Published in Journal of Organizational Change Management, 2014, Volume 27, Issue 2, pp. 175-187

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-08-2012-0124

Monica Rolfsen and Tobias Strand Johansen:

The silent practice: Sustainable self-managing teams in a Norwegian context

Introduction

The self-managing team aims to transcend the detailed technical division of labor. Self-managing teams are usually discussed in debates on high performance work systems (Appelbaum & Batt, 1993), team organization (Mueller, Procter, & Buchanan, 2000) or socio-technical systems (Emery & Thorsrud, 1976; Van Eijnatten, 1993). According to a standard definition, self-managing teams are "responsible for a complete product or service, or a major part of a production process. They control members' task behaviour and make decisions about task assignment and work methods" (Cummings & Worley, 2005, p. 341).

Teamwork has been heralded as superior to other ways of organizing work, stated that it yields higher performance (Banker, Field, Schroeder, & Sinha, 1996; Rolfsen & Langeland, 2012; Womack, Jones, & Roos, 1990), better learning opportunities, more flexibility, better working conditions and workplace democracy (Emery & Thorsrud, 1976). On the other hand, coordination between such groups has proven to be complicated (Ingvaldsen & Rolfsen, 2012).

Several studies have sought to identify factors for success or failure (Blake, Mouton, & Allen, 1987; Drew & Coulson-Thomas, 1997; Tarricone & Luca, 2002; Vallas, 2003), while explanations for survival over a long period of time are rare (Banker, et al., 1996; Van Hootegem, Huys, & Delarue, 2004). In our industrial context, the experience with teamwork is strong: Norway was the first country to implement self-managing teams during the 1960s. The idea was that by implementing teams in various industrial branches, the practice would diffuse throughout industry (Emery & Thorsrud, 1976). However, most teams faded out after some years due to a lack of top managerial support, a lack of union involvement, new owners, or conflicts with middle managers (Gustavsen, Qvale, Sørensen, Midtbø, & Engelstad, 2010).

In this article, we discuss empirical findings from a company that have utilized self-managing teams for almost 30 years. Despite other reported findings, the practice has survived turbulent times, changes of owners, and various management fashions. The case is unique, and we have had the opportunity to follow the company's over a period of 20 years. The contribution is to provide a rich description and thorough explanation for the sustainability of self-managing teams, focusing on structural aspects, as well as culture, symbols and creation of meaning through institutional theory.

Our research question aims to provide explanations focusing on the practice of using self-managing teams, as well as how it is legitimated and reproduced: *"What social mechanisms can contribute to maintaining and legitimating the practice of using self-managing teams?"*

Self-managing teams, sustainability and institutional theory

In order to explain why teamwork has been sustained over time, we need to define self-managing teams within our historical background - developed in the context of socio-technical theory (Cherns, 1976; Cummings, 1978; Trist & Bamforth, 1951), carrying out field experiments during the 1960s (Emery & Thorsrud, 1976). Socio-technical design was seen as a means for increasing industrial productivity and quality of work life, but also a means by which to enable *industrial democracy* (Qvale, 1976). The Scandinavian tradition was strongly ideological, and grounded in an attempt to advance participatory democracy through "broad participation" (Toulmin & Gustavsen, 1996).

A large body of literature deals with how teams can be classified (Benders & Van Hootegem, 1999; Cutcher-Gershenfeld et al., 1994; Durand, Steward, & Castillo, 1999; Mueller, 1994; Mueller, et al., 2000). To distinguish self-managing teams from "ordinary" teams, the level of tasks and responsibilities is often highlighted. One typology combines cycle time and task integration, defining the teams at Volvo Ghent to be at a medium level (Van Hootegem, et al., 2004); another is a continuum from "traditional work groups" to "self-designing teams" (Banker, et al., 1996). We will also focus on the tasks and responsibilities that are delegated to the teams, but when applying an institutional perspective, the participants' own interpretation of self-management also becomes important.

The extensive field experiments with teams in Norway did not survive (Gustavsen, et al., 2010), neither did teams at Volvo or Saturn, due to various problems with self-managing teams (Vallas, 2003) and the political issues that occurred within the larger corporation

(Berggren, 1992; Rubinstein, 2001; Sandberg, 1995). One of the few attempts to provide a relevant heory is the analysis of Volvo's team experiment in Belgium. Van Hootegem and colleagues (2004) present a model for teamwork sustainability under changing circumstances through a combination of structural and process perspectives. Using Tuckman and Jensen's scheme for team maturity (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), Van Hootegem and colleagues claim that teams with high levels of responsibility will require more time to become mature, compared to teams than teams with less responsibility. The more responsible and the more mature the teams are, the more likely they will be to remain sustainable. The strength of the perspective lies in its combination of structural and developmental approaches to teamwork. However, it can be criticized for being instrumental, since it assumes that it is possible to "measure" the exact level of team structure and of teams' developmental maturity at a given point of time. In addition, a connection between the responsibilities, maturity and sustainability of teams is presupposed as being clear-cut.

In other words, previous research on the sustainability of self-managing teams has mainly focused on rational and structural aspects, and neglected symbolic and legitimating processes. To mitigate these limitations, we include institutional perspectives (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2008). The strength of institutional theory is that elements outside the "rational" side of organizations are taken seriously, such as norms, values, symbols and interpretation, and can explain, for instance, why organizations "copy" each other (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Actions that are hard to explain from a structural perspective can become understandable when reframed into symbols that create meaning to the organizational participants. We include institutional theory, in addition to structural and psychological theories already presented, in order to obtain a broader perspective of how and why self-managing teams become sustainable.

Institutional theory focuses on the deeper and more resilient aspects of organizations, including cultural and historical frameworks (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 2008). Certain social patterns are changed from a *possible* way of acting to the *only* way things are done through institutionalization. This becomes especially apparent when patterns are transmitted to a new generation, when "the objectivity thickens and hardens" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 59). A widely applied term for institutionalizing is *isomorphism*, wherein social processes cause organizations to become similar to each other (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Tolbert and Zucker (1983) identify four component processes of institutionalization, from innovation, to habitualization, to objectification, to the final stage of *sedimentation*.

Within this perspective, it is relevant to observe in what way one of the authors was introduced to the company's norms and values as a representative for a "new generation," a situation in which legitimating processes are accessible.

Symbols are important signs when institutions are created and changed, representing certain values, and becoming entities that are "infused with meaning" (Selznick, 1957). Patterns of talking and acting play an important role in the way new practices are interpreted and enacted (Heusinkveld & Benders, 2012). Language is also essential in institutional practices, as a "depository of a large aggregate of collective sedimentation" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 69), a point highlighted in Heusinkveld and Benders' work on sedimentation processes (2012).

Another important contribution from the institutional perspective is the notably organizational processes of decoupling; for instance, between formal structure and daily activities (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Brunsson (1989) calls acting contrary to what is said or decided *hypocrisy* (1989), emphasizing that what is said is not necessarily "better" than what is done, and that actors will not necessarily be aware of their hypocritical practice.

Recalling our research question, we will apply the team maturity model in order to identify teams as self-managing and developmentally mature. To understand the social processes of institutionalization, however, concepts from institutional theory are used; namely sedimentation, entities "infused with meaning," symbolic language, hypocrisy, myths and indulgency patterns.

Methodology

This empirical study follows a case study design. This particular case was chosen because it is unique: the company under study has utilized self-managing teams for a period of 30 years. In line with Starbuck (1993) indicated, we suggest that the extraordinary nature of this case will contribute to important perspectives on, and a unique understanding of, the nature of teamwork.

Empirical data were gathered by different techniques, as part of various research projects conducted over more than 20 years. Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with more than 100 informants, covering managers, engineers, team leaders, shop stewards and workers. We also participated in several group discussions with workers and

union representatives, and managers and union representatives, and took notes at these meetings. We have had access to written documentation, strategy documents, planning systems and policy documents during this period. In addition, the second author was employed as a production worker for six weeks during the summer of 2012. During this period, he was also working as a research assistant, focusing on team work. The author wrote daily field notes and conducted 30 interviews, both formally and informally, focusing on the relation between teams, autonomy and lean production. All participants were aware of his role in the research project. Table 1 gives an overview of available data:

Table 1: Empirical data

Year	**Research project**	**Data gathered**
1991-1993	PhD-project (Rolfsen, 1993).	• Interviews with 35 informants • Participation in four meetings discussing teams • Observation of production process over two days • Survey with 291 respondents on lean and teamwork
1996-1997	Research project on productivity and organization	• Interviews with 12 informants • Participation in three meetings discussing teams
2001-2002	Human Resource Management	The first author worked every second week at another company in the same industry park for 18 months, and participated in informal meetings and discussions on the issue of teamwork with this company, and with former managers, workers and union representatives who had changed roles between the companies.
2006 – 2014	Research project on technology and organization	• Interviews with 10 informants • Observation studies • Informal meetings and discussion • Seminars on team work
2011 - 2014	Research project on lean production and	• Interviews with 120 informants • Observation studies • Formal and informal meetings on team work and

	organization	lean
2012	Summer job	The second author worked on the shop floor for six weeks, wrote fields notes every day, and interviewed 20 informants, including workers and team leaders.
2012	Specific retrospective interviews	Five interviews were conducted during spring and summer for this particular purpose. Several informants who had a central role were interviewed.

In sum, the empirical data are rich and were sampled for many purposes. For this particular article, we selected relevant interviews, field notes and documents from the past, and supplemented them with the participative observation, and several interviews conducted during 2012. Our findings and interpretations were discussed with key informants.

Case study: 20 years with self-management

The company produces parts for the global automotive industry, has about 800 employees, and has a strong participative tradition going back to 1947, when employee representatives were introduced on the board. Around 1980, a change from piecework wages to fixed salaries was an ongoing discussion in the collective bargaining process. The management was reluctant to implement fixed salaries, fearing that productivity might decrease. As a compromise, the union cooperated with the managers to introduce a "productivity office," using time and motion studies and other tools to rationalize production, and received a national price for cooperation between employers and employees in productivity improvement.

First phase: Welder craftsmen and tools department (1978 –1985)

The first sign of self-managing teams we have been able to recognize dates back to 1978; these data are retrospective and somewhat imprecise. The informants tell stories of a strong team of welder craftsmen, who worked with no interference from managers. They were given their orders every Monday, and delivered their products every Friday: no one "dared to interfere" due to a rough climate, high technical competence and strong individuals (*Former operator, foreman and production manager, October 2012)*. In 1982 the group was dissolved by the foreman, but some years later he introduced parts of the practice in the tools department:

> "*Even though the welder group became dysfunctional, there was something good with parts of the practice. The operators became really responsible." (Former foreman, October 2012).*

The foreman introduced extended responsibility to the members of the tools department, which was similar to the welder craftsmen's independence, competence and level of responsibility. The tasks in the tools department are well suited for self-management; the need to coordinate with other departments is low, they work on a long-term horizon, and they are experienced and competent workers.

Second phase: Inspired by Volvo (1985 -1995)

In 1985, the company started to reorganize its production according to demands from its main customer, Volvo (*interview with production manager, June 1993)*. Just-in-time and teamwork were introduced, but in the beginning, managers were reluctant:

> "*Teamwork is being introduced and widely discussed. We appreciate it, and the CEO does as well, but not all of the middle managers are filled with enthusiasm" (Union representative, June 1993).*

According to our informants in 1993, the reasons why middle managers were reluctant were related to the new routines, changing roles, and reductions in power, because more decisions were being delegated to teams. Inspired by Volvo's experiments in Kalmar and Uddevalla (Berggren, 1992; Sandberg, 1995), the company appointed a committee in 1994 to suggest how to work with so-called *QDE-teams*. The label "QDE" was adopted from Volvo; an abbreviation for "quality, delivery and economy." The teams were supposed to be responsible for these three issues, and thus the foreman would be unnecessary (*minutes from meetings in 1994, and retrospective group interview with three members of the committee, June 2012*). Unlike Volvo, the company also included the letters "SHE" in their label, emphasizing "security, health and environment." The reason for this was historical; some years earlier there had been some serious accidents in the plant, and thus health and safety had been given the highest priority. It also became symbolically essential to emphasize safety on all levels *(interview with former CEO, June 2012).* This is an example how external inspiration was combined with parts of the company's own history, thereby creating a new language (QDE-SHE).

The committee consisted of equal numbers of people from the union and management, and was led by a union representative *(final report from the committee, June 1995)*. In the committee's report, it was concluded that teams should consist of 8 -10 members, with leadership rotating within periods of six months, and that teams should be responsible for QDE-SHE issues. However, in team meetings, SHE-dimensions were always to be reported as the first item on the agenda, symbolizing the importance of a safe work environment. During this period, there were four different pilot teams working according to these guidelines.

The next step was to formulate a company description, which was also adopted from Volvo. All employees were involved in the process and the union also had a crucial role:

> *The union was included from the first day, it was entirely based on the intention of the Basic Agreement, and the intention was to achieve productivity through participation. And that was followed down to every detail. Everyone was involved, and we worked with what we called autonomous groups, but the CEO wanted to call it objective-oriented-groups, they were not entirely autonomous, there were supposed to be some leaders there too! It was based on delegation of responsibility, we had seminars and activities, and everyone in the company was involved, operators, managers, technical experts, union representatives, we worked on weekends to create our own production system. All operators were involved; we were divided into groups. My group was supposed to think of all possible ways to reduce the tool change time on one of the central processes. At that time it took between 8 and 12 hours to change tools. Our goal was to reduce it to 2 hours and we thought it was totally unrealistic. But when everyone participated, leaders, workers, all had proposals based on their knowledge, we came up with a plan that reduced the time to less than two hours. It was so fun, I have never felt so well respected and valuable, all were appreciated equally for their particular knowledge. This is why we are still in the market, we have a culture of participating, a spirit of voluntary work."(Union representative, April 2012)*

The question of what to call the teams became a symbolic issue; the CEO did not accept the term "autonomous teams," which was ideologically "owned" by the union. The CEO insisted on "objective-oriented teams," indicating that productivity was superior. The process can be understood as a negotiation in which the where symbolic aspect (the name) and the practical implications (level of responsibility) were unequally important for the two parties, and could

be mutually negotiated; the CEO accepted a high level of responsibility as long as the name symbolically remained "theirs."

Third phase: New owners eliminated teamwork (officially) (1995 -1997)

In 1995, the company was ready to implement teams all over the plant, and teamwork was considered more "future oriented" than the traditional hierarchy (*group interview with CEO, union representatives and middle managers, November 1996).* But, during the same year, the company changed owners. All team experiments were stopped, and the company returned to a more hierarchical practice. There were several exceptions, for instance maintenance teams continued, as well as teams in the tools department that had survived since phase one. The fact that the maintenance and tools teams continued can be understood in line with Crozier's (1964) analysis which identified power as the ability to resist the removal of uncertainty within one's sphere of activities: thus, experts such as maintenance personnel will potentially have more power than production operators. This phenomenon was also enhanced by the fact that the maintenance personnel dominated among union representatives, which gave them an additional source of power.

Fourth phase: "The good-old team days" (1997 -2007)

After two years, a new CEO was appointed, who had previously worked for Volvo. The union considered him to be more receptive to teams, and in their first meeting, they handed over the report from the QDE-SHE committee, and were met with a positive response. In the years that followed, the company invented its own production system, of which self-managing teams were an integral part, under the label "objective-oriented teams." Teams were introduced at all levels, implementing QDE-SHE both as responsibilities and as sorting agenda in meetings. With a higher level of equipment automation, maintenance became increasingly important. To meet these challenges, a new concept was developed: "TPM-stairs" (Total Productive Maintenance). Most of the responsibility for maintenance was delegated to teams, with each of the seven "stairs" referring to the teams' competence level. When competence increased, more comprehensive tasks and responsibilities were delegated, and thus TPM-stairs was interpreted as a tool for increased industrial democracy. An important symbolic issue in relation to this was that two of the TPM trainers happened to be union representatives as well, and thus TPM-stairs was shaped and endorsed by the union.

This period is by workers referred to as "the good-old team days". All production lines had teams, there were meetings every morning, continuous improvement was given priority, and

the teams on some lines managed to reduce the set up time from five hours to 18 minutes without external support. One team won a national competition for being the best kaizen team in the country, and team activity was characterized by enthusiasm by workers, managers and union representatives. As one union representative recalled:

> *"We had built our own production system. It was really good, we had results, enthusiasm, a great response from the work force, there were team meetings every morning, if you participated in the meeting you would experience a great atmosphere, people had a drive towards improvement" (Union representative, March 2012)*

Fifth phase: Economic crisis, introducing the "typical top-down manager" (2008 -2010)

In 2008, the international economic crisis hit the car industry. A new manager was appointed, who referred to himself as "a typical top-down manager." He removed all official team activities. Some of the practices continued, though, without attention or financial support. However, it would have been expensive to reintroduce foremen: thus the production teams continued to be self-managing, in what we can refer to as a "silent practice:"

> *"The new management tried to force us to work differently, but we have been stubborn on working according to what we think is the best way to operate production." (Team leader November, 2011)*

During these years, there was no celebration when teams reached new steps on their stairs, and no dedicated TPM trainers or other supporting activities. Nevertheless, most of the teams continued with the same routines, job rotation, morning meetings and level of responsibility.

Sixth phase: Lean company (2010- present)

In 2010, the owner wanted to sell the company. There was a danger that the company would be closed down, but it was bought by an international car supplier which had its own production system named "Lean Company". Part of the content was familiar, but with new labels and names. Teamwork is not included in the Lean Company concept. The foremen were not reintroduced; however; the "silent practice" of self-managing teams continued and is still observable:

> *"In daily life, what happens in practice on the shop floor is not very different from what it was four years ago" (Plant manager, November 2011)*

Now, figures of "TPM-stairs" are still visible on the walls, but there is no longer a strong focus on it. However, the tool proved to be more important in meetings than the official Lean Company figures:

> *"In morning meetings, I notice that the review of SHE, delivery, quality, logistics and manning is loosely coupled with the Lean Company system. There are common indexes, but the way people discuss it, it seems to fit into a different system. (Field report, August 2012)*

After a year, the union reintroduced the "stairs" in meetings with the plant manager, and this has now become an official policy once again. In addition, several team activities have survived. In morning meetings, reports are organized according to the QDE-SHE principles (*Field notes, June 2012*). In addition, the author who was employed as a production worker observed that these principles serve as an agenda, but, interestingly, none of the operators knew the background of them (F*ield report and interviews,August 2012*). Teams are responsible for production, quality, maintaining, setting up and changing tools, and improvement activities. The way of working is the same as in "the good old team days:"

> *"As long as the job is done, we decide how and when to do it." (Discussion with operator, Field notes, August 2012)*

Job rotation is decided and organized by the team itself. Only in extreme cases is the rotation schedule not followed (F*ield report, August 2012).* This is not part of the official Lean Company system, but rather a practice that has survived:

> *Team leader: We have a fixed schedule; everyone is supposed to learn all jobs. There are four jobs, and they need to be qualified before we can rotate. There is resistance towards rotation, but I have been stubborn.*
>
> *Interviewer: Who is resisting?*
>
> *Team leader: The quality people, they want to return to the 1980s (before the introduction of teams, Authors' comment).*
>
> *Interview: Why is this so important to you?*

Team leader: It has to do with work environment, reducing absenteeism, being more engaged, participating in decisions, becoming more competent, learning to cooperate with others, and caring for your team mates" (Team leader, November 2012)

In team meetings, the Lean Company whiteboards are updated, but it is the TPM-stairs that are referred to in discussions. In mature teams, one of the workers will lead the meetings:

"It should be the workers who are using these tools; there is no doubt about that. They need to be familiar with it, it is their tool."(Team leader, November 2012)

Discussion

Our research question aims to address explanations for why self-managed teams become sustainable. According to earlier research (Van Hootegem, et al., 2004), teams with a high level of responsibility and who have progressed to complete team developmental phases (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) will create sustainability. In our case, the level of responsibility is certainly high. When it comes to the team development phases, time was invested in the initial phases to clarify mutual expectations, and define roles and procedures for cooperation, which are important aspects of the team development model (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Through applying the team maturity model, presumptions for sustainable teams were present. However, this model cannot explain why teamwork continued. In order to understand the less rational aspects, institutional theory is applied.

The routines developed during the second phase were adopted as a best practice from the company's customer Volvo, as a combination of coercive and mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The coercive aspect was connected to required quality standards, but Volvo was also considered an excellent company, and thus mimetic isomorphism was present, as the company was trying to copy Volvo in order to become successful. The routines and symbols were created and changed in stages as described by Tolbert and Zucker (1983). There was a period of trial and error in the first phase, and during the "good-old team days" (phase four) the practice settled, became a habit and finally reached a stage of "sedimentation" (Heusinkveld & Benders, 2012). The sedimentation process provides an explanation for the practice's survival. The SHE-QLE sorting agenda of meetings is also an example of sedimentation: new members such as the second author were socialized into this, but the original, legitimating idea was no longer available for members (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), it was introduced as "the way we do it in this plant" *(Field report, June 2012).*

The practice connected to “the stairs” was to a high degree “infused with meaning beyond the technical requirement” (Selznick, 1957, p. 17); namely, values of industrial democracy. As the union representative expressed it, he had never felt “so well respected,” all of the participants were “appreciated equally,” and these important values where recreated as inherent in the participative tools. The ”TPM-stairs” can be seen as an “entity:” an identifiable social unit with the capacity to take action (Scott, 2008, p. 74). This “entity” was closely connected to the union, because two union representatives had participated in developing it – though in their position as maintenance experts, rather than not as union representatives as such. To other operators however, the tools were perceived as “theirs” because the union representatives were involved. Thus, it is reasonable to interpret the value of participation as inherent in the TPM-stairs, and the issue of preserving the “stairs” became a typical example of a “struggle to preserve a set of unique values” (Scott, 2008).

Meetings were arranged according to a fixed agenda developed during the first phase, which is still followed. Few participants are aware of the this connection to the company’s history, it is perceived as the “way we do it,” and thus serves as an example of “patterns of talking and acting” (Heusinkveld & Benders, 2012). As we experienced, new members of the organization are socialized into patterns that are strongly connected to a mutually negotiated ideology. Similarly, the term “QDE-SHE” remains a part of the company’s mutual language.

We did observe a “sharp distinction between the formal structure and the day-to-day activities” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341), since the formal structure was strictly hierarchical, while the day-to-day activities were connected with self-managing teams. The decision and the action was decoupled in a hypocritical manner (Brunsson, 1989). The change in the formal structure made by the “typical top-down manager” can be understood as an example of an institutionalized myth, which served to provide a signal to the external environment of strict control and cost reduction, and thus legitimize the manager’s cost-reduction agenda, while the day-to-day activities continue decoupled from the formal structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 357).

The decoupling of formal structure and the ongoing “silent practice” of self-managing teams had symbolic aspects, but also served as a compromise between diverse interests, and the unofficial rule-breaking in fact helped meet the ends which the new rules were intended to serve, as earlier identified by Gouldner (1964) as an *indulgency pattern*. The cost was kept low due to the fact that the foreman was not reintroduced, but the practice of self-managing

teams would de-legitimize the symbol of a typical top-down manager. Officially, the routines were changed, but were still enacted silently.

The processes of institutionalization were important, with established routines, procedures and symbols. The "infusion of meaning" was strongly ideological, supporting industrial democracy as a value. The advocates for these values were the union, but it was also stimulated by the fact that the company had been involved in several initiatives on industrial democracy, with a need to legitimate practice towards external actors. Also, because the practice worked well, it was economically feasible to continue. The alternative was to hire foremen to control and coordinate, which would have represented increased costs.

Conclusion

Our research question aimed to address social mechanisms that contribute to maintaining and legitimating self-managing teams. One part of the answer to the question relates to a long period of intensive teamwork (phase four), which gives teams the possibility of creating a maturity level in their process relations. To understand why teams survive after that period, we need to consider concepts within institutional theory. The initial legitimating process in our case was connected to Volvo as a main customer, and isomorphic pressure. Later, the level of sedimentation was strong, and many symbols were "infused with meaning" through the "good-old team days," especially the TPM-stairs, the SHE-QLE as a sorting agenda in meetings, and the level of responsibility. The legitimating process is not widely available, and the practice serves as a type of hypocrisy (Brunsson, 1989) in relation to the official business system, and thus is not discussed, and rather is referred to as a "silent practice".

Our study has several implications. First of all, the importance of maturity has been confirmed, yet our emphasis on symbolic aspects has not been strongly highlighted in socio-technical literature. The importance of the symbols and the supportive actors, especially the union is important. Secondly, methodologically participative observation contributes to the understanding of daily life in an organization. Symbolic aspects are less visible for organization members, and studying a "silent practice" orally will be complicated, if not paradoxical. The role of ethnological methodology in institutional theory has not been strong, and provides an important opportunity for further research. This also holds for research on team working, in which surveys and interviews which are unlikely to disclose "silent practices" dominate.

Literature

Appelbaum, E., & Batt, R. (1993). *High Performance Work Systems: American Models of Workplace Transformation*. Washington D. C.: Economic Policy Institute.

Banker, R. D., Field, J. M., Schroeder, R. G., & Sinha, K. K. (1996). Impact of Work Teams on Manufacturing Performance: A Longitudinal Field Study. *The Academy of Management Journal, 39*(4), 867-890.

Benders, J., & Van Hootegem, G. (1999). Teams and their Context: Moving the Team Discussion Beyond Existing Dichotomies. *Journal of Management Studies, 36*(5), 609-628.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin.

Berggren, C. (1992). *Alternatives to Lean Production: Work organization in the Swedish auto industry*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Blake, R. R., Mouton, J. S., & Allen, R. L. (1987). *Spectacular teamwork: How to develop the leadership skills for team success*: Wiley New York.

Brunsson, N. (1989). *The organization of hypocrisy: Talk, decisions and actions in organizations*. Chichester: Wiley.

Cherns, A. (1976). The Principles of Sociotechnical Design. *Human Relations, 29*(8), 783-792.

Crozier, M. (1964). *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*. London: Tavistock.

Cummings, T. G. (1978). Self-Regulating Work Groups: A Socio-Technical Synthesis. *The Academy of Management Review, 3*(3), 625-634.

Cummings, T. G., & Worley, C. G. (2005). *Organization development and change. 8th edition*. Mason, Ohio: Thomson/South-Western.

Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J., Nitta, M., Barrett, B., Belhedi, N., Bullard, J., Coutchie, C., et al. (1994). Japanese team-based work systems in North America: Explaining the diversity. *California Management Review, 37*(1), 42-64.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review, 48*(2), 147-160.

Drew, S., & Coulson-Thomas, C. (1997). Transformation through teamwork: the path to the new organization? *Team Performance Management, 3*(3), 162-178.

Durand, J. P., Steward, P., & Castillo, J. J. (1999). *Teamwork in the Automobile Industry: Radical Change or Passing Fashion?* London: Macmillian Business Press.

Emery, F., & Thorsrud, E. (1976). *Democracy at Work: The Report of the Norwegian Industrial Democracy Program*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Social Sciences Division.

Gouldner, A. W. (1964). *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*. New York: Free Press.
Gustavsen, B., Qvale, T. U., Sørensen, B. A., Midtbø, M., & Engelstad, P. (2010). *Innovasjonssamarbeid mellom bedrifter og forskning - den norske modellen (Innovative cooperation between industry and research - the Norwegian model)*. Oslo: Gyldendal Arbeidsliv.
Heusinkveld, S., & Benders, J. (2012). On sedimentation in management fashion: an institutional perspective. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 25*(1), 121-142.
Ingvaldsen, J. A., & Rolfsen, M. (2012). Autonomous work groups and the challenge of inter-group coordination. *Human Relations, 65*(7), 861-881.
Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology, 83*(2), 340-363.
Mueller, F. (1994). Teams between hierarchy and commitment: Change strategies and the'internal environment'. *The Journal of Management Studies, 31*(3), 383-404.
Mueller, F., Procter, S., & Buchanan, D. (2000). Teamworking in its context(s): Antecedents, nature and dimensions. *Human Relations, 53*(11), 1387-1424.
Powell, W. W., & DiMaggio, P. J. (1991). *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Qvale, T. U. (1976). A Norwegian Strategy for Democratization of Industry. *Human Relations, 29*(5), 453-469.
Rolfsen, M. (1993). *Japanisme: Ideologi og implementering i bilindustrien (Japanism: Ideology and implementation in the automotive industry).* Norwegian University og Science and Technology, Trondheim.
Rolfsen, M., & Langeland, C. (2012). Successful maintenance practice through team autonomy. *Employee Relations, 34*(3), 306-321.
Rubinstein, S. A. (2001). A different kind of union: Balancing co-management and representation. *Industrial Relations, 40*(2), 163-203.
Sandberg, Å. (Ed.). (1995). *Enriching production: perspectives on Volvo's Uddevalla plant as an alternativeto lean production*. Avebury: Altershot.
Scott, W. R. (2008). *Institutions and Organizations - Ideas and Interests*. London: SAGE.
Selznick, P. (1957). *Leadership in Administration*. New York: Harper & Row.
Starbuck, W. H. (1993). Keeping a Butterfly and an EIephant in a House of Cards. *The Journal of Management Studies, 30*(6), 885-921.

Tarricone, P., & Luca, J. (2002). Employees, teamwork and social interdependence–a formula for successful business? *Team Performance Management, 8*(3/4), 54-59.
Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G. (1983). Institutional Sources of Change in the Formal Structure of Organizations: The Diffusion of Civil Service Reform, 1880-1935. *Administrative science quarterly, 28*(1), 22-39.
Toulmin, S., & Gustavsen, B. (1996). *Beyond Theory: Changing Organizations through Participation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Trist, E., & Bamforth, K. W. (1951). Some Social and Psychological Consequences of the Longwall Method of Coal-Getting: An Examination of the Psychological Situation and Defences of a Work Group in Relation to the Social Structure and Technological Content of the Work System. *Human Relations, 4*(1), 3-38.
Tuckman, B. W., & Jensen, M. A. C. (1977). Stages of small group development revisited. *Group and Organizational Studies, 2*(4), 419-427.
Vallas, S. P. (2003). Why Teamwork Fails: Obstacles to Workplace Change in Four Manufacturing Plants. *American Sociological Review, 68*(2), 223-250.
Van Eijnatten, F. M. (1993). *The paradigm that changed the work place*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
Van Hootegem, G., Huys, R., & Delarue, A. (2004). The sustainability of teamwork under changing circumstances. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management, 24*(8), 773-786.
Womack, J. P., Jones, D. T., & Roos, D. (1990). *The Machine that Changed the World*. London: Simon & Schuster.