

Leadership and practices – An ethnographic study of study of supervisory work in a Finnish logistics centre

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Abstract

In this paper we contribute to the emerging approach in leadership studies known as leadership-as-practice, which aims to study leadership through the everyday activities in organizations. The actual leadership activities have received only marginal attention in leadership research and we still know very little of how everyday working practices contribute to the emergence of leadership. We draw from practice theory and phenomenology to develop a model where practices create specific leadership “moments” for different organizational actors and where the accumulation of these “moments” creates distinct instances of leadership. By analyzing ethnographic data from a large Finnish brewery over a timespan of four years, we show how the supervisors’ changing networks of practices created different leadership “moments” for the workers. These leadership moments also had a noticeable effect on the relationships, working modes, and cooperation in the organization. We discuss our findings and their implications for leadership research and practice.

1 INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of scholars are trying to find new ways of conceptualizing leadership and its manifestations in organizational contexts. Many call for research that assumes alternative views to perceiving leadership as originating from single individuals. Such alternatives include relational view (Uhl-Bien, 2006), contextuality (Fairhurst, 2009), process ontology (Wood, 2005), and social construction of leadership (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010) among others.

The aforementioned views come together in the budding field of leadership research titled 'Leadership-as-Practice' (L-A-P) (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013; Raelin 2011; Crevani et al., 2010; Denis et al., 2010; Carroll et al., 2008). It shows promise in trying to shed new light on issues such as how does leadership happen, how do leaders and other actors *do* leadership? We still have a very limited understanding of the dynamic, processual, context-specific mundane activities of organizational actors that comprise the everyday leadership in organizations. Accordingly, researchers have argued that leadership studies should be complemented with more precise, in-depth research (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003) that focuses on the practical activity of leadership in organizations (Denis et al., 2010).

In this paper, we argue that leadership is constituted by the practices of social actors in a particular situation. The practices encompass what people actually *do* in the course of everyday life (Crevani et al., 2010), and also the meanings they carry and the ways of being-in-the-world they create for them (Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009). L-A-P, instead of "represent[ing] individual agents as acting and performing in isolation to others and context" (Carroll et al., 2008), emphasizes leadership as emerging from the interrelations between multiple practices, social actors, and other organizational elements in a specific context. This approach follows the recent 'practice turn' (e.g. Schatzki, 2001) in organization studies that has been employed in several fields in recent years (Miettinen et al., 2009). The many approaches applying practice theory

share an interest in the everyday activity in organizations: “what humans actually 'do' when managing, making decisions, strategizing, organizing, and so on” (Miettinen et al, 2009).

We argue that leadership emerges from the *meanings* the organizational practices carry. Analysis of organizational practices is not limited to tangible, observable dimension, but should also discuss how people experience them. For example, Schatzki (2001: 12) argues that practices are “the source of meaning and normativity” for social actors. We draw from phenomenologically informed approaches, particularly Ladkin’s (2010) ideas on leadership and Sandberg and Dall’Alba’s (2009) views on practice, to tie the meanings of practices in with leadership.

Our empirical data comes from an ethnographic field study of supervisory work in a Finnish logistics centre spanning four years. The logistics centre proved to be a particularly fitting environment to study practices. The characteristics of industrial work – regular and structured daily activities, short operational time spans, the “sociomateriality” (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008) of the work; both supervisors and workers worked on tangible things – helped us identify the recurring processes and practices, and their outcomes in the organization.

During two prolonged visits to the logistics centre in 2008 and 2011, we collected and analyzed data on the practical, everyday work of the supervisors and their subordinates. Between our visits supervisory leadership changed considerably. This change was both noticeable through our observations, and it was also referred to by the organizational stakeholders. Our study illustrates how changes in supervisory work practices enabled and invited new meanings and ways of being-in-the-world, and how these new meanings added up to changing perceptions of leadership. During our first visit the relationship between supervisors and workers revolved around an anchoring practice (Swidler, 2001) of putting out fires, which associated the supervisors with problems and produced a peculiar mix of authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership. During our second visit new supervisory work practices created variety in the leadership “moments”

experienced by supervisors and workers. This development broadened the scope of leadership meanings and ways of being-in-the-world of the participants, which resulted in a more cooperative leadership mode with the workers assuming a more proactive role.

Our study sheds light on the relationship between everyday working practices and leadership. We show how a certain network of practices creates a specific experience of supervisory leadership for the workers. We show how practices and the specific context they function in are not a mere background for leadership (see e.g. Drath et al, 2008), but are indeed fundamental in “producing, reproducing, and transforming” (Nicolini, 2013) leadership.

2 LEADERSHIP, PRACTICE, AND MEANING

A vast body of leadership research has accumulated focusing on individual leaders, and as a result we know a lot about their traits (Judge et al., 2002), behaviours (House & Aditya, 1997), forms of leadership (e.g. transformational and transactional, Bennis & Nanus, 1985), and so on. The dominance of the individual perspective in leadership studies has been recognized and criticized by many authors² and we will not focus on it here. However, we do highlight the recent broadening of the scope of leadership studies (Avolio et al., 2009). The argument is that taking the analysis from the individual to a broader level will produce a more full appreciation of the phenomenon: “while accumulation of data is important for our knowledge of leadership, studying the parts of something does not necessarily mean that you will understand the whole” (Ciulla, 2008).

Many recently presented approaches aspire for this kind of broadening in leadership research. Researchers have proposed approaches that focus more on the role of followers, something which Grint (2005b) insightfully describes as “putting the ‘ship’ back into leader-ship”. This aspiration is evident in for example the shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003), distributed leadership

² Meindl, 1995; DeRue, 2011; Bryman et al., 2011

(Gronn, 2002), and collaborative leadership (Collinson, 2007) approaches. Other approaches, like relational leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011) call for studying the relationship between the leader and his followers. Complexity leadership theory (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) studies how the interplay between multiple actors produces leadership. The contextual leadership approach (Fairhurst, 2009; Liden & Antonakis, 2009) calls for more attention to the context of leadership, the consideration of which is “noticeably absent from a typical leadership study” (Hunter et al., 2007). Empirical research applying these novel approaches is yet scarce.

This demand for broadening the scope of leadership studies mirrors the development of organizational studies more broadly: many approaches are seen as rather limited and thus lacking. For example, researchers have called more attention to the actual work carried out in organizations (Barley & Kunda, 2001), the broader context of the phenomenon under investigation (Johns, 2006), technological features (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), and the simultaneous consideration of social and material issues (Leonardi & Barley, 2010).

As we were analyzing our data and trying to make sense of what it was we were facing, we reviewed the leadership literature for a framework that would best help us in our task. We found leadership-as-practice, with its appreciation to the “nitty-gritty details” of everyday action (Carroll et al., 2008) to be most appropriate. We next turn to practice theory and its potential for contribution in leadership studies.

2.1 Practice theory and leadership-as-practice

The practice approach is rather new to leadership research: the leadership-as-practice (L-A-P) approach has appeared only recently (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013; Raelin 2011; Crevani et al., 2010; Denis et al., 2010; Carroll et al., 2008). The authors advocating the L-A-P approach to leadership studies argue that such an approach is long overdue. For example, Carroll and her colleagues (2008) declare that “the time is ripe for a leadership-as-practice work that, for virtually

identical reasons as strategy, aims at the demystification, deepening and appreciation of the 'nitty-gritty details' of routine and practice". The L-A-P approach asks what happens in and around leadership in real life: How does "leadership" unfold. Raelin (2011) puts it very succinctly: "To find leadership, then, we must look to the practice within which it is occurring."

The L-A-P approach draws from practice theory, which is not a unified theory³ but rather a collection of researchers and approaches interested in studying the *everyday organizational activity* through the concept of practice (Nicolini, 2013; Miettinen et al., 2009). Some of the most influential scholars to inform practice theory are Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Anthony Giddens (1984), Michel de Certeau (1984), and, more recently, Theodore Schatzki (2001) and Andreas Reckwitz (2002). The increased attention garnered by the practice theory within organizational and social studies is sometimes referred to as the "practice turn" (Miettinen et al., 2009). In organizational studies, the practice approach has been utilized extensively in strategy (Whittington, 2006) and organizational learning (Gherardi, 2006) research.

In studying leadership from the practice perspective, we adopt what Nicolini (2013) calls a strong practice-based programme, where the researcher "strives to *explain* organizational matters in terms of practices instead of simply registering them". Practice theory sees the social world as comprising of interrelated individual agents, physical objects, and multiple interrelated practices that situate the social phenomena in a specific set of historical conditions (Nicolini, 2013).

Practices are seen as the basic units of analysis for organizational phenomena: "practices are fundamental to the production, reproduction, and transformation of social and organizational matters" (Nicolini, 2013). It is thus the *practical activity* of social agents, not individuals and their features that constitute and define leadership.

³ For reviews, look Nicolini (2013) and Organization Studies special issue (2009, vol. 30, iss. 12)

Practices are recurring localized “configurations of actions which carry a specific meaning” and, as such, they are complex wholes composed of a variety of smaller elements (Nicolini, 2013). Delineating practice(s) from the inherently messy social life is wrought with problems. What counts as practice and what elements they consist of vary between theories (Nicolini, 2013). Researchers have to make justified decisions about these questions. These decisions are important because, as Nicolini (2013) observes, “naming, defining, and exemplifying practices is already theorizing them.” Furthermore, as practices also interrelate with other practices and other social elements, critical questions in practice theory are how different practices are performed and how the interrelated practices actually produce the social world as it is (Nicolini, 2013).

In its narrowest sense, practice refers to everyday activity: to a set of consequential activities among participants engaged primarily in work (Giddens, 1984). Broader approaches also refer to the symbolic and meaning-carrying dimensions of practice. For example, Schatzki (1996) argues that “human action and social order emerge, and attain meaning and intelligibility, from social practices”. According to Schatzki (2005), in addition to explicit rules there are two important, often implicit phenomena that organize the actions composing a practice: “understanding of how to do things” and teleoaffective structures (that provide information concerning the acceptable emotions of the participants). Practices are thus not just activities, but also incorporate the preconceptions and premises for action. Practices are inherently social and the practitioners to a practice learn them through participation in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

L-A-P researchers have also emphasized the importance of the meanings carried by practices. Endrissat and Von Arx (2013) highlight the symbolic dimension of leaders’ actions as it is the collectively understood practices that “provide leaders as well as the staff with important cues on how to interpret and make sense of what is happening.” Crevani et al. (2010) call for the studying of how leadership norms are constructed in interaction and the effects of this construction on

social action. Raelin (2011) even puts the central interest of practice researchers “in the beliefs and co-constructions that arise to guide individual and collective action.”

In examining the meaning dimension of practices, we draw from Sandberg and Dall’Alba (2009). They point out that the majority of practice approaches are at least inspired by the tenets of phenomenology and proceed to constructing an explicitly phenomenological framework of practice. They draw from Heidegger’s (1962/1927) notion of *being-in-the-world*, which “stipulates that we are inevitably intertwined with our world through constant engagement in specific ways of being-in-the-world”. These specific ways of being-in-the-world enable social actors to make sense of themselves, other actors, and other elements of social life (Sandberg and Dall’Alba, 2009). It is these ways of being-in-the-world that “give meaning to what we do and who we are”: through them the social actors come to understand themselves as practitioners and practice(s) as consisting of particular activities (Sandberg and Dall’Alba, 2009).

To sum up, we see leadership as being constituted by the dynamics of a *network of practices and other elements*. Practices are seen as localized and recurring configurations of *actions*, which also carry specific *meanings* and constitute certain ways of *being-in-the-world* for the participants in practices. In order to tap into the interrelationship between practices, their meanings and ways of being-in-the-world, we draw from Ladkin’s (2010) idea of leadership “moments”.

2.2 Leadership “moments”

Ladkin (2010) outlines a phenomenological approach to leadership. She outlines leadership through the concepts of “sides”, “aspects”, and “identity”, which she elaborates with the imagery of a cube. Ladkin (ibid.) argues that the different approaches to leadership represent different “sides” of the cube, of which you can see only a few at a time: leadership and “its description would depend on the side which is being perceived”. “Aspects” refer to the different “orientations through which something is perceived”: the appearance of the cube, or leadership, depends on the

aspect you are viewing it from, and each aspect has its own validity and none of them is more truthful than the other (Ladkin, *ibid.*). The different sides and aspects refer to the same phenomenon, but its “identity” is more than a mere collection of sides and aspects. Ladkin (*ibid.*) argues that the definitive identity of a phenomenon, e.g. leadership, can never be totally known. She concludes that this approach to leadership draws attention to the importance of selecting those sides and aspects that would be most useful for specific purposes at specific times.

Drawing from Sokolowski (2000), Ladkin (2010) presents another set of concepts to understanding leadership: the “whole”, the “piece”, and the “moment”. “‘Wholes’ are clearly distinguishable, independent and separate things” that serve their own purposes “without reference to something else” (Ladkin, *ibid.*). She continues that these wholes consist of “pieces” that may exist as their own separate entities, but are pieces in relation to the whole (like strands are pieces of a rug). The things that cannot exist independently and are “wholly dependent on other phenomena for [their] expression in the world” – like colours, weight, and size – are called “moments” (Ladkin, *ibid.*). She argues that leadership should be seen as a “moment”, not as a “whole”: leadership cannot be separated from its contexts and it will always be different depending on which “pieces” and “wholes” it emerges from.

The implications these above-mentioned concepts have for understanding leadership are as follows. First, leadership should be studied within the worlds it operates, for “the meanings it has for those engaged with it... impact significantly on how it is experienced or viewed” (Ladkin, 2010). Second, leadership, as other phenomena, has different sides only one of which can be viewed at a time, only from one particular aspect at a time (e.g. leader, follower, researcher) (Ladkin, *ibid.*). Third, leadership and context are intertwined because as a “moment” leadership is inherently dependent on the specific context from which it arises and it can only be “expressed

through particular localized conditions and the individuals who take part in both creating it and making sense of it” (Ladkin, *ibid.*).

In this study, we see the practices of the supervisors as providing distinct leadership “moments”. As the supervisor is engaged in a practice through which he encounters his subordinates, these moments, or recurrent localized instances of practices, create a certain mode of leadership between the supervisor and the worker. Through these moments, the actions that constitute a practice; the meanings the practice carries; and the participants’ ways of being-in-the-world are constructed and reconstructed. These distinct moments build on and interact with the workers’ previous experiences of past moments, experienced through the same or different practices, all of which results in a collection of moments that build a certain sense of leadership for the worker and the supervisor. These senses of leadership represent different ‘sides’ of leadership, and therefore are not identical for the actors.

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Our research was conducted at the logistics centre of a large Finnish brewery⁴. The logistics centre handles the whole production of the brewery and employs 150-200 people, depending on market seasons. Production, which handles the bottling of beverages, is physically situated between the inbound and outbound ends of logistics. There are also additional support departments, like production planning, maintenance, HR and so on. Our study focused on the outbound end of the logistics centre.

The outbound end of the logistics centre is divided into two separate functions: collecting and warehousing. The collecting function takes in orders from clients (retailers etc.), collects the ordered products into trolleys and palettes, and moves them into the departing area. The

⁴ 2013: 900 employees, turnover 375 million euros, 46% market share in Finland.

warehousing function takes care of warehouse maintenance and production support by e.g. providing the production lines with empty palettes and transporting filled ones away.

The organization of collecting and warehousing is identical: each had supervisors, operators, and workers working in three shifts on weekdays and occasionally on two shifts during weekends, typically during high market seasons. During our study, the amount of supervisors varied between 6 and 8. The collecting supervisors report to the collecting manager, the warehousing supervisors to the warehousing manager. The logistics centre is headed by a logistics centre manager.

The workers in collecting work only in the collecting area. They fetch orders from the operators, collect them by hand or by using small forklifts, and perform various support duties like small maintenance work, cleaning etc. The workers in warehousing operate larger forklifts and their main job is transporting empty and full palettes. They get work orders directly into the forklift from the ERP system or from the operators, and they operate wherever needed in the logistics centre, mostly however in the logistics area.

The operators are in charge of various warehouse maintenance duties, relaying orders to collecting workers, and managing the maintenance of some of the machinery. Their duties are more demanding than the workers', and require much specialized knowledge and skills about the IT systems and machinery. They do not have any formal authority over the workers. The operators work mainly in the operator office using computers, occasionally going into the shop-floor to see to the machinery. Some of the operations in the logistics department, like maintenance, are outsourced to external service providers.

The supervisors are the direct superiors of both workers and operators. They are in charge of the work flow. As one supervisor said it: *“My job is to see that things work and stuff is moving through.”* They instruct and supervise their subordinates, distribute tasks, organize work

schedules, monitor cleanness and work quality etc. They also have some minor planning and development duties (e.g. layout changes), repair and maintenance duties (repairing machinery) etc. All the supervisors had worked as a worker and/or an operator in the organization prior to their supervisor posts. During our first visit to the organization most of them had been working over five years within the organization, some of them longer than ten years.

During our research the brewery organized several organization development programs. Of primary interest to us was a development program focusing on the development of supervisory work in the logistics centre. This consultant-led development program gave us initial access to the organization. The development effort was funded by a public funder⁵, which was also willing to fund research assessing the development results. The consultants introduced us to the logistics centre manager and we collaborated in preparing the funding applications. Our formal role in the project became to follow the development effort, and provide feedback, but not participate in any further development action in the organization. Later, we independently applied for and received further funding for another data collection phase in the organization.

The goals of the development program were to enhance supervisory work: 1) to make the supervisors into more proactive players and “implementers of strategy”, and 2) to enhance supervisor-worker relationships and to get the supervisors to actively empower the workers to produce development ideas. The overall objective was to “improve productivity, wellbeing and coping of both supervisors and workers”. The consultants proposed and implemented various initiatives and procedures to enhance supervisor-worker relationships that ran from fall 2007 to spring 2009. Their working methods were a combination of participatory approaches, coaching, and job role restructuring.

⁵ Finnish Work Environment Fund

3.1 Data collection and development initiatives

Our initial research interest lay in describing the work contents of the supervisors in the organization. We were interested in assessing whether supervisory work was similar or different from the earlier studies conducted in Finland and globally (e.g. Hales, 2005). We were also interested in witnessing whether the development work would provide any change in the supervisory work.

We⁶ collected our research data with methods used in ethnographic studies (van Maanen, 1988; Eriksen, 2010; Watson, 2011, van Maanen, 2011). During two prolonged visits to the organization in 2008 (May to August) and 2011-2012 (November to January), we collected and analyzed data on the practical, everyday work of the supervisors, their subordinates, and other organizational actors (superiors, support staff etc.).

Our primary data collection method was shadowing (Czarniawska, 2007). A researcher followed a supervisor through the work shift and made extensive notes of everything he did. In addition, we conducted multiple interviews with the supervisors and their subordinates, and supplementary interviews with other key personnel like supervisors' superiors and the HR manager. Prior to conducting our first field study phase we interviewed the consultants managing the development program and other key personnel in the organization to get a general idea about the project. In addition, the material prepared during the development project was made available to us. We shadowed the supervisors through six eight-hour shifts. Therefore, every supervisor working in the organization was shadowed once. We also tried to get the supervisors to document their actions in a time/space diary (Czarniawska, 2007). However, the supervisors did not comply to our request very well, and the diary data was incomplete. We did, however, conduct interviews

⁶ "We" refers here to all the members of the research team: the authors and two students working on their Masters' theses.

based on the diary markings with the supervisors and were able to collect their interpretations of their work. After collecting our data, we presented our findings in three workshops the consultants arranged for the members of the organization in autumn 2008. Through these workshops we were able to verify some of our findings as we presented them to our research subjects.

During our second field study phase, we again shadowed the supervisors (17 eight-hour shifts) and conducted multiple interviews with the supervisors and their subordinates. Again we did supplementary interviews with key personnel, and had access to company documentation related to supervisory work. The researcher responsible for the field work wrote extensive notes and memos of her observations and impressions. She drew action nets (Czarniawska, 2009) depicting the supervisors' work in the organization. We presented our findings to the personnel in one workshop in spring 2012.

3.2 Data analysis

As mentioned in the previous chapter, our first interest lay in the contents of the supervisors' work. Our research setting included elements that could be called "casual ethnography" (Westney & van Maanen, 2011). Our intention was not to do a deep cultural analysis of the organization (i.e. "serious ethnography" according to Westney & van Maanen, 2011.), but to focus on the work practices of the supervisors. We became interested in leadership because between our visits we witnessed an impressive change in the mood and atmosphere in the organization, and different patterns in how the supervisors handled their tasks. Interesting was also how the managers in the organization named this change as "leadership change". We came to think the changes as a mystery (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007): What had caused the change in how supervisory leadership was perceived? We adopted a subjective contextualization reasoning strategy (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010) where we wanted to look into the case elements we saw as unique.

Our research question evolved from depicting the totality of supervisory work to supervisory leadership and what had affected the change in the organization. A photography metaphor of ‘sharp-image diagnosis’ (Harrison & Shirom, 1999) well depicts our research process. We first took wide-angle pictures of the logistics centre, then zoomed on the interesting detail, supervisory leadership, and then applied a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to get underneath the ‘skin’ of the phenomenon, asking ourselves what had caused the change in the leadership perceptions.

Our interpretative research design (Hatch & Yanow, 2003) consisted of three partly overlapping phases. The first phase started right after our data collection visits. We wrote detailed manuscripts or realistic tales (van Maanen, 1988) depicting our observations of the supervisors work. At this phase we did not employ any theoretical framework, and tried instead to describe the events in the organization as neutrally as possible. These descriptions detailed the duties and responsibilities of the supervisors; described their actions, practices and routines during working days; sketched the relationships between supervisors, operators, workers and other groups (warehouse managers, HR, maintenance) etc. These manuscripts drew up detailed, thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) about the work practices of the supervisors.

After we had written these manuscripts, we were drawn to how different the work of the supervisors and especially their relationship with their subordinates was between our visits. At this point our guiding research question became “How do the actions of the supervisors and their subordinates affect the leadership between them?” As we were trying to make sense of our findings, we searched for appropriate theoretical approaches to help us in this task. We found practice theory, with its explicit concentration to the actual working practices of people in organizations, to be most promising for our analysis. Our reasoning turned to theoretical contextualization (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). We saw the practice theory consolidating our

explanative story (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). The second analysis phase consisted of identifying and describing the practices in the organization. We quickly found out, as practice theorists have pointed out (e.g. Nicolini, 2013), that we had to make decisions about what practices to concentrate on as we were drowning in practices and their relationships. We decided to concentrate on the practices of the supervisors in relation to the workers.

The third phase of our analysis overlaps with the second phase. As we were identifying and describing the supervisors' practices, we also started to analyze their role in producing the leadership between them and the workers. At this stage, when we were again trying to make sense of our findings, we searched for additional theoretical approaches and discovered Ladkin's (2010) conceptualization of leadership "moments". We saw Ladkin's ideas on the phenomenology of leadership and the developments in the field of practice theory as complementary with a possibility to show 'synthesized coherence' (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997) as an explanation to our findings. From this point on, the two phases of analysis proceeded hand in hand. As we identified and defined the supervisors' practices in different ways, we simultaneously investigated what kinds of moments these practices created for the supervisors and workers and, subsequently, what kinds of meanings the practices carried and what kinds of ways of being-in-the-world they produced for them. In this way we iterated our definitions to find the most appropriate definitions for the practices, which would both stay true to our data and enhance our understanding of leadership in the organization.

4 Findings

In this chapter we present our findings in two sections following the two prolonged visits to the organization. In each section, we first describe the situation in the organization during our visit: what was the leadership like, what were the relationships between workers and supervisors, and how they collaborated. Next, we describe the practices we found most important in shaping the

leadership between supervisors and workers. We then examine the meanings they carried and the ways of being-in-the-world they constructed for the actors. Next we turn to look at the whole network of practices, meanings, and ways-of-being: how they interact in constituting a specific ethos of leadership.

We draw from Ladkin's (2010) concept of leadership "moments" to see what kind of leadership is manifested in and through the practices we identified. We conceptualize these practices as producing leadership "moments": acts of leadership that are intertwined with the people, materials, culture etc. participating in producing it. We adopt the perspectives, or "aspects", of the workers and supervisors in the outbound end of the logistics centre. In doing this we strive to uncover leadership that is revealed to the participants in and through these practices.

4.1 First visit to the organization

When we entered the organization during summer 2008 we observed that the working relations between the supervisors and workers could be described as mediocre at best. Most of the supervisors had one or two "trusted men" among their subordinates, and pretty reserved relationships with the others. This was evidenced by, for example, the tiny amount of casual conversation, lack of greetings or acknowledgment of the other's presence above minimal politeness, and the curt exchanges during work-related conversations. The supervisors had much more cordial relationships with their operators. The encounters between supervisors and workers usually revolved around problems: either the workers needed a solution to a problem, or the supervisor ordered some workers to solve one. Apart from when having a problem, the subordinates rarely approached the supervisors.

The supervisors spent the majority of their working day at the supervisors' office located on the second floor above the departing area. The time in the office was spent using a variety of IT systems monitoring the logistics centre: keeping track of goods, calculating the throughput,

receiving information about deviations etc. Apart from solving problems, the supervisors seldom visited the shop-floor during the day. When the supervisors did go to the shop-floor, we usually saw them quickly adhering to problems they either saw themselves or a worker pointed out to them. The supervisors also told us that this was a frequent phenomenon.

Casual encounters between supervisors and workers were few and far in between. They did meet each other on formal meetings, the most important one being a monthly meeting the supervisors held for both their workers and operators. These were very formal occasions, consisting mainly of the supervisor giving information to his subordinates.

We were explained that the flow of information was not good in the centre. Particularly the supervisors complained that they did not get the information they needed, especially from their superiors. They also lamented that they were not good at providing important information to their subordinates. They specifically referred to two different things that were hindering the flow of information: 1) the lack of suitable forums to distribute information, and 2) the lack of contact with their subordinates during the shift.

The fact that the supervisors mostly dealt with problems when they were interacting with the workers had a direct and noticeable effect on the subordinates. Once during data gathering, when one of the researchers was having a conversation with the workers in the collecting area, a supervisor hurried past. Immediately, one of the workers said *“Oh, there he goes again. Where’s the fire, I wonder?”* A similar attitude was shot through the workers: when a supervisor was spotted, a problem was assumed. This observation was confirmed when we presented it to the supervisors and warehouse managers at a workshop and they readily recognized the phenomenon.

One warehousing supervisor, who had been in the organization over ten years, was an exception among supervisors as he took to the shop-floor three, even four times a day. During these rounds

he often intervened to correct the behaviour of his subordinates. His presence in the field was not received positively by the workers. Several workers referred to him as “the busybody”.

Another impact of the “supervisors are problem-solvers” attribution was that the workers had become very dependent on them. For example, after a collecting supervisor had been called in to repair a machine that is used to wrap plastic around trolleys, he instructed the workers present on how to fix the problem themselves. After presenting the, even to us as outsiders, fairly easy way to fix the machine, the workers acknowledged that they now knew what to do. As the supervisor and researcher were walking away, the supervisor complained that he had given the exact same instructions to the same workers four or five times before.

The leadership between supervisors and workers at the logistics department can be defined as a peculiar mix of authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership. When there were no problems, the supervisors were nowhere to be seen and the workers “only did their jobs” and were quite passive about anything else while assuming the supervisors were in their office using the IT systems. The workers rarely encountered their supervisor, and when they did, it usually involved them informing the supervisors of a problem, or supervisors informing them about a problem, fixing one, or ordering them to fix one. This relationship resulted in passiveness that was also evident in the way the workers expected the supervisors to resolve their problems and “command” them. The supervisor-worker relationship was dominated by what Grint (2005b) calls the “command” mode: under strict time pressures the leader gives out the answers to the followers who are to act according to his orders. In such a mode the leader is the one defining the problem and the solution. Aside from the workers telling the supervisors about problems, the communication was one-way: from the supervisors to the workers. This mode was also evidenced in the monthly meetings.

4.1.1 Putting out fires

”Do you have the key to the locker for dirty clothes? I dropped my car keys in there with my work trousers...” This question was presented to a supervisor during the very first moments of our first visit to the organization. It adequately catches one of the most defining features of the supervisor’s work: his work was constantly interrupted when he had to attend to these kinds of problems. When a machine broke, he went to check it: to repair it or to instruct how work should be done without it and get someone to repair it. The list of these kinds of incidents was endless: braking machinery, layout problems, disputes between workers or with operators or with production line personnel etc. A collecting supervisor summed this well: *“I run in the shop-floor a lot, mostly putting out fires.”*

In sum, this practice consisted of either the workers bringing up a problem, or the supervisor telling the workers to handle one. This is an important part of keeping the workflow going, as this practice often results in a problem being fixed, allowing the worker to return to his job. This practice was frequently triggered, overriding or “toaking over” almost all other practices the supervisor was involved in. Most of the issues concerned direct work flow and hence supervisor’s subordinates, particularly the workers.

The leadership “moments” produced by this practice had a very profound impact for the supervisors and the workers. The ways of being-in-the-world the practice constitutes for the participants are very different. The supervisors are understood as the active party and the workers as the passive one: the supervisors direct, order, guide, and have active agency, whereas the workers seek help, listen, obey, and submit. As the practice constitutes the supervisors as active problem-solvers, it also carries with it meanings associated with problems. Because the workers are constituted as passive, they readily seek out the supervisors when they encounter problems: proactivity is a deviation from the practice.

4.1.2 Using the IT systems

We also observed that a large part of the work tasks of the supervisors revolved around IT systems. Depending on how you counted them, there were 10 to 20 different programs or systems the supervisors used daily. The supervisors both monitored things through the programs and also typed information into them. For example, the supervisor in collecting would receive collecting plans from the control department and check them at the beginning of every shift. From these plans he estimated the workforce required for different tasks and used the program's inbuilt planning tool to distribute tasks to available personnel. He checked the collecting status many times during the day, compared it to the plans and made adjustments if needed, and at the end of the day recorded the total performance. The supervisors also received a lot of email, which provided additional information about e.g. upcoming sales campaigns, new products, major layout changes etc.

The amount of the supervisors' time taken by the practice of using IT systems had increased dramatically over the previous few years: it now took up over half of the supervisor's time. In sum, it consisted of the supervisor using different IT systems to 1) gather information, 2) use this information to plan and schedule tasks and work flow, and 3) type information into them. Most of the work was directed to the work flow and in this sense concerned his subordinates: calculating incentive pays, planning work schedules, checking work progression etc. However, the supervisor performed this practice mostly alone and very little of this practice was really revealed to the workers: its results were mostly invisible to them.

Although the practice mostly concerned the supervisors, it nevertheless produced leadership "moments" for both supervisors and workers. For the supervisor, the leadership "moments" of this practice are 1) it keeps them from engaging with the workers, and 2) it informs them of problems, which initiates the practice of putting out fires. As using the IT systems required the

supervisors to carry out most of their work in their office, the supervisors complained they could go the shop-floor only once or twice per day, often not making it into the field at all. Some supervisors even “stole” into the shop-floor at least once a day despite the fact that this often meant that something was left undone. They perceived their “being stuck in the office” as a problem. When asked about the IT systems, one of the warehousing supervisors replied: *“I don’t go to the shop-floor a lot, because my work time is not even enough to fill out these systems... If you want to do this right, you won’t get out of the booth.”*

The workload of the IT systems was generally regarded as a problem. In addition to not being able to visit the shop-floor very often, the supervisors complained they had very little time to do other important tasks. These included planning and creation and refinement of development ideas, having thorough conversations with their subordinates, and thinking more about “the big picture”. The logistics centre manager also confirmed this observation: *“Our many IT systems control the management process.”*

The practice of using the IT systems produced two different kinds of “moments” for the workers. First, the supervisors would share some information with them, and the supervisors sometimes would initiate the putting out fires practice when they found a problem through the IT systems. Second, almost every time that a worker went into the supervisor’s office, the supervisor sat in front of a computer. This combination of not seeing the results of the work with the IT systems, and seeing the supervisor so often engaged with them had a distinctly negative impact on the workers. For example, once during an observation a researcher heard a brief conversation on the shop-floor where a worker wondered where the supervisor might be. Another answered in a scornful tone that he is probably *“fiddling with the computer in the office”*.

Through the “moments” described above, this practice constitutes the ways of being-in-the-world of supervisors and workers as distant from each other: the supervisors are interacting with

systems that have no direct relevance to the workers. The supervisors are also again seen as the active players as they sometimes come and order the workers to do something. The meanings carried by the practice work to separate supervisors from workers.

4.1.3 Monthly meetings

The supervisors held monthly meetings for their subordinates. In these meetings the supervisors reported about the past month: workers' effectiveness, any accidents or other incidents and what procedures these had initiated, and so on. They also provided information about the next month: what was expected, will there be any changes on the shop-floor, how are the work tasks going to be distributed etc. When we participated in these meetings, we saw that they were very one-sided: the supervisor talked and others listened. The workers did occasionally bring up some immediate problems to be handled. Apart from these, the meetings were not very conversational. This was also brought up by the logistics centre manager: *"The monthly meetings are just full of info the supervisors distribute; there is little conversation and no consistent practices on how the supervisors react to the things the workers bring up."*

The leadership "moments" created by the monthly meetings are very similar to those created by the putting out fires practice. Regarding the ways of being-in-the-world, the supervisors are seen as the only active participants while others are passive listeners. As the subordinates are left with a passive role, they hardly participate apart from listening. The meanings the practice carries are related to necessity: the supervisors are required to hold the meetings and the subordinates to attend. The room left for others to participate is limited to the bringing up of problems, which again initiates the practice of putting out fires.

4.1.4 The interactions of practices and "moments" in producing leadership

One of the central points of practice theory is the notion that different practices form interconnected networks, where the practices constrict and shape one another (e.g. Nicolini,

2013). This interrelation is evident in our study when we look at how the “moments” produced by different practices accumulate to produce a specific ethos of leadership between the workers and the supervisors. Ann Swidler (2001) argues that in many cases there are some key practices that play a more important role than others in producing larger phenomena. She contends that such practices, called anchoring practices, are able to enact a “constitutive rule” that defines a social entity. She continues that these constitutive rules are deep structures, constituted as acts that are able to define what counts as what in a group.

In our case, the anchoring practice between the supervisors and workers was “putting out fires”. Not only did its enactment override the performance of other practices most of the time, but it also was the single most important practice in producing supervisor-worker relationships. The meanings and ways of being-in-the-world associated with this practice can indeed be said to have comprised a constitutive rule within the logistics department, according to which the ways of being-in-the-world of different actors and, in the end, the generic leadership ethos in the organization was constructed.

Across most encounters between the supervisors and the workers, it was the supervisors who were active and workers who were passive. Supervisors both initiated tasks themselves, and were also called in to solve problems for the workers. This way of operating was also reflected in the way the monthly meetings were carried through. These differentiated ways of being-in-the-world created a distinct rift between the supervisors and the workers.

The practice of using the IT systems further exacerbated this rift: the meanings it carried worked to further distance the supervisors from the workers. First, the actual act of using the system kept the supervisors away from their workers, and second, the meanings it carried made things worse. Especially the workers, who saw the practice involving the supervisors attending to other business than to them, felt that the supervisors were not only away, but also *actively* keeping

away from them. A common though not very explicit feeling among the workers was that the supervisors preferred sitting in the office with the computer rather than doing things with the employees. And even when one of the supervisors did frequently visit the shop-floor, it was characterized by the workers as lack of trust towards them.

4.2 Second visit to the organization

As we entered the organization for the second time in November 2011 we noticed that the leadership ethos in the organization had changed. The relationships between the supervisors and workers – the same individuals as during the first visit – were less strained and formal, but more warm and close. Our interviews and conversations with workers, supervisors, and the logistics centre manager corroborated our observations. Whereas during our first visit the interaction between supervisors and workers had revolved around problems, now they were only one issue among others.

It quickly became evident to us that the work of the supervisors was a lot more structured than before. The supervisors still did most of their work in their office, but they were not anymore confined in it: they encountered the workers in various situations throughout the day. In addition to the monthly meetings that had been in operation during the first visit, there now were shift starting meetings at the start of every shift, regular morning coffee meetings, and the supervisors took regular rounds on the shop-floor during the day. The supervisors still used a lot of their time and energy in putting out fires, but the overarching role it had had in the past as the definer of supervisory work had diminished. As a result, the workers had become accustomed to the supervisor being on the shop-floor, and did not connect his presence to problems. There were no mentions of “the busybodies” and the workers would often halt the supervisors to talk to them during their rounds. Also, the things the workers brought up were not limited only to problems or grievances like before. Instead, the workers for example proactively suggested development

ideas, asked for the supervisors' help and suggestions, or simply wanted to chat with them. The distinction in the content of communication between the visits was very clear.

According to our observations, the various meetings were now more open and several times worked as arenas for quite lively discussions. The climate of these meetings had improved and a lot of good conversation took place in them. Our observations were also reaffirmed by the supervisors, and especially by the logistics centre manager who emphatically proclaimed in an interview: "*NOW the monthly meetings are as they're supposed to be!*"

The relationship between the supervisors and workers had vastly improved. Now the workers had multiple occasions to meet the supervisor, and not all issues they raised concerned problems. The supervisors' increased presence on the shop-floor, shift starting meetings, and more open regular meetings had put them much closer to the work and hence they were seen by the workers as actively engaged in their working lives. The supervisors and workers now had congenial encounters where they could discuss about various issues. There were a lot of opportunities for more informal conversation and more neutral treatment of work-related issues. The leadership can be described as much more collaborative (Collinson, 2007), where supervisors and workers worked together to not only get the job done, but also to improve both the quality of work and the atmosphere on the shop-floor.

The supervisors acknowledged and appreciated the state of affairs, but also realized that the improved situation required constant work. For example, one supervisor had been away for a month from the workers of his shift. He had first been on holiday and after that had to stand in for another supervisor. When he returned to his own shift the workers laconically commented "*Oh, so you showed up!*", and their relationships with the supervisor had been rather reserved since. The supervisor felt that he had lost his touch with his subordinates, because he had not been able to keep things up with them. This clearly bothered him.

4.2.1 Shift starting meeting

The shift starting meeting practice had not been in operation in the organization during our first visit. During the second visit this practice was harnessed as one result of the organization development project. It was held in the beginning of each shift. In fact, the practice was not novel to the organization. It had been in operation until some years before our first visit. At the time it was disbanded, mainly because of the new ERP system: with the system telling the workers what to do, the shift starting meeting was seen as redundant. What follows is a description of one shift starting meeting in the collecting function.

After checking the situation with the previous shift's supervisor, the supervisor went to the shop-floor to run the shift starting meeting in the departing area with his subordinates. The supervisor greeted the shift, assigned tasks, reported on the progress of the negotiations concerning the upcoming payroll system, reminded the workers of the morning coffee the next day, and announced the upcoming "coffee and cake" ceremony to celebrate an employee. One of the workers in collecting asked whether a certain temporary procedure about collecting a product was still in effect, and the supervisor concurred. After this, the meeting dispersed and everyone went to work. As we later noticed, this was a good example of the meeting: it consisted of greetings, assigning tasks, questions from the workers and providing information on current issues.

This practice produced leadership "moments" that at first seem to have a hierarchical underpinning, but after a closer look are more open in the end. The ways of being-in-the-world for the participants are different: the supervisor is the active participant who manages the meeting, whereas the subordinates have a minor role. However, the meeting is not very formal and also allows the other participants to actively participate in it. Therefore, the meanings the practice carries are not strictly only authoritative, but more collaborative in relation to what had been typical for the organization in the past.

4.2.2 Rounds on the shop-floor

The supervisors' rounds to the shop-floor had become routine. This was strongly enforced by the logistics centre manager. On several occasions he stressed the importance of these rounds, both to us, the consultants, and the supervisors. Most supervisors made one round immediately after the shift starting meeting, and approximately one every hour after that. During these rounds the supervisors kept tabs on the workflow, interacted with the workers, and handled the different issues they brought up. Some of the issues the supervisors would handle immediately, like calling for cleaning when a crate had broken on the floor. Other issues they would write down and handle after the round from their office. The supervisors had their own individual routines of making these rounds. The timing, the actual routes, and whether the routes varied differed between supervisors. The warehousing and collecting supervisors had also some differences. For example the collecting supervisors had made a habit of telling their subordinates the amount of their incentive pays of the previous day during the first round of the day. The workers eagerly awaited this information, and most of them would offer their own opinion on them: "*Yea, OK, yesterday was not a good day*" or "*Well, I DID work exceptionally hard yesterday*".

This practice represents the single biggest change in the everyday work of the supervisors from the first visit. During our first visit the supervisors wanted to be more on the shop-floor but could do so only rarely, and often the rounds deteriorated into the practice of putting out fires. At the time of our second visit the rounds were institutionalized as an integral part of their working habits. The rounds now allowed for checking the workflow and included both work-related and casual conversation between workers and supervisors. The workers were now also proactively connecting to the supervisor during the rounds.

This practice produced leadership "moments" in which the workers were engaging in a more active way of being-in-the-world with the supervisors. The supervisors took to the shop-floor to

make themselves available to the workers who often took the opportunity to actively engage them. The practice also allowed the supervisors an active way of being-in-the-world in that they could take the initiative if they saw the need. This practice carried a profound meaning of collaboration, where the participants were called into a joint mission of working together.

4.2.3 Putting out fires

The supervisors were still putting out a lot of fires. The amount of unexpected issues was still great and took up a lot of the supervisors' time. The issues were the same as during the first visit: little problems, grievances, broken machinery etc. Many of these issues now came up through other practices: during shift starting meetings and rounds on the shop-floor. Still, our shadowing of the supervisors and the interviews we held with them, revealed that the supervisors were still often interrupted from what they were doing by a constant flow of small, unanticipated problems.

This practice had the same elements and purpose as during our first visit. However, its role had diminished as many of the things now came up through other practices. Still, it was one of the key practices in constituting the leadership between supervisors and workers.

The leadership "moments" produced by this practice were similar to what they were during our first visit. The practice constitutes active ways of being-in-the-world for the supervisors, where they order and guide; and passive ones for the workers, whereby they seek help and comply. The practice still carries meanings associating the supervisors with problems. However, the general impact of these "moments" to leadership ethos is different, as becomes clear when we examine at the interactions between practices and "moments"; see the section "The interactions of practices and 'moments' in producing leadership" below.

4.2.4 Using IT systems

The supervisors still spent most of their working days in their offices. Much of their work with IT systems had remained the same as during our first visit. The supervisors still collected a lot of their information from the systems, filled out information into them, calculated incentive pays etc. The amount of work with IT systems had decreased, and especially the way the supervisors felt with them had changed: they no more felt overwhelmed by them.

This practice remained almost unchanged between our visits. The main difference was that now the supervisor spent less time using the systems. This was largely due to revised division of labour, elimination of minor tasks, and the fact that the supervisors now received some of the information about the work flow directly; as seen in the “rounds on the shop-floor” practice.

Although much about the practice had remained unchanged, the leadership “moments” it produced were still vastly different. The ways of being-in-the-world of both the supervisors and the workers still remained detached and distant. However, because of the less time they took up together with other changes in their ways of working, the supervisors no longer felt the systems were keeping them away from their subordinates. From the workers’ point of view, the changes were twofold: they 1) got to meet the supervisor more because of the practices outlined above, and 2) had to visit the supervisor’s office less often, because they could communicate their problems during the shift starting meeting or the supervisors’ rounds. This shows that the meanings the practice carried had changed: it was no more seen as a practice that contributed to the separation of the supervisors and workers, but more as a regular work practice that was a necessary evil. In contrast to our first visit, the references to supervisors “fiddling with their computers” were not heard from the workers during observations.

4.2.5 Meetings

The supervisors held two regular meetings with their subordinates: the monthly meetings (as in the first phase) and a morning coffee meeting every three weeks. The design of the monthly meeting was the same as during our first visit: it was a more formal meeting where the supervisor provided knowledge for the subordinates. The morning coffee meetings were informal occasions where the supervisors and workers had the opportunity to discuss more freely. For example, in one triweekly coffee meeting we observed, these issues were the upcoming pay system, the performance of individuals and groups and the incentive pays, news of the day, safety issues, work clothes, and recreational activities. The triweekly coffee meeting practice served as an informal meeting where the supervisor and subordinates could talk about both work-related and other issues.

The practice of the monthly meeting had significantly changed after our first visit. Its participants and purpose remained the same, but the atmosphere and behavior of participants was significantly different. Instead of being a one-sided monologue of the supervisor, these meetings now exhibited a lot of conversation on different issues. Not only did the workers discuss the issues presented by the supervisor, they offered their own opinions and ideas on different subjects. Problems were still raised in the meetings, but the way they were presented was different, and many other things were also brought up. The meetings had a good atmosphere and allowed for casual communication.

The leadership “moments” produced by the meetings were also very different from the past. The supervisors’ ways of being-in-the-world were still quite active: they managed the monthly meetings and also assembled the coffee meetings. The supervisors distributed a lot of information, but they also allowed active ways of being-in-the-world for the workers who actively participated in the conversation. The atmosphere of these meetings had changed into a

more collaborative one and they now carried meanings of association and free conversation, in addition to the work-related meanings of sharing information and solving problems. This was evidenced by the triweekly coffee meetings: they were voluntary occasions. Still, almost all supervisors and subordinates strived to be present in them, leaving out only if they had more important work duties.

4.2.6 The interactions of practices and “moments” in producing leadership

When we turn to examine the interactions between practices and “moments” in producing the leadership in the department, profound changes in the network of practices are apparent. During our first visit, the practice of putting out fires was an anchoring practice (Swidler, 2001) that strongly shaped the ways of being-in-the-world of the actors and the meanings the different practices carried. During our second visit, such an anchoring practice was no longer self-evident. The practices of putting out fires, using IT systems, and monthly meetings had all substantially changed, and three new practices had emerged: the rounds on the shop-floor, the shift starting meeting, and the triweekly coffee meeting. The resulting network of practices was more dynamic and complex, and provided opportunities for more heterogenic leadership than before.

The workers now came into contact with the supervisor through various practices, not just putting out fires. As a result, the leadership “moments” that were created were more diverse. The workers met the supervisor in the shift starting meeting, during the multiple rounds on the shop-floor, and also in the monthly meetings and triweekly coffee meetings. The shift starting meeting was a practice through which the workers and supervisor oriented themselves to the coming shift, had the opportunity to discuss various issues, and actually saw each other every day. The regular rounds on the shop-floor also presented the workers the chance to raise any issues they saw as important and they had learned to seize this opportunity. The rounds also allowed the supervisor

to converse with the workers about various issues. Because the supervisor was able to conduct multiple rounds per day, the rounds seldom deteriorated to the practice of putting out fires.

Although a single anchoring practice could no longer be pinpointed, many of the practices now constituted similar ways of being-in-the-world for the participants and carried many similar meanings. The supervisors often assumed an active way of being-in-the-world in different practices, where they were the initiators and managers of action. Instead of constituting the workers as passive participants, the practices often allowed more active ways of being-in-the-world for them also. In the rounds on the shop-floor practice, the workers were even assuming a more active way of being-in-the-world than their supervisors, often being the ones acting as instigators of discussion.

These changes had an interesting effect also on the practice of using the IT systems. Although the actions comprising the practice remained unchanged, the meanings it carried were different. The leadership “moments” created by the practice, whereby the supervisors were kept away from their workers, were no more seen as negative but instead a part of work as usual.

The resulting changes to the leadership and interactions between supervisors and workers and their ways of being-in-the-world were profound. Supervisors were not anymore primarily associated with problems. As a result, the workers’ relationship with the supervisor had improved greatly. The workers were no more wary of the “busybodies”, but had more neutral and direct relations to the supervisors. They were also not so focused on only getting their own work done and instead offered, for example, their own ideas for development.

5 DISCUSSION

The central argument in this article is that leadership can be fruitfully studied by uncovering the relations between everyday working practices, the meanings they carry, and the ways of being-in-

the-world they constitute for the participants in those practices through situated recurring “moments” of leadership. The general ethos of leadership between participants is formed as the moments created by multiple practices come together. In this chapter, we discuss our empirical and theoretical insights and outline their implications for leadership research.

5.1 Studying the everyday, micro-level activities as producing leadership

The present article is based on an ethnographic study in which we examined the actual everyday activity in an organization. We described how leadership changed in the organization under study, and how changes in a network of supervisory work practices influenced that change.

Formal, intentional changes in the way supervisory work was organized helped pave the way for a more “leaderful” (Raelin, 2011) relationship between supervisors and workers in the brewery.

The work practices of the supervisors were reorganized so that the supervisors came ‘closer’ to the workers: the supervisors had more frequent opportunities to meet their subordinates, and that the contents of these encounters became more varied. The previous dominance of problem-related encounters decreased, as the supervisor-subordinate encounters became more varied. Over time this influenced the impressions both the supervisors and subordinates held of their relationship and cooperation.

Our close examination of the everyday work through the notion of practices revealed some of the complex interrelationships between activities, meanings, and ways of being-in-the-world in constituting leadership in a specific context. In this way, we are answering the calls for more in-depth studies of leadership (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), which should aim for “opening the black box of leadership processes” (Raelin, 2011) and “a deeper empirical understanding of everyday leadership practices and interactions” (Crevani et al., 2010). Particularly the leadership-as-practice scholars are advocating for more narrative methods, such as ethnography, utilizing

thick description to better understand leadership (Raelin, 2011) and more micro-level studies to study leadership in particular situated activities (Denis et al., 2010).

5.2 The value of the leadership-as-practice approach

We argue that one of the key contributions of the present study is the specific way in which we approach leadership through practices. We did not try to identify specific leadership practices, but instead studied how the ordinary working practices were able to create the “moments” through which leadership was experienced. In doing this we have acknowledged that “practices do not fall into such neat and discrete packages” and ideologically loaded labels such as “leadership”, “management”, and “strategy” (Carroll et al., 2008). This approach helps in avoiding the tendency to predetermine what kinds of practices should be searched to find leadership. In this way, we have tried to avoid the usual tendency of leadership researchers to *impose* meanings upon phenomena instead of *exposing* them (Bryman et al., 1988).

For example, Denis et al. (2010) develop a compelling program to study leadership practices. However, they still put a heavy emphasis on the formal leaders and advocate focusing on the influence processes between leaders and followers, which is also pointed out by Raelin (2011). Although we follow a similar research program, our study highlights the need to stay open to other processes or practices, which can have an impact on how leadership is perceived. In our study, this is best illustrated by the practice of using IT systems: a practice the activities of which were performed by the supervisors alone, but which still had a noticeable impact on the whole leadership ethos in the department.

5.3 Leadership through “moments”

Our theoretical framework and particularly the use of Ladkin’s (2010) idea of “moments” also allows for a very broad view of leadership and strengthens the aspiration to expose leadership in

the everyday life. The concept of moments closely resembles the ideas of Crevani and others (2010), who propose that “all interactions are potential instances of leadership” and that interactions are instances of situated practices. Here our study contributes to L-A-P approach by elaborating on the recursive relationship between leadership practices and their consequences (Denis et al., 2010). The meanings and ways of being-in-the-world can be conceptualized as “symbolic consequences” (Denis et al., *ibid.*) of leadership practices.

Our study also shows the importance of the perspective, or “aspect” (Ladkin, 2010), taken when studying leadership. From the perspective of the supervisor, the practice that actually defined much of his working day was using IT systems. If we had taken the aspect of the supervisors alone, using the IT systems could have taken the role of the anchoring practice. However, we wanted to examine leadership between the supervisors and the workers and this practice was almost invisible to the workers. As we illustrated, the practice of putting out fires was an anchoring practice from the aspect of their relationship. This observation resonates with Ladkin’s (2010) ideas of “sides” and “aspects”: leadership is revealed very differently to different actors as it is observed from different perspectives.

5.4 The interrelationships between practices, meanings, and ways of being-in-the-world

We also contribute to the leadership-as-practice literature by illustrating how different practices interact and form networks of practices (Nicolini, 2013), in producing the leadership ethos for participants. It was the interrelatedness of the practices, supervisor-worker encounters (as “moments” of leadership), the ways of being-in-the-world constituted by and the meanings different stakeholders attached to these encounters that produced the leadership ethos inferred from the strings of these encounters. The putting out fires is a typical “management by exception” practice, where the supervisors became active when a problem was spotted. The

dominance of these practices in supervisory work gave the impression that workers were not a primary concern of the supervisors. The ways of being-in-the-world held by the parties from these two key practices were transferred to the monthly meetings during the first visit: the supervisors were the active party and the workers the passive, ephemeral party. In sum, the anchoring practice (Swidler, 2001) of putting out fires dominated the creation of the “moments”, resulting in a mix of authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership.

During the second visit, the network of supervisory work practices had become more balanced in the sense that it provided opportunities for supervisor-subordinate relationships that weren't supported by the practices during the first visit. The new elements in supervisory work provided opportunities for ways of being-in-the-world that did not exist previously. The new practices of consecutive shop-floor rounds allowed the superiors and the workers to meet on “neutral grounds” and the topics that were handled were more varied, with direct feedback to workers included. Coupled with the new practice of shift starting meetings, the new and more collaborative ways of being-in-the-world were transferred also to other practices, resulting in a more open, congenial, and mutually supportive working atmosphere and collaborative (Collinson, 2007) leadership.

The interrelationships between practices and the other elements are especially interesting when we consider the practice of using IT systems. Between our visits, the meanings this practice carried were changed profoundly without virtually any changes in its actual activities. Because the changes in meaning cannot be explained through changes in activities, we argue they arise from the changes in the complex dynamic between practices and meanings. This observation very adequately illustrates the views on equipment of Sandberg and Dall'Alba (2010) who argue that “[u]ltimately, equipment is defined by human agency and purposiveness, that is, by the specific meaning it has for our ways of being”. The IT systems the supervisors used, and the practice they

were a part of, were defined differently depending on the different ways of being-in-the-world the practice constituted for the supervisors during our visits.

5.5 Changing practices

Although we did not focus our study on how the practices in the organization changed, we briefly discuss the change here. As Endrissat and Von Arx (2013) note, changing practices is easier said than done and requires “becoming aware of the established practices and making explicit that which is usually implicit, unspoken, and inarticulate”. In our organization, the change in the supervisory work seems to have happened quite smoothly.

One of the things that helped the transition in the supervisory work was that the managers, supervisors and the workers thought that the supervisors’ role was not optimal. Supervisory work had become dominantly administrative over the past decades: the introduction of the various IT systems, especially the ERP system, had introduced more administrative dimensions to the supervisors’ work. This development had slowly and silently, without bigger notice, changed the content and practice of supervisory work: they drifted away from the shop-floor.

In many ways the logistics centre and the supervisors had been left to their own devices in trying to cope with the new requirements emerging from external parties. Of course many of the implemented IT systems had several features that worked as leadership substitutes (Kerr & Jermier, 1978) especially in the area of control. However, worker control through the automated ERP system was not able to support the more tacit, leadership-building needs that are handled in face-to-face meetings between leaders and followers. Both supervisors and workers were concentrating on their own tasks and had little true collaboration; they were almost trying to ignore each another. This kind of behavior could rightly be called “non-deliberate practical coping” as opposed to “planned, intentional action” (Chia & Holt, 2006:643).

Previously, the organization had not helped the supervisors to fill the void created in the face-to-face encounters by this drift into the office. The organization was answering this challenge by starting the development program, one part of which was to support new supervisory practices that would fill this void. This observation connects our observations to research on leadership context (Endrissat & Von Arx, 2013; Fairhurst, 2009), particularly to the recursive relationship between leadership practices and context. During our first visit, the larger context (i.e., the increase of administrative tasks and lack of managerial support) contributed to shaping the practices in such a way that they separated the workers from their supervisors. During the second visit, the changes in tasks and increased managerial support contributed to changing the practices into constituting a more collaborative ethos of leadership.

5.6 Leader-follower distance

One particular way to analyze the leadership change in the logistics centre is through the concept of leader-follower distance. Distance can be understood through different dimensions. In their review on leadership distance research, Antonakis and Atwater (2002) summarize that distance can be manifested in three independent dimensions: 1) leader–follower physical distance, 2) perceived social distance, and 3) perceived leader–follower interaction frequency. The degree to which these three dimensions are manifested in the leader’s behavior will affect the degree to which followers perceive the leader as “close” or “distant.” Both Antonakis & Atwater (2002) and Collinson (2005) concur that the past leadership research concerning distance is discordant both on the conceptual and on the results level. In the most general level proximity is considered beneficial for leadership, with various reservations acknowledged.

Collinson (2005) criticizes the past distance research from two viewpoints. First, he states that the research has mainly focused on military and political leaders. He is skeptical whether the research results are directly transferrable to business or other contexts. Secondly, he is unhappy with its

positivistic tradition of building static categories, and he questions the “dissection” of the different dimensions given to distance. He asks how the dimensions of distance intersect, produce one another, and may be in tension.

In Antonakis & Atwater’s (2002) terms our supervisor leaders were “Class 1” leaders, who are socially close to followers and whose “[l]eader outcomes are visible at the individual level of analysis.” In our study, the observable change in leader-follower distance happened primarily in leader-follower interaction frequency and in the “median” physical distance between the leaders and followers. The leadership between the supervisors and workers changed from “Hands-off Leadership” (socially and physically close, but infrequent contact with followers) to “Proximal Leadership” (socially and physically close, with frequent contact with followers) (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002). Still, we argue here that the actual change in the observable behavior (more frequent contacts on the shop-floor), and in the contents of the encounters (from mainly problems to more heterogenic themes) resulted in a change in the perceived social distance between workers and supervisors (from distant to close). ...

Our research answers some of the questions Collinson raises. We have presented how the physical distance and the social distance were interrelated and how the encounter content and frequency had symbolic value about the leader-follower relationship. We have shown how the supervisory practices or rather the combination or network of practices either held the supervisor distant, or brought him closer to his subordinates. The practice network encourages certain ways of being-in-the-world for both the leaders and the followers, excluding others. The new configuration of work practices enabled the supervisors to practice leadership in a different fashion, creating a new understanding in the organization on the supervisor-worker relationship and enabling new, more cooperative and activating leadership emerge.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this article we set out to unravel the mystery our empirical data presented us: what had caused such profound changes in the leadership between the supervisors and the workers in the organization? Our research question was how the everyday activities within the organization contributed to the generation of leadership. We theorized that working practices, in a specific organizational and social context, interrelate with the meanings they carry and ways of being-in-the-world they create for the participants in creating specific leadership “moments” that together form a certain ethos of leadership.

We studied this interrelation of practices and other elements by examining the relationship of supervisors and workers in the logistics centre of a large Finnish brewery. By focusing on the work of the supervisors we identified the practices in and through which they interacted with their subordinates. By concentrating on the specific leadership “moments” these practices created, we uncovered the meanings they carried and the ways of being-in-the-world they created for both workers and supervisors. We studied the resulting network of practices, meanings, and ways of being-in-the-world to uncover how they interrelated to form specific modes of leadership. During our first visit, the anchoring practice of putting out fires dominated in producing leadership moments in which the supervisors were either active problem solvers or distant administrators, and the workers passive onlookers. This resulted in a mix of authoritative and laissez-faire leadership and a bad working climate. During our second visit, new practices of rounds on the shop-floor and shift starting meetings were largely responsible for a more varied set of leadership moments. This change resulted in more varied ways of being-in-the-world for both supervisors and workers and the overall leadership was more collaborative and the working climate a lot more open and congenial.

In sum, our study contributes into the leadership literature by showing the critical role of practices in creating leadership. We have striven to “capture the experience of doing leadership as a practical activity” (Denis et al., 2010). We have illustrated how it is the very situational and context-specific network of practices and other social elements that ultimately create the modes of leadership. We have also shown how the overall ethos of leadership is constituted by a set of leadership moments created by multiple practices. Our study highlights the need of leadership research to pay serious attention to the everyday activity in organizations.

We have studied the relationship of practices and leadership in the logistics centre of a single organization. It could therefore be asked what the relevance of our study is for other organizations and contexts. However, our study should be considered more as taking a “theoretical sampling” (e.g. Silverman, 2005) or “critical case” (Flyvbjerg, 2005) approach: we illuminate and propose theoretical arguments about the practice-leadership relationship through our empirical data. We argue there is an important relationship between them that should be studied, but we do not propose to know exactly what kind this relationship is in different circumstances. Practices and the resulting leadership moments are very localized (Ladkin, 2010; Nicolini, 2013) occurrences and should therefore always be studied in their own specific contexts. Future research should be conducted in different contexts to find out what other forms the practice-leadership relationship can get.

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