

## Abstract

Title: Ambitions to change and the workings of artifacts. Boundary work and stabilising practices on the production floor  
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This thesis focuses on how a powerful discourse of globalisation and economic competition, requiring “competent” and “flexible” workers, is made concrete on the production floor.

More specifically, the thesis is about tools created by management with the aim of bringing about change and about the workings of these tools on the production floor. One conclusion from the study is a contradictory situation with heavy tension between management demands for central control, e.g. by means of quality assurance systems and *simultaneously*, management demands on the individual's ability to take initiatives and find creative solutions when handling different situations that come up during the working day.

The tools are e.g. changed work organisation, formal meetings, administrative procedures related to production planning systems and a competence ladder. Of particular interest are the special positions among the workers with responsibility for production planning parallel with their normal work on the production floor, and their encounters with management and white-collar workers. The analysis focuses on the anticipated normal flow of events, on dilemmas and disturbances that appear in relation to this, and on how the dilemmas and disturbances are handled. Activity theory has been a theoretical inspiration.

In their use on the production floor and during production planning meetings, the tools presuppose an infrastructure related to mass production and a division of labour between the planning of work and its execution. This creates dilemmas and disturbances in relation to new demands from customers.

What goes on on the production floor is not a reflection of management's intentions, but is something that is shaped as well as re-shaped in and through activity systems of which production workers are part. On the production floor, the tools are transformed to fit the problems the production workers have to deal with in *their* work. However, the removal of the positions of planner and foreman creates disturbances on the production floor, the situation is contradictory in that work actions that cannot easily be combined. The work actions have their origins in different activity systems with different objects, tools and rules. A short morning meeting is a possible new tool for handling the situation. Additionally, a potentially new object can be envisioned, related to “delivery in time”. In particular, this concerns those who have assumed the new positions with a special responsibility for production planning. Here, there is also an obvious ‘fragility’ (“skörhet”) that requires trust. This trust is not given.