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27 days of managerial work in the police service

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to uncover the realities of managerial work in the Norwegian police service. Observation and interview of 27 police managers showed that managerial work emerged and unfolded through specific practices, which occurred within a shared organisational practice shaped by police culture, context and mission. Managers practiced in a variety of ways rather than according to a universal set of managerial practices. Individual police managers developed proficiency by carrying out day-to-day work duties. These managerial practices were dependent on dynamic actions and interactions and were subject to expectations and pressures. Police managers earned legitimacy primarily through being foremost among equals. The current findings supported studies suggesting that managers face complexity and uncertainty in their work as well as those that downplay what managers ought to do, focussing instead on what it is possible to achieve. The implication of these findings for practice is that individual police managers need to develop their own ways of tackling personal, strategic, relational and operational challenges.

Introduction

Following criticism of the Norwegian police service after the terror attacks in Norway on 22 July 2011, evaluation reports and analyses suggested failings in managerial work culture and attitudes in the police service (Vanebo, Bjørkelo, & Aaserud, 2015). These reports initiated substantial changes to police managerial work. In Norway and many other countries, there has thus been growing interest in police managerial work, but there is limited knowledge of what it

is really about (Birzer, 2002; Fyfe & Wilson, 2012; Mintzberg, 2012). Grand actions are expected (for example, Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Sveningsson et al., 2012), and there is an expectation that managerial work should be well-ordered and consist of deliberative processes. The danger is that these recommendations refer to what managers are supposed to do, not what they are actually doing. The day-to-day managing of police work has not been adequately addressed by research efforts (Briner et al., 2012; Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2013).

In this research, we therefore aimed to determine the characteristics of daily managerial work in the police service. Rather than looking at what police managers ought to do, we examined what police managers actually do. In this case, we investigated police managerial practices, characteristics of police manager interactions and the situations and contexts in which they operated. We were interested in the specific actions of police managers and how managerial work was accomplished as a team (for example, Nicolini, 2012; Raelin, 2016; Simpson, 2016). Our study was motivated by the gap between management theories and management in practice (Tengblad, 2012). We responded to the call for practice-oriented research to provide an understanding of the realities of managerial work (Mintzberg, 2012; Raelin, 2016; Tengblad, 2012b). In line with Morgeson (2012), our aim was also to investigate the importance of context and show that managerial behaviours integrate core contextual factors in different settings.

We have not entered into the leadership versus management debate. Instead, we have used the terms leaders and managers interchangeably, as leaders manage and managers lead (Mintzberg, 2012; Sveningsson et al. 2012; Tengblad, 2012). Our position is that managerial work is socially constructed through experience-based practices, as suggested by researchers such as Carlson (1951). He found that managerial work was hectic, complex, fragmented, often disorganised and steered more by work habits and the logic of events than by reflective and deliberate planning. Dalton (1959) described the unofficial side of managerial work as

involving networking and power struggles, while Kanter (1977) described how managers legitimised their role. Our work has also been grounded in Mintzberg's (1973, 2009) studies, which argued that managerial work should be understood as a practice rooted in context and learned through experience. By providing a realistic picture of police managerial work and what police managers are doing, we challenge research that explains what managers ought to do.

Research on Managerial Work Within the Police

Policing is changing, resulting in centralisation, economising, a focus on crime reduction, political pressure on the police and narrowing of the police mandate (Punch 2016; Warwick, et al., 2015). Increasing complexity and higher standards of accountability and public expectations have put considerable pressure on police managers. They must balance a variety of demands from within their organisation and from the surroundings. They must complete operational and administrative duties while managing change and the workforce (White, 2014). According to Sewell (2008), some of the most important lessons police managers learn are that command hurts, politics are everywhere and top police managers are public figures.

Substantial research on police managerial work is based on generic concepts of leadership (Bisschop et al., 2010). Police managerial work may be regarded as more specialised and circumstantial in comparison with "regular" management work ('t Hart & Ten Hooven, 2004) due to managers' continuous interaction with internal and external factors. Research about police managerial work is generally categorised according to trait, skill, style, situational, transformational and power-influenced approaches (Allison & Crego, 2008). In the early days of police research, the focus was on action-centred leadership (Adair, 1973). The term police manager embodies a normative connotation, as it relates to a person who is associated with certain skills and qualities (Moggré et al., 2017). Studies based on personality theories have investigated the skills and characteristics that researchers believe are necessary for effective

leadership (Campbell & Kodz, 2011). For example, Schafer (2010) found traits and habits of ineffective police leaders. Research has also been conducted into police leadership from the perspective of style theory (Bruns & Shuman, 1988; Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982; Murphy & Drodge, 2004), role theory (van Dijk et al., 2015; White, 2014). The effectiveness of managerial behaviour has also been addressed (Densten, 2003; Sarver & Miller, 2014; Schaefer, 2008, 2010).

In general, management research is dominated by positivist assumptions with an emphasis on procedures for securing objectivity (Antonakis et al., 2004; Kroeck et al., 2004; Mumford et al., 2009). It is frequently thought that measurement instruments and theory testing help researchers obtain reliable knowledge, but this is not the case. Many studies reproduce assumptions about desirable managerial behaviour, assuming that managers are active, followers are passive and that influence flows from a single source. These studies neglect context and interactions (Alvesson, 2017; Pfeffer, 2015). Research on police managerial work has followed this trend. In a meta-analysis of research published between 1990 and 2012, Pearson-Goff and Herrington (2013) found that researchers had concentrated on characteristics and activities seen as important for police managers. Most research focused on perceptions of managerial work rather than objective measures. Also, neo-charismatic theories, such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978) have gained considerable traction within the police (for example, Alison & Crego, 2008; Barth-Farkas & Vera, 2014; Cockcroft, 2013; Densten, 1999; Gobby et al., 2004; Rowe, 2006; Sarver & Miller, 2014; Silvestri et al., 2013).

However, little research has been conducted that focuses on what police managers actually do (Haake et al., 2015). One notable exception is Mintzberg (2009), who studied three police managers from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He found that they executed normative control, which meant that they were informed of pending actions and granted approval. Another exception is Fleming's (2008) examination of a female police commissioner

in Australia. Through analysis of diary notes, interviews and observation, Fleming found that unpredictable and uncertain internal and external environments influenced the work.

Methods

Participants

We conducted qualitative, exploratory, inductive studies by shadowing 27 Norwegian police managers in their everyday work during the spring and summer of 2016. We were granted full access to all aspects of their work, shadowing managers as they talked with colleagues, worked at their desks and conducted patrols, operations and formal and informal meetings. We invited 51 police managers to participate in the study, but due to job changes, functional overlap, cancellations and resource constraints, the final sample was 27 participants (nine women and 18 men). The sample was chosen on the basis of function, position and geographical spread. Police managers worked at senior management level in their organisations as Chief Constable, Chief Super Intendent or Super Intendent. They had all completed further managerial training after their initial police education. The sample was too small to conduct rank, gender or demographic analysis; however, this was not the focus of this in-depth qualitative study. The majority of police managers who participated in our study had what we considered office-related jobs, and only a few were involved in highly demanding physical tasks and active police operations. Before starting the study, we obtained the informed consent of all participants.

Analytical process

Data from shadowing and in-depth interviews, together with researchers' interpretations of the observed material, were analysed using reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2004). We considered three data sets. The first comprised data from the shadowing of actions and interactions, which was mostly descriptive. The second included data from interviews, which contained both normative and descriptive elements. The final data set comprised the researchers' interpretations and reflections, which were written after each day of shadowing and interviews. The unit of analysis was the actions and interactions involved in managerial work (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016).

We used inductive and social-constructivist approaches, especially in our shadowing (Czarniawska, 2007). We did not expect to acquire a complete understanding of actions and interactions. Instead, we aimed to clarify various embedded processes, shedding light on everyday activities (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). When we booked a day to visit the police station, we did not look for special days or specific activities. Therefore, we observed police managers' interactions with colleagues, employees and superiors during ordinary working days. Shadowing was open-ended, and we made notes on all activities we observed without interpreting them. During interviews, we asked participants to compare the day to other days and their experience as managers as a whole.

We used grounded theory to analyse our data. First, we transcribed all interviews and notes and imported the data into the Nvivo software. Then, we organised the data. Some of the data was included in several categories to ensure open and axial coding. The data was then categorised and analysed for its relevance (Strauss, 1987). We defined individual categories and tested whether the category was significant. Each category was then hermeneutically interpreted, along with the raw data and researchers' interpretations of the shadowing and interviews. We checked the data against contextual conditions and discussed the extent to which

context affected the findings and interpretations (for example, Habermas 1972, 1984). Finally, we checked whether we had been aware of the inherent interpretation span and variance in the data.

Results

Our data was organised into three broad categories: (i) the structure-agency dimension, (ii) managerial practices and (iii) self-work, and we acknowledged that these categories were integrated and interlinked. We found the following patterns of managerial work in the police service:

Structure-agency

The structure-agency dimension involved the following:

- The actions and interactions taken to address the mission in the best possible way
- The actions of managerial jobs, which were shaped by a specific managerial culture

Examples of the findings have been given in table 1 below.

Insert Table 1 here.

Managerial practices

Managerial practices included the following:

- The actions and interactions carried out to respond to organisational events
- The day-to-day running of organisational units
- The facilitation of decision-making processes to prioritise actions within boundary conditions

- The handling of interpersonal relationships
- The actions and interactions taken to influence organisational boundary conditions

Examples of the findings have been given in table 2 below.

Insert Table 2 here.

Self-work

The self-work dimension included the following:

- The work done by police managers to define and master managerial roles
- The self-management carried out by police managers to cope with the demands of the job

Examples of the findings have been given in table 3 below.

Insert Table 3 here.

Discussion

Addressing the mission. Police managers focus on and are motivated by their mission, meaning that their identity and values strongly correspond with the police force's mission in society (for example, Dobby et al., 2004; Workman-Stark, 2017). As one participant said: *...I had a realistic motive for starting and that was to contribute to and be useful in society...* The police service can exercise power on behalf of the authorities, whilst manoeuvring challenges within a constantly changing and more complex society (Silvestri et al., 2013). This creates ethical issues as well as a need to influence the ethical behaviour of others (Trevino et al., 2003). Several participants talked about how they tried to be a role model for their colleagues and set

good standards (for example, Caless, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). We found little evidence of misuse of power (Lammers et al., 2008; McClusky et al., 2005). In contrast, the loyalty and collegiality we found in the corps did not equate with asymmetric relationships. Power is obvious when police managers make sense of top-down decisions and when they influence the sensemaking of their employees when facilitating local adjustments and priorities. This is in line with Hardy and colleagues' (2003) theory of meaning power, resource power and practice power, which recognises that power is integrated in both top-down and bottom-up political behaviour and interactions.

A specific managerial culture. Managerial work is shaped by specific police and managerial cultures at national and local levels. Participants typically believed that *...when the "house is on fire", then you can rely on the police to fix things...* The cohesion and degree of solidarity shown by police officers is one of the most noticeable yet unusual aspects of the police profession (for example, Hahn, 1971). This sense of fraternal support and fidelity encourages and reinforces police culture. However, this aspect of police culture is not monolithic. It cultivate and reinforce certain sub-cultural norms that reflect the various functional areas of police work. In this case, sub-cultures included, among others, police management culture versus street police culture. These two cultures are increasingly characterised by competing and often conflicting perspectives on procedure and practice in policing (Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

Nonetheless, police managers, beyond their jurisdictional, operational and hierarchical boundaries, are cognizant of the brotherhood of which they are members, which highlights the process of occupational socialisation in the police. Particularly important aspects of this culture are homogeneity, loyalty to the corps, commitment to solving demanding tasks, the exercise of power on behalf of the authorities and the fact that ethics and values are highly esteemed. The culture of police managerial work is about "being foremost among equals", and being foremost

gives legitimacy to a police manager (for example, Krimmel & Lindemuth, 2001; Rowe, 2006). This may give police managers referent and expert power (Yukl, 2013). It also gives them legitimacy in terms of their agency to exercise their own will and to influence others as well as to facilitate joint accomplishment of work (Simpson, 2016).

Responding to events. Our observations and interviews revealed that police officers responded to daily events, which contradicted Clarke's (2006) recommendations. An participant said:

Everyday problems are constantly turning up that need to be dealt with, where decisions must be made... there are very... what should I say... changing conditions...I have so many different things during the day that I have to make decisions on, things that I couldn't prepare beforehand – that suddenly turn up. Holmberg and Tyrstrup (2010) claimed that to a large extent, managerial work should be understood as an event-driven rather than an intention-driven activity. Managers often needed to take impromptu action and to identify the next step in the process, which was in line with previous findings. This is what Chia and Holt (2006, p. 643) referred to as “non-deliberate practical coping” rather than “planned, intentional action”.

Managerial work that deals with unanticipated events is often reactive, meaning that managers work with unexpected circumstances (Liker, 2004; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007) or with urgent, complex, unforeseen and/or ambiguous problems (Walker et al., 1956; Watson, 1994/2001). In some cases, police managers devoted time and effort to dealing with trivial matters. In our study, police managers and others were required to solve unexpected problems in the course of everyday managerial work. In crucial moments, managerial work required managers to respond to the needs of others (Karp & Johannessen, 2010; Shotter, 2016). However, it mostly concerned regular operational issues. Police officers wanted to be regarded as individuals who solved difficult tasks. Dealing with events and incidents may have given them status and career opportunities within the service. The drive to respond to events may also

be a function of the way the police service is organised. Structural perspectives promote this management style and inspire individual agency. Managing events may also be used to legitimise the notion that cases were for managerial work, while in reality this stood in the way of existing processes that required managerial input only because the manager wanted to control events or manifest legitimacy for managerial work.

Day-to-day running of units. Managerial work in the police service was also about day-to-day administration. This meant planning, meetings, staff supervision, financial and human resource management and the administrative duties that enabled the smooth running of the unit: *..oh, was there so much administrative work... everything ranging from completely trite things to bills and working hours (registration) and invoices and stuff like that...* we were told by one participant. We found a range of views concerning the importance of these tasks and the extent to which they should be prioritised. Running daily operations is however a central part of managerial responsibility (for example, Certo & Certo, 2006). However, several police managers found this demanding, time-consuming, boring and at times, unnecessary. Others saw it as a good way to keep control and influence others. If managerial work is related to efficiency (for example, Yukl, 2013), then everyday operational activities are important in achieving optimal results with minimal resources. Professionalisation of the police force has resulted in the service being subjected to reporting, goals and performance monitoring. However, increased demands for professional and efficient operations are perceived by some as challenging existing cultures and identities. But running a unit effectively gives police managers legitimacy, sends signals about values and priorities and can manifest as a source of power

Facilitating decision-making. Post-bureaucracy managerial work is characterised by peer decision-making processes (Heckscher, 1994), but popular accounts notwithstanding, hierarchal decision-making seems to prevail in the police. Participants typically believed that:

...prioritising between daily operations versus development is the core of decision-making...

Many police managers expressed priorities imposed by other agencies rather than based on their own assessments. In addition, police managers were not always firm decision-makers, though they and their teams expected them to be. Decision-making is an incremental process, and it is often not obvious that a decision has been made (for example, Boden, 1994; Clifton, 2009). This was reflected in our findings. Decisions were often facilitated by collective processes, which is in line with the work of Carlson (1951), Luthans and colleagues (1988) and Sayles (1964). This ensures commitment from participants in the process and high quality decisions, but it may also dilute responsibility.

Handling interpersonal relationships. Police managerial work included handling interpersonal relationships, a finding in line with the concept of relationship-oriented behaviour (for example, Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Hemphill and Coons, 1957; Uhl-Bien, 2006). A relationship strategy chosen by one participant was as follows: *...it's popular to talk about "management as walking around", but it's a bit like that – I walk around, or to put it another way... It's like walking around with an oilcan, you know. And then you apply a little here and a little there... so that everything runs smoothly...* Many police managers signalled their commitment to developing relationships; they seemed aware of relationship values and attempted to create a good working environment, as they saw this as a way of impacting organisational culture (Schein, 1992).

Some managers had however an instrumental and pragmatic approach to relationships. Relationship-oriented behaviour is something some they did, because it was expected, although they did not always see the value of it, as they would prefer to be task orientated (for example, House, 1971). For some, maintaining good interpersonal relationships meant being nice, sociable and polite to colleagues, whilst others attempted to be genuinely agreeable. Some police managers were *social architects*, who aimed to create a social system that functioned as

well as possible. They achieved this by talking to people and greasing the social system so everything ran smoothly in their unit. They involved themselves in the co-construction of organisational processes (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014), a social strategy Crevani and Endrissat (2016) labelled *becoming in relation*.

Influencing boundary conditions. Managers influence boundary conditions to obtain autonomy (Hambrick, 2007; March & Weil, 2005); however, not all police managers were aware of this possibility. There was also a question of whether addressing disagreement and engaging in internal politicking is part of police culture. Police managers who engage in these practices are practical and pragmatic strategists in their everyday working situations (Mintzberg, 1987; Whittington, 1996), who try to see the big picture, choose their battles, manage upwards, ally themselves to others and participate in office politics and internal discussions (Pfeffer, 2010). *You must have the ability and create room for action, and as a manager, you have to think a little strategically I think...* was the opinion of one participant.

Research has confirmed that aspects such as control over the agenda (Svennevig, 2012; Van Praet, 2009), control over topic shifts (Walker & Aritz, 2014) and access to symbolic resources, such as knowledge (Nielsen, 2009), determine managers' ability to influence. Knowledge is a valuable asset for many police managers as well as being a source of power (Yukl, 2013). Power thus appeared as a process and an aspect of ongoing self-action, interaction and trans-action (Simpson, 2016), meaning that opponents worked together and in tension with each other. Agency in the police service therefore comes in the form of power to, power over and power with (Simpson, 2016), depending on the action, interaction and context. Many police managers were opportunists (Kotter, 1982b) and used power to manoeuvre, including managing upwards. This is in line with an increasing body of research that emphasises the political aspects of managerial work (Hill, 1992; Mintzberg, 2009; Noordegraaf 2000a, 2000b; Watson, 1994/2001).

In addition, many police managers demonstrated a positive attitude towards change and development, which does not have a strong tradition within the service. This may be because being pro-change can be career enhancing. Most organisations can be viewed as political systems in which opposing interests compete for scarce resources (Bolman & Deal, 1984), and this apply to the police service. Managers tend to involve themselves in management games in an attempt to maintain their positions and remove competitors (Howard & Bray, 1988; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Padilla et al., 2007) as well as using tactics to project themselves as a manager in order to promote their own importance (Babiak & Hare, 2009; Pfeffer, 2010).

Ongoing reform work in the Norwegian police is creating a wider scope of managerial action. Although boundary conditions for police managers are structural and financial, they are also socially constructed, meaning that they can be influenced, as postulated by upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Stewart, 1989). We therefore found that many police managers were strategists who used power dynamics to both openly and covertly influence their strategic and operational boundary conditions.

Mastering managerial roles. Identity is generally represented as a struggle between the expectations of self, others and the organisation (Svenningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Identity is central to existence (Giddens, 1991), and in police managerial work, identity is commonly expressed as the exercise of certain roles (Parker, 2000; White, 2014). Our findings showed that police managers tried to master various managerial roles (Hill, 1992). A role is a set of related rights, norms, beliefs, behaviours and obligations conceptualised by people in a social situation (Biddle, 1986). Stewart (1967, 1976, 1982) argued that managerial roles are dynamic and shaped by choices, demands and constraints and that managers negotiate their roles on the basis of framework conditions.

Ybema and colleagues (2009) claimed that roles are constantly under construction, which we found in our study. Our findings indicated that managers aimed to define and master

their role according to the context in which they worked, which supported Stewart's research (1967, 1976, 1982) as well as work by Nielsen (2009). Context included, among other characteristics, deadlines, resources, quality of service, bureaucratic constraints, the need to set a good example and demands in the form of expectations of self and others. One example from the interviews was: *I'm convinced that what I say and what I do, what I don't say and what I don't do, are noticed. And for that reason I'm very aware of my own behaviour, how I behave when I meet people and what I emphasise...* Within the police, constant shifting and transition between technical and managerial dimensions of the managerial role is typical.

Our finding on role mastery may also be explained by research on identity construction and social interactionism describing how people form, maintain, strengthen and revise their identities (for example, Blumer, 1969; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Karp & Helgø, 2008; Snow & Anderson, 1987). Construction of managerial identity also happens when managers talk about issues related to managerial work. Managerial language can therefore be seen as part of police managers' identity, which is acquired through acting as a manager and through experience and reflection on issues related to managerial work. In line with Carroll's (2016) arguments, we also found that police managerial identity was constructed through routine meetings and reporting; artefacts, such as ranks and uniforms and the use of physical space, such as office arrangements and locations and seating in meetings (Lee & Amjadi, 2014).

Courpasson and Monties (2016) argued that bodily practices may be central to the construction of the self, and physical selfhood is one way of understanding the body/identity nexus among police managers and their capacity to handle their job. For many police managers, role mastery was related to solving challenges, as well as successfully coping with day-to-day managerial duties. There is no ideal form of mastery, and police managers did the best they can, labelled by Storch and Shotter (2013) as "good-enough leadership". We contend that police managers master professional roles they have developed themselves in interaction with others

inside and outside the organisation as well as meeting the demands of the organisational system in which they work.

Self-management. Police managers managed themselves on a more or less conscious basis. They did this to tackle stress, manage their time and to cope with the pressure of tasks and day-to-day responsibilities. One participant told us that: *...everything that happens in here (points to his head, laughs...), after a long day it is a lot of processing... Yes, I think as a manager one has to work a lot, I am clocking many hours...* This was in line with research on self-management (Drucker, 2004, 2005; Kouzes & Posner 2012; Neck & Manz, 2013). Research has suggested that stress results from unclear expectations, inadequate communication, insufficient reward and autocratic management practices (Stinchcomb, 2004). However, little research has been done on the pressures police managers face. Many have demanding workdays, which means that managers need to self-regulate in order to cope with demands and expectations.

Managerial work can be seen, in general, as demanding and subject to expectations and performance pressures (Kanter 1977; Kotter, 1982a; Mintzberg, 1973; Sayles, 1964). It involves uncertainty and unforeseen events (Hannaway, 1989; Kanter, 1977) and is often at a hectic pace over the course of long working hours (Jackall, 1988; Hill, 1992; Matthaei, 2010) and may be fragmented (Guert, 1956; Stewart, 1976; Tengblad, 2002, 2006). Police managers operate within a culture where self-management is rarely discussed, rather, it is something that individual managers are expected to sort out for themselves. Within the police service, there are remnants of a culture of machismo (Haarr 2005; Loftus, 2010; McCarthy, 2013), which may signal that managers should be able to deal with challenges without making a fuss.

Values like social commitment are seen as more important than the individual, and intense loyalty to the system and hierarchy mean that many police managers have demanding workdays. Not all police managers internalise the complexity and pressures to which they are

exposed and are therefore unaware of the need to manage themselves. There may be limited scope for self-care, and police managers may receive little training in self-management. We thus argue that the majority of police managers are exposed to excessive pressure at work and that they need to prioritise their time and capacity. They must master their roles as well as manage their own personal processes in order to function in these roles.

Conclusion

We have studied the realities of daily managerial work in the Norwegian police service in order to determine its characteristics. This involved an investigation of content and context, actions and interactions and the practices of managerial work. We carried out a qualitative and exploratory/inductive study by shadowing and interviewing 27 police managers. We found that police managers suffered from the success of normative theories, leading them to feel inadequate about their performance, as argued by Tengblad (2012). This is because the bulk of research on police managerial work explains what managers ought to do, rather than examining what they actually do.

Also, there is no universal set of practices in the police service. Rather, there are many unique ways of doing managerial work depending on the context and the individual manager. We found no evidence that police managerial work contrasted with managerial work in other fields. On the contrary, managerial work in the police force cannot be considered different from that in other fields. However, the context of police managerial work means that practices may take on a different form. This often concerns practices developed by individual police managers within a specific police management culture rather than a different form of managerial work. In some cases, there may be differences between police management and operational street police cultures (Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

Practice-oriented academics (for example, Raelin, 2011) have theorised that managerial work is a collective ordering of ideas and actions, resulting in a democratic practice characterised by compassion, collaboration and collectiveness. However, such claims were not supported by our study. In the police service, managerial work is both the result of single managers as well as involving joint organisational efforts. Managerial work in the police force is about dealing with messiness and uncertainties. Our study supported research investigating managerial work in the zone between order and chaos, which shows that effective managers are better than others at improvising, learning from experience, recognising opportunities and taking advantage of serendipities (Tengblad, 2012b).

Individual police managers develop proficiency by doing mundane daily managerial work. This includes non-deliberate coping with matters at hand, including self-management, dealing with relationships, doing administrative tasks, facilitating decision-making processes, influencing framework conditions and handling unexpected challenges and disruptions. We observed individual practices, which were dependent on the organisational dynamics governing actions and interactions. These were often conducted at a hectic pace and were subject to expectations, uncertainty, performance pressures, symbolic actions and situations in which police managers earned their legitimacy mainly from being foremost among equals.

In this work, we have challenged the majority of research on police managerial work, which explains what managers ought to do. Instead, we have given what we think is a more realistic picture of police managerial work. The theoretical implications of our research support studies in management fields, such as leadership-as-practice, complexity studies and critical management studies. These fields focus on the complexity and uncertainty faced by managers and downplay the manager as a “heroic individual”, focusing instead on what managerial work actually achieves. Focusing on what managers actually does is important for further research on police managerial work, and especially more ethnographic studies are needed in this field.

Increasing demands are being made on Norwegian police managers in our days. Implications for practitioners include a need to raise awareness of the fact that police managers cope with dilemmas, time constraints, lack of resources, conflicting pressures and ad hoc problems that often need to be resolved quickly. Managers do this by developing their own ways of tackling personal, strategic, relational and operational challenges. Such individualised practices are shaped by structures, framework conditions and the different contexts in which police managers operate as well as their backgrounds, experiences, personalities and interactions with others.

There may be limitations regarding the validity, relevance and generality of our study. We studied a specific population within the Norwegian police service, and the representativeness of this group is debatable. Moreover, apart from a few exceptions, our police managers were not managers of operative units but held positions higher up in the hierarchy. We would not however expect large variations in findings if we were to enlarge the population. In further study, researchers could conduct discursive analysis of interactions between managers and subordinates. An ethnographic study of organisational settings and interactions between managers and subordinates may also be useful. An activity study of operations with a greater degree of intensity than daily operational tasks, processes and dilemmas would complement our findings.

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Category	Observations of actions, interactions and contextual matters	In-depth interviews (quotes from the participants)	Interpretations and reflections of the researchers after each day
The actions and interactions taken to address the mission in the best possible way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She was highly visible in the local community and concerned with how the police service reputation was perceived among the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...And you know, there are some moments in my career that I really feel I made the right choice. You meant something important for some people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed an identity and values that are characterized by the tasks they have to solve and their mission in society.
The doings of managerial jobs shaped by a specific managerial culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She was clear that she had to follow reporting lines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... There's something about the police culture that's difficult and intangible. Basically, it's about the structure of orders when you suddenly have to pay attention to all these other values... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can trust the police to be there when something happens.

Table 1: Examples of findings within the structure-agency dimension

Category	Observations of actions, interactions and contextual matters	In-depth interviews (quotes from the participants)	Interpretations and reflections from the researchers after each day
The actions and interactions carried out to respond to organizational events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of the day is shaped by incoming matters/telephone calls/emails. • ...handling a case which concerns a shooting episode... to a colleague she says that: "...they are constantly at my throat, nagging..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My day is to a large extent about solving ad hoc problems that need to be solved at once. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workdays consist of diverse tasks that need to be dealt with, as well as a variety of people that need attention.

<p>The day-to-day running of organizational units.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...a long call regarding the budget... • In meetings most of the day, says it is either in meetings, on the phone or answering emails all day long. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know my responsibilities but it's difficult to cover everything to be able to say that all is good enough. It is an ongoing process... We will always have more tasks to solve than we have resources for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They spend a lot of time on administrative matters. • The meetings are important arenas for discussions, as well as for directing and ordering matters.
<p>The facilitation of decision-making processes to prioritize within boundary conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a dialogue-based style in the meeting, but makes decisions when needed. • Shifts in the meeting between influencing or letting collective processes play out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We manage in quite different settings, everything from operations at street level, where things need to happen in the space of seconds – other situations you have all the time in the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have a dialogue-based approach and decisions are often a collective accomplishment. • Conscious about involvement so that their employees become the “owner” of the problem.
<p>The handling of interpersonal relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... several of them have a daily morning routine of taking a walk around the department or they attend the morning parole • ..small-talk with colleagues and colleagues popping by to the office • The door was open all day, only closed when meetings on personal matters or when politicking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a good working environment here... trying to strike a balance between specialists and generalists, as well as create a culture where everybody contributes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They spend a lot of time on “management by walking around”, on informal communication, and the small meets between people.
<p>The actions and interactions taken to influence organizational boundary conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talked to the boss, as well as a peer on how to deal with coming changes • She knew she had the power to influence upwards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am trying to pick my fights in the organization and when I've to fight for it I'm not afraid to do so. • It is important to understand the different agendas, see the bigger picture, and accept different priorities and decisions that come from the top. • We have budget frames, but within 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some were practical and pragmatic strategists in their everyday working situations: they tried to see the “bigger picture,” choose their battles, they managed upwards, allied themselves with others and participated in internal politics. • Some said they had plenty of freedom to manoeuvre, others expressed they had not.

		these frames we have freedom	
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Table 2: Examples of findings of managerial practices.

Category	Observations of actions, interactions and contextual matters	In-depth interviews (quotes from the participants)	Interpretations and reflections from the researchers after each day
The work done to define and master managerial roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimed to be good role models: working hard, keeping standards high, and trying to be ethical in their ways. Changed from her uniform to civilian clothes when going to an external meeting on child crimes and then back to the uniform again when returning to the office. He seats himself at the end of the meeting table and controls the agenda and progress of the meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...must be tough and clear in my role ...to master my role I must have knowledge about my job, and that of others, as well as understanding what is going on in the organization and in society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some have high expectations of themselves, their job, their subordinates and the police service. They expect that they and others deliver results. It is a role that is shaped by a lot of unsaid expectations and demands.
The self-management carried out to cope with the demands of the job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are bombarded with incoming tasks that they need to address, decide on and follow-up... .. fragmented and processual working, not easy to see the direction and the next step to take. ... they process a lot of personal matters. Spent time keeping physically fit in order to handle the job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...you're almost constantly "in role." But I make sure I relax whenever I can. I'm pretty good at it. ... not letting things affect me... far removed from being a so-called "goody two-shoes" that seems to bother many women – keeping everything inside, controlling everything, getting involved in everything, arriving early to work, going home late. I don't work more than 45 hours a week you know... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They had high expectations of themselves and the quality of their work, and some of them worked a lot. Some are conscious of the need to manage themselves, and some are on "auto-pilot" not paying much attention to self-regulation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I spend a lot of time thinking how I handled certain, challenging situations... I am so alone... I think it is challenging... 	
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Table 3: Examples of findings within self-work.