Roundtable: Management of self-management

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abstract

The following roundtable took place at a one-day seminar at Lund University, 23 November 2009, and was organized jointly by _ephemera_, Copenhagen Business School and Lund University. The general topic of the seminar was to what extent self-management can be understood as a way of governing work through subjectivity. Topics discussed included the social bonds in and obligations of self-management, the relation between disobedience and self-management, self-management's relationship to productivity and well-being and finally also how therapeutic practice that conceptualizes depressive illness as specific deficits of self-management re-conceptualizes the classic notion of autonomy.

Introduction

In November 2009 ephemera co-organized a seminar on the management of self-management as a lead up to this Special issue. The other organizers were Copenhagen Business School and Lund University. The general topic was a discussion of self-management as a way of governing work through subjectivity. The seminar overall question was what the content of and limits to self-management is today? Before the roundtable discussion, transcribed below, the day had four presentations which we will broadly summarize here as the participants in the roundtable referred to day in their discussion:

Under the title 'The obligation of self-management: The social bonds of freedom', Sverre Raffnsøe argued that self-management today is present in virtually all current forms of management. For Raffnsøe self-management implies that we as employees take responsibility for ourselves when we work, while, at the same time, we independently figure out how we can best create value for the organization of which we are part. Self-management provides employees with new independence and opportunities for development, but with the obligation to leave the state of immaturity and become free comes the burden of freedom and self-development.

In his presentation 'Self-management in product development' Jens Rennstam spoke about the possible relevance and applications of the concept of self-management as a concept signifying something that takes place in the workplace and in work life. As a basis for the reflections, Rennstam used his research on product development work in an engineering firm. In light of that research he argued that extensive self-management and even disobedience is, on the one hand, a prerequisite for productive work to emerge, but on the other a euphemism for work in a 'duck-pond'.

Pia Bramming's presentation on 'Well-being, self-management and productivity' departed from the research project WESP[1] (well-being, self-management and productivity) which considers self-management a managerial concept and technology that associates new economy demands with worker subjectivity. This presentation shared some of the empirical materials that the project has gathered and invited to a common discussion on the questions that these materials raise about the relationships and conflicts between well-being and productivity among self-managing employees.

'Management of depressive deficits of self-management' was the title of the final presentation of the day, by Marius Gudmand-Høyer. In his presentation, Gudmand-Høyer mapped out some features of the management of self-management associated with current anti-depressive procedures such as cognitive behavioural therapy and psychoeducation. In this context he questioned what happens to the classical notion of 'autonomy' when it comes to a therapeutic practice that conceptualizes depressive illness as specific deficits of self-management.

Roundtable

Sverre Spoelstra: In today's presentations and discussions we have come across a number of 'funny' phrases and paradoxes. 'Management of self-management' is already a somewhat strange notion. It appears paradoxical: why would one manage someone who is already managing? Sverre [Raffnsøe] mentioned Kant's 'purpose without purpose' as well as 'virtuality without virtue', as descriptors of self-management. We also talked about the self-managing employee as some kind of 'hero without heroism'; someone who breaks the rules and transcends everyday life, like a hero, but who is not considered to be a hero. Then Jens spoke about 'productive disobedience', which we may also translate as 'dysfunctional functionality' perhaps. We have also heard several times today that the self-managing employee is within the organization by being outside it. That sounds like a paradox as well. Pia stressed that self-managing employees must be passionate *and* distanced from their passions [when they become unproductive] and from Marius we learned that the actions of self-management can appear as a 'passionate pathology' and that autonomy is a way to prepare for non-autonomy. Sounds paradoxical! More funny phrases have occurred like 'responsible responsiveness', or the 'conduct of conduct of conduct'. There were more, but you get the picture: when we talk about self-management, we quickly resort to paradoxes. The question that may get us started is: Why is it that our common language,

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1   http://www.trips.dk/

our commonsensical dichotomies, appear to break down when trying to grasp the management of self-management?

I am thinking of yet another paradox. It seems to me that, similar to Kant's purposelessness without purpose, a lot of what is at stake in self-management may be captured in the phrase 'the usefulness of uselessness'. Perhaps it is the discovery of the stuff that is useless by organizations that ends up being the most useful thing. This is where bio-politics comes in, where thinking and knowledge comes in, it is where play, humanity, authenticity, spirituality, existence, come in. All the stuff that we think of as useless, or as something that has its own intrinsic value, is turned into something that is useful, or valuable for the organization. And maybe this could explain why we so quickly resort to paradoxes when we talk about self-management?

André Spicer: There are two responses to this. The first is that making the useless useful, is a process of commodification. Organizations often run out of places to make a profit; then they need to look around for new opportunities, and this is where things like spirituality come in. The second response is that people are also asking for these things like spirituality or authenticity to become commodified so that they can make a living from them or they can have them recognized as important. So I think we have a kind of paradoxical situation here. On the one hand aspects of 'life' like play, authenticity and spirituality become a source of value and profit for organizations and individuals, but at the same time they become zone of emancipation or autonomy. These two apparently conflicting processes seem to create a weird self-reinforcing cycle of commodification and emancipation.

Dan Kärreman: Yes, there is some play between opposites here, but it strikes me more as irony and not paradox. We do not have a break-down. It is quite clearly possible for us to talk about this empirically. So I think irony would be the more interesting way to talk about this. I think we confuse this. For me self-management is about management. Yes, it exists in the background of autonomy or conditions of autonomy. Management, the way we think about it, has a very strong social power that it counters. But it is still a form of a management. I agree it is a kind of fuzzy concept, but it makes more sense if you look at that way. It is a management of machine, it is a way of economize on people's autonomy. What it does is that it substitutes their autonomy. It is not really people doing what they want. It is a way of harvesting their agency. It is clearly instruction that counts here. If you are self-managing, you are told to do in a particular way. You will have agency, of course, that is the 'self' part, but the 'management' part comes in some sort of directions. I thought Marius Gudmand-Høyer had an excellent point about this when he looked into how this is played out in therapy. I actually did some research, believe it or not, into this area.[2] In health-care settings self-management is used mainly as a way of conceptualising self-administration of therapy or self-administration of drugs. But here it is clearly not a question of autonomy. You are clearly instructed how to do. So what happens here, when you talk about self-

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2   Alvesson, M., D. Kärreman, A. Sturdy and K. Handley (2009) 'Unpacking the client(s): Constructions, positions and client-consultant dynamics', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 25(3): 253-263.

management, is that supervision or other people's authority becomes invisible, but it is clearly here. And I think this is part of the confusion that leads to this paradox.

Jens Rennstam: I can see your point. But you may see it as signifying that previously, it was productive to follow rules, to be obedient, but today it is productive to be disobedient: a sign of the times. There is still bureaucracy, there is still a structure, there is still formal management that is in charge of putting up goals and re-organize, and they have a higher status. When we talk about post-disciplinary society and closures that are opening up, I think we are exaggerating a little bit. Organizations are not open spaces like that, they are still quite bureaucratic. Many things we associate with bureaucracy are still there. But a lot of employees engage with disobedience to be productive, which is interesting in terms of self-management.

Sverre Spoelstra: To me this still sounds paradoxical. Obviously, it is not any kind of disobedience that is productive. We are looking for a particular kind of disobedience. And apparently we do not have a very good term for it, other than 'productive disobedience'?

Marius Gudmand-Høyer: I think this question about productivity of disobedience is an interesting one. If you look into the world of health-care, there are two aspects that might bring more light to this issue. First, it is true that self-management has been a much regulated process in this context. But at the same time this is also the context within which managed care discovered that it had to take disobedience into account in order to produce health. 'Compliance' is the old concept for the patient following the regime prescribed by the doctor, particularly after the 1940-50s when self-administrated pills became the most popular treatment modality. The doctor had his authority and you as a patient were compliant. However, in the last 10-15 years still more new notions for this relationship have been proposed to replace compliance, now deemed to be all too authoritarian and demanding in tenor. 'Concordance' is the last one, while 'adherence' is the new neutral term. But this introduction is not only an element in the current celebration of patient autonomy and agency. It was also related to the shocking discovery that only about 50% of all patients actually take their pills as prescribed, a problem still producing enormous costs for the health care systems. Hence, here you have a problem of lost productivity of non-compliant disobedience. And the problem is that you cannot get people to comply just by telling them what to do, even if you are right. You had to make yourself relevant in another way when acting as a manager of somebody's self-administration of pills. Yet, the second aspect is that now we have all these participation-ideas, shared decision-making, being equals, making treatment contracts, and so forth, and it all seems to work well, much better than compliance at least. But what is interesting is that 'empowerment' has become another important word here. 'Concordance' is an empowerment-word, while 'compliance' is definitively the opposite. This I see as another side of the disobedience problematic, namely that we can also work on this non-compliance by empowerment. And here current medical research indicate, very interestingly, that if people behave as adherent as can be shown now with measures of empowerment and concordance, that is, in accordance with their own wishes and beliefs, they behave completely like the originally compliant persons should have behaved. The authority of compliance and the autonomy of concordance seem to coincide in the very same type of conduct being productive for health. But you have to

go another way to reach the same point; you have to take into consideration the potential disobedience together with the patients' way of relating to themselves. If we look into the general history of societal regulation of self-regulation, for instance as Foucault studies it in his 1979-lectures on the birth of biopolitics, he here shows how classical governmentality has developed into a liberal variant that steps back from direct control and seems to be characterized by this fact: that now you as a manager have to conduct the conduct of others not according to the managerial rationality you might posses but according to the rationality of the managed themselves.[3] Here the problematic of disobedient productivity becomes productive exactly in so far it becomes a new field for potential concordance with new possibilities. And this apparent paradox, I believe, is another reason why management of self-management has come into view as a pertinent response to general organizational problems. It is capable of dealing with disobedience-concordance circulations in a way that also seems productive also for something as individually relevant as your health.

Sverre Raffnsøe: I want to return to what Sverre [Spoelstra] presented as the paradoxes of self-management. According to the sciences of logics or semantics a paradox is a proposition or an expression which is strange, surprises, or even clash with common sense, because it describes a situation which has or involves two facts or qualities you would think could not both be true at the same time. For example, if it describes two states which seem to logically mutually exclude one another as present or obtaining at the same time. And as a self-managing employee I have to lead an all too striking paradoxical existence. I have to endure an apparent dichotomist 'either-or' while incessantly living or performing it as a 'both-and'. When managing myself, I have to be a manager and be managed at the very same time. I have to transgress myself, to leave myself behind, to find myself anew authentically, only in order to transgress myself again to find myself again on the verge of myself. I also have to work and have a life at the very same time; and I have to do that while I go to work; and when I enter my homes, where we also have to work. The fact that this paradoxical life or existence seems logically impossible does not prevent me from leading this life. The famous last thought which comes to Josef K.'s mind just before he dies, dog-tired, towards the end of *The Trial* is: 'The logic is unshakeable, but it yields to someone who insists on or perseveres in living.'[4] The paradoxical nature of this existence does not render it impossible, does not preclude us from performing it, but it creates an ongoing problematization of our very existence and also of that of the organizations. Situated in between two seemingly opposed states, we have to lead a rather speculative mediating and intermediate existence, constantly renegotiating the given.

Pia Bramming: To follow up on that, organizations today are to a large extent managed by the idea that we cannot keep up production if we do not change ourselves. This has been furthered in management literature at least since the 1980s when the learning organization and innovation entered the management literature in a big way. When we talk about obedience, disobedience, or well-being and self-management in

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3   Foucault, M. (2008) *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-79*, trans. G. Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

4   Kafka, F. (1925/1998) *The trial*. A new translation, based on the restored text. Translated and with a preface by Breon Mitchell. New York: Schocken Books.

organizations, we don't talk about these issues from a humanistic point of view: Now we'll make some more human management and we want people to be happy because we want them to be happy. It is a question of managing the potential productivity of the organization, and if our employees are not able to stay fit, not to become overweight, and if they are not able to add value which we could not predict, then production will simply stop. And this is where the changes in economy become interesting. We have this overarching way of thinking the economic system in a capitalistic sense, and that is why we are forced to talk in these interesting paradoxes, because everything is potential productivity. And self-management then becomes to do *as if* the management technology or management ideas were your own ideas. You have to take them in and then you have to add something extra, otherwise you do not add anything to this changing world. ' A career is nothing without a personal life' as an ad for one big Danish company said[5]. If you do not have a life, the organization cannot use you in the potential sense.

Michael Pedersen: Could we dwell a bit more on this. Today we have discussed the concept of autonomy in self-management a lot. But some of you also just brought up the concept of productivity in self-management. What kind of concept of productivity do we have in self-management? What is the failure of the bureaucratic, formal understanding of productivity, if we need self-management?

Dan Kärreman: Two main responses to this. I do think that bureaucracy in some form is compatible with the question of work and in this sense also with some sort of notion of self-management. Universities are very bureaucratic, but they also provide excellent spaces for people like us, and we do not really like to be bossed around. So that is a good argument. Researchers are the prototypical self-managing people. Having said that, in terms of industrial processes, I do think that certain kinds of work, in particular service work and knowledge work is too complicated and too expensive to regulate and supervise within the traditional bureaucratic needs, so there is actually an economic reason why self-management becomes important target or important technique or practice. We could not make the case if we did not really know in an international sense. Although, it seems to be the easiest way to engage in some sort of control for these types of groups: professional service, professional knowledge worker. As a researcher I am very interested in this concept of self-management because it provides a way of thinking about the interface between professional autonomy and management. Self-management is basically a way of accessing and controlling a particular kind of productivity that comes from complex work. I think it is much more interesting to relate to productivity instead of autonomy. Autonomy is a bricolage that is actually substituted by self-management.

André Spicer: I think it is quite easy to argue against Dan here, or at least makes his claim a little more modest. He made the point that the only way we can manage service work is through self-management. But if we look at any form of productive service work, what we find is a massive degree of rationalization, bureaucratization, and external control. He claims that if you look at complex work like management

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5   Cf. Pedersen, M. (2011) '"A career is nothing without a personal life" – On the social machine in the call for authentic employees', *ephemera,* 11(1): 63-77.

consultancy you do not find it. But if you look at management consultancies, they are made of a whole bunch of 25 year old kids implementing ERP-systems. And their work is highly controlled. They too record what they are doing every seven minutes to keep track of their 'billable hours'. So it does not seem that these consultants are particularly self-managing.

Dan Kärreman: Yes, this is precisely my point.

Andre Spicer: Yes, the result is that people begin to think about their life in terms of seven-minute slots. So their whole life becomes series of seven-minutes slot, which is being scheduled for meetings and so forth, and now I am going to drink a beer and network with my friends, and next 7 minute slot I will make my girlfriend happy, and then next seven-minute slot I will go and send some emails. Recent work I have been doing with Johan Alvehus points out how this kind of seven-minute thinking becomes a way these professional service workers begin to financialise their whole life.[6] Their life becomes a series of seven-minute slots, which they can then buy, sell, invest. So I think that Dan is right in pointing out that these forms of rationalized controls become a kind of self-management. So maybe simply opposing the two forms might be a little foolish.

Dan Kärreman: Yes, but I think that if you research this empirically you will see that it is extremely difficult to translate the kind of control that literally exists on an assembly line to service work and to knowledge work. Metaphorically speaking, yes, we can see that something like this is happening, but I would argue that for this control to really come alive, to be performed, it needs much more self-management than on an assembly line, because they are actually forced. You cannot disconnect from that. You can engage in other kinds of thinking. Why in the service sector or knowledge work, you have to engage in these techniques to make it happen.

Marius Gudmand-Høyer: Here we might go back to one of the conceptual discussions we have had. What are we actually talking about when we talk about self-management? On which level of analysis? Societal, organizational, inter- or intrapersonal? It is interesting to relate this to what Sverre Raffnsøe talked earlier about the normative level, where self-management comes up as an answer that we repeat although it does not answer exactly what we are trying to do. Although self-management fails in the first situation, it is still what we take up in the next. That is how normativity works, it is stubborn, it is a wilful normative expectation, and this is also why self-management becomes relevant to study. Of course it is different in different empirical instances and on different levels of analysis, but it is certainly a concept that now has some sort of general societal prevalence. And to return to Dan's question about productivity: without knowing much about productivity per se, I can at least say that the one aspect that seem to be part of self-management and productivity is that organizations now seem to identify what is relevant for production outside the organization itself. It seems to lease out and be interested in aspects that are not already a part of the organization, but which is not complexly detached from it either. Andre Spicer has a brilliant concept for this:

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6   Alvehus, J. and A. Spicer (2009) 'Financialization as a strategy of workplace control in professional service firms', paper presented at the 25th EGOS Colloquium, Barcelona, Spain, July 4-6.

an ex-stitution.[7] However, this particular interventional field, which is situated just on outer surface of the organization, not within it, but not completely detached form either, is of course also part of a major historical movement as well; the whole idea of regulating the self-regulating of civil society is basically the same idea. It is a particular external reference nourished by the belief that if people managed themselves, not as they do now, but as they potentially and willingly could, it would lead to a better productivity, so let us therefore facilitate exactly this. This matrix of 'extitutional facilitation', I believe, has not only become an integral part of production and value-creation, for instance as co-creation. At the same time, the matrix represents a general framework in which management of self-management has emerged as something so prevalent and highly relevant for all sorts of governing.

Andre Spicer: Here you have examples of how the self-management process does not work. The concept of bio-morality is useful here. The central idea is that to be a healthy person, you are a morally good person. If you are engaged in a lot of yoga, go for jog every day, think positives thoughts then you are a morally good person. And, if you do the opposite you will be a bad person. This idea can be found in recent work by Torkild Thanem on workplace health programmes.[8] He found that some workplaces spent an inordinate amount of time monitoring their employees eating. As an employee in these workplaces you should have an apple for breakfast, you should check how much water you are drinking, and by all means avoid having a burger at lunch time. Essentially employees were being treated like children who need to be told what to eat. But then to resist that, what would you do? Would that involve eating ten pizzas and never doing any exercise? This of course is extremely childish too. So the result is that you get in to this trap where you treated as a child, act like a child, but if you resist that you are also like a child. This is a strange because self-management is supposed to be all about responsibility. But it seems that self-management programmes actually make us all into irresponsible children who need to be told what to do all the time.

Charlotta Levay: From a general reflection based on the perspectives from which I have studied governmentality, I think that anyone would have emphasized the extent to which this self-management has the potentiality of rendering new aspects of existence controllable.[9] It is not a question of autonomous people asked to produce self-management, but rather a general kind of effort to solve the puzzle of how to control autonomous individuals or autonomous people. People that are in a context of society where the ideal of autonomy is so strong, so what do you do? You support their autonomy, create their autonomy, create models, recipes, and descriptions and calculations and network and anything for them to be autonomous and act in autonomous ways. It is this constructive element of it I find important, and then to say, did this add to their autonomy or did this restrict them? This points at the whole idea of them being autonomous. Take for instance the case of some anti-obesity programmes

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7   Cf. Spicer, André (2010) 'Extitutions: the other side of institutions', *ephemera*, 10(1): 25-39.

8   Thanema, Torkild (2009) ' "There's no limit to how much you can consume": the New Public Health and the struggle to manage healthy bodies', *Culture and organization*, 15(1): 59-74.

9   Cf. e.g. Levay, Charlotta and Caroline Waks (2009) 'Professions and the pursuit of transparency in healthcare: two cases of soft autonomy', *Organization studies*, 30(5): 509-527.

which I have studied.[10] They encourage patients to reflect on their life and start controlling it better, and obviously that implies indirectly controlling the patients. Previously, I do not even know if this was an area of control of self-control. It was people living their lives, and then it becomes a project; you can describe it systematically and start controlling it.

Jens Rennstam: Michael asked about how this is a new kind of productivity. As to this, one of the paradoxes brought up by Sverre Spoelstra, the purposefulness without purpose, can be solved in a linguistic sense. Purposefulness is an attitude we can have, but there is no purpose anymore that we know of. God is dead, it is said, so he is gone for people of religious belief and thus produces no purpose for most people of today. But we still act as if there was one. So linguistically, we may express this by saying that there is purposefulness because we act as if there is purpose, but there really is none. Hence, purposefulness without purpose. This may be connected to productivity in the way that it is not about 'speed' anymore, which resembles purpose in the sense of something that is attainable and a final goal, but it seems to be more about 'acceleration', which resembles purposefulness in the sense that it is not finite but more like an attitude and specifically an attitude that there is no final goal and there is no end to production. We need to be productive but there is no clear goal of the production other than acceleration. It is not so much about transforming raw material into things in a productive way anymore. At least in the Western world we basically have sold all the useful goods, at least in any fundamental sense. In terms of use-value one may argue that there is very little new during the past 50 years – we've got food, shelter, comfort, etc. At the same time we seem to want difference. Not everybody wants a black Ford anymore, we want different kinds of Fords; we need to experience some kind of difference. This is why this acceleration is needed and this is why we need to tap into something other than just bureaucracy and behaviour that is planned, because if you plan behaviour is just not productive enough, you need to tap into people's selves and make them behave in a productive way without any bureaucratic rules. For a little while more we may be able to live up to the capitalist idea of productivity, but then we need new sources – I guess self-management is one of those potential sources.

Sverre Raffnsøe: Earlier in our discussion we touched on an important point. It's the fact that self-management has become some sort of a prevalent idea, an ideal or normativity that we have to live up to and keep up with, and which we are quite unwilling to dispense with. Self-management has become kind of an *idée fixé*. Even when it is dysfunctional we tend to stick to it, it is not refutable in any simple way. We also tend to stick to it even when it proves to be very difficult to maintain or unproductive. Today we even apply the notion of self-management as a very challenging demand to people who have become victims of severe depressions, as discussed in the presentation by Marius; and we ask them to manage themselves even though they are quite incapable of fulfilling exactly that obligation. It might not be that it's your own fault, and it might not be that you're to blame for the rotten condition you ended up in, but still you have to assume responsibility and display agency. We have

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10 Levay, C. (2010) 'Microphysique d'une intervention sur l'obésité: Technologies de soi comme moyen de traduction' in H. Bergeron and P. Castel (eds.) *Regards croisés sur l'obésité*. Paris: Éditions de Santé and Presses de Sciences Po.

become obsessed with presupposing and installing agency. In this very instance management of self-management seems to attain its extreme margin of what may be cultivated; it comes close to the boundary of the realm to which the notion and the normativity applies. This is where we encounter the limits of management of self-management; it has to be perfectible in some ways. Things have to be perfectible in order for this machine to work. Where it encounters the imperfectible; but as Michael Pedersen has also discussed in his article on self-management and stress, the machinery of self-management almost breaks down, while at the same time the machine seems to reboot immediately, maybe even intensified by its lack of success, in order to overcome the obstacle. [11] Its failure is its very success!

Marius Gudmand-Høyer: In continuation of what Sverre Raffnsøe. just said I think we have to look at self-management not only at the normative level but also as an impending activity of sorts. Self-management is not the equal to any philosophical concept of autonomy, nor is it the same as empirical self-regulation as such. In my opinion, it is a specific process or processing of autonomy, just as it is a specific activity of responsibility, by means of self-regulation. Indeed it presupposes that you can have some free will, or some responsibility or some autonomy, but it is not really about creating a situation in which you actually *are* self-managing in an autonomous way. It is a situation in which we constantly may be on the verge of doing this; but it is always an imperfect prescription too, and therefore it fosters activity. I think there is an interesting and important historical aspect to it, if you go back to Sverre Raffnsøe presentation on the Kantian ideas about autonomy, immaturity and enlightenment. This was the idea that we were actually standing in a spot where we were not as free as we could be, where we needed to move in direction of this freedom and the total use of personality and reason in order to become mature. But if you go back to the ancient Greek way of approaching the same problem, they actually said that we, a least in principle, were completely free from the beginning, and that this was our most important problem because we had to limit our freedom in specific ways in order to conduct ourselves ethically or satisfyingly as to ourselves. Current self-management is also dealing with this Kantian idea that we are not really using as much of our freedom as we could if we really did it in the best way possible. But there is more to it than that. This may be illustrated well with reference to the work of scholars of self-management such as Charles Manz, Henry Sims and Christopher Neck, who, by the way, already in the 1980s introduced the fantastic concept of 'SuperLeadership' for 'leading others to lead themselves'.[12] Now, however, they make a distinction between 'self-management' and what they label as 'self-leadership', both conceived of as so-called 'substitutes for management'.[13] Self-management they define as a process in which you regulate

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11 Pedersen, M. (2008) 'Tune in, break down and reboot: New machines for coping with the stress of commitment', *Culture and Organization*, 14 (2): 171-185. Cf. also Pedersen, M. (2009) *Tune in, breakdown, and reboot: On the production of the stress-fit self-managing employee*. PhD Series 6, Doctoral School of Organization and Management Studies, Copenhagen Business School.

12 Cf. Manz, C. C. and H. P. Sims (1989) *SuperLeadership: Leading others to lead themselves*. New York: Prentice Hall Press.

13 Cf. e.g. Neck, C> P. and J. D. Houghton 'Two decades of self-leadership theory and research: Past development, present trends and future possibilities', *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* special issue on self-leadership, 21(4): 270-295.

yourself in order to reduce discrepancies between your own performance and externally set standards. Here you already know the standards of what you actually should do at work. You also know the rationale for these standards, or why you should perform in accordance with the given standards. But what you du not know is the precise self-regulation needed to put this into work. Hence, it becomes a Known-Known-Unknown structure of some sort. But what comes up with self-leadership is that we do not know the standards beforehand, nor do we know the rationales for them. We have to take part in formulating these standards and their rationales ourselves in order to be really productive, which means we would now have three unknowns. Or more precisely, I think, we have an Unknown-Unknown-Partly Known structure, since we do know for sure that the two unknowns have to be met with some sort of self-regulation activity. We positively know that we have to conduct ourselves productively in respect to these two unknowns, if we want to be really productive. This is a very open system of self-leadership in opposition to the relatively closed system of self-management. However, we should not say that this is either-or situation. It is not self-management *or* self-leadership we have. Rather, I would argue, we should say that the current phenomenon of self-management is somehow stretched out between these two categories with their associated ideas about the nature of freedom and autonomy. What we have is two different experiences at the very same time: With self-management it is the experience that we are bestowed with less maturity than we actually feel we have, which leads to the Kantian problem of freedom as emancipation. With self-leadership it is the experience that we are expected to have much more maturity than we think we have, which leads to the Greek problem of freedom as limitation. It is within this framework that many of the normative activities of autonomy and responsibility are now taking place, oscillating back and forth between passive and active problematics of freedom. For example, the knowledge worker at a university has to be self-managing in accordance with fixed standards of teaching hours, quantities of publications and so forth. But at the same time this person has to be self-leading in order to continuously formulate a productive future of new research projects with unknown standards and rationales. In sum, I believe that many of the problems with the management of self-management and autonomy we talk about today are connected to the ways we try to deal with this double challenge of freedom and maturity, be it practically or empirically, theoretically or conceptually.

Pia Bramming: Hegel questioned an individual conception of freedom stating that freedom is when you don't feel what binds you.[14] Freedom is not an absence of constraints on our liberty or the possibility to do as we desire. What we experience as self-directed is also mediated by others. When we experience independence it happens in a social interdependency. I think when we talk about productivity in organizations, if we had to contextualize it, then the constrains we do not feel in a work context must be seen in light of the obligation to be free, and the obligation to change or to produce value for the organization must be seen as freedom itself. It is a way of cultivating the management technology into a personal ideal. Making a difference between constrains and change, constrains and self-management, or personality and self-management it does not really make any sense when we have said that life itself, or actual management

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14 Cf. Hegel, G. W. F. (1821/2008) *Outlines of the philosophy of right*, trans. T. M. Knox. Revised, edited, and introduced by Stephen Houlgate. New York: Oxford University Press.

itself, is the central product of capital, if that is the truth. Change is produced in relation to constrains.

Andre Spicer: You could also argue for the opposite proposition: Maybe this is just about trying to keep people busy, entertained, or amused. We go to work and what do we do - what are the most people doing at work? They get very stressed out and worried because they have been continually engaged in self-management processes that are not necessarily producing a lot, apart from themselves. So this will be one possible way of keeping people busy. You ask them to engage in self-management. Maybe this is just too cynical. Perhaps what we are witnessing here is the introduction of a new set of morals based on the ideas of autonomy, connectivity, network; kinds of words which you heard again and again. The idea of autonomy seems to come up in all sorts of different settings: Radical activists and anarchists doing media work talk about their organization being highly autonomist. Indigenous peoples engaged in armed struggles throughout the world use it. Management consultants talk about autonomy too. So you see this weird thing, that people who are so opposed and doing very very different things using the same kind of moral claims to justify what is going on within their life. So is not that we live in a society without purpose. It is rather that we seem to be able to use the same purpose for some many different activities.

Sverre Raffnsøe: Not only is the management of self-management a paradoxical notion, there is also some sort of irony connected to it. Consultancy firms and even managers often claim and expect that self-management will make life a lot easier for the managers, since each and everyone assumes his or her responsibility for managing him- or herself. But, surprisingly and ironically, it is quite the other way about. What emerges with the introduction of self-management is an urgent and almost insatiable demand for management coming from the self-managing employees, and a demand that represents a different kind of management in order to make self-management possible. It is a need for management as empowerment, as a caring for you, something that makes you visible, and something which makes it possible for you managing your task at work. The introduction of self-management carries with it a need for existential management. The introduction of self-management was supposed to make things easier for management, but what happens is quite the contrary. I think it also make management very precarious because the manager always seems to do either too little or too much in order to make it possible for you to do the things that you would like to do at work. If he or she does too much, he or she interferes and becomes a nuisance; he or she limits your freedom. If she or he does too little, you feel that she or he abandons you and empowers you insufficiently; the manager helps you insufficiently to help yourself, she or he does not offer her or his assistance to assist you in making use of your freedom …

Michael Pedersen: On that I think we should end. I would like to thank the panel for a very interesting and enlightening discussion. Thank you.

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