

The Dérive

Managing - and Leading - to explore Ill-structured ambiguous problems

This document provides details about the Dérive which is the final assignment in the Leadership Course. It includes information on Processes, Problems, Practicalities. This assignment may be like no other you have done ever done. It is an exercise in co-ordinated teamwork *and also* individual leadership skills and practices. Evidence of completion of this assignment is provided via a team report and presentation on the results of completing the Dérive.

About a Dérive

A dérive is a special type of walking. In a dérive you 'drift' together through a particular terrain to "notice" your surroundings in the widest possible terms. You *experience* the area as it happens. There are links in MyCourses to the philosopher Debord's definition of the dérive. There you will also find more detail how completing this task is important for your emerging capacity as a leader.

Your team will be allocated an area of Mikkeli. You are expected to spend up to 2 hours walking around this area, which you **must** do as a team. No individual will be able to complete this assessment task unless you complete the walk at the same time as your team colleagues. So the team needs to take care when **fixing the time of the walk that everyone can attend**.

- **The team is responsible for** agreeing the time and start point etc.
- **Individual team members are responsible** for being at the start point on time and completing the whole walk. (NB - in 2018 one enterprising team solved an attendance problem caused by health issues by taking their colleague on the walk via 'facetime' - after obtaining permission to do so.)

For this assignment it is the team's observations, and your experience as a group, that is valuable and required. Non attendance, non-completion or incomplete contributions to any part of this assignment will incur a fail mark for this assignment.

Your team presentation will be

- a) based on what you notice and experience - individually and collectively - during your dérive
- b) and then how you apply these observations in completing your report and presentation. All your evidence must come from what have you have directly experienced while on the dérive.

Use of Google or other online research will be penalised.

Team Performance

The team must also review its own performance. This will include reflection on how you worked together, and an assessment of the quality of your team-based management of the project, in relation to four management tasks namely – planning, leading, organising and controlling. There is a rubric on MyCourses that provides a guideline for thinking about how to contribute to your team's success.

Assignment Aims and Skills Development

The Dérive helps develop intuitive skills of noticing, imagination and persuasion. Of particular importance is the quality of the imagination you employ, and the persuasiveness of your story. This task provides opportunities for helping each other expand your capabilities in using these skills.

In case you are wondering how this fits with learning about leadership, look closely at:

- the ways in which you contribute your effort and ideas to team activities
- how you help the team explore new and imaginative ways to think about your surroundings
- provide support to your peers as they contribute to the team's work
- How you help the team to manages the process of completing the Dérive

Much management and leadership activity involves decision making and execution, while operating in situations where there is no clear or certain information about the problem/s to be solved. Everything available may be ambiguous and unclear. The Dérive thus involves a task for which there is no *right* answer, however, like many real-world leadership and management situations there are many possible alternative solutions that might work. Your task is to find an imaginative and engaging solution to this 'ambiguous problem'. To achieve this you must avoid the mistake of using clichéd or banal solutions.

Four leadership qualities are being exercised as you conduct the process of completing this dérive
You are - in effect - exercising your skill of *noticing* - paying close attention to the physical world – using all your senses to their fullest. In particular you are learning about (and how to)

1. Address uncertainty and chance in an unfamiliar, ambiguous setting
2. Manage by Wandering Around (MBWA) – a technique that places managers in the physical heart of an enterprise to learn from and respond to people at the 'front line'
 1. https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_72.htm
 2. <http://fortune.com/2012/08/23/management-by-walking-around-6-tips-to-make-it-work/>
 3. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/one-thing-all-great-leaders-do-goya-neville-gaunt/>
3. Develop conversational skills – the skills of contributing to purposeful conversation when outcomes are contested or unclear, and are occurring outside the structure of conventional meetings.

Being honest and direct in your communication is vital at such times - and requires practice. There is no loss of marks for errors, but there is for *not* trying. Keep a note of all your efforts, and record them in your individual report - as well as in the group report.

Two Key Dimensions of Leadership

There are many dimensions to leadership. Here we are concerned with two - rational and intuitive awareness. Both are important. Effective and efficient leaders rely on both, and are especially alert to deciding which has priority at any particular time. They are aware of being engaged in a balancing act and that factors involved can change at any time. Thus it is not an 'either/or' choice but one of 'which suits now, and why?'

Rational Domain

Theories that emphasise the **rational** domain of management regularly focus on one or more of four major tasks - usually collected together as

- Planning
- Organising
- Leading
- Controlling

Intuitive Domain

Most theories about rational management activity, assert that at some point all four must be engaged for any project to be successful.

Theories emphasising the intuitive domain nominate six key qualities (or capabilities) for success -

- Self-awareness
- Noticing
- Imaginative capacity
- Critical thinking
- Reflective observation and analysis
- Persuasiveness

This assignment involves improving your ability to access the rational capacities *while also* developing your more intuitive capabilities of noticing, imaginative and persuasive capabilities in particular.

In this assignment, you will engage in a type of teamwork different to your experiences elsewhere in this Leadership course. It will be carried out in an ever-changing physical environment (outdoors and not

around a table), with scope for quite different viewpoints and arguments. This is not about finding a single 'best' solution to a specific learning task within known boundaries for decision making, it is about creating inventive and engaging solutions that suit your direct experiences.

You will apply project management principles (so those who have done the Project Management module will be able to help others) as you enact your rational management capacities. You will also improve your persuasive presentation skills - both in your team and as you present to the whole class.

A useful 'by-product' of this activity is that you will be acquiring a basic understanding of how to explore and understand the geography, social context and economy of any context where you decide to visit or work. Mikkeli is the context in which you will be learning to consider how to apply your observations and analytical skills to all/any other places where you live and work.

These rational and intuitive dimensions combine for exploration purposes in this exercise, and are fundamental to the whole course (and realistically apply to your whole degree) so they must all be addressed by all teams. Being creative in how you do this, will be a mark of your understanding of the concepts and ideas being assessed in this task.

The Task

The Question about Mikkeli – the focus of Your Dérive

Mikkeli is a small city in a remote area of Finland. You have chosen to come here for many, varied and personal career reasons. But what do you really know about Mikkeli?

Has it played a major part in world affairs? When you look around now, it appears to be a modern Finnish city with fast rail connections to Helsinki, and beyond that to the world, but with no special claim to a place in Finnish or world History.

What is its early history? How far back might you be able to explore as you wander around your area?

What might be learned from such things as city planning and layout, major buildings; specific locations; materials used in different settings, etc? What might they tell you about Finnish society more generally.

Every town and city has its own layers and complexities. The question your team needs to address is this - ***What can we find, imagine, suggest and notice about Mikkeli?***

This is an open ended task for which there is no right answer. However there are certainly responses that can produce a poor answer. There is advice, in MyCourses, about how to avoid these traps.

Two components of the group assignment

1 Presentation

(the last part- also known as "the end in mind") each team will have **up to 10 minutes to report your Dérive experience - in any manner that includes both oral and visual elements with these elements -**

- A. Your team's unique insights into the question - you need to tell a persuasive, imaginative and original story outlining the theme you developed about your area
- B. Your team's reflection on its development as a working group – a critical review of how well your team managed the key activities of planning, organising, leading and controlling this project and a critical assessment of your team process.

NB - Any visual aspects of your presentation are to be submitted to MyCourses by 5pm on the day before your presentation. Requirements for your visual presentation are in MyCourses. If relevant, you can include notes about your visual presentation at that time.

- C. There will be a 5 minute Q&A session

2 Planning and Implementation

(the first part - also known as good preparation) relates to all the work you do together before you begin your Dérive. This involves planning, organising, leading and controlling - as well as considering how you will collectively apply all your intuitive skills. This needs to begin well before the day you go walking - or you may be unable to do the walk or presentation effectively.

The central core of this work

You will be using this group experience - during which you will explore together the physical environment that is a part of Mikkeli on a particular day - as your source of information and insight. There is **no** one right answer to the question, nor correct way to do the task. You are definitely not looking for your answers by developing notes based on Google or other online searches. You are not being tested on your conventional academic research skills. You are being tested on your ability to deal with an unfamiliar and open-ended, ambiguous problem, using only evidence available in the real physical world. You then apply your imagination to develop an exhibit (presentation and notes) recording and reporting the results of your ability to combine your collective critical and innovative skills. You will need to manage your time and resources carefully to do this successfully.

One important addendum - there is no point in trying to be 'creative' by being cynical or dismissive of Mikkeli as a physical location - that is by doing anything would cause others to 'laugh at' Mikkeli or its inhabitants (including ourselves). You are working on developing your capacity to be aware of your surroundings - this requires giving careful attention to detail and competing a thoughtful analysis of what you find. Insight and deep thinking about a few things are valued in this task. This will require far more than just collecting data (accumulating facts and figures) and reporting it.

Having read this far, consider the following comment -

The meaning of the derive was a bit unclear, and therefore people did not feel very motivated to do it, especially when it had to be conducted outside the class hours and lots of people are extremely busy with their thesis and felt like it took some of that time off of them.

This is a comment from a previous student. There is no way to ask this writer: what did you did not understand about the task? What else did you need know to get maximum value from the experience?

It is included here to remind you to **ask** about anything you do not understand about the task. Its full meaning really does only emerge as you complete the work - which is a deliberately created parallel to how life and work operates. Conversely it is deliberately different from more conventional tertiary study assessment tasks. The more clearly you focus on being immersed in the task and look for what it can help you learn, the more likely you are to grow your own rational and intuitive capabilities as a leader. Moreover, you will be much less likely to be left wondering what it was all about.

Effective and successful teams will notice/uncover/invent/ some sort of interesting pattern/s, and be able to persuade others of its feasibility and potential, in short they will build a theme around which to base their persuasive presentation. They will then focus on the detail by using their experiences to reinforce the story. The focus for your presentation is the evidence from your Dérive.

What is expected of your team as you undertake your Dérive?

Being a management student - focusing here on leadership - is much like being both a 'forensic detective' and a 'reporter'. You are observing, gathering information, (about past and present) and then making future observations. Teams are expected to look for physical, natural and human-created evidence that might explain a story you develop about the area you walk. This is a 3-dimensional and temporal world so observe everyday life and record common, significant and/or unusual events. Find and record examples of successful management and/or leadership practice. Engage with people and businesses in ways you feel comfortable with. Look for anomalies and exceptions.

Your aim is NOT to use the Dérive to get from A to B by the fastest route. It is quite different. It is to go as slowly as possible from A in the direction of B, looking for every opportunity to collect data for your answers or at least find clues to help address whatever questions emerge. There are numerous clues available as you walk. You do not need to do too much advance preparation about the walk itself, although you will need to prepare your team processes. Take notes, take photographs (remember warnings concerning security and any Finnish laws on photography), have conversations within the group and (if you feel comfortable) with people you meet.

Practical Tips

Preparation

You have nearly 2 weeks to prepare for this assignment. You will be provided with the following handouts:

- The assignment note
- Map with your assigned zone
- Planning form
- Guidelines on team process that you should use to record your team reflection
- Timetable - briefing
- Timetable for the assignment – your activities

Take the time to check out these documents early enough to be able to help your team prepare effectively for the Derive experience.

Mikkeli is an unusually (in the 21st century) peaceful city spread over quite a large landscape. It is important to use your common sense wisely in your travels around Mikkeli. Read the appendix to check out the current list of practical tips and hints.

Criteria for assessment

This is an exercise in noticing, imagination, storytelling and persuasion. Groups which take risks in their presentation will not be penalised. Imaginative enterprising presentations that don't quite work, are preferred to routine high-school type presentations that succeed but aim low.

The Presentation

All parts of the presentation will be assessed for quality, insight, originality, relevance and impact on the audience. The presentation should cover two issues

1. your answer to the question on the area of Mikkeli you were assigned
2. your team reflection on team process

You have 10 minutes for your presentation. You will then have a 5 minute Q&A session.

You should use no more than 10-15 slides of which two for team reflection will be based on the template uploaded to MyCourses.

Remember - You are aiming to make the maximum impact on other teams!

Marking criteria will consider such things as -

- Quality of the presentation
- Team management - as reported in your notes and as exhibited in action on the day
- Adhering to the maximum number of slides; creative use of visuals
- Timekeeping
- Storytelling in a very compressed time
- Presence of all team members
- Coherence of your responses to the task
- Extent to which the group has "noticed" what might not be observed in everyday walking in the city
- Original and exciting core idea/s clearly sparked by the group's actual experiences in their zone?

- Demonstrated ability to develop a distinctive and compelling narrative about the experiences using visual, spoken and/or performed approaches [originality is rewarded]
- Minimal use of resources which could have been found without going on the walk
- Quality of team's reflections
- Evidence that the team as a whole contributed to the ideas presented (e.g. mind maps of idea generation; reports of idea evolution, minutes of meetings; other notes tracking development of ideas)
- Team reflection on both
 - team process (how members interacted) and
 - project management (how the project was managed)
- Level of use of work planning form. How well was the project controlled?

For Team Reflection on process - team working (for the presentation)

- How useful/effective were your initial planning efforts?
- Did they change as you evolved your original idea/s into action?
- Did you stick to these plans or make changes? If so why did you change?
- If you did not change what went well what went badly as you put them into action? Y
- Be honest and realistic. It is fatal to pretend that everything went smoothly - this would indicate a failure have any Insight into the actual working of the team process.
- The key question to answer is "what are the lessons we have learnt for the future?"
- It is very easy to be superficial - avoid this trap at all costs. Effective and memorable reports quote specific incidents and moments to illustrate and support statements on team working. Effective and efficient teams are always well resources in this section.

A rubric, based on these items will be provided in advance and multiple copies will be provided for completion by everyone present during the presentations

Appendix 1

Processes, Problems, Practicalities - Tips

You will be allocated an area of Mikkeli, which will be marked on a map. If you start from a location outside your area, use the walk towards the area as part of your *dérive*, but don't waste too much time getting there. The ideal is to spend time in your area. It is up to the team how you decide to explore it. These are some general suggestions to consider as you plan -

- A. If you see something interesting just outside your zone, feel free to examine that also. Do not feel you are a "prisoner of the map".
- B. The area has quite a variety of environments, try to discover this diversity, rather than sticking to a very small area or one main road route which only has one story to tell
- C. There may be interesting locations right at the edge of the zone, especially where there are features such as a river or lake; don't feel you have stay in the centre of the zone
- D. Useful practice involves leaving any 'main route' where you can. Much of 'interesting Mikkeli' is a bit hidden. Do what is uncommon in everyday travel - look up and look down. Like all human areas of habitation, Mikkeli is a very three dimensional city.
- E. It is not essential to walk the whole time. It is may be useful to stop during the walk or at the end (including refreshment), so you can discuss things and reflect in a relaxed way.
- F. Anything can be a stimulus, even totally everyday objects. *Expect the unexpected*. You may find deeper meaning in utility covers, roads signs, building shapes, etc. It is possible to get insights from animals, graffiti, even litter. Seek out what is NOT obvious to residents, workers or visiting tourists.
- G. You are not only looking at the physical environment, but of course the humans in it as well. Please treat humans with humanity and politeness, especially when it comes to photography and in dealing with them through questions or conversation. Do not assume that everyone has to help you.
- H. If you get a job in audit, consultancy, line management etc, you will want to find out things for yourself and you will want to find out things that others are trying to keep from you. These others want to keep you on the main road. This is a time (and an opportunity) to help you explore the side roads and bypasses and hidden extras.

Problems to avoid -

- A. If one person in the group claims to know the area, do not as a result automatically follow their advice or recommendations. They actually have only a partial knowledge and, as in business, this very familiarity can become a barrier to learning and deep insight rather than an accelerator.
- B. Do not let any one person try to impose their strong views on the group. This is often a barrier to team success. This task is about team insight, and any member of the group may have a good idea.
- C. Because of our habit of taking photos and viewing them in sequence, it is easy to fall into the trap of developing a LINEAR understanding. As you are walking, try to develop one or more "THEMES" which tell some bigger story into which you can then later fit some of your experiences/photos.
 - A. Creating insight in an ill-structured problem is about creating patterns. As you get into the second half of the walk, make sure you allocate some time not only for collecting data, but also for beginning to develop your story.
- D. You are learning about all aspects of leadership and management, not just answering the core question. Document even small examples, for example ethical or behavioural dilemmas you face.
- E. One of the very worst errors to make is to divide people up for any significant period of time. Feel free to do it for 3 or 4 minutes in specific places for very specific reasons. But any more splitting than this may have a negative impact on the activity, as it is specifically a whole group work exercise, and the discussion and even argument is an important part of the work.
- F. If conflict does emerge in the group - document it. Managing conflict is an inevitable (and frequent) task for managers and leaders. You can learn how to do it - here and now! This can be a long term positive learning experience, and you/the team will not be deducted marks for revealing and discussing conflict. In fact there is a likelihood that groups that are able to document a full range of experiences will score higher.
- G. Don't try to over plan your walk. Be guided by your eyes and instincts as much as the map.
- H. It is essential that all team members participate in the whole of the walk.
- I. Abandon your instinct to look things up by searching the web.

- J. Ineffective low-scoring teams fall into the trap of thinking of themselves as tourists, passively accepting what is easy to see. Excellent teams are curious, troubled, worry about something just not quite right, anxious to find out more and get if not to a truth, at least to some deeper insight.
- K. The walk is the research phase of the activity, and good management needs good planning. So you will be spending about an hour in class preparing for the walk, and you will need as a group to complete a planning document - also in class.
- L. The walk will occur outside class hours - which is why it is vital that you plan it so that everyone is available. If a team member advises the team of an excused absence on the day planned for the walk, then that person forfeits the mark - or the team re-allocates a new time.
- M. Don't skimp on time. Much of the planning that a team will do relates to time management (for all aspects of the tasks involved)
 - A. Take time to divide the work into high-medium-low priority, divide up the work among the team, make contingency plans for risks and how to co-ordinate your team physically and virtually.

Practical Notes - Security and Safety; Ethics

This is a real project in the real world in a well managed location. Please comply immediately with all instructions from receptionists, security guards etc. It is essential that you take care to look out for your own/team safety in all respects, as well as not getting into trouble due to using risky or illegal methods. Read the law on photography and remember that nothing in this piece of work is of greater value than your personal well-being in all respects. We also expect the very highest ethical standards e.g. avoid covert photography and videos.

Take what is necessary for your comfort on the walk

Mikkeli can be cold, so it is essential to assume the worst and use footwear and clothing suitable for walking in cold/ wet conditions.

Make sure you have all necessary tools and materials for taking notes, photographs etc.

Allow time for a coffee together, or take water or hot drinks and snacks.

Information about your rights in regard to taking photos in Finland are available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Country_specific_consent_requirements

An introduction to the theory of the is available at <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/314>