New principles of management in modern organizations

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper we shall try to analyse a paradox which seems to be inherent in modern organisational and management theory and practice. The paradox is derived from two managerial principles. The first principle is decentralization of managerial decisions to the employees. This takes place using principles or management technologies like 'self-managing teams', 'empowerment', 'value based management' and 'self-management'. According to this principle the employees themselves should be responsible for planning, organizing and control of own work. The top-management is 'just' responsible for strategic management, Human Resource Management and for formulating the organizations vision and mission (e.g. Bach & Sisson (ed.), 2000; Kelly and Allison, 1998).

The other principle is a development of new systems for maximising performance and tightening control. It is management technologies like 'Just in Time' 'Business Process Reengineering', 'Total Quality Management' and 'LEAN'. These technologies entail close supervision and control of the staff (e.g. Wood, 2005). In other words, it seems to be completely in contrast to the first one.

It is interesting that the two principles of management, close supervision and control and self-management, are simultaneously implemented in modern organizations. Management communicates the message that the organisation emphasises self-management (self-organising), empowerment and team-work. But at the same time the organisation use modern, ITC-based systems for close control of the work, standardisation of processes and documentation of employee performance. In the paper we will provide a theoretical framework to explain this dichotomy in management and supervision of employees in modern organizations and illustrate this development by cases from public and private sector organisations.

A theoretical framework to explain this dichotomy is organizational institutionalism. Especially decoupling is a relevant theoretical framework. Decoupling is a pragmatic response to conflicting pressures to ensure both legitimacy and production efficiency (e.g. Mayer & Rowan, 1991; Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008) and the point is that the external face of the organization differs from its internal practice.

Another explanation, which we will discuss in the paper, is the establishing of a new kind of Taylorism. Previously, Taylorism was about making technical efficiency through standardization of the work. The modern organization is trying to achieve technical efficiency by decentralising supervision and control to the employees in the production. The organization is supposed to be most effective when supervision and control are decentralized.

At the same time these tasks of supervision and control are particularly narrow and detailed. The employees have just a small degree of autonomy. But still, new management concepts imply that

employees must be motivated and feel responsibility. A high degree of commitment is necessary if these narrow principles are to succeed. The narrow practical conditions are created by new types of (self) control and establishment of narrow production standards. This is only possible if the employees accept and act according to their managerial tasks and responsibilities. This has been achieved by introduction of self-managing teams, value based management, decentralization of control and self-management.

Our contribution ends up with an argumentation for another variation of self-management than hitherto discussed in the literature. The notion of 'limited governance' will be discussed as a relevant term for the findings in the article.

THE PARADOX

Our seemingly paradoxical question is how the simultaneously standardisation and detailed monitoring of employee performance can be consistent with decentralising responsibility and competence by establishing self-management. We shall start up with a number of explanations that in various ways may contribute to understanding this phenomenon.

A widespread explanation is that the two tendencies are embedded in an area of conflict. There is a rivalry between a modernistic concept that favours a tight and detailed management and standardising regime on the one hand and an organisation marked by post-modern tendencies where self-management is a prevailing ideal and practice. These two tendencies can be observed simultaneously in working life (Howlett & Lindquist, 2007). In addition a number of contributions argue that the future will and should bring network organisations and consequently self-management (McArthur, 2007; Pearce & Manz, 2005). These contributions argues for the emerging of a post-industrial working life and point at factual tendencies in society that strengthen this argumentation. But a coherent documentation for a shift of paradigm is absent.

Another explanation on the paradox may be a polarised organisation where parts (including production) have network organisation and self-management while other employees in manufacturing and service production are subject to a documentation and standardisation regime where the principal ingredients are standardising, regularity and major demands for documentation on results and resources.

This explanation on the paradox points directly to the explanation forwarded by the neo-institutional organisational theory. A decoupling is taking place because the formal structures are detached from the practice of the organisation (cf. Meyer & Rowan, 1983; Bowenbaum & Jonsson, 2008; Brunsson, 2002; Brunsson & Olsen, 1993). A number of organisational studies have shown a considerable discrepancy between what is made explicit and the reality observed by the employees (and other stakeholders). The established discourse among management differs from the conception of the reality of the entire, parts of or the surroundings of the organisation.

In brief, the essence of the first explanation that organisations are in a transitional phase into sel-management, while the second explanation refers to that self-management to a high degree is a constructed and decoupled discourse among researchers, consultants and top management rather than an experienced reality among employees in the organisation. A last explanation points at an internal polarisation where the two tendencies can be found among different groups op employees. All three explanations refer to an imbalance in the organisation. The two tendencies will not be able to exist simultaneously in the organisation unless a polarisation among the employees takes place or a decoupling takes place. In this paper we shall argue that the two tendencies exist in the same organisation. An organisation can be subject to a tight management induced steering and control and simultaneously have a variant of self-management.

ORGANISATIONS WITH PARADOXES

It seems to be a contradiction that an organisation can have a strong monitoring simultaneously with self-management. A number of studies in working life and organisation, however, have

delivered theoretical arguments and empirical examples that explain such contradictory examples within the same organisation. A further example on paradoxes is that within the same organisation both centralisation and decentralisation can be observed.

A key argument of the German sociologist Ulrik Beck is that an individualisation and standardising of social relations take place simultaneously. Individualisation is a basic condition in late modern society. On of the areas where Ulrik Beck observes this development is in working life (Beck 1992 & 2002). The individualisation is especially pertinent as a detachment of the individual from time, space and legal regulation, but also at organisational level is an individualisation taking place when companies and institutions specialise and develop own unique solutions. In the public sector individualisation is visible as a deregulation where certain categories of public institutions and organisations (for example hospitals and educational institutions) are put into a competitive situation with other similar institutions or private sector companies. Finally, an organisational individualisation emerges from the multifarious pressure for change that is the condition for many organisations. These challenges imply comprehensive, new and changing demands that management and traditional monitoring tools cannot keep pace. This development is the key argument for both decentralisation and self-management (Brunsson, 2006;). To meet such demands the individual employee must participate in co-ordinating own and perhaps the work of colleagues. This is also the situation for the public sector where the various institutions are made responsible for their own result and have to deal with a changing world under the increasing pressure of competition.

Simultaneously with the increasing individualisation and decentralisation of public organisations a stadardisation and centralisation take place. The standardisation includes demands for a professional management across organisations and professions. The contents of this professional management has its focus on personnel management, the manager's capacity as an agent for change and a capacity for all levels of management to be take part in strategic management (e.g. Bach & Sisson (ed.), 2000; Kelly and Allison, 1998).

Another example is that organisational development is framed by conceptual management technologies which with a certain space for individual adaptation are implemented in a large number of organisations simultaneously.

Organisational changes in working life is thus characterised by a development where increasing and more specific demands to organisations and their members result in decentralisation and standardisation by establishing committing and identical solutions across the various organisations.

An example of antagonism in the organisation can be found in HRM- theory. A key concept in HRM is 'commitment'. It refers to that the individual employee is involved and supports his organisation, its visions, goals and values. The bargain is that the employee can expect an interesting work which allows for and includes personal development and skills (Hendry, 1995). 'Commitment' has both an individual dimension – the individual's commitment and benefits from his work – and an organisational dimension where the purpose is to create an organisational culture that aims a common responsibility to the goals and visions of the organisation. If the goal is 'commitment' the challenge will be to create a common culture and values in accordance with the goals and visions of the organisation (Beer et Al., 1984; Bratton & Gold, 1999; Holbeche, 2001; Storey, 1992;).

Along with 'commitment' the HRM-theories launch a concept on quality that seems to point into another direction. It refers to the demand to be able to prove that certain aspects are as stipulated or expected. This is both the case concerning the employees – their work performance and qualifications – and the quality of organisation's products or services (Guest, 1987; Hendry, 1995). The HRM organisation is in this way faced by a challenge that looks like the Gordian knot. On one hand the demand for 'commitment' and as a key feature of 'commitment' is trust in the employee, a simultaneous direct, constant and restrictive control is contradictory. On the other hand the organisation needs a contant knowledge into the functioning of the organisation in order to achieve

knowledge for strategic decisions and to improve and and make the production more effective. The concept 'quality' refers to this aspect.

A quality system in a HRM regime has two purposes. The first is to identify possibilities for changes and improvements. Det second purpose is to exercise control. Both purposes presupposes active participation from the employees. The quality system consequently has to be shaped and deployed in a way that commit the employees. The ongoing collection of information for control purposes, strategic planning and improvements is connected to responsibility and influence on own work. This presupposes the 'commitment' of the employees and in this way the necessary symbiosis between commitment and quality. Concepts that otherwise easily could develop into each others contrast.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE IN BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS

Andrew Van de Ven and Marshall Poole (2004) distinguish between four main types of change (cf. also Darwin et Al., 2001; Kanter m.fl., 1992; Jacobsen, 2005 who apply these four types). According to one of these models development is considered as a result of planned and management induced actions. Changes are based upon a professional and systematic behaviour where key actors, first and foremost management, induce changes in all areas with the purpose of improving the functioning of the organisation. Van de Ven and Poole do not distinguish among planned changes but in other parts of the litterature distinction is made among two categories, namely a technical-rational approach and an organic-functional approach to planned changes (Kristensen & Voxted, 2009; Beer & Noriha, 2000).

A technical-rational approach is derived from a classic and mechanic conception of development. The organisation is seen as a production system which via a functional design transforms input to output (see for example Beer & Noriha, 2000; Darwin et Al, 2001). The prime target for this design is to make production effective and attain competitive advantages broadly speaking. As soon as it is considered in the organisation that the functioning can be improved, new patterns of behaviour are initialised in the shape of new technology, rationalisation, changes in working patterns, outsourcing, introduction of new products etc. According to the technical-rational model it is management – often supported by internal or external experts - that has the initiative when changes are taking place.

According to this approach changes are connected to goal orientation and problem solving. The road to change is a process where issues and solutions are identified and a change of the organisational design is implemented and the outcome is subsequently measured and evaluated. Human resources are, in this model, considered as objects that in principle do not differ from technology. To the extent they are assumed to have motives these are rational and derived from own narrow interests. When the employees are ascribed to such motives and furthermore not are involved to any high degree in the process of change, the changes implemented from a technical-rational paradigm will often be accompanied by passivity or even resistance. The employees do not have ownership to the changes.

The alternative to the technical-rational model is an organic-functional approach to changes. An organisation is made of parts or systems that mutually affect each other. The most important of these systems is the social system. According to the organic-functional approach have all actors - their accept and participation - decisive importance for development. This assumption is a major difference to the technical-rational model, and furthermore are the actors according to the organic-functional approach ascribed to broader motives and patterns of reaction which again gives management – and the task of motivating the employees – a much more complex challenge (e.g. Child, 2005; Darwin et Al, 2001).

The intention of change is to configure the organisation in accordance to shifting challenges that become visible from the demands of the stakeholders. Management theories assume a division of

work in the process of change. It is the task of (top)management, supported by experts, to analyse own organisation and its environment and from this analysis sketch visions, goals and frameworks for innovations while the planning of the details and their implementation of the change process is put in the hands of lower management and the employees. When all the stakeholders of the organisation are given active and perhaps even key roles in the process of change, the reason is that in the complex and knowledge intensive organisation it is most frequently the core employees or key partners who have the insight and access to create the most appropriate solutions.

The two approaches are often confronted and most frequently normative statements argue that the organic-functional model is the new contribution. The organic-functional model is even labelled as a humanistic strategy of change (e.g. Borum 2004). We prefer not to label the two models from normative standards, but argue that both have strengths and weaknesses.

The technical-rational model has its strength as a tool that management can apply immediately and directly when faced by issues that demands an urgent and precise response. Management can with a technical-rational approach direct the organisation into the desired direction by introducing the changes that fit an observed challenge and/or clearly declared aims. The weakness of the model is that it does not create new and unexpected solutions. The result or output that emerges is in details monitored by the intentions. Another problem is that the objectivation of the employees may led to passivity or even resistance. This is obviously an obstacle to the desired result of the change process.

The organic-functional model has its strengths where the technical-rational model has its weaknesses. Facilitating development and participation among the employees forms a framework that may create quite new and unforeseen solutions and may bring the organisation much further than a strictly controlled process. Another kind of strength is that involvement creates motivation and commitment for the changes. On the other hand has the model also weaknesses: facing demands for fast and focussed changes, the participation of the employees may turn out to be both too slow and imprecise.

So, the organic-functionalistic model becomes the approach which is obvious in cases where organisations need to open up for new and hitherto unknown possibilities. On the other hand must the organisation realise that solutions not always are in conformity with management's or the politicians' priorities. The time schedule may be unclear as well. If the targets for the changes are clear and aim for measurable results or if the organisation is in a crisis that demands a fast and focussed action, the technical-rational model seems to be a more obvious answer than an organic-functional one.

This takes us to the conclusion that when the two strategies are applied simultaneously in private and public companies the reason may be that the companies have a need for both strategies in their competition with the environment.

Both private and public organisation must be capable of implementing ongoing adjustments to improve effectivity and improve the economic results and deliver documented quality of products and services. This demand implies initially a need for managerial monitoring with clear and well defined targets. To meet this demand in organisations chose to implement technologies for change within the technical-rational segment.

Concurrently, however, increasing complexity and the necessity and precondition of the knowledge and competence of the employees that the targets for an effective production only can be met to the extent the employees on their own initiative contribute to the achievement of the targets of the organisation. This presupposes motivated employees and that they support the goals and values of the organisation but also that they have space and conditions to unfold their capacities. These elements are connected with an organic-functional change strategy.

The challenge for most organisations is thus to combine the two strategies in a way it includes the advantages of both strategies. It is from this ambition we deduct a new variation of self-management which differs from the way it hitherto is applied in management literature.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

A first and quite open question is what self-management is. In an article Bang (2006) tries to go behind this concept and comes up with a number of interesting points. In the first place, it is not a new concept from the last few years on theorising management and organisation. The concept can be dated back to the mechanic ideal of organisation.[1] Secondly, self-management is representing the ideas opposing the restrictive management of the early industrialisation. Thirdly, Bang argues that self-management is applied as a broad description of the fact that employees are allowed responsibility and competence for the co-ordination of the working operations. It is by far not an ambiguous concept. There are several interpretations in management literature.

Self-management is related to the symbolic perspective[2] - in a twofold sense. On one hand self-management is applied as a principle of management which is inherent in post-modern and post-structuralistic interpretation of organisations (cf. Darwin et Al., 2001; Morgan, 1996; Hatch, 2005). It refers to a cybernistic system where the sense and meaning in companies subject to fast and unpredictable changes is created in and by the interplay among all the actor of the organisation in a loosely coupled system. In its most radical form self-management does not even include normative recommendations on (good) management as such recommendation would be self-contradictory – it does not make sense to direct behaviour in processes that per definition are non-dirigible. At the most you can adapt to them and try to influence the common interpretation of the reality in social systems.

Such a radical approach, however, has not monopoly on the concept 'self-management'. It is also applied in management technologies in conformity with the organic-functional approach to organisational change. Here self-management refers to the authorisation for co-ordinating own and colleagues' work is inherent for the employees – it is part of the work operation. This means that the vertical division of work between production management and the operational tasks is dissolved and substituted with a system where operations in the job are united into the same job-function – still subject to the goals and visions defined by top-management. The key elements in this process is knowledge, the ability to apply knowledge in social systems and values.

In this variant self-management becomes an ingredience in the functional management literature and is more or less explicitly part of a number of management technologies. This is the case in the organisation theories that deal with 'empowerment' (e.g. Kelly & Allison, 1999; Kinslaw, 1997), various variations of organisational learning (Christensen (ed.), 2008), value based management and CSR (Martin et Al., 2008) and in Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2003).

According to the functional theory's application of self-management is (top) management neither superfluous or without influence on own organisation. On the contrary, management is the key actor and the theories are actually aimed at management who is told that it can grasp the culture and the agenda in the organisation provided that it is done in order to improve the functioning of the organisation and is according to shared goals and values among the organisation and the employees.

A third variation draws parallels between self-management and the autonomy inherent in the skilled work. The skilled worker exercises self-management by planning, arranging and controlling own and colleagues' work (Pedersen, 2000). Self-management is here seen as a traditional kind of management which has been eroded by the systems and the strive for rational choices by the industrial production. A shining example on this type of self-management is seen in the traditional

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[1] See for example Mary Parker Follett (1924) for an argumentation for a form of self-management.
[2] See for example Scott, 2007; Hatch, 2005 for a definition on 'symbolic perspective'.

profession occupations, for instance in hospitals, education, research and certain types of administrative functions (e.g. Exworthy & Halford (ed.), 1999; Mintzberg, 1984; Sløk, 2009).

These three forms of self-management cannot explain the paradox that the concept is applied in companies flavoured by a technical-rational strategy.

The most extensive type of self-management refers to quite other types of organisations than the private and public sector production organisations that we consider in this context. Manufacturing and private and public service are not produced by independent actors in loose networks which relate to each other when it is needed, but by employees who co-operate within determined and co-ordinated frameworks.

A FOURTH VARIETY OF SELF-MANAGEMENT

The variety of self-management we can observe in concurrence with the paradox we mention looks like the organic-functional model for self-management because it to a major extent is the employees and their immediate managers who in common are given competence to act in the organisation. But the space for own decisions and action is narrow and lies within the goals and visions of top management. Furthermore, these goals and visions are very detailed and subject to a thorough monitoring and control. Self-management is intended to create acceptance and secure a dedicated effort from the employees to implement the goals and visions within a technical-rational regime of change.

The difference to other ways of understanding self-management is that methods that normally are ascribed to an organic-functional strategy of change are unfolded simultaneously with a regime of control and standardisation[3]. The deployment of these managerial principles and technologies has not like in the organic-functional strategy the intention to seek, authorise and equip the employees to find autonomous solutions in order to realise more open goals and visions. The intention with applying monitoring principles and management technologies with an organic-functional approach is mainly – seen with our eyes – to create acceptance in the operational part of the organisation for a regime of documentation and standardisation.

To discuss and exemplify this fourth variety of self-management we shall tentatively draw on a set of case studies from both private and public sector which can illustrate some of the facets of this variety in practice.

CASES

In a recent research project (Knudsen et al 2009) covering 11 case studies (work places) in 6 industries (banking, food production, schools, hotels, hospitals and an IT-company) the main findings support the general notion that employee participation furthers a good quality of the working environment (QWE). In organisations where the employees have a sense of a relatively high degree of influence on how their work is done they also tend to be satisfied with their working environment. Employees like to have a certain degree of 'self-management' and if they have that the result is a better (mental) working environment.

Another key finding from the study was that this degree of 'self-management' in most cases was restrained to the operational level of the organisations. In general, employees have accepted that their influence should not include tactical and strategic issues of the organisation. Such issues are up to the management to deal with. In all the cases of the study the organisations were regulated by health and safety legislation involving employee representatives in decisions on health and safety, legislation on employee representatives in the company boards, and collective agreements (except in the IT-company) which give employee representatives and shop stewards certain rights

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[3] To some extent this standardisation combined with self-management is also observed by Hvid (2009).

for influencing strategic and tactical issues. These systems and representative participation were not as important to the employees as was their direct influence on operational issues.

This direct influence on the operational level took place within certain limits of discretion that varied among the industries and workplaces. Main factors in this variety are traditional patterns – where professionals or skilled workers always have had room for self-management – and the HRM policies of management to leave more or less room for the individual employee to make decisions on how the job should be done. Based on the configuration of the representative and collectivist patterns of participation derived from legislation or collective bargaining and the direct and individual participation derived on traditions of the trade or management HRM policies Knudsen et al identified four models or profiles of participation. The IR model includes workplaces where participation mainly takes place according to legislation and collective bargaining, the HRM model where management emphasises individual and direct participation, the combined IR/HRM model which is a mixture of the two models, and the democratic model, where employee participation is very intense in terms of the two models and actually moves far beyond as the employees in common decides all operational matters and also deal with a lot of tactical issues.

Table 1: Workplaces grouped according to participation profile

IR model		HRM model		HRM/IR combination model		Democratic model	
Factory X	11	IT X	6	Bank X	8	School X	3
Factory Y	10	Hotel X	4	Bank Y	7	HospitalY	1
School Y	5	Hotel Y	9			Hospital X	2

Source: Knudsen et al 2009.

Comment: The numbers define the ranking of the workplace according to direct participation.

At the two factories participation was primarily functioning as a union-management partnership and practised very much in accordance with the formal regulatory framework, mainly from collective bargaining. Employee representatives played important roles, but lay employees were only marginally or as part of a management-designed lean-concept invited to take part in decisions. At School Y representative participation was well developed, but the directives from the political decision makers and the local management were not implemented with contributions from collegial debates or individuals. The teachers just had to follow the rules that were outlined from management.

At the IT-company and the two hotels, participation was primarily a matter between the individual or team of employees and their manager. Representative participation was weak, typically limited to the mandatory H&S-structure. This was not a surprise concerning the IT-company as there was no collective agreement, but at the hotels the standards of the collective agreements were respected but never an issue. So, the access and the limits to participation were given by management considerations as to what is beneficial to productivity, including employee well-being. However, a humanistic and caring attitude characterised employee relations and the response from the employees seems to be that "when you have finished your task, you start helping your colleagues" (Knudsen et al 2009:208).

In the two banks there was a combination of features from the HRM and the IR models. The fact that the entire sector and the bank that the two cases were part of are thoroughly regulated by a comprehensive and developed set of collective agreements formed the background for the employee/management relationship at the floor level. The general attitude was that most issues

were taken care of, and the local shop stewards were consulted, but only in a narrow range of issues. The shaping of direct participation, for instance a recent change to team-work, was unambiguously in the hands of management and connected to productivity considerations.

At School X and the two hospital wards, participation was embedded in democratic governance. All forms of direct and indirect participation were in play, but most striking, direct collective forms were pursued. Participation, furthermore, extended to more tactical issues than in any of the other workplaces. It was not just the individual's own working conditions that was subject to influencing.

The workplaces with the relatively lowest score on direct participation are within the IR model (School Y has a medium score, though) and the highest scores are among the workplaces with a democratic model (so the model and the placing of the workplaces, which mainly was created from the qualitative data, actually seems to fit with the quantitative data!). The workplaces with HRM and combination are in the middle. Three of the five workplaces with lowest QWE were found in the IR model. Factory X with machine-bound and strenuous work was also low on participation. Furthermore, to the extent that direct participation was at hand it was as an option, not a must. Factory Y, ranking lowest of all on QWE, had a relatively low score also on participation in the responses from employees, whereas management had invested lots of resources in the introduction of a 'lean' system of work organisation, at least in theory providing decision-making powers as well as responsibility to employees. This was combined with a mode of participation, where the interests of some employees were overruled to the benefit of productivity targets and with a negative effect on the mental working environment. School Y, also very low on QWE and with records of teachers that had succumbed to stress, scored medium high on participation. This was partly because job control had been increasingly transferred from the single employee or his workplace to central administrative and political bodies and partly a result of a vague use of the options for participative decision-making (which obviously is possible as the case of school X showed).

The two banks in the combined model were both relatively low on QWE, but middle-placed on participation. The mode of participation, however, was clearly linked to productivity targets. It might appeal to personal desires of self-realisation and promotion but was obviously ineffective towards influencing strenuous work demands. Participation was shaped on the conditions of (top) management and the elements of IR-structures at the workplace seemed just transferred from upper levels of bargaining in the company.

Although it is difficult to apply the concepts of (self-)management to these case studies, it seems obvious that the organisations categorised as the democratic model have major similarities with the third variant of self-management mentioned above. Our fourth variety of self-management can actually be found in the rest of the organisations as these case studies show that employee job control actually may remain limited as work systems and procedures have been stream-lined, standardized and computerized to serve productivity targets in increasingly larger and centrally planning organisations. Participation without access to influence such matters is no longer capable of maintaining the necessary balance between the interests of the organisation and the interests and resources of the employees. But perhaps the fourth variety of self-management is most widespread in the HRM and the combination model, which combine a medium degree of direct participation with a standardised job performance. The two factories from the IR-model have also some elements of allowing the employees to participate, but it seems that the employees do not have much illusions about their influence on their job – and the room for taking decisions is very narrow in that kind of work despite management intentions of providing some job discretion in the running of the lean-concept.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The model of self-management we presented here intends to implement a technical-functional strategy of change in organisations, but differs from a management logic that normally is connected to a technical-rational model. We schetch a model of self-management that is intending to implement a regime on control and standardisation. When companies in these days reject the technical-rational strategy's original notion on stearing – direct stearing and centralisation of the decision making competence at formal management – the reason is that the challenges facing companies nowadays cannot be included within an initially tayloristic stearing model with its clear directives on the organisation of the work process (Taylor, 1911a & 1911b). Companies are too complex so direct monitoring would be two costly and resistance against this type of organising and control would be so massive that a classic technical-rational change strategy cannot do the job. Consequently, it is necessary with simultaneous strategies where responsibility and competence are decentralised and where a shift from direct to indirect monitoring takes place. The indirect monitoring, however, is exercised within the framework of well defined goals that constantly are consulted and measured. The degree of detailing results in a very narrow space for action for the employees. The essence of self-management becomes the art of thinking and acting according to the goals and intentions of top management.

By means of our applied case studies we have not been able to show such consequences in any detail, but we have been able to show that this mode of self-management is inherent in various shapes in a number of organisations throughout working life and point at some of the consequences in terms of the quality of the working environment. A relevant question would be if employees in the longer term will accept a situation where they are reduced to actors that only must think and act in accordance with politicians' and top management's goals and intentions. Will it be possible to maintain support for a technical-rational change strategy in the longer perspective?

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