Abstract

Göteborg University
School of Economics and Commercial Law
Gothenburg Research Institute, GRI
P O Box 600, SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden

Author: Annica Bragd
Language: English
ISBN 91-7246-201-9
196 pages
Doctoral Thesis 2002

KNOWING MANAGEMENT
An Ethnographic Study of Tinkering with a New Car

This study accounts for "running things" and "making things happen" in a product development project. It reports how a project team explored and constructed realities, and how they changed their views of reality during the development process of a new car project. I found that throughout the day the project team was involved in a self-organising process of arguing and discussing the events of the project governed by their strategies for creating action.

The project team work is to be seen as a knowing community and this thesis describes their knowledge production through concepts such as tinkering. Tinkering (bricolage) is rarely used in organisation theory and its strong relevance in this particular setting is pointed out. The theory of a temporary organisation (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995) is also used as an applied frame of reference and is extended by adding such categories as tinkering, rhythm, looping and mixed practice zone, which summarise the project team’s practice.

To collect and interpret the field material, an ethnographic method was applied. This method offers a chance to learn the rules of social life by interacting with people for a period of time. In addition to observing various project team meetings, I have tape recorded, taken notes, eavesdropped, and chatted with many people from the project and outside the project on a daily basis throughout the course of a year.

Key words: project management, tinkering, rhythm, looping, automotive industry, knowing community, decision-making, ethnographic study

Printed in Sweden
by Grafikerna Livrén AB,
Kungälv, 2002

©Annica Bragd and
BAS Publisher 2002