

INFLUENCE OF OBJECTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE

How objects facilitate and support employee opinion of organizational culture

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Abstract

The theme of this master's thesis is in general organizational behavior, and more specifically the social function of material objects in relations to employees and organizational culture. The thesis studies a phenomenon at a Danish subsidiary in Hungary that displays objects in its physical environment that showcases Danish cultural elements. Danish and Hungarian employees work side by side, and it was speculated that objects had an influence on how employees perceived the organizational culture, hence the problem formulation is designed to examine whether objects possess an influencing role on employee perception of organizational culture and their capacity to adapt to it. In order to answer the problem formulation, the thesis utilized a theoretical framework with three components: 1) *banal nationalism* and *national flagging* by Michael Billig, defining how *national identity* is ingrained in the personal identity of employees, 2) *mediated action* by Ron Scollon, to explain how material objects can be embedded with meanings which can influence employees' actions, and 3) *habitus* by Pierre Bourdieu which explains how employee' actions are restricted, or unrestricted, by their knowledge of social phenomena and their ability to successfully incorporate new knowledge.

The thesis approaches the issues of the problem formulation with a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology so that the social reality as experienced by employees is the foundation for the analysis and discussion. A semi-structured interview guide is employed to inquire employees about their perception of organizational culture at their workplace, their relation to objects, and their ability to navigate organizational culture. Employee accounts are regarded through a narrative analysis method, a perspective that focuses on the narrative context of accounts as part of a broader view of values and expectations. The findings show that employees do view objects with a certain esteem and engage with objects in a highly interactive manner. Danish and Hungarian employees agree upon the nature of organization culture, though there are differences in how well they adapt to it. The thesis concludes that objects prove to be a facilitating link between Danish and Hungarian employees, as well employees and organizational culture, but only because the right context is applied by the employees themselves.

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1. Introduction

What is an organization, and why is it relevant to study when there exists so much research on organizations already? Organizations come in as many different forms and sizes as there are organizations, and to study them is a popular topic in social sciences exactly because there is always something new to unveil. Some of them are commercial companies with the aim of earning revenue from their practices. Others are charity groups whose goal is to support a certain cause, and others can be sport clubs, professional or non-professional. Organizations have different purposes, goals, or functions, and are composed of organization members who - do, or do not - share culture, values and norms. The culture within an organization and the identity of it is largely a result of a complex mix of values and norms defined by its members and the daily actions performed by members, in other words practice.. Today many companies are operating in several countries and have workforces of different nationalities working together. As a result many companies choose to implement some form of diversity management to combat misunderstandings among different cultures and to integrate employees of different cultural backgrounds, not only based on nationality, into an organizational consensus of practice.

Prior to this thesis , in 2020 a research project was started which studied a Danish subsidiary in Hungary, and a phenomenon of displaying objects in the subsidiary which features Danish culture. There seemed to be no effort in showcasing the cultural diversity of the employees in the visual identity of the subsidiary, and there seemed to be a cultural bias in the discourse among employees. The project analysed the displaying of objects and found out that objects can be embedded with *meanings* and *actions* such as symbolic visualizations of national culture, Danish culture. Ultimately the project concluded that the phenomenon, also referred to as *national flagging* of banal nationalism, did happen at the subsidiary, but it was restricted in explaining why this phenomenon occurred. It was speculated that it could be a reflection of a Danish culture bias in the organizational culture, or that the object was influencing employees to construct an organizational culture with Danish culture characteristics. These limitations eventually lead to the problem formulation of this thesis which intended to turn speculations into answers. Therefore this thesis studies the function of objects, what influence they have on employees, and what this relationship means for the perception of organizational culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pilot Study

As previously explained in the introduction, the researcher has prior to this thesis conducted a study which looked into a Danish subsidiary in Hungary, more specifically the company of MD-Recruitment/DentalService. Legally two separate companies, they practically function as one, and share certain internal services with each other. The two companies, which the pilot study refers to as ‘the company’ are subsidiaries of Danish counterparts, but located in Budapest, Hungary. Therefore the workforce is composed of Danish and Hungarian employees, somewhat split half and half. Both companies share the same floor in an office building and employees interact, professionally and socially, cross-company. Though in MD-Recruitment there is a majority Hungarian workforce, and in DentalService there is a majority Danish workforce (Kaas, 2021). This dualism sparked the immediate curiosity of the pilot study, or rather the lack of dualism in the sense that one would normally think, when two or more nationalities are working together. Lack of dualism has to be understood rather as a lack of inclusion of both nationalities in the two companies as a whole, firstly in the discourse present. There seemed to be a positioning of identity going on in the discourse at the company.

Danish employees had a tendency to speak favourably about Danish work culture, idealizing the ‘Danish way’, and often at the expense of Hungarian work culture, or culture in general, as something not to be desired: *“The Danish work culture is repeated as some form of benefit to the employees, something they can price themselves with, and consider themselves lucky to work in Hungary under non-Hungarian conditions.”* (Kaas, 2021 p. 4). The discourse around work culture related topics can serve as a form of organizational commitment, where employee satisfaction is established and reinforced through a collective sensemaking (Kaas, 2021). How the discourse on work culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService had been established was unclear to the researcher in the beginning, and it was never uncovered in the pilot study. One factor that could be established was that the discourse served to produce the organizational identity of the organization as a whole, and it had even been adopted by Hungarian employees.

However, the researcher noticed that, though there roughly were a fifty-fifty split of Danish and Hungarian employees, there was a physically visual overrepresentation of Denmark at the office, seen in Danish posters and other Danish objects, that had Danish symbolic value. These national symbols were ever present, from the lobby to the offices, from the staff kitchen to the conference room, and is the main focus of the pilot study. The study asked how national identity can be linked to organizational identity based on the discourse of organizational members, though the discourse in this aspect is understood as the visual representations of the discourse; the symbolic Danish object at the workplace (Kaas, 2021).

To understand these Danish objects, the pilot study applies the thought of Michael Billig, and his ideas on national symbolism, or ‘flagging’ (Billig, 2002). Billig argues that there is an embedded meaning in national symbols that people of a shared nationality will understand, even without clearly expressing what these national symbols exactly mean. A national symbol represents the nation and everything in it, but often it is an idealised image of the nation (Billig, 2002). The concepts of banal nationalism and national flagging will be further clarified at the end of this chapter, but what is relevant to underline now is that it concerns display of national identity, which is not to be confused with nationalism in a political sense. How this symbolism was projected through objects was in the pilot study explained through the concept of *modes* and *mediated action* which is explained in the following section.

2.1.1 Mediated Discourse Analysis

To analyse how objects can have an embedded meaning in objects, and how objects come to possess these meanings, the pilot study applies the concept *Modes* introduced by Sigrid Norris (2013) and it is meant to reflect the actions of social actors, and *Mediated Discourse Analysis* by Ron Scollon (2001). A mode can be any action or interaction, and carries meanings with them, applied to them by social actors. Social actors can embed objects with meanings through their actions, a process called modes. A mode is a social actor’s meaning applied to an action or an object, which allows social actors to convey their meanings even though they are not present. Instead they are present through actions and objects. E.g. can a social actor be present by having a picture hanging in a room by the action of hanging up the picture (Norris, 2013). The picture then might represent something to the social actor and those who look at it.

Modes can be carried in objects as well and have several meanings, making them multimodal. A symbol can be regarded as a form of mode, as it is an object or image that carries meanings applied by social actors. It takes its inspiration from Scollon's (2001) concept of *mediated discourse analysis* which acknowledges that discourse (as an action) can be mediated through other means than simply verbal communication.

“Scollon (2001) is focused on the relation between actions and discourse, and suggests that actions and discourse is present in the social arena, called site of engagement, where social actors interact and apply meanings to actions and objects in relation to discourse. For the posters to be hanging, there must of course have been an action of hanging them up, and in that sense the poster carries multiple modes.” (Kaas, 2021 p.21).



Picture 12 and Picture 13, posters displaying Danish design (Appendix VI).

Like the posters representing Danish culture hanging at MD-Recruitment/DentalService as mentioned in the pilot study (Kaas, 2021), they represent a certain discourse on Danish culture (like the quality and pleasant aesthetic of Danish design). The focus of Scollon (2001) has on action relates to discourse. To him, discourse is always present in the social contexts such as an organization, actually in any social context, where social actors make sense of the many meanings they experience. Discourse is a form of social action that can be represented through means of other media than verbal language, e.g. objects (Scollon, 2001). He for examples writes how a meeting at a social meeting at coffee shop has multiple meanings and how we interpret them in relation to each other in order to make sense of the situation as a whole:

“In having this cup of coffee I could say there is just a single action - having a cup of coffee as is implied in the common invitations ‘Let’s go have a cup of coffee.’ Or I could say there is a very complex and nested set of actions - queuing, ordering, purchasing, receiving the order, selecting a table, drinking coffee, conversing, disposing of our cups and other materials, and the rest.” (Scollon, 2001 p. 2).

The point is that social phenomena can be boiled down to simple expressions, but actually social phenomena are enormously complex. In the case with objects displayed at the MD-Recruitment/DentalService offices, e.g. a poster with national identity symbolism, one could say ‘there hangs a poster’, but within that is also the complexity of someone hanging the poster, deciding what poster, intended message with the poster, and the response from observers of the poster’s content. The complexity has almost no end, it depends and how many questions we ask, and which:

“Or I could say there are many complex discourses here - a conversation among friends. Or I could say there are many complex discourses with rampant intertextuality and interdiscursivity - international neo-capitalistic marketing of coffee, service encounter talk, linguistic conference talk, family talk and the rest.” (Scollon, 2001 p. 2).

Central to Scollon’s writing on this topic is the ‘action’ that needs to be taken, but also ‘objects’ that enables action, mediated or not:

“Without the cup there is no <having a cup of coffee> in the literal sense. Throughout all the other actions which take place, the cup figures as the material line that holds this all together.” (Scollon, 2001 p. 3).

Like with the cup, the objects at the MD-Recruitment/DentalService offices are the enabler of other actions. The banal nationalism flagged by the objects enables actions by the employees that are embedded with national identity meaning.

To analyse such social phenomena Scollon (2001) has developed five conceptual focus points. These five points allow for the researcher to ask about possible meanings of objects and discover possible discourses within them. The pilot study makes use of these five points to settle on meanings of the symbolic objects that are the centre of concern, mainly the posters and other objects as well, displaying Danish national identity. Scollon’s (2001) focus points as outlined in the pilot study is:

- 1) *“Mediated action. Actions are mediated through individuals or objects. Objects, though, are not merely material, but carry meanings of individuals just as much as verbal language can convey meanings between individuals. Actions are materially grounded in objects, in other words”* (Kaas, 2021 p.11).
- 2) *“A site of engagement. Mediated actions happen within a social arena, meaning that actions are related to where they happen and the individuals who execute them - in this case the Company and its employees”* (Kaas, 2021 p.11).
- 3) *“Mediational means. Actions, or the meanings of them, are mediated through objects, and one object can entail multiple actions. Mediated means includes social actors in the sense of how they act, dress, and in any case socially perform. Scollon (2001) writes that it is granted that mediational means always carries “historical affordances and constraints, and to be inherently polyvocal, intertextual, and interdiscursive” (Scollon, 2001 p. 15) in any single action”* (Kaas, 2021 p.11).
- 4) *“Practice and social structure. In order for mediated action to happen there must exist an “intersection of social practices and mediational means which in themselves reproduces social groups, histories, and identities. (Scollon, 2001 p. 15). This means that in order to analyse meanings in mediated actions, the researcher must be aware of the relation these actions can possibly have to social groups and social structures within a site of engagement”* (Kaas, 2021 p.11).
- 5) *“Nexus of practices. Mediated analysis views actions as products of practices which again are results of practices, creating a nexus of practices from which actions derive. In other words, actions are shaped by an array of influences, for example culture and norms, or historical affordances or constraints, thus, meanings of actions have no single source but multiple sources (Scollon, 2001 p. 16). Actions are a product of construction and reconstruction of social action forming [...] (Norris, 2013)”* (Kaas, 2021 p.12).

The pilot study determines that the modes embedded in the posters and objects and the office is that of Danish national symbolism. It is speculated which factor is embedding which, the verbal discourse or the visual objects, or in other words - whether Danish national symbols are affecting the discourse at MD-Recruitment/DentalService, or whether the national symbols are present because of the discourse. The pilot study could conclude that there exists national flagging at MD-Recruitment/DentalService, which is embedded in objects. The

objects represent ideal images of Denmark and Danish culture. The visual representation was something that was reproduced in the language of Danish employees. But whether the Danish symbolism was the cause the pilot study could not conclude. Within the discourse there was a cultural bias that was not to the advantage of Hungarian culture. Nationality was greatly emphasised in the discourse constructed, casually present during the regular work week. This was characteristic of the organization as a whole, that Denmark was in focus within the organizational culture, often at the expense of Hungarian culture.

2.2 Beyond the Pilot Study

The pilot study concludes that ‘national flagging’ is practiced at the organization that is MD-Recruitment/DentalService, which suggests that the phenomenon might exist within other organizations. What the pilot study does not conclude is how employees perceive the organizational identity of the organization, and whether their perception in any case is influenced by what the pilot study suggests the organization’s identity to be. Is there at all a link between the organization’s allegedly national focused identity to how employees perceive it? The focus of the pilot study was on objects and made assumptions that the mediated meanings of them were linked to organizational identity and based on discourse. The thesis approaches the function of the objects in a somewhat different manner. Instead of studying the relation to organizational identity and discourse, the thesis studies the function of the objects in relation to organizational culture. The following sections contain a brief explanation of how to define culture, and why organizational culture is different from organizational identity. Thereafter the role of nationality in organizations is being examined with examples of diversity management in subsidiaries. The thesis will not further study or examine diversity management, but the examples of diversity management are there to exemplify an underlying theme of the thesis - that culture matters and determines the ability of social actors to understand, or misunderstand, social phenomena. The theory of *habitus* was chosen to explain these abilities of social actors further down this chapter, and lastly the concept of national flagging and banal nationalism, used in the pilot study, is explained.

2.2.1 Organization - Culture vs. Identity

The term culture is in itself a broad term of which there are many definitions, too many to dig deep into here. It is a term that covers a wide range of factors which together make up a culture, but culture is also flexible and fluid, hence it can be difficult to clearly define. Therefore, in order to properly use the term in the context of this thesis, a definition is presented in this first section of the chapter. Starting with two older examples, Margeret Mead (1951) describes culture like a body of learned behaviors which is a collection of different beliefs, habits and traditions that are shared by a group and continuously passed on to new people entering the group. Geert Hofstede (1984) defines culture as a collective programming of people's minds to the same systems of value which separates group members from members of other groups. More recently, Anthony Giddens (2002 p. 22) refers to culture to *"the way of life of the members of the society, or of groups within a society"*, and George E. Cheney writes that *"Culture can be defined as a system of meaning that guides the construction of reality in a social community"* (Cheney et al., 2011 p.).

To build upon Giddens' (2002) understanding of culture where members in society share life, or behavioral patterns, organizations in the same way are made up of organizational members who share the same workspace, roles, goals and management regime. Employee behavior is widely researched as well as how they behave in relation to each other in an organization, hence, it is said that organizations do have culture as well based on the shared organizational life of an organization's members. On member action Mats Alvesson (2002) writes that organizational culture is a socially shared nature summed up of member's actions, their feelings, their thoughts, meanings, and beliefs. What these definitions have in common is that culture is a combination of a wide range of factors - which can be applied to organizational culture. Organizational culture, like culture, is an umbrella term that covers multiple components in a group's shared 'personality traits'. It could somewhat be confused with the term of organizational *identity*.

But what is the difference between organizational culture and organizational identity? *"At the broadest level it is useful to think of identity as something every living system is doing - and in fact must do - in order to maintain itself"* (Cheney et al., 2011 p. 107) and is how these systems define the borders between themselves and its surroundings. Like culture, identity is something that constitutes an organization, but unlike culture, identity is more about conscious positioning, and is built upon narratives to make sense of position. Like

individuals, organizations require a sense of itself to preserve consistency - what constitutes the organization and what does not. Through management, identity can be engineered through communication and be fitted to serve changing environments. Still built upon a set of beliefs, organizational identity is flexible in the sense that the changing narrative can contest and negotiate identity through iterative interactions between management and stakeholders (Cheney et al, 2011). Kaas (2021) was not wrong to use the concept of organizational identity when analysing the phenomenon of national flagging because he speculated that objects could be put up intentionally to reflect organizational characteristics. Perhaps they could have been put up by management to project the organizational identity? Management in organizations are keen to control its 'image' and the organizational perception of employees, in other words what employees think about their workplace, and organizational identity can thus be regarded through the lense of power relation. (Alvesson & Robertson, 2016). But the aim of the thesis is not to study the potential power relation between management and employees, or between Danish and Hungarian employees. Organizational Identity is not something that evolves out of nothing. Though organizational identity offers the researcher interesting possibilities when studying organizational life, *"it does not offer a realistic and sensitive understanding of how employees may address issues around direction, priorities, meaning, and distinctiveness"* (Alvesson & Robertson, 2016 p. 161), implying that in order to understand the cause of organizational identity, the researcher must look beyond identity. Identity does not evolve on its own, and it is a product of organizational culture. For that reason, to study the cause of objects at MD-Recruitment/DentalService rather than how they position the company, or construct its 'image', the thesis chose the concept of organizational culture over organizational identity.

2.2.2 National Culture in Organizations

Nationalities and other different cultural markers are topics which organizational research is familiar with. In *Organizational Behavior* Jon Stephons (as cited in Brooks, 2009) writes that with the increasing internationalism and globalization of business activities, the impact of national culture on organizations have become of increased importance. The differences between national cultures can bring an organization of mixed national cultures to behave in new and different ways when it deals with internal matters as well as when dealing with other organizations (Stephons, as cited in Brooks, 2009). Not only does globalization

open job opportunities for foreign employees, but the internationalisation of business sees more organizations seeking a presence internationally. The trade bloc within the European Union is an example (Stephons, as cited in Brooks, 2009). A company like MD-Recruitment/DentalService is a good example of this phenomenon. In section 6.1.1 the nature and purpose of the company is more closely elaborated, but in short the company is registered both in Denmark and Hungary, but most of its operations happen from Hungary, but services are mainly aimed for Danish clients. The single market sought to remove trade barriers and regulations in order to move goods and labor more freely within the union. MD-Recruitment/DentalService would not exist without this foundation as its main function is international recruitment and outsourced consultancy support. About this phenomenon, Stephons writes that:

“[...] with the EU growing to 27 members, there has been a surge of international mergers, alliances and joint ventures as companies seek to achieve competitive advantage through internationalisation.[...] it is not merely European companies investing and developing overseas,; it is also organizations from others countries which have invested in Europe. Again there is a likelihood of increased contact with managers in other countries, even if the organization operates predominantly in one country.” (Stephons, as cited in Brooks, 2009 p. 284).

More organizations have to deal with cultural issues, and the outcome of these dealing can have a significant impact on the organization's general performance. This leads to organizations like MD-Recruitment/DentalService operating in several countries across the continent, and sometimes beyond it. Hence managers in these organizations are required to deal with employees of other nationalities, and place the agenda of national culture higher and higher on the agenda to accommodate cultural differences, e.g. through diversity management.

Stephons (as cited in Brooks, 2009) also raises a question when explaining national culture impact. How to find an acceptable definition for national culture in the first place? Social science researchers will be aware of the many interpretations of *culture*, and the definitions depend on the application of culture as a concept, and Stephons notes that researchers in 1985 found over 160 definitions. He does settle with two definitions which are useful when studying organizational life.

In social science literature, there exists numerous examples of studies researching employees and how employees of different backgrounds either interact, or are managed by the organization. Organizations put a lot of time and effort into the inclusion of different groups, not only nationalities, but also groups according to religion, gender, sexualities or other minorities. Though in the case of MD-Recruitment/DentalService there seems, based on the pilot study, no indication that effort is made to integrate Hungarian elements into at least the visual presentation of the company.

What Stephons writes about national culture can somewhat be linked to nationality or ethnicity. The concept of nationality and ethnicity has the same traits related to culture - that a group has a similar learned behavior, shares a system of values and a collections of beliefs and habits, though ethnicity has a biological component. Jakob Luring (Luring & Jonasson, 2017) has made studies into ethnicity and language when peoples of different backgrounds (nationalities) share the same workplace. He, just as Stephons, recognizes that global tendencies require international organizations to reflect on how organization members interact with each other in order to pursue the same organizational goals. Luring, together with Charlotte Jonasson (Luring & Jonasson, 2017), writes that *“In a knowledge-based economy, this means that management of communication and language has become increasingly crucial for the acquisition of competitive advantage.”* (Luring & Jonasson, 2017 p. 199) Modern demands, in this case the cultural composition of employees, forces companies to acknowledge that language skills, verbal and non-verbal, form the basis of organizational human resources, and employees, and companies therefore need to secure effective communication where the right informationen is shared with the right people.

Luring & Jonasson (2017) that especially in international subsidiaries (that is a subsidiary of a company located in another country than the headquarter) are language as a managerial challenge that can easily result in problematic employee interactions. They made a study into internal organizational communication problems at a Chinese subsidiary of a Danish company. Other than Danish management not being familiar with the local language, Luring & Jonasson (2017) point to three sources of communication problems: 1) inequitable internal language structure, 2) different cultural backgrounds, and 3) ethno-centrism.

The last source of communication problems, ethnocentrism, is worth noticing, as this will be a recurring theme in Luring's research into cross-cultural communicative problems. The second source, different cultural backgrounds, is also interesting to the underlying theme, culture. It does not necessarily mean national culture, but also what "*sociolinguist and intercultural experts have observed, much cross-cultural communication literature does not come to grips what happens when people are actually communicating across the boundaries of social groups*" (Luring & Jonasson, 2017 p. 200). Though in Luring's study the focus is on communication, not culture, there can be some parallels drawn to the initial interest of this thesis - that culture matters and determines our ability to understand, or misunderstand, social phenomena.

This is not to imply that the Danish management of MD-Recruitment/DentalService is ethno-centric when displaying objects embedded with Danish symbolism, but to point out that there is a bias in national cultural representation, and there might be grounds for misunderstanding. In another example, Luring (2013) has made a study of another international subsidiary, this case in a Saudi Arabian subsidiary of a Danish company, where upper management was Danish, lower management was Egyptian, and the general workforce was of various *third world nationalities* (TNC) like Indian.

In this case, Luring describes how globalization and national concerns about growing demographic diversity have increased awareness for diversity management in companies, and the idea of managing while utilizing the given demographic diversity has caught attention. Though, the interpretations of what diversity management means can vary a lot. Hence, Luring (2013) explores a case, where there were intentions from Danish headquarters in a company to implement diversity as a Saudi Arabian subsidiary, but where Danish upper management failed to do so in order to pursue economic goals, sacrificing the intention of diversity management and developing it to mean something rather different.

Interestingly in relation to the pilot study (Kaas, 2021), Luring writes in his article "*this paper therefore aims to explore the defining and the uses of demographic heterogeneity in an international management situation*" (Luring, 2013 p. 212). The pilot study however lacks the focus on management, but notice a visual demographic, or cultural, heterogeneity at the case company.

In Lauring's (2013) case the Danish managers were required to implement the 'Danish way' of democratic management, which should be in line with formal diversity management ideas in accordance with corporate policies. The goals of these policies was that diversity management should motivate and empower different employees to perform at their best. Though, when Danish managers experiences obstructions of their inclusive leadership style, they interpreted it as other nationalities' absence of independence, which made them manage in a more authoritarian manner, with one saying: *"In some ways it is easier to work with Indians, Filipinos and Egyptians and in some ways it is more difficult. Here you can also make demands - just on a different level.... it is not like - I want it this way! It is more like raising children - not to be offending."* (Lauring, 2013 p. 217).

Danish scepticism of other nationalities' lack of understanding of the 'Danish way', the democratic management style, made them act with less attention to diversity management, and sometimes the difficulties with introducing changes such as diversity management initiatives was too troublesome and they preferred to leave things as they were. Instead, focus was given on the performance of the business, and if diversity management was just an obstacle to that, it was not cared for. It even took an unintended twist when Danish scepticism and disappointment towards other nationalities evolved to mistrust. *"You develop an understanding of other people like they can't think and they are trying to cheat and deceive you and therefore need surveillance"* (Lauring, 2013 p. 218) said one manager. From the TNC perspective, Danes were autocratic and inflexible, and showed little concern for using diverse human resources effectively. One notes the *"Europeans are very racist, they just don't know it"* (Lauring, 2013 p. 218). It is noticeable that Danish management seeks to implement what they perceive to be the correct, almost natural, management style, though when employees fail to respond in the desired manner, Danish management resorts to implementing a stronger hierarchy.

TNC workers are from countries that have other management traditions, and they struggle understanding the Danish way. Why is it that they are unable to adjust to the wishes of management, and why does it result in a culture clash? The answers can be sought for in how we as humans form and learn habits and behaviors. The theme and problem formulation of the thesis is not about diversity management, but as explained in the pilot study, it is interesting that in an ever globalizing world, a Danish company in Hungary does little to no effort to implement diversity management, and instead displays an array of objects with Danish symbolism for employees to see. How we practice habits and behaviors are one

underlying theme in organizational research, but fundamentally the concept of *habitus* can help us understand how we as social actors acquire the skills necessary to engage in a social context at all.

The concept was developed by Pierre Bourdieu, who along that wrote that social actors possess different forms of capitals at their disposal, and social actors employ various strategies to reconstruct or achieve the amounts of capital needed to own or improve their power position in a social context (which Bourdieu calls fields of engagement (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011)) (Tatli et al., 2015). Social actors apply strategy to assign and distribute their different capital when engaging a social context, the site of engagement. But the ability to reconfigure or enhance capitals are determined by one's habitus, and in essence, Bourieu's sociology is the *"relational and contextual, as it is only through the mediation of habitus and field, that different form of capital gain their value. [...] Bourdieu's theory allows us to understand human agency in organizations as simultaneously active, dynamic, situated, and constrained."* (Tatli et al., 2015 p.5).



Picture 10, symbolic poster for Fyn island. Picture 18, symbolic poster for Bornholm island (Appendix VI).

2.2.3 Bourdieu's Habitus

As mentioned, culture is a concept which is difficult to pinpoint, and as summed up, culture is group members' shared sense making of social phenomena within a shared social arena. When defining culture, it is not mentioned how members, the social actors, utilize the information they gather from social phenomena in order to engage sufficiently in a social contest. Pierre Bourdieu's theory, as defined in *Outline of the Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977), on habits helps bridge that gap, as it explains how individuals position themselves in a social context. Habitus is a somewhat strategic allocation of the information learned from social phenomena in order to accommodate social situations.

Bourdieu's habitus is relational and context driven in the sense that it is through mediation of habitus and social arena that different forms of capital become valuable to the social actor - if the social actor understands how to apply (mediate) the capital. Habitus is strategically and tactically employed by social actors to negotiate the social norms that govern social practice .

The central concept of Bourdieu's theory of practice, habitus, is defined as a deep structure of generative thought and behavior which orients practice but without itself producing thoughts and behavior (Spiegel, 2005). Practice is understood as a collective of applied behaviors based on learned ideas from e.g. social norms or other experienced phenomena which trains social actors. Practice is the habitual manner of social actors' conduct. Bourdieu (1977) defines habitus as systems composed of durable transposable dispositions, and as "*an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted; the habitus engenders all the thought, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions, and no others*" (Bourdieu 1977, as cited in Spiegel 2005 p.179-180). This might come off as a somewhat circular ending, and it is not far from it.

Learning from social phenomena is a continuous process where social actors utilize systems of behavior they have learned from previous social engagements in order to navigate new ones, and from new social engagements new experiences are added to the habitus which again can be utilized later on if needed. However it is not a circular ending because social actors' habitus will only add more behavioral knowledge to employ in new or same situations, and for "*Bourdieu the relationship between agentic and structural forces is not unidirectional, and neither is it deterministic*" (Tatli et al., 2015 p.4), so in any case social actors will have the ability to act slightly different

Habitus is already being constructed in the earliest stages in life as basic dispositions or basic orientations and operates on the same level as physical bodily dispositions or mental operations. In other words habitus serves as a map for social actors' social worlds and how to navigate them, but they are not totally free to navigate as they in the end are completely governed by the generative patterns initially acquired through the cultures they inhabit (Spiegel, 2005). Social actors are bound to act certain ways depending on their habitus, which is the source of the series of moves the social actor will apply to a situation, though it can not be dismissed that the responses of the habitus can be supplemented by a strategic calculation of semi-conscious action where the social actor might react in a different way than the habitus otherwise would prescribe.

This can happen when the social actor estimates a chance of success based on assumptions of past effect into expected objectives, allowing for a partially consecutively semi-conscious calculation of alternative reactions, though still within the limitations of one's habitus, yet still pushing the boundaries of it. *"Bourdieu's work is also criticized for failing to explain change and drawing a static picture of the society"* (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011 p. 1232), and habitus can seem somewhat fatalistic, though that would mean that habitus foresee a social actor's behavior. This is not the case, because even though the social actor is limited to act based on the habitus, every individual's habitus' generative systems of durable, transposable dispositions offers a near inexhaustible collection of actions to apply, which depends on the individual habitus, the social engagement, other social actors, and context. However, Bourdieu is critical towards the idea of a society that is subject to a continuous flux of change, and argues that change, though rare given the deeply ingrained mechanism which authorizes action, happens slowly (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). Each social actor *"is a producer and reproducer of objective meanings. "Because his actions and works are the product of a modus operandi of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery. [...] The habitus is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices without either explicit reason or significant intent, to be none the less, "sensible" and "reasonable"."* (Spiegel, 2005 p. 183).

A basic component of the construction of habitus is the production of a commonsense world, as sensemaking of the general social world, equipped with the objectivity secured by consensus of meanings of practices and the world (Spiegel, 2005). Social actors unconsciously seek to adjust and harmonize their acquired interpretations and collegially reinforce their perceptions to form homogeneity of habitus. This can for example happen

through conversation, and it is done to create a familiarity in social actor responses, so behavior falls within the boundaries of social norm. We as human beings expect others to behave within the perimeter of socially accepted behavior, and we can easily detect when behavior does not conform to social norms. Habitus is exactly the guiding law laid down in each individual from the earliest upbringing through other individuals' dispositions, dictating a certain system of dispositions of the individual's habitus. Because the social actor is the result of dispositions internalized of the dispositions of others', the same objective structures will be present within social groups such as a national community (Spiegel, 2005).

The concepts of Banal Nationalism and National Flagging used in the pilot study (Kaas, 2021) also all about *knowledge* of meanings, the symbolism, in objects. Michael Billig (2002) are aware that social actors learn about their national identity by studying others and writes that *"to act and to speak, one must remember"* (Billig, 2002 p. 42), hinting at the notion of habitus, but also that actor do not see their actions as mere repetitions or ordinary, and that when they are speaking they are not conscious about to what extent their words repeat, meaning that social actors repeat learned behaviors to reinforce them, to reinforce culture.

To summarize, habitus is applied to understand how employees at MD-Recruitment/Dentalservice employ dispositions in order to navigate the organizational culture. Given that the staff is composed of both Danish and Hungarian employees, their perception of the objects and their ability to understand the embedded meanings must be different among nationality lines. The thesis could also add Bourdieu's theory of capitals to further explain different dispositions among employees because *"Bourdieu's conception of capitals has a potential to shed light onto the material and symbolic resources that shape organisational life as well as to bridge the gap between the material and symbolic domains of human agency"* (Tatli et al., 2015 p.9). Though it will not make use of that, since habitus is a sufficient theory to explain the agency of employees. Billig actually directly alludes Bourdieu's habitus in his book *Banal Nationalism* writing that *"The 'habitus' refers to dispositions, practices and routines of the familiar social world. It describes 'the second nature' which people must acquire in order to pass mindlessly (and also mindfully) through the banal routines of daily life"* (Billig, 2002 p. 42).

2.2.4 Banal Nationalism & National Flagging

Since it is concluded in the pilot study (Kaas, 2021) that there can exist national flagging in an organization, and this thesis will study an organization, Michael Billig's (2002) concept of banal nationalism and national symbolism is included in the theoretical framework. The inclusion of this concept, which Billig actually coined banal nationalism, allows the thesis to question employees about how they perceive the objects that are present physically at the MD-Recruitment/DentalService. This section will first define banal nationalism, and how it is projected through national flagging, as it is presented by Billig (2002), and secondly explain how it can be applied to organizational culture.

So what is banal nationalism? First of all, Billig (2002) argues that the idea of a nationhood is so embedded in our understanding of nations. We understand nations as states that possess certain characteristic traits that collectively make up the nation, such as language, religion, wealth, education etc. Because the idea of nations comes so naturally to us, we easily assume that nationalism, that there is a us and them, which we employ when identifying ourselves. It is natural to have a national identity as a person (Billig, 2002). The national identity helps us position ourselves, though we may not initially give it much thought. Billig writes that *"It seems 'natural' to have such an identity. In the established nations, people do not generally forget their national identity. If asked 'who are you', people may not respond by first giving their national identity [...]. Rarely, if asked which is their nationality, do they respond 'I've forgotten'. although their answers may be not be quite straightforward. National identity is not only something which is thought to be natural to possess, but also something natural to remember."* (Billig, 2002 p. 37).

Paradoxically the 'remembering' of national identity also includes forgetting, what Billig describes as "a complex dialectic of remembering and forgetting" (Billig, 2002 p. 37), meaning that people in a nation collectively remembers characteristic traits of historic moments of the nation's history when it is beneficial to their understanding of their national identity, but also tend to forget less desirable attributes if it does not fit into their understanding. In connection with the previous section on habitus, habitus determines social actors' ability to utilize this *remembering and forgetting*, and *"Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the 'habitus' expresses well this dialectic of remembering and forgetting. The 'habitus' refers to dispositions, practices and routines of the familiar social world. It describes 'the second*

nature' which people must acquire in order to pass mindlessly (and also mindfully) through the banal routines of daily life." (Billig, 2002 p. 42).

Every nation has history, and collective selective forgetting of history is "*a crucial element in the creation of nations*" (Renan, as cited in Bhabha, 1990 p.11), and when a nation is established, its existence depends on a continuous collective amnesia. What Billig (2002) and Renan (as cited in Bhabha, 1990) implies is not that citizens in a nation live in a constant state between amnesia and memory like an elephant, but rather that historical events as well as symbols are unconsciously used and disused when it is relevant to do so. To simplify this concept, Billig (2002) has the flag analogy. The flag is a national symbol and represents nationhood. It could be any symbol which we as citizens apply significant cultural meaning to, but the flag is a very powerful and easily recognizable symbol of national identity, as it is part of the environment in any nation. Though a flag is an easily recognizable symbol for nationhood and the state, not every sight of a national flag calls for the immediate saluting or reverence of the nation. A flag can be waved, remembered, or unwaved, forgotten.

To illustrate, and maybe most interesting, unwaved flags might be more common but also the most forgotten, hence being unwaved. The flag might be hanging outside an official building, stitched to an official uniform, maybe the flag is visible on a food product or part of a magazine cover. These flags are largely unnoticed, mindless, and call for no attention (Billig, 2002). Different nations have different flag traditions, where for example Denmark has a somewhat liberal use of its national flag, displaying it on Christmas trees, and on napkins and paper plates when celebrating birthdays. In Denmark, using the national flags as decoration does not necessarily have anything to do with nationalism, but it does reflect national identity.

The waved flag is more uncommon but probably most visible. It is the flags that are waved consciously and with passion, often considered an example of ideological, or political, nationalism. Waved or unwaved depends on the response. An actual nation flag might be the most recognisable example of a waved flag, often accompanied by a national hymn or other display of national pride, thus Billig (2002) also writes that flags can be saluted or unsaluted, depending on the response. A national flag can also be unwaved, e.g. in the case of Danish use of its flag on Christmas trees or birthday napkins. Danes do not cry out in national hymn when seeing their flag on a napkin, but waved or unwaved flags as symbols are embedded with as much national identity symbolism in either case.

Symbolic meaning of the unwaved flags, though unnoticed and mindless, would immediately be recognized by any national citizen, where he questioned about the meaning. And that is the point Billig (2002) is trying to make - the national symbols are present in society, and serve as constant, unconscious reminders for national identity, or constant reminders of a shared sense making.

Flags are not the only symbol of statehood, as coins and banknotes typically also bear national emblems, which are also unwaved flags, remaining unnoticed when we use them for our daily transactions. This is essentially the banality of nationalism - that it is present everywhere in modern nations, but most often it is unwaved, though if asked about it, any citizen would be able to recall the meaning of the symbolic values. Billig (2002) relates the ability to recognize and utilize national symbols to Bourdieu's notion of habitus in the sense that it expresses the dialectic of remembering and forgetting. As also explained in the previous section, Billig (2002) too acknowledges that habitus covers the "*dispositions, practices, and routines of the familiar social world*" (Billig, 2002 p. 42). Citizens adopt the meanings and patterns of national symbols when constructing their habitus. These symbols become habitual, or routine, and citizens' thoughts, reactions, and symbols turn into routine habits, and in doing so embody the past, which relates to Scollon's (2001) concept of how action can be embedded in material objects.

Billig's distinction between nationalism and national identity is relevant to explain. Nationalism is linked to the nation-state, but where the idea of the nation-state is declining, Billig (2002) argues that nationalism is not declining with it. Nationalism "*is not a flag which is waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building*" (Billig, 2002 p. 8) meaning that symbolic imagery of the nation is present all around us, and it can be a flag, but other objects as well. National identity is what is embedded in the waved flag, the reminder of nationhood. Like Bourdieu's (1977) habitus, national identity is a form of disposition which forms part of one's habitus, used to position oneself in relation to others both within, and without of, the nationhood. To use one of Scollon's (2001) five focus points, national identity is like a nexus of practice, summed up by a practice, social structure, norms, values, and historical affordances or constraints of a nation. National identity *is* practice and action.

About nationalism and national identity, Billig criticizes social science for neglecting it, or he writes that there is a double neglect. The inhabited nationalism in society is often neglected, the unwaved flags by the every-day-citizen goes unstudied. On the other hand, Billig (2002) argues that social science, sociology in particular, have primarily focused research on nationalism when it is political, extreme, or violent. Sociologists fail to recognize the impact nationalism has when social actors go on with their daily business, Billig (2002) writes. Like with other rituals in life, e.g. waking up in the morning and leaving for work, or holding the door for someone if you are well mannered, national identity is something that is being learned, something which social actors are being socialised into and perceive as natural as other rituals in daily life. These patterns of our daily social life become habitual and routine and embodies the past by doing so (Billig, 2002) just as national identity is an echo of national and social history of a group.

3. Problem Formulation

When different nationalities work within the same organization, it is not uncommon, almost given, that the organization introduces some form of diversity management that can amass different opinions and concatenate to a form of consensus amongst organization members. The pilot study (Kaas, 2021) explores an organization with members of two different nationalities, and a physical environment that represents only one of the two. The physical representation of Danish objects is present throughout the office space at MD-Recruitment/DentalService, and though there is a somewhat fifty-fifty population of Danes and Hungarians working there, there are no objects representing Hungarian culture:

“The various material objects throughout the office echoes the verbal discourse of Danish national identity, and it can only be assumed that objects at any organization to some extent echoes its organizational identity.” (Kaas, 2021 p. 20)

Kaas (2021) concluded that national flagging of Danish national identity occurred, and further speculated that this overrepresentation is the result of the organizational practices, or that organizational practices were shaped by the influence of the objects. Objects can be embedded with meanings, meanings that are mediated to social actors and influencing them to certain actions. Hence, the flagging of Danish national identity must have an influencing effect on employees and MD-Recruitment/DentalService, possibly shaping the perception of Danish culture at the workplace. Within the concept of national identity there is the mechanism of remembering and forgetting, a simultaneous phenomenon that is the cradle of national identity - the remembering of a nation's positive aspects and the forgetting of its negative. A sort of same mechanism was occurring in the daily conversations at the company:

“At the Company, Danish national identity is being produced just the same way as it is within Denmark, though, at the Company, instead of forgetting unpleasantries in Danish history, Hungarian culture is given the unpleasant part of the work culture there. Though, it is only know from the undocumented verbal accounts which gave thoughts to the issue of work culture and organizational identity. It would be unfair to conclude that Hungarian culture is a scapegoat within the organizational identity for everything bad, everything that Danish culture is not.” (Kaas, 2021 p.20).

Why is it that Danish seem to be a positive and Hungarian a negative? Is it an accepted fact in organizational culture that national differences matter so much, and can the objects, which clearly display Danish culture positively, have any influence? If the objects have an influencing role on employee actions, then how are employees, depending on nationality, comprehending this influence? A Danish employee is bound to have a different habitus than a Hungarian employee, and therefore different meanings of Danish national identity. How are employees making sense of the objects and how does their perception of Danish national identity relate to the organizational culture? According to the visual display through the objects, the organizational culture must have elements of Danish national identity. But how do employees perceive the organizational culture themselves, and do the mediated meanings embedded in the objects affect perception? If diversity management is not implemented to mediate differences, how is consensus formed among employees?

These are all relevant questions but there are three key elements to them: the objects, the employees, and culture. The thesis is therefore studying 1) employee perception of organizational culture at their workplace, and whether they experience a cultural bias, 2) the function of objects and how they mediate national identity, and 3) how employees of different nationalities navigate the organizational culture and if objects facilitate navigation. Hence, on the base of these three elements, the following problem formulation is proposed:

What factor do objects have in facilitating employee perception of the organizational culture at their workplace and their capacity to adapt to the organizational culture?

4. Theoretical Framework

The thesis is not concerned with further establishing the fact that Danish culture is not only visible through flagging of national identity, but also a key component of the organizational culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. Instead the thesis will utilize theory into three components to answer the problem formulation. First component is Billig's concept of banal nationalism, the idea of how national identity is projected through flagging. The second component is Scollon's concept of mediated action, that material objects are embedded with meanings that can, if set in the right context, call influence action. The third component is Bourdieu's theory of habitus. Habitus will help understand how social actors, the employees, employ the meanings embedded in the objects in order to adapt to the organizational culture.

4.1 Banal Nationalism, Flagging, & National Identity

Michael Billig (2002) charges sociologists with not focusing enough on the impact of national sentiment in the daily lives of social actors, and when given attention, nationalism as a political force is often used instead of taking into account the national identity of social actors as a factor. On that account, this thesis builds upon the focus on nationality in organizational life in the pilot study (Kaas, 2021), and as explained in the previous chapter on the problem formulation, the social aspect from employees is being taken into consideration. National identity does mean something to social actors, hence the thesis takes the stance that employees do as well, and in an organization that flags banal nationalism in its physical environment and possibly its organizational culture, employees are bound to replicate this national identity. Though the concept of flagging of banal nationalism itself can not explain how and why social actors want or benefit from adopting and employing national identity, which is why Billig (2002) suggests habitus as a tool for understanding why social actors apply nationality to define themselves. The remembering of pleasant national aspects and the forgetting of unpleasant aspects are the results of a strategic use of habitus dispositions to adjust to a situation and construct a consensus on national identity.

This national identity is flagged throughout MD-Recruitment/DentalService, reminding employees of the identity of the workplace. Whether a consensus of meanings about these 'flags' was prior to this thesis unknown, and it was assumed that different nationalities possess different symbols, and that they would be unaware how to interpret each others

symbolism in ‘flags’ since “*habitus is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. of language, economy, etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely.*” (Spiegel, 2005 p. 187).

But a consensus can still be made in an organization about any symbol, because objects only have symbolic value when it is applied to them, and in any group the symbolic value or meaning of objects can be revamped to fit social needs.

For the thesis to study the culture in an organization, theoretical boundaries must be established in order to know what is meant by culture, and how it can be acknowledged. As explained in the literature review, there is a distinction between identity and culture. Any organization possesses both, but the identity is a result of the culture in the organization. The pilot study (Kaas, 2021) concluded that national flagging is happening and is part of the identity of MD-Recruitment/DentService, and hence, Danish culture is part of the organizational culture.

Instead, how it is expressed and experienced by employees is what the following analysis is focused on. National flagging serves as reminders and surely employees are affected by flagging. Which impact they perceive these ‘flags’ to have in their daily work is as well elaborated upon in the analysis.

4.2 Mediated Action

In addition to the theory of habitus, the thesis employs Scollon’s (2002) five conceptual focus points. Literature does not directly suggest that his five points are in relation to Bourdieu’s habitus, but it is arguable that habitus is the fundamental social idea behind the five points. What Scollon and Bourdieu have in common is that they both are interested in social practice and argue that social actors exploit what they have learned through previous experience when engaging in a social exchange. The first point, *mediated action*, states that individuals and objects mediate actions through them, hence a form of habitus can be applied to them and can be strategically employed by individuals when needed. The second point, *site of engagement*, is basically the Bourdieu’s field, the social arena in which social actors employ their dispositions in order to navigate the social context. Bourdieu writes about the strategic

and tactic use of dispositions, a somewhat semi-unconscious use of prior knowledge of social actors to accommodate social context. Scollon's writing is again reminiscent of Bourdieu in the third point, *mediational means*, that is especially focused on what can be translated to *dispositions* and their meanings, but specifically how social actors use them, e.g. how they dress, behave, and that dressing up or behaving in a certain manner carries historical affordances and constraints. When Scollon (2002) writes about affordances and constraints in mediated actions, it is closely associated with the idea of the strategic and tactical use of dispositions. In relation to the problem formulation, an example could be how employees choose to display their national identity. Do they dress in a certain way, or do they use their knowledge of Danish culture in order to fit into the organizational culture?

4.3 Habitus

Billig himself suggests the theory of habitus to interpret both why social actors replicate and display national identity, but also how remembering or forgetting national identity traits are configured by social actors. Accordingly, the thesis as well applies habitus to explain how employees know about national identity, why they perceive it the way they do, and how they utilize the knowledge of national identity to their benefit. Habitus is relational and context driven, meaning that if the objects influence employees the employees will employ the meanings they learn from the objects in social situations where they see they can benefit from it. Being able to strategically employ the right dispositions is crucial for employees when navigating the organizational culture, and if they perceive the organizational culture as being dominated by Danish national identity, they can socially benefit if they manage to gain convenient dispositions through the meanings embedded in objects. Their ability to do so is however limited by their habitus, thus Danish employees must have an advantage in navigating the organizational culture. Within the theory of habitus change is not something that can happen fast, but changes slowly through experiencing new social phenomena. It is therefore not impossible for Hungarian employees to understand Danish national identity and employ their knowledge about it, but it requires the right social conditions for them to do so.

Overall, to research the problem formulation, the thesis utilizes the concept of national flagging and banal nationalism mediated through symbolic objects displayed in the

organization, and habitus to interpret how employees decode the objects as well as how they perceive the organizational culture and adapt to it. To summarize: *Banal nationalism* and *flagging* explains how to recognize symbolic depictions of national identity. *Mediated Discourse Analysis* explains how the construction of national identity and the symbolic depictions of it can be embodied within material objects and also be transferred to social actors who mediate it through actions. *Habitus* explains how social actors choose to utilize the knowledge they have of national identity in a social context.

5. Philosophy of Science

5.1 Constructivist Ontology

The ontological position of the thesis is based on constructionism, which asserts that the context of social phenomena is continuously being constructed, and re-constructed by social actors. Social reality is not an objective truth but rather a compilation of social actors' perspectives. What can be considered a social reality is the result of social actors' sensemaking of the social phenomena they encounter and experience (Bryman 2012). As stated in the theoretical framework, organizational culture is a collective of employee sensemaking, a constructivist ontological approach allows the thesis to discover how social reality (the culture) is constructed in an organization, in this case how organizational culture and the perception of objects is constructed, or established through discourse, by employees at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. The thesis recognizes the employee discourse as the interactive vessel where culture is being constructed, and it is not something stable, as individual employees have different views of the organizational culture. As such, organizational culture is a constantly changing social phenomena, which is being negotiated and re-negotiated every time employees communicate with each other on a daily basis.

5.2 Interpretivist Epistemology

The epistemological position of the thesis is interpretivism, which allows the thesis to study the social phenomena of organizational culture and the role objects as interpreted by the employees at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. Where in natural science, the natural world can be viewed through somewhat objective perspectives, the social world can not be experienced objectively and is in that sense more complex when constructing a general view of the social reality: “[...] *people and their institutions - are fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences. The study of the social world therefore requires a different logic of the research procedure, one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order*” (Bryman, 2012 p. 28). In other words, humans create a social reality with unmeasurable factors such as the symbolic meaning which can be applied to an object. Hence, when applying an interpretivist approach, the researcher needs to comprehend the subtle and intricate subjective meanings made by social actors, their actions, and the action

mediated through objects. Since the thesis is concerned with the social phenomenon of organizational culture based on national identity symbolism within objects, an interpretivist approach is the logical approach in order to move past the findings of the pilot study. The pilot study concluded that national flagging is happening at MD-Recruitment/DentalService, but was not, given the nature of the research, able to further study how employees were affected by national symbolism, and only assume that organizational culture was affected by it. General, objective meanings can be applied to symbols, a symbol, after all, is somewhat generic and has ambiguous meanings. Social reality can not be viewed objectively as is the sum of interpretations of social actors applying meanings in relation to their own position in the social reality they experience (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). Therefore, how individuals choose to interpret symbols can, given their ambiguous nature, be very subjective.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

In a lot of social science research, qualitative research methods is a favoured approach, where it is the opposite for other sciences which favours quantitative methods for its capability to generate reliable variables (Silverman, 2009). Not that it is given that social science research will only make use of qualitative methods, though this thesis is. Where quantitative methods are competent at gathering information and creating a numerical relations between data, theory, and the research question (Bryman, 2012), qualitative methods offer the researcher a possibility of creating a more nuanced depiction of social reality beyond mere numbers. To research the thesis' problem formulation, a single case study is chosen, in this case the Danish-Hungarian company MD-Recruitment/DentalService with a qualitative approach. This is partly because of the methods of the pilot study's (Kaas, 2021) research where the data generation is based solely on the visual expression of the organizational culture at the Danish-Hungarian company, where the conclusion can be argued to be somewhat distant to the employees' experience of the organizational culture. The conclusion of the pilot study is of course valid in its own right given its problem formulation when not including employee interpretations. But the pilot study is making assumptions of employee opinions which it can not answer. Hence the choice of qualitative approach for this thesis. A quantitative approach would only alone offer a positivistic, objectivist view of social reality at the company. It is limited to expose relationships between inputs and outputs of social phenomena, concerning itself only with established correlation between variables, and offering an operational view of social reality (Silverman, 2009) which the thesis then could make new assumptions upon.

As Kaas (2021) mentions in the pilot study, the *de jure* two companies of MD-Recruitment and DentalService could be made into two cases in order to compare findings. Given the specific problem formulation, making a comparative study of two totally independent organizations could be troublesome as it would take resources to discover, but as introduced in the literature review, Luring's (2013) could be a candidate to research how a dominant national culture affects organization. The thesis could choose to do that, but instead settled to study the social phenomenon of organizational culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService as a single case. Though there is a sustained misunderstanding, mostly from other sciences, that

single case studies are too subjective to offer valid generalizability, Della Porta & Keating (2008) argues that social science contains elements of a comparative nature. Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that a single case study can be just as truthful to reality as a multiple case study or a comparative case study. To develop a general conclusion, this thesis compares statements from Danish and Hungarian employees to generate a general interpretation of the role of objects within the organizational culture of the company through interviews. In social science, generalizability is essential and truthful characteristics must be attributed to the social world, research must be generalisable. Being general could be somewhat understood as being objective, but as social science in itself is subjective, researchers must strive to construct a social objectivity out of subjective meanings (Flyvbjerg, 2006). To make a general perspective of the social reality in the organization seen from both national cultural perspective, both Danish and Hungarian employees are interviewed. Interviews are another preferred method of social science researchers (Silverman, 2013) and will be explained further on.

To sum it up, the qualitative approach is applied in this thesis, and to deliver a generalizable of the social reality, the perception of the role of objects within organizational culture, as experienced by employees.

6.1.1 The Case

The case used for studying the problem formulation has, as described in the pilot study (Kaas, 2021), the internship workplace of the researcher and later on the part time workplace. Possible complications of it are discussed in section 6.4 Limitations. The organizational structure of the company can be divided into two parts, each part legally functioning as its own company, but in practice functioning as one organization, hence MD-Recruitment and DentalService is in this thesis often written as ‘MD-Recruitment/DentalService’ or referred to as ‘the company’. For the sake of anonymity, the company, each part have been given pseudonyms, and the original names do not figure in the thesis. The company is operating both in Denmark and Hungary, with the main office and all staff located working from the Hungarian capital Budapest, except for two employees. Upper management is solely natives Danes, lower management and the rest if the staff is a mix of both Danes and Hungarians.

The first part, MD-Recruitment is the oldest of the two having been established some twelve years ago, providing services mainly focused on recruitment of medically trained candidates from the European Union, offering courses in Danish language and culture to candidates. Candidates are recruited on behalf of clients in Denmark (public or private hospitals and clinics), and together with their families they relocate to Budapest, Hungary to undergo courses before moving to Denmark starting their new jobs. Since spring 2020 all courses have been conducted online, with the candidates moving directly from their home country to Denmark after the courses are concluded, without first relocating to Budapest. The staff composition of MD-Recruitment is majority native Hungarian employees, with only a few native Danish employees. Daily management is Hungarian, though upper level management is solely native Danish. Danish language skill requirement is minimal for employees in MD-Recruitment, hence Hungarian employees can work there as could they in any other company, though English skills is a must. Danish employees are engaged for positions that require contact to Danish clients or Danish public authorities. Other than that, a handful of native Hungarians are fluent in Danish and are primarily employed as Danish language and culture course teachers.

DentalService is the youngest of the two having been created approximately five years ago. It is mainly a consultancy providing services like marketing, recruitment, human resource solutions, and bookkeeping and salary administration to clients in Denmark. Teams in DentalService have individually more contact with clients than teams in MD-Recruitment, which almost have none, where clients are handled by only a few employees, typically Danish upper management. The staff of DentalService therefore is mostly Danish.

The two parts of the company share the same office floor in an office complex centrally located in Budapest. The floor has one entrance, and visitors are met with a small lobby with adjacent kitchen, toilets, and a corridor connecting both MD-Recruitment's and DentalService's respective offices, and a shared meeting room which doubles as break room. The language spoken in the two parts of the company reflects the cultural composition within. In MD-Recruitment Hungarian and English are the preferred languages spoken, and in DentalService Danish and English are prevalent. English is the lingua franca among the two employee groups, though some Hungarian employees speak Danish and use it when working not only with recruited candidates but also with coworkers.

6.2 Data Generation

6.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Considering that the thesis studies the employee perspective of organizational culture and national identity presence, interviews are the ideal method to research the interpretations of employees' own experiences at their workplace. According to Silverman (2013), a favoured method of qualitative research is almost by default interviews because it allows interviewees to construct their own narrative of the social reality as they experience it. Social reality is not something tangible as such, it is overall constructed by those inhabiting it, the social actors - in line with the constructivist ontology of the thesis - and social reality thus derives from their statements. Specifically, semi-structured interview was used to interview four employees, and was chosen because of the focus on the participant's perspectives and its flexible and adaptable structure (Bryman, 2012) when questioning interviewees. Interviewees were asked based on the interview guide (see 11.1 Appendix I) with specific questions. Interviewees were, according to the semi-structure method, free to elaborate on questions and the interviewer had leeway to respond to interviewees' replies, because question (Bryman, 2012).

This method was the preferred method of the thesis over e.g. unstructured interviews, which more resembles a conversation, and where the interviewee is allowed to respond totally free and can take the conversation to any topic regardless of its relevance to the research question. On the other hand, the structured interview is much more standardized, and is typically inflexible, not allowing the interviewee to elaborate too much on topics and not allowing the interviewer to pick up and respond to replies that might and offer new discoveries in the research (Bryman, 2012). Hence, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with four employees, two being Danish and two being Hungarian.

6.2.2 Sampling Method

Since the aim of the thesis is to investigate how employees view the organizational culture at the company and the national aspects of it, semi structures have been chosen to study employee perspectives. Bryman (2012) writes that the research question, or problem formulation, should give indications to the sampling method, and that it should provide a guideline for which individuals would be suitable candidates for interview. In this case of course, it is employees at the MD-Recruitment/DentalService.

Employees have been selected based on two factors: whether they are Danish or Hungarian, and their position in the company. Out of the total staff at the company of almost twenty employees, four have been selected for interview. Two of the interviewees, a Dane and a Hungarian have at least four years of experience at the company, while the two other interviewees, also a Dane and a Hungarian, have approximately two years of experience each. Within the company there exist different teams that each take care of different internal or external services for the company. The different teams cover a wide range of different services such as marketing (both for the company itself, and for external clients), Danish language courses and integration services to recruited candidates, salary and bookkeeping for external clients, and other consultancy services.

Given the relatively small size of the staff, team sizes vary from approximately two to five employees, with some employees in more than one team. Each interviewee works at separate teams at the company, covering four different teams. Approaching employees was uncomplicated and they were made accessible with consent from company management itself. Organizations and individuals are overall not opposed to participate in interviews concerning themselves and their conducts, and they usually see the benefit of gaining knowledge on issues about themselves (Silverman, 2013) Sampling interviewees representing four different teams was intentional, giving way for possible different perspectives on the organizational culture at the company on other grounds than whether the interviewee was Danish or Hungarian. Though there is no theoretical reasoning - cf. the theoretical framework, that is - for that possibility, it can be argued that more diversity within the interviewee group makes for a better representation of the staff of the company as a whole. Sampling participants from different areas, or units, is not uncommon in social science research, resorting from randomly selecting interviewees. *“Most sampling in qualitative research entails purposive sampling of some kind”* (Bryman, 2012 p. 418) and reason for this

may be “*to draw on the cultural resources that are available in a setting*” (Bryman, 2012 p. 417). The desired outcome of the interviews was to get a better understanding of how the employees experience the organizational culture and their thoughts the displayed objects, hence a diverse selection of employees makes for the best option, if not to interview the whole staff.

Interviews were conducted through video call with the interviewees being present in their homes, not at the company premise. This was chosen out of convenience, but also allowed interviewees to be comfortable answering questions regarding the company without restraint, compared to interviewing them at the company premises. As some questions focused on the visual interior of the company, as explained later on in the following section, the symbolic objects, pictures of the objects and office surroundings were shown through the video call to the interviewees. The interviewees was told that their testimony was anonymized and they have been labeled as:

Employee H, Danish with 2+ years experience at the company.

Employee I, Hungarian with 1+ years experience at the company.

Employee J, Danish with 4+ years experience at the company.

Employee K, Hungarian with 4+ years experience at the company.

6.2.3 The interviews & Interview Guide

As just mentioned, the interviews were conducted through video call, though usually and preferably interviews in qualitative research are done face-to-face (Bryman, 2012). In general, interviews can happen in many ways besides face-to-face, e.g. telephone, self-administered questionnaires via email/mail (De Vaus, 2001), and in this case face-to-face through a video call service, partly due to the interviewer and interviewee having a greater geographical distance between them (Bryman, 2012), and partly because the interviewer, the researcher, was no longer present at the workplace as his employment there had ceased to be. A reason for this, also as earlier mentioned, was to maintain a level of objectivity, and to keep a social and professional distance between interviewee and the interviewer who had enjoyed a professional work relationship up until about a week prior to the interviews. All interviews were conducted in English.

The intent of the interview questions in the guide is to invite interviewees to elaborate. The guide (see 11.1 Appendix I) loosely follows the nine kinds of questions suggested by Kvale (1996), opening with an ‘introducing’ question which initiates the theme; “*What thoughts come to your mind when I say work culture at the company?*”, with a subsequent ‘follow-up question’ to make them elaborate on the work culture at the company in relation to their previous answer; “*Would you describe the work culture at the company particularly Danish or Hungarian, and why?*” with further follow-up questions; “*What does Danish work culture mean to you?*” and “*What does Hungarian work culture mean to you?*”. The term ‘organizational culture’ is a somewhat academic term, thus in the interview guide it is instead referred to as ‘work culture’.

Scattered within the interviews, and not a part of the interview guide, a mix of question types which. One of these are e.g. the ‘probing questions’ which are follow-up questions on things within the interviewee's reply. In accordance with the nature of semi-structured interviews, the interviewer picks up elements in the replies and uses them right after or later on during the interview. Allowed to do so because of the semi-structured interview, it also underlines the inherent conflict of the analysis method used.

The method, *narrative analysis*, is explained in the coming section, but to shortly explain, the conflict referred to is the one that a pure narrative from the interviewee can be problematic to ensure since the interviewer in any interview setting will have some influence on the answers given based on the questions and level and nature of follow-up questions. The researcher can never be fully objective (Bryman, 2012), thus the questions are somewhat mirroring the researcher's intent.

To limit the influence from follow-up questions to the answers, the questions refer to something being said by the interviewer, which is also the nature of these questions, inviting the interviewee to elaborate more on what is already being said. Another element of the interview is pictures. During the interview the interviewee is asked to look at pictures of objects displayed at the different Budapest offices. Adding images to an interview may assist the researcher in grounding interview questions, and to stimulate the interviewee to remember events or situations connected to what they see (Bryman, 2012), and showing objects to the interviewees helped provide context when talking about the objects.

6.3 Data Analysis

One major difficulty with qualitative research is that it quickly generates a large unwieldy amount of data because of the way it generates data - field notes, interview transcripts, documents (Bryman, 2012). As mentioned earlier, qualitative research methods offer a more nuanced depiction of social reality, and this is because of the possible wide range of data for analysis. Hence, *“the researcher must guard against being captivated by the richness of the data collected”* (Bryman, 2012 p. 565) and keep an eye out for the relevant data. Though the semi-structured interviews enable information out of the main topic, certain new discoveries are also possible, and these are acceptable to pursue in the analysis.

When analyzing interviews numerous methods are possible methods, such as thematic analysis, which could be applied to this thesis. Thematic analysis prescribes the researcher to define certain themes based on the theories used, and often through a coding process finding the themes of interviewee answers (Bryman, 2012). The theoretical framework of this thesis certainly allows for themes, e.g. national symbols, mediated discourse, flagging, dispositions, and so on. Discourse analysis could also be an option in which the social world, society and event produce discourse, and language is the constituent of discourse. The thesis is not making use of themes or analysing language though, and instead opt for another method - *narrative analysis*. Narrative analysis is an approach that treats social actors' statements as narrative, as part of a continuous story, and in contrast to other analysis methods it acknowledges that individuals perceive their lives in terms of continuity and as a process (Bryman, 2012).

The difference in narrative analysis from other methods is also that instead of asking *“‘what actually happened?’”* (Bryman, 2012 p. 582) it expands to ask *“‘how do people make sense of what happened and to what effect?’”* (Bryman, 2012 p. 582). This is partly because this method originally intended to research ‘moments’ that individuals had encountered, and in a somewhat unstructured interview style have interviewees construct a storyline of how they had experienced a social phenomenon. This approach to qualitative data which emphasize the stories that social actors employ to account for events, something which employees are also keen to do when describing their relation to objects and organizational culture. In the analysis section employees often answer questions with situational events to emphasize their point and show that *“The narrative demonstrates a generally consistent set of underlying values and expectations”* (Davis, 2008, as cited in Bryman, 2012 p. 584). Narratives can relate to

somewhat long periods of time or to very specific events, and in the case of MD-Recruitment/DentalService employees recount events in relation to answering questions regarding interactions with objects or coworkers. Though the interview guide is designed for semi-structured interviews, narrative analysis can be applied to data that have been generated in “*a variety of research methods (notably semi-structured and unstructured interviewing and participant observation)*” (Bryman, 2012 p. 584). The method can and has been on conventional interview transcriptions as well, and it has proven to uncover narratives within the interviews.

There existed a story of good and bad work culture, and also national identity in general, among employees. The intention of utilizing narrative analysis is to unveil that narrative in some form, though it is somewhat assisted by the interview guide. More specifically, narrative analysis is about viewing interview testimony in a functionalist way, meaning that a narrative “*should be viewed in terms of the function that the narrative serves for the teller*” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, as cited in Bryman, 2012 p. 584).

The intent is to reconstruct the accounts of connections between events and context. The purpose is to decipher form and function of the narrative provided through interviewee’s statements, and to deliver an overall narrative. One aspect that is important to mention though, is that the interviewer is somewhat elicited in constructing the narrative provided by the nature of the questions and follow-up questions. As mentioned in the previous sections, when designing the interview guide, thought to limit guided questions have been a concern. On a purely practical level, the thesis applies narrative analysis to the interviews by reading the transcripts through the lenses of habitus functionality (strategic use of dispositions) to construct the narrative of how the employees perceive national identity and national culture in the organizational culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService.

6.4 Limitations

Naturally no research work is able to comprise all data and information, and to study its subject it is always a matter of balancing what is relevant to include and what is not. One issue when researching social phenomena through the perspectives of the social actors, is always to select relevant social actors. To include all actors experiencing any given phenomenon would enable the researcher to make the most generalizable conclusion, though

this approach can in many cases be unfeasible because of population size. In regards to this thesis it was decided that a handful of interviewees could be representative of the general staff. Four or five employees makes up approximately 20-25% of the staff, which is considered to be sufficient. A larger interviewee population would provide a more in-depth look of employee experiences, but this argument can be made no matter the interviewee population size as long as it is less than 100%.

Another issue is the possible conflict with the author being an employee at the case organization. The initial interest in the organizational and social relations between Danish and Hungarian employees came from knowledge of internal discourse, and then the topic that is the base for this thesis. In cases where a researcher immerses oneself in the case, there is the risk of the researcher *going native* and becoming wrapped up in the same perception of the employees (Bryman, 2012), thus limiting the ability to act objectively.

To combat such risks, the author chose to conduct the interviews after he had discontinued his employment at the company, but also refrained from discussing any related topic that could influence employees' perspective on the matter. An advantage of the author's background knowledge of the company can be, that he is able to understand subtle meanings interviewee answers. On the other hand there is also a risk that he might misinterpret some statements on the ground that he has already made presumptions of the topic (which is already visible in the pilot study (Kaas, 2021)), let alone the fact that he is also Danish, adding another risk of a biased interpretation because of his own habitus.

The problem formulation which this thesis answers is specific to the case. Though the conclusion to the problem formulation seeks to make a generalizable answer, other conclusions could have been made in a different case with organization members of different cultures. From the literature review it is known that national identity matters to people and they utilize a sense of nationhood and shared national cultural adherence when relating to others. Hence, which national identity an employee possesses is important to employee self perception and possibly to the perception of employees possessing a different national identity. Therefore, the conclusion of this thesis has its limits to the validity of its ability to be generalizable to other nationalities, and further research into national identity at workplaces may be worthwhile.

7. Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the thesis applies narrative analysis method to analyse the testimony of employees at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. The focus is to study how the employees perceive the organizational culture (referred to as work culture in the transcriptions) at the company, how they define Danish culture and Hungarian culture, whether the organizational culture at the workplace demonstrate national cultural characteristics, in what regard the employees recognize the objects and what meanings they apply the them, and if they perceive advantages or disadvantages in employee dispositions based on nationality. Narrative analysis is usually applied in combination with an interview about a momentary event (Bryman, 2012), which this thesis has chosen not to do. The thesis is to research the social reality at the workplace understood as a perpetual experience for the employees.

As the name prescribes, narrative analysis is regarding social actors' testimony as a narrative, reconstructed accounts of connections between events, and it is that point that makes this method valid to use on conventional interviews. *"Proponents of narrative analysis argue that most approaches to the collection and analysis of data neglect the fact that people perceive their lives in terms of continuity and process and that attempts to understand social life that are not attuned to this feature neglect the perspective of those being studied"* (Bryman, 2012 p. 582), which means that the interviewee will always form some kind of narrative during an interview setting. This is evident in the interview transcriptions for this research, because the employees view themselves in the context of the workplace where they have a role and a story about their role. Not a story that has a start and ending, but a narrative that has reasons for the employee perceptions. The analysis is arranged in three segments, each with a focus. The narrative the analysis draws on is based on the employees' habitus, their ability to apply dispositions in order to navigate the organizational culture, and how they connect the objects displayed at the office with their narrative.

The employees interviewed have all been given a pseudonym for the sake of anonymity, and to help the reader the employees have been giving pseudonyms that hint to their nationality and gender:

Employee H	Ingrid (Danish, 2+ years experience at the company)
Employee I	László (Hungarian, 1+ years experience at the company)
Employee J	Preben (Danish, 4+ years experience at the company)
Employee K	Noémi (Hungarian, 4+ years experience at the company)

7.1 Findings

7.1.1 Perception of Organizational Culture

In this first second the analysis seeks to form a picture of how the employees perceive the organizational culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService, and also how the employees perceive their own and their coworker's organizational culture behavior. This related to the problem formulation's question on how the workplace's organizational culture is perceived by the employees themselves in terms of whether it is Danish or something else. In other words, does there exist a *national identity* in the organizational culture? Instead of the term 'organizational culture' the term 'work culture' was introduced in the interviews since it was deemed easier for interviewees to translate and relate to the culture at the workplace, whereas organizational culture presumably is an academic term. The first question asked is an introductory question about how employees view the work culture at their workplace, but is also designed to make employees elaborate on the *practice and social structure* within the company. They are asked the open question "*What thoughts come to mind when I say work culture at the company?*" and the answers already hint to some national identity characteristics, underlined later on by their replies on other questions. Overall, the office spaces of the company functions as *the site of engagement* where mediated action happens. The meanings of actions relates to where it happens, in this case the office space is the social arena. The pilot study (Kaas, 2021) suggests that the organizational culture at the workplace is influenced by Danish culture because of the display of objects with symbolic value. Employees' answers to the first questions are:

“I definitely can say this is ehm, this is a workplace where there is possibility of everyone talking to everyone.” (László, Appendix III p. 93).

“I wouldn’t say the hierarchy is on the surface very strong, maybe in decision making” (László, Appendix III p. 93).

“Denmark is very well known for the flat hierarchy and you know work-life-balance. [...] I think [...] they managed to transfer the Danish properties of work culture into the Hungarian company very well” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 104).

“Flat hierarchy, [...] friendly atmosphere. Ehm. Opinions are welcome and expected, feedback is very much valued, and expected. Open mindedness.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 113).

There are some similarities in the answers that are characteristic for the first couple of answers given by employees such as the structural arrangement of the workplace. Scollon’s (2001) first focus point, *mediated means*, tells that mediated actions are carried through not only in objects, but also ‘actions’, how social actors choose to behave. In terms of Bourdieu’s (1977) habitus theory, mediated means can be translated into the strategic deployment of dispositions. It is apparent in the choice of expressions like ‘hierarchy’, and also in the relational aspect where employees mention ‘expectation of feedback’, ‘work-life-balance’, ‘friendly atmosphere’. Maybe not concrete signs of Danish culture, but when the follow-up question “*would you describe the work culture at the company as particular Danish or Hungarian?*” is asked, employees describe the workplace with features they characterize as somewhat Danish, and also explicitly by labeling the workplace as Danish:

“I think it is seventy percent Danish thirty Hungarian, so more Danish [...] this was much more laid back, and ehm, like I said more friendlier and more casual atmosphere, ehm, so that was very not Hungarian cause you cannot, you could feel that there was no tension in people coming to work.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 113).

“I definitely can say this is ehm, this is a workplace where there is possibility of everyone walking to everyone. I wouldn’t say the hierarchy is on the surface very strong, maybe in decision making it ehm, of course there is a hierarchy but on the surface level you can really feel like you can go to the highest boss and just send them a mail, and ehm, which at my previous workplace for example, you never would to that, like why would you ever contact

your manager's manager. But here it somehow, you also have a bit of personal relation, but also completely natural to ask questions" (László, Appendix III p. 93).

About having a more informal communication chain is something also mentioned by Preben, but it is done in relation to how a Hungarian workplace would handle cross-level communication. It is often that when explaining what Danish work culture is, or how the work culture is at the company, employees resort to define it in relation to what it is not - Hungarian:

In Denmark we talk about an open door policy, in Hungary I would say more a closed door policy. You're not supposed to skip the chain of command. You can't go straight to the boss. Or to your boss's boss rather. You have to follow the chain of command all the way through." (Preben, Appendix IV p. 105).

When describing the workplace, Noémi does in contrast to what it is not - Hungarian. This is something that is encountered in other employee's answers and which is quoted further on in this section. Another employee said:

"Definitely more Danish when it comes to the social part. The flexibility, the assignments, the understanding of the people. The management, all of that. But still some Hungarian aspects." (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 82).

When asked what these Hungarian aspects were, Ingrid replied:

"when you work in some areas you have a lot of flexibility, but when you work in other areas, maybe where more Hungarians are involved in the process, there will be less flexibility" (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 83).

To Ingrid, when working with more Hungarians the assignments or work becomes less flexible, implicit that Danish work culture is more flexible, also since Ingrid later states that the 'Danish way' is more flexible. Though she is also reflective about why she has this opinion:

"I would definitely favor Danish work ehm culture more, but maybe I'm from Denmark it's not necessarily true. Okay but from my understanding its a bit, it's more flexible." (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 83).

When describing the practice and social structure within the company, employees somewhat draws on the same narrative. In continuation regarding the definition of the work culture in contrast to what it is not, as often mentioned by employees, László saw some difficulties with the definition ‘Danish work culture’ when asked if he would describe the work culture at the company as Danish or Hungarian:

“The issue is I haven’t, I never really worked in at an explicitly and completely Hungarian company or at an explicitly and completely Danish company. [...] People are always talking about how a Hungarian workplace would be, but I would say that it’s rather, usually. It’s usually not a positive workplace, Hungarian workplace, even among Hungarians. If you say Hungarian that means it’s kind of hierarchy, it’s back, it’s a lot of conflict, it’s a lot of nonsense, and it’s a lot of bullshit, ehm. And very conservative in a sense.” (László, Appendix III p. 93).

Though what László describes as a Hungarian workplace is, according to himself, what he has heard from others, the description matches the adjectives applied by other employees regarding Hungarian workplace culture. Also, László mentioned, that he has work in an international company but still with Hungarian leadership, so he must have come to know Hungarian work culture aspects:

“coming from an American based but Hungarian lead huge company with twelve hundred employees” (László, Appendix III p. 93).

In extension of the previous statement, László reflects on how a Danish workplace is perceived by presumably his Hungarian and other non-Danish acquaintances:

“on the other hand for Hungarians, or also at least I feel somehow, in an international community, a Danish workplace is like heaven on earth haha. And it’s amazing, and it’s good, and there’s no formal. not much formal contact because it’s not hierarchic. You can work together; and it’s with anyone you like, you’re flexible, you have freedom. [...] a lot less bullshit, and it’s very pragmatic and looking forward” (László, Appendix III p. 93).

According to László, there exists a somewhat stereotypical, or banal, depiction of how a Danish workplace is, ‘heaven on earth’. Thought said while laughing, it indicates that amongst some non-Danes the remembering and forgetting of national traits thrives - there seem to be no downside to working in a Danish workplace. László reflects on his answer and continues with his thoughts on work culture at the company:

“So this is like how I define like, or how I see Hungarian workplace, what Hungarian workplace or Danish workplace is called, in this sense I definitely feel this would be a more Danish workplace ehm. Also from the, the Hungarian colleagues’ side. I feel it’s pretty pragmatic and ehm, and how should I say. Also honor and respect which are part of the Hungarian work culture, is like less important as I feel it than any other of the places I [worked] in Hungary.” (László, Appendix III p. 93).

Also, László makes an interesting observation comparing his colleagues and the workplace to what he otherwise have been used to:

“I don’t see that some people, because they want to defend your honor, would admit making mistakes or giving up on decision, or something like that, Yes so in this I would categorize is as a Danish workplace, but there is some issue with this categorization” (László, Appendix III p. 94).

The Danish and Hungarian employees also tried to describe how they perceived differences of their national counterpart’s working culture in relation to their own. Interestingly there seem to be a discrepancy in how they view each other applying some traits to each other that are somewhat similar. Danish Ingrid says:

“Hungarians as like as an individual, their mentality I think [...] they would more often say no to something before they start doing the assignment. [...] I experience more with the Danish people that they will be much more open minded and think, how can we try to solve this instead of saying ‘no that’s not an option’.” (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 83).

Later on the interview Ingrid talks about being solution oriented, and expresses that she might be more solution oriented than others, and it is not necessarily a Danish personal trait. It falls in line with the perception of Danish work culture being more flexible and pragmatic, as both Danish and Hungarian employees have mentioned. Even though she admits that some Danes can be less solution oriented too, Ingrid on the other hand sees more often the opposite being true for Hungarians, saying:

“I think that I see it more often for the Hungarians. [...] I still feel that maybe more the pessimism in the [Hungarian] culture in general. And I think in Denmark I see more the optimistic things. So if you take ten people from Hungary, ten people from Denmark you will, I think you will find more optimistic people in the ten people from Denmark and more pessimistic people from in the group from Hungary. (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 88).

Ingrid might experience the same as Preben. As quoted earlier, Preben says that there is a 'closed door policy' in Hungary, and a chain of command that needs to be respected. This might be what Ingrid had encountered when working with her Hungarian colleagues. Though an interesting statement about how Danish work was given from Hungarian László:

"I would say Danish employees are a lot more cautious about somehow borders, borders of their position, borders of their responsibilities, what they can do, what they are allowed to do. While I think it's a bit more chaotic with Hungarians, who are less aware of these borders, I would say that you can give a pretty much random task to a Hungarian employee. A Danish employee might say 'this is not my job', a Hungarian probably wouldn't." (László, Appendix III p. 94).

Employees, regardless of nationality, consider MD-Recruitment/DentalService as having a work culture which they perceive as being Danish (flexible, weak hierarchy, open minded, pragmatic, and maybe more solution oriented). In contrast they all have similar thoughts on Hungarian work culture, and they largely describe Danish work culture in contrast to how Hungarian work culture is (conservative, strong hierarchy, formal, honor and respect). What the employees are describing when defining Danish and Hungarian work culture is the *nexus of practices* that creates differences.

The Danish employees agree that the company has successfully applied Danish work culture in the organization, and the Hungarian employees have noticed how the work culture is different to what they have previously experienced. A nexus of practices is an accumulation of actions, actions that have multiple sources. Different historical sources have shaped the actions within Danish or Hungarian work culture, and in a way that employees consider Hungarian work culture slightly old fashioned when comparing the two. There is a somewhat rejection of what they consider as Hungarian work culture characteristics, largely considering them conservative, and not very progressive.

7.1.2 Objects & Meanings

This second section looks into the relationship employees have to the objects displayed at the office, what the objects means to them, and how they interact with them. Does the objects mediate the *national identity* that employees experience at the workplace? So far all employees interviewed acknowledge that MD-Recruitment/DentalService differ from other companies in Hungary they are familiar with, and they perceive the work culture at the company as somewhat Danish. Hungarian employees, and also Preben stress the difference in the work culture at the company in relation to how it does not resemble Hungarian work culture. In general Danish employees recognize the company having a Danish work culture based on their disposition to know what Danish work culture is, and Hungarian employees recognize it by noticing differences in what they have been used to in Hungary. But mainly all employees agree on the adjectives of the work culture of the company (e.g. flexibility, flat hierarchy, open minded).

In this section thoughts on the objects displayed at the offices are presented and also how they interact with the objects. During the interviews, the employees were shown pictures (see Appendix VI) of the object, the objects with Danish national identity symbolic value. Employees are all familiar with the objects as they are present all over the offices, though they might not have applied much conscious meaning to them, but when asked to respond to “*What do you think about the objects on display at the company’s office in Budapest?*” they showed familiarity with the objects and their possible purpose:

“I think they are, well for one they’re nice decoration, so they definitely elevates the atmosphere at the office, ehm, and it’s a great conversation starter; like when a Hungarian drops in at the office, they can start like ‘what is that’ and they find out about Danish culture a little, and that’s very important when working at a Danish workplace.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 117).

“I think it’s a really fun way to display the Danish culture, I think it is for who lives abroad [Danish employees] and come to work at the company they feel very welcome [...] there is a Danish spot where you can be with Danes and you can have yourself a little bit of the culture. And also in the experience something that I didn’t even know or wasn’t grateful for about Denmark. But because I see how Hungarians play with the Lego and they like to have

competitions with the Lego and also the candidates from all around Europe. So they show me how much they appreciate the Danish culture as well.” (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 84).

Noémi and Ingrid point out the interactive aspect of the objects, serving as a conversation starter and also reminders of Danish culture to those you already know about it, or as a catalyst for getting to know about it. Employees acknowledge the objects for flagging banal nationalism, they see the objects have symbolic value. For Preben and László the objects underline their previous statements about how the company has a Danish work culture, but it also makes sense to them in the light that the office spaces have also served for teaching. As mentioned the MD-Recruitment part of the company is recruiting medical staff from around the European Union to work in Denmark.

Before the 2020 pandemic recruited candidates and their respective families were housed in Budapest and taught Danish language and culture by the company. Unaware prior to writing this thesis, candidates were schooled at the company’s offices where employees are also working today. National identity is a continuous remembering and forgetting of national characteristics and history, and the objects are mediates this action.

“for me of course it makes perfect sense. [...] so at least for the recruitment section of the company, it might also have helped them, ehm, kind of understand or at least notice some of what they are working for or working at on behalf of doctors or whoever they might be recruiting. So I think they are quite nice. So of course they also influence people on a daily basis in some way. Honestly I had forgotten all about them haha. [...] they are quite uniquely Danish. The Kaj Bojesen monkey and the Lego. Things that are quite special for Denmark and very well known.” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 106).

“I think this just, it states even stronger, as I was talking [about] before, it’s not another workplace which is, this is a workplace which tries to be Danish, [...] it should look Danish. [...] These posters were chosen not only because the workplace wants to be Danish, but it’s also a workplace which was meant to integrate people into Denmark, or just get them some understanding of Denmark. Like it makes sense to see a map of Denmark, it makes sense to see some funny Danish quotes. Or some rare Danish Words. Danish design. (László, Appendix III p. 95).

They both agree that the objects are an influencing factor when learning about Danish culture, and that the cultural depictions of Denmark have a positive element to it:

“I like all of the posters that are there. [...] and also they are very important for the candidates, because they can also like, see just a lot of Danish stuff all around them and I think that’s nice, it’s colorful, it’s happy, it’s ehm culturally appropriate. It’s nice” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 117).

“it would be hard not to think about Denmark when you’re surrounded by these objects, and of course Danish people.”. (Noémi, Appendix V p. 118).



Picture 1 and Picture 2, posters showcasing Denmark (Appendix VI).

Clearly the objects are meant to have an influence on people being in their presence. Employees recognize the symbolic value of the objects when they say that ‘it makes sense’ to have the objects displayed. Whether the symbolic meanings are understood the same by both Danish and Hungarian employees is to be examined further on. But identifying objects as ‘culturally appropriate’ suggests the objects are portraying national identity with its inherent *remembering and forgetting*, depicting Denmark in a positive-only perspective.

It is also perceived as such by these employees, and it is interesting that employees are influenced by the national flagging, supporting Billig's (2002) writing and the conclusion of the pilot study (Kaas, 2021), that flagging influences. Initially the objects were meant to have an effect on recruited candidates, and employees confirm the objects do have an influence on people when asked:

“Absolutely. [...] when I was at the company for the very first time I noticed all of these small things. And I still remember the joy I was filled with” (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 84).

“I think at least if you see something, like the Kaj Bojesen monkey for instance, or the Lego. You will stop up and take a look at it. Maybe you will question it, or question ehm, or ask what are this who does it belong to, and in that way get a better sense of Danish culture. (Preben, Appendix IV p.107).

“Yeah and be curious about Danish culture because you look at one of those posters and you’re like ‘what is that cow saying’, or ‘why is there a cow and a quote on that picture’ or ‘why is there a horse and a quote on that picture’. And then you find out that it is like sayings ehm, that has a cow or horse in them in Danish and then you learn it and then it’s a fun fact to know.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 117).



Picture 16 and Picture 17, poster displaying Danish idioms (Appendix VI).

Danish employees seem to respond positively to the objects, acknowledging them as *reminders* of Danish culture, reinforcing their dispositions on Danish culture, whereas Hungarian employees see the reminders as an incentive to learn. Something that is evident in the following quotes, the habitus of Danish employees allows them to retain a different relationship to the objects compared to their Hungarian colleagues. To Danish employees, the objects are reminders of their national identity. To Hungarian employees, the objects serve as reminders to learn about Danish national identity.

The dispositions to understand the symbolic value of the objects is also something that at least the Danish employees are aware of, with Preben mentioning the Kaj Bojesen monkey, an objects that Ingrid is also mentioning, and an objects that outside of Denmark may not be

of any particular value, but to Danes it can be recognized as an example or symbol of Danish design. The monkey is an example of national flagging, and Ingrid is aware that this flag is only understood through a habitus possessing the disposition to understand the significance of the monkey:

“Maybe the Kaj Bojesen Monkey monkey doesn’t mean anything for Hungarians. [...] it doesn’t even mean anything for me, only I see a lot of people owning that monkey so that’s how I know okay that’s a famous monkey. So yeah. Oh can I just add that it’s just an understanding I can only have as Danish, which a Hungarian can not understand unless they ask us.” (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 85).



Picture 3, shelf with Kaj Bojesen Monkey. Picture 4, shelf with books (Appendix VI).

Besides the Kaj Bojesen monkey are books on Denmark and Danish culture: *The Year of living Danishly*, *Danmark Dejligst* (Loveliest Denmark), *Norden For Nybegyndere* (The Nordics of Beginners), *Dansk Uden Tårer* (Danish Without Tears), and *How To Be Danish*.

About interacting with the objects, László notes that some objects might not have a direct effect on his fellow Hungarian colleagues, as they need some form of utility. The map of Denmark hanging on the wall (see Appendix VI picture X) becomes an incentive for employees to incorporate Denmark into their conversion. This is also the case with another object, a poster with old Danish words which hangs in the lunch and meeting room at the company. Again an object that stimulates employees to discuss a Danish culture related topic:

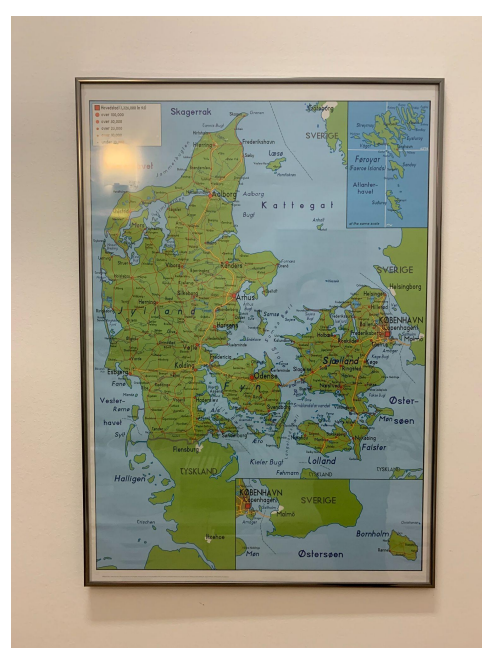
“I’m pretty sure not for Hungarian colleagues in, in general have no interaction with that [poster mentioned by him earlier]. The map [of Denmark] is fantastic, I love it. That one which we really interact with. I love to show my Hungarian colleagues where the clinics are where we are working with.” (László, Appendix III p. 96).

Even though some objects do not initiate immediate interaction, maybe less from Hungarians, they are present, they are flagging Danish national identity, influencing the conversions where Hungarians are present. When asked ‘how are the objects being treated by employees? do they notice them, do they interact with the objects?’ employees pointed to the poster containing old Danish words. The poster is especially interacted with by Danish employees:

“Yes definitely, the Danish employees haha. Like the rare Danish words [poster] come up almost every second lunch break, or at every party some Danes are going to sit there a figure out what these words are.” (László, Appendix III p. 96).

“About the pictures I remember, not much the words the poster with all the old Danish words that are dying.” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 107).

“I sometimes interact with them for example the map of Denmark. Or in the lunch break we will sometimes walk about the words (See Appendix VI, picture X), on the pictures you showed me from the lunch room. So. It's not like I think ‘there is a picture put there so I have to deal with it every day’, but like it’s there so I see it and my mind is seeing it.” (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 85).



Picture 12, old Danish words. Picture 8, map of Denmark (Appendix VI).

One object in particular seems to have been more interactive than others. Lego of course is meant to be an interactive toy, and Lego is a brand many Danes and non-Danes easily recognize as a Danish brand. Because of this Danish brand value, a Danish national flag, the Lego has been put up at the entrance hall of MD-Recruitment/DentalService, with the intended effect of employees and guest easily linking the Lego bricks and the company to Denmark (though they have been removed because of the 2020 pandemic for health reasons). The lego bricks have also had a socializing function at the workplace. Somehow competitions have evolved amongst employees, and true to the Danish work culture characteristics, all employees regardless of employment level have participated in the events.

“So they [the objects] are also kinda marketing materials, hey we are a Danish company, look at all the Danish culture on the wall. ehm. and ehm, the Lego for instans, we had before covid weekly lego challenges. that you had to build something and then, you know, whenever you had free time you could like build an animal or something and then you would win some chocolate.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 121).

“Before covid we had a daily, sorry, weekly Lego competition. [...] that was very interactive and it was also highly used actually. People really enjoyed that part.” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 107).

“it was everyone. yeah. [...] the managing director was ehm, usually won too, he was very good haha.” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 108).



Picture 14, Lego building station in the lobby. Picture 18, stored Lego (Appendix VI).

The Lego building competitions in some form embodies the flat hierarchy the employees have mentioned. In general, objects displaying Danish national identity motivates employees to either interact with the objects or mediate conversations to include Danish national identity. Employees already, when asked, acknowledge how the objects influence them to interact and talk, and even see the objects original purpose to influence candidates who used to be taught about Danish language and culture, with the side effect that the company now also 'looks' Danish. Employees recognize the objects as Danish flagging stating the 'Danishness' of the company in visual form, which is also manifested in the work culture. In general, MD-Recruitment/DentalService is a workplace which, by its employees, are considered to have a Danish work culture, and the objects visually present at its offices in Budapest are loaded with Danish symbolism, something the employees have not failed to miss. In a practical manner the objects stimulate employees to embody the work culture, seeking information about Danish culture, and engaging in cross-level communication in both regard to employment level and nationality.

7.1.3 Adaptation to Organizational Culture

The third section focuses on how employees interpret flagging and national identity at the workplace, and what they think about adapting to the work culture's national identity aspect, if they do at all. In other words, how do they utilize the knowledge they have about the work culture and its national bias, how do they deploy their dispositions. In general employees at MD-Recruitment/DentalService agree that the work culture at the company is somewhat Danish, and that the objects displayed at the office portray Danish culture and have an influence on people in the offices. But it is evident that there also exist different dispositions to decipher the meanings of the objects when employees are asked if they see advantages or disadvantages of being Danish or not in the company. Part of the concept of national flagging of banal nationalism is that people collectively remember and forget simultaneously, that the positive attributes of the nation are glorified, and the lesser attractive part of a nation's characteristics or history is left out of the identity story, the banality of nationalism. This banality of the flagging of Danish national identity at the company is not totally unnoticed. When reflecting on the objects, Noémi says:

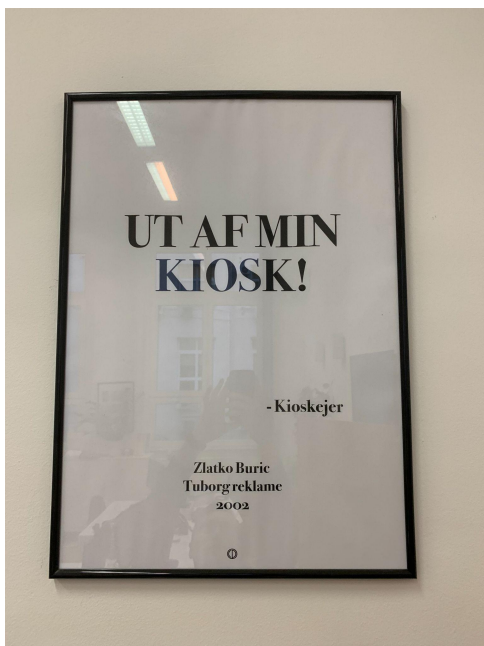
“I think learning their stories, the posters’ stories is really just it makes them, makes all of us employees appreciate them more because we know the meaning behind it” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 118).

Appreciating having knowledge about the meanings of the objects could be a sign of adaptation, seeking to gain disposition to understand the environment at the workplace. In a follow-up question she was asked whether she knew anything about Danish culture before being employed at the company, and she replied with highlighting some interesting aspects that hints to her being aware of the collective Danish remembering and forgetting:

“Not really just the typical Scandinavian stereotypes you know. Like ehm, happiest country in the world. Everything is perfect there. Everything is working very well hehe. But it’s often dark and rainy and cold and, people are on antidepressants. You know, just the typical stuff.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 118).

Noémi is pointing to some aspects of Denmark that are both positive, negative, and at the same time maybe exaggerated. Of course, given the different habitus possessed by Hungarian employees compared to their Danish counterparts, they only know about Danish culture from what they can learn from the sources they are able to access.

“maybe my Hungarian colleagues will not always understand why we do things like this in Denmark, like how we know, how we feel for Denmark” (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 87).



Picture 6 and Picture 7, quotes with Danish cultural reference (Appendix VI).

László was keen to mention specific objects in the office, and he was asked about a certain poster with a quote probably known to many Danes. The quote is ‘hut-li-hut!’ uttered by football commentator Flemming Toft during the 1992 European football championship final, where Denmark won against Germany. Prior seeing this poster, László did not have an idea of the importance of this event, and he has done some research on it which has made him reflect on the nature of Danes:

“I was looking it up, then I was also telling it to, to my other colleagues. [...] wonder of Denmark when they suddenly won it and then it was like hut-li-hut like, hop, which is a bit strange so say, as like. It’s like saying we don’t completely have control of our things, but everything turns out to be great. So I think its a bit Ironical on a company’s wall [...] it sounds like you also like riding on luck and like, oh in the end everything turns out whop up, okay we it turned out great” (László, Appendix III p. 96).

László has reacted to the flags and actively sought to learn what these reminders mean in an effort to adapt. When asked if he would characterize that as particularly Danish, László answered:

“I think that is Danish characteristic as that you are very cautious and aware of your limitations and borders and so on. I also have this feeling of Danish mentality which can be described as ‘vi tager det stille og roligt’. ‘Vi tager det som det kommer’. [...] I feel it’s a bit Danish that sometimes just be brave enough to slip a bit of control of things, which you probably prepared for and then in the end you try to figure it out and it works, but you slip a bit of control maybe.” (László, Appendix III p. 97).

The employees were asked whether they thought there were any advantages of being Danish or at least knowing about Danish culture in order to fit into the workplace. Being surrounded by Danish imagery and objects could indicate that some prior knowledge or the ability to adopt knowledge about Denmark were imperative. Whether it is beneficial to be Danish in the company, the Danish employees see it both ways. As they see it, it is in some capacity helpful to be Danish, but it is mostly related to the professional roles rather than social context:

“Because we are working with Danish people it is an advantage, but there is definitely a lot of roles at the company, that can still be handles without being Danish.” (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 87).

“[...] you know, the business lines are divided. And the different sections of the company are separated, so the recruitment part was mostly, or solely maintained by Hungarians. And the organization, selling and [the] external part was solely done by Danish speakers.” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 110).

So professionally the roles are divided into Danish-speakers and Hungarian-speakers. What does this do with the organizational cohesion at the workplace? Preben seem to have noticed that there does exist a lack of inclusion from the Danes:

“[...] they were a part of the company, but I also note that it was mentioned several times at the management meetings that we need to speak more English to make sure that we include them more. Because if we switch to Danish they can't be part of the conversation.” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 110).

Noémi notes that when she is working together with Hungarians in a Hungarian-only team, they do resort to a more Hungarian way of working, though still influenced by what she perceives as a Danish characteristic:

“You know when you have three Hungarians talking we are gonna be very Hungarian even at a Danish workplace. [...] but we do this discuss everything and that's very more Danish than Hungarian, so if anybody has a problem they need to bring storm about or something then, we going to discussion mode and everybody helps each other and. Yeah it's much more Danish I would say.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 119).

Inclusion in any organization can be considered only as a benefit, otherwise diversity management in multi-cultural organizations wouldn't be prioritized. Preben also notices a difference in socialization at the workplace, where he observed the adherence to hierarchy among Hungarians which employees interviewed have mentioned:

“I think there is a lot, much higher level of paranoia haha amongst the Hungarian colleagues. [...] if they are chatting in front of the coffee machine or something like this, and a person from management or something walk by, then I have noticed that they will very quickly wrap it up and go back to work. Whereas, with Danish colleagues if a manager comes and you're standing at the coffee machine talking, that manager will join you if you talk.” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 112).

Interestingly Noémi also mentions the social interaction going on in this context, also referring to Danes and Hungarians doing this, though without referring to breaking it up because of management:

“[...] when people just, you know, wanna catch a break, they come up to, and they just stop in the kitchen for ten minutes, and have a nice talk I think that's both ehm, very typical in Hungary and ehm, in Denmark or at least at the company it was very typical of both Danish colleagues and Hungarian colleagues.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 115).

It might have to do with Noémi not noticing if she, a Hungarian, leaves earlier than Danes do if a superior walks in, but she might also be more prone to adapt. When asked whether she sees Hungarian work culture characteristics in her Hungarian coworkers, she replies that she does not, and explains that a certain type of people are hired at the workplace. This might be true, but the Danish employees have noticed a difference in the work culture embodied by their Hungarian counterparts.

“I think that everyone that came to work here was hired because they were open minded. And they very quickly pick up the pace. When they realize this is not a typical Hungarian workplace, they are much more open to Danish work culture. And all of us just kinda pick it up, and lean more to that method, or that.” (Noémi, Appendix V p. 116).

An employee's ability to adapt seems like a necessary trait in order to fit into the workplace. Though the company might opt for hiring open minded people, adapting to the cultural differences can still be difficult for some. László recalls when a Hungarian student worker was hired, and it was difficult for that employee to navigate in the Danish work culture:

“I would say for her it was particularly hard to somehow adapt to the working culture, which was made easier by change in her; her leader, which I became and our Danish leader was leaving. So we established like Hungarian office where she, by an instance, opened up more, and was not afraid anymore. [...] I don't think she did comprehend all the things which happened around her, and I don't think she thrived that well” (László, Appendix III p. 99).

So here is an example of a particular employee who struggled to fit into the work culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService, which the employees have described as flexible, non-hierarchical, open minded. Thus one would think these characteristics would allow for an employee to thrive, as it has for some according to Noémi, not all Hungarians adapt that well to the Danish work culture. Of course there can be many factors involved, e.g. did Noémi

describe how previous Hungarian workplaces of hers did not suit her, not able to conform to the more hierarchical work culture of Hungarian workplaces, and she has therefore been more prone to adapt into the Danish work culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. Exactly that was what the student worker had been struggling with:

“definitely something she is struggling with might be somehow the. Ehm. This Danish way of saying ‘frihed under ansvar’. Like, freedom in case of, under responsibility, or freedom and responsibility. [...] I don’t think this is ever part of Hungarian work places until the point where you get into management. [...] It’s usually very clear ‘you do this and then this happens’. She gained a lot of freedom, even though this is still an entry level position” (László, Appendix III p. 99).

Danish employees might be unaware of how big of an effect working in a Danish environment can have on non-Danes, maybe because they view their Danish way of working as more natural, and also the obvious way of working.

“I don’t think Danish work culture comes as a culture shock to our Hungarian peers. So I don’t think necessarily that as to be introduced to them” (Preben, Appendix IV p. 109).

It somewhat comes back to the habitus inherent in us all, and whether we are able to apply the dispositions available to us. As Noémi explained in a quote earlier, new employees are curious about the objects and then engage in learning about the culture, and also start seeing the benefits of the work culture at the workplace. Lucky for the student worker, she now has a Hungarian leader in her team instead of a Dane, which apparently has made her relax more. Though it is only speculative, learning more about the ‘Danish’ work culture in the company and adapting to it must be crucial for her future well-being in the company. László was asked whether Hungarian employees needed to adapt to Danish way of working, to which he replied:

“Yes, definitely, which they can profit of sometimes, but I also see that it sometimes can be, can be tough on them. It’s a different culture.” (László, Appendix III p. 98).

So there seems to be a difference in perception of how well Hungarians integrate into the work culture at the company. On one side the Danes consider their way of working natural, and that Hungarians largely can fit well in, despite occasional ‘paranoia’ of hierarchical retribution’. Hungarian employees see the benefit of acquiring knowledge about Danish work culture, beneficial because it equips them to navigate the organization - though they do recognize that it can be difficult and requires the right mindset. The Hungarian employees have experienced some components of the work culture which they consider too strange or impractical. So far this thesis, and particularly the analysis chapter, has not avoided introducing longer quotes to support the reader’s comprehension of the thesis’ intention. The following quotes are not an exception and are excerpts from the transcriptions with the interviews’ comments also. Noémi and László elaborates on some observations they made and they give a humorous look into their thoughts on their workplace and Danish colleagues.

“I had a talk with ehm, with the daily manager [Hungarian], ehm. we were talking a bit about greeting culture, socializing culture. it's very strange in a sense how, how Danes are doing less body contact in general, or when they are doing it they are doing it a lot more than Hungarians. In a Hungarian workplace it's normal [...] really I did this at all my previous workplaces. You come into your workplace and you shake hands with everyone. You go to everyone and you shake hands with them. Sorry only men with men, So like of course you don't shake hands with women because that's not part of Hungarian culture, and handshaking with women is not really, really a thing. But you shake hands with all the men, and greet everyone.

When you are new, or is it everyday?

Every day you come into the office. It's like ‘hey colleague’ and you shake hands. And this is something which we don't do [at MD-Recruitment/DentalService]. And this is probably don't do it because this is not Danish. And I just thought that was like ‘wauw this is not happening, this is so strange’. But then again when you sometimes meet colleagues and you have the Danish way of greeting each other with giving a hug Like a handshake, like no handshake for Hungarians that's, that's, that's strange. But like getting a hug that's too much [...] which is completely strange for the Hungarians. Ehm yes so this definitely feels a bit cold, not giving a handshake and not feeling the other's hand. That means a lot to Hungarians. Definitely. And now when I talked with

the daily manager about this, I realized 'wauw really, I haven't done this in a year'. And somehow I am missing it. It builds up a kind of trust. "

(László, Appendix III p. 102-103).

Though without the proper source to back it up, it could be claimed that greeting coworkers at the workplace every morning by shaking hands is not a usual gesture at Danish workplaces. What for Danes could probably feel a bit alienating, distributing handshakes among coworkers every day you enter the workplace, for László it signals trust and builds social bonds to coworkers. In general Danish culture and values seem to dominate how people interact at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. When deliberately asked 'do you think the company actively seeks to integrate both Hungarian and Danish work culture' the employees replied:

"I don't think so" (Preben, Appendix IV p. 105).

"I think more Danish than Hungarian" (Noémi, Appendix V p. 115).

"I don't think Hungarian work culture is embraced really much, as far as I see. I don't think there is an interest in that" (László, Appendix III p. 94).

As mentioned a bit earlier, Noémi as well had some thoughts on observations she made, or experiences she has had working in the company. Although broadly accepting and embracing the Danish work culture at the office, not everything is so easy for her to adapt to, in this case the culture surrounding meetings:

"Some people sometimes complain that there is too many meetings.

Yeah?

And they are long. you know the meetings that could fit in an email. That would be more time efficient. [...]

You perceive that as a Danish work culture phenomenon?

No I think it's omnipresent but, for some reason I think just Danish work culture has more and longer meetings haha. We just. I haven't had a meeting in a while now but it used to be like, no I think it's still weekly, daily, you know, it's just way too many way too often way too long.

Was there some things at the company that you thought were difficult to work with, for example meetings? You mentioned that could be a bit frustrating maybe?

Yeah but if we didn't have time for it, or we don't have time for a long one we can always, like, discuss the agenda and see if we can make it shorter and try to be more concise when we are actually talking. It's not like an impossible problem. But it is a bit too much sometimes."

(Noémi, Appendix V p. 120-121).

Noémi has in other statements during the interview, and also quoted earlier, cherished the Danish 'way of working', the flat hierarchy and also the expectation of feedback. The meeting culture she struggles to come to terms with might be a product of Danish management's effort to implement these structures, where the meeting facilitates an open doors policy and access for employees and management to discuss assignments. She does mention that the agenda can be up for debate, an indication of the expectation of, and welcoming, of feedback. Ingrid reflects on her thoughts before getting a new daily manager, who is Hungarian. Prior to the change she would have had perhaps ungrounded negative opinions on Hungarian management, but after the change she has shifted to having a more positive view.

"If you asked me some months ago I would say yes, because I didn't work with so many Hungarian colleagues, but now I have them really close to me. And I think that the company the structure is so flat. [...] the daily manager had some questions, but he is asking questions not giving orders, so I think it is very very flexible. [...] I would say it also depends on the experience. Because for example. Our daily manager has worked in that environment and is accustomed to it" (Ingrid, Appendix II p. 89).

The two excerpts from the interviews with László and Noémi, respectively, demonstrates the relationship Hungarian employees have to the work culture at their workplace. They are equipped with a different habitus already because they are born in Hungary, not in Denmark, and are socialized into Hungarian norms. Some people are better at adapting, this is because they have acquired dispositions to their habitus which allows them to better navigate a different environment better than others, strategically deploying these dispositions. Hungarian employees are faced with the Danish norms and adaptation to these norms are required, because they can not change them, and the company does not make an effort to

incorporate Hungarian norms other than when Hungarians themselves are working together in a team. The ‘paranoia’ mentioned by Preben might be an example of the clash that happens when his Hungarian coworkers react to what he perceives as totally normal work culture, but what they in turn perceive otherwise and can struggle adapting to.



Picture 20, birthday celebration in the lunchroom. Picture 19, celebrating employee birthday. Hungarians normally do not use their national flag for birthday celebrations, in this case it is waved along with the Danish flag. Notice the poster to the right of the whiteboard. (Appendix VI).

8. Discussion

It was speculated in the pilot study (Kaas, 2021) that MD-Recruitment/DentalService had an organizational culture with a bias toward Danish culture based on the visual look of the offices. Some of the objects on display all around the company's Budapest offices had a stereotypical portrayal of Danish culture, and some had specific cultural references or symbolic meanings which required knowledge about Danish cultural phenomena to understand. It was also speculated that objects were either intentionally put up as an effect of the organizational culture, or to impose the 'right, Danish' sentiment into the organizational culture. These speculations together with the conclusion that national flagging did occur at MD-Recruitment/DentalService brought forth the problem formulation "*What factor do objects have in facilitating employee perception of the organizational culture at their workplace and their capacity to adapt to the organizational culture?*" to research what role the objects could have in the perceived organizational culture, as experienced by the employees. One deciding factor in the approach to this question was that the objects mediated a discourse, that of Danish national identity, a factor since there are two nationalities represented at the company.

Employees have been interviewed and confirmed national identity plays a role in the organizational culture, and confirmed that objects mediating national identity were put up intentionally to have an influence. But how significant is the influencing role of objects, and wouldn't the organizational culture be perceived having a national identity bias without the presence of the objects? This chapter discusses the findings from three facets; how to observe employees as members of groups within the company, how group members are influenced by objects, and which actions group members take to adapt to organizational culture circumstances.

8.1 Culture & Groups

As mentioned in section 2.2.1 in the literary review, there's many suggestions to the definitions of culture, but broadly speaking culture is a compilation of norms, values, beliefs and other learned behaviors, put into a system utilized by a group to make sense of and construct social reality. What constitutes an organization is debatable as what constitutes

culture, maybe because the two concepts are related, because for an organization to be, there must be a culture within it. Hence, the stance of the thesis is, also as earlier mentioned, that organisation *is* culture. Organizations consist of systems, more or less formalized by its members. Groups are not concrete sizes and vary a lot and depend on context. A group can for example be a handful of friends that have constructed traditions and rituals over time, history and identities, ultimately making up what Scollon (2001) defines as practice and social structure.

A group can also be a sports club where several members share an interest in the same sport, where some of these members can be friends outside of the club. A group can also be hundreds of employees at a workplace, some are maybe friends outside of work hours, and some are maybe attending the same sports club. Each group has a culture and some form of *consensus on the boundaries* of its practices and social structures. Consensus is not a conscious product but rather the norm of action, and it is in other words the nexus of practice which Scollon (2001) defines as the categorical producer of action. Groups and organization are made up of a nexus of practice, which is a culmination of norms, values, history, affordances and constraints. The idea of a national identity described by Billig (2002) is itself a nexus of practice producing action.

This is to illustrate that groups vary in sizes and are fluid in the sense that group members can be members in other groups criss-crossing organizations and contexts. Now, with the expression ‘consensus on boundaries of culture’ it does not mean that one culture is a concrete system, rather that a culture is dictated by its system, and group members are in a constant negotiation about the system, reaching consensus continuously.

Groups are also prominently, though not explicitly, used in this thesis, but are not very well defined. The thesis has concerned itself with mainly three groups, the Danish employees, the Hungarian employees, and employees as a whole. Each group possess practices and social structures, both inside and outside of MD-recruitment/DentalService, and each group member is part of different groups with different cultures inside and outside the workplace. On the larger scale, Danish employees are members of the ‘Denmark group’, meaning their national community, and the Hungarians employees are members of the ‘Hungary group’. The norms and values members of these groups have been socialized into, the habitus of so to speak, is something they bring with them to the workplace as social actors who navigate the organizational life there. The interviews confirm speculations on the company’s national

culture bias within its organizational culture, and it is very obvious that Danish organizational culture is allowed to dominate. Why has it come to be like this? Why is Danish organizational culture all permitted to govern the workplace and employees? First of all, there is a problem with the definition 'Danish organizational culture', because what does that even mean? Researching several Danish organizations in Denmark one would find that each organization has its own practices and social structure. Based on the previously explained culture of groups this is evident, as these organizations consist of members themselves part of other groups with other cultures. Each Danish organization will apply a different consensus about its culture. So what makes them Danish, other than these hypothetical organizations are located in Denmark?

When the employees at MD-Recruitment/DentalService described Danish this and Danish that, they are referring to certain characteristics which they perceive are typical of the group generally considered 'Danes'. Researching several organizations in Denmark one would undeniably come across some generalizable characteristics, some intangible norms and values which could apply to all. In the case of the employees at MD-Recruitment/DentalService among these characteristics are flexible, open minded, flat hierarchy, pragmatic. These characteristics are the norms and values within the system they experience as part of the organizational culture at a workplace which brands itself on its Danishness, initially to its recruited candidates and then to its employees, hence this is why they perceive it as Danish. Especially for the Hungarian employees who are met with an organizational culture more different than what they have experienced at Hungarian workplaces, evident from the different dispositions available to them when navigating the field, or site of engagement, that is the company. The deployment of dispositions are more closely discussed in the third part of this chapter.

Employees are very focused on contrast when describing organizational culture, especially Hungarian employees who have experiences with other organizations. But because it is different from Hungarian organization and it is a Danish company, is the organizational culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService then by default? Does it mean there can exist no strong hierarchy in other Danish organizations located elsewhere, for example in Denmark, if that is a Danish organizational culture characteristic? Probably not. The level of hierarchy varies from organization to organization, also in Danish ones. One could question whether a Hungarian would always perceive Danish organizations as having weak hierarchies because of being socialized into a Hungarian organization culture, even if said organization has a, in

Danish standards, strong hierarchy? It is beyond the limits of this thesis to answer that question, but it is interesting to challenge the perceived organizational culture experienced by the employees, because it comes back to groups and group members, and the consensus negotiation going on within groups. Each group member possesses different habitus equipping them with different sets of dispositions to utilize, which is visible in the answers by employees.

Employees seem to have reached a consensus on how to define the organizational culture, but have they done so only through the mediated meanings of objects? Employees agree that their workplace has a flat hierarchy, is pragmatic, offers an open door and values feedback. Yet László mentions flat hierarchy does matter when decision making occurs. In Prebens opinion the company should mandate English as the sole language to combat the risk of exclusion of non-Danish speakers. So apparently Danish takes precedence over Hungarian and English, and there are signs that a chain of command takes place. An unfavorable mix for Hungarian employees if upper management, which is Danish, communicates, or decides upon, solutions in Danish.

8.2 The Role of Objects

The following text is focusing on how employees experience the mediated action embedded in the objects - the flagging of Danish national identity. First and foremost, employees confirm that objects have an influencing factor on them. The objects are perceived as a positive addition to the environment, adding a sort of 'Danishness' to the office. Ingrid refers to a 'Danish spot where you can be with Danes and you can have yourself a little bit of culture', and Noémi, who mentioned 'friendly atmosphere' as part of the culture at the company, said that the objects 'definitely elevates the atmosphere at the office'. This implies that objects are embedded with meanings and mediate that meaning to employees.

The objects have a communal role - new people show a curious interest in the objects, employees interact with the objects together. Billig (2002) writes that when constructing national identity there happens a simultaneous remembering and forgetting of national characteristics, ultimately creating a wanted image of the 'nation'. In other words, people want to view their country in a positive light, and they will construct a narrative of the nation that is positive and likable to a banal level. Employees reconstruct this narrative about

Denmark, and it is likely that this action has to do with the mediated meanings embedded in the objects.

Banality is certainly not left out of the imagery and symbolism of the objects at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. It is not mentioned in the interview with Noémi, but she has not herself been to Denmark, and when she was asked what she knew about Denmark, she admitted she knew ‘the typical Scandinavian stereotypes’. How could she know anything besides that if what is presented to her is the national identity material available at the workplace. Concerning the consensus mentioned in the previous section, the objects play a central role in how employees construct their perception of the organizational culture. This positive portrayal of Danish national identity has certainly made its way into the perception, or at least the articulation, of Danish culture and its role in MD-Recruitment/DentalService’s organizational culture. When describing organizational culture, employees promote the same banal nationalism which the objects do of Danish national identity - everything is better, especially better than what it is not, Hungarian.

On the other hand, can ‘remembering and forgetting’ be avoided when describing national cultures? When describing national culture, a large system of values and norms, can it be avoided to make generalizations and stereotypes? Probably not, but would that not at least include negative aspects? Noémi does mention what she thinks is a stereotype about Danes - the ironic phenomenon that Danes are the ‘happiest people in the world and at the same time consuming a great deal of antidepressant medicine, a somewhat metaphor for Billig’s (2002) concepts of remembering and forgetting.

Perhaps it is just in human nature to focus on the positive aspect, afterall, as Billig (2002) writes, we use our national identity to identity and position ourselves in relation to others. So naturally we choose to display the nation in a benevolent perspective, because it means to present ourselves in a positive perspective. But that would not explain why Hungarians employees apply the same perspective on Danish organizational culture as the Danes? It comes back to the influencing factor that objects have on consensus making between employees. According to Scollon (2001) *action is actually a reaction to action*. E.g. a site of engagement, in this case the offices, are filled with objects that mediates action, encouraging to action. Could the company have a Danish organizational culture without the objects? Possibly, but the employees do perceive that the company possesses a certain ‘Danishness’,

and this perception is a reaction to action brought forth because of the practices and social structures that are already relatively 'Danish'.

The most outstanding example of object interaction is the weekly Lego brick competitions held amongst employees. The Lego bricks physically enable the employee perception of Danish organizational culture, facilitating non-hierarchical communication. Hungarian employees, who are used to a hierarchical organizational structure with honor and respect, experience a social arena where they are on equal footing with Danes and management. Ingrid even connects the Lego competitions with an appreciation for Danish culture, and the competitions might be the most visible example of the organizational culture described for employees over all. According to Scollon (2001) this is what mediated action is all about. Material objects are embedded with discourse, in this case the discourse on Danish culture. Objects are then enablers of action, action that are influenced by the mediated meanings embedded in the objects, but it would not be possible for the employees to construct a reaction if it was not for the already favourable nexus of practice at the company.

Objects, not only the Lego, but also the posters and other examples, serve as reminders of national identity for the Danish employees, seeing Hungarians appreciating Danish culture when interacting with them. For Hungarian employees on the other hand, they serve as reminders of organizational culture and the importance to conform to the consensus - take part or be left out. A fact evident when Hungarian employees mention aspects of Danish organizational life which they are baffled by, like László and greeting rituals, or Noémi and meeting length. All employees state that the company makes no effort in integrating Hungarian organizational culture into its organizational culture. László also describes how a Hungarian employee has struggled adapting to the culture at the workplace, somewhat alienating her at the beginning, only halted by Hungarian László promotion to her new leader. But undoubtedly she will have to pick up the reminders flagged around the environment to learn about the mediated meanings in order to adapt, if she is to integrate better into the organization. What is going on at the company is a sort of culture clash, a culture clash in the sense that the consensus of organizational culture is dominated by Danish norms and values, and subscribing to that consensus is crucial.

It could seem that the consensus, like Bourdieu's habitus, is not something that evolved fast, if it evolves at all. Employees must gain the right dispositions to strategically deploy if they are to navigate the organizational culture successfully. But is that possible to do within a

reasonable timespan? According to Bourdieu, habitus is both enabling and disabling social actors, and unfortunately for Hungarian employees, habitus is difficult to reconstruct because habitus is socialized into social actors already from an early age. Habitus is the toolbox Hungarians can look into when understanding the ‘strange Danish culture’. Dispositions are their tools. But if they do not possess the right dispositions, they are bound to struggle, and they depend on acquiring new dispositions from experiences. Luckily for Hungarian employees, objects are the invitation to acquisition.

Adapting to the organizational culture is further discussed in the following section. Objects might not be the source of the organizational culture, but they are the proposition for understanding and adapting to it. Objects are reminders to employees of all nationalities, but they are understood differently. To Danes the objects remind them of national identity, and since they reside in a foreign land, these reminders seem to enforce the banality of nationalism from Danish employees themselves more than might would be the case if the company was located in Denmark and not Hungary.

8.3 Actions & Dispositions

So, it is undeniable that objects do play a significant role within the organization, not as the cause of the organizational culture, but as reminders to construct consensus. Objects are both put up by employees with the intention of mediating the national affiliation of MD-Recruitment/DentalService externally, and also having the side-effect of influencing internally. The influence objects have is on employee perception of the organizational culture, or how they should conform to it. The company is a Danish company, thus it is flagging its Danish organizational culture. But would it not be a Danish company with a Danish organizational culture even without flagging the objects? In the pilot study (Kaas, 2021) it was speculated whether objects had been put up as a result of the organizational culture, or if the organizational culture was a result of the objects. Something that was not expected prior to the interview was the high level of interaction that employees have with the objects, and the individual relation they have to the objects. For mediated action to happen, there needs to be in place the social structure and practice to provide context for the action. Actions are shaped by culture and norms (Scollon, 2001), meaning that just because the objects mediate Danish national identity, it does not mean that social actors will adapt to Danish culture if

there is no context providing them a reason to do so. The interviews made it clear that the objects were put to mediate Danish national identity in order to create action - adding dispositions with non-Danes to navigate Danish practices that were present. This influence expanded to Hungarian employees because of the context as reaction to the mediated action of the objects.

According to Bourdieu (Spiegel, 2005), social actors are bound to act within the limits of their habitus, their habitus providing a guiding tool to navigate the social world. Limits can be pushed allowing social actors to expand their habitus by learning new dispositions. The action that objects mediate is an invitation for non-Danes to expand their habitus, and for Danes to employ the correct dispositions. Hungarian employees are placed in a site of engagement with practices and social structures which are unfamiliar to them, and objects encourage them to act, to expand their habitus with new dispositions to navigate the site of engagement. László says that Hungarians can profit from adapting to the Danish way of doing things, though admitting it can be tough.

It is tough because it is not easy to expand one's habitus. Even though they see it as beneficial, it is a struggle. In Noémi's view Danes like to have long meetings, longer than she thinks is necessary. Maybe these meetings are just a product of the organizational characteristics she values? The long meetings could be the eco of flat hierarchy and a sign of value of feedback because the meetings have a democratic structure that encourage employees to share opinions and discuss ideas. Not that longer meetings in itself is a guarantee for democratic management, but even when she initially values these characteristics, she struggles to adapt because it takes time for her to equip her habitus with the disposition to see the advantage of longer meetings.

Preben recounts that when chatting with his Hungarian coworkers, if a person from management walks in, the Hungarian coworkers express a sort of paranoia and disperse from the conversation. The Hungarian employees perhaps do not want to seem unproductive in the eyes of the manager, where Preben might see the benefit of the manager joining in. Ingrid also mentions that she can get frustrated by the somewhat pessimistic attitude from her Hungarian coworkers. When Preben uses the word 'paranoia' it is because his habitus allows him to decipher the situation in a totally different way. It is here where the objects, such as the Lego, can serve as a mediating factor between the habitus of the Hungarians and the organizational culture they need to adapt to.

Interestingly Ingrid tells of her thoughts on getting a new daily manager, who is Hungarian. Before the change she was sceptical towards the idea of Hungarian management, but after the change she has shifted to a more favourable opinion.

There can be two reasons for this. Either Hungarian management style is less hierarchical than employees give it credit for, or maybe the Hungarian daily manager has managed to adapt his habitus to possess a leadership style more resembling what Ingrid is familiar with. The latter is probably the answer, according to Ingrid, because the daily manager has worked within the organizational culture for some time and has become accustomed to it.

The objects might not have had a decisive impact, but instead an influencing role since we know that employees are receptive to the mediation of national identity. Surely, the objects mediate meanings which reaffirm Danish employees in their Danish national identity, a nexus of practice which they strive to work - a comforting reminder when living abroad. To Hungarian employees objects are reminders to adapt to the organizational culture which is Danish. The yet powerful influence of the objects would not occur was it not for the site of engagement where practices and social structures allowed them to project their symbolism.

9. Conclusion

The problem formulation designated the thesis to answer which role objects have on employees when constructing perception of, and adapting to, organizational culture. The approach to the issue was based on the speculations of the pilot study, which hypothesized that objects and organizational culture were influencing either of each other - were objects put up to reflect organizational culture, or was the organizational culture influenced objects? The speculations of the pilot study turned out to actually not be a question of how objects influence organizational culture rather than a question of how objects support employees' perception of organizational culture. During interviews with employees it became clear that objects were put up intentionally with an influencing effect in mind, though initially not intended to influence employees. Employees, both Danish and Hungarian, perceive the organizational culture of MD-Recruitment/DentalService to have what they describe as Danish characteristics, and this perception of organizational culture allows for the meanings, and intended meanings, of the objects to resonate with employees.

Objects are flagging Danish national identity, but without the perception of the organizational culture as being Danish, objects would not enjoy the same status as is the case. Employees, both Danish and Hungarian, construct a narrative of themselves and the workplace as something uniquely Danish in an otherwise un-Danish environment, and the objects are symbols of that because of the context. The objects would not be held to the same esteem were they in an organization located in Denmark. Employees have much more interaction with the objects than anticipated, and some more than others seem to embody the characteristics employees apply to the organizational culture. Again, the role of the objects depends on the context, the practices and social structure of the company, where employees perceive their practices as Danish, and the objects as a natural reflection of this.

The objects facilitate organizational culture because they remind employees to embody it, but at the same time there exists a culture which creates a context for the objects to be understood by employees in this way. The company does have an organizational culture with Danish national identity, and the objects are not enforcing this perception but reinforcing it. There is a difference in how well Danish and Hungarian employees manage to adapt to the organizational practices and social structures. For Danes the weak hierarchical structure is more straightforward to navigate, and Hungarians need to become familiar with the structure

before being comfortable with it. It shows the contrasting habitus among nationalities at the company, and objects have earned a facilitating role both for Hungarian employees to learn new dispositions, and also for employees of both nationalities to share experiences. The role of objects is limited to the value social actors apply to them, and to the context in which they are placed. Objects can be a facilitator of organizational culture but only to the degree that organization members can contextualize objects into their perception of organizational culture, otherwise objects.

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11. Appendix

11.1 Appendix I

Interviewguide

Introduction speech: *Thank you very much for participating in this interview. The topic of the interview will be how you experience some aspects of work culture at MD-Recruitment/DentalService. The interview is expected to last for 30-40 minutes.*

This interview will be totally anonymous. To secure your anonymity, any reference to your name, age, and gender will not occur in the thesis, and any name, should you mention any, will be anonymized as well. The only thing that will be related to you personally will be whether you are a native Hungarian or native Danish employee, male or female, and experience. The reason behind this is to explore the differences in how Hungarian and Danish employees experience some aspects of work culture at the company.

What will be said during this interview will be said in total confidentiality, though the thesis will be made available for reading at Aalborg University assignment library.

The name of the company, MD-Recruitment/DentalService will as well be anonymized. Should you mention any of the companies by name, the name will be anonymized in the thesis. I will refer to MD-Recruitment/DentalService as 'the company'.

The questions I will ask are meant to be elaborated on by you, meaning that you are welcome to give as long explanations as you wish, though I might proceed to another question when I think it time to do so. You are welcome to decline answering any question you want to if you do not feel like answering.

Do you have any questions? Let's begin the interview.

Questions

1. *What thoughts come to your mind when I say work culture at the company?*
2. *Would you describe the work culture at the company particularly Danish or Hungarian, and why?*
3. *What does Danish work culture mean to you?*
4. *What does Hungarian work culture mean to you?*
5. *In what way does the company display the work culture you experience there?*
 - a. *How do you*

6. *Do you think the company actively seeks to integrate both Hungarian and Danish work culture in the company?*
7. *What differences or similarities have you experienced comparing your Hungarian and Danish coworkers to each other?*

I will now show you some pictures from the company

8. *What do you think about the different objects on display at the company's office in Budapest?
The objects portraying Danish culture?*
9. *Why do you think the objects are present at the office?*
10. *How are the objects being treated by employees? Like do they notice them and how do they interact with the objects?*
11. *Do you think about the objects in your work day?*
12. *Do you think Danes have a better understanding of the meaning of the objects?*
 - a. *Why?*
13. *Do you think about Denmark during your work day?*
 - a. *What do you think about Denmark?*
14. *Do you work in a Danish way or a Hungarian way?*
15. *Can there be any advantages of knowing about Danish culture when working at the company?
When?*
16. *Can there be an advantage being Danish when working in the company?*
 - a. *Social, work quality?*
17. *Have you experienced any negative attitude towards Hungarian culture at the company from employees?*
18. *Have you experienced any negative attitude towards Danish culture at the company from employees?*

11.2 Appendix II

Employee H (Ingrid), Danish employee, 2+ years work experience.

Interviewer's sentences are written in *cursive*, interviewee's are not.

- *What thoughts come to mind when I say work culture at the company?*
- how we work together as colleagues, and how the structure of the company is, and we work within that. So for example, are there flexible work hours, how do we take our brakes, stuff like that. and how are we as colleagues and the social part as well.

- *if that's what you think about when we talk about work culture. yes. what would you describe the work culture at the company particular Danish, or Hungarian?*
- definitely more Danish when it comes to the social part. The flexibility, the assignments, the understanding of the people. the management, all of that. but I still see some Hungarian aspects. I see, I see sometimes the structure is a bit more Hungarian, like. but it's minor, but sometimes it's there. and it's noticeable because it's very different from the Danish culture.
- *When you say that some aspects are more Hungarian, what do you mean by that?*
- I mean for example when you work in some areas you have a lot of flexibility, but when you work in other areas, maybe where more Hungarians are involved in the process, there will be less flexibility
- *So when you say some aspect are Hungarian it means that they are less flexible?*
- emh yes, like I would say not only that. but I think that's the way it, I notice it more. and also there some other small stuff like how interact with each other is also different with the Hungarians.
- *Yes. What does Danish work culture mean to you?*
- ehm, it means. That's a good question. emh. that's a really good question
- *so say that Hungarian is*
- yeah no, but I think that I think I would definitely favor the Danish work ehm culture more, but maybe because I'm from Denmark it's not necessarily true. Okay but from my understanding it's a bit, it's more flexible. So it comes back to the flexibility. Ehm it's more friendly and more open and more personal. than the Hungarian work culture. and it's more, yeah, no, more flexible is the word.
- *In what way does the company display the work culture you experience there? It could for example be how do you experience it in meetings? You say when there is more Hungarians it is less flexible? How does that work?*
- I would say it comes more back to the Hungarians as like as an individual, their mentality I think is more often they would more often say no to something before they

starts doing the assignment. They will not think about the possibility but maybe only the what would go wrong. and that's also where the flexibility come into my mind that, as I don't know it's just for me as a Danish person just, with the colleagues I have I experience more with the Danish people that they will be much more open minded and think, how can we try to solve this instead of saying no that's not an option.

- *im gonna show you some pictures from the office.*

[shows pictures]

- *what do you think about the different objects on display at the company's office in Budapest displaying Danish culture?*
- I think it's a really fun way to display the Danish culture, I think it is for those who lives abroad and comes to work at the company they feel very welcome and they in this big city in this Hungarian culture there is a Danish spot where you can be with danes and you can have yourself a little bit of the culture. and also in that experience somethings that I didn't even know or wasn't grateful for about Denmark. but because I see how Hungarians play with the lego and they like to have the competitions with the lego and actually also the candidates from all around europe. so they just show me how much they appreciate the Danish culture as well. so it's ehm, yeah it's really interesting and it's good to, so it feel a bit like home and also, yeah.
- *so you're thinking about when Danish employees coming from Denmark and start working for the company they feel more at home?*
- definitely
- *why do you think the objects are present at the office?*
- because they definitely want to remind themself that this is a Danish company. also they also, I think, want to remind the Hungarians and the candidates. I think especially the candidates because those are the people moving to Denmark. so when we can show them this is the map of Denmark, this is the lego, they will feel they are transitioning. ehm yeah, so..
- *so you believe that the objects have an influence on people?*

- absolutely. this is ehm, when I was at the company for the very first time I noticed all of these small things. and I still remember the joy that I was filled with so. so one hundred percent. I see them every day, and I see these pictures, I see them every day and still I can just stop up in the middle of the day “ud af min kiosk” and still smile, so definitely
- *yeah, do you ehm, do you think about the objects in your every day?*
- not like actively, wow this one is placed there, but like I see them, and I sometimes interact with them for example the map of Denmark. or in the lunch break we will talk about the words, on the pictures you showed me from the lunch room. so. it's not like I think ‘there is a pictures put there so I have to deal with it every day’, but like it's there so I see it and my mind is seeing it.
- *yes. ehm do you think danes have a better understanding of the meanings of the objects than Hungarians?*
- of course, first of all some of the language is in Denmark. maybe the the Kaj Bojesen monkey doesn't mean anything for Hungarians. if we tell them we paid more for this monkey than you do for your food for two months they will, think, yeah, not be so happy. and this is just the monkey, it doesn't even mean anything for me, only I see a lot of people owning that monkey so that's how I know okay that's a famous monkey. so yeah. oh can I just add that is just an understanding I can only have as Danish, which a Hungarian can not understand unless they ask us.
- *yeah. so there is some meanings in the objects at the office that the Hungarians don't understand?*
- yes.
- *do you think about Denmark during your work day?*
- of course.
- *what do you think, in what relation do you think about Denmark?*
- I think about it because I am inside aHungarian culture but I work mainly for Danish companies Danish clients. and I need to make everything happening as it should work in Denmark, but still being in Hungary, so there is always this twist. but the twist is

only there for me personally because I know what is going on in Denmark and how it should work in Denmark. only I am the one sitting outside and have to make it work. so I need to think about how would the Danes look at this or how would they think about it. and also there is a the clients are often from other cultures so there is still like the culture thing involved, but so I also have to think okay they are in Denmark but not necessarily Danish so yeah.

- *so you think there is some, you have some knowledge about Denmark that the clients you're working for do not have because they are not Danish, and you are aware of that when you are working with them?*
- yes, or of course they maybe they also know about that because they have been in Denmark for maybe ten years. but still they come from their background, cultural background and don't necessarily accept it or want to see it in that way or want to work in that, because they have another way that is working for them.
- *can there be an advantage of knowing about Danish culture when working at the company?*
- one hundred percent.
- *why do you think that?*
- I just. ehm for example now I just started doing marketing for organization A, and I'm just preparing more post for september. and we talked about, we just had a meeting. what do they miss, what improvement do they want. and a lot of them was about getting some information about Denmark, and I just realized how easy it is for me to write about anything from Denmark. cause I already went to legoland I already, I grew up with hc andersen. all of these thing where anyone else would have to google okay legoland have seven rollercoasters and that by that, I can write like how is it to be inside legoland and this feeling when we go in there and I think it's so valuable especially for the role that I play at the company that I can bring this information.
- *so it's giving something to your work, assignment wise. do you think it's an advantage when working together with you colleagues that you know about Danish culture?*
- yes

- *how?*
- emh maybe my Hungarian colleagues will not always understand why we do things like this in Denmark, like we know, how we feel for Denmark, we think this is the best way because this is how it's working. Hungarians feel the same way and they have to adjust to our culture when they for example for with the clients. it's so easy, it makes it easier for the company that we can explain each other. first for all they can explain to me why the supermarket lady is angry at me in Hungary. and I can explain them why the person from this client company is acting this way when they ask this question, because she is sixty years old and she doesn't wanna speak english so maybe I should call her instead
- *so there is ehm an advantage of being Danish? at the company?*
- yes, but in the role that I have yes, because they think okay. because we are working with Danish people it is an advantage, but there is definitely a lot of the roles at the company that can still be handles without being Danish. but I think it is vital for the company to have Danish speakers.
- *do you think it's an advantage in the, you say that, ehm, the work culture at the company is flexible and it's personal, and it's open. do you think that there is an advantage in being Danish in that kind of environment?*
- I would say yes and no. because as I have said it is also not, you also feel the Hungarian work culture there. so. sometimes personally for me that can make me a bit upset or, because I don't understand their way of doing it. but of course it's an advantage for me because i'm already accustomed to the flexibility, but I think it's also an advantage for the Hungarians because they realize that okay we don't just have to sit on our, ehm, chair the entire day, we can like be flexible with our work hours and we can have meeting this way instead, or be more creative. so I think it's and advantage to them as well to see how else it can work, and I think is a big advantage for them than it is for me because I also see limitations, that I don't have because I am in Hungary. that I would have if I was in Denmark.
- *do you experience any negative attitude towards Hungarian culture at the company?*

- I would not say in the daily life, just personally with my personality I fell myself sometimes being a bit upset because I will have to, if someone gives me one problem I give them five solutions. and with I'm with someone who find zero solutions that can me a little bit angry. but that's my personal, I would not say that there is a general thinking about the Hungarian people that they are not good enough or they are too stupid or. definitely not, because they are really really good coworkers
- *but you, are you implying that Danes are more solution oriented, and that Hungarians are less solution oriented?*
- no, I would say that's my personality. because I have definitely met danes who can be the same. I just think that I see it more often for the Hungarians. that this ehm, how do I day. I don't want to offend anyone, but still I feel that maybe more the pessimism in the culture in general. an I think in Denmark I see more the optimistic things. so if you take ten people from Hungary ten people from Denmark you will, I think you will find more optimistic people in the ten people from Denmark and more pessimistic people in the group from Hungary. and i, you know so that's how I make my this kind of presumption because the colleagues from organization A are wonderful, just I see, that, they sometimes..
- *have you experienced any negative attitude towards Danish culture at the company?*
- when we sing the birthday song they think it is very embarrassing. maybe, I think they can also be annoyed by, I have also experienced that because of this personality that I find five solutions they also sometimes are very overwhelmed that everything has to happen so fast because maybe they just need that refined, the really really correct solution for all parts involved. and I would prefer to just find the solution that will work, and maybe not necessary, the ninety percent, and they will spend more time finding the solutions that work one hundred percent. so. that's where we sometimes
- *the Hungarian employees?*
- yes
- *and ehm, and they, they think that danes, Danish culture is about coming up with solutions too fast or?*

- I would say I don't know if this is about the culture, because I don't think so. but more about my personal experience.
- *so you think Hungarian culture is more hierarchical?*
- ehm. if you asked me some months ago I would say yes, because I didn't work with so many Hungarian colleagues, but now I have them really close to me. and I think that the company the structure is so flat. and, anyone even someone only working twenty hours, a student worker was just in a meeting with me handling all the marketing for example, the daily manager had some questions, but he is asking questions not giving orders, so I think it is very very flexible.
- *so that's emh, would you say that the Hungarians are working with working Danish, under Danish work culture?*
- yes because I can a bit imagine that would not be like that anywhere else. everywhere else.
- *you don't expect it to be in a Hungarians workplace with only Hungarians working there?*
- no. I worked at a, it was an international company as well, but of course with a lot of Hungarians, and it was definitely different.
- *do you think they objects I showed you had any influence on how people work?*
- ehm. that's a good question
- *do you think the, yeah*
- I would say if you remove them, everyone would still be efficient, the work would still be done, no issue, I still think the objects are adding some value. because it just take two minutes, or two seconds to look at them and maybe smile. so that's like having a colleague that makes you smile or, a hoptimist on your table. it's these small things. they don't mean a lot but they bring just a little bit value
- *do you think the Hungarian employees have tried to understand objects, the meaning of objects?*

- yes. like if they are interested then yes, definitely the lego challenge everyone was involved. I don't know how much I would care about a map of Hungary, actually I would not care about a map of Hungary. so maybe I would like, it's a map. it's only relevant for me because I'm reminded about where I come from. so if it's ehm something text wise they ask what is this. and that how they try to understand it
- *so could you say, what I'm hearing you saying, and you can correct me know, is that, during the every day you don't really notice the objects around the office, but when you stop and look at them, for example the map and you can see where you are from, some feelings come into you?*
- yes, definitely.
- *do you think that affects you, how you work in any way?*
- no not really. because for example now I am in just a really boring ugly room, for example there is a blanket on the wall, who the hell puts a blanket on the wall? and still like, I'm just working quite normal. when I worked from home during covid I worked like normal. so I don't think, that is having a directly effect. but it's about the experience.
- *do you think you have an advantage over the Hungarian employees, when, I don't know, when coming up with creative solutions or navigating in a flat work environment, or having a more personal relation to your colleagues, like the things you mentioned about the company. like do you feel it's easier for you than your Hungarian colleagues?*
- ehm, I would say it also depends on the experience. because for example. our daily manager has worked in that environment and is accustomed to it. and. and I think just think the student workers this is the first workplace and the first time being somewhere, and then it's like this. and maybe they experience just very hierarchical structure, and I tell you what to do and you do it. big words and that's the thing. and then it's not like that. I think compared to them I have the bigger advantage but compared to someone with a lot of work experience, someone who. respect, ehm, also themselves, where do they want to work, so they don't accept being somewhere where it would be like that because they didn't like it so they always look for something. like this they would have the same advantage as me

- *you say that ehm, that the company's, having a Danish work culture do you think that the company is also good at integrating Hungarians aspects, or Hungarian culture, or Hungarian work culture?*
- I think they take the best of both world
- *is there anything you think at the workplace they do, that you think is Hungarians? workwise?*
- ehm, yeah, for example when I talk with the daily leader. he tells me a lot of stuff. he gives me a lot of examples how one company is working in Hungary they do like this and this. and then he tries maybe we can implement it here. so I think because like, if he was from romania and the article was in romanian he would jus bring that in to the work palce but because they are Hungarians and their ideas are from the Hungarians culture and it's a good idea, they talk with us about it and then we see if we can implement something.
- *do you think that these Hungarian ideas, or these Hungarian cultural aspects are implemented, you say you talk about them. but is it actually being implemented or do you do you do it in a Danish way still?*
- ehm, I think that's a good question. because I think always we want to do what is best for the company. so it doesn't really matter is it the Hungarian solution or the Danish solution. as long as we can see it fit's. and yes I've seen some of the ideas coming from, liek Hungarian website that we are implementing. but of course we do adjustment and we make sure that it fit's.
- *that it fit's the way you work at the company?*
- yeah.
- *I don't have anymore questions. do you have any?*
- I think it is very interesting to have this interview now since we had a recently restructure things going on at the company. and if this meeting was some months ago, I would be very blind to the Hungarian, to, like how the Hungarian coworkers are influencing the workplace, but because I am so lucky now to be part of that. I'm very happy to be aware of how much they are actually also doing instead of also doing,

because before I would definitely think like. uh okay they are so Hungarian. but now I get to work with them and I see okay they are so human

- *so you work more with Hungarians now than you did before and it has opened you mind to what Hungarians are working with?*
- yes definitely
- *are they more or less flexible than you expected?*
- more
- *so could you say they are more of less Hungarian than you expected?*
- yes
- *okay thank you for participating.*

11.3 Appendix III

Employee I (László), Hungarian employee, 1+ years work experience.

Interviewer's sentences are written in *cursive*, interviewee's are not.

- *What thoughts come to mind when I say work culture at the company?*
- ehm hmm. that's a good question. I usually have issues with defining what work cultures in general means. but, but specifically, should it be specific to this company now or should we, should I like probably what I think about what is work culture?
- *you can say a little about what you think is work culture, but try to think of how it applies to the company*
- okay so I would, okay so let's' yeah work culture in general would be something around how, what kind of behavior or what kind of social norms or rules there are at the workplace, or also in regards to how you work, how you socialize with you colleagues. yeah how you work together how you corporate. what, ehm, in this sense

maybe also what kind of formalization there is between when you're talking to someone else, if it's like, people are closer or more far away, or hierarchy is stronger or less strong, yes but if, if you look at this specific company I think that one thing which is at least for me coming from an American based but Hungarian lead huge company with twelve hundred employees, I definitely can say this is ehm, this is a workplace where there is possibility of everyone talking to everyone. with very. I wouldn't say the hierarchy is on the surface very strong, maybe in decision making it ehm, of course there is a hierarchy but on the surface level you can really feel like you can go to the highest boss and just send them a mail, and ehm. which would at my previous workplace for example, you never would do that, like why would you ever contact your manager's manager. but here it somehow, you also have a bit of personal relation, but it is also completely natural so ask questions and to, and to write. so maybe yeah that's definitely one, one important question about culture is hierarchy, and in hierarchy I think it is pretty much non hierarchical company. ehm. but of course hierarchy kick in when it comes to decisions because in the end it's the, of course, somehow has, there as to be some kind of hierarchy to make decisions.

- *would you describe the work culture at the company particularly Danish or Hungarian?*
- ehm the issue is i.. the issue is I haven't, I never really worked at an explicitly and completely Hungarian company or at an explicitly and completely Danish company. so in this sense, yeah. you always. people are always talking about how a Hungarian workplace would be, but I would say that it's rather, usually. it's usually not a positive workplace, Hungarian workplace. even among Hungarians. if you say it's Hungarian that means it's kind of hierarchy, it's back, it's a lot of conflicts, it's a lot of nonsense, and it's a lot of bullshit. ehm. and very conservative in a sense. that would be how Hungarian is usually defined by also Hungarians, it's like, it's something bad. ehm. and, on the other hand for Hungarians, or also at least I feel somehow, in an international community, a Danish workplace is like heaven on earth haha. and it's amazing, and it's good, and there's no formal, not much formal contact because it's not hierarchic. you can work together, and it's with anyone you like, you're flexible, you have freedom. it's ehm, there's ehm, a lot less bullshit, and it's very pragmatic and looking forward. so this is like how I define like, or how I see Hungarian workplace, what Hungarian workplace or Danish workplace is called, in this sense I definitely

feel this would be a more Danish workplace ehm. also from the, the Hungarian colleagues' side. I feel it's pretty pragmatic, and ehm, and how should I say. also honor and respect which are part of the Hungarian work culture. is like less important as I feel it than any other of the places I in Hungary. like I don't see that some people, because they want to defend your honor, would admit making mistakes or giving up on decision, or something like that. yes so in this sense I would categorize it as a Danish workplace, but there is some issue with this categorization.

- *do you think the company actively seeks to integrate both Hungarian and Danish work culture?*
- I don't think Hungarian work culture is embraced really much, as far as I see. I don't think there is an interest in that. it's really more like we wanna be Danish, we wanna be. ehm. so like i, I have this feeling the whole company want to be Danish. then, yes.
- *what differences and similarities have you experienced comparing your Danish and Hungarian coworkers to each other?*
- lets see whats easier to start with. ehm. lets take differences. I think in general Danish employees usually are lot more cautious and a lit more aware of, ehm, of their limit's. and their, I do this and I do that, that's what I got hired for and I do it, and I wont go outside of this. I'm not like, yeah. I would say Danish employees are lot more cautious about somehow borders, borders of their position, borders of their possibilities, what they can do, what they are allowed to do. while I think it's a bit more chaotic with Hungarians. who are less aware of these borders, I would just say that you can give a pretty much random task to an Hungarian employee. a Danish employee might say this is not my job, a Hungarian probably wouldn't.
- *is that because of the honor and the respects, and the hierarchy that the Hungarians does the task even though it's not part of their job?*
- I think it's more like, you don't want to. you don't want to seem like someone who isn't doing his best and isn't doing his all. and ehm. yes.
- *I want to show you some pictures.*
- yes.

- *from the company.*
- [showing pictures]
- *what do you think about the objects on display at the company's office in budapest?*
- I think this is just, it states even stronger, as I was talking before, it's not another workplace which is, this is a workplace which tries to be Danish. tries to be Danish, it should look Danish. and all though. and ehm I think we personally, I already mentioned this one time we were talking about this, part of the reason exactly these, how should I say. these posters were chosen were not only because the workplace wants to be Danish, but it's also a workplace which was meant to integrate people into Denmark, or just get them some understanding of Denmark. like it makes sense to see a map of Denmark, it makes sense to see some funny Danish quotes. or some rare Danish words. Danish design. because ehm, these office spaces also had the function of, of teaching some foreign dentist, or not just dentist but medical folk stuff, to. the Danish language and the Danish culture. so I would say, maybe it would be a bit less like this if there wouldn't be this background, but I would imagine it could still be this. and it's because the workplace wants to be Danish, and obviously Danish is very design posters hanging on the wall.
- *so the objects are on display to influence first of all the candidates who were present to learn about Danish culture?*
- yeah I think that was a very important part of the history of wh it looks like that. but of course the company also wants to look design. so I think it's a fifty fifty, but a part of it is the history of the room.
- *so part of it is to, when the candidates are there to learn about Danish culture, they will influenced by it, but it is also for the company to project that it itself is a Danish company?*
- yes, yes definitely.
- *how are the objects being treated by employees? do they notice them, do they interacts with the objects?*

- yes definitely, the Danish employees haha. like the rare Danish words come up almost every second lunch break, or at every party some Danes are going to sit there a figure out what these words are
- *the poster with the old Danish words that are in the lunch room.*
- yeah exactly. but it is also located at a place like that, other than that. I myself, and it's also. only because I'm Danish. I'm not Danish but I speak Danish. only because I speak Danish. for me it's ehm, for example going under the poster saying 'ingen ko på isen'. that. which was also like the favorite thing my former colleague. this is something that resonates for me. but I'm pretty sure not for Hungarian colleagues in, in general have no interaction with that. the map is fantastic, I love it. that one which we really interact with. I love to show my Hungarian colleagues where the clinics are where we are working with. who we are calling now and so on, and how Denmark looks like. so I think a map is fantastic. the others I don't think they interact with.
- *do you, so you notice, you notice the objects, you interact with the map of Denmark.*
- yes definitely, and also with some of the others like ingen ko på isen means something to me, I love to see it. sometimes I like to see Bornholm or all these other posters. so for me it gives something. as a Hungarian but I'm a Danish speaking Hungarian, so for me there is.
- *there is the poster saying 'hut-li-hut'.*
- yes.
- *do you have any knowledge about that?*
- yes I was looking it up, then I was also telling it to, to my other colleagues. this was the ninety two when the football, ehm, wonder of Denmark when they suddenly won it and then it was like 'hut-li-hut' like, hop. which is a bit strange to say as like. it's like saying we don't completely have control of our things, but somehow everything turns out to be great. so I think it's a bit ironic on a company's wall, especially if you know the backside story, because. it sounds like you also like riding on luck and like, oh in the end everything turns out whop up, okay we it turned out great.
- *do you think that is particular Danish, like that's a Danish characteristic?*

- ehm. ehm. yes I think it could be, I feel some kind of an aspect of. other than, I think that is Danish characteristic as that you are very cautious and aware of your limitations and borders and so on. I also have this feeling of Danish mentality which can be described as 'vi tager det stillet og roligt'. 'vi tager det som det kommer'. ehm and. you just, in some cases you just, I feel it's a bit Danish that sometimes just be brave enough to slip a bit of control of things, which you probably prepared for and then in the end you try to figure it out and it works, but you slip a bit of control maybe.
- *do you think Danes have a better understanding of the meanings of these objects?*
- like 'hut-li-hut', definitely, and also the Danish words. I don't know if any Dane is at the office is like resonating on the Bornholm posters, or those others, that a good question. me as a. yeah I do resonate, but I was interested in Denmark, or I have this special interest.
- *do you think about Denmark or Danish culture during your workday?*
- ehm yes. I do. so I like sometimes to try to feel like being in Denmark haha. and yeah, somehow I am because I am talking to Danish people on the phone, and sit around Danish colleagues, and everything is full of Danish posters on the wall. so like sometimes you can like, ehm slip into another world. or slip out of Hungary in this sense like, in the feeling of doing things and so on.
- *do you think you work in a Danish way or Hungarian way?*
- ehm that would be a bit hard to define. I would say I definitely elements from both of them so I wouldn't say I am working in a Danish way, and I wouldn't say i, I think I am well integrated in this workplace, but I am not completely sure I would be like completely as well integrated at a Danish-Danish workplace located in Denmark with only Danes who are in their homeland. I'm not sure I would qualify as a Dane there.
- *do you think ehm, can there be any advantages of knowing about Danish culture when working at the company for the employee? for you?*
- I think it is not an advantage because it helps to socialize. I think this socializing aspect of the workplace is also very Danish. especially that organization A employees are not really socializing right now, they are sitting at home and working from home,

like, long time home office for a year now or something. all the Hungarian recruiters. so I feel like the, the, the. even the drinking culture, the humor and everything is very strongly Danish lead in the socializing things are very. you have this feeling that you are together with Danes and so on, and it is not a Hungarian get away, not a Hungarian, yeah socializing.

- *can there be any advantages of being Danish at the company?*
- I think definitely. Danes in any case, especially at Organization B, or. yeah do you mean like Danish as a Dane or Danish as a Danish speaker.
- *Danish as a native Dane, and it can be socially, workwise. it can be any advantage you can come up with.*
- yes definitely, workwise in marketing there would, there's almost no possibility for non-Danish speaker to work. or if they, probably would do some back office work like. could do I don't know programming of homepages or anything. there's no way to move higher up the ladder if you don't speak Danish or are a Dane. so I think that's definitely a big possibility for Danes. and I think even for Danish speakers, against Danes, in marketing it's just Danes who know their language who can write in their language. I don't really can imagine people having that type, higher level of Danish that they could write proper marketing text and so on. for example in the field of marketing it's definitely, it's almost like a must if you want to.
- *do you that Danish employees at the company thrive better than Hungarian employees?*
- they deal with different issues I guess. somehow. so Danish employees at the company deal with the issues of like, Hungarian environment, I mean salary wise. freetime-wise, or just holiday, the amount of holiday, the amount of salary you can get. and so on. which is definitely ehm, a bit tougher on the Danes I would say. but they in general I think, can better, easier socialize in this environment, and it's more like, they maybe easy, a lot more easier find a place for them selves, the Danes. Hungarians, I think Hungarians can enjoy this workplace, and can enjoy this workplace culture, but they have to be a bit open to this. and it really takes a lot of ehm. how do I say. yeah you really need to be open and try to understand the way of,

things are not done like in Hungary, things are not done like you would expect from a Hungarian workplace, and you have to somehow get close to the Danes.

- *so the Hungarian employees they have to adapt to a Danish way of working?*
- yes definitely, which they can, they can profit of sometimes, but I can also see that, it sometimes can be, can be tough on them. it's a different culture.
- *yeah, last autumn you hired a new financial assistant.*
- yes.
- *and she had to adapt to Danish work culture?*
- ehm well she. I would say for her it was particularly hard to somehow adapt to the working culture, which was made easier by change in her, her leader, which I became and our Danish leader was leaving. so we established like Hungarian office where she, by an instance opened up more, and was not that afraid anymore. she had, it was hard on her I think. and I don't think she did comprehend all the things which happened around her, and I don't think she thrived that well in, if it, when it was very yeah.
- *if you should take some elements of Danish work culture, you have mentioned that it's flexible, there's more freedom, it's more freedom, it's more pragmatic, it's less formal. is there any of these things that she has been struggling with?*
- ehm let me think about this. yes I think there is definitely, this could be also. she's, yeah she has been on the job market for some times and she had some jobs, but she is right now a student worker. but ehm definitely something she is struggling with might be somehow the. ehm. this Danish way of saying like 'frihed under ansvar'. like, freedom in case of, under responsibility, or freedom and responsibility.
- *that you have to govern yourself, and you are responsible for what you do.*
- yes and I don't think this is part of Hungarian school system. I don't think this is ever part of Hungarian workplaces until pretty, until the point where you get into management, and then it probably starts being a thing. but I could see on her that she somehow could feel. not understanding what she had to do at the moment, and not have the energy, not having the, the, how should I say, self-confidence and this

self-control to like, figure it out for herself. while she was at a Hungarian workplace, especially in these entry level positions, she in before. it's usually very clear you do this and then this happens. she gained a lot more freedom, even though this is still an entry level position. this is still something where the processes are very well defined, but with a lot more freedom. and with a lot less micromanagement. and I think that was hard on her.

- *lets say that she was Danish.*
- yes.
- *then she would, you are implying that she would have fitted in perfectly from the beginning, and would not have struggled?*
- ehm, I don't know if she would have fitted in perfectly, but I would say she would have been more ready, or as far as I see and what I see about the way of the Danish, of the Danish school system, of the Danish upbringing by parents, is that there is much more emphasis in Denmark on being. I don't know if I can find the word.
- *independent?*
- independent, yes, or independent or self, like. yeah. so and this independency I don't think this is as much a part of a Hungarian culture, and that can make issues, especially if you are looking for a job where you are doing your stuff and you get told what you have to do. here you are not being told constantly what you have to do, or how you have to do it.
- *have you experienced any negative attitude towards Hungarian culture at the company from employees?*
- definitely from Hungarian employees haha. and also somehow from Danish employees I think. you mentioned the, that here had been talks about how it would be if we were working at a Hungarian workplace. yes.
- *so there is a conversation coming up where there's made some comparisons?*
- yes I would say that Hungarian values as such, or Hungarian workplace culture as such. I don't think they're ever used in a positive sense by anyone, be it Hungarian or

Danish, at the company. so it's like we are better than Hungary, or like the Hungarian way of doing things, yes.

- *have you experienced any negative attitude towards Danish culture at the company from employees?*
- not really negative. I feel a lot of times there's, I can see on my colleagues, Hungarian colleagues, that they, they struggle with understanding. but as far as I think I don't think that I ever heard any complaints or bad words about this. regarding the Danish culture, it's just like we don't get it sometimes.
- *do you think that the objects, the different posters, and the lego bricks. does that help understanding Danish culture, or getting a feeling of Danish culture?*
- ehm I think it could also be alienating in a sense. but yes, so. I think it definitely needs to be something which has to be explained. if it's not explained it's alienating. I myself try to explain it. when i'm around Hungarian colleagues and we are looking at this and that, I am trying to explain it. so.
- *I don't have anymore questions, do you anything you want to add or any questions.*
- let me think, there was something on my mind which I did forget, and then it was on my mind again, and then I forget it again. ehm. what was it.
- *we have talked about different things, on the objects on display, we have talked about the, how the employees, Danish and Hungarians, function socially. how well they integrate. you have mentioned on, how Hungarian work culture can be perceived as being hierarchical. there's conflict. it's more conservative. Danish culture you mentioned it's*
- don't forget honor and pride and respects.
- *and respect yeah. in Denmark is maybe a bit more opposite, it's more flexible, it's non-formal, and pragmatic. it's heaven haha, as you mentioned, heaven on earth.*
- haha, yeah, I am talking about how I think it is perceived. and as much as I can see of it.
- *is it perceived as that at the company?*

- yeah I think definitely. it's definitely perceived better and I think that the company itself defines its culture better than a Hungarian workplace culture.
- *is it Hungarians or Danes or both who says this?*
- I think both. both. so, yes.
- *do you think the Hungarians they, you say they struggle when they start at the company, about understanding Danish culture. but they still think that Danish work culture is heaven? Do you know how they come to think this?*
- this is what is told, and this is what is like. like I think every Hungarian you ask, if you ask them about Hungarian work culture they say it's shit, and everything else is better. especially scandinavia is like a lot better. like germany is already better. so yes. so yeah I think the interesting thing is like ive never ever heard someone praise Hungarian working culture. never. not at the workplace, but also in person, ive never met Hungarians who were saying the Hungarian way of doing things is the right way. it's just. no. yeah. I would ad one interesting thing i, last time I had a talk with ehm, with the daily manager, ehm. we were talking a bit about greeting culture, socializing culture. it's very strange in a sense how, how Danes are doing less body contact in general, or when they are doing it they are doing it a lot more than Hungarians. in a Hungarian workplace it's normal and now that he told me, really I did this at all my previous workplaces. you come into your workplace and you shake hands with everyone. you go to everyone and you shake hands with them. sorry only men with men, so like of course you don't shake hands with women because that's not part of Hungarian culture, and handshaking with women is not really, really a thing. but you shake hands with all the men, and greet everyone. and this is somehow.
- *when you are new, or is it everyday?*
- every day you come into the office. it's like 'hey colleague' and you shake hands. and this is something which we don't do. and this is probably don't do it because this is not Danish. and I just thought that was like wauw this is not happening, this is so strange. but then again when you sometimes meet colleagues and you have the Danish way of greeting each other with giving a hug. like a handshake, like no handshake for Hungarians that's, that's, that's strange. but like getting a hug that's too much. that's like what is this, and ehm. you and i, as partly German like my brothers do this too.

from hamburg they have the same greeting things. they would not shake hands but, if we are close or if we are meeting privately it is always with a hug, which is completely strange for the Hungarians. ehm yes so this definitely feels a bit cold, not giving a handshake and not feeling the other's hand. that means a lot to Hungarians. definitely. and now when I talked with the daily manager about this, I realized wauw really, I haven't done this in a year. and somehow I am missing it. it builds up a kind of trust.

- *do you think if you tried to implements this at the company, that it would be successful?*
- it's a good questions, I don't know if you can like, directly implement something like this. every morning come and it's handshake time but ehm. it's a good question. I think it's a nice thing because it's a gesture which. and I think this, this is not just a Hungarian gesture, it's widely used in austria and germany at the workplace, like professionally it's very very widespread. but it really means a lot to get to a bit of physical contact with the other, and also have the feeling of his handshake, which can be firm and can be like saying I have control over things, sometimes you just feel they are like, they are down, they are somehow not full of energy that they. and it builds up some kind of trust. I think this could be something which could be, ehm, put in to the workplace culture and it would be positive if there's something which could be positive for a Hungarian. but this is not very Hungarian things. but I think most of the things we were talking about, like Danish workplace culture, could also be said about scandinavian workplace culture. partly also maybe US and so on, so it depends on like, how you broadly defined this.
- *very good. we don't have more time thank you for participating.*

11.4 Appendix IV

Employee J (Preben), Danish employee, 4+ years work experience.

Interviewer's sentences are written in *cursive*, interviewee's are not.

- *what thought come to your mind I say work culture at the company?*
- oh, yeah.. i, that's a really good question. because me being Danish person, ehm, I did not quite know what to expect from working in a Hungarian-Danish company. there are obviously some differences in culture. especially when it comes to, you know, Denmark is very well known for the flat hierarchy and you know work-life-balance, these kind of things. ehm, so for me the biggest part was a sort of uncertainty as to how it would be to work in a Hungarian, Danish-Hungarian company. emh but I think, in ehm the most part they managed to transfer the Danish properties of work culture into the Hungarian company very well. cause I obviously worked in the Hungarian part of the company [organization A], in the Hungarian office. yeah i, I don't think there was any noticable difference from a Danish company located in Denmark. so in that way I think they managed to transfer Danish properties of work-life-balance and work culture very well into, into the company.
- *would you describe the work culture at the company as particular Danish or Hungarian?*
- ehm. I never worked anywhere else in Hungary so I don't know exactly what it needs to be to work in a Hungarian company. but from what I understand, what from, what I've heard from many of my peers, ehm, it was predominantly Danish.
- *yeah*
- absolutely
- *what does Hungarian work culture means to you, what comes to mind?*
- Well so, ehm, many Hungarian companies are of course shared service centers, so they are based in, usually other countries, most of the US. emh, so there might also be a part of work culture coming from there. but for me, the Hungarian culture, not just in a work sense but also the society as a whole, is very build up on respect and

authority. and so there is, you know, in Denmark we talk about an open door policy, in Hungary I would say more is a closed door policy. you're not supposed to skip the chain of command, you cant go straight to the boss. or to your bosses boss rather. you have to follow the chain of command all the way through. you're expected to, huh, to work and ehm, pretty much figure things out mostly on your own to be honest. they don't really allow for ehm, for questions that bother them. and people are very career oriented. and I think that is also kind of impeach them in progressing, the organization as a whole. because people are afraid of asking questions because there might be frowned upon by their peers. or their superiors. so I think that, for me it's, it's Hungarians work culture. without having a one-to-one experience of that means myself.

- *it's what you have heard from others?*
- it is yeah, I have lived in Hungary for six years, ehm, and I studied both my bachelor and master in Hungary. so I know a lot of Hungarians and also foreigners, tha worked in Hungarian companies. and yes that is, it is usually haha very mixed what people experience. but I would say that I probably mostly to the bad, bad side ehm if you can say it like that.
- *do you think that the company actively seeks to integrate both Hungarian and Danish work culture in the company?*
- I don't think so, no. i, we did of course took a lot of Hungarian. we worked with mostly Hungarians and the daily manager is also a Hungarian, so of course some properties of Hungarian culture is transferred in that way. ehm. but I think it was, I don't think there was any actual thought put behind in why the work culture is the way that it is. ehm. you know, culture in my opinion mostly comes from the top-down, and the top being Danish people, was mostly Danish values being transferred down. but I don't think it's necessarily something they did on purpose, I just think it's the way it ended up being haha. because they are Danish. but of course there are some thing, I mean from the top of my mind, when, when we had interns they would get usually presents related to Hungary. some kind of crafts or a memory of Hungary. we of course drank palinka once in a while. so of course there are parts where you're at least introduced, or. a part of Hungary in a way. but mostly I would say it's predominantly

Danish, but I'm not sure if it's something. at least the four years i've been there, something they did necessarily on purpose.

- *what differences and similarities have you experienced comparing your Danish and Hungarian coworkers to each other?*
- hmm.. that is a really interesting question. actually I would not necessarily think there are huge differences between them. from the management perspective I think that the daily manager was really excited about Danish values, so I think that is also something he took upon him. ehm. just by standards also because he have been there for a long time. but from the student workers, ehm. I feel like there were, most of them where very excited about working in the company, because it was just so different from what they expected haha, or from what they have known previously. and I think that generally make people very happy, and inclined to take these values upon them. so when it comes to it, I did not, or I did not notice any special differences at least. I think there were quite a few similarities in what we did. but I don't actually remember any, anything that was particularly Hungarian of them.
- *okay. ehm. I'd like to show you some pictures now.*

[shows pictures]
- *okay let's continues. what do you think about the objects on display the company's office in budapest?*
- well, for me of course it makes perfect sense. yeah it might have. so at least for the recruitment section of the company, it might also have helped them, ehm, kind of understand or at least notice some of what they are working for or working at on behalf of the doctors or whoever they might be recruiting. so I think they are quite nice. so of course they also influence people on a daily basis in some way. honestly I had forgotten all about them haha. but yeah they are there and of course they are quite uniquely Danish. the Kaj Bojesen monkey and the lego. things that are quite special for Denmark and very well known.
- *how do you think they affect the employees?*
- well I mean, I think they, they, they affect them in the way that they are reminded that they work in a multicultural workplace. and also that, you know, they, they maybe

help to inspire people, not only the workers, but also the candidates who are walking through, get a little bit of the glimpse into, little word plays and items that are uniquely Danish. and it helps them integrate into predominantly Danish work culture.

- *so you, you're saying that the objects, they have an influence on people, it helps them understand Danish culture?*
- I think at least if you see something, like the Kaj Bojesen monkey for instance, or the lego. you will stop up and take a look at it. maybe you will question it, or question ehm, or ask what are this who does it belong to, and in that way get a better sense of Danish culture. or at least know more about it. so in that way, I would say yes, it does in some way influence the, the non-Danish people at least
- *ehm, how are the objects being treated by employees? like do they notice them, do they interacts with the objects?*
- ehm well, the legos was very interactive. before covid we had a daily, sorry weekly lego competition. so we would put up a theme, let's say build you know, something adventurous. and then people would build different things. based on what they kinda associated it based on the word. and yeah, so so, that was very interactive and it was also highly used actually. people really enjoyed that part. about the pictures I remember, not much the words the poster with all the old Danish words that are dying. but some of the other posters, that are little more unique. like 'there's no cow on the ice', 'fyn er fin' and these kind of things. people they didn't really understand them. and they were also very difficult to explain in a way that made sense. but people they noticed and questioned it. and I think it definitely improved their understanding of Denmark and the Danish culture
- *it makes them think or reflect?*
- yeah absolutely, yeah.
- *do you think Danes have a better understanding of the meanings of the objects? for example ingen ko på isen, or the Kaj Bojesen monkey?*
- well of those two I think they have a better understanding, yes. I mean lego is also a very big thing in Hungary. so, so they already knew these beforehand. but I think, I mean when you see something that is on display, and looks weird, or the words are

different, then of course you stop up to, to question what is it that I am looking and, or what is it that i'm holding. ehm. and yeah I think that helps them probably it did make some sort of difference, and also remind them what they are working for.

- *so it's affecting their understanding of the company? do you think it's affecting their work culture, their way of working, both Hungarian and Danish employees being surrounded by Danish objects?*
- ehm.. I'm not sure if it has an impact on kind of, the work culture. I mean it, it does of course have an impact in the way that it. well that it helps people. just think about what they're doing. but I mean if you look at the lego bricks, you're not gonna think about, kind of hierarchy or something like this. but the way that it did help probably is that it, it enables communication across the different cultures. because people would see something they didn't know about, which was just taken for granted by Danish people because we are surrounded by it from we're born essentially. but the Hungarians, or anyone else who is not Danish, would stop up and, and ask about it from Danish people and learn from Danish, and enable communication across the different cultures. so if anything it probably helped on a more of a team building basis, ehm.
- *do you think, or are these lego competitions you mentioned, was it. who participated in that, which employees? was it Hungarians, Danes, was it lower employees, management?*
- it was everyone.
- *everyone yeah?*
- yeah. the managing director was ehm, usually won too, he was very good haha.
- *do you think ehm, do you think about Denmark during your work day?*
- hmm.. I mean not in an emotional way, but in a logical way. I of course did cause that was my job haha. but I didn't transfer the properties to a personal level for the most part.
- *okay. would you say you are working in a Danish way or a Hungarian way?*

- good question, because what does that exactly mean? but I mean i, I like to think that I work in a mostly Danish way, but also being schooled by Hungarians in Hungary, partly working in a Hungarian way. but I'm not quite sure. I mean the organization as a whole is definitely mostly influenced by Danish work culture, that's for sure.
- *but have, you mentioned some aspects of Hungarian work culture, respect, authority, there's a chain of command. so have you adopted some of those aspects, being schooled by Hungarians?*
- no, no. then I mean, in that way I agree that I, I'm working in a Danish way. yeah absolutely.
- *do you think there's any advantages about knowing about Danish culture when working at the company?*
- there's some things which I think non-Danish people should be aware of when working with Danish people. and that is, especially things such as sarcasm, which is very difficult, or can be very difficult for some cultures. ehm I think the Hungarians don't have that much of an issue with is, but it's something that you should be aware of, because some people don't grasp the idea of sarcasm. and you might really offend someone by saying something you meant in a sarcastic way. I don't think, I don't think Danish work culture comes as a culture shock to our Hungarian peers. so I don't think necessarily that has to be introduced to them. but i, I think was pretty much standard when a person joined, they walked around the entire office and that everyone have a short chat. and they where told that if you need anything, if you have any help, or need any help just come to me, don't worry about it. so in that way they might have had an introduction, just not in a sort of a formalized way.
- *do you think they will fit in the company better socially if they understand Danish culture better? for example it could be understanding the objects on the walls, or some other cultural significant thing that is Danish?*
- ehm. yeaah well. so i, I mentioned that, you know, it enables communication across, the objects enable communication across the different cultures. so yes in that way definitely brought people closer in some way. that probably also made it easier to work across culture, and also maintain good relationships. and if you lack something

to talk about you always had a go to, which was on the walls or hanging from the shelves or something like this.

- *can there be any advantage of being Danish when working at the company? it can be social, or work quality or something else.*
- well, of course since we worked with Denmark, that is the hospitals and the clinic owners and all these aspects of lines of business that we have. some of them could only be maintained by Danish people because of communication. and I think that also, one of the things that we noticed what that. especially with elderly, or older, workers or customers, they ehm. they intend to trust and they are more inclined to talk to people that are familiar, that is, you know, being from the same country. or at least speaking the same language. so some positions are not really, not really the best for non-speaking, non-Danish speaking people. and in that way there was an advantage of being a Danish speaker.
- *is there and advantage being Danish when starting at the company or when integrating into the company?*
- I, I, it's a difficult question because the company is very, you know, the business lines are divided. and the different sections of the company are separated. so the recruitment part was mostly, or solely maintained by Hungarians. and the organization B, selling and external part was solely done by Danish speakers. so in that way we are very divided in to different unit's. so, so actually I'm not sure if, if it helped, yeah. but I think from the finance department we had two Hungarians, or we have two Hungarian speakers. and I think they felt like, they were apart of the company, but I also note that it was mentioned several times at the management meetings that we need to speak more English to make sure that we include them more. because if we switch to Danish they can't be a part of the conversation, and of course then it helps, definitely helps speaking Danish.
- *and Danish language is often spoken even when there are not Danish speakers present?*
- yeah, yeah.

- *have you experienced any negative attitude towards Hungarian culture at the company from employees?*
- ehm, I wouldn't say the culture as such, but there was of course, and it was mostly done in Danish, but there was of course criticism of different things. either political or the way their society works, because it's just very different from how the Danish society works. I don't think it's something the Hungarians know, cause as I said it's something that is done in, in Danish, but I think that, you know, we could probably have toned down the way that we sometimes talk about their country, since we're after all, after all we're guests there haha. but ehm. you know even if we're guest we're allowed to have an opinion of what's going on. yeah.
- *have you experienced any negative attitude towards Danish culture at the company from employees?*
- ehm. I wouldn't say though. not that I can quite remember.
- *yeah. ehm. if I say that when there is talks about Danish work life, or work culture, it can also, sometimes be expense of the Hungarian society. that Danish is this and this because it is not Hungarian, as an example?*
- right
- *have you experienced that?*
- I mean of course some things are put into contrast. ehm if you, I mean I don't know if that's necessarily culture. but at least the society, which is also I suppose a part of culture. but you know, if something is, I don't really know an example. but if a Hungarian says we do this and this, then yeah sometimes it would be mentioned, but yeah in Denmark we do this and this and it's better because this and this. so in that way there's, things are put into contrast for sure. ehm. i, put don't think it's mentioned as, or said as a negative thing necessarily but I can see that it might come across as being such. if whats mentioned is kinda superior to what ever they are saying.
- *do you think that Danish employees and Hungarian employees work in the different ways?*

- ehm. I think so yes. I think there is a lot, much higher level of paranoia haha amongst the Hungarian colleagues. in the way that, you know, again it comes from the authority part of things, but if they are chatting in front of the coffee machine or something like this, and a person from management or something walk by, then I have noticed that they will very quickly wrap it up and go back to work. where as, with Danish colleagues if a manager comes and you're standing at the coffee machine talking, that manager will join you if you talk. so yeah that is one of the things I have noticed yes.
- *so ehm, you say that there is, the company as a more Danish way of management, Danish work culture. but Hungarian employees, they still adhere to Hungarian norms at the work, at a workplace like how they should behave.*
- I think, I mean, the open door policy and flat hierarchy, these things they have taking it upon them and they live by it, but I think that there's some, some things you're so ingrained with, kinda you're born and raised with. and I guess it's just maybe subconsciously just sticks with you. and in that way, yeah probably they do that differently at least.
- *I don't have any more questions, is there something you would like to add?*
- no not particularly. I think for the company is the best thing to do would be to have a completely English kind of policy, so that you had to speak English all the time with everyone, no exceptions kinda things.
- *why do you think that?*
- what?
- *why do you think that?*
- well I think that because then you would always include people. I mean there's no reason why we should speak Hungarian and Danish and English. I can see that there can of course be the risk of something being lost in translation, and of course there are some situations where, I mean. if you talk with customers of course you have to speak Danish with them. but if you spoke purely English all the time, everyone could, would always, you know, be able to join the conversation, and it would just be more normal that everyone had a common culture of English. it would probably support the

business and the communication across everyone, if everyone was able to understand what everyone said at all times. it would reduce paranoia, it would reduce, I mean if if you're worried that someone is saying something you don't like or anything like this, if it's in English you know what they are saying. ehm you know if you're saying talk to something about work with someone, someone over here said oh but I know the solution to this and that, I think that could really improve culture and also they way that the workplace work as an entirety. but that's my only thing that I would like to ad. that I thing would help.

- *so to sum up what you said, the company could be better at integrating the both cultures, or employees of both cultures with each other?*
- I mean in that particular situation yes, I think so yeah.
- *well thank you participating*
- you're very welcome.

11.5 Appendix V

Employee K (Noémi), Hungarian employee, 4+ years work experience.

Interviewer's sentences are written in *cursive*, interviewee's are not.

- *What thoughts come to mind when I say work culture at the company?*
- Flat hierarchy, for sure. ehm. friendly atmosphere. ehm. opinions are welcome and expected. feedback is very much valued, and expected. open mindedness, I guess. ehm. yeah those are the first thing that comes to mind.
- *would you describe the work culture at the company as particular Danish or Hungarian?*
- I think it is seventy percent Danish thirty Hungarians, so more Danish
- *would you try to explain the seventy-thirty division?*

- well yeah. since there was quite a few Hungarian people working there I think there are quite a few Hungarians still working there. but also when I started there where I think more Hungarians and then we started getting more interns, so now I think the rate is like equalizing kind of, like how many Hungarians and danes are at the office, but at the very beginning ehm. it was, I don't know. you could still feel that it's still not a Hungarian workplace, because I've worked at a Hungarian workplace before, and this was much more laid back, and ehm, like I said more friendlier and more casual atmosphere. ehm, so that was very not Hungarian cause you cannot, you could feel that there was no tension in people coming to work.
- *what do you think, what does Hungarian work culture mean to you?*
- well it's, it's much more formal I would say. you know in Hungarian there are two kind of tenses like, if you address someone who is your superior or senior, you address them in a formal manner. and if you're addressing a person on the same level as you then it's an informal manner. and then Hungarian workplaces it's very important to keep that, it's not just hierarchy, but it's like a very clinging on to respect, and a little bit old fashioned I would say, ways. and it's also at, they uh, Hungarian workplaces don't respect feed back as much, like ehm. like it has to be done kinda thing, like a early review or something. it's a bureaucratic chor, but it's not really taken into consideration much. and ehm. yeah it's just mostly the strict hierarchy that is must obvious in Hungarian workspaces.
- *and the, and what does Danish work culture mean to you?*
- well the flat hierarchy for sure. ehm. and that everybody, even the so to say lowest level of employees, have a say in their, in how they do their tasks. emh. if you can optimize a process then you are free to do so. you can talk to your superior or your bosses boss, or you bosses bosses boss without restrictions. it's not like going over someone's head, it's just normal, it's okay to you know, talk to people haha, who are not on the same level as you.
- *ehm. do you think, so you would describe the company as having seventy percent Danish ehm work culture features, but workplace still some Hungarian ehm features?*
- yeah yeah yeah, I think the ehm. what was very Hungarian I think when we where complaining about people dirty dishes in the sink, and the repeatedly sending emails

about it. I think it happens less now or less often. but there was times when it was a weekly thing, us complaining about people being untidy. and you know the little culture clashed, like you're in the bathroom and someone tries to open the door without knocking? that's unacceptable in Hungary but it's weird in Denmark if you knock, so. you know, just, slight tiny tiny differences. not a strongly noticeable I guess, only if you are there for a long time.

- *so the Hungarian aspects of the company is more social?*
- yeah yeah yeah definitely more social yeah.
- *do you think the company actively seeks to integrate both Hungarian and Danish work culture at the company?*
- I think more Danish than Hungarian.
- *aha, why do you say that?*
- because ehm, the company values themselves, you know the five values. quality over quantity, respects, you know these ones. they are leaning more towards Danish work culture than Hungarian, and they tried to incorporate more. and Hungarian work culture is not really something to strive for, cause it's not great, it's not serviceminded, for one. and this is a company that provies consultant services, so it's very important to be servicesminded. and Hungarians don't do that, we are like the costumer can fuck off, sorry haha.
- *ehm. what differences or similarities have you experienced comparing your Hungarian and Danish colleagues to each other?*
- I think everyone is always ready with a joke and can be chatty, like the water cooler talks, you know, those are very common in both. I think ehm. caffeine addiction yes, that's a check.
- *but ehm, when if you can go back to the water cooler talk, is that more the danes or Hungarians engaging in that?*
- both, both, I think yeah, I think that's a similarity at least as far as i've noticed that. when people just, you know, wanna catch a break, they come up to, and they just stop in the kitchen for ten minutes, and have a nice talk I think that's both ehm, very

typical in Hungary and ehm, in Denmark or at least at the company it was very typical of both Danish colleagues and Hungarian colleagues. but before covid hehe sorry, no actually now too so. now that it's coming back and people are coming back to the office it's fine

- *and ehm, when what about the coffee addiction?*
- haha I think that's a bit more Danish, ehm. we do like our coffee ehm, but I've noticed that some Danish colleagues drinks like seven cups a day eight maybe, which is just horrendous to my Hungarian mind, like how are you people alive? ehm but, you know haha
- *aha, yeah. ehm. is there any, you have mentioned that, is there any other differences or similarities. you mentioned about Danish work culture that it is less hierarchical, more open minded, and they value feed back. where Hungarian work culture is more formal, has more hierarchy, more bureaucratic. they don't value feed back that much. is that also something that you could see in your colleagues of the different cultures?*
- ehm not at the company actually, now, I think that everyone that came to work here was hired because they were open minded. and they very quickly pick up the pace. when they realize this it not a typical Hungarian workplace, they are much more open to Danish work culture. and all of us just kinda pick it up, and lean more to that method, or that.
- *did you have, dI you have a hard time of adapting or was it there a period of adapting?*
- no, not really. because ehm I only worked at Hungarian workplaces before at a shorter time. and I actually left those workplaces because I didn't feel it was a good fit for me. cause I was bit too, ehm, informal, and too friendly hehe, I don't know, too chatty. I would state my opinion loud and clear, and that's not necessarily valued in Hungarian workplaces or not everywhere it would say. ehm so no it was very easy for my, it was a perfects fit, I knew it right away it was good.
- *I will show you some pictures now.*
- okay.

- *I am gonna show you some pictures and then we will talk a bit about them afterwards.*
- [showing pictures]
- oh that's the posters from the office!
- *exactly.*
- oh and I assembled that [shelf]
- *So there are some books about Danish culture, and there's the monkey. living Danishly and some other Danish culture books.*
- yes.
- *some quotes. what do you think about the different objects on display at the company, at the budapest office, displaying Danish cultural objects?*
- I think they are, well for one they're nice decorations, so they definitely elevate the atmosphere at the office, ehm, and it's a great conversation starter, like when a Hungarian drops in the office, they can start like, what is that and they find out about Danish culture a little, and that's very important when working at a Danish workplace. so I like all of the posters that are there. they are just, yeah, and also they are very important for the candidates, because they can also like, see just a lot of Danish stuff all around them and I think that's nice, it's colorful, it's happy, it's ehm culturally appropriate. it's nice
- *so ehm, so what you're saying is that there is, the objects have an influence on both the employees and the candidates. you say that it's helping them understand Danish culture*
- yeah and be curious about Danish culture because you look at one of those posters and you're like 'what is that cow saying', or 'why is there a cow and a quote on that picture' or 'why is there a horse and a quote on that picture'. and then you find out that it is like sayings ehm, that has cow and horse in them in Danish and then you can learn it and then it's a fun fact you know. it's a learning experience haha, in your environment, which is just fun

- *yeah. do you think Danes have a better understanding of the meaning of the objects?*
- yeah yeah yeah, of course well, for one a lot of the words on them are in Danish, and they are like referencing places in Denmark some of them, and object that are typical Danish things. and ehm, yeah I think it is also great for the danes working at the office just to remind them of their home country.
- *yes, would you think the object would be there even though there where not candidates and only employees?*
- yes but it's important for the employees too. I mean they are working in a Danish work cultures, a Danish cultural environment, so. I mean, it has to reflect the culture, the environment.
- *do you think it helps the employees fitting better in to the company?*
- yeah yeah yeah, I think learning their stories, the posters' stories is really just, it makes them, makes all of us employees appreciate them more because we know the meaning behind it
- *did you know anything about Danish culture before you started working at the company?*
- not really just the typical scandinavian stereotypes you know. like ehm. happiest country in the world. everything is perfect there, everything is working very well hehe. but it's very often dark and rainy and cold and, people are on antidepressants. you know, just the typical stuff.
- *ehm so, so you say that the objects they portray the better side of Denmark?*
- yeah for sure
- *do you think about Denmark during your workday in anyway?*
- yeah I have to. it's emh, even when, you know when you're talking to candidates for example, and they of course have these questions and concerns about moving there. and ehm just. for them to see all these positive little happy Danish people and happy Danish things around them. it's very comforting. and I think it makes the transition that much easier. for me as well I think about them going to a good place, and then I

feel better about my work, because yeah they will have a nice life there. so yeah I think about Denmark. and it would be hard not to think about Denmark when you're surrounded by these objects, and of course Danish people. so yeah.

- *would you that you, the way that you're working, way you're conducting your work. would you say that it's Danish or Hungarian?*
- I think, since I'm working in a Hungarian team, within the Danish company, emh. it's. again it's seventy Danish, thirty Hungarian because we do discuss a lot of things among us within the team. in Hungarian. and then of course our culture comes out. you know when you have three Hungarians talking we are gonna be very Hungarian even at a Danish workplace, so. ehm yeah but. ehm, but we do this discuss everything and that's very more Danish than Hungarian, so if anybody has a problem they need to bring storm about or something then, we going to discussion mode and everybody helps each other and. yeah it's much more Danish I would say
- *can there be any advantages of knowing about Danish culture when working in the company? you mentioned that ehm, people get become curios about Denmark because of the objects there. do you think knowledge about Denmark, is that helpful?*
- yeah of course, of course. I mean if you're working with any nationality, learning about their background is, is absolutely useful. it helps you understand them better. it improves communication within the team, within the company. it's just, knowing about each others culture is, is very very important at a workplace.
- *do you think there is an effort from Danish employees to know about Hungarian culture?*
- yeah
- *in order to work with you?*
- yeah a lot of them are try to learn Hungarian or at least some Hungarian expressions. and they ask about things, why do you people do this, why do you people do that? you know, and then. and then they learn a lot about our culture as well.
- *aha. you they adapt some Hungarian culture in their work, in their way of working?*

- ehm, they must. yeah. I'm thinking about an example. I've seen a Danish employee blow his nose in public. that was fairly Hungarian yes.
- *okay*
- hahaha. I don't know. I'm sure they do. they swear a lot sometimes
- *have you experienced any negative attitude towards Hungarians culture at the company from employees?*
- explicitly negative no..
- *it can be uh, in conversations, ehm you talk about Hungarian culture or Hungary in any way, can there be negative sentiment from employees?*
- ehm well some exasperations about the way we do things, like our insanely slow and inefficient bureaucracy. that comes up very often because people have to get stuff done, but they can because bureaucracy is just crumbling down in this country. so yeah some about the way things, the way government offices work in Hungary can be very frustrating to someone coming from Denmark where it is working better
- *what about Hungarian work culture, have you experienced people commenting on that?*
- not really no. emh. no I can not recall any incidents
- *have you experienced any negative attitude towards Danish culture at the company from employees?*
- some people sometimes complain that there is too many meetings
- *yeah?*
- and they are long. you know the meetings that could fit in an email. that would be more time efficient. so maybe they commented on that, but nothing else I think. yeah. and meetings is that.
- *you perceive that as a Danish work culture phenomenon?*
- no I think it's omnipresent but, for some reason I think just Danish work culture has more and longer meetings haha. we just. I haven't had a meeting in a while now but it

used to be like, no I think it's still weekly daily, you know, it's just way too many way too often way too long.

- *was there some things at the company that you thought were difficult to work with, for example meeting. you mentioned that could be a bit frustrating maybe?*
- yeah but if we didn't have time for it, or we don't have time for a long one we can always, like, discuss the agenda and see if we can make it shorter and try to be more concise when we are actually talking. it's not like an impossible problem. but it is a bit too much sometimes. and I feel like it, can slow down my pace for the day, because it just breaks up the day. I have to stop doing this that I am really in to ehm, flowing and then I have to go to a meeting. and then I get back and my mind is elsewhere so. yeah I breaks up the day a little bit. but besides that, the director is the only hindrance.
- *I think we have covered it all. there is one thing, the objects. I would like me to explain me more how they are treated by employees. you mention that people are curious about, for example the cow you want to know more about that. could you tell me how the, how you interact with the objects?*
- ah well, when, for example when we take pictures of people at the office, or if workplace some celebration, ehm and, or a holiday or something. when we take pictures they are always in the pictures. just to represent to company online. if we posted for marketing reasons. so they are also kinda marketing materials, hey we are a Danish company, look at all the Danish culture on the wall. ehm. and ehm, the lego for instans, we had before covid weekly lego challenges. that you had to build something and then, you know, whenever you had free time you could like build an animal or something and then you would win some chocolate. if it was the best one. but this one employee always one so, that wasn't fair. so it's ehm. it, but it really can be a conversation starter, even when partners or clients come in for meeting, they can see that Danish culture is represented in the office. so the furniture, the ehm, the posters, the lego, the ikea stuff haha all around, it's very scandinavian. and you can, and the white wall you know, it's just the whole thing it scandI design. even really the walls, windows, furniture. so it's ehm. I think it's a great representation of ehm scandinavian and specifically Danish culture for everyone who walk in
- *so, people know that now they are in Danish territory, so now Danish rules apply?*

- yeah, yeah quite.
- *well that was ehm, all the questions I had. do you want to add anything to this, something you have thought about?*
- one more thing that about Danish work culture. that the changes are quite frequent. and like systems, or have we use them, or team structures. and I think that's a very good thing. cause in Hungary it takes for ever to implement changes, and systems, or anything really, cause people rebel. we are like no we don't change we are used to this. and at the company it is completely different, because we can actually evolve and develop and be better, by changing old habits. so that's also a nice thing about Danish work culture. and the flexibility yeah
- *and the flexibility yeah*
- yeah regarding the home office and work time and, you know, just in general. it's very flexible.
- *okay, I think we are done for now. thank you for participating in this interview.*

11.6 Appendix VI

Pictures of objects displayed at the MD-Recruitment/DentalService offices in Budapest.



Picture 1 on the left. Picture 2 on the right.



Picture 3 on the left. Picture 4 on the right.



Picture 5 on the left. Picture 6 on the right.



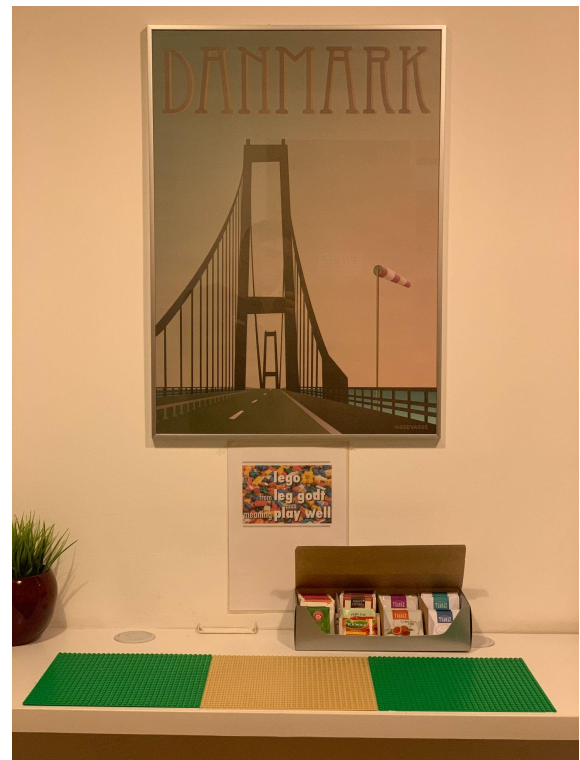
Picture 7 on the left. Picture 8 on the right.



Picture 9 on the left. Picture 10 on the right.



Picture 11 on the left. Picture 12 on the right.



Picture 13 on the left. Picture 14 on the right.



Picture 15 on the left. Picture 16 on the right.



Picture 17 on the left. Picture 18 on the right.



Picture 19 on the left. Picture 20 on the right.

