

Bybi

Walking the Path, Not Following the Star:

Purpose and Leadership as Embodied Practice in a Regenerative Enterprise





THIRD SEMESTER PROJECT

**Walking the Path,
Not Following the Star:
Purpose and Leadership as Embodied
Practice in a Regenerative Enterprise**

CHARACTERS: 163.405

GROUP:

V2560683466

SUBMITTED BY:

Anastasia Kerasoviti
Baptiste de Nercy
Guillermina Furch
Marie Sohn
Peter Goga

SUPERVISOR:

Jacob Dahl Rendtorff

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Abstract

Social enterprises are often described as organisations driven by a clear and shared purpose. Less is known about how this purpose is actually experienced and enacted in everyday organisational life. This study examines how members of a hybrid social enterprise make sense of their daily practices in relation to organisational purpose.

The research is based on a qualitative case study of Bybi, a Copenhagen based social enterprise working with urban beekeeping, environmental education and community engagement. Guided by a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the study draws on semi structured interviews with the founder, an employee and volunteers, complemented by participant observation during a volunteer workday and analysis of secondary material.

The findings show that organisational purpose at Bybi is not primarily expressed through formal strategies or articulated visions, but is continuously produced through everyday practices, interactions and shared responsibilities. Leadership emerges as a relational and situational process embedded in coordination, dialogue and mutual support rather than in formal roles or hierarchical authority. At the same time, organisational members navigate tensions related to hybridity, voluntary engagement and responsibility through ongoing sensemaking.

The study contributes to a practice based understanding of purpose and regenerative leadership in social enterprises by showing how organisational coherence is sustained through lived experience rather than formal structures or abstract ideals.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the last decades, social enterprises have emerged as notable actors at the intersection of social, environmental, and economic domains. These hybrid organisations focus on combining social purpose with entrepreneurial activity, responding to complex challenges in our society while operating within market logics. Though this dual orientation creates inherent tensions, such as tensions between social value creation and economic performance, and tensions between ethical commitment and operational efficiency. These tensions together with institutional demands continually shape organisational life. Leadership within such a context can no longer be understood through traditional, hierarchical models, but needs to be reconceived as a relational, collective, and practice-oriented phenomenon. Despite growing academic interest in relational leadership and participation-oriented ways of organising, little is known about how leadership and purpose is actually experienced, negotiated, and made meaningful by organisational members in their everyday activities.

This gap between conceptual understanding and lived realities is specifically noteworthy in organisations that rely greatly on voluntary participation, where diverse roles, motivations, and interpretations do exist together. This study addresses the questions about how members of hybrid social enterprises interpret their daily practices in relation to the organisation's overarching purpose, how is leadership enacted when authority is distributed, and how does meaning emerge from collective action instead of a top-down communication. These questions are examined in the case of Bybi, a Copenhagen-based social enterprise that combines urban beekeeping, environmental education, and community building. The investigation moves beyond abstract theoretical understanding of social entrepreneurship in order to focus on the embodied, lived, and relational dimensions of organising.

1.1. Problem Area

Social enterprises combine social and economic goals and therefore operate within competing institutional logics that are difficult to reconcile. The effort to balance moral purpose with economic performance generates ongoing tension at the core of their organisational life (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Leadership research has sought to address this complexity by turning to relational and collective perspectives that emphasise participation, ethics and shared meaning (Jackson et al., 2018; Raelin, 2014). These approaches frame leadership as a social process through which diverse goals can be integrated. However, much of this research remains at a conceptual level. While collaboration is frequently framed as a positive and coherent process, empirical studies highlight that collaborative encounters are often shaped by affective tensions, power relations and informal dynamics that influence how collective purpose and leadership emerge in practice (Dahlman, 2023).

Organisation studies have similarly moved towards understanding organisations as continuously produced through situated actions and interactions rather than as stable entities (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). From this perspective, leadership emerges within collective activity instead of being exercised by an individual (Carroll et al., 2008; Denis et al., 2012). Yet despite this shift, practice-oriented research tends to overlook how members sustain coherence and purpose in their daily work. The relationship between abstract organisational visions and the lived realities through which they are enacted remains insufficiently explored. This gap is not only theoretical but also practical, as it limits understanding of how hybrid organisations navigate tensions between ideals and realities in their everyday functioning.

To bridge this gap, an interpretative approach is essential. From a hermeneutic-phenomenological position, organisational reality is intersubjective, constantly created through the meanings that members attribute to their own experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This perspective shifts focus from what the organisations are, to how they

can be enacted and understood in everyday practice. It emphasises the lifeworld of participants which shapes actions and interpretations (Husserl, 1970). In hybrid organisations like social enterprises, this shared background of meaning can be often fragmented and require ongoing sensemaking to align daily practices with the social and environmental objectives.

Furthermore, the role of dialogue and narratives in upholding coherence seem to be underexplored. Different actors within social enterprises need to continuously make sense of and justify their actions within contradictory value frameworks (Diochon & Anderson, 2011). The process of meaning-making is strongly relational and embodied. It involves producing shared understanding, but also renegotiating meaning in connection to tensions and contradictions (Giuliani, 2016). How do these processes emerge and unfold in the course of daily work and how they interact with organisational coherence remains to be uncovered.

ByBi, a social enterprise based in Copenhagen that pursues social, environmental and economic goals, provides a relevant setting to investigate these questions. Its hybrid structure requires members to continually interpret and balance different expectations linked to the organisation's vision in their daily work. Exploring how members perceive and make sense of these everyday practices offers an entry point to examine how purpose and leadership are enacted, adjusted and sustained within complex organisational contexts. The aim of this research is therefore to explore how members of Bybi perceive and make sense of their everyday organisational practices in relation to the organisation's purpose, and thereby contribute to a more grounded understanding of how coherence and meaning are maintained within hybrid organisational settings.

1.2. Research Question

How do members of Bybi perceive and make sense of everyday organisational practices in relation to the organisation's purpose?

2. Background

This section provides contextual background for the study by introducing the empirical case and outlining the motivation for the research. It begins with a presentation of Bybi as a social enterprise, describing its organisational structure, activities and positioning within broader social and environmental agendas. The section then accounts for the academic motivation behind the study, explaining how prior engagement with social entrepreneurship literature and case-based material informed the project's focus. Together, these subsections establish the empirical and motivational context for the study.

2.1. Case Description - Bybi

Bybi ("City Bee") is a Danish social enterprise based in the Sundholm neighbourhood of Copenhagen. It was founded in 2009 by a British anthropologist, who developed the idea in the aftermath of the UN Climate Conference held in Copenhagen that same year (Elsøe et al., 2019). Inspired by the global discussions on sustainability and social transformation, the founder sought to create a local initiative that could connect ecological awareness with social inclusion through meaningful and collaborative forms of work (Fuglsang, et al., 2019).

The organisation operates through a core team of five employees supported by a wide network of volunteers and partners (Bybi, n.d.-d).

Bybi's activities span a wide range of interconnected practices that bridge environmental, social and cultural dimensions. At its core, the organisation operates a network of urban

beehives distributed across Copenhagen. Beehives are placed on rooftops or near buildings belonging to public institutions, private companies and social organisations, including partners such as Ørsted, L'Oréal and Tivoli (Bybi, 2023). Bybi maintains the hives, processes the honey, and often redistributes the finished products back to employees and partners, thereby creating a tangible link between production, community, and sustainability (Fuglsang, et al., 2019).

Partnerships constitute a key element of Bybi's business model and identity. Approximately a quarter of the organisation's income derives from corporate collaborations, around sixty percent from honey sales, and the remaining share from partnerships with schools, housing associations and social projects. Bybi receives no public funding, and any profit is reinvested into its social and environmental work (Københavns Lufthavn & Bybi, 2016). For its partners, collaboration with Bybi represents more than a corporate sustainability initiative. The partnerships are designed as mutual learning spaces, where the honeybees act as ambassadors for regeneration, biodiversity and social connection (Bybi, n.d.-c). These collaborations are supported through ongoing communication and evaluation, ensuring continued learning and knowledge sharing (Bybi, n.d.-c).

In addition to its production and partnership work, Bybi functions as a social and educational platform. The organisation hosts a variety of activities at its Sundholm base and across Copenhagen ranging from guided tours and workshops to talks, creative collaborations and community events. Examples include *Conversation and Soup* evenings that explore collective dialogue and cultural exchange, *Parliament of Things* discussions, and creative sessions such as candle-making or *Resting with Bees* workshops (Bybi, 2024). Bybi also collaborates with schools, cultural institutions and local organisations on projects that combine ecological education with artistic and sensory learning (Bybi, n.d.-a). Across these initiatives, the founder frequently contributes through talks and discussions that connect Bybi's practical

work with broader reflections on social entrepreneurship, regeneration and ecological responsibility (Bybi, n.d.-b). Each initiative builds on the principles of commitment and shared responsibility, aiming to create spaces where everyone can take part and feel included, regardless of their background or experience (Bybi, 2024).

2.2. Motivation for the Study

The motivation for this is rooted in our academic engagement in the master's programme Social Entrepreneurship and Management at Roskilde University. Throughout the programme, we have been introduced to a broad range of theories, concepts and empirical cases concerning social enterprises, social innovation and new forms of organising in response to societal challenges. A recurring theme across courses and project work has been the dual nature of social enterprises, which seeks to combine social, environmental and economic objectives while operating as professional organisations in complex, multi-stakeholder contexts.

As a part of our studies, we have repeatedly worked with case-based material, including reports, strategy documents and public communication from social enterprises. In these materials, organisations are often presented as coherent and purpose-driven entities, characterised by shared values, collective responsibility and strong alignment between purpose and practice. This was also the case when we previously worked with Bybi in another course, where our analysis was based primarily on annual reports and other secondary material. These documents portray Bybi as a highly collaborative organisation, emphasising co-creation, collectivity and shared ownership of both processes and outcomes.

While such representations offer valuable insights into organisational self-understanding and strategic orientation, they also raised a growing curiosity regarding how these ideals are experienced and enacted in everyday organisational life. In particular, we became interested

in understanding how organisational members relate to the collective language and purpose articulated in the formal documents, and how meaning is constructed through daily practices rather than solely through official narratives. This shift in interest reflects a broader concern within the programme: moving from abstract models and conceptual descriptions towards an examination of how social entrepreneurship and organising unfold in practice.

From an academic perspective, this motivation aligns with the programme's emphasis on problem-oriented and practice-based research, as well as its focus on analysing organisations as dynamic and socially constructed processes. Rather than evaluating whether a social enterprise succeeds in fulfilling its purpose, this study seeks to explore how members themselves make sense of their everyday activities in relation to that purpose. By focusing on lived experiences, situated action and meaning-making, the project addresses a gap between conceptual accounts of social enterprises and the practical realities through which organisational visions are continuously interpreted and sustained.

By selecting Bybi as a case, this study aims to deepen understanding of how collective ideals and social purpose are negotiated in everyday organisational practices. The motivation is thus both academic and empirical: to contribute to discussions on organising and leadership in social enterprises, and to gain insight into how purpose-driven organisations function beyond their formal representations.

3. Literature Review

The literature review situates the study within existing academic debates on social enterprises, voluntary work, leadership and organisational sensemaking. Drawing on organisational and management research, this section identifies key tensions related to hybridity, participation and purpose in social enterprises, with particular attention to how meaning and leadership are enacted in everyday organisational practices. The review further

establishes the conceptual foundation for analysing how organisational members interpret and sustain organisational vision through daily work activities.

3.1. Social Enterprise and Social Entrepreneurship

The concepts of Social Enterprise (SE) and Social Entrepreneurship have received significant attention throughout academic, policy, and practitioner circles since the 1990s. Despite this popularity, the field remains pre-paradigmatic, characterised by an abundance of definitions, conceptualisations, and contextual interpretations (Nicholls, 2010c, as cited in Huybrechts & Nichols, 2012).

At its essence, social entrepreneurship is understood as a process which merges a social mission with a market-oriented and innovative approach. J. Gregory Dees (1998) contributed with one of the most cited definitions, delineating social entrepreneurs as “change agents in the social sector” who achieve their mission by:

- “Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value),”
- “Recognising and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission,”
- “Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning,”
- “Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and”
- “Exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created” (Dees, 1998, p.4).

This definition emphasises the dual focus on social value creation and entrepreneurial conducts such as innovation and recognition of opportunities. Huybrechts and Nicholls (2012) integrate these ideas into three essential building blocks of Social Entrepreneurship: *sociality* (primacy of social/environmental goals), *innovation* (new solutions to social problems), and *market orientation* (application of commercial methods).

A central and tenacious challenge in the field is achieving definitional clarity. As Dacin, Dacin and Tracey (2011) observe, “the predominance of definitional debates leads to an academic literature that appears somewhat fragmented... with a variety of very disparate meanings” (p. 1204). They argue that a mission-oriented definition holds the most promise, suggesting that “a definition of social entrepreneurship focusing on... the primary mission of the social entrepreneur being one of creating social value by providing solutions to social problems... provides for the fruitful exploration of social entrepreneurship as a context” (p. 1204). This focus on outcomes, both positive and negative, allows researchers to examine the way by which social value is attained and realised.

The academic and practical discourse on SE and Social Entrepreneurship is not indivisible. Previous research has identified four major distinct schools of thought, often rooted in various socio-economic contexts (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Hoogendoorn et al. 2010). Young and Lecy (2014) categorise these into competing metaphors that shape understanding. One approach is the Social Innovation School (Schumpeterian). Prominent in the US, this school puts an emphasis on the individual social entrepreneur as a transformative agent of change. These entrepreneurs are characterised as those who “identifies and applies practical solutions to social problems by combining innovation, resourcefulness, and opportunities” (Schwab Foundation, as cited in Young & Lecy, 2014, p. 1326). This perspective often prioritises the depiction of a “heroic characterisation” of social entrepreneurs (Dacin et al., 2011, p. 1205).

A second school of thought is the Social Enterprise School (Earned-Income). Another school strongly prominent in the US, with focus placed more on the organisation rather than an individual. Its primary focus delves on non-profit organisations generating earned income by adopting commercial activities and therefore minimising dependence on donations and grants (Dees & Anderson, 2006). Young & Lecy (2014) refer to this as the “Spectrum” metaphor,

which “emphasises the trade-off between pure profit-making and social impact, locating organisations on this continuum” (p. 1307).

A third school of thought is the EMES Approach (Ideal Type). Rooted in the tradition of European social economy, this school is defined by EMES Research Network using nine criteria. These include entrepreneurial dimensions (e.g., economic activity, risk) and social dimensions (e.g., limited profit distribution, participatory governance) (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). Young & Lecy (2014) describe this conceptualisation of SE as an “aspirational ideal type of organisation” (p. 1307) or a “north star” for the field.

And lastly, the fourth school of thought is the UK Approach. The UK government took a proactive role and defined social enterprise as “a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are primarily reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners” (DTI, 2002, as cited in Defourny & Nyssens, 2010, p. 37).

The coexistence of the various schools brings about inherent ambiguity and tensions within and around social enterprises. Diochon and Anderson (2011) investigate this by examining the role of values in reconciling a purpose of an organisation with its practices. They recognise major value tensions that social enterprises need to traverse, such as “social well-being vs. economic well-being; innovation vs. conformity; and independence vs. interdependence” (p. 101). Their research focused on narratives showcases that these tensions are not only weakening but can be enabling organisations to rebalance their priorities and create its unique identity and operational logic.

3.2. Voluntary Work in Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are characterised not only by hybrid missions and governance structures, but also by the composition of their workforce. In contrast to conventional organisations, they

frequently rely on a combination of paid employees and voluntary workers, whose contributions are central to organisational functioning and identity. Voluntary work therefore constitutes not a peripheral addition, but a structural feature of many social enterprises, shaping everyday practices, organisational culture and the enactment of social missions (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). At the same time, research distinguishes voluntary work in mission-driven organisations from forms of unpaid labour driven primarily by economic necessity, emphasising its normative, relational and value-based grounding (Wilson, 2000; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

The prominence of voluntary work reflects the normative foundations of social enterprises, which are often rooted in civic engagement, solidarity and collective responsibility. Unlike paid employment, voluntary work is not primarily motivated by financial remuneration, but by intrinsic motives such as value alignment, moral commitment and the desire to contribute to a meaningful cause. Research on volunteering has shown that such forms of engagement are closely linked to processes of identity formation and meaning construction, as individuals derive purpose, belonging and orientation from their involvement (Clary et al., 1998; Wilson, 2000). In social enterprises, these motivational dynamics are particularly salient, as organisational missions explicitly appeal to ethical values and societal contribution. Volunteers thus contribute not only labour, but also narratives, interpretations and expectations that shape how organisational purpose is understood and enacted in practice.

At the same time, voluntary work in social enterprises cannot be reduced to motivational aspects alone. The coexistence of paid and unpaid work gives rise to distinctive organisational arrangements that challenge conventional assumptions about coordination, accountability and authority. Volunteers often occupy roles that are operationally significant yet formally ambiguous, as they are neither employees nor external stakeholders. This hybridity shapes expectations regarding commitment, availability and responsibility and

requires ongoing negotiation in everyday organisational practice (Studer, 2016). These negotiations are not purely technical but frequently intersect with informal power relations between paid staff and volunteers.

Empirical research highlights that the integration of voluntary workers can both enhance organisational capacity and generate tension. On the one hand, volunteers contribute time, skills and social capital that would otherwise be unavailable, thereby supporting organisational resilience and mission fulfilment (Brudney & Meijs, 2009). On the other hand, differences in contractual status, motivation and degrees of professionalisation between paid staff and volunteers may lead to role ambiguity, coordination problems and conflicts over decision-making and authority (Kreutzer & Jäger, 2011). Such tensions are particularly pronounced in social enterprises, where efficiency requirements coexist with participatory ideals and normative commitments. Recent qualitative research on purpose-driven organisations further suggests that strong identification with organisational purpose may contribute to processes of work intensification, as normative expectations of commitment and care become internalised by organisational members (Dupret & Pultz, 2021). These dynamics complicate distinctions between voluntary engagement and organisational demand, particularly in contexts where meaningful work is closely tied to moral responsibility.

Moreover, volunteering itself has undergone significant transformation in recent decades. Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) describe a shift from collective, duty-based forms of volunteering towards more reflexive and individualised modes of engagement. Volunteers increasingly seek flexibility, personal development and alignment with individual values rather than long-term obligation to a single organisation. For social enterprises, this development further intensifies organisational complexity, as commitment becomes more fluid while organisational tasks often require continuity and reliability.

Taken together, voluntary work in social enterprises constitutes a distinct organisational phenomenon that intersects with hybrid missions, identity processes and everyday practice. It underscores that social enterprises are not only hybrid in terms of goals and resources, but also in terms of labour relations and meaning structures. An understanding of voluntary work is therefore essential for analysing how organisational purpose is enacted, negotiated and sustained in practice. In this study, voluntary work is approached not as an idealised form of engagement, but as a situated organisational practice shaped by motivation, tension and sensemaking, providing a conceptual foundation for the subsequent analysis.

3.3. Leadership in Social Enterprises

Leadership in social enterprises has been examined extensively in organisational research considering the hybrid character of these organisations, which combine social purpose with economic activity. The coexistence of multiple institutional logics introduces persistent tensions that challenge hierarchical and leader-centred understandings of leadership (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Within this context, leadership research has shifted towards relational and process-oriented approaches that emphasise interaction, participation and shared responsibility.

This shift aligns with broader developments in leadership studies that conceptualise leadership as a social process rather than a position or individual attribute. Leadership-as-practice approaches conceptualise leadership as constituted through everyday activities, interactions and routines, and thus embedded in organisational life rather than exercised through formal authority (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2014). Leadership is thereby understood as enacted through coordination, dialogue and mutual adjustment, an orientation of particular relevance to social enterprises that depend on collective engagement and volunteer participation.

Within social enterprise research, leadership is commonly examined in relation to organisational purpose and meaning. Jackson et al. (2018) conceptualise leadership as a dialogical and context-sensitive phenomenon shaped by interrelated dimensions such as purpose, place and social relations. This perspective locates leadership in processes of shared interpretation and interaction rather than directive control. At the same time, such perspectives may implicitly assume a degree of coherence between organisational values and everyday practice that may be difficult to sustain in hybrid organisational settings marked by ambiguity and competing demands.

Relational and practice-based perspectives further highlight that leadership is enacted through interaction, dialogue and embodied engagement in everyday organisational life (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). From this perspective, leadership involves ongoing negotiation of belonging, trust and responsibility among organisational members rather than the execution of predefined roles. Pasricha et al. (2017) point to the ethical dimension of leadership in value-driven organisations, while also indicating its vulnerability when moral aspirations encounter economic constraints.

Other contributions question individualised conceptions of leadership by conceptualising leadership as distributed and plural. Denis et al. (2012) describe leadership as emerging from the interaction of multiple actors who collectively shape organisational direction, priorities and interpretations. In social enterprises, similar dynamics can be observed, leadership processes often extend beyond formal roles, involving employees, volunteers and partners across formal and informal contexts. Leadership thus appears less as a fixed role than as a collective accomplishment negotiated in and through practice.

Research has further identified tensions between formal accountability structures and informal leadership practices. While legal responsibility, strategic decision-making and external representation are commonly concentrated in specific roles, leadership is

simultaneously enacted through informal interaction, shared routines and situational coordination (Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2016). This coexistence of formal authority and emergent leadership practices may introduce ambiguity, while also enabling flexibility within hybrid organisational contexts.

From a practice-based perspective, leadership does not necessarily arise from intentional acts of influence. It may emerge through everyday problem-solving, coordination and mutual support, becoming visible when organisational members respond to situational demands or take initiative without occupying formal leadership roles (Chia & Holt, 2006). Leadership is therefore closely connected to sensemaking processes embedded in practice rather than to deliberate leadership behaviour alone.

Despite these developments, leadership research in social enterprises continues to exhibit a tension between normative ideals and empirical accounts. While collaboration, participation and shared purpose are widely emphasised, comparatively little is known about how leadership is enacted, interpreted and sustained in everyday organisational life. How organisational members navigate contradictions between ideals and lived experience through daily practice remains underexplored.

This study adopts a practice-oriented and interpretive understanding of leadership, focusing on how leadership is enacted and experienced in everyday organisational life rather than on predefined leadership roles or normative models. This perspective informs the empirical analysis of everyday practices, interactions and narratives through which leadership and organisational purpose are rendered meaningful within the organisational context of Bybi.

3.4. Organisational Practices and Sensemaking

Building on the preceding discussion of social enterprises as hybrid organisations (3.1), voluntary work as a central organisational practice (3.2) and leadership as a relational and

collective process (3.3), this section synthesises research on sensemaking and organisational practices to further illuminate how organisational life is constituted in everyday activity. In organisational contexts characterised by strong normative orientations, hybrid logics and extensive voluntary engagement, coherence cannot be assumed as a stable condition. Rather, it emerges as a provisional and ongoing accomplishment that is continuously produced and sustained through everyday practices, particularly under conditions of ambiguity, competing expectations and tension (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

Organisation studies have increasingly turned attention to the everyday practices through which organisations are enacted. Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) conceptualise organisational practices as situated and recurrent activities through which organisational life is continuously produced and transformed. From this perspective, organisations are not fixed structures, but ongoing accomplishments emerging from collective action. Practices simultaneously generate stability and change by reproducing routines that provide order while allowing for adaptation through reflection, improvisation and adjustment. Meaning and structure thus arise through practice rather than being imposed solely through formal systems or abstract organisational designs.

This practice-oriented perspective complements research on leadership and organising by shifting analytical attention away from individual actors towards the collective processes through which work is coordinated and sustained. While leadership scholarship often focuses on how collective purpose is articulated and guided, a practice lens foregrounds how such orientations take shape through everyday interactions, routines and material arrangements. Organisational practices thereby render abstract values, relationships and emotions tangible, translating them into lived experience and making them consequential in daily organisational life (Raelin, 2016).

Organisational practices are inherently plural and negotiated, as multiple actors contribute to shaping and maintaining organisational direction (Denis et al., 2012). Order and meaning are therefore not fixed properties of organisations, but provisional outcomes of ongoing interaction, negotiation and adjustment. This dynamic is particularly salient in social enterprises, where paid employees and volunteers jointly engage in organisational activity under conditions of normative commitment and structural ambiguity.

Within this practice-oriented understanding, sensemaking offers a complementary perspective for examining how organisational members interpret and orient themselves within ongoing activity. As organisations operate in increasingly complex and dynamic environments, individuals and groups continuously interpret unfolding situations in order to act meaningfully (Moss, 2001). In social enterprises, where purpose-driven engagement and voluntary work are central, such interpretive processes are particularly salient, as organisational members must navigate tensions between ideals and constraints, commitment and capacity, as well as between personal motivation and organisational demands (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

Following Weick's (1995) foundational contribution, sensemaking has developed into a central concept within organisation and management studies. Sensemaking refers to the processes through which organisational actors frame, narrate and categorise experience to render equivocal situations intelligible. These processes are not confined to individual cognition, but unfold through situated language, embodied action and relational interaction, enabling actors to recognise patterns and orient judgement and practice (Weick et al., 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Emotions play an integral role in these processes, as affective responses signal relevance, guide attention and shape how situations are interpreted and acted upon.

Recent developments in sensemaking research have further emphasised its phenomenological and practice-based foundations. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) argue that organisational actors are always already immersed in sociomaterial practice worlds rather than standing outside situations as detached interpreters. From this perspective, sensemaking unfolds through four interrelated dimensions: being-in-the-world, temporality, embodiment and language. Sensemaking ranges from absorbed engagement in routine activity to more reflective modes of deliberation during moments of disruption. Meaning emerges through bodily attunement, temporal orientation and linguistic articulation within ongoing practice.

Within this phenomenological account, sensemaking can be understood as unfolding across different practice worlds. A primary practice world is characterised by the enactment of organisational activity, while a secondary practice world involves reflection and explanation of such activity. As this study is concerned with everyday organisational practices, analytical attention is directed towards sensemaking processes unfolding within the primary practice world, where meaning is produced under conditions of time pressure, emotional involvement and practical constraint.

Complementing these perspectives, Giuliani (2016) highlights that organisational meaning is not only enacted but also actively shaped and contested. She distinguishes between sensemaking, sensegiving and sensebreaking as analytically distinct yet interconnected processes. While sensemaking concerns the interpretation of events, sensegiving captures deliberate efforts to influence how others construct meaning, thereby stabilising and legitimising particular interpretations. Sensebreaking involves the disruption of established meanings through questioning and reframing. These processes draw attention to the relational and political dimensions of meaning construction, in which certain interpretations gain prominence while others remain marginal.

Taken together, the literature on organisational practices and sensemaking highlights how meaning, purpose and responsibility are continuously produced, negotiated and contested in everyday organisational life. Rather than presenting a prescriptive framework, these perspectives sensitise analysis to the situated, relational and processual nature of organising. As such, they provide a conceptual orientation for examining how organisational members make sense of their work and their organisation in practice, without predetermining analytical categories or outcomes.

4. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological choices guiding the study, including its philosophical foundations, research design and data collection methods. Grounded in a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, the methodology is designed to explore how organisational members experience and make sense of everyday practices in relation to organisational purpose. A qualitative case study approach is employed, combining semi-structured interviews, participant observations and secondary data to generate context-sensitive and interpretive insights. The methodological choices reflect an emphasis on situated meaning-making, reflexivity and ethical sensitivity through the research process.

4.1. Philosophy of Science

Our project is grounded in an interpretive paradigm, which asserts that reality is created through the meanings that individuals assign to their interactions and experiences (Schwandt, 1994). Within this paradigm, knowledge is context-dependent and situated, emerging through the dialogue between the researcher's interpretation and participants' understanding of their experience (Egholm, 2014). Our goal is not to uncover universal rules regulating organisational dynamics, but to gain a rich and deep contextual understanding of how

members of Bybi interpret their world. This approach particularly fits our research question, which strives to explore the subjective perceptions and “sensemaking” of individual members in the organisation. To properly articulate this stance, we outline our ontological and epistemological position within the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology.

4.1.1. Ontology and Epistemology - Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Ontology refers to the nature of reality (Egholm, 2014). From a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, the reality is intersubjective (Crowther & Thomson, 2020). This means that there is no objective reality at Bybi separate from the lived experiences of the organisation members. Organisational reality is manifested through the “lifeworld” (Lebenswelt) of its participants. The lifeworld represents the shared meaning of everyday practices, meanings, and routines (Husserl, 1970). The purpose of Bybi is a dynamic, lived concept, which is repeatedly being interpreted through practice. The practices of working with bees, community events, and partnership management are the very composition through which the reality of Bybi is understood.

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and its production (Egholm, 2014). The epistemological position of this project is that knowledge is created through interpretation and dialogue. The researcher is unable to be a disconnected and neutral observer, but essentially plays a part in the process of interpretation (Gadamer, 1975). We obtain knowledge of Bybi’s reality through engagement with the meanings that the organisation members ascribe to their individual experiences.

4.2. Planned Research Design

Our research design follows a qualitative and hermeneutic phenomenological approach, consistent with our interpretivist philosophy of science. This design enables us to explore how members of Bybi experience and interpret their everyday organisational practices in

relation to the organisation's purpose. As Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue, qualitative research allows for a close engagement with participants' lived realities and provides rich, contextualised understandings of social life.

A case study design was selected because it offers a coherent framework for examining complex organisational phenomena within their real-life context (Flick, 2023). Data will be generated through semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and secondary sources. This triangulation supports hermeneutic interpretation by connecting individual narratives with the broader organisational and social context. The interviews provide insight into participants' lived experiences and interpretations, while the participant observations offer contextual understanding of everyday practices. And the secondary data supports the situating of these interpretations within a broader organisational context.

Throughout the research process, interpretation will occur as a dialogical movement between the researchers' pre-understandings and the participants' lived experiences, echoing Gadamer's (1975) notion of the "fusion of horizons". Our aim is to develop a nuanced understanding of how meaning at Bybi unfolds through everyday practices.

4.3. Case Study Approach

This project is designed as a qualitative case study focusing on Bybi. The social enterprise was selected purposely because of its hybrid nature, which combines social inclusion, environmental care and community engagement, offers a meaningful context for exploring our research question on how members make sense of everyday organisational practices in relation to the organisation's purpose.

Case studies are particularly suitable for understanding complex social phenomena in real-life contexts. As Flick (2023) notes, an important task in case study design is to identify a case that is significant for the research question and to clarify what elements form part of the case.

In our study, Bybi is understood not only as an organisation but also as a community of practices involving employees, volunteers, and external partners.

Within this study, the case is approached as a situated organisational context in which purpose and leadership are enacted through everyday practices and interactions among organisational members.

The study will apply a qualitative and interpretive approach, combining semi-structured interviews, participant observation and secondary data to provide a rich and contextualised understanding of the case. Using multiple sources of data is expected to strengthen the analysis and allow for a more comprehensive interpretation of how organisational purpose and everyday practices are connected. By focusing on a single case, the study enables an in-depth and context-sensitive exploration of meaning-making processes as they unfold in everyday organisational life.

4.4. Data Collection - Semi-Structured Interviews

The empirical material for this study was generated through qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted during an extended field visit at Bybi. This approach is grounded in Flick's (2023) understanding of qualitative research as a context-sensitive and process-oriented form of inquiry that seeks to capture participants' perspectives as they are embedded in everyday social practices. Semi-structured interviews were selected to explore experiences, interpretations and organisational practices in depth, while remaining open to topics that emerged during the research encounter (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were particularly suitable for the study's phenomenological orientation, as they allow participants to express their lived experiences in their own words while still providing a guiding structure for the conversation (Flick, 2023). This type of interview typically follows a set of open-ended questions that help maintain focus, but also

gives participants the freedom to introduce their own thoughts and experiences that go beyond the prepared topics (Flick, 2023). Such flexibility supported the study's aim of understanding how meaning and interpretation emerged through participants' reflections on their everyday engagement with Bybi.

Interviews were conducted with organisational members occupying different roles, including the founder, one employee with coordinating responsibilities and volunteers, both in individual and group interview formats. This combination enabled the study to capture both individual and collective perspectives on organisational sensemaking and leadership within the organisation.

4.4.1. Recruitment of Participants

Participants were recruited through direct contact with Bybi and in dialogue with the organisation's founder. The overall recruitment strategy was purposive, as the study sought to include participants occupying different roles within the organisation in order to capture varied perspectives on everyday organisational practices and their relation to Bybi's purpose. At the same time, the final selection of participants was shaped by practical considerations related to availability and participation on the day of the data collection.

In line with Flick's (2023) emphasis on strategic participant selection in qualitative research, the founder was deliberately chosen as the initial interview partner due to their central role in shaping organisational purpose, structure and practices. One interview was therefore pre-arranged with the founder of Bybi. Beyond this planned interview, no specific participants were recruited in advance. Upon arrival at Bybi, participation in interviews was based on who was present during the Volunteer Day and willing to take part. This approach reflects the organisational context of Bybi, where volunteers participate flexibly and where daily activities take precedence over formal scheduling.

In total, four interviews were conducted involving six participants. One individual interview was conducted with the founder. In addition, one individual interview was conducted with an employee who held a coordinating role within the organisation. Volunteer perspectives were captured through one individual interview and one group interview involving three volunteers.

Access to additional participants was facilitated through the founder, who acted as a central contact person and introduced the research team to other organisational members present on the day of data collection. The group interview emerged organically during the Volunteer Day, as the three volunteers were working closely together on shared tasks at the time of the data collection. Conducting the interview collectively allowed the conversation to take place without interrupting ongoing work and reflected the collaborative setting in which the volunteers were already engaged. Later the same day, individual interviews with the employee and the volunteer were conducted in a separate room.

Overall, the recruitment process combined an intended purposive logic with pragmatic, field-based considerations. While the study aimed to include a heterogeneous range of roles, specifically leadership, paid staff with coordinating responsibilities and volunteers, situational factors inherent to qualitative fieldwork, such as participants' presence on the day of data collection, availability and willingness to participate, ultimately influenced the final composition of the sample.

4.4.2. Development and Design of the Interview Guide

The development of the interview guide was a reflexive process guided in the hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective and guided by the central research question: *“How do members of ByBi perceive and make sense of everyday organisational practices in relation to the organisation’s purpose?”* The main goal was to create a focused tool to which

would be able to bring forth abundant narrative descriptions of lived experiences of different participants. The purpose of these accounts is to help us uncover the processes of meaning-making within Bybi's organisational and hybrid context (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Flick, 2023).

The interview guide's arrangement mirrored the hermeneutic circle of interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018) navigating the flow of conversation from broader contextual understanding towards specific reflections on practical actions. This sequencing also aimed to help fostering affinity and trust through accessible topics, creating the trust necessary for participants to delve deeper into the more reflexive dialogue about experiences and meaning (Josselson, 2013). The guide was organised into the four interconnected thematic sections.

The opening section focused on *introduction & role* in order to establish narrative context of the participant, inviting them to describe their current activities and their journey to and within Bybi. This connects with the phenomenological emphasis on understanding the distinctive lifeworld of the participants as the starting point of investigation (Van Manen, 2016).

The following section pursued to explore *vision & meaning* through both shared and personal interpretations of Bybi's purpose, mission, and main grounded concepts like social enterprise and regenerative practice. These questions aim to elucidate the holistic experience of meaning-making, exploring both the cognitive frameworks that participants engage to make sense of their work, and affective responses such as personal significance and emotion which also shape their responses and interpretations (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

Aligned with the research question, looking into *everyday practices & sensemaking*, this section focused on bringing about accounts of specific activities, daily interactions, and decisions and how they connect to the organisation's purpose and vision. Attention was placed onto the enactment of leadership and purpose in contextual action (Raelin, 2016), and

the navigation of the tension characteristics that are inherent to the nature of hybrid organisations (Battilana et al., 2022).

The last section paid significant attention to *reflection & coherence*, with the questions encouraging reflections on learning, adaptation, and alignment, trying to understand how coherence is experienced and managed collectively over time (Gioia et al., 2013).

Acknowledging that sensemaking is fundamentally positional and formed by one's responsibilities, role, and engagement within the organisation (Jackson et al., 2018), this interview guide was shaped into three distinct, though interdependent sets of questions. Such design helped us to facilitate the polyphonic understanding of the reality within the organisation and capture different perspectives and voices (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012).

All interviews followed this semi-structured interview guide, which served as an orientation rather than a rigid script. In line with Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) understanding of qualitative interviews as a research conversation, the guide allowed participants to elaborate on issues they considered particularly relevant and enabled spontaneous follow-up questions during the interviews.

Consistent with semi-structured phenomenological interviewing, all the interview questions were designed as open-ended invitations for description, narration, and reflection (Brinkmann, 2013). The use of "Describe...", "Tell me about...", or "Give me an example of.." was prioritised over asking "why" questions in order to lead the participants towards descriptions of experience rather than rationalisations (Smith et al., 2009). This approach privileged the emergence of the participant's lived world and minimised the conceptual imposition of the researchers. Furthermore, a prepared list of follow-up and probing questions ("What was that like for you?", "Can you say more about how that made you feel?") was integrated in order to facilitate depth, emotional resonance, and clarity during the interviews.

(Josselson, 2013). This flexibility proved essential to stay responsive to the unique direction of each interview, allowing for emergence of unforeseen topics and themes.

4.4.3. Interview Procedures

Data collection took place on Tuesday, 9 December 2025, during a voluntary workday at the organisation. Three out of five of the research team were present on site from approximately 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and remained at the organisation throughout the visit. Conducting the interviews on a voluntary workday meant that conversations unfolded alongside ongoing organisational activity rather than being detached from it. This allowed participants' accounts to be understood in relation to everyday practices, interactions and coordination processes taking place during the visit.

Upon arrival, the research team greeted volunteers and employees who were already engaged in work activities. The visit began with a scheduled interview with the founder, which was conducted in the organisation's office and community space. This room serves as a central meeting and gathering area and is characterised by a large, shared table used by both staff and volunteers for coordination, informal exchange and breaks. The interview with the founder provided an initial overview of the organisation's purpose, structure and daily operations and served as an entry point into the field.

Following this interview, the research team was introduced to the organisation's premises and informed about the activities planned for the day. As the visit coincided with a voluntary workday, the researchers were invited to support ongoing activities and were assigned practical tasks alongside volunteers and employees. Approximately one hour was spent participating in these activities, which involved routine operational work related to the organisation's core activities. Through this involvement, the research team became familiar

with everyday organisational practices and interactions before the subsequent interviews, reflecting Flick's (2023) emphasis on studying social phenomena in their natural settings.

After this phase of participation, a group interview with three volunteers was conducted in the organisation's work hall. Voluntary work continued in parallel and participants moved between work tasks and conversation during the interview. This setting allowed collective reflections on voluntary work to emerge in proximity to ongoing practice and reflected the open and fluid nature of the organisational environment.

Following the group interview, a shared lunch took place. During this time, informal conversations between the research team and organisational members continued. While these exchanges were not treated as formal interview data, they contributed to a broader understanding of participants' motivations, roles, length of involvement and everyday responsibilities within the organisation.

In the afternoon, two further individual interviews were conducted. One interview involved a volunteer engaged in ongoing voluntary work, while the other was conducted with an employee who also held a coordinating role within the organisation. These interviews took place in a quieter area of the office and community space and followed a sit-down format, with interviewers and interviewees seated at a large table. During one of these interviews, another organisational member continued working in the same space, illustrating the permeability between work, coordination and interaction within the organisation. All interviews were conducted in English.

In total, four interviews were conducted over the course of the day. The interviews were carried out by the research team in varying constellations, with two or three researchers present depending on availability. Interview duration ranged from approximately 25 to 40 minutes.

Throughout the visit, the research team moved freely between organisational spaces and was not accompanied or supervised. Over the course of the day, three primary spaces were used: the office and community room, the work hall where voluntary tasks were carried out, and a larger room used for packaging products. These spaces differed in terms of activity level and formality, ranging from quieter interview settings to more dynamic, task-oriented environments. The overall atmosphere was open, collaborative and lively. At times, coordination appeared improvised, particularly as an employee who typically assumed a key coordinating role was absent due to illness on the day of the visit. In addition, preparations related to the upcoming holiday period were visible, reflecting the seasonal context of organisational activity.

Interviews were occasionally interrupted by organisational members entering the room to ask questions or coordinate tasks. These interruptions reflected the open and permeable nature of the organisational setting and did not substantially disrupt the flow of the interviews. Voluntary work continued alongside the interviews, and the research team intermittently supported ongoing activities when appropriate.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed using transcription software.

4.5. Data Collection - Participant Observations

In addition to semi-structured interviews, the empirical material for this study includes participant observations at Bybi. The purpose of the participant observations was to gain insight into how everyday organisational practices are carried out in practice and how members interact, coordinate tasks and participate in collective work activities as part of Bybi's daily operations. In line with Flick's (2023) emphasis on observational methods as means of going beyond verbal accounts, participant observations were employed to assess

practices and interactions as they unfolded in their natural organisational context. The observations were intended to provide a contextual and descriptive understanding of everyday organisational life at Bybi and to situate interview accounts within observed practices.

Observational methods seek to understand practices, interactions and events as they occur within a specific context, either from the inside as a participant or from the outside as an observer (Flick, 2023). In this study, the research team adopted a participant observation approach, engaging directly in everyday activities alongside the organisational members in order to gain insight into the organisation's practices from within.

Prior to the documented participant observation, members of the research team attended a *Conversation and Soup* event organised by Bybi. This event served as an initial point of contact with the organisation and contributed to a general familiarity with its atmosphere, forms of interaction and participatory culture. As no systematic observational notes were produced during this event, it does not form part of the empirical material of the study. Instead, participation in the *Conversation and Soup* event is acknowledged as part of the researchers' pre-understanding, which informed subsequent engagement with the field.

The primary participant observation included in this study took place during one Volunteer Day at Bybi's premises in Sundholm, Copenhagen, in late autumn. During this day, members of the research team participated alongside volunteers and staff in routine production activities related to honey processing, labelling, packaging and preparation of products for seasonal sales. Consistent with Flick's (2023) description of participant observation, the researchers did not refrain from activities in the field but actively participated in them as a means of gaining closer access to relevant organisational processes and practices. The work was organised around several workstations, where participants rotated between tasks such as filling jars, applying labels, assembling gift boxes and preparing lunch in the kitchen.

Throughout the Volunteer Day, work activities unfolded in a calm and informal manner. Tasks were coordinated through brief verbal exchanges and practical demonstrations rather than formal instructions. Volunteers and staff assisted one another continuously, offering guidance, answering questions and adjusting the pace of work when needed. Participation appeared flexible, as individuals moved between standing and seated tasks, changed roles during the day and took breaks without formal scheduling. A communal lunch was prepared and shared by all participants, creating a collective pause in the workday and reinforcing the social dimension of the Volunteer Day.

Interactions between volunteers and staff were characterised by openness and familiarity. While certain individuals held responsibility for coordinating activities and responding to questions, distinctions between staff and volunteers were not always immediately visible in everyday interactions. Decisions related to work tasks, such as handling misprinted labels or adjusting production flow, were discussed collectively before being clarified by staff members when necessary. Such moments illustrate how organisational practices and coordination emerge through interactions rather than through formalised procedures, aligning with Flick's (2023) understanding of observation as a means of tracing socially constructed realities as they are enacted in practice.

Observational attention was directed towards the organisation of work, the distribution of tasks, patterns of interaction and the overall atmosphere of the day. Notes were also taken on how material elements, such as tools, honey jars, labels and spatial arrangements, shaped work routines and participation. Particular attention was paid to how collaboration and mutual support were enacted through everyday actions rather than explicit articulation of organisational values.

Observational notes were written individually by members of the research group shortly after the Volunteer Day. These notes consist of descriptive accounts of activities, interactions and

situations encountered during participation. In line with Flick's (2023) argument that observational data contribute to the construction and interpretation of social reality, the observations are treated as contextual and descriptive material rather than as data subjected to systematic coding or independent analysis. The observations are used to support and contextualise interview material by providing concrete descriptions of organisational practices as they unfolded during the Volunteer Day.

4.6. Secondary Data

To complement interviews and observations, secondary data was analysed. Academic articles accessed through the RUC Library served to contextualise the information gathered. The quality of these sources was assessed based on the following criteria highlighted by Flick (2023), namely authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning.

Authenticity was assessed by carefully comparing the concepts presented in the selected literature with other academic articles. Inconsistencies, errors, and differing perspectives regarding the concepts were reviewed.

Credibility was ensured by selecting only articles published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and made available by the Royal Danish Library. Additionally, the limitations of each study were examined in detail.

Representativeness was addressed by focusing the literature search on specific keywords such as social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, hybrid organisations, voluntary work, leadership in social enterprises, organisational practices, sensemaking, and regenerative leadership. The Danish contextual relevance was also considered in the selection of sources.

Finally, meaning was assessed by comparing various articles containing the relevant concepts in order to ensure that the evidence was clear and comprehensible. Articles that most clearly reflected our understanding of the concepts were selected.

4.7. Data Analysis

Our analysis consists of an hermeneutic thematic approach inspired by Ho, Chiang and Leung (2017), where meaning unfolds through language. This perspective aligns with the interpretivist orientation of our study where participants' accounts are understood as a lived expressions of how they experience and interpret Bybi's organisational practice. In this sense, coding involved a "dwelling" in the data and urged us to revisit it several times (Ho et al., 2017).

We used thematic analysis as a strategy to uncover the common structures of meaning embodied in participants' experiences. We conceived codes as they emerged in participant's discourse, disclosing partially what matters to them, their concerns and how they orient themselves within Bybi's relational network. As Ho et al. (2017) emphasise, themes are recurrences materialising through an interpretive loop between participants' perspective and our pre-understandings. To maximise contextual cues, and give depth to our interpretations, we broaden our sources of inputs, meaning we paid close attention to the content but also the container and its environments. To ensure scientific rigour, we identified and used our assumptions as resources for interpretation, while remaining reflexive about how they shaped our understanding of the material.

The analysis then unfolded in two stages: First, we engaged inductively with the transcripts, looking for patterns and tensions to emerge from the participants' language. Second, we interpreted these insights through a hermeneutic lens informed by concepts such as "regenerative leadership" and "sense-making", which helped us make sense of how organisational practices at Bybi are understood, embodied and negotiated in everyday work.

The balance movement allowed us to trace how participants construct meaning around their roles, relationships and the organisation's broader purpose.

This approach aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2006) view of thematic analysis as a flexible yet systematic method, but extends it through a hermeneutic emphasis on interpretation, relational meaning and contextual sensitivity. In this way, the analysis remains rigorous and responsive to the complexity of participants' lived experience.

4.7.1. Coding and Constructing Themes

During the coding process we followed the logic of interpretative thematic analysis in several iterative layers. We began by creating transcripts from the audio recording of the interviews. Then we worked line-by-line through each transcript, noting descriptive comments, emotional cues and linguistic choices. This stage was intentionally open, which allowed us to stay close to the participants' own words before moving into interpretation (Smith et al., 2009).

We coded in two parallel modes. The first summarised the content: what the participant said, the situations they described, and the practices they highlighted. The second captured early interpretative reflections: patterns we noticed, possible meanings behind their wording, signs of something significant. Maintaining these two layers side-by-side allowed us to balance fidelity to the data with the reflexive work of interpretation.

After this initial coding, we revisited each transcript to cluster related codes and identify early thematic directions. This had often required returning to earlier sections when new insights emerged, which is common to hermeneutic approach. Some codes were combined, others were expanded, and a few were dropped when they did not hold up across repeated readings. From this process emerged the foundation for the subordinate themes that structure the findings. Throughout coding, we remained attentive to the double hermeneutic at play: our interpretations were shaped by our perspective as researchers, but they were always grounded in the participant's meaning-making (Crowther & Thomson, 2020).

Only after each transcript was coded independently did we compare patterns across cases. This cross-case step allowed us to see where participants shared experiences or interpretations, and where their perspectives diverged.

4.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical sensitivity was central to the study, especially given the relational and reflective nature of our study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the project, the voluntary character of their participation and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences. Participants were also explicitly informed of their right to refrain from answering individual questions at any time. Consent was collected prior to each interview. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) note, informed consent is not a single act but an ongoing ethical dialogue, and we kept this in mind throughout the data collection process by regularly checking participants' comfort and boundaries.

Confidentiality was ensured by anonymising names, roles and identifiable details during transcription and analysis. Identifying information was removed during transcription, and role descriptions were assigned in a way that protected participants' anonymity.

Audio files and transcripts were stored securely and accessed only by the research team. In accordance with good qualitative practice, we were attentive to the fact that anonymity can be challenging in small organisational settings; therefore, care was taken to remove contextual cues that could reveal individuals indirectly (Saunders et al., 2015).

Because interviews invited participants to reflect on personal experiences within their work environment, there was a risk of emotional discomfort. We addressed this by using open, participant-led questioning and by creating space for pauses, clarifications or redirection whenever needed. Following the guidance of Smith et al. (2009), we approached each

conversation with empathy and openness, recognising that the interview is itself a relational encounter that carries ethical responsibility.

The double hermeneutic underlying our approach also raises ethical questions, as the researcher interprets meaning that the participant may not have explicitly articulated. To address this, we engaged in reflexive note-taking throughout the analysis, making our assumptions and interpretive moves explicit (Crowther & Thomson, 2020). This reflexive stance helped minimise interpretive imposition and supported a more transparent analytic process.

In line with Denzin and Lincoln's (2008) understanding of qualitative research as an interpretive and ethical practice, particular attention was paid to informed consent, confidentiality and sensitivity to the organisational context throughout the research process.

4.9. Bias and Reflectivity

As outlined in Section 4.1, this study is grounded in an interpretive and hermeneutic-phenomenological approach. From this perspective, reflexivity constitutes a central methodological concern, as the researchers are not understood as neutral observers, but as active participants in the process of knowledge production, whose pre-understandings shape both data generation and interpretation (Gadamer, 1975). Rather than seeking to eliminate bias, the aim is to make such pre-understandings explicit and to reflect on how they may influence the research process.

The research team entered the field with a substantial degree of prior familiarity with Bybi. During the first semester of the Master's programme, four out of five group members were introduced to Bybi when the founder presented the organisation and its work as part of a company visit to the university. In addition, the group previously worked with Bybi as an empirical case in the current semester, where the analysis focused on leadership and

organisational themes based primarily on secondary material. This involved extensive engagement with Bybi's publicly available communication, including annual reports, written material and multiple video presentations by the founder. As described in the motivation for this study, these materials often present Bybi as a highly collaborative and purpose-driven organisational, emphasising collectivity and shared responsibility.

As a part of the field engagement, members of the research team participated in a *Conversation and Soup* event organised by Bybi prior to the documented participant observation. Although this event does not form part of the empirical material, it contributed to the researchers' embodied and experiential familiarity with the organisation's atmosphere, values and modes of interaction. Together, these experiences created a rich but potentially partial pre-understanding of Bybi, shaped largely through the organisation's own narratives and self-presentations.

This prior familiarity entails a risk of normative alignment with Bybi's vision and language, potentially influencing how observations were attended to and how interview accounts were interpreted. There is also a risk that positive impressions formed through earlier exposure could lead to selective attention towards practices that appear consistent with the organisation's stated values, while tensions or contradictions may receive less immediate attention. These risks were addressed through ongoing discussion within the research team through the research process.

Several strategies were employed to mitigate these potential biases. First, the study combines multiple data sources, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation and secondary material, allowing for triangulation and comparison across different forms of empirical input. Second, observational material from the Volunteer Day was treated as descriptive contextual data rather than as analytically coded material, reducing the risk of over-interpreting situated impressions. Third, interview questions were designed to invite

participants' own descriptions and interpretations of everyday practices rather than to confirm predefined assumptions derived from prior knowledge of the organisation.

Throughout the data collection and analysis, the research team engaged in dialogue, explicitly discussing moments where prior expectations or familiarity appeared to shape interpretation. Attention was paid to discrepancies between organisational narratives encountered in earlier material and the practices observed and described by participants in the present study. In this way, reflexivity functioned not as a limitation to be overcome, but as an analytical resource that supported a more nuanced and critically aware interpretation of how organisational meaning and purpose are enacted in everyday practice at Bybi.

4.10. Limitations

The study is grounded in a qualitative, interpretive case study design that seeks to understand how organisational members make sense of everyday practices in relation to organisational purpose. While this approach is well-aligned with the research question and theoretical orientation, it also involves several methodological limitations that shape what the study can demonstrate.

The main limitation of adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy of science lies in its interpretive and situated nature. Because meaning is understood as co-constructed between participants and researchers, the findings cannot claim objectivity or generalisability in a positivist sense. The analysis is shaped by the researchers' pre-understandings, theoretical sensitivities, and positionality, which, while treated reflexively as analytic resources, also delimit what can be seen and articulated. Moreover, phenomenological hermeneutics privileges depth of lived experience over breadth, meaning that organisational dynamics are explored intensively rather than exhaustively. This approach may therefore underrepresent structural, economic, or macro-level forces that shape organisational practices

but are not directly articulated in participants' accounts. Moreover, the emphasis on language and meaning risks foregrounding sensemaking processes at the expense of material constraints or power asymmetries that may operate tacitly or remain unspoken. These limitations do not undermine the value of the approach but define the scope and epistemic claims of the study, situating its contributions within an interpretive understanding of organisational life rather than an ambition to explain or predict those phenomena.

Another limitation concerns the structure of the empirical material. The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews supported by participant observation during a single field visit. This enabled close engagement with participants' experiences and interpretations, but it also means that the study relies primarily on participants' own accounts of practice. Rather than following organisational processes as they unfold over time, the analysis captures how members reflect on and articulate their everyday work. As a result, sensemaking is approached through narrated experience rather than through longitudinal observation of organisational dynamics.

A related limitation lies in the situational context of data collection. All interviews and observations were conducted during a Volunteer Day, a setting deliberately organised around openness, collaboration and community. This context likely shaped both interactions and accounts, bringing relational and affirmative aspects of organisational life to the foreground. Other dimensions, such as moments of tension, disagreement or pressure, may be less visible in this setting. The findings should therefore be understood as interpretations emerging from a particular organisational moment rather than as a comprehensive representation of everyday organisational life.

The size and composition of the sample further delimit the scope of the analysis. The empirical material consists of four interviews involving six participants, including the founder, one employee and four volunteers. This provided rich insight into lived experience,

especially from the perspective of volunteers, but it limits the range of organisational positions represented. In particular, the small number of employees restricts insight into how formal responsibility and organisational accountability shape experiences of leadership and purpose.

In addition, the sampling approach may have influenced the empirical material. Apart from the founder, participants were included based on their availability and willingness to participate during the field visit. This reflects the flexible and volunteer-based nature of the organisation, but it also increases the likelihood that those who are highly engaged and positively oriented towards Bybi are overrepresented. Perspectives marked by distance, ambivalence or critique may therefore be less present in the data.

Taken together, these limitations suggest that the findings should be read as context-specific and analytically transferable rather than empirically generalisable. The study offers a situated and interpretive account of how organisational members at Bybi experience and make sense of purpose and leadership in everyday practice, while recognising that different contexts, moments or participant constellations may give rise to other interpretations.

4.11. Use of GAI

Generative AI tools, specifically ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com/>) and Microsoft Copilot (<https://copilot.microsoft.com/>), were used in connection with the development of this project.

ChatGPT was used to support the writing process by assisting with grammatical corrections, sentence structure, and clarity of language. No AI-generated content was used without revision, and the responsibility for all academic content, analysis, and conclusions remained with the research team.

Microsoft Copilot was used to assist with the transcripts of interviews conducted for the project. All AI-assisted transcripts were carefully reviewed, corrected, and validated to ensure accuracy and fidelity to the original recordings.

We chose to use these AI tools because they contribute to efficiency in technical and preparatory tasks while supporting, rather than replacing, independent academic work. All AI output used in the project was edited, adapted, and integrated by the students. No generated AI tools were used to produce theoretical content, core analyses, or academic arguments.

5. Theoretical Framework

The preceding literature review has outlined key research strands on social enterprises, voluntary work, leadership and sensemaking, highlighting how organisational life in hybrid, purpose-driven contexts is shaped by everyday practices, interpretive processes and relational dynamics. While this body of literature provides a broad and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study, it also reveals a need to focus on and integrate selected perspectives to guide the empirical analysis.

This chapter, therefore develops the theoretical framework of the study by bringing together those concepts that are most relevant for examining how organisational members make sense of their work and their organisation in practice. Rather than proposing a prescriptive or normative model, the framework serves as an interpretive orientation that sensitises the analysis to dimensions of organisational life. It clarifies how selected concepts are understood in this study and how they relate to one another, without predetermining analytical categories or outcomes.

Building on the literature discussed in Chapter 3, the framework foregrounds the role of sensemaking, everyday practices and normative orientations in shaping organisational coherence and action. In doing so, it provides a focused theoretical lens for analysing the

empirical material presented in the following chapters. The framework thus functions as a bridge between the literature review and the empirical analysis, translating existing theoretical insights into an analytically usable orientation for the study.

5.1. From Regenerative Leadership to Regenerative Management

Recent leadership research has increasingly questioned whether conventional leadership approaches are adequate for addressing the social, ecological and ethical challenges contemporary organisations face. Leadership models centred on individual influence or intra-organisational dynamics have been criticised for their limited capacity to account for systemic conditions that extend beyond organisational boundaries. In response, leadership scholarship has increasingly turned towards relational, responsible and complexity-oriented perspectives that situate leadership within broader social and ecological contexts (Maak & Pless, 2006; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Waldman & Galvin, 2008).

Within this stream of research, regenerative leadership has emerged as a conceptual reorientation of leadership beyond control, optimisation and short-term performance. This conceptual reorientation is part of a broader philosophical shift in our understanding of the role of business in our society. Regenerative approaches propose to rethink human life so as to reconnect, recreate, enhance, and restore life in unity with nature. According to Rendtorff (2025), regenerative thinking argues that businesses should work for planetary health and human wellbeing, helping ecosystems refine, build resilience, and enhance their integrity within life-affirming systems. This perspective emphasises the importance of developing nature-oriented business ethics with a focus on sustainability and the environment.

Regenerative management philosophy, as described by Rendtorff (2025), is a theory of business that envisions how to regrow, renew, or restore nature as a new ethics and politics of capitalism that drive the green transition and is essential for sustainable development. Its

central idea is to include nature as a respected stakeholder in companies' decisions, shaping relationships between businesses and other stakeholders.

In the regenerative business economy, companies seek to align organisational knowledge, decision-making, and actions to create authentic, life-affirming ecosystems. Moreover, corporations work to overcome the separation between human and nonhuman and to respect the demands of nature. Regenerative leaders and researchers therefore advocate for a nature-inclusive transformation of business and politics. Acting regeneratively means assuming responsibility and stewardship for nature, guided by ethical principles such as ecological integrity and vulnerability (Rendtorff, 2025).

This regenerative management philosophy is gaining ground through creative and innovative business models that represent the next level of the green transition, moving beyond the traditional view of business as focused on economic exploitation of nature and the environment.

In addition to these academic perspectives, regenerative leadership has also been developed in practitioner-oriented and conceptual literature that emphasises reflexivity, embodied awareness and future-oriented responsibility. Hardman (2012; 2017) conceptualises regenerative leadership as a collective and purpose-driven process aimed at restoring social, ecological and economic systems, thereby shifting leadership away from individual authority towards stewardship and shared responsibility. He defines regenerative leadership as:

the capacity to restore the damage caused by human activity on natural, social, and economic systems, while at the same time securing lasting, desirable futures for all living beings through the design of integrated approaches that lead to resilient, thriving and life-affirming organisations, communities, regions, and the world. (Hardman, 2017, p. 12).

Camrass (2023a, 2023b) highlights regenerative leadership as a reflective and emergent practice which is informed by future-oriented thinking and metaphor-based sensemaking. The

leadership is illustrated through spider's web metaphor as flexible, interconnected, and continuously regenerating. This metaphor aligns with the understanding of organisations as living systems that require relational, adaptive, and context aware leadership (Camrass, 2023b). While these contributions are primarily normative and practice-oriented, they have played an important role in shaping contemporary understandings of regenerative leadership as an ethical and relational orientation rather than a prescriptive leadership model.

A prominent articulation of regenerative leadership is provided by Hutchins and Storm (2019), who conceptualise leadership through what they describe as the "Logic of Life". Their framework departs from mechanistic conceptions of organising and instead aligns leadership with principles through which living systems organise, adapt and sustain themselves. Regenerative leadership is structured around three interrelated dimensions.

First, Living Systems Design focuses on the application of nature-inspired principles to the development of products, services and organisational processes. Second, Living Systems Culture extends systems thinking to organisations and communities, encouraging an understanding of organisations as living, adaptive systems shaped by relationships and shared meaning. Third, Living Systems Being attends to the physiological, psychological and emotional dimensions of leadership, emphasising the capacities leaders require to navigate complexity and uncertainty while fostering harmony with the natural and social environments in which they operate (Hutchins and Storm, 2019).

These dimensions are organised through two interrelated dynamics. At the level of life processes, divergence enables creativity through openness and diversity, while convergence provides coherence through shared purpose, boundaries and structure. Emergence arises from the productive tension between these forces. At the level of leadership, self-awareness and systemic awareness operate as foundational capacities, giving rise to what Hutchins and Storm describe as a regenerative leadership consciousness that integrates personal reflection

with an understanding of relational and ecological interdependence (Hutchins and Storm, 2019).

At this point, regenerative leadership cannot be understood as a stand-alone approach. If regenerative principles are to shape organisational practice in a sustained manner, they must extend beyond leadership interactions and inform organisational purpose, decision-making and structures. As organisations operate within institutional, economic and ecological systems that exceed individual or relational influence, regenerative orientations require translation into a broader organisational paradigm. This transition marks the shift from regenerative leadership to regenerative management.

Regenerative management can be understood as building on the ethical and systemic foundations articulated in regenerative leadership, while relocating regeneration to the level of organisational design and governance. Rather than treating organisations as isolated economic actors, regenerative management conceptualises them as participants in interdependent social and ecological systems. This perspective resonates with critiques of sustainable development and corporate sustainability, which argue that dominant sustainability frameworks remain largely focused on mitigating harm rather than transforming underlying patterns of organising (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Dyllick & Muff, 2016).

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainable development as meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. While influential, this definition has been criticised for its limited engagement with ethical responsibility and the structural consequences of economic activity. Subsequent research has demonstrated that sustainability-oriented approaches often struggle to reconcile competing social, environmental and economic demands within prevailing

organisational logics (Hahn et al., 2015). Regenerative management responds to these limitations by proposing a more fundamental reorientation of business and organising.

Within regenerative management, organisations are understood as embedded within ecological systems whose integrity and resilience condition long-term organisational viability. Whiteman et al. (2013) emphasise the relevance of planetary boundaries for organisational activity, highlighting the constraints imposed by ecological limits on growth-oriented business models. Similarly, Schneider et al. (2017) conceptualise organisational sustainability as a systemic challenge that requires reconsideration of organisational purpose, governance and decision-making processes. Taken together, these arguments suggest that regeneration may function as a guiding organisational principle rather than an additional managerial instrument.

Regenerative management is commonly framed as extending sustainability by moving beyond impact reduction towards the active strengthening of social and ecological systems. It foregrounds ethical responsibility, long-term orientation and systemic awareness as central organising principles (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Dyllick & Muff, 2016). In contrast to instrumental sustainability approaches, this perspective emphasises organisational contributions to the vitality of the systems on which both society and economic activity depend.

Within this broader framework, leadership does not function as an independent analytical category, but as the relational and experiential enactment of regenerative management in everyday organisational life. Regenerative leadership captures how regenerative management orientations are interpreted, negotiated and rendered meaningful by organisational members through everyday practices, interactions and sensemaking processes. Leadership, in this sense, is inseparable from organisational context and systemic responsibility, emerging through collective engagement rather than formal authority.

This understanding aligns with complexity-oriented leadership research, which conceptualises leadership as a dynamic process embedded within organisational systems rather than as an attribute of individual actors (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). It also resonates with sensemaking perspectives that emphasise how organisational members collectively interpret purpose and action under conditions of ambiguity (Weick, 1995).

Processes of sensemaking, sensegiving and sensebreaking play a central role in how regenerative management orientations are enacted in practice. Through collective sensemaking, organisational members interpret organisational purpose in relation to social and ecological systems. Sensegiving contributes to the formation of shared understandings of regenerative orientations, while sensebreaking enables the questioning and dismantling of established assumptions that hinder organisational transformation (Gioia et al., 2013). Leadership thus operates as a meaning-making process embedded within broader organisational and systemic contexts.

Despite its conceptual richness, the literature on regenerative management and leadership remains partly normative. Emphases on coherence, harmony and systemic integration often understate the tensions, power relations and material constraints that characterise organisational life (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Fleming & Banerjee, 2016). Empirical research examining how regenerative principles are interpreted and enacted in everyday organisational practice therefore remains limited.

For social enterprises such as Bybi, regenerative management provides a particularly relevant theoretical framework. Operating at the intersection of social, economic and environmental logics, social enterprises face persistent tensions that cannot be resolved through leadership influence alone (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Regenerative management offers a systemic orientation through which these tensions can be engaged, while regenerative leadership

shapes how organisational members interpret, navigate and live these tensions in everyday practice.

Taken together, regenerative leadership and regenerative management form an integrated theoretical framework in which leadership constitutes the relational origin and experiential enactment of regenerative management. In this study, regenerative concepts are employed not as prescriptive ideals, but as interpretive lenses through which to examine how organisational members experience, enact and make sense of regenerative orientations in their everyday organisational life, including the ambiguities, constraints and contradictions that accompany them.

6. Analysis

The analysis builds on themes constructed through an iterative thematic coding of the interview material, connecting participants' narratives with the study's interpretive framework. Through these themes, the analysis explores how organisational members at Bybi make sense of organisational purpose, leadership and everyday practices within a hybrid organisational context. The aim is to provide a nuanced interpretation of how meaning, coordination and leadership are enacted and negotiated in everyday organisational life.

6.1. “We Don't Have a Vision, We Have a Practice”: Purpose as Embodied, Emergent, and Co-Created

This theme captures the fundamental ontological stance of Bybi regarding its purpose: purpose is not a pre-defined, static entity to be communicated and implemented, but a dynamic, living reality that is continuously generated through collective, reflective action. This closely aligns with Hutchins and Storm (2019) defining the purpose of regenerative organisation as a living, adaptive process which is continually evolving. The organisation's

guiding principle is not being experienced as a north star to be followed, but as a path that is walked into existence. This represents a significant departure from conventional organisational sensegiving, repositioning sensemaking from a cognitive, top-down process to an embodied, praxis-oriented one.

The founder initiates a clear sensebreaking (Giuliani, 2016) process against the dominant corporate language of purpose. They explicitly reject the standard vocabulary of strategic management:

I'm not really... I don't really like these kind of mission, vision, values languages. I think there's a dogma in business which tends to kind of try to draw everything into alignment behind a product... And this kind of mission, vision language is part of that as well.
(Interview 1, 64-70)

This rejection goes beyond a simple semantic preference; it is an ontological claim. They interpret “mission, vision, values” as tools of a product-centric, alignment-forcing dogma that contradicts the relational, fluid reality they seek to cultivate at Bybi. Through breaking this established sense, they create an interpretative absence, a space where new meaning needs to be built up not from statements, but from actions.

Into this absence, the sense is given through the invitation to participate in practice itself. The main sensegiving mechanism is the principle that: “it's easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of acting” (Interview 1, 89-90). This essentially turns around the traditional logic of change management. Purpose is not understood theoretically first and then enacted, it is rather discovered and shaped through enactment.

This is vividly portrayed in how the new volunteers are introduced to Bybi. There happens to be no onboarding presentation or briefing on the “vision” of the organisation whatsoever. The employee describes the process:

It's just we would just say hello welcome who are you and come and eat lunch... and all of this you know changing the language and... it's a practice. So, it's not like a quick fix... it's also something that you are doing like gradually as well. You're getting used to a different language... you just practice it yourself and then, you make it your own. (Interview 2, 216-226)

Sensemaking here becomes a gradual, corporeal process of habituation. The practice of “different language” (“invitation” not “product”) is not taught but absorbed through repeated use in a context. This is also further confirmed by the experience of a volunteer:

But the concept is just, it's there, and if I want to take part, I go, and if I don't, I don't go, and that's it. It's not a big deal for anyone. But it's a nice opportunity to try to think a bit differently and to take part of it. (Interview 4, 245-247)

Understanding is not transferred but grown from within the practice, aligning with Sandberg and Tsoukas's (2020) phenomenological view of sensemaking as emerging from absorbed, embodied coping within a “practice world”.

A direct consequence of this approach oriented towards praxis is that members, especially volunteers, often experience a lack of explicit, conceptual understanding of what Bybi's purpose is, which they do not necessarily perceive as deficit. Volunteers willingly admit their struggle to articulate what Bybi is: “I would struggle because I still haven't quite grasped how [Founder] makes any money” (Interview 3, 80-81), “with difficulty... I don't think you can explain without...Sort of saying what you do.” (Interview 4, 162-176).

They acknowledge a distance from the conceptual level at which the founder operates:

I'm not involved at the higher level, the concept level... He's on a different plane to me... I think he's on a different plane to most” (Interview 4, 207-215), “Sometimes it's very

philosophical with [Founder] and some days I get it, some days I don't (Interview 4, 423-424).

This “not knowing” is not necessarily a failure of communication but rather a feature of the sensemaking process. The purpose of Bybi resides in the “plane” of practice, not the “plane” of philosophical concepts. Their sensemaking is grounded in the tangible, such as the feel of the honey, the rhythm of the tasks, the warmth of the lunch conversation, rather than in an abstract theoretical model. Their understanding is felt before it is known (Van Manen, 2016). Bybi’s organisational purpose can be best understood as a dynamic sphere of relationships and actions, which is constantly adapted and negotiated. The founder describes it as a “constantly changing space” where “circumstances change and you have to adapt to them. So it does require a kind of constant reflection. Conversation, involvement, listening, adaptation, those sorts of things.” (Interview 1, 93-95). This is reflecting the collective process of sensemaking, where the “what” of purpose is continually being defined by the “how” of practice. The employee’s project to archive stories of what happens after the honey ceremonies exemplifies this. The purpose of the ceremony is not assumed but emerges retrospectively from the outcomes of practice and can be actively discovered by collecting narratives of its effects (Interview 2).

From a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective, this theme further illustrates how Bybi’s members are “being-in-the-world” of a regenerative practice. The founder’s sensebreaking and sensegiving create a lifeworld (Husserl, 1970) where the main mode of engagement is practical and reflective. In this lifeworld, the meaning of “regeneration” is not a definition but a lived logic. When a founder mentions that “what we understand as regeneration is the activation of potential. How do you activate the potential of ourselves, each other, and the animals and plants around us to create thriving and healthy communities.” (Interview 1, 113-115), this is more of a description of an ongoing practice rather than a goal to be

achieved. Members activate their own potential by taking initiative: “...usually at the lunch and usually invites us to suggest things if he wants some input. He's seeking for advice, really. He's really the man to brainstorm our opinions, actually” (Interview 4, 144-148). They activate community potential through shared lunches and conversations. They activate ecological potential by planting seeds shared with the honey.

This theme demonstrates that at Bybi, sensemaking becomes a collective, embodied practice. The purpose of the organisation escapes defining articulations since it is not something to be known, but a quality of action to be continually reflected upon and enacted. Coherence is maintained through a shared commitment to a reflective practice which is generating the meaning from the bottom up. This foundational theme enables the particular practices of relational currency (Chapter 6.2.) and is facilitated by the leadership (Chapter 6.3.) and community container (Chapter 6.4) explored in the upcoming sections.

6.2. Reconstituting Materiality as Relational Currency

This theme explores how Bybi reconfigures the meaning of its central material substance, honey, and how this shift transforms its economic and relational world. Across the interviews, honey is not treated as a commodity or an output but as a relational medium that organises interactions within the enterprise between humans, bees, plants, and by extension, the wider community. What emerges is a radical form of sensemaking in which materiality becomes a barrier of ethical relations. Indeed, the shift in language or refusing the term “product” and replacing it with “invitation” is beyond symbolic. It reshapes how honey is perceived and how it impacts others as it is perceived differently, and in doing so, reconstitutes the organisation’s entire ontology.

In the first interview, the founder’s rejection of the “product” logic operates as a clear act of sensebreaking. They repeatedly dismantle the assumption that a social enterprise must

negotiate between commercial and social priorities. Instead, they position this tension itself as an artefact of capitalist language: “There shouldn’t be a contradiction... The fact that there is is a consequence of the language and structures of capitalist society” (Interview 1, 367-369). What usually appears as a practical dilemma of profit versus purpose dissolves when the vocabulary anchoring that dilemma is abandoned. The move is hermeneutic: changing the words changes the world in which action becomes possible. When the founder explains that “when you change the language... the economic dilemmas disappear,” (Interview 1, 144-145) they highlight the interpretive mechanism by which Bybi reorganises its material practices. Language becomes the site where new possibilities of economic practices are disclosed. Nonetheless, this reframing is not maintained by constant conceptual analysis; it is lived through practice.

This is particularly visible when the founder describes honey as “an invitation to... reproduce the conditions for this larger, more-than-human community to thrive.” (Interview 1, 58-59). The shift from product to invitation calls for a different form of engagement, one that is grounded in responsibility and reciprocity instead of consumption. This dynamic mirrors the regenerative leadership stance discussed previously (Chapter 6.1) where purpose, and here materiality, is enacted before it is understood. People learn what honey does by participating in the relationships it mediates: planting flowers, tending to bees and sharing honey and therefore access to a different meaning. Understanding follows doing. In hermeneutic terms, the meaning of honey is disclosed through embodied engagement with the world it creates.

Employees deepen this interpretive shift by describing honey as a “currency of care” (Interview 2, 63). This is particularly true in the honey ceremonies, where participants drill holes into a sculpture to dedicate them to a living being; a bee, an insect, an ancestor, or even a value like playfulness or love (Interview 2). Here, honey is then given freely, but accompanied by obligations: to thank the bees, to plant flowers, and to share the honey with

someone you care about. Through these gestures, honey is framed and used as a relational operator: it moves through the community not as capital, but as an ethical commitment. What circulates is care, attention, and reciprocal responsibility. This movement of honey connects together people, bees, and plants in a multispecies community. The employee's reflection captures this metaphorically: honey is "gluing the people and the bees and the plants, the flowers together in this whole community" (Interview 2, 393-394). Here, materiality becomes a connective tissue.

Across our data set, participants express different understanding of this logic (interview 1, interview 2, Interview 4). The employee who speaks of seeing "everything we get from nature as a gift" (Interview 2, 174), articulates a broader understanding restructuring of the human more-than-human relationship. The book once a tree, the phone once mineral, the honey once a co-produced act of multispecies labour. Repeatedly reframing nature as gift reorients ethical thinking: acts of extraction become inappropriate, even incoherent. Indeed, this employee explains that humans become part of a shared economy of giving and receiving, echoing Indigenous philosophies of reciprocity referenced through *Braiding Sweetgrass* written by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Interview 2). This interpretive shift demonstrates how some Bybi members engage in sensemaking through language that foregrounds relational responsibility.

At the same time, some participants express ambivalence when confronted with conventional markers of product identity. One volunteer recounts: "I got told off for calling honey a product'... as soon as you put it in a jar and put a label on it, it's a product" (Interview 3, 448- 449). This tension reveals the liminal space where Bybi operates. The organisation is situated within capitalist structures, and honey is inevitably materialised through jars, labels, and distribution practices. Yet within the lifeworld constructed by the founder's language and the community's practices, honey refuses to settle fully into a commercial category. This

ambivalence is not a contradiction, but evidence of the ongoing renegotiation of meaning of what hermeneutics understands as the continuous oscillation between the world-as-given and the world-as-interpreted (Gadamer, 1975).

This dynamic can also be analysed in discussions of money. One employee acknowledged that “of course, we need money” (Interview 2, 370) and described the difficulty of generating funding without returning to extractive logic. However, the latter interpret this not as a failure but as an invitation to imagine “money coming in different ways” (Interview 2, 382) such as partnerships or other funding channels that do not rely on extraction.

The ongoing search for non-extractive income sources is another field where sensemaking, ethics, and material constraints intersect. Instead of trying to resolve those tensions, Bybi members learn to inhabit it creatively, a form of regenerative adaptability.

Through these different accounts, honey becomes a focal point through which Bybi members reinterpret their relationship to value, economy, and community. The linguistic reframing opens space for divergence, allowing alternative understandings to coexist without being forced into a dominant narrative. This logic is reinforced through ritualised practices in which volunteers are negotiating frictions between past understandings and new lived experiences. Rather than resolving these tensions, Bybi allows them to circulate, and creates the conditions for convergence around a shared, lived purpose grounded in care for multispecies relations. In this process, materiality is not static; it functions as a relational agent within a living system (Hutchins & Storm, 2019).

With this theme, we see that honey becomes a medium through which people learn to act, feel, and think differently. It is not a “what” but a “how”, a way of organising relationships. This practice exemplifies how regenerative leadership can reconstitute systems. Bybi does not dictate outcomes but creates conditions that allow the organisation’s purpose to evolve in

self-organising ways (Hutchins & Storm, 2019). This reconfiguration lays the groundwork for the leadership practices examined in Theme 3.

6.3. The Paradoxical Praxis of Relational Leadership

The practice of leadership at Bybi is defined by a fundamental paradox: the conscious enactment of a distributed, non-hierarchical ideal by a founder, who holds undeniably concentrated responsibility. Leadership emerges specifically from reflexive management of this particular tension. Unlike regular businesses, where command-and-control models are common in leadership practices, Bybi's approach is reflexive, inclusive, and aims to create a safe space for all members to share their voices in the construction of decisions. This theme analyses how this paradox is navigated through intentional sensegiving by the founder, its internalisation by members as a lived experience of agency and expression of self-organising logic of a living system, aligning with the principles of regenerative leadership.

Sensegiving is also seen in the process of important decision-making and how it is constructed through people's perspectives and consensus. Despite the main decisions about partnerships and financial flows being made by the Founder, the data show a clear organisational narrative from him, which influences how others interpret power, hierarchy, and autonomy. This narrative is also present in the interviews with both employees and volunteers.

The founder engages in deliberate sensebreaking (Giuliani, 2016) against traditional leadership scripts. He explicitly rejects the identity and language of command: "I don't like being a boss. I don't like telling people what to do. So I try and do it in a way where there's as much autonomy as possible." (Interview 1, 8-9) The founder reinforces this narrative consistently, the process which employees clearly receive: "[Founder] hates when I call him my boss... he insists that I don't ask for permission, but instead I ask for advice" (Interview 2,

274-278). This reframing of a leader's role from commander to advisor can be understood as an sensegiving act promoting a particular worldview where initiative is expected and authority is advisory. Furthermore, this does not naively deny the structural reality of his position. The founder showcases reflexive transparency about his centrality, especially regarding final accountability:

I mean, probably in practice, if you looked at it, you'd say that it was me that was taking the decisions, and that's probably true. But there's a strong consensus process as well. So we do talk about things and look at it from different angles. In the core team, we're also in slightly different places, all of us as well. (Interview 1, 225-230)

Here the paradox is clearly portrayed. He acknowledges the asymmetry of ultimate decision-making but immediately connects it with the collaborative process ('strong consensus'). This sensegiving strategy legitimises the founder's necessary role while prescribing the relational practice through which it should be exercised. The mechanism for this practice is institutionalised in daily rituals, as volunteers note: "He's seeking advice, really. He's really the man to brainstorm our opinions, actually. Yeah, he likes to get involved." (Interview 4, 147-148 Volunteer 2). The founder's sensegiving establishes a clear narrative: authority is decentralised and advisory, final responsibility is centrally held but exercised through consensus, while input is actively solicited through embedded rituals.

This intentional narrative is internalised by members, thus shaping their lifeworld (Husserl, 1970) and how they experience belonging. The compelling evidence comes especially from an employee who transitioned from being a volunteer:

I wouldn't really know the difference (between volunteering and working). Well, of course now with developing these projects, of course, I'm a part of, I guess, what we do here in Bybi... they (were) just opened to listening to my ideas as well and they took me equally serious as if I was working here, even though I was just a volunteer...So for me, there's

not really a lot of a difference in that sense. ...I'm being paid for the work that I do and I have maybe more responsibility in terms of having the overview... that's maybe where the big difference is. But other than that, you are just as much a part of the family as either how you are working here or just a volunteer. (Interview 2, 126-134)

This interviewee offers an interesting perspective from someone who transitioned from volunteer to employee, and their difficulty in establishing a clear boundary between the two roles. The main distinction she acknowledges is not status, but functional 'overview'. It illustrates how the organisation shapes members' interpretations of roles, identity, and belonging, promoting a narrative of equality and community that is then internalised by the interviewee.

In daily practice, the task leadership and coordination are experienced as competence-based and fluid, instead of attached to a specific position. Volunteers describe an organic system of coordination:

We swap and we say, 'if you are fed up with doing this, we try to say, 'would you like my job?' But usually it's okay. We are here for that. So it's communication, and the boss usually has more of a leader, let's say ... usually [Employee 2], [Employee 3], we respect the employee, let's say, order ... And if not, we it's the more experienced ... it flows well. After a time, the task and you take initiative. You try to fit where you see something that can be helpful. (Interview 4, 370-376)

Here, authority and agency are situational and emergent. There is also an internalisation of how roles, belonging, and participation are conceived. The leadership position is taken by those who can hold a broader overview of the situation or task, while responsibility is shared and emergent. This culture of joint responsibility arising organically is also observed by the founder himself:

One of the things that I'm most happy about in our little area is this kind of idea of joint responsibility that emerges very strongly in what we do. So when we have events, when we're all here, then everybody very naturally without any kind of need to ask for help to tidy up, do the washing up, put things away... Will chip in where they're needed. If somebody's struggling, then they'll help. (Interview 1, 170-176)

Finally, it is also evident from the founders perspective that there is a clear transmission and reinforcement of a preferred interpretation of organisational reality.

This theme shows the transition of leadership from individualistic toward relational and processual perspectives, where leadership emerges through shared meaning and interaction (Weick, 1995; Jackson et al., 2018). Additionally, it illustrates how the legitimisation of a hybrid model of leadership is constructed through daily activities in which members of the organisation interpret and act within organisational narratives.

These findings reveal how leadership at Bybi is not exercised through fixed positions or predefined authority, but through the fluid, context-sensitive dynamics that characterise self-organising systems (Hutchins and Storm, 2019). The Self-Organising and Locally Attuning component of the Living System Culture becomes particularly relevant here: roles are not attached to status but emerge through relational attunement, experience, and situational awareness. What becomes visible in the data is a form of heterarchy where responsibilities move across the system, allowing volunteers and employees to step into leadership functions when their knowledge, perspective, or overview is needed.

This fluidity does not imply a lack of structure; rather, it reflects a structure that is continually co-created through listening, collaboration, and mutual accountability. The data demonstrate how the Founders sensegiving shapes a shared understanding of autonomy, consensus, and collective responsibility, which in turn sustains the organisation's ability to self-organise.

Members feel empowered to act, intervene, or lead without waiting for formal permission because the organisational narrative reinforces trust and distributed responsibility.

In this sense, leadership at Bybi becomes a living process rather than a position, one that aligns strongly with regenerative principles. The organisation's ability to adapt, coordinate, and make decisions through relational practices exemplifies how self-organising capacities emerge when hierarchy is softened and attunement becomes the primary organising logic. (Hutchins and Storm, 2019)

Thus, the initial paradox is not resolved through structural changes but through reframing. The founder's central role is constituted as a function of facilitation: holding space, absorbing strategic risk, and safeguarding the narrative that allows agency to circulate freely within the community. Leadership, in this regenerative view, becomes a paradoxical praxis of developing the conditions for its own dissipation into everyday collective action.

6.4. Navigating Hybridity Through Ritual and Relational Glue

This theme highlights the tensions inherent in any social enterprise in relation to economic, social, and ecological factors. Based on the responses obtained, two fundamental elements can be identified. First, a shift in how organisational members perceive challenges and problems. Second, a strong commitment to adapting to these challenges and strengthening the enterprise through the inclusion of all its members and the surrounding community. Facing the inherent tensions between social, ecological, and economic logics, the organisation does not strictly rely on rigid strategic plans for resolution. Instead, these predicaments are navigated through affectively charged, relational container of the community itself. Everyday rituals of shared meals and labour, the conscious framing of honey as a relational "gift" and the cultivation of "safe space" together create a lifeworld (Husserl, 1970) where right action is felt and negotiated relationally instead of being dictated procedurally. Community thereby

becomes an essential medium through which Bybi's hybrid position is interpreted and sustained.

The founder explicitly describes a change in interpretation rather than a change in objective conditions. Economic tensions do not disappear through strategic optimisation or trade-offs, but through a reinterpretation of what the problem is and how value circulates within the organisation. Rather than framing social, ecological, and economic goals as contradictory logics, the Founder reframes them as “different energies (that) circulate within the community.”(Interview 1, 146-147). This linguistic shift transforms hybridity from a problem to be solved into a dynamic process that can be lived with. This move aligns with and exemplifies the regenerative management philosophy articulated by Rendtorff (2025). He argues that a regenerative turn needs to move beyond a pragmatic utility and profit-oriented understanding of sustainability, where nature is seen as a resource for exploitation, towards an approach that seeks to “recreate, renew or restore nature” (Rendtorff, 2025, p.1) as a core ethical practice. The founder describes how economic dilemmas are reframed within the relational logic of the community:

I don't think there's necessarily a split between those things. I think one of the things that we've discovered is that when you change the language in the way that we've done, then some of the economic dilemmas disappear. So it's not about things that contradict each other, but about reframing the situation of how the different energies circulate within the community so that there's space for things that work... So, I mean, we do the conversation soup, we do the community building activities. We don't get any money for those things, but we do it because it's an important organ within the community to reflect and engage and develop the ideas that we're working with. We don't kind of actively pursue new partners to sell them products, but we try and cultivate the ones that we have in different sorts of ways. (Interview 1, 143-153)

The Founder also uses metaphorical and relational language such as “energies,” “circulate,” and “organ within the community,” rather than managerial or purely economic terminology. This illustrates how organisational reality is discursively constructed through sensegiving processes. At the same time, the quote reflects enactment, as organisational members actively participate in the construction of meaning through their everyday practices. Rituals such as “conversation and soup” are not merely symbolic; they actively produce the sense of community that subsequently guides decision-making processes.

The data also demonstrates a strong alignment with the regenerative perspective, in which value is understood systemically and encompasses all aspects of life, including but not limited to monetary profit (Hutchins and Storm, 2019).

From the employee perspective, a similar shift in interpretation of challenges, rather than objective conditions, can be observed:

Of course, we need money. And that's a challenge right now with these projects as well. (...) But of course, you know, that is just something that we, yeah, it's a challenge, not really a problem, you know, because we just have to think differently than how we can imagine money coming in different ways. Maybe it's through partners, maybe it's through funds. (Interview 2, 270-383)

While economic challenges are clearly recognised and taken into account, they are internally reframed and approached in ways that align with regenerative principles. These approaches emphasise that “it is all about relationships,” suggesting that when there is space for tensions, idea-sharing, and co-creation, the organisation is able to adapt and evolve.

From the volunteer perspective, the enactment dimension of meaning construction and decision-making is also evident. In regenerative businesses, relational tensions are no longer something to be mitigated or avoided, but rather the very dynamics that enliven the

organisational system and enrich its capacity for productivity and innovation (Hutchins and Storm, 2019).

And then at lunchtime, there's always discussion about all sorts of topics, also about Bybi or input about ideas for the future or input for events, or just general chatting about the world, which is also so interesting. (Interview 4, 93-98)

The ways in which feedback and learning cultures are promoted at Bybi through practices such as “conversation and soup,” “community lunch,” “honey ceremonies,” and everyday activities are strongly aligned with regenerative approaches that emphasise relationships as central organising principles. These practices aim to engage and empower people in ways that encourage listening, ideation, and co-evolution through self-organising processes that transcend traditional hierarchical decision-making structures.

It can be small things but also bigger things like around our honey ceremony and someone says like, have you ever thought about something like this? Or what would it be, what would it look like if we were to do this instead? And many of them are also a part of our conversation and soup evenings. And they are also a part of that and creating, we change the way we think together. I think I would say. (Interview 2, 303-308)

Across the volunteer interviews, expressions such as “safe space,” “no judgment at all,” “everybody’s welcome,” and “strong sense of community” reveal a strong emphasis on relationship-building. Regenerative organisations create, through everyday practices, cultural conditions in which people feel psychologically safe and courageous enough to explore, learn, and grow. This connects directly to a key leadership capability within regenerative frameworks: ecosystem facilitation. This involves the ability to “hold the space,” that is, to provide a psychologically safe container for generative dialogue among diverse actors with divergent perspectives, while remaining attentive to relational dynamics (Hutchins and Storm, 2019).

Finally, across all interviews with organisational members, a strong connection emerges with Giuliani's (2016) key dimension of sensemaking as identity work, that is the process through which individuals integrate organisational participation into their broader biographical narratives.

I was at a point of my life where I really wanted to kind of change direction and I really wanted to be a part, first of all, of a community, but also really wanted to contribute to what I was really hoping for or looking for specifically was to join like an urban garden to have my hands in the soil and planting and harvesting and weeding and doing stuff like that. (Interview 2, 107-111)

These accounts also demonstrate how sensemaking operates at societal and relational levels, not solely at the organisational level. From a regenerative perspective, the importance of purpose once again becomes visible as a unifying force among organisational members. A resonant sense of purpose, emerging from the inside out, can only occur when individuals genuinely align with and feel connected to the organisation's purpose. (Hutchins and Storm, 2019)

Because I'm a pensioner, I've got time and I do a lot of volunteering because it helps to integrate me into society and give back something because I'm so happy to be in Copenhagen, giving something back to the city. (Interview 3, 18-20)

So to be integrated, to integrate and to take part of what it's a part of, it's a Danish company. I don't know how to call it business, but something like that, a place to be. So it's local, so I'm happy to help a local organisation. (Interview 4, 47-49)

Taken together, these interpretations suggest that hybridity at Bybi is not experienced as a set of competing logics that must be strategically balanced, but as an ongoing relational process that is continuously enacted through everyday practices, language, and rituals. Through collective sensemaking and sensegiving, organisational members construct a shared reality in

which economic, social, and ecological dimensions coexist without being hierarchically ordered. Rather than eliminating tensions, the organisation cultivates spaces in which they can be held, explored, and transformed into sources of learning and cohesion. This highlights how regenerative leadership operates less through formal structures and more through the creation of relational containers that enable meaning, identity, and purpose to emerge collectively.

7. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to existing literature on sensemaking, leadership and regenerative and hybrid organising. The discussion is structured around three interconnected themes that elaborate how purpose, leadership and collective coherence are enacted in everyday organisational life at Bybi. Through this discussion, the chapter situates the empirical insights within broader theoretical debates and reflects on how Bybi's practices challenge conventional models of strategic alignment and sensegiving.

7.1. Findings

This study set out to explore how members of a hybrid social enterprise make sense of and perceive their everyday work in relation to its purpose. The findings reveal that at Bybi, this process defies conventional frameworks of strategic alignment and implementation. We have observed a significant integration of purpose and practice, where sensemaking becomes a generative, embodied activity, ingrained in a consciously cultivated relational lifeworld. This discussion argues that Bybi's practices offer a re-imagination of hybrid organising, one in which coherence emerges from subordinating instrumental action to a deeper, relational ontology.

7.2. From Mission-Vision Frameworks to Embodied Purpose

One of the central findings of this study is the explicit rejection of conventional business frameworks such as mission, vision, and values. Rather than articulating organisational identity through formalised statements, the founder and members consistently oriented their narratives around the notion of purpose. This shift reflects a fundamentally different way of enacting organisational meaning.

Although the concept of mission was never explicitly defined in interviews, observations, or organisational documents, Bybi's practices and discourse reveal a strong alignment with principles commonly associated with regenerative businesses. Within this literature, mission is understood as an effort to transform systems characterised by consumerism, disconnection, and degenerative business practices towards conscious living, sustainability, connectedness, and life-affirming modes of organising (Hutchins and Storm, 2019). In this sense, Bybi appears to enact such a mission implicitly, through practice rather than through formal articulation.

In regenerative approaches, purpose is not conceived as an abstract organisational statement, but as something that is embodied and enacted in everyday conduct. Purpose, in this view, is less about having a goal and more about living in a purposeful way. This understanding resonates strongly with the empirical material, as participants expressed a deep emotional and practical connection to Bybi's work, despite being unable to clearly articulate its goals in conceptual terms (Hutchins and Storm, 2019).

Similarly, while values are typically framed as core behavioural principles guiding organisational action, no explicit list of values could be identified at Bybi. Nevertheless, the data suggest that values are actively lived and reproduced through everyday practices. The integration of multiple voices, respect for the more-than-human world in which the organisation is embedded, curiosity, and enjoyment consistently guided organisational

practices and decision-making. In this regard, values appear not as declarative abstractions, but as relational orientations woven into the organisational lifeworld.

This logic also extends to the notion of vision. Rather than articulating a fixed vision of a desired future, regenerative businesses often speak of movement, understood as an ongoing commitment to societal transformation towards life-affirming futures. At Bybi, this orientation becomes visible through the rejection of an abstract vision and its replacement by concrete practice. Members, and especially volunteers, did not demonstrate a clear conceptual understanding of organisational goals, yet they consistently expressed trust in the organisation's socio-environmental value and a strong sense of belonging.

At first glance, this lack of articulated clarity could be interpreted as uncertainty regarding organisational identity, which, according to Maitlis and Christianson (2014), can trigger sensemaking processes. However, the findings suggest a different dynamic. Despite the absence of explicit goal articulation, core organisational processes such as everyday practices, innovation, creativity, and decision-making were not undermined. On the contrary, meaning and coherence appeared to emerge through participation itself.

As already noted, this is not a failure of communication, but rather the expression of a specific sensemaking mode. Echoing the founder's principle that it is "easier to act your way into a new way of thinking," understanding at Bybi is emergent, embodied, and relational. This finding aligns with and extends Sandberg and Tsoukas's (2020) argument that sensemaking primarily unfolds through engagement in a shared practice world. At Bybi, this practice world is constituted through the material reappraisal of honey, the ritual of shared meals, and the deliberate refusal of dogmatic corporate language. Purpose thus becomes an immanent quality of ongoing, reflective action rather than a directive imposed from above.

In contrast to top-down models of strategic communication and sensegiving, where meaning is formulated by leaders and subsequently implemented by members, leadership at Bybi

appears oriented towards curating the conditions under which shared meaning can emerge organically. By shaping spaces, rituals, and language, leadership supports a relational lifeworld in which purpose is continuously enacted rather than strategically transmitted.

7.3. Regenerative Leadership Beyond Conceptual Awareness

An additional point of reflection concerns the uneven conceptual understanding of regenerative leadership across organisational roles. While the founder demonstrated both conceptual and practical clarity regarding what regenerative leadership entails, this clarity appeared progressively diluted among employees and was largely absent at the volunteer level. Volunteers did not articulate regenerative leadership as a concept, nor did they explicitly recognise it as a guiding organisational principle.

Importantly, however, this lack of conceptual awareness did not hinder the enactment of regenerative leadership practices within the organisation, nor did it disrupt members' participation in collective sensemaking processes. Rather than relying on shared theoretical understanding, the essence of regenerative leadership appeared to be embedded in the organisation's capacity to cultivate a psychologically safe and relational space. Such a space enables participants to engage, evolve, and develop authentically, while simultaneously releasing conventional mechanical regimes in which meaning, roles, and hierarchies are rigidly prescribed (Hutchins and Storm, 2019).

This finding suggests that regenerative leadership at Bybi operates primarily at the level of lived experience rather than cognitive abstraction. Even in the absence of explicit conceptual alignment, participants were nonetheless shaped by leadership practices that fostered openness, trust, and relational engagement. In this sense, leadership influence remained present, though deliberately de-centred and non-intrusive.

While leadership roles and tasks are intentionally obscured within this organisational form, they nonetheless remain fundamental to the sensemaking process. At Bybi, leadership appears closely aligned with what Maitlis and Christianson (2014) describe as guided sensemaking, wherein leaders actively promote interpretations and understandings of events while organisational members simultaneously engage in shaping shared beliefs. This guidance does not take the form of directive sensegiving, but rather unfolds through subtle facilitation, invitation, and relational attunement.

Consistent with regenerative theory, such practices are inherently iterative and procedural, grounded in ongoing experimentation, reflection, and responsiveness to feedback. Moreover, they are collective and participatory, involving all actors embedded within the social–ecological system. At Bybi, the leadership style, characterised by invitation, curiosity, and openness, thus reflects core regenerative principles, even when these are neither named nor explicitly taught to organisational members.

7.4. Plural Purposes and Convergent Sensemaking

A final reflection concerns the role of individual motivations and purposes among volunteers. The findings indicate that sharing a uniform or explicitly articulated purpose was not a prerequisite for participation in Bybi. Volunteers joined the organisation for diverse reasons, and individual motivations varied considerably. Despite this plurality, participants consistently expressed a strong sense of belonging and a shared orientation towards “moving in the same direction.”

This apparent paradox suggests that purpose at Bybi does not operate as a pre-defined cognitive alignment, but rather emerges through collective engagement in everyday practices. In this process, honey plays a central mediating role. More than a product or resource, honey functions as a focal point around which diverse motivations, practices, and meanings

converge. It provides a shared material and symbolic anchor for sensemaking in daily organisational life.

Following Hahn and Tampe (2021), places and material artefacts can be understood as sites where interpretations and meanings are “constructed and experienced as material ecological artefacts and intricate networks of social relations” (pp. 462). At Bybi, honey embodies such a site. It operates as an invitation to participate, co-create, respond, and develop, enabling members with differing purposes to engage meaningfully within a shared practice world.

In this way, individual purposes do not need to be identical in order to generate coherence. Instead, coherence emerges relationally, through engagement with a shared material practice that allows diverse actors to align without requiring conceptual uniformity. Purpose thus becomes not something that must be cognitively agreed upon in advance, but something that is continuously enacted and re-negotiated through collective action.

7.5. Closing Remarks of the Discussion

Overall, the findings show that organising at Bybi is grounded in embodied practice rather than in abstract frameworks of mission, vision, or leadership. Purpose is enacted through everyday activities and shared material engagement, enabling coherence to emerge without formal articulation. Regenerative leadership operates through the cultivation of relational and psychologically safe spaces, shaping collective sensemaking even in the absence of conceptual awareness among members (Hutchins and Storm, 2019; Hahn and Tampe, 2021). Finally, while individual motivations vary, shared direction is sustained through participation in a common practice world, with honey serving as a material and symbolic anchor for sensemaking. Together, these findings challenge top-down models of sensegiving and highlight a relational, practice-based understanding of purpose and leadership in hybrid social enterprises.

7.6. Limitations and Future Research

This study adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore how members of a hybrid social enterprise make sense of and perceive their everyday work in relation to organisational purpose. This approach enabled a holistic and richly contextualised understanding of different organisational roles and practices. By focusing on shared meanings and lived experiences, the study was able to capture how purpose is enacted across the organisation rather than merely articulated at a formal level.

While the approach offered breadth and interpretive depth at the organisational level, the scope of our focus did not allow for a more detailed exploration of individual motivations, expectations, and the ways in which these are personally fulfilled through participation in the organisation. The emphasis on collective sensemaking necessarily limited the extent to which individual experiential trajectories could be examined in depth. Future research could build on these findings by adopting an experiential phenomenological approach, with a stronger focus on individual lived experiences. Such studies could explore personal motivations and expectations in greater depth, as well as points of convergence and divergence among members' experiences of purpose and participation within Bybi.

In addition, Bybi was founded in 2011, whereas the empirical material for this study was collected over the course of a single semester in 2025 and focused primarily on current operational practices. Although interviews indicated that both the organisational structure and purpose have evolved over time, the temporal scope of the study did not allow for a deeper examination of these historical changes. Future sensemaking-oriented research could adopt a longitudinal perspective to examine how Bybi's organisational structures, practices, and interpretations of purpose have evolved over time. Tracing the organisation's developmental trajectory could provide further insight into how its current form of hybrid and regenerative

organising emerged, and how sensemaking processes have unfolded across different phases of organisational change.

A further limitation of this study relates to its primary focus on internal organisational sensemaking. The analysis centred on how members within Bybi perceive and enact purpose in their everyday work, thereby privileging internal experiences, practices, and interpretations. While this focus was consistent with the study's phenomenological and hermeneutic orientation, it necessarily excluded the perspectives of external stakeholders.

Understanding the organisation as a living system implies recognising its continuous interaction with a broader ecosystem of actors, including local communities, partners, customers, and other stakeholders. From a regenerative business perspective, sensemaking is not confined to organisational boundaries but is co-constructed through relationships that extend beyond the organisation itself. These external dynamics were not explored in the present study and therefore represent an important limitation of its scope.

Future research could address this limitation by extending the analysis of sensemaking to include external stakeholders and community actors. Such studies could examine how organisational purpose and regenerative practices are interpreted, negotiated, and reinforced across organisational boundaries, offering a more systemic understanding of sensemaking within regenerative and hybrid enterprises.

8. Conclusion

This study set out to explore how organisational purpose, leadership, and everyday practices are made sense of and enacted within Bybi, a social enterprise operating at the intersection of human and more-than-human relations. The analysis adopted a hermeneutic perspective to understand how meaning emerges through everyday practices, language, and engagement with material. By focusing on lived experience, the study reveals how Bybi articulates a

regenerative mission, but more importantly experiments with what it means to organise ethically within ecological framework.

The findings show that Bybi's purpose is experienced as an emergent and collective process continuously shaped through practice. Purpose is discovered through participation, bypassing sensegiving processes that are often centralised. This mechanism challenges dominant practices assuming that coherence emerges from set articulation and hierarchical control. Contrarily, Bybi sustained coherence through shared practices, reflective dialogue, and embodied engagement.

The analysis further demonstrates how materiality plays an active role in this sensemaking process. Indeed, members don't treat honey as a commodity, but as a relational medium that changes how values, and being in community are understood. Through shared initiatives and group practices, honey is becoming a currency of care that circulates ethical obligations across human and more than human actors. This reconstitution of what is materiality shows how economic life can be reorganised around relational and regenerative logics, without fully escaping the constraints of existing monetary systems. Moreover, the tensions participants express around funding, labeling, and market interfaces highlight the creative potential as well as the structural fragility of such experiments.

From a leadership perspective, the study shows that Bybi doesn't operate through direct sensegiving but facilitates conditions in which new meanings and practices can emerge. Leadership is exercised through sensebreaking, and the creation of spaces for collective interpretation and experimentation. This aligns with regenerative leadership frameworks that emphasise emergence, self-organisation, and ecosystemic facilitation, while also revealing the practical challenges of sustaining such approaches within capitalist institutional environments.

Summarised, this study highlights Bybi's significance in its ongoing effort to reconfigure how organising, valuing, and relating are practiced. The social enterprise functions as a living experiment in regenerative sensemaking, where purpose and leadership are continuously negotiated rather than set in stone. Understanding such organisations requires moving beyond metrics of success and instead attending to the ethical, relational, and interpretive work through which alternative futures are tentatively enacted.

9. References

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10. List of Appendices

All appendices have been enclosed separately as PDFs:

Appendix 1: Transcript 1 - Interview with Founder

Appendix 2: Transcript 2 - Interview with Employee 1

Appendix 3: Transcript 3 - Interview with Volunteer 4

Appendix 4: Transcript 4 - Interview with Volunteer 1, 2 & 3

Appendix 5: Interview Guides

Appendix 6: Participant Observation 1

Appendix 7: Participant Observation 2

Appendix 8: Competency Reflection - Anastasia Kerasoviti

Appendix 9: Competency Reflection - Baptiste Bussière de Nercy

Appendix 10: Competency Reflection - Guillermina Furch

Appendix 11: Competency Reflection - Marie Sohn

Appendix 12: Competency Reflection - Peter Goga