Summary

The overarching theme of this thesis is management in context. More precisely it investigates what characterizes management in diaconal institutions by analyzing how management is conceptualized and exercised in practice between, related to the context where it is performed. Data consists of observational data of six leaders from one or more days, interviews them, and analysis of policy documents from institutional and public policy level.

The thesis represents a multi-disciplinary study, but is primarily a contribution to an empirical science of diaconia, where a managerial study contributes to the empirical basis of a science of diaconia.

An important insight of the study is that management of faith-based charities represent common features and characteristics when compared with studies of management in other types of organizations. There are, however, differences between the somatic and clinical work and caring services with long-term perspective. The thesis thus claim that core tasks of the organization contribute to the understanding, shaping, and the practice of managerial work and roles. At the same time, data indicate relatively similar main areas of responsibility. As reported in other studies, first-line managers seem to have higher level of activities and higher pace due to the proximity to the exercise of services and they have a larger portion of administrative work. Time is mostly spent with own staff and to a lesser extent with superiors, fellow managers or external actors.

Managers contribute in different ways to the promotion of fundamental values and values-work in the organization. Faith-based charities operate between the public sector and civil society, and the organizational field is institutionalized through policies, professional standard requirements and the terms of the contract relationship to the authorities. The boards and top executives have contributed, so that sector values have been integrated and interpreted in the organization. At the same time the chosen values has been articulated and concretized in relation to the diaconal foundations and identity. Middle managers and first-line managers contribute to enhancing and the practicing these values, but contribute stronger in the articulation of public policy and professional values with practical implications for the daily work. Managers thus shapes the context of work in the organizational unit.

The thesis develops an integrative model of the managerial job, connecting a discussion of relevant dimensions by which to categorize practice and conceptions of how managers contribute in interpreting and shaping the understanding of organizational purpose. The study also contributes with input to empirical diaconal science. Particularly this relates to the diaconal character organizations, which were evident in relation to diaconal values and promotion of the faith-based foundation, which justified the institutions.

A distinguishing feature of diaconal management is interpreted as an example of integrated management of hybridity. Management of diaconal organizations are located in a context characterized by different rationalities, and data suggests managers have integrated these different rationalities in a holistic understanding of organizational purpose and managing.

Summarizing, the study contributes in strengthening the link between descriptive observational studies, with categorization of activity patterns, with an analysis of managers’ contributions to the organization through central tasks and functions. Thus, the study seek to move beyond the question of what the managers do addressing the question of why they do as they do. At the same time, the model is open for integrating the issue of how management is exercised through the various role profiles.