Moved by relocation
Professional identification in the decentralization of public sector jobs in Sweden

Angelika Sjöstedt Landén
For Cornelia and Felicia

For Cornelia and Felicia
Abstract

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Swedish civil service underwent some extensive changes, such as the relocations of public sector jobs, initiated by the government in 2005. This thesis follows an ethnological tradition of focusing on employees’ perspectives as a way of exploring power relations and changes in society. In this study, I draw attention to the fears, joys, anxieties, hopes, and dreams of employees in the Swedish civil service at a time when their workplace was being relocated from one city to another.

The study especially focuses on the fact that a decision to relocate initiates processes that change employee’s images of their work life and future. They become forced to rethink life and work and re-identify with professional positions. Such processes are described in this thesis as processes of professional identification.

The aim of the study is to analyze professional identification among employees during the relocation of a government agency. It is based on four articles that highlight different aspects of the relocation and the conditions under which research was conducted. The overarching question that runs through the thesis is: what did processes of professional identification mean in relocation practice?

I argue that such processes should be taken into account as pivotal to civil service practices such as relocation work. Such knowledge could also be used as a tool for thinking about work life change in a wider sense. Because relocations entail moving people’s entire lives, points of interest are formulated that tell stories of how social norms and rules are formed, maintained, and contested. The results in this thesis could also serve as a departure for discussing the localization of knowledge-intensive institutions.

The case study builds on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2005 and 2009 at a government agency that moved from the capital of Sweden to a smaller town in the north of Sweden. The ethnographic source material was analyzed using discourse analysis.

The analysis centres on a discussion of how processes of professional identification became conditioned by social structures in terms of gender, age, and social class in relocation work. I furthermore discuss the ways in which images of geographies and emotions could be regarded as social categories that conditioned professional identities and had implications for how the move of the agency was organized and conducted, for example for the transferring of competency, travelling on business, and setting up new work practices.
The establishment of professional identity positions functioned to stabilize the social environment during the move - a time when many things at work seemed to be in turmoil. At the same time the positions worked to privilege some ways of professional identification and exclude others. Attention should be drawn to the ways in which agency staff became enmeshed in power structures, norms, ideals, images, and plans for the future that limited their actions in various ways. It is therefore important that the features of professional identification in this relocation process should be further discussed, not primarily as individual concerns of particular individuals, or even a particular agency or location, but as a vital issue of the greatest concern to the welfare state.
Acknowledgements/Tack

Studying the move of a government agency has been something of a relocation process for me as well. Over the years, this project has been reliant on the support of many different people in different locations.

My sincere thanks to my supervisors Anna Sofia Lundgren and Billy Ehn at the Department for Culture and Media Studies at Umeå University. Anna Sofia’s tireless readings, theoretical clarity and brilliant sense of humour have been of crucial value to my work on this thesis. Billy has, ever since my time as an undergraduate student, provided critical readings as well as firm support whenever it was needed the most. Thanks to both of you for trusting my abilities when I hardly managed to do that myself.

Thanks to my colleagues at the Department for Culture and Media Studies for always making me feel at home in Umeå. My ethnological heart beats for you. I particularly want to acknowledge my grad-student peers. Anna Johanson welcomed me with a ‘how good you’re here!’ in 2007, and now I just want to say: how good you were there! Thanks for your readings of my texts, our lengthy seminars and for providing accommodation, great company and many laughs. Thanks to Jens Lindberg for companionship inside and outside the ‘logics-world’ and to Robert Bhatt for thorough readings of related texts and for engaging discussions.

I also want to thank Claes G. Olsson for all his encouragement and for teaching me so much about Jämtland from the time of Ytterån onwards.

Ethnologist Kjell Hansen at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science in Uppsala and Bo Nilsson from my home department read my mid- seminar manuscript. Thank you for your valuable comments that gave me the energy to continue writing a compilation thesis.

Warm thanks to Jenny Gunnarsson Payne and Annika Egan Sjölander, two academic role models and mentors who guided me along the winding paths of discourse analysis. Jenny also contributed with an insightful reading of the whole thesis at a later stage of the process. I found her comments very important in the final stage of finishing the thesis.

I owe many thanks to Olle Westerlund at the Department for Economics at Umeå University, who managed the research project Decentralisation of government agencies, work force mobility and rural development funded by the research council FORMAS. The project financed this thesis together with the Faculty of Arts at Umeå University. This funding has enabled me to finish my graduate studies.

Olle also managed the multidisciplinary research school that I have attended during my time as a PhD student before he was succeeded by Johan...
Lundberg. Many thanks to Johan and all the PhD students at the Graduate School for Population Dynamics and Public Policy for interesting seminars, travels and a great community, not least to my project partner Lena Birkelöf, always on her way to new adventures! The graduate school has also provided resources for me to present my research at various international conferences. For this purpose, I have also received a grant from the Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademin för svensk folkkultur.

Thanks to everyone at the National Institute for Working Life (NIWL) in Östersund for believing in my project idea and for introducing me to the multidisciplinary world of research before I became a PhD student. It was inspiring just to meet ethnologists there – Anette Forsberg, Maria Andersson and Anna Lundstedt – the living proof that it was actually possible to ‘be something’ with a degree in ethnology, too.

Thanks to Jonathan Parker for his enthusiasm and patience during my first attempts to write academic texts in English. My warm thanks goes to the whole Parker-Wood family and all the welcoming people at Keele University and campus for friendship and support when we relocated to Keele, United Kingdom.

My earnest thanks goes to all of my colleagues at the Department for Social Sciences in Östersund and Sundsvall, especially the Division for Sociology and Gender Studies, for making room for me and for providing challenges and trusting me in teaching and research. I am honoured to have been informally appointed honorary sociologist! Jonny Bergman, Erika Wall and Gunilla Olofsdotter have provided indispensable fellowship both at work and in leisure time.

Tack till mina föräldrar Annika och Ola, mina bröder, släkt och vänner runt omkring som utan förbehåll ryckt in och stöttat i stort och smått. Till Inga-Lill och Ruben för barnvaktning och allehanda support.

Tack till min fantastiska familj som kämpat tillsammans med mig hela vägen: Richard, Cornelia och Felicia. Ni är bäst.

And last – but certainly not least – to those who have been the greatest source of knowledge in this study and have so generously shared their experiences of work, life and relocation:

Jag kan inte fatta att denna veckan redan är förbi. Det har gått enormt fort. Men jag har också fått massor av material. Tack! För att jag fått ta del av er vardags i både glädje och sorg. (Ur fältanteckningar, juni 2006).

Angelika Sjöstedt Landén, April 2012
Included articles

Article I  From ethnographic ‘self’-discovery to processes of identification. Published in Qualitative Research, (2011), 11, p.536-551.


Article IV  A fantasy of ‘the ambitious young girl’ as flexible knowledge worker subject. Submitted to Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research (NORA), March 2012.

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Prologue

February 2007

One of the bodyguards stands in the doorway. I say hello to him on my way in. He gives me a discrete nod while secretly whispering into the minimal earpiece connecting him with his colleagues at other locations around the building. He is wearing a black suit, the spitting image of the archetypal bodyguard, a man in black.

There are approximately fifteen of us gathered around the table in the conference room, full of expectation, but also mistrustful. Rumours have been circulating at work about the government’s blacklist of state agencies to be closed down at the start of their four-year period of rule. Our workplace seems to have been the top name on that blacklist, and now the new rulers have swung into action. We are to be closed down immediately.

Suddenly she appears in the room, the woman soon to be the first ever to lead the Swedish Social Democratic Party. She has not been elected yet, but she is one of the top candidates in the leadership election party in the coming month. The Social Democrats had dominated Swedish politics for much of the twentieth century, but five months ago, in September 2006, they lost the general election to a centre-right four-party alliance. She smiles her characteristic squinting smile and nods at us. Even as the leader of the Opposition she cannot save us from our current situation—we are on the verge of closure—but can she give us hope for the future?

She starts to speak, saying that it is a shame that our workplace is being closed down by the newly elected government.

The situation at our workplace is precarious. Only a couple of months ago several new employees were recruited. They were financed by a political compensation package for the region that was initiated in 2005 by the then Social Democratic government. The compensation package included over 2,000 jobs in the regions that had been especially affected by the restructuring and cutbacks of the Swedish defence apparatus. The military left town. New recruits to the newly relocated agencies moved in with their families to start a new life with permanent jobs in what was to them an unfamiliar town. With the closing of their new workplace, their views of the future need to be reconsidered again.

Now the discussion around the conference table revolves around these relocations of state agencies carried out by the Social Democrats just before the change of government. One of our colleagues raises her hand to ask a
question. She asks: 'Why do you call relocations “out-locations”?' The Social Democrats’ leader-to-be does not understand the question. Is there something strange about that term? Localization policies entail moving agencies from the centre, mostly Stockholm, out to the regions. Out-location is just a way of describing that, she says.

- Direct translation from Swedish for one of the commonly used words for relocation.
Part I: Introduction

My interest in studying the relocation of public sector jobs dates to 2005 and the aftermath of the Swedish government’s abolition of most of the regiments in smaller towns around the country in the wake of a massive restructuring of the military. One of the effects of the regiments’ disbandment was the loss of many qualified jobs in the smaller towns. As compensation for the loss of job opportunities, the government appointed a commission to consider which government agencies that could be relocated from Stockholm to the stricken regions (SOU 2004/15).

The resultant media debate was heated. The practice of relocating public sector jobs was reported as the ‘forced movement’ of Stockholm employees and was even described as ‘deportation’. Agencies warned of a ‘knowledge drain’ and ‘loss of competence’ because staff at the government agencies in Stockholm were generally reluctant to move. Reports spelled out that professional identity was at stake. ‘I don’t think anyone wants to move. We are an expert agency [...] based on knowledge, contact and cooperation with many other actors and agencies’, said one employee at one of the agencies about to be relocated to the trade union newspaper *Jussek tidningen* (8 February 2005).

It was reported that employees were grieved because their family situation did not allow a move even if they wanted to. Moreover, it was regarded to be difficult to recruit experts to smaller towns, fearing a decrease of the quality of the work conducted at the agencies. Voices were raised that the effectivity of the civil service should not be jeopardised in favor of regional political incentives. In spite of the massive outcry, the relocations were driven through, guided by the idea that ‘relocations could be a good business deal for the whole of society’, that they would contribute to a ‘fresh start’, and that they would ‘lift’ and lend ‘hope for the future’ to the regions by providing a more varied labour

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market. It was said in particular that relocations would offer new possibilities for young, newly graduated academics to enter the labour market. Public sector relocation was thus defined as both a problem and a possibility. The different statements had in common however, that professional conduct in the civil service was affected.

Already interested in research on worklife conditions, the adverse reactions evident in the public debate made me curious about what it was like to work at one of the agencies undergoing relocation. I initiated a pilot study in 2005 at one of the larger workplaces that was going to be moved in its entirety from the Swedish capital to one of the smaller Swedish towns. As I started to research the course of the relocation, I observed that the relocation process disrupted the way employees went about their daily business and sparked emotionally charged discussions about such notions as the common good, movement, mobility, competence, family life, and professional identity. These discussion topics were linked with systems of social stratification, which in turn seemed to become organized in temporal as well as spatial/geographical terms (Sjöstedt Landén, 2006).

The government’s decision to relocate agencies brought to the fore discussions about future resources and the ways in which the civil service and the work conducted within the sector should be organized. However, when I started to look into what had been written about public sector job relocation before, I found that although it is employees who are expected to do the relocation work in practice, their role has often been overlooked in earlier research and official reports.

Background

In Sweden, public sector job relocation was at its most expansive phase in the 1970s, when approximately 10,000 public sector jobs were moved from Stockholm to other parts of the country (Berger 1995; Statskontoret, 1986). The relocation of various government agencies was also driven through at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s. These relocations often took the form of compensation packages aimed at particular regions hit by the restructuring—and contraction—of their local labour markets (Banverket, 1991; Berger & Nykvist, 1990; Gonäs et al., 1995; Riksrevisorerna, 1983; Rindlöw, 1991).

In comparison to other countries, this may seem a rather small number, although in relation to the relatively small population it was a large number. In 1970 the population of Sweden was approximately 8 million (Statistics Sweden, 2011).

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In the post-war era, Swedish public sector jobs have primarily been relocated as a way of decentralizing the civil service (Berger, 1995; Edsta, 1980; Statskontoret, 1989). The concept of decentralization has a double meaning in the Swedish context. The one type of decentralization refers to the process of shifting decision-making from the centre of an organization to its more ‘peripheral’ or ‘local’ parts, and while this in turn might mean that parts of the organization undergo geographic decentralization, it does not necessarily imply geographical movement. The decentralization of decision-making has therefore not always been closely tied to regional politics (Statskontoret, 1977; Statskontoret, 1989).

The other form of decentralization is geographic decentralization—the focus of this study. It has explicitly been used as a means to further regional policies to a greater extent than the decentralization of decision-making. Nevertheless, there are overlapping features behind both types of reform to the public sector that should be taken into account. Both forms of decentralization claim a part in the democratic project. Both share the rhetoric of existing to serve welfare: the idea that decentralization could contribute to giving the community proper welfare service and facilitate citizen’s availability to authorities (Berger, 1995; Statskontoret, 1977; Statskontoret, 1989).

The most commonly used Swedish concepts for the relocation of public sector jobs are decentralisering (commonly referring to geographical decentralization), omlokalisering (relocation), and utlokalisering (lit. ‘out-location’). The latter presuppose a centre, something ‘original’ where the workplace was located in the beginning, before moving to the periphery. The centre is thus constructed as ‘normal’ whereas the periphery is thought ‘problematic’ in different ways. Acknowledging the terminology used for public sector relocation helps make visible the fact that it has been a social and not only a political practice, and involves conflict over the distribution of resources and the determination of meanings associated with geography. Saetren (2011: 27) argues that the relocation of public sector jobs is bound to be contentious because it entails someone receiving something seen as good and attractive at the cost to someone else. The practice of public sector relocation highlights and concretizes social dynamics, their historical traits, and some of their potential impact in the future.

In research, public sector job relocation has been explored as a regional political measure, where the focus is firmly on the distribution of state resources (Berger, 1995; Isaksson, 1989) or as part of a general attempt to render

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\[1\] For a more detailed discussion in relation to this specific case-study, see Article III.
the civil service more effective (see Marshall et al. 2005a; Trondal, 2011). These fields are commonly the province of geographers, political scientists, and economists.

This case-study of a government agency under relocation takes a somewhat unusual perspective on public sector job relocation. In what is at heart an ethnological study, I focus on the ways in which notions of professional life are at stake during the process of relocation. This study comprise an exploration of how professional’s emotions and fantasies about the future become intertwined with notions of gender, age, social class and geography in relocation practice. I argue that research on the norms, ideals, images, and plans for how to become a ‘proper’ professional knowledge worker in the civil service is of central value when exploring the scope and effects of public sector job relocation. This way of studying relocation work could also shed light over worklife changes in wider contexts.

In conclusion, my own as well as other research shows that public sector relocation cannot be regarded a ‘neutral’ practice as implied by the politician in the prologue to this thesis. Researching the practice of public sector job relocation provides an excellent opportunity to research the intertwinnings of professional identity, civil service, geographical distribution of population and other resources, and the systems of social stratification that become associated with the practice.

Aim and research questions

In this thesis, I foreground employees as core stakeholders in the process of relocating a public sector agency. The choice to put employees in the centre of the analysis from the outset reflects the fact that it is imperative that employees are understood as able to ‘accommodate, revise, or resist policies and outcomes’ (Marshall et al., 2005a: 885; Bringelius, 2008). This thesis contributes by linking employees’ subjective interpretations of everyday relocation work with the norms and images of professional conduct, and with the rules and resources of public sector job relocation.

Throughout the research project, the overarching aim has been to problematize and analyse the practice of public sector job relocation. When I began to research a particular case—the relocation of a Swedish government agency—my attention was increasingly drawn to matters of professional

12 Locating agencies outside central urban areas has been seen as a means to cut the costs of facilities and salaries (Jefferson & Trainor, 1996; Marshall et al. 2003; SOU 1989; Trondal, 2011), and also of creating administrative centres outside the big cities. These ‘central’ agencies are then expected to provide services and administrative support for local agencies throughout the country.
Part I: Introduction

identification, because I was repeatedly made aware of the centrality of such identifications to the outcome of the process. In the course of my research, a more specific aim has been formulated: toanalyse processes of professional identification in relocation work.

A set of research questions grew from this aim. A main question in the thesis is what the processes of professional identification meant in relocation practice. The starting-point was to explore the professional positions that were made available to employees in the course of relocation. Although each of the four articles (henceforth referred to as Articles I–IV) presented in this thesis presents its own research issues, further specification of research questions is needed here.

How was the ethnographic research process integrated into relocation practices as a process of professional identification? (Article I).

What was the role of emotion in professional identification processes in relocation work? (Articles I, II, III & IV).

In what ways were ideals about ‘becoming professional’ connected with images of geographies and location? Could civil service knowledge workers be located ‘anywhere’? (Articles II, III & IV).

What meanings were accorded to gender, age, and other intersections of social stratification in relocation practices and professional identification processes? How did such social categorizations affect the relocation and processes of professional identification? (Articles I, II, III & IV).

The approaches adopted in the thesis for addressing these questions are drawn from an ethnological research context. To that end, I will first consider the ethnological studies that primarily explore aspects of work and profession. It is not a full description of ethnological research about worklife in Sweden, but works as an overview of themes important for this field. The varied field of ethnological worklife studies is then discussed in terms of recent work on public sector relocation in academic disciplines ranging from political science, geography, and to economics. In the light of the research on professionalism and relocation, I will then define in greater detail the case-study at the centre of this thesis.

Worklife ethnology in Sweden

When the discipline of ethnology became established in Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century, one of its most important tasks was to document peasant culture, which was seen as gradually being wiped away by the processes
of modernization and industrialization. Early ethnologists (called folklorists at the time) often took an interest in the activities and objects of everyday life, of which work was an important part, in order to document changes in (peasant) society (Bringés, 1970; Ehn & Löfgren, 1996; Löfgren, 1994). In this ethnological context, work has traditionally been regarded an important arena for socio-cultural production (Arvidsson, 2001). One of the key features of the discipline was the exploration of demographical changes and the movements of occupational groups from the perspective of local communities.

The direction taken by ethnology changed dramatically in the late 1960s and the 1970s, when it was heavily influenced by the so-called cultural and linguistic turns in the humanities and social sciences. Nevertheless, ethnologists’ interest in peoples’ worklife conditions continued unabated. Åke Daun’s classic study (1969) of workers’ protests against industrial closures in the village of Båtskärsmän in northern Sweden is often described as something of a turning-point, for it was an ethnological analysis inspired by sociological theories and cultural studies. Daun’s work was followed by studies such as Ehn’s (1981) and Arvastsson’s (1987) explorations of everyday work relations in industry. Studies of industrial workers’ roles in a growing capitalist culture and global labour market were later studied by for example Fägerborg (1996), Martinsson (2000a), and Ohlsson (2009). Lundin (1992) explored the transformation of meanings of craftsmanship in her study of typographers.

Office culture has been another important area of study. Researchers have taken interest in how it took form and how the office domain was reproduced and reconceptualized (Conradson, 1988; Armstrong, 1989a; Willim, 2002). A related ethnological field comprised studies of the administration of a changing state apparatus and its emergent professions in sectors such as postal work (Lundgren, 1990), child care (Ehn, 1983), social work (Arnstberg 1989b), elderly care (Öhlander, 1996), and education (Lundgren, 2008; Ehn, 2001; Ehn & Löfgren, 2004; Åberg, 2008). Professionalism and expert identity has been studied by von der Lippe (1985), and Ek-Nilsson (1995).

Technological society has been explored from the horizon of the workplace and worklife conditions by, for example, Nyberg (2001), Pettersson (2007), and Willim (2002): all examples of ethnological studies of more privileged groups in society, to which can be added Lindquist’s (1996) study of male private sector elites.

Lindqvist (2001) has also studied economics in the news media, while Lindquist & Lindquist’s (2008) research on the out-sourcing of a global telecoms company and international sexwork shows how the order of global capitalism makes its way into the practices of everyday life as systems of social

Ethnologists have also taken on the analysis of normative aspects of waged work and occupations in living a ‘proper’ or ‘good’ modern Swedish life. Critical analyses have been conducted, for example, on how categories such as ‘unemployed’ (Andersson, 2003) and ‘immigrant women’ (Lundstedt, 2005) have been constructed as groups of citizens in need of instruction and state intervention.

Ethnological worklife studies from 1969 onwards have commonly focused on employees’ perspectives when mapping power relations. The question of professional identity has been a focus in most of these worklife studies, with the reoccurring theme of the intersection of profession, gender, and location in time and space: a theme that is often intertwined in the narratives about the professions or actual work practices at a certain workplace. However, there have also been studies that discuss professionalism in relation to gender and social class in more general terms (see, for example, Anderson, 2003; Conradson & Rundquist, 1997; Lindqvist, 1996; Lundgren, 1990; Mellström, 1995; Nyberg, 2001; Nilsson, 2003; Nordberg, 2005; Silvén, 2004).

The interest in spatial dimensions has also been conspicuous. For example, Nilsson (2009; 2010) has explored how ideologies of work, gender, social class, and ethnicity have become incorporated in images of Kiruna as a mining city and region. Johansson (1994) wrote about masculinity as related to age, generation, and spatiality among loggers. Pripp (2001) has researched the meanings of ethnicity in small businesses in the Swedish city of Södertälje. Vallström (2011) has studied migration, work, and gender, drawing on interviews with Finnish immigrants who came to Sweden to work in the booming logging industry in the 1950s. Wolanik Boström (2005) studied narratives about national identity, life, work and career among highly educated Poles. There is also a range of examples of ethnologists who have explored the social and cultural aspects of different geographies (Berglund-Lake, 2001; Gerber, 2011; Häggström, 2000; Kullgren, 2000; Lundgren, 2011; F. Nilsson, 1999; Wahlberg, 1996; Öman 1998). Hansen (1998) in particular has provided a critical examination of how people in northern Sweden related to regional politics in their everyday lives.

As this brief survey of ethnological worklife studies reveals, there has been academic interest in the events of everyday life, interaction, identity, and meaning: from the gendered divisions of work and the detailed descriptions of work equipment in peasant society via the factories of industrialization,
viewing the phenomenon of public sector job relocation with an ‘ethnological gaze’. The ethnographic closeness to actual work practices also makes it possible to emphasize public sector relocation from an employee perspective, highlighting the benefits of viewing the realms of personal, economic, and social life as interlinked (see Miller & Rose, 2008: 19).

Public sector job relocation entails a range of social and political dimensions that must be taken into account. In order to make the position of this study clearer, current research on public sector relocation constitutes an important point of departure here, drawing on academic disciplines such as political science, geography, and economics. This also places both the research and public sector relocation practice alike in an international context.

Relocation research and societal context
In relation to the sheer scale of the phenomenon, there has been little research on public sector job relocation. After all, it has affected a great many employees and their families, who has contributed to population changes in local communities, and has stirred up heated debates about the distribution of resources at different levels of the community. From such research as does exist, it could be concluded that relocations similar to the ones in Sweden have also been seen, or at least have been hotly debated, in the UK, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Norway, and Finland (Isaksson, 1989; Jun, 2007; Marshall et al., 2005a; 2005b; Marshall et al., 2007; Trondal, 2011).

The larger part of the research on public sector relocation is concerned with the economic aspects, for example state expenditure (Jun, 2007), labour market recruitment processes (Birkelof & Westerlund, forthcoming) or the government aspects such as the policy- and decision-making concerned (Isaksson, 1989; Jefferson & Trainer, 1996; Marshall et al., 2005a; 2005b; Marshall, 2007; Trondal, 2011; Winckler, 1990).

Employees are rarely in the centre of attention in this previous research. The situation for employees is however brought up in parts of many of these studies. I will continuously refer back to this previous research when discussing professional identification in this study.
In addition to the research contributions to the field of public sector job relocation, evaluations by the Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret, 1989) and the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen, 2009) help to contextualize professional identification in Swedish relocation practice. The report from 2009 evaluated the economic effects at two of the government agencies that were relocated in 2005. The report functions as secondary literature and as documentation of the relocation process that I also have brought into empirical analysis.

The evaluation from 1989 contributes with a historical perspective as it concerns the long-term effects of the major decentralization of government agencies in the 1970s. The evaluation concludes that employees experienced that the relocations affected many aspects of life; their health, career and family life. According to this evaluation, 70-80 per cent of the employees in Stockholm decided not to move with their workplaces to the new locations (Statskontoret, 1989:267). The report argues that many of those that chose not to move with their work were described as specialists (1989:272). These previous experiences from the Swedish context can be related to the findings of Marshall et al. (2005a) that see a pattern of public sector job moves being less appreciated among senior professionals. Such patterns are likely to comprise status relations and hierarchical orders intertwined with patterns of divisions of work (see for example Massey, 1995). This includes notions of the territorial division of work (Andersson, Ek & Molina, 2008). In relation to this, previous research often lack engagement with the gendered aspects of professionalism in the course of relocation work.

Methodological and theoretical ways of exploring how these practices become bound up with social struggles for status and power could therefore be an important contribution to the field. This leads on to the ways in which research also contributes to articulating relocation practice in a societal context that stretches out in many directions across the economic, political and social landscape.

Isaksson (1989: 48), a political scientist, points out that although public sector job relocation often has been understood as a regional political measure, it has also been seen as a measure for developing state administration and making it more effective. Isaksson argues that the practice is marked by a political ‘homelessness’ (1989: 48). Nevertheless, Berger (1995:180),

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as a social geographer, highlights the role of public sector job relocation in Swedish regional politics, stating that it is one of the few state measures that can be used to affect the location of its activities in a direct way.

In 1989, Isaksson questioned the very possibility of going though with any new relocations in Scandinavia because of it being in many ways such an odd and unlikely practice (Isaksson, 1989: 225) that stirs up the feelings of the public and professionals involved (Saetren, 2011). The arguments in favour of relocation have been recast to suit the spirit of the times, however. Troundal notes that recent relocations in Norway have been motivated and made comprehensible using the political language of efficiency in the civil service (Trondal, 2011). This same argument has been used in different ways at different times.

Public sector relocation was first articulated as a political measure in a post-war Sweden marked by the ideologies of ‘modernization’. Hansen (1998) has shown how ideologies of modernization had their specific geography: a densification of urban areas and a growing civil service, say, or the greater exploitation of natural resources (for example in the logging industry) which saw smaller communities built up around one particular industry. The modern welfare state was in many ways constructed according to the paradigms of industrialization and urbanization. The individual should be adapted to industry and, in turn, industry needed to adapt to ‘modern society’ (Hansen, 1998: 49).

One of the problems to arise in the course of this was that the centrifugal powers of urbanization and industrialization resulted in a ‘flight from the countryside’, which began to be seen in the deterioration of less urbanized areas. The asymmetric relationship between urban and rural/sparsely populated areas left its mark on the ways in which Swedish regional policies, not to mention the labour movement, were constructed. The modernization project was not to prove a success story for all parts of the country, and decentralization policies were called for. In this context, regional policies aimed at recreating ‘harmony’ between industry and society. In order to achieve such harmony, the state offered incentives for people, organizations, and jobs to move. Hansen (1998) argues that it was this movement (flyttning) that became integral to the rhetoric of Swedish regional politics.

Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, the arguments for relocating public sector jobs from Stockholm to other parts of the country invoked the rights of all Swedish citizens to basic welfare services. Throughout the history of public sector relocation in Sweden, this solidarity argument has consistently been fuelled by economic necessity. Public sector job relocation derives from models of the distribution of state resources by way of market-driven...
principles—principles, moreover, that were constructed in such a way as to privilege urban areas (Öhman, 1995: 33)—while their implementation was contemporaneous with the rise of a welfare state that demanded a larger civil service (see Marshall et al., 2005a).

From the 1940s until the 1970s, efficiency in state expenditure was one of the prime factors in motivating geographical decentralization, which then mostly comprised the localization of trade and industry that were not necessarily state owned. It was not until the 1960s, when the government decided upon an ‘active localization politics’ (aktiv lokaliseringspolitik) (Edsta, 1980; Statskontoret, 1989), that the argument for public sector relocation was integrated into a more targeted regional policy. There had been some relatively successful political attempts to control the localization of industry (see, for example, Holm, 1952), and in the light of some of these experiences it was thought easier to make decisions about moving jobs where the state was the sole employer than where private businesses were concerned (Berger, 1995).

In the beginning of the 1970s, the Localization Commission of the day gave two reasons for the relocation of public sector jobs. One argument was that it was necessary to check the expansion of the city region of Stockholm, with its high wage costs and expensive facilities. The other was that it would be positive for the regions where agencies were placed, because a highly qualified workforce would move there and contribute to the local tax base, and ultimately state finances as a whole would benefit (Statskontoret, 1989). The locations under consideration for the relocated jobs had to meet certain criteria: they should not be too small, because they needed the resources to receive the agencies without too many constraints; they should have well-developed community services and a reasonably differentiated labour market that could provide work for partners; and they should have a well-developed infrastructure and good communications with Stockholm, despite being located at a sufficient distance to offer a real alternative to the capital’s rapid expansion (that is, the locations should not encourage permanent commuting from Stockholm) (Edsta, 1980; 4). In other words, the problems with urbanization were thought to be solved by further urbanization of regional centres (see Hansen, 1998).

Paradoxically, Hansen (1998) remarks that differences between the urban and the rural were contrasted and reinforced in regional political processes, which indeed could be seen as social and imaginative processes (see Anderson, 2000). Further, ethnological and other qualitatively oriented research

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on the formation of ‘modern identity’ have noted that in order to make the contours of the good examples for living modern life more distinct, bad examples have also been brought to the fore. In this way, geographical areas such as suburbs have functioned as markers of difference (Ekström & Gerholm, 2006; Ristilammi, 1994) and have been contrasted to the urban, gender-equal, middle-class areas taken to represent ‘modern Sweden’.15 Eriksson (2010a) argues that rural and sparsely populated areas have played a similar role, as is to be seen in popular culture and the news media, for example. The uneven power relations between what are perceived as ‘the modern centres’ and ‘the non-modern peripheries’ have in this perspective been ‘essential for building modern nation-states’ (Eriksson, 2010b: 145).

Policies aimed at controlling territory, however, have often been linked with the social dynamics of the state, for example by subsidizing the location of industry in certain regions, or granting support for education or for moving between locations. Relocations have also been conducted in the name of reducing uneven occupational patterns in order to reduce social inequalities in the national context (Andersson et al., 2008: 17; Statskontoret 1989). In Sweden, meanwhile, regional political incentives have become entangled with other social projects, such as the campaigns for gender equality (Hudson & Rönnblom, 2007) and the problems due to an ageing population in rural areas (Lundgren, 2011).

In the research on public sector job relocation, there is much to indicate that it can be characterized as a practice that stretches out in many directions across the economic, political, and social landscape. I argue that the implications of a relocation’s sometimes contradictory, chaotic, and paradoxical dimensions could be further explored by the use of methods that operate close to the professional practices of relocation work. Learning more about status relations in professional contexts means one must be alert to the formal as well as the informal aspects to relocation.

As I have already noted, earlier studies have not focused to any great extent on how employees involved in a relocation interpret their professional situation, how they feel about their workplace moving, the opportunities they see it bringing, and their reasons for their decisions. This thesis contributes by shifting the focus to the interests of the personnel, their hopes for the future—and their fears. Saetren (2011) points to the element of force inherent in the decision to make a workplace move from one location to another. He argues that this opens a window of opportunity for studying processes that

12 Regional identity has often been understood in relation to the Stockholm identity; for example in the Skåne and Kalmar regions (Nilsson, 1999; Strömshorn, 2003), and as a way of defining ‘Norrlandic’ identity (see Eriksson, 2010a; Hansen, 1998).

15 Regional identity has often been understood in relation to the Stockholm identity; for example in the Skåne and Kalmar regions (Nilsson, 1999; Strömshorn, 2003), and as a way of defining ‘Norrlandic’ identity (see Eriksson, 2010a; Hansen, 1998).
normally would be relegated to the background by institutionalized routines (Saetren, 2011: 28). I have chosen an approach to this aspect of relocation work that gets close to the practices, feelings, and imaginings that make up the relocation during the actual move. The government’s decision to relocate the agency in question here required reactions of personnel and managers that forced them to reconsider their everyday professional lives. It seems possible the time of my fieldwork at the agency came just at the point that the ‘window’ suggested by Saetren was open, when the relocation process was causing disruption to the sedimented meanings that had once been regarded as commonplace.

However, first some of the background to how the case-study analysed in this thesis was designed, and then the content, detail, and context if the particular case.

Defining a case of relocation

As already noted, the current wave of public sector job relocations in Sweden was initiated in 2005 after a massive restructuring of the armed forces. This was due to military reform in which the focus on defence from invasion was abandoned in favour of strategic command (Proposition 2004/05:5; von Friedrichs, 2009: 59). Most of Sweden’s regiments were abolished and many of the highly-qualified jobs in smaller towns that had been provided by the military disappeared. Local labour markets were strongly affected by the closure of the regiments: some 2,500 jobs across the country were lost in this wave of cuts (Proposition 2004/05: 5). A Localization Commission was appointed to investigate which agencies that would be suitable for relocation from Stockholm to the regions affected by the military cuts. The Commission duly proposed that ten agencies should at least in part be relocated to six towns around the country, six of the agencies in their entirety. It was also suggested that some agencies should concentrate their activities to certain localities where they were already had offices. All in all nineteen agencies were affected by the proposition. The whole compensation package comprised approximately 2,700 jobs. The Commission suggested that the majority of these jobs (1,170) should go to the town of Östersund (SOU 2004/15:9), a town with approximately 60,000 inhabitants located in the northernmost of Sweden’s three main regions often referred to as Norrland (lit. “North land”).

\[\text{Saetren (2011)}\] refers primarily to networks and mechanisms that are not visible in the course of routine government and politics. Kiland & Trondal (2011), however, show that this could also be true of the organization of the actual relocation, not only of the political decision-making processes behind it.

\[\text{In my data, the relocation of the agency was invariably understood within a geographical context, where the move itself was thought of as a move \textit{to Norrland} (see discussion in Article III).}\]

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Some of the larger agencies only moved parts of their activities, but I chose to conduct my fieldwork at one of the largest workplaces (in terms of numbers of employees) to be moved from Stockholm to Östersund. The chosen agency was going to move in its entirety. In 2005, the government decided that this agency was to move all its activities and its 150 or so employees from Stockholm to Östersund. Very few of the employees in Stockholm decided to join in the move to the new location, and an entirely new workforce had to be hired.19

Many of the employees who were hired to work in Östersund were not recruited locally. Instead, they moved there—single households as well as families—solely in order to start work at the agency (Birkelöf & Westerlund, forthcoming). The relocation was designed in order for new employees to be recruited as quickly as possible. This turnover in employees fundamentally marked the process of relocation. Newly employed staff hired early in the relocation process were stationed in the new location, but were obliged to work in Stockholm for a few months or so to learn the ropes. Meanwhile, existing staff also travelled from Stockholm to induct new recruits at the Östersund

18 The image shows the destinations for the agencies under relocation (marked with red dots). Black dots indicate reference-points in terms of larger cities in Sweden. It is however unclear why the small village of Korpilombolo with 358 inhabitants (Pajala kommun, 2006) is included in this overview.

19 When I first came into contact with the agency in 2005, the internal prognosis was that five members of staff would want to move to the new location. The National Audit Office later reported that only one of the analysts moved with the workplace (Riksrevisionen, 2009: 70).
offices. Temporary staff were also hired as consultants to replace personnel who were leaving, or where new permanent staff had yet to be appointed. This meant that existing staff in Stockholm and new recruits in Östersund were expected to work closely together during the process from the autumn of 2005, when the offices in Östersund opened, until the Stockholm offices were closed down in 2007, almost two years later.

When the workplace was located in Stockholm, approximately 75 per cent of the employees were women and 25 per cent men. These numbers did not change significantly with the new workforce at the new location. According to the National Audit Office, the average age for analysts—the largest category of employees—was 44 in 2004 (before the government’s decision to relocate), and in 2008, when the offices had been transferred to the new location, it was 45 (Riksrevisionen, 2009: 81).

Professional context
In this study, the spotlight is on the part of the public sector that operates closest to the government ministries—the civil service. The Swedish government has ministries to help it organize and govern the state, including the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Enterprise Energy and Communications, and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. In turn, there are a number of government agencies placed under each ministry’s area of specialization. The agencies’ tasks are to implement legislation and regulations and to act as Parliament and the government see fit (Regeringskansliet, 2008). According to Statistics Sweden (2009), government agencies employ around 220,000 people. Civil service agencies are located over the whole country although a clear majority of agencies and head offices are concentrated to the Stockholm region (Brandt & Westholm, 2006; SOU 2007/11). There is no definite consensus in the official statistics on how to count the government agencies themselves (Statistics Sweden, 2009); however, the various institutions that try to keep count agree on that the number of agencies has dropped dramatically since the 1990s. One explanation could be that the civil service underwent radical change after Sweden’s financial crisis in the 1990s in order to render the civil service more economically efficient (Statskontoret, 2005/32: 16).

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Part I: Introduction

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The agency I have studied falls in a part of the public sector that has many highly qualified blocks of jobs. From a planning perspective, agencies eligible
for relocation are those that are thought by policy- and decision-makers to be less reliant on being situated close to a particular part of the population (as is clearly the case with education or healthcare, by contrast), for their relocation promises a gain in efficiency and increased national wealth, or at least no loss of efficiency in their core work (see Jefferson & Trainor, 1996). Paradoxically, professionals working at such specialist agencies have also been seen as one of the most reluctant to move according to Marshall et al. (2005a).

The core work at the agency I have studied was conducted by analysts. Other crucial functions were met by administrative, information, IT and communications, and maintenance staff (see Riksrevisionen, 2009). Analysts' work primarily consisted of producing reports and reviewing research to provide the basis for decision-making by the ministries, Parliament, and government. They were also required to follow up and audit the work of other public authorities and organizations. The agency was expected to serve as a ‘national centre for knowledge’, evaluating, assessing, and contributing statistics on the political goals defined by the government. Its work was done in collaboration with local actors (on a municipal and county level) as well as with internal actors (primarily within the EU). Working as an analyst consequently required various kinds of networking, for example with representatives from the research community or from Sweden’s municipalities and counties (Riksrevisionen, 2009).

The agency was directly subordinate to the relevant ministries and required a highly qualified body of staff. Most analysts were expected to have a Master’s degree, and if possible a Ph.D. The workplace was regarded as offering some of the most desirable positions in the country for those aiming to work within the agency’s policy area. Agency employees fell firmly into the category of knowledge workers, expected to deploy ‘a great degree of problem-solving’ at a ‘high level of qualification’ in ‘flexible time-cultures’ (Kvande, 2009: 61).

Kvande (2009) argues that this calls for a type of organization that permits its employees a great degree of autonomy, and has generally resulted in an increase in post-bureaucratic forms of organization. It should thus be noted that since this study concerns knowledge workers in the civil service, their work is similarly characterized by longstanding, strong bureaucratic processes. For example, the sociologists Gorman and Sandefur (2011: 285) argue that knowledge work in the public sector may impose ‘greater organizational restrictions on expert autonomy’.

It is important to note that my intention with this investigation is not to suggest how state employees ideally should be managed. By researching professional identification, I want to highlight social contexts and structures of...

Angelika Sjöstedt Landén
power that constitute public sector job relocation in practice. This also means that I do not try to pinpoint what the ideal professional ‘is’ or what should ideally count as characteristics of civil service knowledge worker. Instead, my attention is directed towards how images of ideal professionals are constructed and what such constructions mean in the process of relocation.\textsuperscript{21}

Thesis outline
In Parts II and III of the thesis, I account for the methods and theory utilized in this study of public sector job relocation, which were duly combined in the process of gathering material and doing fieldwork. I discuss how my knowledge of relocation practices was produced, and the perspectives used to view the knowledge generated in this research project. In Part IV, I summarize the articles that constitute my thesis. In Part V, I analyse all the findings in the articles and relate them to one another. The thesis ends with a concluding discussion in Part VI.

\textsuperscript{21} This goes in line with Goman and Sandefur’s (2011:291) observations of contemporary studies of professional and knowledge-based work, which they argue has moved ‘beyond the study of professions per se’ and thereby ‘escapes the tiresome debates about the definitions of ‘profession’ and ‘professionalism’.
Part II: Research process and source material

A core element in my exploration of the government agency’s relocation process consisted of following everyday work at the agency at the time of the move. I was interested in the ways in which professionals’ lives were affected by the government’s decision to relocate their workplace (irrespective of whether they resigned, joined in the move, or were new recruits). However, the relocation did not happen in a day, so it was my belief that I would have to have longitudinal knowledge for the case-study: I needed to adopt a framework of theories and methods that could account for the processual character of the relocation I wanted to study.

The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in two stages. The first period lasted from my first contact with the agency in 2005 to December 2006. Moreover, I have studied past and current documentation and reports on public sector job relocation, both material specific to the agency I have followed for this study, as well as general material on relocation processes in Sweden. The longitudinal approach contributed to the problematization of relocation work, for example by highlighting paradoxes in the analysis of the data and pinpointing the social and political processes affecting the work situation.

Fieldwork—longitudinal work in two stages

The announcement of the relocation was made to the staff at the agency’s offices in Stockholm in January 2005. I first came in contact with the organization in late summer the same year, and starting in October of 2005 I spent time at the agency offices, ranging from a couple of days up to a week at a time, where I conducted interviews and observations at the offices at both locations. The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in two stages. The first period lasted from my first contact with the agency in 2005 to December 2006. These months saw the most intense period of ‘physical’ relocation work, when everything from computers to people were moved between Stockholm and
During this time, I conducted interviews with employees and observation work in Stockholm and Östersund. At my first visit in October 2005, the relocation was not yet visible, or at least that was not the impression—admittedly, employees had started to leave some of the agency’s departments, but others were still intact in terms of personnel, and the material environment in terms of offices was still fairly untouched—yet coming into the workplace at that stage enabled me to observe how the workplace was organized before the furniture was dismantled, the materials were packed, and the personnel had left.

The second period of fieldwork was conducted in 2009 and consisted of follow-up interviews with newly recruited employees. When I conducted the first interviews with new recruits to the organization in Östersund in 2006, some of them had only worked at the agency for a month. Follow-up interviews enabled me to return to learn more about how the work had evolved at the new location.

Generally, I tried to make contact with people whom I could follow over a longer period, for ‘simply having many interviews does not solve methodological questions of interpretation and design’ (McLeod, 2003: 203) when researching professional identification processes in a changing work environment. The longitudinal approach contributes to the work of building a documentary archive (Gunnarson Payne, 2006: 39; Howarth, 2005: 336 ff.; McLeod, 2003: 202), which in the present case meant not only interviews and observations at the workplace, but also the gathering of all kinds of source material related to the relocation. Furthermore, it entailed tracing some of the history of public sector job relocation in documents and the literature, as well as analysing Internet material and other communications during the relocation process.

It was possible to maintain contact with some of the employees over longer periods, while others disappeared from the organization rather quickly. I decided to concentrate on what happened in the organization, which meant that people who stopped working at the agency also ceased to register in my material. This meant that I interacted more with some people at the agency (the ones who stayed longer during the relocation process), while I saw others only a couple of times (the ones who left the workplace). This does not mean that I have valued their accounts any differently in the course of the analysis. All informants have been regarded as equally important as sources. It is not always easy for researchers to get access quickly, or indeed to prepare in advance to shadow this kind of process. In the present case, my first field-
work dates to approximately seven months after the government’s decision to relocate the agency. Although it would have been interesting to have come in even earlier, I still was able to follow the move as a process. I did manage to capture some of the interaction and routines that had been in place before the relocation, and then follow the course of events.

What sets this type of field research apart is not only the longitudinal stance per se, but also the fact that it is conducted during an ongoing and intense process, in this case a relocation. A sequence of events that afterwards often becomes accepted, adjusted into a seemingly coherent narrative about the relocation (and perhaps even forgotten), was now documented as it was under way. Exploring the relocation process as it went along contributed a certain awareness of what was paradoxical, complex and difficult about it.

**Gatekeepers and door-openers**

Once I had started to spend time at the agency, one of my first impressions was that I found it less formal a workplace than I had expected. The dress code was not strict. People on their breaks laughed and chatted.

It’s the women who go for the coffee break. It feels a lot like a coffee morning. They talk about their children and regional accents and laugh out loud. All very cozy inside, big city pulse outside. (Field notes, October 2005, Stockholm).

The common-room in the centre of the Stockholm offices served as a social hub, and was to be one of the important places for my fieldwork there (Article I). Looking back through my field notes, I see how the fieldwork process challenged my assumptions about knowledge workers in the civil service. What I recalled as ‘less strict than I expected’, for example, had feminine connotations. Had I expected something like the strict suits and loud discussions about the stock-exchange and synergy effects noted by Lindquist (1996) in his study on men in business and industry? This example from my field notes highlights the fact that imaginings about profession, gender, and location had a greater impact on the relocation process than I first expected and forced me to scrutinize my own conceptions of knowledge work.

In Stockholm, the agency offices were laid out with people’s working spaces arranged around an open area used for coffee- and lunch-breaks, larger gatherings, and staff meetings. This was the first space at the agency’s offices to which I had access as a researcher. In Article I, I discuss the visitor identity that stuck with me throughout my fieldwork there, which I think was partly because I was travelling to Stockholm from Östersund to conduct the fieldwork, and it is possible that agency staff did not think I necessarily
Alike the relocation workers, I was also struggling to become a professional, commuting between Stockholm and Östersund. Furthermore, I was identified as a woman and an academic, which enabled me to ‘blend in’ in a way, although my standing was not particularly high (at least not at the beginning of the fieldwork process, before I had become a postgraduate research student). Indeed, this might have acted as a door-opener, given that I could be regarded as little or no threat to the working environment at what was described as a vulnerable time for the agency; however, at the same time it was difficult for me to judge how this might impact on the research process.

A major concern when doing qualitative research is how to get access to the field, and for organization-based research it is more often than not necessary to get the approval of the people in charge. Those who have the authority to permit field researchers to enter work organizations are often referred to as gatekeepers (Neyland, 2007: 16; Smith, 2001: 226). Gatekeepers provide the researcher with access to the field, and are especially important to the ethnographic researcher: they also have the power to close doors or keep them ajar, as well as the ability to decide, or at least affect, what to reveal and what not to reveal (Smith, 2001). Moreover, in my experience it can be difficult as a researcher to access information about which doors remain shut, or to discover how such information is kept out of the researcher’s reach. My research was not expected to intervene in the relocation process, but I nevertheless feared that it might have done so anyway (see Thomson & Holland, 2003: 239).

In my case, I got in touch with at least two gatekeepers of crucial importance for my access to the organization: they were the ones who to a large extent enabled me to conduct my research, they functioned both as gatekeepers and door-openers, and they became vital to the research process. My initial contact with the agency was established with the person responsible for coordinating the relocation. The coordinator informed the board of executives, and saw to it that my study gained approval from agency’s top executives. Staff were informed via the agency intranet that an ethnological study of the relocation was underway. Together with the coordinator, I discussed how my initial contact with agency staff would be organized.

The second contact who meant a lot for the fieldwork process was one of the mid-level managers, whom I encountered when I started to conduct interviews. She was especially important for the opportunity to conduct participant observations in both Stockholm and Östersund, because she had access to many levels of the organization and in effect worked as a networker shared the ‘big city pulse’. On the other hand, my travelling could be a point of identification with some of the staff who were working on the relocation.
Selecting informants

The selection of individuals to be invited to a first interview was based on some general categorizations of the agency staff. The employer had already categorized its staff by estimating their future with the agency, dividing them into one of three categories: ‘not moving’, ‘interested in commuting’, and ‘willing to move’. I considered it relevant for my study to send invitations to employees in all of these three groups. The categories were based on information that the employees themselves had given their employer, and were used in preparing a staffing forecast used by the agency to plan the relocation. The staffing forecasts were preliminary, although they confirmed tendencies that would hold good for the entire process: the group thought to fall into the category of those who would not move was the largest in number; the smallest group consisted of those who were interested in moving with the agency to Östersund. Other types of categorization were also taken into consideration in the process of selecting the first interviewees. For example, I tried to ensure the first group was somewhat diverse in respect of gender and age and departmental affiliation.

Just over fifteen employees were contacted in the first round, as I wanted to be able to interview everyone who was interested. With the help of the relocation coordinator, I contacted potential interviewees with an email in which I presented my research, and myself, and asked them to respond if they wanted to participate. I received responses from eleven employees. Ultimately, interviews with ten participants were conducted in this initial stage. Three of the ten were men, in a fairly accurate reflection of the general gender constitution at the workplace. The average age of 47 at the workplace was approximately the same as in my group of interviewees, which varied between from 30 to 60.22 The ones who were invited to join the study, but declined or did not respond to the invitation to participate in an interview, were drawn from a similar variety of selection criteria.

The interviews with employees in Östersund were initiated in a different manner. Because at the start the new employees were so few, I was able to

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22 The figure for the average age of employees is based on the agency’s internal report. Since it included all employees, the figure arrived at differs from that given in the report by the Swedish National Audit Office (2009), which only included agency analysts.

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issue invitations to be interviewed to all new employees. I sent out invitations in three rounds in the autumn of 2006, which resulted in interviews with sixteen newly employed participants. Follow up interviews with ten of the same newly employed participants were initiated during the spring of 2009.

Of the difficulties with handling the data, one of the most obvious is how to represent a heterogeneous collective in writing. I use the terms ‘staff’, ‘employees’, or ‘personnel’ throughout the thesis. It should be noted that these terms are a generalization for a group that, while it consisted mostly of analysts, also included mid-level managers, IT and information desk staff, and maintenance. In cases where it is important for the analysis, I have indicated the individual informant’s position within the organization; however, it is also crucial to informant confidentiality that ‘employees’ remain largely anonymous. A different issue arose because the conditions under which observations and interviews were conducted changed over time and according to location. At the beginning and end of the research process, I mostly conducted scheduled, individual interviews, with less observation work. The contacts that enabled me to do more observation work (by participating in staff meetings and such) had largely been built up in Stockholm, and so were only partly relevant at the Östersund offices. In a way, much of the research process had to start afresh with scheduled interviews when the offices in Stockholm closed down.

Interviews

Scheduled interviews were a way of becoming acquainted with the agency, because to schedule meetings with people was the ‘normal’ thing to do there. The interview appointments offered the ideal opportunity to make initial contact with people at the workplace. It was a way of going ‘native’ in order to access data, as the scheduled interviews served to legitimize my presence in the workplace with the consent of the organization. I had the impression that it would be inappropriate simply to turn up and park myself in a corner, or to walk around making observations, because to do so would conflict too much with the general norms of being in an office (see Bhatt, forthcoming). Such ‘strolling’ observations might well be an excellent way to start when exploring public places (see Arvastson & Ehn, 2009), but in a workplace I would probably be taken for someone snooping around: a mysterious unknown observer. I had no wish to start out as more ‘suspect’ than necessary.

As stated, I conducted a total of forty-three recorded interviews (audio recording or recorded with notes) with twenty-six participants in Stockholm and Östersund during the course of both periods of fieldwork. The interviews were mostly held at the agency’s offices, but some participants wished to meet
me elsewhere, and on some of those occasions we met at the university campus in Östersund where I had an office. Scheduled interviews usually lasted for approximately one hour. In addition to the on-site interviews and observations, I was in continuous contact with interviewees by phone and email in order to follow up on interviews and keep up to date about developments in the relocation process.

When it comes to the form the interviews took, they could be described as semi-structured. The informants knew from the invitation to participate in the study that I was interested in the relocation process, and that I wanted to talk to them about their work situation and how it was affected by the relocation. I did not have a detailed interview guide. Instead, I told interviewees that I was interested in three themes that I hoped they would address: firstly, I asked them to talk a bit about their background and how they came to work at the agency; secondly, I wanted them to describe their work at the agency; and thirdly, I asked them about their thoughts on the future. There were a variety of trajectories, but there were also many similarities, so that most of the interviews revolved around a mixture of work and private life, for example—in other words, talking about the relocation of the workplace was not only a question of talking about work, and instead it prompted informants to discuss many aspects of their lives.

It was with the informants’ input that the form of the interviews was remodelled as I was going about the work. If I noticed that something kept coming up in interviews—for example the issue of travelling on business—I started to bring that up in other interviews. In that way, the interviews changed depending on what was brought up along the way. Every interview also had its unique characteristics. I was able to go deeper into certain aspects of relocation work with some interviewees, whereas other aspects stood out as being more important for others (Fägerborg, 1999: 64). The more I learned about the relocation and the organization, the more detailed my questions. New questions that were identified as important for the relocation process were added to the interviews.

The ongoing processes of construction in the interviews highlight that we cannot as researchers ‘speak from nowhere’ (Gray, 2003: 33 drawing on Haraway and Harding), and that there are no neutral questions in interviews, whether they are categorized as structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (see Nilsson, 2002). Research has as much of an impact on the researcher’s identification processes as on the researched (see Priyadharshini, 2003). For example, it became important for me to reflect on my (geographical) location as a researcher, and on the gendered aspects of doing organizational research.
Observations

The occasions when I did interviews were in most cases combined with observations at the workplace offices, whether I was in Stockholm or Östersund. The observations were documented in field notes. In some instances, I also conducted observations when there were no ‘formal’ interviews: at the inauguration of the agency offices in Östersund in 2005, for example. In 2006, I participated in various types of meetings with agency staff, and participated in everyday activities at the offices in Stockholm. I observed meetings between mid-level managers and between managers and other staff, coffee-break conversations, and lunches. In Östersund, I sat in on the recruitment process, observing interviews with potential new personnel. All together, this resulted in field notes from observations on twenty-eight separate occasions, divided between Stockholm and Östersund.

Observations were important for the study, not because what people do is more valuable than what they say, but because meaning is not only created in what is said, but also in what is done (Lundgren 2009: 97). Observations enabled me to study not only the disassembly of the workplace in Stockholm—a relocation process that could turn someone’s office into a ‘dump’ (Article I), altering the conception of the work that could be done in that particular office space—but also its installation in Östersund. The materiality of the organization, with its offices and different social spaces, helped me to understand both its temporality and spatiality.

One could say that observations allowed me to study the simultaneousness of contingency and stability in the process of the relocation. The texts people produced and the things they said to one another, together with such articulations as the positioning of bodies, furniture, walls, corridors, and even entire buildings, amounted to an empirical material that could shed light on the circumstances under which the practice of relocation was conducted. Sometimes there were things that I observed but informants did not explicitly express; at other times, I could observe how informants touched on stability and current changes in their interactions.

Most of the observations and interviews were conducted at the agency’s offices in Stockholm or Östersund. Sometimes the informants took me to lunch, especially in Stockholm. I think they wanted to treat me as a guest and show me the special advantages of the offices’ location in Stockholm. They were well aware that I was not a Stockholmer, but going out for lunch was also a way of finding a sheltered spot to talk away from the office building. In Article I, I describe some of the things that made me feel like the eternal
visitor at the workplace, and discuss how this visitorship set the boundaries for how participatory I could be and the frustrations that created. However, at the same time it served as a position I could identify with, and enabled me to become ‘that person who’s writing about the relocation’ [hon som skriver om omlokaliseringen].

In Article I, I also give some examples of field notes and how I produced them. They not only functioned as documents and products of source material, they were also the proof that I had done some work—the ‘evidence’ that I actually had done research, instead of just ‘sitting around’ (see Öhlander, 1999:83). The function of writing field notes was not only to record source material, but also enabled me to be identified (by myself and others) as a researcher.

Documents
Besides conducting interviews and observations on everyday work, I also studied internal documentation related to the relocation process and official documents about the relocation and the organization as a whole. Among the documents central to my analysis are reports about the agency written by other government agencies, appointed to examine the relocation process. Such reports represent the public and official discourse about the agency. At the same time, they reveal the in-house, bureaucratic grammar used when government bodies write about other government bodies. As a genre, it is somewhat different to news media material, for example, if only because they address a different type of audience that could be seen as semi-internal. These are documents that are publicly published on the agency’s website and can be accessed by anyone. I also had the opportunity to observe the internal website, and what was written there about the relocation, between 2004 and the spring of 2006. This material provided an insight into how the relocation was initiated and presented to the employees. Some interviewees said that it was through this channel that employees first heard of the idea of relocating the agency.

Howarth (2005: 337) stresses the question of the criteria for the selection of documents. In the course of the analysis, documents were important in the first instance because they contextualized the interviews and observations by providing accounts of how the relocation was communicated outside the organization well as within (see Article II). In some cases, I have used documents as primary source material, analysing them alongside interview and observation material (see Article IV).
Research ethics

Many of the employees I met during my fieldwork shared a conception of the relocation as professionally, socially, and emotionally difficult. The relocation awakened dreams, hopes, anxieties, and fears; as a process, it brought simmering discontent that sometimes surfaced in open conflict. Employees at various levels of the agency told me that they needed to ‘watch their tongue’ depending on who they were talking to. This created an environment of uncertainty where internal relations were easily strained (see, for example, Article II).

The ethical dilemmas to be taken into consideration when writing a Ph.D. thesis based on this kind of field-data are closely connected with the practicalities of how such material is gathered. The research builds on the activities that the researcher herself takes part in. It becomes apparent that the data is not simply recorded by the researcher. Instead, it is co-constructed by the researcher and the participants in the research project (see for example Gunnemark, 2011; Lundstedt, 2009; Pripp, 1999). I continuously reflected on these aspects of the (co-)construction of data throughout the whole research process, from the way I conducted interviews and observations to how I should write it up (see Coffey, 1999:136). In so doing, my attention was drawn to the importance of the ethical considerations in the research process.

Participant confidentiality is one of the pillars of qualitative research. At the minimum, the Swedish Research Council expects all researchers to take proper measures to safeguard the integrity of those participating in research (Vetenskapsrådet 2011:1: 69). In a new situation this is not always a straightforward business, which is why in practice the ways in which confidentiality and personal integrity are protected always need to be considered for each study, and even for each stage of the research. Although my questions did not concern so-called sensitive or personal matters from the point of view of research ethics or legal research ethics (see PUL 1998: 204 §13), my interactions with informants had to be sensitive to the context. Interviews and observations might touch on relations that could be sensitive for an informant’s professional future, and similarly on matters that could only be considered personal.

As an ethnologist, I am interested in describing the setting and its population in as great detail as possible. However, since the agency had something of a unique position in Sweden, my concern has been the integrity of participants when describing the workplace and the organization. I have tried to describe environments, while as far as possible handling the material and personal integrity are protected always need to be considered for each study, and even for each stage of the research. Although my questions did not concern so-called sensitive or personal matters from the point of view of research ethics or legal research ethics (see PUL 1998: 204 §13), my interactions with informants had to be sensitive to the context. Interviews and observations might touch on relations that could be sensitive for an informant’s professional future, and similarly on matters that could only be considered personal.

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with discretion. For example, on those occasions where I use names they are pseudonyms, and any ages given rare approximations. Direct quotes from interviews have been edited in order not to reveal the individual’s identity because of their linguistic style. The process of translating quotations from Swedish into English has anonymized them further by making it harder to trace them back to individuals.

Another way of handling this is to discuss interpretations and the treatment of quotations with informants. I have sometimes asked informants to read drafts of my articles, which gave me the opportunity to learn how my texts were seen from their point of view. Not all informants were interested in reading my texts. Those who did were often at pains to impress on me how important it was to be clear about, for example, the differences in working conditions for different categories of professionals at the agency.

This way of working, as well as its obvious disadvantages, has its benefits, one of which is that informants could ask questions about my way of writing up my findings that would probably not have come up in discussions with other researchers. In some cases, the participants’ questions improved the analysis, for example by pointing to missing details about the course of events described in my texts. Where they were described and/or quoted in the texts, they could react to the way in which they were represented. However, showing texts to informants during ongoing longitudinal fieldwork risks circulating immature analyses, and any problems this might give rise to can be difficult for the researcher to assess in the heat of the moment.

A main ethical concern I have borne with me since the beginning of the fieldwork regards how to describe and name the agency at which I conducted research. Here, the longitudinal approach has caused problems and posed ethical dilemmas that I had not foreseen. For example, interviewing an informant on more than one occasion meant that the same individual could appear in more than one text. I had to be careful that the quotations and descriptions used in the various articles, when combined in the dissertation, did not reveal the identities of individual participants.44 Because of the particularities of the whole relocation process and the fact that Sweden is a small country in terms of population, I considered it impossible to keep the names of towns confidential. However, the agency will not be named in this text. Instead, I write ‘the workplace’, ‘the agency’, or ‘the organization’, although this does not mean that it would be impossible to work out which agency is meant.

44 Elsewhere I consider how the format of the compilation thesis can create particular ethical dilemmas when presenting this kind of longitudinal and ethnographic research (Sjöstedt Landén, forthcoming).
Actually, it would be fairly easy by looking at relocation events in 2005 on. This, of course, is partly an effect of having decided to name the geographical places involved in the relocation, but the geographical implications would be impossible to discuss otherwise, as they are so closely connected with Swedish history in a way that would be very difficult to convey using fabricated names.

When weighing these issues, I have been inspired by the ethnologist Lena Martinsson’s (2006a) approach to similar problems that she confronted in a field study of a corporate workplace. Martinsson points out that the purpose of describing situations and events at the workplace is primarily to exemplify social patterns and structures in the organization. She makes clear that the interest lies not in writing the history of a particular organization, but instead in the norms and principles that are reproduced in practices situated in regional, national, and even global contexts (Martinsson, 2006a: 9; see also Nilsson, 2002: 18). I believe that Martinsson’s remarks pertain in my study—though it should be noted that in course of my research I became increasingly restrictive about how to name the workplace. The ethical considerations in writing up my findings are something that I have worked with continuously.

Leaving the details of the research process and data gathered, I will now turn to the theories that inform my work on the ethnographically constructed source material generated in the case-study, be it in the crafting of interviews, observations, and document searches to the categorization of the data and the process of writing up.
Part III: Theoretical orientations

The theoretical resources for this thesis were drawn in the first instance from a variety of postgraduate courses available to me, and in particular the course Perspectives on discourse analysis: Democracy, politics and social change that started in Umeå in 2008, which had a considerable impact on my subsequent work. The course undertook to disentangle the philosophical and conceptual points of departure in the different strands of discourse analysis—and gave me the opportunity to explore the possibilities and limits of a discourse analysis of the kind of data I had gathered in my Ph.D. project. The course work eventually resulted in an anthology, of which Article III in this thesis was one of the chapters. The theoretical ideas for that chapter were assembled by combining discourse theory with a feminist theory of emotions addressed in the course Feminism and cultural politics of emotion at Lund University. These two approaches together in turn constitute the theoretical framework for this thesis.

‘What is this “discourse” business?’

It is often said that discourse analysis in a broad sense should be viewed as ‘a package’ containing both theory and methods (Winther Jörgensen & Phillips, 1998: 10). The strategies for analysis and empirical exploration cannot be distinguished from its philosophical premises. It is this intertwining of methods and theory that is one of the reasons why I have been interested in the concept of discourse since my time as an undergraduate student of ethnology. I remember asking my lecturer at an early stage of my undergraduate studies, ‘what is this “discourse” business?’ He smiled and said that he had been trying to work it out for a long time, but had not found the answer yet. This intriguing aspect of the concept could also be why I wanted to explore it further and try to riddle it out.

The one irrefutable fact about the notion of discourse is that it has been much debated and cannot be described by one single definition (see, for example, Egan Sjölander & Gunnarsson Payne, 2011; Glynos et al., 2009; Howarth, 2000; Paul, 2009). It was not strange that the lecturer and I had problems

35 Tracking discourses: Identity, politics and social change (Egan Sjölander & Gunnarsson Payne, 2011).
36 Of course, it was not solely an interest in the concept of discourse as such that led me to choose discourse analysis for this thesis. As Ehn & Lüdke (forthcoming: 6) point out, the ethnology has ‘from the 1970’s to the 2000’s, seemed to be unusually open, trendy and “eclectic” when choosing and using concepts and ideas from different disciplines, which has resulted in innovative ways of combining theories, not always taking much notice of the philosophical underpinning over the various schools of thought. Recent years have seen a growing interest in the ontology of, for example, phenomenology (Alftberg & Hansson, 2012) and various forms of discourse analysis (Egan Sjölander & Gunnarsson Payne, 2001). I share the aspiration to hit upon a theoretical grammar that makes explicit the ways of viewing the world that inform my research on public sector job relocation.

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pinpointing a definition of the concept. In everyday English, a discourse is a ‘written or spoken communication or debate’.27 However, in poststructuralist discourse theory (PDT), which I apply in this thesis, the meaning of the term discourse is much more extensive and dynamic: it includes ‘all practices and meanings shaping a particular community of social actors’ (Howarth, 2000:5).28 This means that everything should be considered discursive, and thus meaningful, in my case-study of public sector job relocation.29

Using this definition of discourse, discourse analysis comprises both philosophically and methodologically ‘practical’ elements that I will address here. Discourse theory in this respect has a dual role: explicating the ontological assumptions of my research as well as providing the conceptual tools for operating and organizing my analysis.

Discourse theory

My approach to the concept of discourse as an ontological category derives from the work initiated by the political philosophers Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and developed by Glynos and Howarth (2007). I will here highlight the three philosophical contributions that function as an ‘ontological horizon’ (Glynos et al., 2009: 9) for this thesis.

As already noted, the first effect discourse theory had on my research was to lead me to regard all objects and actions as meaningful and thus ‘discursively constructed’ (Howarth, 2000: 101). To view ‘everything’ as meaningful may not appear exceptionally new—indeed, exploring the meaning of anything and everything, from material objects to abstract ideas, is what most ethnologists would claim to do in their research—but what has not been attempted to the same extent is to make the ontological assumptions always behind the exploration of meaning explicit.30 Here, I have found that the discourse theory

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27 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. ‘discourse’.
28 PDT is also often used for political discourse theory, another name for the same strand of poststructuralist discourse analysis. See Egan Sjölander (2011) for a discussion of the naming of PDT.
29 If discourse is all, questions arise about the boundaries between theory, method, and data, as the ‘empirical’ as well as the ‘theoretical’ are articulations of discourse (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 211). Glynos & Howarth call this a retroductive process. The retroductive stance emphasizes that, as a researcher, I do not stand outside and look in on a phenomenon; instead, I find myself in the middle of it (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 215), and I use theoretical concepts to systematize my observations and impressions in an articulatory practice that characterizes, explains, and criticizes social phenomena (ibid). In this way, retroduction works particularly well with ethnographically oriented disciplines such as ethnology, with its longstanding interest in discussing reflexivity and the ‘internality’ of the researcher in the chosen field. For post-structuralist approaches to researching subjectivity, see, for example, Brown, 2008; Gunningon Payne, 2006; Jackson, 2008; Johansson, 2010; Leifer, 2001; Lindgren, 2009; Troille, 2008.
30 There is a growing body of ethnological research that uses discourse theory. See, for example, Gerber, 2011; Gunningon Payne, 2006; Herberg, 2004; Johansson, 2010; Lindgren, 2012; Lindstedt, 2005; Martinsson, 2006a; Nilsen, 2010. For a discussion of discourse theory and Swedish ethnology, see Lindström, 2004.

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definition of the discursivity of ‘everything’ helped in putting words to my ontological hypotheses. Importantly, the philosophical statement that posits everything to be meaningful profoundly questions the claim to essentialism and universalism—any object or action is always perceived on the basis of its relation to something else—and it insists on the idea that discourse cannot be reduced to linguistic elements such as text or talk alone (Howarth, 2005: 336). This means that I draw no ontological distinction between discourse and practice, as these are seen as equally discursive.31 Such arguments are especially promising for ethnologists, since ethnological studies often comprise a diverse body of data, which potentially are all equally important to the analysis.

The second contribution of discourse theory is that the view that everything is discursive opens up a space for thinking about the structures of the world as ‘radically contingent’ (Laclau, 1996). If everything is discursively constructed, it also means that everything potentially could have been assembled in other ways. The order of the world observed at a given point in time and space only constitutes one way of organizing objects, social relations, political demands, and so on. This view of the world as always open-ended, regardless of how closed and sedimented a social order may seem, turns structural claims of universality and essentialism on their head by showing that other directions could have been taken. However, the question remains: why this and not the other direction?

This leads to the third effect of discourse theory: namely that any social structure is always seen to involve the ‘construction of antagonisms and the exercise of power’ (Howarth, 2000: 104). With the concept of hegemony, Laclau & Mouffe (1985) emphasized how strong and enduring discursive structures enjoy stability over space and time by linking together different identities and political forces into chains of meaning.32 Some of these chains may eventually grow particularly strong and powerful. For example, the practice of public sector relocation has centred on ideas that denote some geographical places as centres and others as peripheries. The move to a modern Swedish welfare state was to tightly link notions of modernity with the notion of urban centres. These centres could in turn be linked with notions of knowledge and resources and so on, forming a strong chain of meaning.
In that way, the notion of ‘centre’ was granted a privileged and hegemonic position in Sweden’s ideal of a modern welfare state.

The concept of hegemony underscores the fact that there can never be such thing as pure contingency. In the same instance, hegemonic orders also become vulnerable to those forces excluded by them (Howarth, 2000: 104). Elements that have been excluded may formulate new demands and counteractions that eventually reveal the hegemonic order as contingent, notwithstanding how ‘natural’ and undisputed it may appear to be. In this perspective, public sector job relocation cannot only be understood as intertwined with policy processes and political decision-making, but should be seen as political in its very constitution (see Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2008).

Besides providing an ontological agenda, discourse theory has also been a source of analytical concepts that lend themselves to interaction with other theoretical concepts when analysing my data. An advantage with the discourse theory approach is that it offers concepts that focus on the genesis of a phenomenon and the linking together of individual narratives with social processes in so-called articulatory practices (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 105). For that reason, I will now turn to the analytical concepts on which my study builds: identification, fantasy, and affect.

Identification and power struggles

One aim of my work on professional identification in relocation work is to form an understanding of how professionals become involved in hegemonic orders and power struggles. The notions of identity and identification are of central value for untangling such processes (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1990). The discourse theory approach contributes with an analytical distinction between these two concepts.

The notion of identity is viewed as a collectively imagined ideal position—for example, ‘the professional knowledge worker’. Such a position is always dependent on its relationships with other positions within a wider social structure that—because of its contingency—never can be completely closed (see Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 127). Instead, an identity (position) is understood as lacking a given content (Laclau, 1996: 92), and, because of this constant incompleteness, subjects will continuously try to identify with positions/identities. In this perspective, identities only exist to the extent that subjects try to identify with them (Laclau, 1990). If no attempts at identification were made, an identity

23 With my discourse theory spectacles on, the category of ‘knowledge’ is always relational. What I present in this thesis provides a form of knowledge, not the only form of knowledge (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 210) about public sector job relocation.

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Judith Butler (see, for example, 1990; 2000), which has formed my understanding of gendered identities in a post-structural ontology. Hers is the explanation focus such elements as are privileged or are seen as less legitimate at any given moment. Given this, I am not primarily interested in professional identities as such: instead, my concern is the process of professional identification in relocation work.

**Gendered professionals: intersections of discursive structures**

The gendered articulation of professional identification came to be an important dimension of my analysis throughout the research process. The framework provided by discourse theory works just as well when exploring gendered identity and identification—indeed, any type of identity construction. Analyses including gender and other discursive structures do however benefit from a combination of discursive theory with a more explicit theorization about gender. Other ethnologists who have used a discourse theory framework when considering constructions of gendered identities have also highlighted the ways in which gender is understood where it intersects with age (Gunnarsson Payne, 2006; Johansson, 2010; Lundgren, 2011), national identity (Gerber, 2011), and class, race, and ethnicity (Martinsson, 2006a; Lundstedt, 2005; Nilsson, 2010). Their work has shown the impact of the intersections of such discursive structures on identification processes. My reading of discourse theory has consequently been informed by an ‘ethnological gaze’ that—as shown by the survey of ethnological working life literature above—more often than not looks to the loci where different structures of power intersect.34

The idea that gender has a discursive structure owes much to the work of Judith Butler (see, for example, 1990; 2000), which has formed my understanding of gendered identities in a post-structural ontology. Hers is the explana-
tion of the performative character of gender construction and the forces of heteronormativity as ways of constructing ‘modern’ gendered subjectivity. The concept of heteronormativity sheds light on how gender is constructed dualistically and in relation to notions of heterosexuality. Importantly, it comprises an understanding of gender in terms of power, and especially in terms of heterosexuality as a hegemonic order.

Of the further categorizations that will be encountered in this thesis, ‘geographies’, ‘location’, ‘profession’, ‘age’, and ‘emotion’, like gender, are held to be equally discursive structures. From a geographical perspective, Massey (2005: 10) argues that viewing (geographical) identities as relational and unessential ‘raises questions of the politics of those geographies and of our relationship to and responsibility for them; and it raises, conversely and perhaps less expectedly, the potential geographies of our social responsibility’. This view opens the way to thinking about social change in a multidimensional way. It does not mean that emotion, geography, and so on should be seen as less ‘real’ or as free-floating in a postmodern sense. As Massey suggests, these concepts of identity and identification come with concrete political implications and are always part of hegemonic struggles—struggles for power.

When exploring the linking of employees’ subjective interpretations of their professional lives with the social norms, rules, and resources of public sector job relocation, I have worked with Glynos & Howarth’s development of discourse theory (2007) into what they call a logics of critical explanation.

A logics approach

The function of the logics approach adopted in this thesis is to articulate the discourse theory framework through my empirical material. As well as deconstructing social practices, it offers a means of reconstructing them and organizing them analytically. Glynos and Howarth mobilize the concept of logics to denominate different levels of aspects of social practices and argue that there are essentially three dimensions to logics: social, political, and fantasmatic. Social logics relate to the characteristics of the social rules that govern a practice at the time of study and make it appear as socially necessary (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 137). In this thesis, I not only describe the characteristics of the practice of public sector relocation, but I characterize the professional identities that were reinforced in the source material in various ways. In Article II, for example, I map the positional features of professional identities during the time of relocation (see also p. 41).

The notion of political logics raises the question of how those social rules came into being, and whether they are or have been contested and/or trans-
formed (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 141). This has drawn my attention to what was seen as problematic, contradictory, or conflicting in the data and revealed the social logics to be contingent. For example, employees described themselves as trapped by expectations that they did not want to live up to. In those cases, I read the material for the kinds of ‘techniques’ that were used when escaping or contesting such expectations.

In their understanding of social and political logics, Glynos and Howarth build on Laclau and Moély (1985) as well as Laclau’s later work. However, the imaginative and affective aspects of logics have not previously been introduced at the centre of discourse theory. Glynos and Howarth’s conceptualization of fantastmatic logics is thus a significant contribution to PDT. Fantasmatic logics accounts for how subjects become caught up in, ‘gripped’ by, social logics or instead decide to embark on acts of resistance (ibid. 145). Why, for example, did agency employees adhere to, or tried to live up to, the expectations they criticized? The focus is on how subjects legitimate their acceptance or objection to social rules that have become dominant.

These three dimensions of logics (social, political, and fantastmatic) enabled me to organize my data and critically analyse the practices of public sector job relocation. They also helped me identify what is characteristic of my specific case, but at the same time make clear that this case is not an isolated example (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: 213). This is particularly important when exploring how the specifics of my case connect with the social and political processes into which the workplace and its personnel are drawn.

It should be noted that there are no given models for working with the logics approach. I primarily see this as strength, because it means that these methods remain alert to the contingency and context of every new case-study. One of the tricky things with researching logics, especially when working on such diverse data, is that they operate on different levels. For example, on a meta-level of inquiry, the social logics of public sector job relocation in Sweden might regard relocation as a ‘necessary’ answer to the cutbacks in military spending in different parts of the country. In the microsetting of the workplace, the social logics of public sector job relocation might include the necessity of travelling to Stockholm for meetings rather than meeting in Östersund.

This is not so much a theoretical problem as a problem of disposition and presenting a coherent report. The question is how complexity can best be described. The premise of the logics approach is that each narrative, event, or entity cannot be represented as either social or political, or fantastmatic. Instead, all three dimensions need to be articulated together. In order to make
this sustainable in analytical practice, Lundgren (2011) has suggested that each empirical moment in research could be explored from all three dimensions—social, political, and fantasmatic logics alike.

While I agree with Lundgren that it is important that all aspects of logics need to be seen as concurrent, there is a need for strategies to cope with this complexity in analytical practice. I have attempted a couple of strategies in two of my articles. In Article II, I have tried to break down the social, political, and fantasmatic logics of relocation practice, using certain narratives from interviews or documents to illustrate some of the content of each logical dimension. This does not mean, however, that each of those narratives could not be used as an example of the other two dimensions of logics. In Article III, I used a different strategy by which I highlighted fantasmatic logics, and left social and political logics to form the background to my report.

All three logical dimensions are important when critically exploring social practice, yet in what follows I will concentrate on the fantasmatic dimension as a way of conceptualizing the juxtaposition of identification processes with social structures.

I ideological fantasy
In enlarging on the fantasmatic logics of social practice, Glynos and Howarth draw on the Lacanian theorization of fantasy as ideological, socially constructed, and shared. They argue that fantasmonic logics entail normative ideals and affective resources brought together in ideological fantasies (Glynos, 2001; Glynos, 2008; Glynos 2010; Glynos & Howarth, 2007:147). The concept of ideological fantasy helps in picking out the various aspects of fantasmonic logics in greater detail.

In the analysis, the analysts (utredare) at the agency were characterized as specialized knowledge-networkers within the agency’s policy area, as well as specialists in bureaucratic processes (myndighetsarbete, lit. ‘public administration work’). These characteristics and expectations formed ideological images of the analysts’ professional identity. Such ideological fantasies could then be charged with promises of ‘the good life’ or ‘modern society’ for those whose work lived up to these expectations (see Stavrakakis, 2004). Fantasies about living ‘the good life’ could make out the motifs for professional practices to be organized in certain ways in order to fulfill the ideological model.35

35 Nilsson (2010), for example, studied how the relocation of an entire town was made to appear comprehensible and necessary with help of the concept of ideological fantasy. The implementation of an ideological fantasy about the town of Kiruna in the north of Sweden as wholly dependent on its mining industry resulted in the identity of ‘a citizen of Kiruna’ becoming socially, ideologically, and emotionally invested in the logics of the mining company. Questioning the relocation of the town could appear as ‘illogical’, and even impossible.

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In Article III, I say more about fantasy—in this instance how professionalism is imagined in relation to geographies (see, for example, Massey, 1994; Valentine, 2007; Vanderbeck, 2006) and how they become interwoven with identification with fantasies of the ideal professional.36

Similarly, it is evident that notions of expertise are incorporated in the fantasy of ‘the professional knowledge worker’ in my source material. Not only that, for the position of the expert was secured by its ‘linking the values of economic productivity, political democracy and personal contentment’ (Miller & Rose, 2008: 47). The notion of ideological fantasy suggests that working to fulfill those ideal images is thought legitimate and desirable. Striving to fulfill an ideological fantasy of the professional knowledge worker—a fantasy that combines ‘productivity’ with ‘democracy’ and ‘personal contentment’—may thus appear to be a particularly desirable future. The analytical exercise that follows is not about pinpointing what should be defined objectively as the proper professional. Rather, my focus is on the objects and activities that are seen as desirable for professionals, because they are telling examples of why it is thought important to achieve certain modes of professional subjectivity.

Affect
When working with the empirical material using the concept of ideological fantasy (Articles II, III, and IV), the affective or emotional dimensions to what the ideological fantasies thought desirable could be further developed. To remedy this, I turned in particular to Sara Ahmed’s work (2004) on the cultural politics of the emotions. My interest was not directed at finding universal qualities or general assumptions about nameable emotions such as fear, anger, guilt, joy, and so forth, but rather at establishing the part the emotions play—and the meaning accorded to them—in relocation practice: what emotions do instead of what they are.

This approach stems from the idea that affect involves investment in social norms. Ahmed (2004:90) uses the metaphor of ‘stickyness’ to describe how something that gets repeated in social life accumulates affective value. Ahmed (2004:91) argues that ‘[w]hen a sign or object becomes sticky it can function to “block” the movement (of other things or signs) and it can function to bind (other things or signs) together. Stickiness helps to associate “blockages” with “binding”’. By combining Ahmed with Glynos and Howarth, I highlight the fact that the dynamics of undergoing a move and/or feeling attached say important...
things about the processes of professional identification in relocation work. Distinctions are sometimes made between feeling, affect, and emotion (see, for example, Gorton, 2007), but rather than distinguishing between them on ontological or other grounds, I instead use the terms interchangeably in my analysis in order to leave the question open as to the form the various terms for mood may take in the source material.

This way of handling mood also derives from a feminist critique of the strong lines of thought that intimately connect emotions with the individual subject. The idea that emotions are individual and emanate from single subjects has been rejected by post-structuralist thinkers and feminist researchers (Terada, 2001; Hemmings, 2005; Ahmed, 2004; Gorton, 2007), who prefer to see emotion or affect as shared ideas and experiences, viewing them in social and political terms, instead of biological or cognitive concerns.

Furthermore, the feminist critique extends to the Western idea of the emotions as singular and subjective, which has made various emotional expressions available to certain subject positions yet unavailable to others. ‘Being emotional’ has traditionally been understood as an attribute of the ‘soft’ and often feminized body, rationality, and reason as the attributes of the masculine body (see Ahmed, 2004: 4). It is in this respect that the ideal of the civil service professional, traditionally associated with the public sphere and masculine ideals (Lundgren, 1990; Stievers, 2002), has a bearing on the role of emotion in processes of professional identification.

Before embarking on the analysis proper, I will summarize the articles that constitute the grounds for my analysis. Part V then draws on the collected results of those four articles, and Part VI offers a concluding discussion about the effects and affects of relocation.
Part IV: Article summaries

Article I
The focus in the first article is the methodological question of researching a workplace on the move. I analyse field notes from 2005 and 2006, written during observations at the agency’s Stockholm offices. I explore the potential formation of ethnographic researcher identity as a process of identification, and argue that doing ethnography is to attempt to constitute professional (researcher) identity. That a large number of expectations and ideals are in circulation is evident in the field research. Such norms and expectations need to be investigated and questioned, not merely taken for granted. In the article, I try to capture my first encounter with the workplace by referring to the feeling of being a newcomer. My position changed slightly over time as I became acquainted with the workplace and some of the employees. However, I also discovered that it was difficult to avoid identifying myself as a visitor, or indeed being identified by others as such, and this visitorship tended to stick with me throughout the fieldwork process.

Article II
The analysis in the second article builds on interviews, phone conversations, and observations involving participants working in both Stockholm and Östersund during the most intense phase of the relocation in 2005 and 2006. I found that two professional identity positions were articulated in the material, and that they became more explicit and chiselled over time: ‘the old’ and ‘the new’. ‘The old’ were associated with the Stockholm office, ‘the new’ with Östersund. Furthermore, these two positions overlapped with other ways of naming the workforce and dividing them into groups, for example in terms of experts and generalists. These positions were in many ways constituted by the emotional attachment of each group with either one of the two workplace locations. These professional positions were furthermore connoted with femininity in different ways. I consider the implications of the hegemonization of the two employee identities, and find that it was difficult for employees to pursue alternative modes of identification.

Article III
The third article is concerned with the hopes and dreams of the employees who moved to Östersund to work. The primary data for the article were interviews conducted in 2006 with recent staff who were in the throes of moving to Östersund to start work at the agency. Some of the interviewees had only...
been at their new jobs for a few weeks when I interviewed them. The focus is on what the informants saw as imaginable. In the article, I discuss how the ideological fantasy of worklife and family/private life became interconnected, and how emotions could work to attach or detach subjects from ideological fantasies. The analysis explores how the normativity of working in order to live ‘the good life’ was combined with the ideological fantasy of Östersund as a town in a sparsely populated region: a combination harbouring a variety of desires to ‘have it all’.

**Article IV**

The fourth article addresses the relocation’s role in the ongoing transformation of Sweden’s civil service, and particularly the new ways of auditing work at the agency. The material consists primarily of follow-up interviews conducted in 2009 with staff who had been taken on in Östersund when the agency moved from Stockholm. The analysis draws on feminist research and critical organization studies in order to explore how gender, age, and spatiality intersect in professional identification processes. The analysis shows that the gendered descriptions of the new workforce as consisting of ‘young ambitious girls’ entailed certain expectations of flexible and mouldable civil service knowledge worker.
Part V: Imagining professionals: fantasy and the relocation practice

In this part of the thesis, I draw together the findings from the four articles and discuss how they interconnect. I will begin by mapping the fantasies about professionalism that occurred in the material. I then go on to discuss how these ideological fantasies were connected with other fantasies about, for example, geographical location. These fantasies will be problematized by means of the analysis of the roles of affect in the process of relocating the agency, and how all of this became related to ideals of living ‘the good life’. In so doing, I also refer to empirical material not previously used in my published work. Finally, I reflect on impact of fantasies about professionalism and public sector job relocation on how movement and professional identity is envisaged and contribute to construct futures.

The more I became acquainted with the process of relocating the workplace, the more I realized that the very organization of the relocation hinged on identification with professional ideals. These ideals were generally guided by the professional context: in this case, the ideals of professional civil service knowledge workers. In the relocation process, however, the description of the workforce at the agency gave it a particular shape. In Article II, I mapped two professional positions that were to be particularly significant for the relocation process. In interview and observation material they were referred to as ‘the new’ and ‘the old’ positions. These positions were ideological in construction, in that their characteristics were imagined to describe the agency’s workforce, but had the effect of concealing the heterogeneity among employees. Both of these positions were linked to a set of characteristics (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The new</th>
<th>The old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruited to Östersund</td>
<td>Employees in Stockholm before the decision to relocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of education, less experience</td>
<td>Long experience with the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalist</td>
<td>Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Loss of enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to move to Östersund</td>
<td>Unwilling to move from Stockholm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>Old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1: The two professional positions and their characteristics (from Article II).
These thought-identity positions were the basis for ideological fantasies in which several different orders of social stratification came together—age, gender, competence, affective modes, and geographical belonging—forming social logics that in everyday practice influenced employees’ expectations of what their work at the agency would be like, and influenced how they viewed one another as well as themselves.

Gender, age and professionalism

The characteristics linked with ‘the new’ and ‘the old’ shows that these positions had become imbued with features that were seen as obstructions as well as opportunities for the future. In many ways, these positions were constructed as distinct from each other, or even as opposites, except for on one point: they were both distinguished by femininity. On various occasions throughout my fieldwork, I came across remarks to the effect that ‘there are lots of women at this workplace’, sometimes made in a somewhat worried tone of voice. It was not always clear exactly what the cause of their anxiety was, but I provide some examples of how this was constructed as a problem.

The gendered images of the agency’s workforce tie in with well-established opinion about gender equality in the Swedish context. Generally, equality in numbers of men and women has been portrayed being as beneficial to all workplaces and organizations (Alvesson, 1997). Consequently, the uneven gender demographic at the agency was talked about as being problematic because of the uneven division between men and women at the workplace.

This follows the idea that men and women are complementary of each other, which is a core feature of the heterosexual norm. Moreover, the construction of femininity as being significant for the workforce could serve to mark what was seen as problematic and difficult about relocation work.37

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I encountered unease at the ‘fact’ that the vast majority of employees at the agency in Stockholm were women at a ‘bad age’

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37 In a historical perspective, heteronormativity has generally had its greatest impact on the organization of Swedish working life. When the civil service opened for female workers in the 1800, it was recognized that bringing women into the civil service could make the state administration more financially effective since women were seen as a loyal and cheap workforce (Karlsson, 1997; Waldemarson, 1996). Nevertheless, the assumption that women should ‘normally’ be married to a man and that she ‘naturally’ belonged to the home sphere and its caring activities still prevailed, even for those in state employ (Jansson, 2010; Rönnblom, 2005; Martinsson, 2006). Femininity, often represented by the category of ‘women’, has been represented as somewhat divergent and problematic in worklife to this day, particularly in prestigious and powerful positions; and this despite the strong and broadly accepted Swedish notion of gender equality. It has been noted that Swedish policy on gender equality in worklife may even work to reproduce ideas about heteronormity and of women as problematic in worklife instead of breaking with these longstanding patterns (see for example Jansson, 2010; Rönnblom, 2005; Martinsson, 2006).
to get new jobs (Article II). It was thought this would complicate the adjustment process for Stockholm employees who were not moving with the workplace. Those who did not find new jobs on their own were helped by the newly established job security council (omställningsorganisation), sarcastically referred to by one of the interviewees as ‘the compost’—apparently thought an undesirable view of the future. Male employees at the agency were not to the same extent thought to suffer such difficulties; in fact, they were rarely mentioned in the descriptions of the Stockholm workforce. They were largely taken silently for granted as fairly unproblematic element in the predicted labour market.

When men described their own situation, they saw themselves in relation to the—femininely charged—positions of ‘the new’ and ‘the old’. A man in his forties reported that the majority of employees in Stockholm were older women who were having a hard time finding new jobs, but that he did not fit that description. Consequently, he said, he did not feel as worried as them.

I’m probably one of the ones who doesn’t need to be that worried, as luck would have it! [...] I’ve heard it from several quarters. (Man in his forties, Stockholm, 2005).

He saw his own situation as being different from the majority’s, and he noted how this image was often constructed in the ways others viewed him. This did not mean, however, that male employees did not worry about the future. For example, one of the younger male informants was anxious that his experience would be insufficient when looking for a new job in Stockholm. It was more that for men gender did not stand out as a concern in the thick of the relocation process as it was presumed to do for the majority of the workforce—the women. The worry and anxiety that became part of relocation work thus became part of a gendered structure.

Although ‘the old’ were naturally seen as experts and commanded highly valued positions at the agency, they also became constructed as subordinate to ‘the new’. ‘The old’ were privileged insasmuch as their position was associated with the agency’s expertise and experience while it was located in Stockholm; yet equally ‘the old’ position was thought of as problematic, backward-looking, and resistant to change. Fantasies about professionalism were especially focused on a future in which it was thought ‘the new’ would take the lead, associated with positive characteristics in terms of future work at the agency. ‘The new’ were perceived as coming into the organization with a fresh set of eyes and new knowledge, something that was sought after in ‘the new organization in Östersund’. Here, femininity could also be seen as a positively charged characteristic in that ‘the new’ were seen as consisting of...
‘young ambitious girls’ who worked hard and were willing to be flexible and embrace change (Article IV).

However, one of the paradoxes that intrigued me when following the relocation process arose in the description of ‘the new’ as younger. The newly employed ‘younger workforce’ were not any younger (in the sense of chronological age), although they were talked about in that way. The average age of agency analysts instead proved to have risen slightly after the relocation (Riksrevisionen, 2009). One explanation of why this fantasy of ‘the new’ as younger than ‘the old’ endured could be that it had a symbolic function for the relocation process: not only could it be explained by the analytical relationship between ‘new’/young and ‘old’/old (the rhetoric about ‘the new’ as young and enthusiastic did not use actual ages), it symbolized new expectations of the agency’s workforce that changed with the move.

The organization has become more change-oriented. This has meant that the relatively major changes in policy effected shortly before the relocation have been introduced relatively smoothly to the agency. (Riksrevisionen, 2009: 82).

The new expectations lay further weight to flexibility and mouldability. It is important for us to retain younger co-workers in the organization who can be moulded and develop in their professional roles. (Agency intranet, 2006).

The denomination of the positions of ‘the new’ and ‘the old’ was connected with images of age, which also served to enforce the difference between the two positions as well as complicating the relations internal to each position. This was significant for enabling those identifying with the position of ‘the old’ to retain the strong bonds with the notion of the expert. However, at the same time it could strengthen the victimization and feelings of degradation that was sometime related to Stockholm employees.

You were pissed off and sad, perhaps for yourself, but also about the importance of our questions [areas of expertise]. It felt as if they didn’t really want to invest in us, even though it wasn’t going to be shut down, but it sort of was, with it moving so far away […] that we staff were expendable. It felt as if we weren’t really worth investing in enough. (Woman in her forties, Stockholm 2005, quoted in Article II).

It should thus be noted that the average age dropped by approximately five years in the initial stage of the relocation according to the agency’s own reports. This may indicate that larger numbers of younger staff were recruited in the early stages of the process.

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Although the future seemed to be in the hands of ‘the new’, theirs was a position dependent on ‘the old’ sharing their knowledge and introducing them to the work. As the relocation proceeded, I also observed that to be too ambitious and to achieve too much could become negatively charged. As I learned during the follow-up interviews in 2009, these characteristics associated with ‘the new’ were not only positively charged, but could also be construed as a threat to the working environment. The ‘young ambitious girls’, for example, were viewed in opposition to male employees, who were described as ‘laid-back lads’ who knew how not to ‘overdo’ things. The ‘girls’ were appreciated for their loyalty, flexibility, and willingness to work hard. In contrast to the ‘laid-back lads’, however, they risked standing out as ‘too ambitious’: a worry, especially if they whipped up too competitive a working climate. The concern was that if women became ‘too ambitious’, it could result in a stressful and unhealthy work environment (Article IV). These gendered and age-marked descriptions became constitutive of professional subject positions to which employees had to relate (irrespective of whether subjects identified with any of the positions of ‘women growing too old’ or ‘young ambitious girl’, see Article IV).

I had no interest in measuring or evaluating whether work conducted at one location was more ‘effective’ than the other; instead, my study shows that the quality and efficiency of government agencies were just as high once they had moved to locations outside the capital, as they had been when they were located in Oslo. It is hazardous to draw direct parallels between these Norwegian findings and the Swedish context, but nevertheless the results are relevant here because they highlight the fact that different ways of studying a relocation process provide different kinds of knowledge about it.39 This is crucial to the case in hand, because it means that although agencies are expected to continue function in a similar fashion at their new locations, the expectations of how professionals could and should do their work altered with the change of location. That being so, it is important to think further in this particular case about how ideological fantasies of ‘the old’ and ‘the new’...
staff as experts or generalists are situated at different geographical locations, and how that geographical situatedness imbues professional identities with meaning. How, then, did geographical contexts become located in processes of professional identification?

**Location and fantasy—relocating competence**

One of the central points in this thesis is that the geographical circumstances of the relocation were significant for professional identification. One example of the way this took concrete form were the arrangements made for the transfer of competence.

Transferring competence became a key feature of the relocation because most Stockholm employees were not going to move with the agency to the new location. Knowledge and competence needed to be transferred from the staff in Stockholm to the new recruits in Östersund. The processes of the competence transfer are a good example of the practical impact had by professional identification on how the relocation was organized and implemented.

The intense period of competence transfer roughly speaking ran from the autumn of 2005, through 2006, until the Stockholm offices were closed down in 2007. During this period, employees in Stockholm and new recruits in Östersund were ordered to work especially closely together. Although terming groups of the workforce as ‘the new’ and ‘the old’ became a way of making the relocation work comprehensible, it was also something that equally troubled staff in Stockholm and Östersund, not least because it complicated their work with transferring competence.

The division between ‘new’ and ‘old’ created a number of practical problems. I have written in Article II about the issue of the transfer of competence, and in Articles II and IV about how employees were either permitted or forbidden to influence the organization of their work and their heavy workloads due to frequent work-related travel.

Because these positions were associated with either Stockholm or Östersund, they became colonizing forces that invaded the field of professional identification, creating a geographically organized and polarized hegemony (see Lundgren, 2011: 334). In Articles II and III, I argue that professional identification became organized according to a logic of centre and periphery that created a geographically marked division between groups of employees and narrowed the scope for action for personnel working in Stockholm and Östersund alike. The logic of centre and periphery entailed all three dimensions of the logics framework. Ideas about centre and periphery stood out as normative for relocation work, but like any hegemonic order it was also...
criticized and contested by employees. Employees could relate to this logic in many different ways (see Article III). But the unifying factor was that the logic’s hegemonic position called for employees to relate to the logic in one way or another.

When I talked to employees (including mid-level managers) involved in the transfer of competence, they noted that the induction of newly recruited employees was inconsistent across the organization. They reported significant differences between departments and working groups in their ways of going about the transfer of competence, which created the perception that working conditions for departing staff as well as new staff were unfair. New employees were provided with unequal levels of support during their introduction, and the size of the workloads taken on by Stockholm employees working out their notice could vary significantly (where they formally had no obligations to the organization). This was described as a source of irritation as well as insecurity among employees (including mid-level managers).

Some in Stockholm were unwilling to share their knowledge with the new employees, whereas others found themselves taking on extra heavy workloads (see Article II). This, taken with the fact that the newly employed did not really know what expect from their induction (because they had only just joined the organization), had the effect of putting staff on their watch. When personnel became wary of sharing thoughts, experiences, and ideas with one another, the process of transferring competence was further complicated. The already general confusion about what the transfer of competence was about was amplified.

Moving and being moved

As newly employed person you had to watch your tongue so that you didn’t talk too much about Östersund in Stockholm and vice versa. So I think they were a bit cautious about showing how upset they really were for not to put it on... because I think they realized that I didn’t make any decisions but I have only...erm...I have only gotten something positive out of this decision. (Interview with women in her thirties, quoted in Article II).

This informant points to the meaning accorded to emotions in the process of transferring knowledge. She talks of a certain atmosphere where employees

40 Stockholm employees who chose not to move with the agency to the new location were obliged to resign from their posts. Depending on their age and their length of state employment, they could have up to a year of ‘turnaround time’ under the aegis of the Swedish Employment Security Council (<http://www.tsn.se/for-arbetsgivare/trygghetsavtalet.aspx>; SOU 2005/09). During this time, managers had no formal authority to allocate work to employees who were working their notice. The National Audit Office calls this ‘generous terms for those who did not join in the move’ (Riksrevisonen, 2009).
and managers worked hard to keep their emotions in check, while at the same time as their colleagues could not fail to notice that they were going through a period when they were upset—and excited. The time and labor spent on this could, in Ahmed’s words, be described as accumulating an affective quality, with the ‘stickyness’ of the ideological fantasies of ‘the new’ or ‘the old’ (ibid. 2004:127). In turn, this was what could leave subjects ‘get stuck’ with these fantasies about professionalism. This is a good example of what emotions did in the relocation process.

Furthermore, emotions offered explanations for why colleagues acted in certain ways as employees tried to identify and make the stages of the knowledge transfer intelligible. This leads on to the fantasmatic aspects of undergoing a move and/or feeling attached. Affective forces were at play when personnel in Stockholm tried to leave their positions as quickly as possible, and why new recruits were left with only the vaguest of notions how to do their jobs, with the result that new recruits also chose to resign far sooner than might otherwise have been expected. Similarly, employees in Stockholm said that they were countermanded if they showed interest in moving with their work to Östersund, because this could be seen as a betrayal of ‘their own’ position, with its associated, expert competence localized in Stockholm. All this became part of ideological fantasy that knowledge workers were located geographically (see Table 1, p.43). An example of this comes from my notes recording one of the phone interviews held with an employee in Stockholm.

When the decision that the agency should be relocated was announced, she immediately informed her superiors that she wanted to move with the workplace. She did not feel that this was taken seriously by her manager, but that it was met with disapproval. (Woman in her fifties, 2005).

This touches on an important point when thinking about what was at stake for the professionals in Stockholm when the proposition to relocate was announced, and how the relocation became threatening to their professional identity. The relocation in itself was not necessarily seen as a threat to the quoted informant as an individual. It was clear, however, that her interest in moving with the agency to Östersund did not sit well with the fantasy of ‘the old’ being located to Stockholm. Such reflections from employees in Stockholm also occurred in other interviews. The fantasy of experts being located in Stockholm carried with it expectations of loyalty to those ideals from those already working there, and in the relocation process became characterized as ‘the old’.

At the same time, it also says something about what was seen as desirable for those taking the new jobs in Östersund. They were to acquire a position
at one of the most respected institutions in their specialist field, which had appeared unobtainable when the agency was located in Stockholm. This was thought difficult before the relocation, because many of the experts in Stockholm had been with the agency a long time and it would have been difficult to compete with their merits, especially in terms of organizational experience. The relocation offered a unique opportunity for a large group of applicants to gain a toehold in the organization.

This exemplifies the complicated work relations and the processes of holding on to, or acquiring, professional positions during the relocation period. Affect or emotion was present, explicitly and implicitly, and was something that seemed to trickle into all aspects of the relocation process. Consider the words of a mid-level manager in the midst of the relocation:

The atmosphere that was built up during the move of the workplace could be interpreted as ‘dreadfully positive’, or as ‘fantastic’, with a real pioneer-

Like the formulations in this extract, employees often referred to how it felt to relate to the fantasy of ‘the old’ or ‘the new’. Such feelings were often seen as being linked with a certain workplace atmosphere. It could be ‘fun to start something new’ in Östersund. The atmosphere was seen as different there than in Stockholm. Affective forces were furthermore seen as dangerous to the relocation work, with ‘negative aspects’ of the relocation work being ‘infectious’.

I know how much fun it can be... well, I think it’s good that they are in Östersund and not together [with the employees in Stockholm]. Even the negative aspects will be infectious, I think (Woman in her fifties, employed in Stockholm, Östersund 2005, quoted in Article II, my emphasis).

Affect and emotion was used as a reason for keeping the two positions of ‘the new’ and ‘the old’ apart.

Many think it’s tiresome having to travel to Östersund, and even having to introduce [recruits]. It feels as if it’s not enough their turning up and being so dreadfully enthusiastic and taking your job, but you then have to train them too! (Notes from a phone interview with woman in her fifties employed in Stockholm, 2006).

The atmosphere that was built up during the move of the workplace could be interpreted as ‘dreadfully positive’, or as ‘fantastic’, with a real pioneer-
The relocation could also be an awkward way to end a position at the agency—for some even a whole life’s work—with sadness at what felt like forcible retirement. Interviewees in Stockholm as well as Östersund associated the relocation with loss in various ways. This implied that some aspects of their professional identity were going to be lost with the change of location. Although this was a loss that first and foremost was seen as striking Stockholm employees, the new recruits could feel and share this loss, because it was not only about losing position: it was also about the loss of knowledge as a professional resource. For example, it could affect new recruits, uncertain whether the correct or proper amount of knowledge had been transferred and whether they had been properly equipped for a future as a knowledge worker at the agency. Questions also arose among employees as to what the changing fantasy of the civil service knowledge worker actually entailed.

If they’re going to say that everyone is a generalist it might have an effect. Now no one can be an expert, ’cos after all being an expert means a pay rise and so on. (Woman in her thirties, Östersund 2009, quoted in Article IV).

In discussing the intense strains of the transfer of competence, informants kept coming back to the position of the managers. Managers were often referred to as having been important for setting the agenda for how the worker actually entailed.

The relocation was commonly referred to as a job loss for employees in Stockholm. An individual, however, they had to resign in order to be allowed leave. All employees who wanted to remain with the agency could do so if they were prepared to move to the new location. The implication of this rhetoric of loss points to the feeling of being either moved by force or deported (the words used in the media) or discharged (as implied in the interviews).

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At the same time, employees in Stockholm feared that ‘managers only think about Östersund and forget to take deal with the difficulties in Stockholm’ (notes from a phone interview with a woman in her fifties, 2006). This ambiguity about the managers’ loyalties and commitment merely emphasize the anxiety in an already uncertain situation.

The transfer of competence had not only practical but also symbolic consequences. Its fantasmatic content pointed away from the old, towards the new. Former systems, structures, and orders were being transformed, shifted, and maybe even left behind. This created an organizational narrative that suggested that one paradigm in the organization’s history was to end with the move. Something new was waiting, a prospect that brought an element of temporality to professional subjectivity. For example, the position of the expert was implicitly destabilized when the organization required generalist competence at the new location, so questioning how the role of experts was to be valued in the new organizational context.

Over a longer period, however, it shows that the position of the expert prevailed as a yardstick for professional identity in the organization. In order to make a career and rise up the pay scale, the members of the workforce employed as generalists also needed to argue that they were actually specialists with nationally unique expertise. In the follow-up interviews in 2009, I found that the employees after the relocation experienced a further emphasis on expert competence (ideally demonstrated by possession of a Ph.D.). Expert status was idealized in the new location, as it had been in Stockholm, but at the same time was seen as being more difficult to achieve at the new location.

We were less expert than them, them in Stockholm. We were meant have like a broader range so we could shift focus between issues. That idea lives on, what with the new Director General and all, that we’re meant to jump around between fields [...] to be useful policy-wise when the focus is on certain questions, that kind of thing. (Woman in her thirties, Östersund 2009, quoted in Article IV).
The localization of the fantasy of generalists served to make identification with the position of the expert more difficult at a location outside Stockholm.

At the beginning of the relocation process, when most newly employed staff were expected to work in Stockholm for some time to learn the ropes, there was a great deal of travel between Stockholm and Östersund. As the relocation proceeded, it also became more common for staff to travel from Stockholm to help settle in new recruits at the Östersund offices. Mid-level managers who had been identified as key personnel from the time in Stockholm stayed on at the agency after the most intense phase of the relocation, which also meant endless commutes as some continued to live in Stockholm and many of them attended a large number of meetings there.

Analysts also travelled a lot to attend meetings after the more intense period of transferring competence. Great importance was attached to the location where the work was done, and there were differences in what could be expected at the different locations. At the agency’s offices in Stockholm, people from organizations across the world could meet, exchange experiences, and build networks. It was not expected that this type of meeting would happen when the agency moved to Östersund.

When the agency was in Stockholm, staff expected their contacts to come to Stockholm. This attitude has changed with the move to Östersund (Riksrevisionen 2009:76).

It was taken for granted that employees needed to travel to Stockholm, even after the offices in Stockholm were closed. In one informant’s words:

“There is no hiding the fact that it’s difficult. After all, masses of meetings and such are in Stockholm. [...] Even if you’re meeting people from northern Sweden, it’s still much easier to meet in Stockholm than here. So that means that we are allowed to travel. I’m on planning committees for conferences, and then we always meet in Gothenburg or Stockholm. And the meetings are pretty frequent. (Woman in her fifties, Östersund 2009).”

In order to create and maintain contacts with the various networks of experts and target groups, employees thus had to travel to meetings instead of holding

42 The issue of travelling was often discussed during the relocation. Some Stockholm employees resisted travelling to Östersund, whereas others enjoyed it because of the general buzz at the new offices. Many of the recent recruits who I interviewed were happy to work in Stockholm, but also appreciated the new community spirit that emerged as the number of employees at the Östersund offices grew.

43 The agency rented a smaller office space in Stockholm where its staff could work when they were in the capital.
them at the agency. Even though in principle the same work was done at the offices in the new location as had been in Stockholm, the change of location meant that the draw of the agency as a national knowledge centre seemed to have lessened. This contributed to the way in which professional positions were valued internally as well as externally to the organization.

With a longitudinal perspective, views on the future become marked by contingency. Interviewees told me about the never-ending stream of new changes. A new government took office in 2006 and launched a different political agenda, new ways of auditing the agency’s work were set up within the organization, and the financial crisis in 2008 brought uncertainty (would they be closed down before they even finished moving to Östersund?). The settler spirit that had carried the new workforce through the initial difficulties began to fade. Employees spoke of recent recruits leaving the agency, disappointed at the continuous changes.

There’s kind of always something new. It’s either something political that’s going to happen that affects our work; there’s going to be a new government, or there’s a new organization managing what we do. Just recently it was the new Director General and reorganizing for her, and there’s always things like that, one after another. You just have to learn to cope. There’s no point in waiting it out, hoping it’ll all settle down somehow. [...] So it’s just something I’ve realized somehow, which is just as well I reckon. Otherwise you’d end up exhausted. ‘Cos there are lots in the group who are exhausted. (Woman in her thirties, Östersund 2009, quoted in Article IV).

The organizational narrative of a new beginning that had been a positive force for ‘the new’ was now challenged by organizational narratives of uncertainty and discontent. The relocation could be described as a moment when ‘shared feelings were at stake’, creating ‘thickness in the air, or an atmosphere’ (Ahmed, 2004: 10) at the workplace. However, this notion of shared feelings was not about feeling the same way. Instead, what was shared was the object of the emotion, the thing to which affect ‘got stuck’ (Ahmed, 2004: 10 ff.): the ideological fantasies of the professional knowledge workers. It was this, I would argue, that was the shared object of emotion that could circulate among professional subjects. For example, professional identification in the relocation process was marked by a fear of being insufficiently useful and anxiety about the extent of the restructuring at work, the financial crisis, and the general election, all of which became specific to gender and location (see Article IV).

Professional identification was thick with affect, despite knowledge workers and experts usually being represented as ‘persons professing neutrality’...
Fantasies of 'the good life'  
Working life and everyday life in general could not be separated into distinct units. This was the totality that supported ideological fantasies about how 'the good life' could be achieved and lived. The housing and childcare situation, jobs for partners, the opportunity to visit relatives or for them to visit Östersund were all taken into account when employees in Stockholm, and indeed new applicants for positions in Östersund, decided whether to stay in Stockholm or move with the agency.

For all informants in the study, work and achievement were highly valued in their lives. As mentioned, in individualized society dreams of success often have connotations of autonomous subjectivity and personal development (Miller & Rose, 2008; Äberg, 2008). It became apparent in the interviews, however, that the ultimate 'good life' was commonly described as being attainable by combining autonomous professionalism with 'collectivity' in terms of family, friends, and relatives.

The fantasies about the good life also had their particular geography, becoming explicit in a fantasy of Norrland and Stockholm as existing in a polarized relationship. These images affect peoples' decisions about moving to or away from different locations to work. Employees moving to work in Östersund justified the move by referring to the opportunities not only to

(Miller & Rose 2008: 51). With this view of affect-laden professional subjectivity, the fantasy of the ideal knowledge worker could be described as 'a site of social tension' (Ahmed, 2004). Seen in this light, the anger and sadness that 'stuck' to professionals during the relocation merely highlight the fact that subjects were invested in ideological fantasies about the professional and professional life that included social norms and expectations for the future. As the informant above notes, the future of civil service knowledge workers was not only reduced to the single organization; it was also part of an overall 'generational shift', with the civil service workforce facing demands to be effective and to adapt quickly to political and organizational changes on national and international levels (see SOU 2008/118).

However, the demanding work situation in this relocation process could be more or less difficult to tackle depending on the reasons for moving to Östersund to work in the first place. This was not only about dreams and hopes connected with work. Professional identification was tangled up in fantasies of living 'the good life' in a more general sense. The location of the workplace was not reduced to fantasies about the workplace, but intersected with ideological fantasies about life 'outside' work.

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realize gender equality; to be more free and live a more authentic life close to nature; and to escape the traffic and commuting in the big city and control their travel time; but also to improve their financial situation. The new recruits presented themselves as ambitious, not only about work but also about housing, parenting, family life and social prosperity. In this perspective, peripherality was perceived as enabling them to ‘have it all’. However, those who did not share in the idyll were just as likely to view their surroundings as circumscribing their social lives (Article III).

The part of Sweden referred to as Norrland has often been characterized as sparsely populated. Consequently, the continuous depopulation of rural areas was constituted largely as a ‘Norrland problem’ (Hansen, 1998: 50) to which relocation was partly formulated as a solution (SOU 1989). These demographical processes and their thought solutions must also be conceived as social processes and power relations. Eriksson (2010b), for example, has shown that rhetoric about Norrland is repeatedly being linked with working-class ideals in popular culture, while elites typically represent urban areas. Eriksson argues that this construction of class difference is problematic in the way that it renders the urban working class invisible, whereas elites are seen as out of place in the regions (Eriksson, 2010b: 143).

This fantasy, which constitutes the centre and peripheries as inherently different, goes some way to explain why it was seen as more difficult to pursue a professional expert identity following the agency’s move, because Östersund had connotations of rurality and peripherality. This order could mean different things depending on the subject’s position, however. Eriksson returns to the significance of social class in this discussion, and argues that the rurality of the Norrland fantasy could be construed as more of a resource when articulated in relation to middle-class subjectivity.

Apart from being resistant to the move because of it was compulsory, not to mention the difficulties of leaving family and friends, expert identity was strongly constructed around a fantasy of ‘the good life’ in terms of an urban lifestyle. This even led some of the employees in Stockholm to talk of the relocation almost as if it was the same thing as the agency closing down completely. Consequently, it became difficult for those interested in moving with the workplace from Stockholm to appear comprehensible and ‘logical’.

However, ruralness could also become the choice of an alternative lifestyle (Eriksson, 2010b: 143). This was especially noticeable in my source material in terms of narratives about the benefits of proximity of work, home, and day care for children that the town offered, as well as in the romantic ideal of living close to nature that those moving to Östersund worked to achieve.
This was something that was seen as impossible to combine with a career in Stockholm.

“I hope we don’t have to move back to Stockholm”. Here you can walk to the slalom slope, the youth centre; own swimming pool at school. In Stockholm long distances and queues. (Notes from an interview with woman in her forties, Östersund 2009).

This could be an example of what Eriksson indicates when writing that ‘Norrland becomes a place where middle-class people may find themselves’ and ‘remain modern but also genuine’ (Eriksson, 2010b: 143–144). That said, this was only accessible under certain circumstances. When I did the follow-up interviews with newly recruited staff in 2009, they were well aware that their work situation was vulnerable. Employees experienced that it all hinged on whether the agency was effective enough.

Talk of the economic crisis, the next general election, and the necessity of proving oneself useful. (Notes from an interview with woman in her forties, Östersund 2009).

Informants pondered whether the threats of further crises meant that they would not want to stay with the agency, and, if the threats at some point led to the agency downsizing, whether their private and professional lives would inevitably be affected, especially given of the location of the workplace.

My sense is that there are only very small chances of changing jobs here in town, and that’s another thing that makes you uncertain whether you want to stay on. (Woman in her thirties, Östersund 2009).

Drawing on the results of this study, patterns of geographical fantasies not only occur in popular representations, as Eriksson (2010a; 2010b) has illuminatingly shown; they also influence professional subjectivities.

Regardless of whether conditions of living and working in Östersund or Stockholm were seen as ideal or circumscribing the life situation, the arguments were spelled out in relation to a logic of centre and periphery that organized people’s visions of living ‘the good life’.

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Part VI: Concluding discussion

Having discussed how the processes of professional identification were conditioned by social structures in terms of gender, age, location, and social class, I will now summarize my findings and comment on where the relocation studied here stands in the history of public sector relocation, with an eye to the fantasies and meanings that relocations of public sector jobs and professional identification may acquire in the future.

I have used the methods of ethnographic research in order to explore processes of professional identification in relocation work. The group studied here is on the privileged side of the line that ‘increasingly lies between jobs and occupations that require expert knowledge—in the form of specialized higher education—and those that do not’ (Gorman & Sandefur, 2011: 277). My research has been conducted among professionals who in many ways appear to embody the dream of living ‘the good life’ and ‘having it all’.

My point, however, is that such notions are not neutral descriptions of individuals’ (professional) abilities. By utilizing the notions of ideological fantasy and emotion, I have sought to illustrate ‘how subjects are woven into positions’ (Priyadharshini, 2003: 429); how professional subjects can be caught up in positions with contradictory, even paradoxical, content and expectations. In doing so, I hope to have illuminated some of the nuances of the fantasies about ideal ways of life, and the points at which contradictions in privileged subjectivities arise (Priyadharshini, 2003: 429). The analysis of professional positions, and the (im)possibility of identifying with those positions, sketches out how social stratification can proceed in the thick of change.

Studying public sector job relocation in this way reveals that the focus of day-to-day relocation work was not really centred on the act of implementing a regional political measure (which was the task set by the government). For the staff, relocation work was also about struggles to maintain or acquire professional positions. The study highlights that these struggles could not only be seen as personal career projects, because professional identification in relocation practice took place within certain social structures with their temporality and spatiality.

Professional identification was not solely related to particular people or even bound to one particular workplace. I have mapped out how ideological fantasies about professionalism and its connected processes of identification were based on intersecting fantasies about geographies, which comprised the logic of centre and periphery, norms of doing knowledge work in the civil service, and perceived problems with a workforce ‘dominated’ by women,
whether ‘old’ or ‘new’. Another example was the idea that the agency lost status by moving away from Stockholm, which affected the ways in which work at the agency could be conducted, and made the position of the expert knowledge worker stand out as more difficult to claim.

My ambition here has been to focus on how subjects relate to—and become affected by—ideological fantasies and logics. From within the field of critical policy studies where the logic of critical explanation (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) takes its departure, there have been calls for a more nuanced understanding of social practices (West, 2011:428) and the ability to address continuity and change simultaneously and in more adequate ways (Paul, 2009:249)—in other words, to acknowledge complexities, and thereby the contingencies of what is studied. I have adopted a similar line by exploring new theoretical combinations; for example, in terms of feminist theory about emotion. The research questions posed by this thesis have helped to highlight the fact that relocation work was not about either continuity, inclusion etc., or discontinuity, exclusion, etc., but the intertwining of such forces.

The study of public sector job relocation contributes by showing how territorial and social stratification has played a major role as ideological strategies in the very organization of the welfare state. These historical traits in relocations past also matter for current, not to mention future, relocation processes. Importantly, these systems for organizing the welfare state did not only regulate the dispersion of material resources or create hierarchies between places, they also constructed hierarchies between populations. To write about these states as being normalized by ideological fantasies highlights their constructed character, although stressing the fact that such fantasies have taken a concrete form and have concrete consequences. Professional subjectivity is thus understood as ‘woven into’, or even ‘thrown into’, systems of social structures, meanings, and practices that ‘both shapes their identity and structures their practices’ (Glynos & Howarth, 2008: 164; see Laclau, 1990: 44).

So, what kind of future for professional identification is currently being proposed using public sector job relocation?

**Relocating the future**

The relocations in Sweden initiated in 2005 show that locating knowledge-intense institutions outside ‘the centre’ can attract a highly qualified workforce (Riksrevisionen, 2009). Some informants even noted that the fact that the agency became located outside of Stockholm was one of the reasons for them to even apply for the job. Considering the workforce’s willingness to

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move has been constructed as one of the pillars of the rhetoric of modernity, growth, and productivity (see Hansen, 1998), this could be argued to have been a successful and ‘effective’ relocation.

However, with its chameleon character, public sector job relocation has also been linked to other qualities in the name of efficiency. I can only agree with Isaksson (1989) that movement in terms of relocation is strikingly controversial. In a report the connection between workforce mobility and productivity by Andersson and Thulin (2008: 73) and published by the Globalization Council, it is stated that workforce movement in our day is not about just any workforce movement.\(^{43}\)

Large cities and clusters offering good opportunities for the spread of knowledge and information, and good access to international transportation systems, etc., very likely will increase in importance in pace with increased globalization and faster technological development.

This formulates a future that singles out particular directions of migration and movement of a qualified workforce. In this context, public sector job relocation as a decentralizing practice aimed at preventing populations from leaving more sparsely populated areas might amount to the ‘wrong’ kind of workforce movement.

Further, it should be noted that policies to counteract the population drift away from the country’s sparsely populated areas to metropolitan areas can be counterproductive. This is true, for example, of the relocation of government bodies from metropolitan areas to other parts of the country to compensate for closures. There is rather reason to facilitate population drift from parts of the country with few job opportunities to regions with a good job market, for example with removal assistance. (Andersson & Thulin, 2008: 74).

The line taken in the report is that the unwillingness to move from big cities observed among employees at relocated agencies is unquestionably ‘logical’ for professional subjects caught up in these kinds of fantasies of efficiency. As I have accounted for in this study, the insecure situation with the agency as well as the local labour market, however made it difficult for those employed at the agency in Östersund to plan their futures in terms of both work and

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The line taken in the report is that the unwillingness to move from big cities observed among employees at relocated agencies is unquestionably ‘logical’ for professional subjects caught up in these kinds of fantasies of efficiency. As I have accounted for in this study, the insecure situation with the agency as well as the local labour market, however made it difficult for those employed at the agency in Östersund to plan their futures in terms of both work and

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\(^{43}\) The Globalization Council was set up by the government in December 2006, led until its disbandment in 2009 by the Minister for Higher Education and Research, Lars Leijonborg. The Council had twenty-two members—twelve men and ten women—drawn from trade and industry, the government, the unions, the civil service, the media, and academia. Its annual report states that ‘one of the main tasks of the Globalization Council is to formulate economic-political strategies so that Sweden can share in the potentially large welfare gains offered by globalization’ (Globaliseringsrådet, 2009: 25).
family; in turn incorporating with the fantasy of the non-metropolitan as less imaginable as a ‘good job market’ for professional- and expert work.

The notions of the future foregrounded here and exemplified by the Globaliseringsrådet report emphasize that the practice of public sector job relocation draws on definitions and identifications of geographical territories and their populations. It recreates the polarized geographies of the logic of centre and periphery that disregards many of the nuances and struggles of work and social life.

With this in mind, the ongoing densification of urban areas points to a kind of centralization taking shape within public as well as privately owned institutions in Sweden (von Friedrichs, 2009: 61). For as long as the belief in centralization remains as strong in Sweden, ‘it seems a good thing to have targeted measures such as the relocation of state agencies and companies’ (von Friedrichs, 2009: 61). This is the conclusion of the business economist Yvonne von Friedrichs, who has researched the aftermath of the closure of the regiments in 2004 on a municipal level. According to her report, the local authorities’ fear was that they would become ‘low-income regions’ when the qualified jobs provided by the military were withdrawn; their hope was that the relocation of ‘academic jobs’ would provide a broader labour market (von Friedrichs, 2009: 61) as academic jobs are invariably an important marker for prosperity (see Gorman & Sandefur, 2011: 277). Von Friedrich’s conclusion highlights the fact that decentralization practices only become comprehensible when they are articulated in relation to centralizing practices. In relocation practice, then, centralization stands out as taken for granted.

This example highlights that what is apprehended as ‘regional problems’ are not produced by regions, but by the organization of work relations themselves (Massey, 1994:65).

Such continuity could however be difficult to comprehend, because fighting over the ‘state cake’ is at the same time so scattered that it must be considered as continuing on various ‘fronts’: in everyday life at the workplace, in the news media, and in public policy and politics. Public sector job relocation is a practice that operates by means of public discourses and raises issues of power and inequality (see, for example, De Fina & Baynham, 2005) on local, national, and global levels of analysis. Categories such as mobility and knowledge could furthermore be seen as some of the most influential dimensions of a globalized knowledge society in terms of social stratification.

It offers an opportunity to scrutinize the complexity with which various social orders and processes of domination and subordination become inextricably linked in civil service practices. This is a complexity inherent in the
thought that the problems of urbanization can be solved by further urbanization (see Hansen, 1998) and centralization and relocation. The ideological fantasy of further modernization takes the shape of a history of evolution that is thought to emanate from the urban centre. In this national narrative, the urban areas are then presented as the forerunners to modernity (Eriksson, 2009). Taking a civil service long-established in the capital and moving parts of it ‘out’ to the regions could therefore also serve to maintain asymmetrical power relations.

In the dichotomized world of centre and periphery, knowledge-worker subjectivity is continuously measured against the urban norm, leaving a highly qualified workforce always somewhat out of place outside the more heavily urbanized areas. Thanks to its longitudinal approach, the analysis shows how difficult it was to abandon the experienced expert as located to Stockholm as a yardstick by which the performance of professional work at the agency was judged at the new location, even after the most intense period of relocation was finished.

Instead, there was a reinforcement of the centralization of legitimate expert positions by means of meetings held in Stockholm, managers working from Stockholm on a regular basis, and the choice to disparage new recruits as ‘generalists’ rather than ‘experts’. This made it more difficult—although not impossible—to imagine professional knowledge workers in locations seen as peripheral/less urban.

At the same time, the relocation process contributed to the New Public Management processes of decentralizing decision making and individualizing achievement. The rhetoric of a generalist workforce—mouldable and consisting of ‘ambitious young girls’—became comprehensible and desirable. Changes towards adaptable, mouldable and flexible workforce is not however isolated to this case. My argument is rather that the relocation became the medium for such change in a very rapid and condensed process.

By extension, questions for further research occur of what kinds of futures that are created in this context of public sector job relocation. What does it mean if qualified professionals are more likely to be imaginable ‘in the metropolitan areas’ (as Globaliseringsrådet put it)? What meanings are held to the gendered structures of the subjects who could embody such qualified professionals? It draws attention to further explore what is seen as imaginable in terms of professional conduct as a way of living ‘th good life’.
Moved by relocation

In this thesis, I have shown that the practice of public sector job relocation is not only a question of making decisions about whether or not to move particular agencies from one location to another. There is a lot more at stake than that. I have concentrated on how professional identity was to be constructed in the relocation process. I have not held professional identity to the possession of individual knowledge workers, but as a circulating object of affect and emotion. This draws attention to the impact of fantasies about professionalism within power structures that have made some kinds of identification with professional ideals more possible than others. These power structures comprise a range of social and political areas: they were geographical, gendered, and age-marked ideals about competence and professionalism and always ‘affected’—moved by relocation.

The practice of public sector job relocation was filled with different content, stretching from regional policies and staff politics to ideal images of how the civil service should be organized and run. It was filled with content created by the expectations placed on knowledge workers in the civil service, and on analysts in particular. External audits and the demands for public sector agencies to be ‘useful’ and ‘effective’ place the responsibility for living up to such fantasies firmly on the personnel.

The concepts of affect and emotion led me to think about public sector job relocation as a practice that keeps groups of people in place by threatening their social status in ways that create and maintain social, political, and economic gaps within populations. Paradoxically, public sector job relocation is a practice charged with the hope of reducing such gaps.

Attention should be drawn to the way in which agency staff became enmeshed in power structures that limited their actions in various ways. It is therefore of importance that the features of professional identification identified in this relocation process should be further discussed, not primarily as individual problems of particular individuals, or even a particular agency, or location, but as a vital issue of the greatest concern to the welfare state.
Epilogue

The more closely we engage with power, the closer we come to examining our own reflections in the powerful and even our own complicity as we go about producing knowledge. (Priyadharshini, 2003: 434).

At the time of the events described in the prologue to this thesis, I was a research assistant at the Swedish National Institute for Working Life, or NIWL. When the relocations of 2005 were initiated, the NIWL was already located in Östersund. The Localization Commission (SOU 2004/15) suggested, however, that a few positions should be added to the NIWL as part of the wider compensation package. A few months before the meeting described in the prologue, the NIWL had recruited a handful of new researchers to the relocated posts. Shortly afterwards, there had been a general election that resulted in a change of government. The new government decided to close NIWL completely, and approximately four hundred researchers stationed at local offices around the country were forced to find new jobs.

When we were sitting there at the conference table in February 2007 with one of the most powerful politicians in Sweden at the time, one of my colleagues asked the question: why is relocation called an out-location? What she thought was a reasonable question, pressing even, was met by the politician’s failure to understand its relevance. Many were disappointed with the answer. For the politician, a politically correct answer at that gathering would have been to say it should rather be called a relocation, and in that way she could have made it clear that she understood the asymmetric power relations between the beneficent centre and recipient regions conveyed in the word out-location. The matter was not further discussed. Immediately after the conference room meeting, the men in black gathered around her again to escort her out of the building. And I went off to write down what had been said about relocations and out-locations of state agencies in Sweden.
SAMMANFATTNING PÅ SVENSKA

Berörda av omlokalisering: Professionell identifikation under flytten av en svensk myndighet


Under tiden som jag följde omlokaliseringen sånges arbetet med att omlokalisera sätter igång processer som förändrar anställdas bilder av vad de sett som sin framtid i arbetslivet. De tvingas tänka om och ta nya beslut angående sin arbets- och livssituation. Sådana processer beskrivs i den här avhandlingen som processer av professionell identifikation.

Syftet med avhandlingen är att analysera betydelsen av professionell identifikation under arbetet med att omlokalisera en myndighet. I förlängningen kan resultaten av denna studie även belysa anställdas perspektiv på arbetslivsförändringar inom offentlig sektor. Resultaten kan även tjäna som underlag för diskussioner om lokalisering av kunskapsintensiva institutioner.


Trots att det inte skulle gå att sätta några omlokaliseringsexemplen i verket utan att det fanns anställda som organiserade och genomförde flyttandet,
så har anställda inte ägnats någon större uppmärksamhet i tidigare forskning eller utvärdering av de oomlokaliseringar som utförts tidigare. Denna etnologiska fallstudie som utspelar sig på en arbetsplats under tiden för dess flytt kan därmed sägas anta ett annorlunda perspektiv i relation till tidigare studier. Detta gör att den här studien kan beröra vissa av de mer outforskade aspekterna av oomlokaliseringarbetet.


Här följer en kort sammanfattning av innehållet i de fyra artiklarna:

Artikel I handlar om villkoren för att med etnografiska metoder utforska en arbetsplats under tiden som den flyttar och att även den etnografiska forskaren involveras i processen av professionell identifikation.

Artikel II behandlar den omvälvande process av kunskapsöverföring som myndigheten genomgick i och med flytten. Detta var en central aktivitet i omlokaliseringprocessen eftersom yterst få anställda flyttade med arbetet till den nya orten.


Dessa sätt att beskriva arbetstystkan på skapade professionella positioner som generaliserade över hela arbetstystkan och som de anställda behövde förhålla sig till. Det blev därför svårt att finna alternativa professionella identiteter bortom ’de nya’ och ’de gamla’ under tiden för omlokaliseringen. Detta fick även betydelse för hur kunskapsöverföring förstods, organiserades och genomfördes.


Artikel IV bygger på en uppföljning av hur arbetsvardagen tedde sig efter att den mest intensiva flyttningen var avklarad. Utifrån detta kom denna fjärde artikel att handla mycket om de pågående förändringar i förvaltningen av centrum och därmed de nya förväntningar som ställde på dessa anställda. Jag diskuterar hur talet om de nyanställda som ’unga ambitiösa tjejer’ symboliserade förväntningar på att arbetstystkan skulle vara flexibel och formbar. Jag undersöker hur kön, ålder och geografi fick betydelse för hur anställda förhöll sig till dessa förändringar och förväntningar.

Sammanfattningsvis tog geografiska aspekter stor plats i omlokaliseringarbetet. Detta var kanske inte särskilt överraskande så till vida att det i själva idén om omlokalisering från början finns en snarast ofranämnlig geografisk dimension. Mer oväntat var däremot att myter och fantasier om centrum och periferi hade så stor inverkan på hur omlokaliseringarbetet utformades. Sådana myter och fantasier påverkade till exempel hur anställda talade om sig själva och med varandra, hur arbetet lades upp och även vad som kunde förväntas av anställda på olika orter. Att identifiera sig med expert-identitet uppfattades till exempel som svårare när arbetsplassen flyttade från Stockholms ’centrum’. Betydelser av expertskap blev därmed centrala för omlokaliseringarbetet. I förknippats

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med skapandet av det västerländska moderna samhället och kopplats till medelklass-identitet som i sin tur utgjort norm för ‘det goda livet’ och något att sträva efter. Om det finns starka föreställningar som motarbetar möjligheterna för människor att betrakta som legitima experter på vissa platser men inte andra kan det i sin tur innebära att geografiskt bundna klassklyftar skapas och/eller upprätthålls. Paradoxalt nog är det just sådana geografisk betingade ojämlikheter som omskrivningar av statliga myndigheter utgivit sig för att råda bot på. Attribuerar arbetsstyrkan som ’gamla’ och ’nya’ markerade även att nya förväntningar ställdes på arbetsstyrkan i och med flytten. Idag hade de anställda omtalats som erfarna specialister för att sedan komma att omtalas som flexibla och formbara generalister. Samtidigt förväntades utredarna fortfarande vara specialister inom de policyområden de arbetade med oavsett myndighetens lokalisering. Föreställningar om kön, ålder och klass flätades in i dessa fantasier om professionalitet. Fantasier och känslor kom att ’organisera’ omskrivningsarbetet och hade betydelse för vilka professionella positioner som tillgängliggjordes och hur arbetet med omskrivningen gick till. Omlokaliseringen berörde...

Omlokaliseringsarbetet innefattade till stor del att definiera, upprätthålla och/eller bygga upp professionell identitet. Sammantaget innebar detta att professionell identitet inte bara ifrågasattes i den mån att anställda tvingades omvärdera sin individuella situation; i hög grad sattes idéer om vad kunskapsintensivt arbete i statens tjänst över lag bör/kan innebära på spel. Förmodas om myndighetsarbetet som tidigare bestått av att ’statens kaka är liten men säker’ och där lång och trogen tjänst varit ett ideal arbetades om i och med flyttandet. Förväntningar skapades på de anställda under ideal om flexibilitet och formbarhet som de anställda förväntades infria.
Interviews and observations
Audio recordings, transcribed interviews and fieldnotes are filed at the Department for culture and media studies, Umeå University.

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