



Leading knowledge-workers through situated ambiguity

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Ambiguity
Autonomy
Followers
Leaders
Sensemaking
Tensions

ABSTRACT

The paper explores how formal leaders make sense of and deal with autonomy of knowledge-workers. Based on interviews, I suggest that leaders make sense of knowledge-workers' autonomy as ranging from *perfectly autonomous to too autonomous to less independent to acting childish*. This ambiguity was dealt with by making sense of leading as ranging from *facilitative and supportive approaches to more controlling, even reprimanding acts*. This empirical investigation of constructions of 'leader/ship' and 'followers' contributes to leader/ship-follower/ship literature. The paper's contribution to theory lies in the notion of *situated ambiguity*; a way to understand the emerging way through which formal leaders navigate and smoothly move between their own differing perspectives, different practical situations, various culturally acceptable understandings of leaders and knowledge-workers.

1. Introduction

This paper explores how formal (positionally appointed) leaders make sense of and deal with autonomy of knowledge-workers (highly educated and/or experienced individuals such as professionals, creative people, etc.) Autonomy is generally understood as the quality or state of being self-governing and having the ability and freedom to make their own, independent decisions. Autonomy plays a defining role in leadership literature on, e.g., professionals, knowledge-workers, and creative people, highlighting that these employees are highly educated experts who are capable of and motivated for self-government and independent decision-making. That is, they wish for and need autonomy in/over work tasks (Alvesson, Blom, & Sveningsson, 2017; Blom & Alvesson, 2014; Denis, Langley, & Cazale, 1996; Døving, Elstad, & Storvik, 2016; Florida, 2012; Mintzberg, 1993; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002). While autonomy has been described as one of the main motivations for highly educated individuals (Foley, 2010), the need for autonomy has also resulted in leadership tensions. For example, in terms of ability to control means and ends. As such, various leadership studies within different literature streams highlight how people in formal leader positions often have difficulties leading employees who are defined by their autonomy. Tensions arise when formal leaders must reduce the use of formal authority and control, in order to accommodate for the autonomy of employees, which comes at the expense of formal leaders' own autonomy to govern and make decisions. The sociology of profession literature has, for example, emphasized that use of formal authority and power may lead to a lack of leader legitimacy and that leading should rather be thought of as support in the

organization of work (e.g., Empson, Muzio, Broschak, & Hinings, 2015; Mintzberg, 1998). Similarly, literature on leading for creativeness and innovation underscores the importance of facilitating motivation and creativity by allowing for autonomy (e.g., Florida, 2012; Hein, 2013; Mumford et al., 2002). Facilitative, supportive, non-micro-managing approaches are also highlighted as helpful in literature on knowledge-intensive firms (e.g., Blom & Alvesson, 2014). However, it has also been claimed that no-one is autonomous all the time and that knowledge-workers sometimes demand leadership (Alvesson et al., 2017; Blom & Alvesson, 2014).

Situational leadership theories would explain this mechanism as a combination of traits and styles – connecting these attributes to the “knowledge/ability and commitment/confidence – conceptualized as maturity – of subordinates” (Alvesson et al., 2017, p. 33). That is; contingent on the perceived maturity of followers ranging from dependent, immature to mature, different types of leadership such as telling/directing, selling/motivating, participating/supporting and delegating may be applied (Yukl, 2011). One problem with these theories is the idea that formal leaders are thought to be able to assess the ability and confidence of employees. This idea depicts leaders in an always superior position. Another is the application of these theories in knowledge-intensive, professional organizations, where employees – because of their knowledge and expertise – may be considered mature. In that case, leadership should always be delegative. But in practice, this reality is not always the case.

Parallel to this, literature on leader/ship-follower/ship has theorized autonomy-leadership tensions by problematizing the terms 'leaders' and 'followers' (Bligh, 2011; Collinson, 2005, 2014; Ford &

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scajman.2019.101060>

Received 17 January 2019; Received in revised form 2 July 2019; Accepted 8 July 2019

Available online 22 July 2019

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Harding, 2018; Tourish, 2008, 2014). This literature emphasizes that these terms are inconsistent with postindustrial understandings of leadership, because they depict followers as powerless and inferior subjects and portray leaders as powerful (Alvesson & Blom, 2015; Collinson, 2005, 2014; Rost, 2008), leader/ship-follower/ship scholars encourage research that challenges the common assumptions and expectations embedded in these terms (Alvesson et al., 2017; Bligh, 2011; Collinson, 2014; Tourish, 2008). The focus should be on “the process by which ‘followership’ is socially constructed”, and the factors that “cause it to be constructed in different ways”, and on how “both leaders and followers contribute to romanticizing the importance of leaders and downplaying the role of followers” (Bligh, 2011, p. 433), because this will assist understanding of how people in formal leader and follower positions manage dynamic leader-follower processes.

With this background, the present paper aims to enlighten the constructions of leader/ship-follower/ship by looking into knowledge-intensive contexts where constructions of ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ and their relationships have been highlighted as tension-filled because autonomy and power are at stake.

While it has long been recognized in implicit leadership and followership theories that leaders and followers construct each other based on their implicit assumptions and expectations (Grint, 2005; Harding, 2015; Schyns & Meindl, 2005; Sy, 2010), it has recently been stressed that there is a need to know what people think about the follower (Harding, 2015), and that very little research has paid attention to leaders’ perceptions of and responses to follower-orientations, even if it is important for leadership practice and theory to understand how leaders view and respond to employees (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, & Huang, 2017). Inspired by this concept and located within the calls for more research that address the tensions between formal leaders and followers, simultaneously considering these terms, the present study explores leaders’ perceptions of knowledge-workers (as possibly autonomous ‘followers’ in need of less leadership/doing leadership themselves/perhaps in special situations wanting or demanding leadership (Alvesson et al., 2017; Blom & Alvesson, 2014)). In doing so, it asks: *How do formal leaders make sense of and deal with employee autonomy?*

A communicative lens is particularly suited for studying power-based processes, tensions and ambiguities that characterize leader-follower relations (Collinson, 2014; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Tourish, 2008). The present study, therefore, applies sense-making as an inductive, analytical approach to study the nuances and ambiguities in formal leaders’ perceptions and interpretations of employee autonomy as communicatively expressed. This way, the paper opens up the possibility to explore how autonomy is conceptualized in different situations, which is important because it may help understand how formal leaders legitimize leader/ship in contexts where these phenomena are contested.

In order to pay special attention to ambiguities – multiple possible interpretations and vagueness in precise meaning (Gioia, Nag, & Corley, 2012; Jarzabkowski, Sillince, & Shaw, 2010; Weick, 1995) – the paper finds inspiration in ambiguity-literature (e.g., Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski et al., 2010). This literature highlights how ambiguity has been conceptualized as 1) something to be dealt with in terms of eliminating it, 2) something to be used creatively – e.g., deliberately enacting it in planning and dealing with institutional complexity, and 3) as produced in discrepancies between leaders’ talk and actions.

By taking this approach, this paper shows how formal leaders made sense of employee autonomy and leading in ambiguous ways. For example, one and the same employee could be perceived as perfectly autonomous in one situation, but also as childish in another. Ascribing different, situated meanings to the same terms by using them differently in contradictory examples, formal leaders constructed, but also re-defined and even resisted general categorizations and understandings of knowledge-workers as autonomous. This mechanism has also been

described in linguistic research (Hastrup, 2005, citing Saussure’s work in *Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916), and it is interesting here, because it shows how formal leaders created situated opportunities to construct knowledge-workers more in line with traditional understandings of followers and themselves more in line with powerful superiors. The paper has, thereby, contributed an empirical investigation of constructions of leader/ship-follower/ship as well as autonomy-leadership tensions in knowledge-intensive organizations.

The contribution of this paper to theory lies in the notion of *situated ambiguity*; a way to understand the emerging way through which formal leaders navigate and smoothly move between their own differing perspectives, different practical situations, various culturally acceptable understandings of how formal leaders and knowledge-workers ‘should’ behave in different situations, and how they ‘should’ behave in leader-follower relationships. By constantly creating ambiguity around employee autonomy, formal leaders constructed and placed knowledge-workers into categories that legitimized different ways of leading. By doing so, formal leaders formed a way to secure their own autonomy. Free to make sense and free to use it, formal leaders could respond to ‘autonomous’ knowledge-workers with support and retracted control, while knowledge-workers not behaving up to formal leaders’ ideals of autonomy might be labeled ‘too autonomous’, ‘not independent enough’ or even ‘childish’ – and, thus, in need of leadership (which often, in these situations, connoted control). While formal leaders, thus, created ambiguity as a resource for strengthening and legitimizing their own autonomy, they simultaneously limited the possibilities of knowledge-workers to interpret and enact their autonomy.

Situated ambiguity is, thus, meant to highlight the variations in how ambiguity emerges and is used, and to emphasize the ease with which formal leaders shift between situations and socially constructed and acceptable norms and values, while also using, shaping, and re-creating these phenomena if they were experienced as threats to leaders’ image of their own necessity and autonomy.

Having introduced the background for the present study, I turn to provide an overview of the literature that focuses on ambiguity in leadership. The overview clarifies how leaders may deal with autonomy. It is structured into three sections: Eliminating ambiguity, producing ambiguity, and emerging ambiguity. After this literature review, I discuss the research design and present the empirics, the analysis and the discussion.

2. Ambiguity

Ambiguity literature offers some interesting and helpful ideas on how ambiguity may be approached in terms of the autonomy-leadership tensions – i.e., how formal leaders may understand, create, deal with, and manage ambiguities.

2.1. Eliminating ambiguity

Traditionally, ambiguity has been described as a characteristic of organizational life, and March, Christensen, and Olsen (1976)) have shown how people try to either eliminate or ignore it. Weick (1995) has also studied ambiguity – called equivocality – and argued that it triggers sensemaking, which works as a reduction or makes ambiguity manageable. Other authors have emphasized how it has been the purpose of leadership to *deal with ambiguity* (Bennis, 2009; Gioia et al., 2012; Pondy, Boland, & Thomas, 1988; Yang, 2016). For example, Denis et al. (1996) takes this perspective on ambiguity in their analysis of leadership and strategic change in a large public hospital. Here, ambiguity is described as a condition for change, but also as an element that leaders should limit and control by working in closely-knit teams with clear role specializations, differentiations, and complementarities. It may, thus, be expected that formal leaders seek to eliminate or limit ambiguity. Partly in line with this view, but also challenging it, Bennis (2009) argues that leaders need to create visions and trust (which may

indicate clear and unambiguous goals), however, leadership must not be too focused on creating harmony and agreement (which may indicate the need for some ambiguity – and, thus, flexibility – in how visions and goals are interpreted). The last thought is also the main idea in studies emphasizing how ambiguity may be used strategically.

2.2. Producing ambiguity

Recent studies on ambiguity advocate that *ambiguity can be used as a deliberate strategy* in organizational planning (Abdallah & Langley, 2014; Denis et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Yang, 2016). As such, Gioia et al. (2012) discuss how an ambiguous organizational vision may enable various, co-existing interpretations because it “enables a sense of alignment” by “allowing employees to apply their own interpretations — to change their perceptions, conceptions, and actions in a fashion that they can view as being broadly consistent with the larger vision” (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 365). In this way, ambiguity becomes a resource for managers in the facilitation of change. Similarly, Jarzabkowski et al. (2010) show how ambiguity may be used as a rhetorical resource for enabling multiple interests. The authors advocate that rhetoric provides a means of managing ambiguous, contested interpretations as well as function as a device for creating strategic ambiguity to manage collective action. Davenport and Leitch (2005) have also explored the use of ambiguity in strategic planning, arguing that “strategic ambiguity can empower stakeholders by opening spaces for the co-creation of meaning within organizational discourse”. Similarly, Abdallah and Langley (2014) found that ambiguity, at least to some degree, “plays an enabling role as participants engage in enacting their respective interpretations of strategy” (Abdallah & Langley, 2014, p. 235). Building on these and other studies on ambiguity, Yang (2016) suggests ‘ambiguity logic’ as a framework for conceptualizing how organizational members may deal with institutional complexity and achieve their purposes through ambiguity. This point indicates that strategic use of ambiguity works well “to initiate organizational changes or to manage knowledge-workers in order to avoid strong resistance” (Yang, 2016, pp. 517-518).

Following from this, I expect that formal leaders engage in some form for strategic use of ambiguity around autonomy and leading.

2.3. Emerging ambiguity

While the studies above mainly discuss the organizational situation as ambiguous and hence see ambiguity as something to be dealt with or something to be used strategically, ambiguity has also been studied as emerging through *discrepancies between leaders’ talk and actions*. As such, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003, p. 965) argue, that “[l]eadership does not deal with ambiguity as much as it is an example of it or even produces it”. While this may be one of the ways in which to produce strategic ambiguity (as discussed above), discrepancies between talk about and practice of leadership have led to the suggestion that leadership is fragmented, incoherent, and ambiguous (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2016; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). In line with this point, I expect ambiguities to arise around autonomy and leading as a product of discrepancies between formal leaders’ general talk about employee autonomy and leading versus their examples and sensemaking of the actions taken. I, therefore, pay special attention to differences and contradictions – because of how they are constructed and dealt with is the revolving theme of the present study.

Following from the three ambiguity-perspectives above, it is likely that all three understandings of ambiguity may be present in formal leaders’ sensemaking – even if this may sometimes be contradictory. In order to analyze and discuss this idea further, I outline the research design and method in the next section; then, I turn to the analysis of formal leaders’ sensemaking.

3. Research design and method

Focusing on autonomy and leadership as socially constructed and complex phenomena, I position the study in line with constructionist, communicative approaches to leader/ship-follower/ship studies (e.g., Bligh, 2011; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Meindl, 1995). Investigating the “constructions of social and organizational realities in a particular context and time and/or how we humanly shape, maintain, and interpret social realities through language, symbols, and texts (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 10), I wish to address three common charges often imposed on qualitative leadership studies focusing on the perceptions of ‘one side of the leadership relationship only’. Focusing on the level of meaning and understanding, it is useful and relevant to look at people’ constructions, perceptions, and sensemaking (Cunliffe, 2011). By doing so, knowledge will always be contextualized, situated, and dependent on the researcher’s interpretations and generalizability, not the point of research. However, studying the particulars from an inductive perspective can serve to illustrate larger issues and concepts (Rynes & Bartunek, 2016; Shkedi, 2004) by offering contextualized understandings (Cunliffe, 2011). Secondly, while focused on leaders’ perceptions and how they deal with perceptions of knowledge-workers’ autonomy, constructionist approaches highlight how social realities are constructed as people interact, reflect upon, and contextualize relationships. This builds on the understanding that “we are always selves-in-relation-to-others” (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 11). Accordingly, studying ‘one side of the leadership equation’ will always, though implicitly, imply the other. Thirdly, because objective truth and generalizability are not the goals of qualitative studies, and while a small sample of interviewees is normally considered a limitation, a smaller number of research participants may be enough to suggest ideas for further investigation. Following these clarifications, I outline the research contexts, selection of participants, and analytical strategies.

3.1. Research contexts and participants

I conducted interviews with formal leaders from two small (under 100 employees) and three large (more than 100 employees) public and private organizations. The leaders (one man and four women) referred to themselves as top-leaders/directors of organizations within health-care, research, and IT-services. I chose these organizational contexts based on the expectation that they would be likely sites for the autonomy-leadership tension to prevail, i.e., as contexts where “most qualified individuals probably want discretion and leeway to do the job as they see fit... [and] do not want much interference or too many constraints on what they are doing” (Alvesson & Blom, 2015, p. 274). The rationale for choosing to interview formal leaders from these contexts was that “it allows a combination of depth, richness and variation” (Blom & Alvesson, 2014, p. 347). While depth, richness, and variation are the goals, I wish to note that this study is part of a larger research project on leadership, autonomy, and legitimacy in knowledge-intensive organizations, where I studied relevant documents, observed meetings, and carried out informal talks with employees. As such, the ideas discussed with formal leaders in the present study have also been observed in interviews with other formal leaders in the larger research project.

3.2. Interview process

The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 50–70 min each and took place at the leaders’ offices. I also conducted a follow-up interview with one of the leaders some months later. I contacted the leaders as a researcher and framed the interviews as being about leadership in knowledge-intensive organizations. During the interviews, I asked open questions about 1) their experiences being leaders in knowledge-intensive organizations. I did not use the terms ‘autonomy’

or 'follower' (or equivalents). I also employed the critical incident technique (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005) of asking interviewees to recall a specific, recent experience relating to instances where 2) they believed they provided good leadership, and 3) they felt challenged and how they handled this experience. I did not ask specific questions about the autonomy-leadership tension, but applied the logic of discovery (Locke, 2011), as I wanted to see if and how this was brought up by leaders themselves, and wanted leaders to use their own words in describing and elaborating on these issues – a strategy also recommended by Silverman (2013) and employed in other leadership studies (e.g., Blom & Alvesson, 2014).

Asking questions about leading, I took for granted that the people I interviewed could relate to the concept, but I also assumed different viewpoints. Further, I anticipated that the formal leaders would struggle to deal with autonomy-leadership tensions. Finally, I expected that differing ideas and struggles would be expressed during the interview. As the leaders constructed ideas of autonomy and leading with me – an active participant in the creation of research narratives (Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2004) – I learned about their thinking and how that applied to what they did. Following that logic, I expected leaders' perspectives, ideas, descriptions, etc. to be products and further developments of social processes – influenced not only by the social, inter-subjective understanding created during the interview, but also reflecting on experiences of 'leader'-'follower' relationships as well as broader societal and ideological expectations (Cunliffe, 2011). All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.3. Analytical approach

Analyzing the interviews and being interested in leaders' perceptions – understandings and meanings – I found inspiration in sensemaking theory. Originally developed to understand how organizing takes place in crisis situations (Weick, 1988), sensemaking has also generated research within the broader context of organizational and management studies (Brown, Colville, & Pye, 2015; Colville, Brown, & Pye, 2012; Cornelissen, 2012; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), often studying how people in formal leader positions notice variances, label, categorize and turn circumstances into plausible situations that are "comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). While this interpretive process is seen as a retrospective, cognitive information-processing activity meant to organize flux (turn ambiguity into clarity), other researchers have theorized sensemaking as a temporal, embodied and embedded "interpretive process in which we judge our experience, actions and sense of identity in relationship to specific and generalized others" (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012, p. 66). This idea highlights sensemaking as a responsive struggle for meaning, suggesting that what is plausible for one group (e.g., leaders) may not be plausible for another group (e.g., autonomous individuals). This idea is particularly relevant to the present study because it allows for ambiguous ideas to arise and be constructed as autonomy-leadership tensions that are worked out in practice and plausibility contested in conversations between formal leaders and knowledge-workers.

Sensemaking studies of formal leaders (or people in leading positions) have demonstrated the fruitfulness of taking discursive or metaphorical approaches, focusing on the micro-processes of sensemaking in interviews, naturally occurring conversations, vignettes/stories told by leaders, and public discussions (e.g. Cornelissen, 2012; Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Earley, Applegate, & Tarule, 2013; Patriotta & Brown, 2011; Whittle, Housley, Gilchrist, Mueller, & Lenney, 2015; Whittle & Mueller, 2012). When analyzing the interviews, I, therefore, paid special attention to the metaphors and categories or 'labels' that leaders applied when making sense around knowledge-workers' autonomy and how to deal with these.

I read the interview transcripts several times, focusing on the sensemaking from leaders regarding knowledge-workers' autonomy. When

I asked about experiences being leaders in knowledge-intensive organizations (question one) leaders generated sensemaking in which autonomy was labelled much in line with current organizational research; i.e., knowledge-workers were portrayed as self-governing, autonomously working individuals and the sense that followed was that autonomous individuals should be dealt with in a facilitative, supportive manner. For example, leaders constructed autonomy with labels such as *self-directed*, *independently working*, *clever experts*, and leading with labels such as *relational leadership* and *facilitation*.

However, when asking for specific examples as in questions two and three, leaders recalled incidents that challenged the 'normal'; common and socially accepted understandings of autonomy and leading in knowledge-intensive contexts. Leaders, thus, labeled autonomy in terms of three additional patterns: 1) 'too' autonomous, *unrealistic kings, queens, Gods, primadonnas*, and as 2) *less independently working, but clever employees who should be part of developing the organization*, and sometimes even as 3) *boys and girls, children and kindergarten toddlers*. With these labels, they highlighted different interpretations and understandings of autonomy. Similarly, and related to these labels and metaphors, leaders made sense of leading – ways to deal with employee autonomy – in term two overall patterns: 1) *being visionary, setting goals, guiding work, and installing rules* or 2) *reality-orienting employees, reprimanding or educating them*.

The sensemaking patterns, thus, emerged based on leaders' use of similar metaphors and labels. As formal leaders made sense of various situated experiences and ideas with me as a researcher, (Cunliffe et al., 2004) interpreting knowledge-workers' actions and their relationships with these individuals then and now (i.e., as selves-in-relation-to-others, Cunliffe, 2011) the differing, contradicting sensemaking patterns may be understood as struggles to create and present plausible, legitimate meanings – because what was plausible for the leaders (one group) might not be plausible for knowledge-workers (another group) or for me as a researcher.

The analysis is organized according to formal leaders' metaphors and labels used to help comprehend and describe autonomy.

4. Four ways of making sense of employee autonomy

4.1. Making sense of employees as autonomous experts

When telling about their perspectives on leading in knowledge-intensive organizations more generally (question one), leaders labelled employees as 'knowledge-workers' and 'experts'. Thereby, they made sense of employees as highly regarded, knowledgeable professionals, who were able to work autonomously within the organizational expectations.

For example, Anna, the director of a small research organization, highlights that leading in a knowledge-intensive organization is special and interesting, because the employees are "*those, who know about their field, they know the work, they can, they know things about the development within the field and what areas we need to strengthen in the future. So, it is about listening and make, and it is very important to get the competence into processes. So, it is, well, I can facilitate the processes... but it isn't me who knows about the field*".

Another example of this type of sensemaking comes from Nico. Nico is a leader for a medium size IT-organization: "*The middle managers have to be much more knowledgeable in their areas than me. I... let people, who are more competent than me, be in front and do what they love. I know all the fields of expertise, I can discuss, but I often don't have the answer*".

Nico then continues with an example of a very talented employee, who is partly responsible for having developed the organization into the success it is today.

Similarly, Veronica, director for a large public healthcare organization makes the sense that knowledge-workers are "*one of the most important personnel groups in a hospital or healthcare company [and that they are] likely to have significantly higher competencies than those who are*

set to lead them, right... So, in that way, you encounter 'bumps' all the time if you're trying to know more than them. So, you must keep a close and good relationship with the workers you depend on".

These examples are close to descriptions of knowledge-workers as autonomous individuals in literature; experienced, comfortable, able, willing, mature, and motivated to do the job and take responsibility for it (e.g. Alvesson & Blom, 2015; Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Oldham & Hackman, 2010; Yukl, 2011). This sensemaking construct knowledge-workers as less follower-like (Alvesson & Blom, 2015; Alvesson et al., 2017; Collinson, 2005; Rost, 2008), and hence, according to leader/ship-follower/ship literature and situational leadership theories less in need or want for leadership. Acknowledging employees as knowledgeable, proactive, self-aware and knowing subjects (Collinson, 2005), on which leaders are dependent (Collinson, 2014; Denis et al., 1996), leaders confirmed the sense that knowledge-workers should be allowed space because leaders "know less of what goes on than those large groups of employees holding esoteric expertise" (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, p. 965). In line with this thought, leaders emphasized their own positions of authority as retracted, explaining that they dealt with autonomous individuals by leading in a *listening, facilitative* manner – corresponding with descriptions in literature of how to lead self-motivated, self-governing employees (e.g. Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Greenleaf, 2002; Mintzberg, 1998).

This type of sensemaking was present across all interviews for the present study as well as in the larger research project. While this sensemaking developed in talk about leading in knowledge-intensive organizations, other metaphors and labels were used when providing examples of leading. Thus, ambiguity between talk and action emerged.

4.2. Making sense of employees as 'too autonomous'

The leaders expressed frustration when knowledge-workers acted in ways, which did not live up to common social and organizational work expectations. In such situations, leaders constructed employees as working 'too autonomously'. Examples of how this sensemaking took form follow:

Anna, director of a small research organization, says: "...they are *primadonnas*. They do exactly what they want; they leave when they want, they decide everything, they can be informal leaders, right, and just boycott everything the leader says, or every decision made... COMPLETELY their own life".

Anna also recalls an example of her previous work, holding a leading position in a healthcare organization: "Then, it was doctors who absolutely had to purchase surgical equipment for millions of [Norwegian] kroner without asking me... That's obvious, they are the kings... And he had just called and ordered... had a container sent up with surgical equipment worth MANY millions without asking me and so I had to take that fight."

Guro, the director of a healthcare organization, has a similar experience with a knowledge-worker in a middle-management position: "He had his ideas, and he is Superman, right, so when everything tears apart, he will come down from the mountaintop, where he has been hiking, and then he takes over... When he came back, I said to him [explains that there is a critical situation and that it should be handled with care, not 'Superman' power]. You must think about your behavior, you have the responsibility. There is a power in that. And you are misusing that power, when you behave like that [like Superman]."

These accounts are just a few examples of how leaders in the present study – but also in the larger research project – explained autonomy and their challenges with leading. Using metaphors and labels such as *primadonnas*, *kings*, and *Superman* – and in other interviews as *queens* and *Gods* – leaders drew attention to employees' enactment of autonomy as challenging to leaders' authority – *primadonnas* and *kings* are usually considered the top of the hierarchy, and in power, but so are formal leaders. Dealing with challenges and conflicts in terms of fights, reality orienting, even reprimanding approaches, highlights how leaders understand their positions and leadership as being about creating

order and stability, controlling goals and finances, guaranteeing collaboration and the upholding of general organizational norms. When leaders turned autonomy into a problem for the enactment of such norms and procedures as well as for leadership, they created ambiguity around the positive picture of autonomy created in the sensemaking pattern above. Making sense of knowledge-workers as too autonomous allowed leaders to act and actively use their formal power to *reality-orient* and sometimes *reprimand* the knowledge-workers. In this way, leaders became less dependent on the relationships with clever employees (Collinson, 2014; Denis et al., 1996). Even if such acts may be understood as resorting to formal authority to gain compliance and, hence, be seen as a leadership failure (Fairhurst, 2011), the image changes when action is taken to ensure compliance with work-procedures, organizational rules, common norms, economic priorities, etc. By installing these values in their organizations, formal leaders created a position for themselves where they could use their formal authority and power. With this power, they supported their own autonomy to govern and direct – something which was downplayed in the sensemaking pattern discussed above.

4.3. Making sense of employees as less independent individuals

Leaders also made sense of employees as clever individuals who needed to be involved in developing the organization – but only after leaders had decided on the goals.

For example, Nico and the leader team set the goals, then employees were involved in the rest: "if you let highly competent people... know the goal... and don't discuss the means in detail... then highly competent people will define the means to reach the goal".

Guro has a similar way of working: "When I have created an overview, then I can see that it will be smart to do this or that. And if they themselves find out that I, that it was a good idea, we haven't thought of that, then they change their practice without an order to change practice".

Veronica provides a similar example. Because the example is very detailed, I have summarized it using Veronica's own sentences: "Every year, we receive a document with tasks... And we are given a budget frame... Then, I present a suggestion for the prioritization of tasks... And then someone says that, no, we can't do that... Then we constitute a project group to investigate how this can be done... And then we pick people that I think have meanings, as leaders, and then they often come to a result close to what I wanted."

Similarly, Silje, the director of a healthcare organization reflects upon her leadership philosophy being about "involvement and letting the employees be part of deciding their day. I think it is very important to work bottom up; I think it is very important to get them with you. Like here, when we work with projects, okay, then they come [to me] and ask can we do a project on [x]?". In this example, Silje presented employees as capable, as someone responsive to motivation, but also as 'being let', 'being part of', and 'being allowed/permitted' to do a project.

In these representative examples, leaders make the sense that they decide on the goals and priorities, and that knowledge-workers are to be involved in and allowed to access the details after this point. The knowledge-workers were, thus, positioned as smart and clever, but also in need of guidance (but not direct orders). They could participate in the strategic work (but only once an overall direction for future work was in place) and involved in this (not initiators). This sensemaking places knowledge-workers in less autonomous, more traditional 'follower' positions (Rost, 2008), which contrasts the understandings of employees as too autonomous or perfectly autonomous, in that employees are regarded as less capable of and willing to self-govern and self-regulate, even if they may want to take the responsibility.

Leaders dealt with perceptions of employees as less autonomous, less powerful, and capable, by making sense of leading as a guiding, visionary activity, suggesting that leaders know more, and know better. This idea of leading is in line with the descriptions of leadership and leaders in literature as powerful influencers, who counteract free,

diverse thinking, valuing, and acting (Alvesson & Blom, 2015). It assisted leaders in legitimizing their positions as powerful by drawing on traditional ideas of leaders as great, inspiring individuals – encapsulated in Great Man theories on leadership (Grint, 2011).

4.4. Making sense of employees as children

Leaders also made sense of employees as rather immature, even childish by applying metaphors of knowledge-workers as ‘children’, ‘boys and girls’, ‘a kindergarten’, and ‘resources’.

Making sense of a complex work-conflict, which involved different understandings, standards, and juridical frameworks for how work should be completed, Silje, says that she called the involved parties into her office, heard their opposing stories and told them that they had to work together despite differing views: “[I] called them in and sorted it out... It is [laughs] almost kindergarten work”.

Another example of this type of sensemaking is Guro’s reflection on reprimanding an employee: “She could be a bitch, really yell at people, etc. And then in this meeting [mentions the details], she voiced a lot of discontents... And it was the first meeting I had with them, then I said, now you have to stop... Then everything went quiet... we ended the meeting. And then she stayed in the room, because she wanted to talk with me... And then I could go into; how do you think it impacts others when you act like you do? Then she changed... When you are grown up, then you are not used to it. You could take it when you were five years old and your mum... that your mum or your dad. But after turning 20, you are not receiving reprimands any longer... But when you act like that, a bitch, then someone has to tell you”.

Likewise, the other leaders of this study as well as in the larger research project have provided many examples that ended with conclusions like Veronica’s: “So I have managed to raise them into a team that is working more autonomously and making their own priorities.”

The last example represents sensemaking that followed from examples like Guro’s and Silje’s above and from examples of how leaders had implemented new collaborative structures that either structured previously unlimited and often misused, employee autonomy or got rid of micro-managing procedures that required formal leaders to take responsibility for work tasks. As such, the above examples contributed to make the sense that knowledge-workers sometimes mis-governed their autonomy – not in terms of using their expertise and knowledge to make work-related decisions – but in terms of behaving inappropriately in a team, in relation to leaders, in relation to organizational expectations, and in relation to general values associated with being highly educated.

This sensemaking contrasted the general, socially accepted definitions of knowledge-workers’ autonomy. It also contrasts all the other sensemaking patterns leaders created around the employees and their autonomy, in that the employees are presented as devoid of collaboration capabilities and abilities to self-govern, self-regulate and self-lead (Alvesson et al., 2017; Døving et al., 2016; Rost, 2008). As such, employees were constructed as immature (Yukl, 2011) followers “lacking responsible judgment” (Rost, 2008, p. 57), ultimately allowing “others to control their lives and activities” (Rost, 2008, p. 57).

When making sense of employees as followers, leaders turned challenging or frustrating situations into controllable affairs. Constructing employees like children, formal leaders came to sound like the grownups, the rational beings having an overview, being in control, being superior – in line with the common understandings and dichotomizing constructs of ‘leaders’ as powerful influencers and traditional understandings of ‘followers’ as less powerful and less autonomous individuals (Collinson, 2005, 2014; Rost, 2008; Yukl, 2011). Using labels such as boys, girls, and children, reprimanding and educating came to look like as the result of caring parenting; wanting to stay in control and simultaneously to bring up responsible individuals. It follows that it would not only be leaders’ right to educate employees; it would be irresponsible not to do so. In this way, leaders justified the use of power,

stemming from their positions of formal authority.

Having presented and discussed how leaders made sense of and constructed employee autonomy and leading in various ways, I argue that leaders – more or less intentionally – created ambiguity around autonomy and the understandings of leading. The section below analyses and discusses how ambiguity emerges and how it is used.

5. Analysis and discussion – ambiguous sensemaking around autonomy

As seen above, leaders challenged and ascribed new meanings to the idea of knowledge-workers’ ‘autonomy’ and to ‘leading’. This happened as they recalled different experiences and made situated sense of these – i.e., they changed their interpretations because they embedded them with practical experiences of leading (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). As such, and within the relatively short timeframe of an interview, the same leader made sense of autonomy and leading in different ways. Guro, for example, made sense of knowledge-workers as both ‘too autonomous’, ‘less independently working’ and ‘children’ and leading as ‘reality orienting’, ‘guiding’ and ‘educating’. Each sensemaking pattern therefore exemplifies how leaders not only made sense of knowledge-workers’ ‘autonomy’, but also how they dealt with different situations.

Each sensemaking pattern may, thus, be seen as an attempt to establish clarity and order in line with the ambiguity literature that focuses on managing and eliminating ambiguity (Bennis, 2009; Denis et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Pondy et al., 1988; Weick, 1995; Yang, 2016). However, ambiguity emerges (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2016; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003) because of the situated embeddedness and the complex, intertwined use of sensemaking patterns. This produces (Abdallah & Langley, 2014; Denis et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Yang, 2016) various possibilities for formal leaders to move smoothly between contextually different situations and what they constructed as culturally acceptable understandings of employee autonomy while upholding the image of their own necessity and autonomy.

Borrowing from linguistics (Hastrup, 2005, citing Saussure’s work in *Cours de linguistique générale*, 1916), this process can also be understood in terms of redefining the meanings of words (in the present study, autonomy) by placing them in a sentence and a context (i.e., in relation to each other), but also by choosing specific words (labels) above other possible words (i.e., in relation to the absent meanings). While one word may connote some core understandings and represent some ideal examples, it can be “extended to cover the ‘shades of gray’ found in the real world” (Buchowski, Kronenfeld, Peterman, & Thomas, 1994, p. 560). It follows, that autonomy may not only be defined by the absent meanings such as dependence, subjection, unfreedom but also found to include some of these concepts – even if they are contradictory. I show how ambiguity is accomplished by discussing the four understandings of autonomy as constructed in the sensemaking patterns – highlighting how autonomy is reconstructed and redefined according to the situation.

5.1. Producing ambiguity around autonomy and between sensemaking patterns

Looking at the first sensemaking pattern, employees are labelled as self-directed, independently working, clever experts. This is in line with autonomy definitions in contemporary leadership literature (Collinson, 2005). Correspondingly, and also in line with leadership literature on how to lead knowledge-workers (Avolio et al., 2009; Greenleaf, 2002; Gronn, 2002; Mintzberg, 1998; Mumford et al., 2002; Yukl, 2011), leaders constructed leading in supportive, facilitative, delegating terms. While this sensemaking around employee autonomy did not contribute to ambiguity in relation to the descriptions in literature and generally accepted understandings of employee autonomy, it came to serve as a ‘normal’ (Weick et al., 2005) or core understanding (Buchowski et al.,

1994) against which the other sensemaking patterns were contrasted.

Recalling specific experiences of leading, leaders challenged the 'normal' by also portraying employees as 'too autonomous', using labels such as kings, queens, Gods, primadonnas, etc. By making ironic the ways that knowledge-workers governed their responsibilities and met common social and organizational expectations, leaders challenged the idea that knowledge-workers are 'mature' (Yukl, 2011) and always deserve discretion, leeway, and control over their work (Alvesson & Blom, 2015; Alvesson et al., 2017; Døving et al., 2016; Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Leaders dealt with the 'too-autonomous' employees by installing rules, reality-orienting and sometimes even reprimanding or educating them (mixing the sensemaking patterns around leading). Hence, leaders generated ambiguity in relation to 'normal' acceptable expectations and descriptions from the literature of autonomous employees and leading in knowledge-intensive settings. In line with the idea from linguistics, autonomy came to include the shades of gray (too autonomous) found in the real world, and leaders used the ambiguity around autonomy-expectations as a resource for framing leading and leaders as necessary (Abdallah & Langley, 2014; Denis et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Yang, 2016).

Leaders sometimes made the sense that the followers were less independently working. In line with traditional understandings of followers as less powerful and less autonomous individuals (Rost, 2008) and in line with situational leadership theories describing employees as dependent (Yukl, 2011), leaders dealt with this by making sense of leading as a guiding, visionary activity, were leaders were in power to counteract free, diverse thinking, valuing and acting of employees (Alvesson & Blom, 2015). With this sensemaking, the concepts of autonomy and leading were given new meanings, and ambiguity emerged in relation to the 'normal' and employees as 'too autonomous'. Following, it is easy to understand why leadership has been described as fragmented (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2016; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). This sensemaking contributes to blurring ideas/include redefinitions of autonomy and leading in knowledge-intensive settings. With these different definitions, leaders created the opportunity to legitimize their own decisions, goals, strategies, and autonomy (Abdallah & Langley, 2014; Denis et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Yang, 2016).

The last sensemaking pattern labels knowledge-workers as children who need grown-ups (leaders) to resolve conflicts, reality-orient, reprimand, or educate them (mixing sensemaking patterns around leading). This sensemaking is in plain contrast to contemporary understandings of followers as knowledgeable, proactive individuals (Collinson, 2005) and the literature on how to lead autonomous individuals (e.g., Avolio et al., 2009; Greenleaf, 2002; Mintzberg, 1998; Mumford et al., 2002). As such, the sensemaking contributes to creating ambiguity around the meaning of autonomy – and even opposite understandings such as dependence, subjection, and unfreedom are made plausible descriptions of knowledge-workers (normally defined by their ability to self-govern, etc.). Again, leaders used the ambiguity around autonomy as a resource (Abdallah & Langley, 2014; Denis et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Yang, 2016) for constructing the necessity of leading – understood as the use of formal authority and controlling actions.

Following from the above discussion, ambiguity can be understood as emerging when leaders recalled different situations and temporally made sense of these as situated (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012) – changing their interpretations as they embedded them with relationships to employees so that they seemed plausible in their interviews with me as a researcher. Thus, the constant re-labelling and re-construction of employees and their autonomy may be understood as ongoing struggles and negotiations for plausible meaning.

One result of these ongoing struggles and negotiations for plausible meaning is that the knowledge-workers' autonomy is questioned. It creates the idea that knowledge-workers do not always deserve autonomy, power, freedom of choice, motivation and responsibility.

Thereby, leaders contributed to uphold the image of knowledge-workers as followers in the traditional understanding; less independently working (Jackson & Parry, 2008; Rost, 2008), which simultaneously portrayed leaders as great and necessary visionaries. However, the leader-follower dichotomy may well be created and upheld by leaders – but the meaning of these terms may be very different from the perspectives of employees.

Another result of the ambiguity between the sensemaking patterns is that ideas of leading become hard to grasp. This ambiguity may serve to counter or accommodate resistance against formal leaders and leading. Similar lines of thought are presented in studies on ambiguity as a resource (e.g. Abdallah & Langley, 2014; Gioia et al., 2012; Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Yang, 2016). Ambiguity around leadership and leading also makes it possible for leaders to talk about employee autonomy as well as deal with it in organizational contexts where leadership and leading are often described as less needed, wanted, or possible (Alvesson et al., 2017). Because the ambiguity produces the idea that leaders cannot always be expected to accommodate employee expectations of autonomy, it enables leaders to shift between facilitating, and supporting forms and position themselves as decision-makers in charge of visions, strategies, and goals. While these activities are often seen as contradictory, the ambiguity around their meanings and use seemingly allow for their co-existence.

Moving back and forth between temporally and situated (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012) sensemaking patterns, I argue that formal leaders seek to lead knowledge-workers through *situated ambiguity*. I will elaborate on this idea below.

5.2. Situated ambiguity

From the above discussions, ambiguity emerged 1) as discrepancies between talk and action (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003); formal leaders discussed the first interview question on leading in knowledge-intensive organizations in general terms, but when asked to provide examples as in question two and three, formal leaders told about experiences and made sense of these experiences in ways that contradicted the general talk about leading in knowledge-intensive organizations. Ambiguity also emerged 2) as formal leaders moved back and forth between the situated sensemaking patterns. While each sensemaking pattern may be seen as an attempt to establish clarity and order (Bennis, 2009; Denis et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2012; Pondy et al., 1988; Weick, 1995; Yang, 2016), the complex, intertwined use of these patterns created ambiguity around the meanings of autonomy, leading, and relationships between formal leaders and followers. Thus, ambiguity also relates 3) to time and place in more than one way – formal leaders recalled different, previous experiences, in which they made situated sense of them but re-interpreted that sense in the (present) interview situation, where their examples were given new connections and analyzed considering their current knowledge. Further, because formal leaders had to present plausible, legitimate meanings, they had to consider not only themselves but also the knowledge-workers and me as a researcher. It follows that the ambiguity also arose as formal leaders struggled with presenting plausible and legitimate examples and interpretations of the experiences that considered themselves, the knowledge-workers, and me as a researcher (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). Subsequently, ambiguity emerged 4) on different levels of the strategic and practical enactment. By either limiting or creating ambiguity, and by relating ambiguity to organizational norms, values, and expectations, to (unwritten) processes and procedures, and the nature of authority, leaders moved between different practical situations and differing acceptable understandings to uphold the image of their own necessity and autonomy. I discuss these processes further below.

As leaders *created* ambiguity around the meaning of autonomy, this provided them enormous flexibility in how to deal with knowledge-workers and the tensions between autonomy and leadership. In creating ambiguity as discussed above, formal leaders moved smoothly between

different, plausible constructions of knowledge-workers as followers in the traditional understanding. This flexibility further legitimized the use of formal authority and power. Hence, it seems as if leaders always found a way to justify their own autonomy and authority, so that they became free to prioritize, make decisions, implement and install collaborative rules, organizational norms, etc.

However, the ambiguity created around autonomy was simultaneously used to *limit* the ambiguity of knowledge-workers' interpretations and enactments of autonomy. Only interpretations and behavior that formal leaders perceived to be the 'normal' understanding of autonomy; freedom to make own, independent decisions *within* the frames of the organization, were acceptable. In situations where knowledge-workers interpreted their autonomy differently, formal leaders created a repertoire of ways to make sense of the behavior as inappropriate, which ultimately provided formal leaders with the opportunity to use their own decision-making discretion and autonomy. For example, when leaders labeled knowledge-workers as 'kings', 'queens', 'prima-donnas', etc. they applied the understanding that knowledge-workers ought to discuss the spending of money, their leadership approaches, and their use of time, etc. with formal leaders. Thus, knowledge-workers were restricted in their ability to self-govern – even if this restriction also had implications for their professional work. When knowledge-workers did not check with formal leaders or behave according to organizational norms, formal leaders made the sense that knowledge-workers governed their autonomy in 'unrealistic, inappropriate' ways. Formal leaders then created their right to reality-orient knowledge-workers. This circumstance may be interpreted as an act of situationally *limiting* the ambiguity for knowledge-workers' interpretations of autonomy, by making explicit referrals to organizational rules, norms, values, formal (and less formalized) processes and procedures that knowledge-workers are expected to know of, comply with, and/or be capable of interpreting, being self-governing, autonomous knowledge-workers. The same process for limiting ambiguity characterizes situations where leaders labeled knowledge-workers as 'less autonomous' and as 'children'.

It follows from the above, I argue, that leaders created *situated ambiguity*. This ambiguity had huge implications for formal leaders' legitimacy in contexts where 'leaders' and leadership have been described as less necessary, wanted, or possible because of knowledge-workers' autonomy and ability to self-govern, and because of their status as experts rather than 'followers' in the traditional understanding. By creating situated ambiguity, formal leaders challenged the meanings of the concepts of 'leaders', 'followers', and 'autonomy', thus, becoming able to move smoothly between their own differing perspectives, different practical situations, and various culturally acceptable understandings of how leaders and knowledge-workers 'should' behave in different situations – more broadly related to tensions between the ideas of homogeneity (we are in this together) and realities of heterogeneity (we have different perspectives and goals). Simultaneously, leaders also legitimized the limitations of knowledge-workers' possibilities to enact autonomy.

While this ambiguity may serve the same purpose as 'organized hypocrisy' – saying one thing, but doing another, in order to maintain legitimacy during conflicting demands (Brunsson, 2002) – situated ambiguity presents itself as an emerging, more subtle, less planned, always situated legitimized and, therefore, perhaps, also more morally acceptable way of approaching tensions. Or as an approach which is harder to criticize.

The notion of situated ambiguity is meant to highlight the variations in how ambiguities emerge and are used, and to emphasize the ease with which leaders shift between situations and socially constructed and acceptable norms and values, while also using, shaping, and recreating these if they are experienced as threats to leaders' images of their own necessity and autonomy. As such, it may be considered an emerging way for leaders to navigate and legitimize their expectations, work practices, and various power-positions in different situations.

6. Conclusion

Having explored how formal leaders make sense of and deal with employee autonomy in knowledge-intensive organizations, I suggest that formal leaders made sense of autonomy so that knowledge-workers are perceived of in different ways ranging from *perfectly autonomous*, to *too autonomous*, to *less independent*, to *acting childish*. While these constructs were situated and embedded in specific contexts and time, as well as related to organizational norms, values, and expectations, to (un-written) processes and procedures, formal leaders applied them in an intertwined manner as they recalled different experiences with leading. Thus linked, formal leaders dealt with 'autonomous' knowledge-workers by constructing leading as ranging from *facilitative and supportive approaches to more controlling forms, even reprimanding acts*. These approaches were also related to and legitimized in differing leadership ideas, norms, values, and expectations. As such, this paper has contributed to an empirical understanding of leaders' perceptions of and responses to follower-orientations (Carsten et al., 2017; Harding, 2015).

While the perceptions of employees and related leadership acts immediately resemble those perceptions found in situational leadership theories (Yukl, 2011), the present study examined organizational contexts where employees, according to these theories, were expected to be 'mature' – i.e., knowledgeable, autonomous individuals – based on their expertise and experience. As such, the study contributes a theoretical nuance by showing how this idea was challenged and worked around in practice when leaders in ambiguous, situated ways constructed even 'mature', autonomous individuals as followers – in the traditional meaning of the term.

Making sense of 'autonomy' and 'leading' by linking them to various, often contradictory examples, leaders also challenged, redefined and created ambiguity around the meaning of these terms. This mechanism has also been described in linguistic research and based on the idea that words can come to include other meanings when used in different contexts, this paper has shown how leaders use this mechanism to redefine knowledge-workers from autonomous individuals to followers in the traditional understanding. The paper, thereby, contributes to an empirical investigation of the construction of followers and the romanticizing of leaders (Bligh, 2011), and in response to calls for leadership research that encourages the challenging of common assumptions and expectations around leader/follower/ship (Alvesson et al., 2017; Collinson, 2014; Tourish, 2008) shows how these common terms are constructed in different, situated ambiguous ways.

In order to understand these complex dynamics, the paper proposes the notion of *situated ambiguity*; to understand the emerging way through which formal leaders navigate and legitimize expectations, work practices, and various power-positions in different situations. With situated ambiguity, formal leaders create flexibility for themselves to make sense of situations as prompting the need for a leader, the need for leadership. Hereby, formal leaders legitimized their own necessity and autonomy. Simultaneously, and because of the situatedness, formal leaders also created flexibility to limit the ambiguity of knowledge-worker's interpretations and enactment of autonomy.

By showing that various ideas of what to do with ambiguity can be in play interchangeably, situated ambiguity adds a perspective to the literature on ambiguity. While ambiguity-studies tend to focus on one understanding of ambiguity (e.g., elimination or strategic use) and explore how this can be accomplished, the present study shows that ambiguity is simultaneously emerging, eliminated, and created.

A limitation of the present study is the rather small interview sample. An interesting position for further research would be to broaden the interview sample. Another additional approach would be to study the effect of formal leaders' ambiguity creating mechanisms over time, and a third additional question would include the perspectives of knowledge-workers.

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