs upp av tydliga hierarkiska principer och där det finns en direkt orderkedja – en linje – från ledningen ner till verksamheten. Längst ner finns det så kallade ”golvet”. Tankarna om linjeorganisationen har sedan vidareutvecklats av Fayol, som även lyfter in begreppet stab. Staben ska ha en rådgivande funktion och utgöras av specialister.
   - Om begreppet känns till fråga hur de definierar begreppet.

4. Anser du dig arbeta i linjen eller staben och varför då?
   - Frågan ställs ej till politikerna.

5. Vad ser du för fördelar med ett linje-stabssystem?

6. Vad ser du för nackdelar med ett linje-stabssystem?

7. Tycker du att linje-stabssystemet ska förändras på något sätt eller fungerar det väl som det gör?

8. Ser du några konflikter i hur linje-stab används i förhållande till exempelvis lean/change management?

10. Hur upplever du centralisering kontra decentralisering i den organisation där du arbetar idag?

11. Finns det något ytterligare du vill tillföra denna diskussion?

English version

1. Which group do you belong to?
   a. Politicians b. Senior management c. Middle management within administration d. Middle management within a clinical setting e. Staff work without a management position or clinical work with subsidiary activities. f. Productive work, for example, with patients or systems.

2. The organizational structure refers to how different parts of the business should be grouped and coordinated.
   a. What organizational structure do you perceive to be the most pronounced in the county currently or if you do not come to someone how would you describe the organization you are experiencing is in the county?
   b. Are there any other organizational structures or forms that you want to add?

3. Are you familiar with the concept of line - staff and how would you describe it?
   - If the concept is not known the following brief explanation is given: "Line-staff describes the structure of an organization and has its origin in Weber's theories about the ideal bureaucracy and is built up by clear hierarchical principles, and where there is a direct chain of command - a line - from the leader down to production. At the bottom is the so-called "floor". The ideas of the line organization has since been further developed by Fayol, which also raises the notion of Staff. The team shall have an advisory role and consist of specialists.
   - If the concept is known it is asked how they define the concept.
4. Do you consider yourself to work in line or staff and why?
   - The question is not forwarded to the politicians.

5. What advantages do you see with a line-staff system?

6. What do you see for disadvantages with a line-staff system?

7. Do you think the line-staff system should be changed in any way or does it work well as it does?

8. Do you see any conflict in the line - staff used in relation to for example lean or change management?

9. How do you define the staff and what do you think the staff is responsible to support? How do you think it is like today?

10. How do you feel centralization versus decentralization is in the organization where you work today?

11. Is there anything else you want to bring to the discussion?

Appendix B, Invitation

Swedish version

Hej!

Hur en organisation byggs upp på papperet, men även i praktiken, kan se ut på olika sätt. Inom samma organisation kan dessutom mer än en struktur samtidigt vara gällande formellt eller
informellt. På något sätt innehåller alla organisationsteorier både för och nackdelar varför det finns behov av att problematisera runt omkring hur det ser ut både formellt på papper, men även i praktiken.

Som en del i mitt arbete på MBA-programmet, Blekinge Tekniska Högskola, har jag valt att undersöka hur olika grupper inom landstinget uppfattar en särskild organisationsstruktur. För att få ett utgångsläge om hur uppfattningen är inom Norrbottens läns landsting skickas inte några frågor ut innan. Frågorna är emellertid tio stycken till antalet och svaren kommer att vara anonymiserade.


Hoppas du har möjlighet att ställa upp på detta och hur skulle det fungera för dig förslagsvis

Med vänlig hälsning!

Sven Hagnerud

**English version**

How an organization built on paper, but also in practice, may look differently. Within the same organization can be more than one structure at the same time being in force formally or informally. Somehow contains all organizational theories both pros and cons why there is a need to problematize around what it looks like both formally on paper but also in practice.
As part of my work in the MBA program, Blekinge Institute of Technology, I have chosen to examine how different groups within the county perceives a particular organizational structure. In order to get a baseline of how the perception is in Norrbotten County Council I will not send out any questions beforehand. The questions are, however, ten in number, and the answers will be anonymous.

I hope that you are able to answer these questions and suggestion on time. The questions will be asked on the phone and is expected to take 15-20 minutes. Below, the different groups that will take part in the survey is displayed and the group you will belong to is highlighted in blue.

I hope you will be able to participate and how would it work for you for example …………

Sincerely yours!

Sven Hagnerud
**Table 1.** In this table three categories are described: “Know of line-staff”; “Describes the staff as support to top management”; “Describes staff as support to different levels within the organization”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Knows about line-staff</th>
<th>Describes staff as support to top management</th>
<th>Describes staff as support to different levels of the organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (3) within administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (2) within a clinical setting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff work without a (3) management position or clinical work with subsidiary activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive work without (2) administrative duties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first question tried to explore which organization structures the interviewees find most vivid within the County or how they would describe the organization. No further hints were given when the question was asked. From the answers different concepts appeared and the main themes that appeared besides the issue of line-staff are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mentions line-staff</th>
<th>Mentions line or staff</th>
<th>Mentions hierarchic, pyramid or flat organization</th>
<th>Mentions the issue of coordination</th>
<th>Mentions political organization</th>
<th>Professional organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within a clinical setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff work without a (3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management position or clinical work with subsidiary activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive work without (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrative duties.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Which organization structure do you perceive currently as the most pronounced one?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Distinct areas of responsibility and order.</th>
<th>Identified structure for where decisions are taken.</th>
<th>Enables to analyze trends important for health care in a bigger perspective or supporting role like law questions.</th>
<th>Give clear support in vital functions like economy and HR.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (3) within administration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (2) within a clinical setting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff work without a (3) management position or clinical work with subsidiary activities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive work without (2) administrative duties.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Which advantages do you see in a line-staff system?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>Fragmentation and problem with coordination.</th>
<th>Long distances for information and decisions.</th>
<th>Inflexibility</th>
<th>Difficult to get a full perspective or that one perspective gets more in focus than more relevant ones.</th>
<th>Risk that the staff function get a more pronounced role with governance.</th>
<th>Risk for we and them mentality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management (2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (3) within administration</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (2) within a clinical setting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff work without a (3) management position or clinical work with subsidiary activities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive work without (2) administrative duties.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Which disadvantages do you see in a line-staff system?