

Is there a ‘New Managerial Work’? A Comparison with Henry Mintzberg’s Classic Study 30 Years Later*

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ABSTRACT This comparative study of top executives’ work aimed at examining the stability of top managerial behaviour reveals a relatively different pattern of behaviour compared with the study by Henry Mintzberg. The main differences are a much larger workload, a contact pattern to a larger degree oriented towards subordinates in group-settings, a greater emphasis on giving information, and less preoccupation with administrative work. One important finding is that fragmentation of time – in previous studies highlighted as a central tenet of managerial work – was not as prevalent in the new study. The different results can be attributed (with caution) to the impact of the management discourse about leadership and corporate culture, and to factors such as organizational structure and geographical dispersion of companies. However, there are also significant similarities between the two studies which indicate that claims of the emergence of a radically different managerial work are much exaggerated. Instead the empirical data shows that new work-practices are combined with older practices, both in a complex and context-specific ways. Therefore, there is a need for better integration between theoretical development and empirical investigations in this field of inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

In 1973, Henry Mintzberg published *The Nature of Managerial Work*. This book included both a synthesis of previous research and a summary of an intensive study of the working behaviour of five chief executives. On the basis of this research, Mintzberg formulated ten management roles and made thirteen propositions about the characteristics of managerial work (Mintzberg, 1973, pp. 51–3). The propositions describe managerial work in a rather precise and well-defined manner (reactive and fragmented behaviour, conducted at a relentless pace, preferably through verbal interactions). The propositions were based on the theoretical assumption that structural conditions determine managerial behaviour to a large extent.

The Nature of Managerial Work is still used as an important source of reference that informs management research and education, despite a number of challenges from

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academic scholars (in particular, see Carroll and Gillen, 1987; Martinko and Gardner, 1985; Snyder and Glueck, 1980; Willmott, 1987). One reason for this seminal status of Mintzberg's book is that Kurke and Aldrich (1983) confirmed Mintzberg's results in a replicating study. The minor differences in behaviour between the studies were explained by four contingency factors that moderated (not questioned) the original propositions.

This article addresses the question of the extent to which managerial work (at the executive level) is subject to change. The purpose of the study is to try to counterbalance two contradictory pictures of managerial work. On the one hand, there are classic studies based on systematic empirical research such as studies by Carlson (1951), Mintzberg (1973) and Kurke and Aldrich (1983) which have presented similar results and which portray managerial work similarly over time (for instance variety, brevity and fragmentation). On the other hand, there are many well-known researchers and authors who claim that managerial work has undergone dramatic changes during the last decades (Drucker, 1988; Handy, 1989; Kanter, 1989; Morgan, 1993; Peters, 1989; Zuboff, 1988).

The aim of the article is to present a comparative study with that of Mintzberg (1973) in order to inform the discussion about the changeability of managerial work. Is there reason to believe that the new discourse about change, flexibility, leadership and culture have affected managerial behaviour in any substantial manner?

The article begins with a short presentation of the advances of research in managerial work, followed by a discussion of whether managerial work has been subject to profound changes. Thereafter, the empirical setting and the methods used are discussed, followed by a presentation of the empirical results. The article ends with an analysis of the results and a discussion of the general implications.

SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

The Nature of Managerial Work inspired a stream of further studies in a field that previously was more descriptive and methodologically oriented than theoretical (Hales, 1999b). In particular, Mintzberg's book inspired a number of studies that used the method of structured observation (Martinko and Gardner, 1985) in various managerial occupations such as public administrators, police officers and in particular, school principals.

Researchers interested in understanding the meaning managers attribute to their behaviour (a cognitive perspective) took a different approach. Stewart (1982) shows that all managerial jobs offer choice and that managers perceive similar jobs in personal ways. Kotter (1982) highlights the idea that managers pursue their work mainly by engaging themselves in activities related to *agenda setting* and *network building*. Other important studies using a cognitive approach are Hannaway (1989) and Watson (1994/2001).

A third research direction has placed managerial work in a broader perspective by analysing the systemic, institutional and moral grounds upon which managerial work can be claimed to rest (Dyck et al., 2005; Hales, 1993, 1999b, 2005; Reed, 1984, 1990; Whitley, 1989; Willmott, 1984, 1987, 1997). More specifically, mainstream research in managerial work has been criticized for neglecting the political dimensions of management, in particular the conflict between labour and capital (Reed, 1990; Willmott, 1984, 1997).

Fourth, there has also been research investigating the importance of national culture in shaping the behavioural patterns of managers (Boisot and Liang, 1992; Brewster et al., 1993; Doktor, 1990; Luthans et al., 1993; Stewart et al., 1994). Doktor (1990), for instance, shows that Japanese and South Korean chief executives worked in a less fragmented way than their American counterparts. Boisot and Liang (1992) compared the work behaviour of six Chinese enterprise directors with those studied by Mintzberg and found that Chinese executives had much more frequent contact with their superiors, spent considerably less time on desk work and were more reluctant to delegate.

The extensive research described above has enriched our understanding of the multi-faceted phenomenon of managerial work, but the research has not addressed the issue of the extent to which managerial behaviour is subject to change. In particular, this article addresses to what extent apparent changes in *management discourse* and the related perception of the role of the manager have contributed to changes in everyday *managerial practices*. Expressed another way: Can the rhetorical claims about the emergence of a new and different managerial work be substantiated by empirical investigations of actual managerial behaviour? A suitable starting point for such an examination is first, to describe in what way discourses about management have changed since the study of Mintzberg (1973), and second, to investigate if managerial practices appear to be affected by the management discourse.

Changes in Management Discourse

It is evident that the general discourse about management has undergone major changes since Mintzberg's study. Barley and Kunda (1992), who have made a systematic investigation of the development of management thought during the twentieth century, identify a shift in managerial rhetoric that occurred around 1980. During the preceding period, labelled as the era of 'systems rationalism', the role of executive managers was primarily related to the quest for rational administrative behaviour. Great expectations were placed on techniques, often referred to as management science (computer modelling, portfolio management, planning, forecasting and other quantitative techniques). Leader charisma in the period of 'systems rationalism' was to a great extent viewed as a relic of the entrepreneurial past; more impersonal techniques were seen as more professional, rational and effective (Waring, 1991).

Mintzberg's study clearly belongs to this management science tradition, not least illustrated by the fact that the largest section of his book is devoted to the topic of 'programming' managerial work and the use of management science for this purpose (chapters 6 and 7). Furthermore, the role as 'leader' – which constitutes only one of ten managerial roles – is described in relatively administrative terms such as staffing, motivating and maintaining 'a certain degree of alertness in the organization' (p. 62). Also ceremonies, which are central from a leader/culture perspective, are coded as 'secondary' (p. 249). Finally it is worth noting that the replicating study of Kurke and Aldrich (1983) was published in the journal *Management Science*.

The discursive shift away from 'systems rationalism' was led by an explosive interest in leadership and the related idea that the top executive should assume the role of a leader who communicates visions and transforms the organization. Early contributors in this

movement were Zaleznick (1977), who contrasted managers as maintainers of status quo with leaders who promoted change, and Burns (1978), who popularized the concept of transformational leadership.

The generous amount of literature about the top manager as a leader (cf. Bass, 1985; Conger, 1989; House, 1977; Sashkin, 1988; Tichy and Devanna, 1986) has been labelled *The New Leadership Approach* (Bryman, 1992). This approach emphasizes the overarching role of the top executive as a leader who maintains and moulds the values of an organization, while at the same time rejects the management science tradition as overly formalistic, bureaucratic and stifling.

The Stability of Managerial Practices

During recent decades many books have been published that emphasize the importance of corporate leadership as well as represent a 'post-bureaucratic' view on organizing (Hales, 2002). Post-bureaucracy is characterized by flexible and non-hierarchical organizations built on shared values, dialogue and trust, rather than on rule-following (Grey and Garsten, 2001; Heckscher, 1994). Many authors (Drucker, 1988; Handy, 1989; Kanter, 1989; Morgan, 1993; Peters, 1989; Zuboff, 1988) claim that the emergence of post-bureaucracy has had, or at least, in the near future, will have, a profound impact on the way managers perform their work. Kanter (1989, pp. 85 ff.), for instance, argues that managerial work is undergoing 'an enormous and rapid change' spurred by new technology, increasing customer demands and competitive pressures that weed out traditional forms of organizing. The new role of the manager is to be a partner and facilitator to empowered employees who solve business problems by themselves through cross-functional networks and project-teams.

The existence of a new managerial work, however, is not really substantiated by empirical evidence, and its advent has been questioned by Hales (2002) based on a number of empirical studies of middle managers. These studies reveal that only small changes in managerial behaviour towards the post-bureaucratic ideal had been taken (Hales, 1999a; Hales and Mustapha, 2000; Hales and Tamangani, 1996). Hales (2002, p. 64) describes the new ways of organizing more as '*bureaucracy-lite*: all the strength of bureaucracy control with only half the hierarchical calories'. The main reason for this characterization is, according to Hales, that managers are still held personally responsible for the performance of their units and therefore are not likely to begin to treat employees as independent partners or to abandon close monitoring of performance.

Watson (1994/2001, p. xii) also claims managerial behaviour to be of a relatively stable nature. In his ethnographic study, he expressed surprise about the minimal effect all the talk of culture change, empowerment and customer focus had had on the everyday work of managers.

It should be noted that even if Hales and Watson are able to show that 'bureaucratic' ways of organizing still are vigorous, their focus is on the middle management level. How managers at the executive level have been affected by the new managerial discourse remains unanswered and this article seeks to answer this question.

Henry Mintzberg deserves a final say in the discussion about the changeability of managerial work. In the 1973 study, Mintzberg presented his results in a timeless way

and claimed that it was a timeless phenomenon: 'In essence, managers work today as they always have' (Mintzberg 1973, p. 161). He argued that the reason for such stability was the strength of structural conditions inherent in the work itself, which left little room for individual deviations from the general pattern. In his rather recent studies, which cover a large number of managers at various levels observed one day each, Mintzberg did not challenge this view (Mintzberg, 1994, 1998). In his articles, he is still sceptical of the proponents of transformational leadership and post-bureaucracy. Issues such as new technology, change, flexibility, globalization, and increasing competitive pressures are not addressed. Instead Mintzberg concludes that the great complexity of managerial work requires the conduct of several different roles other than 'leading' (conceiving, scheduling, controlling, linking, communicating, dealing). In summary, Mintzberg appears to remain in the 'stability camp'.

Culture and Management Discourse in Sweden

Because this comparative study is conducted in a different country than those countries in the Mintzberg study, remarks about the study context are essential. A CEO in Sweden (verkställande direktör), according to the Company Act of Sweden, is somewhat between a US CEO and a British managing director with regard to power and responsibility. A CEO in Sweden cannot be the chairman of the board as is possible in the USA, but he/she has more legal authority and more responsibilities than a British managing director. Thus company boards in Sweden, although responsible for appointing and removing the verkställande direktör, have primarily a monitoring and policy-making function (Arlebäck, 1997) and have no right to interfere in current operations, which are the sole responsibility of the verkställande direktör.

According to Hofstede (1984), the largest cultural difference between the USA, where Mintzberg's study was conducted, and Sweden is the low level of masculinity in the latter country.^[1] According to Hofstede, this difference implies that Swedes tend to value the quality of human relationships and the living environment relatively more than material rewards, and also that Swedes value dialogue and consensus highly. In general these interpretations have been supported by later studies (Brewster et al., 1993; Källström, 1995; Lindkvist, 1988).

Sweden has also been described by other researchers as a country on the cutting edge of cultural change (Inglehart and Baker, 2000) and as a country especially receptive to social innovation (Byrkjeflot, 2003, p. 29; Cetron and O'Toole, 1983). In the 1990–93 World Value Study (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart et al., 1998), Sweden is identified as one of the leading countries in the 'postmodernization' of the Western World, implying a declining belief in authority, and a strong emphasis on individual self-expression, quality of life and subjective well-being. The cultural characteristics indicate that Sweden should be a relatively fertile ground for post-bureaucracy according to Heckscher's (1994) definition, where consensus-building dialogue, trust and a dispersed sense of responsibility are central features.

That Sweden is a relatively fertile ground for post-bureaucracy is also indicated by the fact that the US dominated discourse about leadership and corporate culture was received enthusiastically. The book, *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman, 1982),

was translated into Swedish within a few months, and sold 40,000 copies in Sweden alone (Furusten, 1995). The interest in leadership issues reached almost a feverish level during the first half of the 1980s. A Swedish magazine about leadership issues commented on the phenomenon by stating; ‘One sometimes has the impression that half of the plane from the USA to Sweden is filled with “leadership gurus”, on their way to seminars, “salons” and workshops with Swedish managers’ (from Czarniawska-Joerges, 1988, pp. 18–19).

One frequent traveller to Sweden was Michael Maccoby who was engaged by the Swedish research institute FA-rådet to investigate whether the existing practices of leadership in Sweden were suitable for the future (Edström et al., 1985). According to Maccoby, this was not the case as most top Swedish leaders were perceived as technocratic and not very receptive to change. FA-rådet began – inspired by Maccoby – to promote the idea that the main role for CEOs should be to formulate and communicate visions which committed the employees to work, accordingly in decentralized structures (Beckérus et al., 1988).

Also, other Swedish researchers, consultants and business leaders were engaged in this ‘leadership movement’. Of special importance was the CEO of the airline carrier SAS, Jan Carlzon, who in 1985 published the book *Riv Pyramiderna*, which was translated to English with the title *Moments of Truth* (Carlzon, 1988). This book which is the best-selling management book ever in Sweden, contains a particular blend of ideas about service management, customer orientation and transformational leadership. In the late 1980s SAS was financially successful; outside commentators believed a main reason for this success was that Carlzon was able to alter the corporate culture through his visionary and communicative leadership style (Edström et al., 1989). The central message from the SAS case, widely accepted in Swedish business life, was that a top leader should command the organization through communicating ideas rather than by giving instructions and setting rules. At the same time, the picture of the top manager as an efficient administrator became unfashionable. These ideological beliefs were also developed in a series of interviews with leading top managers in Sweden where many interviewees spoke with conviction that a CEO should act as a transformational leader by setting examples, by inspiring, by communicating goals and visions and by building corporate values (Källström, 1995; Jönsson, 1994). According to Andersson (2005, p. 5), who examined executive training in Sweden, there is a strong preference for the word ‘leader’ over the word ‘manager’ (‘chef’ in Swedish):

The word is leader! You are a management dinosaur when calling yourself manager! No one says manager any more, if you persist in calling yourself manager you only prove that you are not a leader! (Berggren and Hedin, 2002, p. 37; quoted in Andersson, 2005, p. 5)

The enthusiastic reception of post-bureaucratic thinking in Swedish business life was also supported by a belief that there was a coherence between the post-bureaucratic business philosophy and established business practices in Sweden, which were interpreted as consisting of a relatively informal and decentralized leadership style based on trust, a desire for consensus, and empowered subordinates (Jönsson, 1994; Källström, 1995).

Some commentators on this development (Sjöstrand, 1999) argue that such messages are mainly rhetorical, and that there is a wide gap between leader self-representation and actual leader behaviour. This warning is worth noting, although what is particularly important here is that the discourse has been very successful on the rhetorical level.

To conclude, it can be anticipated that the popularity of post-modern values and the strong reception of the post-bureaucratic discourse in Sweden will provide a more fertile ground for post-bureaucratic managerial practices than in most other countries. Consequently, if new managerial work practices cannot be found in Sweden, the prospects of finding such practices in other countries are probably even less likely.

METHODS AND SETTING

This article belongs to a research project that acknowledged the fact that about 50 years have passed since the first systematic study of top managers at work was conducted by the Swedish professor Sune Carlson (1951). In a follow-up study of Carlson, reported in Tengblad (2002), eight Swedish CEOs were studied for four weeks each, using the methodology of Carlson in order to facilitate comparisons. It was also decided to include direct observation in order to facilitate a deeper qualitative understanding and to make comparisons with Mintzberg (1973). Four of the CEOs were thus observed during a working week (five days) and the other four were observed during 1–2 working days each. This article presents only the behaviour of those CEOs observed during a full week and only in regard to the systematic comparison with Mintzberg's study. Additional qualitative data obtained from the observations of the CEOs, primarily concerning the link between corporate control and managerial work, is presented elsewhere (Tengblad, 2004).

Carlson used a standardized form for measuring work behaviour: one form per registered activity describing what the executive was working on, with whom and for how long (Tengblad, 2003). Even if Carlson (1951) and Mintzberg (1973) used somewhat different terminology, in general it was not difficult to translate the diary forms into Mintzberg's classification scheme (such as location, kind of media, kind of participants, number of participants), with one exception, namely 'purpose of contacts'. It was unproblematic to transfer the markings for 'getting information', 'reviewing information' and 'informing, advising' into Mintzberg's terminology of 'receiving information', 'review' and 'giving information', respectively, and to reclassify activities of the CEOs into the categories of 'ceremony', 'external board work' and 'observational tours' when needed. However, it was more difficult to determine the proper distribution of time for 'scheduling', 'requests and solicitations', 'strategy' and 'negotiation'. In most cases, field notes, the classification according to the Carlson terminology, and the consistent use of keywords description of each activity gave a clear indication about the nature of activity, although in some cases it was difficult to classify the activities with precision. The comparison problem should not be exaggerated; a larger difficulty was how to make a single, best representation of an activity into a predetermined category scheme. Indeed, there is a need to treat the dimension of 'purpose of contacts' with greater caution than the other dimensions since this dimension is based on an interpretation of behaviour and not on pure description (for a discussion of the problems in measuring the content of managerial work, see Hales, 1986).

Also included in the analysis is a part of work, during the observation period, performed without the presence of the observer, which has been coded on the basis of personal diaries and short interviews with the participants.^[2] For instance, one of the CEOs regularly reads international and Swedish business magazines on the Internet for almost one hour at home before going to the office. The personal diaries are not as precise and accurate as the observations, but they should be included in order to provide a fair view of the total workload and its distribution.^[3]

- Direct observation – 231 hours (80%)
- Work conducted at home and during weekends – 38 hours (13%)
- Work not observed due to sensitivity and other reasons – 20 hours (7%)
- Total work time – 289 hours (100%)

Furthermore, in contrast to the Mintzberg study, no analysis of ingoing and outgoing mail was made, no record was kept of whether the meetings were scheduled or not, and no note was made of who the initiators of verbal contacts were. Discussions on these matters are therefore not included in this comparative study.

The study is related to the case study research approach, in this instance the work of four business leaders during more than 250 hours. The case studies have been performed in a systematic way by combining qualitative and quantitative methods in order to be able to make a comparison to an earlier, important study and to make analytical generalizations regarding the research questions of this article as recommended by Yin (1994) and Hartley (2004).

Limitations

This study, like those of Mintzberg (1973) and Kurke and Aldrich (1983), is restricted in size, context and time. These restrictions place limitations on how far generalizations can be made. No attempts will be made to generalize about managerial work on middle or lower management levels. The research in managerial work has covered all kind of managerial jobs from foremen to managing directors (Hales, 1993). This diversity in jobs has been a complicating factor when developing general theories about managerial work (cf. Hales, 1986). Additionally, there is no attempt to make comparisons to studies from very different settings, such as Boisot and Liang's (1992) investigation of Chinese enterprise directors.

It should also be said that it is perilous to examine the link between discourse and practice, and particularly in this study that deals with a very complex and ambiguous phenomenon. As Hales (1986, p. 106) writes, studying managers' behaviour (talking, reading) does not necessarily tell us much about what functions the manager performs (creating value for shareholders, maintaining financial prudence, achieving operational excellence, or something similar). The emphasis has been to compare behaviour and not to examine per se the relation between behaviour and function. Therefore the analysis is based on an interpretation of what might be the reasons for the differences between the studies; such reasons (differences in management discourse) are not empirical facts as such.

Finally, it is difficult to separate differences that stem from cultural and contingency factors and that are related to development of management discourse and management practices linked to the discourse. This separation is especially difficult in Sweden as the cultural characteristics have become intermingled with discourse development due to the very strong reception of post-bureaucratic thinking. Expressed another way, it is probable that post-bureaucratic thinking to some extent has emerged as an important feature of the Swedish management culture.

The Participants

In three cases the participants were CEOs for firms listed on the OM Stockholm Exchange, and in the fourth case, the participant led a family owned company. The companies employed between slightly fewer than 2,000 persons to almost 15,000 persons and the combined market value of the three listed companies exceeded US\$12 billion at the time of study.

- *CEO 1* was relatively recently appointed as CEO of a newspaper company. He has a university degree in business administration and had previously been a CEO in the tourism and hospitality sector.
- *CEO 2* led one of the largest and most successful financial institutions in Scandinavia. He had a strong reputation in the Swedish business community and was a member of several boards of large companies.
- *CEO 3* had for many years led the build-up of a nationwide company in the retailing sector. During his career, he had received several awards for his leadership achievements.
- *CEO 4*, an engineer (MSc) by training, led a company that had become the world's largest in its sector with more than 90 per cent of the operations located outside Sweden. This CEO had also received much public attention for his performance.

The geographical setting differed for the companies. The company of CEO 1 was concentrated in one region, the company of CEO 2 mainly operated in the Nordic countries, the company of CEO 3 was nationally dispersed, while the company of CEO 4 was acting globally.

The observations were made in April 1998, September 1998, February 1999 and March 1999. These time periods were chosen mainly for practical reasons, when access was provided and when the periods of observation did not conflict. It was wise to start the investigation soon after a CEO agreed to participate in order to reduce the risk that some unexpected event could interfere with the commitment to be observed. The selection of observation periods rested also on the assumption that there are no 'normal' working weeks for a CEO as every week has its own peculiarities (Carlson, 1951; Tengblad, 2003).

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Table I, which describes the distribution of work time, shows both similarities and differences between the two samples. The most important difference is that the managers

Table I. Total working time average values per participant

	<i>Tengblad</i>			<i>Mintzberg</i>		<i>Comparison</i>
	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>range</i>	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>h/week</i>
1. Meetings	45.7	63%	59–71%	28	64%	63%
2. Tours	0.9	1%	0–4%	1	2%	–10%
3. Telephone calls	5.4	7%	2–16%	2.6	6%	108%
1–3. Total verbal	52	72%	62–80%	31.6	72%	65%
4. Desk work	9	12%	4–23%	8.8	20%	2%
5. Transportation	11.2	16%	7–21%	3.6	8%	211%
Total working time per participant	72.2	100%		44	100%	64%
Total working time incl. a 7 hour trip	72.2	100%		45.4	103%	59%

in the new study worked longer hours than their counterparts. While Mintzberg reports a total work time per participant of between 40 and 53 hours a week, a span between 61 and 81 hours was registered in the new study.

There was also a difference concerning an increase in transportation and a relative decrease in desk work, although one needs to recognize that there are large, individual variances in work behaviour in both samples (see the Appendix for individual data of the CEOs). Accordingly, one of the participants in the new study travelled less (CEO 1), and one (CEO 2) was more occupied with desk work (as he used the Internet extensively as a source of information) than the average executive in Mintzberg's study.

On the other dimensions, there were also many similarities between the studies, such as the proportion of time spent on meetings, tours and telephone calls (keeping in mind the large individual variations within the two samples). On the whole, the new study does not question Mintzberg's (1973) descriptions that managerial work is characterized by much work at an unrelenting pace, a preference for live action and an attraction to the verbal media.

The main part in Mintzberg's description of his observational study concerns the analysis of the verbal contacts (meetings, tours, telephone), which corresponded to more than 70 per cent of the total work time (see Table II). The CEOs in the new study met people relatively less often at their own offices, although CEO 1 deviated from this pattern by conducting 49 per cent of his verbal contacts there. Instead, the CEOs in the new study met people much more often in conference rooms. The reason for this difference can be related to the fact that these CEOs participated more frequently in meetings with many participants.

Table III shows the frequency of meetings, not the relative distribution of time, as time distribution is not presented in Mintzberg's study. The general increase in meetings is related to meetings with more than one person, in particular to meetings with four or more participants. Also in this regard CEO 1 displayed a different behaviour, meeting people in smaller settings, as indicated by the fact that only 10 per cent of his total number of meetings involved four or more persons.

It is also worth noting that Table III gives the impression that dyadic meetings continue to be the dominant form of meeting. However, this impression is misleading, as

Table II. Location of verbal contacts

	<i>Tengblad</i>			<i>Mintzberg</i>		<i>Comparison</i>
	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>range</i>	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>h/week</i>
1. Manager's office	12.1	23%	11–49%	12.3	39%	–2%
2. Office of subordinate	1.9	4%	0–6%	2.5	8%	–24%
3. Hall or plant	2	4%	0–7%	0.3	1%	567%
4. Conference or board room	15.9	31%	16–45%	4.4	14%	261%
5. Away from organization	20.1	39%	12–55%	12	38%	68%
Total time in verbal contact per week	52	100%		31.6	100%	65%

Table III. Size of meetings/tours

	<i>Tengblad</i>			<i>Mintzberg</i>		<i>Comparison</i>
	<i>no. per week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>range</i>	<i>no. per week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>no. per week</i>
1. CEO and one person	34	50%	16–30%	32	68%	6%
2. CEO and two persons	10	15%	5–15%	4	9%	150%
3. CEO and three persons	6	9%	4–25%	3	6%	100%
4. CEO and four persons or more	19	28%	31–71%	8	17%	138%
Total no. of meetings/tours per week	68	100%		47	100%	45%

it reflects the fact that the short and unscheduled meetings usually were dyadic. When measuring dyadic meetings as a proportion of *total meeting time*, these kinds of meetings accounted for only 20 per cent of meeting time in the new study, while meetings that engaged four or more persons accounted for as much as 61 per cent of meeting time.

The increased number of meetings in larger settings does not by itself explain why more group meetings took place. While it is reasonable to say that the participants in the new study (with CEO 1 as an exception) viewed decision-making and sharing of information as activities that should be undertaken more in group settings, one can only speculate about the reasons for this preference. It may be the case that the greater emphasis on group meetings can be related to the more 'collectivistic' and group oriented Swedish culture, which presumably values dialogue and consensus more than the US culture does (Brewster et al., 1993; Hofstede, 1984; Lindkvist, 1988). However, this work behaviour can also be related to the post-bureaucratic management discourse in which team-work and team-building often are prescribed as tools for creating shared values, commitment and a dispersed sense of accountability.

Regarding whom the CEOs met (Table IV), two main differences between the two studies can be identified. The CEOs in the new study were less occupied with meetings

Table IV. Participants at meetings/tours

	<i>Tengblad</i>			<i>Mintzberg</i>		<i>Comparison</i>
	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>range</i>	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>h/week</i>
1. Director (superiors)	1.6	3%	0–12%	2	7%	–20%
2. Peer, co-director	4.3	9%	1–20%	4.6	16%	–7%
3. Client, supplier, associate	3.3	7%	3–9%	5.8	20%	–43%
4. Independent and others	5.1	11%	2–21%	2.3	8%	122%
5. Subordinates	32.3	69%	51–95%	13.9	48%	132%
Total time in meetings/tours per participant	46.6	100%		29	100%	61%

with clients, suppliers and associates (the range was 3–9 per cent compared with the average of 20 per cent in Mintzberg's study). Instead the CEOs in the new study met subordinates much more often (the range in Mintzberg's study was 34–61 per cent, compared with the average of 69 per cent in the new study). These differences were also revealed in a comparison with the Swedish CEOs in Carlson's (1951) study. External contacts that previously had been handled by the CEO personally had to a large degree been delegated to subordinate managers (Tengblad, 2002).

The figures in Table V, directly derived from Mintzberg's 13 different categories of purpose of work content, should be viewed as estimations rather than absolute measures, as it is not possible to draw a clear line between the categories. The most evident difference is that the CEOs in the new study allocated substantially more time to giving information. This activity was estimated to be 16–23 per cent of total work time compared to 3–13 per cent for the chief executives of Mintzberg's study. On the other hand, the CEOs in the new study spent considerably less time on requests and solicitations (the range in Mintzberg, 13–30 per cent, and the range in the new study, 5–10 per cent), and also less time on 'decision-making'.

About 60 per cent of the verbal contacts were coded as 'informational' for all of the participants, even if there were some substantial differences in the relative distribution between receiving (listening), giving (presenting) and reviewing (discussing) information. A possible explanation for this major preoccupation with information exchange is that the CEOs in the new study seemed to work in a more decentralized way than the executives in the Mintzberg study. Instead of making many decisions individually or in groups, the CEOs often preferred subordinate managers to make their own decisions within their own areas of responsibility. Thus the CEOs devoted more energy to communicating their expectations (visions, strategic intentions and performance targets) to subordinate managers, and in particular to making sure that these managers felt that they were responsible for reaching these expectations (see Tengblad (2004) for a more detailed description and analysis of the business leaders as 'expectations handlers' based on this observational study).

The CEOs in the new study also participated more frequently in ceremonies (business dinners, inaugurations and other social gatherings). In fact the estimations indicated that

Table V. Purpose of contacts (based on Mintzberg, 1973, table 13, pp. 250–1)

	<i>Tengblad</i>			<i>Mintzberg</i>		<i>Comparison</i>
	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>range</i>	<i>h/week</i>	<i>share</i>	<i>percent</i>
1. Organizational work	0	0%	–	0.6	2%	–
2. Scheduling	0.7	1%	1–2%	0.9	3%	–22%
3. Ceremony	8.2	16%	8–23%	3.8	12%	116%
4. External board work	1.9	4%	0–8%	1.6	5%	19%
<i>1–4. Total secondary</i>	<i>10.8</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>18–25%</i>	<i>6.6</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>64%</i>
<i>5–7. Requests and solicitations*</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>5–10%</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>–25%</i>
8. Observational tours	0.9	2%	0–5%	0.3	1%	200%
9. Receiving information	11.4	22%	17–30%	5.1	16%	124%
10. Giving information	10.1	19%	16–23%	2.5	8%	304%
11. Review	9.1	18%	15–25%	5.1	16%	78%
<i>8–11. Total informational</i>	<i>31.5</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>59–62%</i>	<i>12.6</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>150%</i>
12. Strategy (important decision-making)	3.6	7%	3–10%	4.1	13%	–12%
13. Negotiation	1.8	3%	0–7%	2.5	8%	–28%
<i>12–13. Total decision-making</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>5–14%</i>	<i>6.6</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>–18%</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>100%</i>		<i>31.6</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>65%</i>

* In the new study it was not possible to differentiate between 5: status requests and solicitations; 6: action requests; and 7: manager requests.

during the time of observation they spent about twice as much time on ceremonies as on decision-making. These differences in behaviour, which include more giving of information, ceremonies and fewer requests and solicitations (giving permission, assignment of working tasks, handling of proposals, etc), indicate at least that a relative shift away from systems rationalism and administrative management has occurred, even though it is difficult to draw this conclusion with precision since it is not possible to compare the actual content of the activities between the two data sets.

Comparing Fragmentation in Managerial Work

The high degree of work fragmentation is a central tenet in *The Nature of Managerial Work*. Snyder and Glueck (1980) questioned this conclusion by suggesting that it is the methodology itself that creates the fragmentation by dividing a work that may be coherent in content into different elements. Solving a specific quality problem may require a number of different contacts and forms of media, but may nevertheless follow a structured pattern without unwanted interruptions.

When using similar methodology for registering activities, a lower degree of fragmentation of time was revealed in the new study, mainly due to fewer desk sessions and the longer duration of telephone calls (see Table VI). In total, the mean activity lasted nearly 30 per cent longer (31 versus 24 minutes). As the internal variance in this dimension was relatively low, all CEOs in the new study had on average lengthier activities (range 29–38 minutes) than the CEOs in Mintzberg's study (17–28 minutes).

Table VI. Number and duration of activities

	<i>Tengblad</i>			<i>Mintzberg</i>		<i>Comparison</i>
		<i>share</i>	<i>range</i>		<i>share</i>	<i>percent</i>
Desk work, number of sessions	28	20%	13–39	36	33%	–22%
Desk work, average duration in min.	19		16–24	15		27%
Number of telephone calls	32	23%	10–59	27	25%	19%
Telephone calls, average duration in min.	10		5–13	6		67%
Number of meetings	65	47%	46–80	41	38%	59%
Meetings, average duration in min.	42		36–53	41		2%
Number of tours	3	2%	0–10	6	6%	–50%
Tours, average duration in min.	17		12–19	10		70%
Transportation	11	8%	4–15	?	?	–
Transportation, average duration in min.	61		45–72	?		–
Total number of activities per participant	139	100%	109–163	109	100%	28%
Activities, average duration in min.	31		29–38	24		29%
No. of activities lasting less than 9 min.	63	45%	40–70	54	50%	17%
No. of activities lasting 9 to 60 min.	59	42%	45–106	44	40%	34%
No. of activities lasting longer than 60 min.	17	12%	15–24	11	10%	55%

It is also important to note that choosing to present the frequency of activities of different lengths easily leads to an exaggeration of the actual fragmentation since even a large number of short activities does not necessarily constitute a large proportion of the total working time. This observation can be illustrated by the fact that in the new study activities lasting fewer than 9 minutes accounted for only 6 per cent (range 4–8 per cent) of total working time, while activities lasting longer than one hour accounted for about 55 per cent of total work time (range 42–62 per cent)! It is also worth noting that the activities lasting fewer than 9 minutes appear to account for only about 8 per cent of the total working time for the executives in Mintzberg's study. This calculation is made using an average length of such activities of a little more than 4 minutes, the same length as the average length in the new study ($54 \text{ activities per participant} \times 4.1 \text{ minutes} / (44 \text{ hours} \times 60 \text{ minutes}) = 8.4\%$).

The conclusion from this analysis is that the generally acknowledged high level of fragmentation in managerial work can be interpreted in a different way, if fragmentation is measured by share of time accounted for by short activities instead of by the frequency of such activities. The most characteristic aspect of the working days of the CEOs in the new study was their participation in relatively lengthy meetings. Only about one tenth of their working time mirrored the widespread picture of the busy administrator, sitting in an office, making decisions and processing various administrative tasks. Also, the meetings themselves were not particularly fragmented in the new study. The characteristics of longer meetings were rather thorough presentations and discussions that had been well prepared by at least one of the participants.

However, the comparison with Carlson's study of CEO behaviour some 50 years ago revealed that the CEO work has become more fragmented regarding *space* (Tengblad,

2002). Travel, not least between different countries where the company had important operations, had become routine for the majority of the CEOs in the study. The CEOs of the four international firms in the larger study spent on average almost 40 per cent of their working time outside Sweden (ibid, p. 549). This outside-of-Sweden time can be compared to the time spent in their own offices, on average about 25 per cent of their work time.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The comparison between the studies shows not only remarkable similarities as in the previous replication of Kurke and Aldrich (1983), but also some important differences. To what extent can the differences support the claims that a new managerial work had been established as Kanter (1989) suggested more than 15 years ago? A suitable first step for answering this question is to examine how much empirical support there is for the 13 propositions of managerial work that Mintzberg (1973, pp. 51–3) formulated in his original study. Based on the time distributions and other qualitative observations, it can be stated that eight of the propositions still receive support. These are:

Proposition 1: Managerial work consists of great quantities of work conducted at an unrelenting pace.

Proposition 4: The manager gravitates towards live action.

Proposition 5: The manager prefers verbal media.

Proposition 6: The manager gives mail cursory treatment.

Proposition 7: Telephone and unscheduled meetings are mainly used for brief contacts between persons that know each other.

Proposition 8: The scheduled meetings consume more time of the manager than any other medium.

Proposition 9: Tours can give valuable information but the manager spends little time on them.

Proposition 12: The manager spends relatively little of his time with superiors (board of directors).

Proposition 10, which states that external contacts generally consume one-third to one-half of the manager's contact time, can also be supported in the new study, although only 27 per cent of the contact time consisted of external contacts. However, in the larger study (32 weeks) this figure was 41 per cent, well in the range of the proposition (Tengblad, 2002, p. 553). Proposition 11, which states that subordinates generally consume one-third to one-half of the manager's contact time, received less

support since at least 69 per cent of meeting time was devoted to subordinates. But in the larger study this figure was 54 per cent, almost in the range of the proposition (ibid).

Only two of Mintzberg's propositions definitely do not receive support in the new study: Proposition 2, which states that managerial work is fragmented and that interruptions are commonplace; and Proposition 3, which states that the manager actually appears to prefer brevity and interruptions. No indications were given that the CEOs preferred interruptions, which in fact were rather seldom. The CEOs used their secretaries to answer their telephones, and the CEOs returned their calls, if necessary, when they had free time. The secretaries thus acted as buffers so that the CEOs could concentrate on their work, in particular on scheduled meetings without being interrupted. (Mintzberg's final proposition (Proposition 13: 'The manager can exert control by extracting information, exercising leadership and in many other ways') is vague in its character, and therefore not suited for the task of analysing the changeability of managerial work.)

The relatively high number of propositions that are validated in the new study indicates that a radically different kind of managerial work has not emerged, at least not among the CEOs investigated.

On the other hand, strong claims about stability and timelessness in managerial behaviour, i.e. 'managers work today as they always have' (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 161), are not supported in this investigation. There are some obvious differences between the two studies, as noted below:

- Substantial increase
 - Total work load
 - Time spent on transportation
 - Meetings with many participants
 - Meetings with subordinates
 - Giving of information
- Substantial decrease
 - Desk work
 - Meetings with clients, suppliers and associates
 - Work concerning requests and solicitations
 - Fragmentation (of time)

The differences noted between the two studies are more profound than merely consisting of cosmetic changes in managerial behaviour or the outcome of not so radical reforms for curing bureaucratic dysfunctions, as Hales (2002) has characterized the relatively small impact new forms of organizing have had on middle managers' behaviour in a couple of field-studies. New management philosophies such as transformational leadership, organization culture and customer satisfaction are more profound than only cosmetic fads, a condition that critical commentators have also acknowledged (du Gay and Salaman, 1992; Willmott, 1993).

The differences between the two studies – using Selznick's (1957) terminology – can be interpreted as indicating a relative shift in behaviour from *administrative management* to

institutional leadership. In the new study, the CEOs' larger preoccupations with ceremonies and the less time spent at their own offices also support this shift. The CEOs saw themselves, as indicated in the description of the strong reception in Sweden of the managerial discourse about leadership and corporate culture, as leaders who should inspire and communicate goals and visions, and build culture. An illustration of this self-perception was the way one of the CEOs defined his role at the feedback session (8 October 1999): 'My most important task is to tell the history of the company'. This history was about a major crisis that occurred some 30 years ago and about the changes an externally recruited CEO initiated, as well as the reasons for these changes. This kind of storytelling which took place on many occasions, was coded in the material for replicating purpose as 'giving of information'. However, this is not mainly about transmitting information: it is instead about transferring meaning for the purpose of infusing and building organizational culture, regardless of whether the listeners are influenced or not. In a way this episode illustrates the philosophical difference between administrative management and institutional leadership. It is difficult to imagine a CEO who sees him/herself as a rational and busy administrator, concerned with decision-making, devoting much time to storytelling of events which took place several decades ago. From a management scientist perspective, such behaviour appears odd and unprofessional.

However, the relative shift from managerial practices related to administrative management and institutional leadership should not be interpreted as a general or revolutionary occurrence. There is a need to enclose and clarify this claim so that it will not contribute to simplified and misleading conclusions.

First, the reception of the ideology of 'institutional leadership' does not produce a very different kind of behaviour compared with Mintzberg's study, but the relative importance of various kinds of activities is different in the two settings. To exemplify, ceremonies, classified by Mintzberg under the heading 'secondary' activities, are probably considered more important for the CEOs in the new study. Their relative aversion to desk-work is also possible to explain by the reception of the post-bureaucratic discourse. But the preference for personal meetings and the quest for maintaining control and good company performance are unchanged.

Second, the new way of acting is not necessarily more effective, ethical or humane. It may be the case that all the efforts to communicate values, norms in speeches and ceremonies, for example, produce only meagre or undesirable results, as in Kunda's (1992) study of culture management.

Third, the relative shift towards a larger degree of 'institutional leadership' in managerial work at the CEO level does not have to imply that managers at lower levels can and will shape new role behaviours. The hierarchy is not removed and a successful institutional leader will probably need many administratively oriented managers at lower levels in order realize company objectives.

Fourth, the change towards top managerial work, based on the ideology of 'institutional leadership', might not be significant in countries where the reception of post-bureaucratic thinking has not been so enthusiastically received as in Sweden.

Fifth, even though a post-bureaucratic discourse seems to have had an impact on managerial practices at the top level, it is by no means certain that this effect represents

a cumulative and irrevocable development from a rational to a normative control as Bendix (1956) suggested. One alternative is that the development is more a kind of pendulum swing (Barley and Kunda, 1992). It can thus be the case that inherent weaknesses and contradictions of post-bureaucratic control ideology eventually lead to a renaissance of managerial work practices based on a rationalistic discourse.

Finally, the degree to which the CEOs' work behaviour resembled institutional leadership varied considerably among the participants. While three of the CEOs could be said to act largely as institutional leaders, one of the participants (CEO 1, newspaper company) acted definitely more as an administrative manager. This CEO worked mainly at his own office, and dealt with practical administrative and financial issues with his subordinate managers. This way of working is not surprising as he worked under different conditions than the other participants. According to Swedish law, it is the editor-in-chief who leads the work of making the newspaper and is responsible for the content. There were no expectations that the CEO should be visionary or charismatic; he was only expected to take care of the operational, administrative and financial part of the company. The editor-in-chief was also the one with the most suitable background (journalism) for acting as a leader for the newspaper, as compared to the CEO who was an externally recruited manager with an educational background in business administration.

The Influence of Structural Factors in Managerial Work

Hales (2002) criticized the literature about post-bureaucratic organizing for underestimating the fact that managers are reluctant to abandon traditional supervision in favour of control based on trust and dialogue. This reluctance is, according to Hales, due to the fact that individual managers are held responsible for what subordinates are doing and that they therefore want to reduce uncertainty by exercising close control (*ibid*, p. 63). This in turn makes it less likely that radical post-bureaucratic form of organizing will be popular. It can also be added that organizational size influences the likelihood that post-bureaucratic managerial work practices emerge. Obviously, it is easier to implement post-bureaucratic practices in a small consultancy firm than in a global manufacturer.

Structural factors can also be used for explaining some of the differences. The relatively high number of meetings with subordinates, and accordingly the relatively low number of meetings with those outside the company, can be related to the increased use of decentralized organizational structures with relatively independent subsidiaries scattered over large, geographical areas. The company of CEO 2, for instance, had some 500 branch offices in 15 countries, while the company of CEO 4 had about 70 subsidiaries in 25 countries. Moreover, CEO 4 headed a company divided into several business areas, which had grown by acquisitions. As a result, the company owned many different brands and subsidiaries, which generally served a national or a regional market. Meetings with customers, suppliers, representatives for local officials, etc, were therefore almost an exclusive responsibility of the business area managers, their management teams and the local sale representatives. As a result, CEO 4 did not have the intention, or the capacity, to act in the same way as the executive type in Mintzberg's study, who

was compared to 'the neck of an hourglass, standing between his own organization and a network of outside contacts' (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 52).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The comparison shows that managerial work is not as stable as described in Mintzberg (1973) but neither as changeable as the proponents of post-bureaucracy claim. While the majority of Mintzberg's propositions are still valid, the new study shows a managerial work at the top that is less fragmented (with regard to time) and less oriented towards administrative efficiency. On the whole there are several indications that the introduction of topics such as transformational leadership, corporate culture and 'de-bureaucratization' have affected managerial practices at the CEO level.

Although the sample is restricted to a few business leaders from Sweden, it is possible to make some important theoretical generalizations. In this final section three related topics are discussed. First, it is claimed that managerial work practices are gradually developed over time rather than radically transformed; second, that managerial work is a much more complex and paradoxical phenomenon than usually acknowledged; and third, that there is a need to create stronger links between theory development and empirical investigation.

1. Radical Transformation versus Sedimentation of Practices

The theoretical development in management and organization theory, as Barley and Kunda (2001) note, often takes the shape of 'conceptual inversion', i.e. theoretical models that are formulated in opposition to traditional models of organizing. To exemplify, theorists of post-bureaucracy have formulated ideas about networks as opposed to hierarchies, 'boundaryless career' as opposed to the traditional career-ladder, and fluid organic structures as opposed to bureaucratic structures (Heckscher, 1994; Kanter, 1989; Morgan, 1993; Zuboff, 1988). Implicit in the conceptual inversion way of theorizing is an assumption that the reality is changing character as one qualitatively different state replaces another. In contrast to such assumptions, this study clearly shows that new work practices are gaining ground without replacing old work practices. The personal meeting continues to be the pivotal medium of managerial work, while administrative routines of the CEOs', like attesting payments, are still carried out, although in a lesser degree. In short, new work practices are developed together with old ones like new foods added to a smorgasbord. New dishes may replace some old, less popular dishes – smoked salmon may become more popular than roast beef – but nevertheless the smorgasbord remains a smorgasbord. Instead of claiming that there is no 'roast beef' any longer (for instance, some old, administrative routine deemed no longer needed), one needs to view managerial work as a centuries old way of consuming food with some characteristics that are more or less timeless (such as the face-to-face meetings), but that the actual composition of dishes and what is actually eaten may change over time and vary between places and jobholders. Thus it is important to stress both continuity and change in managerial work and to focus on the actual composition of work practices performed by various managers.

2. Theoretical Consistency versus the Complexity and Paradoxicality of Work Practices

Theories within management and organization theory are often characterized by an internal logic and consistency. Thus the theorists assume that the reality is ordered according to some rational logic, some irresistible environmental force or a structural condition that every actor has to comply with. However, both human and organizational actors do not act in ways that are predetermined by external forces and therefore the researcher should be able to take variation into account (Barley and Kunda, 2001, pp. 78–9).

Managerial work is a complex phenomenon and the large variations in work behaviour revealed in this study indicate that there is often no clear link between environmental pressures and managerial behaviour. This is also a point of difference between this study and *The Nature of Managerial Work*, where it is claimed that the managers were directed by their environment in stimulus-response exchanges:

All managers appear to be puppets. Some decide who will pull the string and how, and they then take advantage of each move that they are forced to make. (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 51)

The claim here is not that the executive is the opposite, the supreme commander who determines the fate of his/her organization. The reality is much more complicated than these two theoretically purified and simplified assumptions. Kotter (1982) shows that executives often are good at seizing opportunities to implement their agendas, even in unplanned situations (see also Stewart (1982) for a discussion of the importance of choice in managerial behaviour).

Actual variation in managerial behaviour was in this study often unexpected. From a theoretical perspective, it appeared much more logical that CEO 1 should be an institutional leader, and the CEO 2 an administrative manager, rather than the opposite as was actually the case. CEO 1 led a company with many similarities to a 'new economy company' since the company dealt with information and image production, and had an informal corporate culture with many independent knowledge workers, a good gender balance, and relatively loose employment relations with an increasing number of contract workers and freelancers. The financial company of CEO 2, on the other hand, was located in a very respectable 'bank palace', all managers wore ties and dark suits, except for a few conservatively dressed women, and the company had a strong and traditional internal labour market. In order to understand why CEO 1 and CEO 2 were employed in these companies, one needs to investigate the cases themselves, and not the general environment and the structural properties of the companies. CEOs can thus be hired for transforming traditional financial companies just as CEOs can be hired in order to impose financial control in new economy companies, regardless of whether this represents any 'cultural fit' from a theoretical perspective. As opposed to the inclination towards creating theoretical consistency, particularly the preference for finding such consistency in environmental factors, it is here argued that the organizational structures are often paradoxical in their characters, and

that this 'paradoxicality' can be seen as an unavoidable fact of life (cf. Czarniawska, 1997).

3. Base Theoretical Development on Systematic Fieldwork

This article can be viewed as an effort to link the managerial work tradition with general management theory, as advocated by Jönsson (1998). This is an important mission if Barley and Kunda (2001) are right when they claim that the linkage between theory development and empirical backing have been weakened in recent decades in management and organization studies. There are two major indications that this claim is valid with relation to this article. One is the expansion of literature in various topics related to post-bureaucracy, which often lack support from empirical research. The second example is the minimal effect of the extensive research about managerial work on the general theory development in management and organization theory (*The Nature of Managerial Work* is in this regard an important exception).

Also required, as Hales (1999b, p. 347) points out, is the development of research tools which can describe the material, cognitive and moral foundation of management. To succeed with this mission, empirical research about managerial work will be invaluable. But the traditional aversion to combining behavioural observations with theories based on political and moral theory should be abandoned. Management is a political phenomenon, which defines the authority and responsibilities of organizations, managers and employees (Waring, 1991). Detailed observational studies of managerial work that use open coding techniques and that thereafter make theoretically informed interpretations on the basis of interesting research questions are highly recommended. Gender issues, decision-making, and leadership are only three research areas that can benefit greatly from structured observation studies of managerial work. That the managerial work tradition has not contributed greatly to our overall theoretical understanding of management is partly due to its 'pure' scientific approach. But why shouldn't the results from systematic empirical research about managerial behaviour constitute one of the main pillars in our scientific understanding of management?

NOTES

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- [1] The Swedish respondents scored 31 on power distance (US 40), 29 on uncertainty avoidance (US 46), 71 on individualism (US 91) and 5 on masculinity (US 62) (Hofstede, 1984).
- [2] The participants were asked to keep notes when they worked at home, during weekends and when no observer was present.
- [3] If non-observed activities are excluded, the proportion of deskwork will decrease as will telephone calls, work away from the organization and the activity of receiving information, while the share of ceremonies, giving information and meetings will increase somewhat.

APPENDIX: INDIVIDUAL VALUES

<i>Table I. Total working time</i>	<i>CEO 1</i>	<i>CEO 2</i>	<i>CEO 3</i>	<i>CEO 4</i>
1. Meetings	71%	59%	61%	63%
2. Tours	1%	0%	4%	0%
3. Telephone calls	8%	2%	3%	16%
<i>1-3. Total verbal</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>62%</i>	<i>68%</i>	<i>79%</i>
4. Desk work	13%	23%	11%	4%
5. Transportation	7%	16%	21%	17%
Total working time per participant, hours	61.5	68.3	81.3	77.5

<i>Table II. Location of verbal contact</i>	<i>CEO 1</i>	<i>CEO 2</i>	<i>CEO 3</i>	<i>CEO 4</i>
1. Manager's office	49%	20%	17%	11%
2. Office of subordinate	3%	0%	5%	6%
3. Hall or plant	3%	6%	7%	0%
4. Conference or board room	34%	45%	16%	31%
5. Away from organization	12%	29%	55%	52%
Total time in verbal contacts, hours/week	49.4	42.1	55.5	61

<i>Table III. Size of meetings measured in hours per participant</i>	<i>CEO 1</i>	<i>CEO 2</i>	<i>CEO 3</i>	<i>CEO 4</i>
1. CEO and one person	30%	18%	16%	19%
2. CEO and two persons	15%	6%	5%	8%
3. CEO and three persons	25%	7%	9%	4%
4. CEO and four persons or more	31%	70%	70%	71%
Total number of meetings per participant	71	46	76	80

<i>Table IV. Participants at meetings/tours</i>	<i>CEO 1</i>	<i>CEO 2</i>	<i>CEO 3</i>	<i>CEO 4</i>
1. Director (superiors)	3%	12%	0%	0%
2. Peer, co-director	1%	15%	20%	0%
3. Client, supplier, associate	9%	8%	9%	3%
4. Independent and others	8%	11%	21%	2%
5. Subordinates	78%	53%	51%	95%
Total time in meetings/tours in hours	44.6	40.5	52.8	48.6

<i>Table V. Purpose of contacts</i>	<i>CEO 1</i>	<i>CEO 2</i>	<i>CEO 3</i>	<i>CEO 4</i>
1. Organizational work	0%	0%	0%	0%
2. Scheduling	1%	1%	2%	2%
3. Ceremony	15%	17%	8%	23%
4. External board work	0%	7%	8%	0%
<i>1-4. Total secondary</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>5-7. Total requests and solicitations</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>5%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>9%</i>
8. Observational tours	2%	0%	5%	0%
9. Receiving information	18%	21%	17%	30%
10. Giving information	16%	23%	22%	17%
11. Review	25%	17%	15%	15%

8–11. Total informational	60%	61%	59%	62%
12. Strategy	8%	10%	7%	3%
13. Negotiation	5%	0%	7%	2%
12–13. Total decision-making	13%	10%	14%	5%
Total time (hours) in verbal contacts per participant	49.4	42.1	55.5	61

Table VI. Number and duration of activities	CEO 1	CEO 2	CEO 3	CEO 4
Desk work, number of sessions	26	39	32	13
Number of calls	26	10	33	59
Number of meetings	68	46	66	80
Number of tours	3	0	10	0
Transportation	4	14	15	11
Number of activities per participant	127	109	156	163
Activities shorter than 9 minutes of total time	4%	5%	7%	7%
Activities between 9 and 60 minutes of total time	43%	33%	31%	51%
Activities longer than 60 minutes of total time	53%	62%	62%	42%
Average duration of an activity, minutes	29	38	31	29

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