Leading and organizing the future - Temporality and social practices within a military staff exercise

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the social practices a staff organization adopts to gain control of its past, present and future during a staff training exercise. It looks into the leadership and organizing practices the staff adopts in its daily work. The study looks at how organizing actualizes in time and how the formal structure and operating policies influence the future planning activities.

The research is based on the author's experiences from 2016 and 2017 when he participated in the CJSE international crisis management exercise in the role of an ethnographic researcher. An ethnographer follows the organization members in their daily tasks, aiming to gain understanding of how the staff organization works in practice and how the organization members make sense of their work.

The research shows how the leading/organizing practices are premised on both cyclical and linear temporalities. The organization applies cyclical entrainment practices to provide shared daily rhythms for the organization members, and linear sequential practices to coordinate workflows. Furthermore, the research shows how the disparity of formal documents representing past futures and current operational realities representing present futures can create networks of indecision in the organization hindering the planning effort.

In general, the staff organization is organized similarly to industrial organizations: the coordination of knowledge work follows the logic of traditional production planning. Yet, in certain situations these organizing principles may hinder the emergence of collective situation awareness.

Introduction

A central aspect of leadership work is the production of direction for an organization (Crevani, 2018, see also Grint, 2005, Drath et al., 2008). In general, talking about organizational direction draws on other concepts. Direction implies both a) teleology: purposes, strategies, desired outcomes and goals, and b) change: movement and time. Within the field of leadership research, this directing has historically been associated with the transformational leader (Díaz-Sáenz, 2011). Instead, newer post-heroic research has argued that both setting direction and other leadership work activities are shared, collective and processual activities (Wood, 2005; Fairhurst, 2009; Denis et al., 2010; Crevani, 2018) rather than the responsibility of a single charismatic leader or a hierarchical authority. Furthermore, it has been argued that leadership is not something mysterious, special or extra, but is embedded in the skilful organizing of the everyday activity, or as defined by (Ladkin, 2010: 28) as 'the collective mobilization towards an implicit or explicit purpose'.

In this study, I study how an impermanent organization strives to become organized and fill its purpose. The organization in question is a military staff organization ramped up for a crisis management exercise. The primary function of a military staff is to forecast and plan the progress of a military scenario. The staff is tasked to both scan the environment for threats and opportunities and create plans for military activities and operations. The staff organization supports and helps a military commander in leading an operation, in the execution of both reactionary and proactive maneuvers. My research delves into how the staff organization aims to take control of its future and how both prescribed organizational structures and procedures and human agency influence such processes. The empirical focus is on the temporal practices an organization adopts in trying to plan its current and future direction. I adopt a practice theory (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 2001) lens in deepening the understanding of the temporalities in the organizing/leading activity within the staff organization.

The study focuses on a) how organizing actualizes in a simulated training environment over the course of an exercise, b) what social practices an organization adopts to control its past, present, and future, and c) how do the formal structure and operating policies of a military organization influence the way organization members make sense of their future planning and coordination

tasks. These questions set the basis for my research process and provided the frame of reference for data collection during the field study.

The research observations and findings are based on an ethnographic field study where the author took part in an international crisis management training exercise called Combat Joint Staff Exercise (CJSE) during 2016 and 2017. The CJSE is an international, yearly organized event gathering over a thousand participants from dozens of countries across the globe. In the exercise participants hone their crisis management skills in a complex, simulated role play setting supported by a sophisticated computer support system. The simulated training environment provides a simplified, yet an accelerated case of how an international crisis management operation is led by a multinational team of military and civilian professionals.

This paper is organized in the following manner. As the CJSE provides a fascinating and unique research setting, it is first detailed to the reader. This descriptive section is followed by a more thorough presentation of the research interest and the focus of this paper. Next, the earlier literature on temporality and organizing is discussed and the theoretical views and concepts relevant to this study are presented and explained to the reader. This section is followed by a discussion of the ethnographic research method. Furthermore, the methodological considerations of studying in an exercise setting are discussed in detail. After these sections, the research findings are presented via three vignettes. Each descriptive vignette is further elaborated and analyzed via temporality and practice theory. The key findings are summarized in the conclusions section into observations on how leadership, organizing and temporality were connected during the staff exercise. The paper ends with a discussion section where the research conclusions are discussed in relation to the generic organizing principles of military staff organizations.

THE CJSE exercise

Combat Joint Staff Exercise (CJSE) is an international crisis response operation exercise that has been organized continuously for over a decade. Each year a multinational group of military and government officials (over 1200 participants from 24 different countries during 2017), partake in

the exercise hosted by the Swedish Armed Forces and the Swedish Defence University. The exercise participants are placed in the middle of a fictional crisis as members of a peace-keeping organization and they are required to identify, adopt and execute their role in the operation. They work as staff officers planning and supporting the operation as it proceeds in the fictive, roleplayed setting. This weeklong exercise offers its participants a complex, computer assisted simulation of a military-political crisis scenario where they apply and hone their operational planning and execution skills.

The scenarios played in the CJSE form a continuous storyline of a failed state and the United Nations (UN) sanctioned peacekeeping operation in the country. The fictive state in question, 'Bogaland', and its neighboring countries who are partly drawn to the conflict, are richly described in the game environment with multiple hostile and non-hostile stakeholders influencing the scenario. In addition, the decisions and the actions taken by the operation command (called BFOR) during previous exercise rounds are documented in detail and influence the situation faced by the current gamers. During 2017 the gaming events were placed circa 40 days after the beginning of the landing operation in Bogaland (in game terms: D+41-47). Earlier events of the operation have been played during the previous exercise rounds. The BFOR HQ simulates the leading of an army operation of circa 70 000 troops. According to the game narrative, the security situation in Bogaland is threatened by various armed factions. The formal Bogaland government and its troops cannot hold their ground against these insurgent groups. Furthermore, a powerful neighboring country (Neland) is showing strategic interest towards the Bogaland area and has become militarily active in the region. The gamers therefore face multiple, widely dispersed challenges in the operation, where they need to both enforce peace in Bogaland, deal with and disarm the various armed factions operating in the region and react to the increasing military threat presented by a powerful neighboring country. The fragmented, multidimensional challenges facing the operation require the different parts of the BFOR organization to conduct joint operations, whose many challenges require smooth cooperation between land, maritime, air, logistics, special forces and other components. Furthermore, the operation should apply a comprehensive approach to crisis management, where the problems and challenges are not solely seen from a military point of view, but also the various other stakeholders (e.g. political, humanitarian) are included in the decision-making action[1].

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[1] For a more thorough presentation of the comprehensive approach, its various definitions and applications, see Mustonen (2015).

The simulation includes participants in three generic roles. The game is run by an organization of game planners (JEC), who plan, construct and execute various game incidents in the game environment. Most of these are injected into the game via the computer environment, however, there are also incidents were live roleplaying scenes are conducted. The biggest group of participants are the actual trainees, i.e. those who assume a position in the one of the BFOR operation staff organizations and who 'roleplay' their tasks and responsibilities in the organization. The players typically have previous training in staff functions from their home countries and/or practical experience of working in real life peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, their previous experience and training (supplemented by this particular exercise) has focused on making them able organizers and leaders. The gamers' military ranks vary from captains to generals and they are positioned in the organization based on their previous experience and training via a manning process executed before the exercise. The participants are therefore experienced professionals accustomed to adopting formal leadership roles during their earlier careers and yet they have only limited experience of their particular task in this exercise setting.

In addition to these groups, a third major group of roles consists of mentors and assessors (OTTM, EXEVAL). Individuals in these roles observe and guide the players during the exercise, providing help to those in need. These individuals are typically retired military officers with a long personal history of staff work. They also return feedback to the game planning organization for example about whether the tempo and number of incidents is befitting the exercise learning targets.

The CJSE organization is depicted in the following pictures. In picture 1 the total exercise organization is depicted, with the BFOR organization drawn in blue, the game running JEC organization in red and the supporting/auditing organizations in green. In addition, the picture shows how the organizations are physically located on three different sites across Sweden. In picture 2 the Land Component (LCC) playing organization – the organization studied during the 2017 exercise– is depicted.
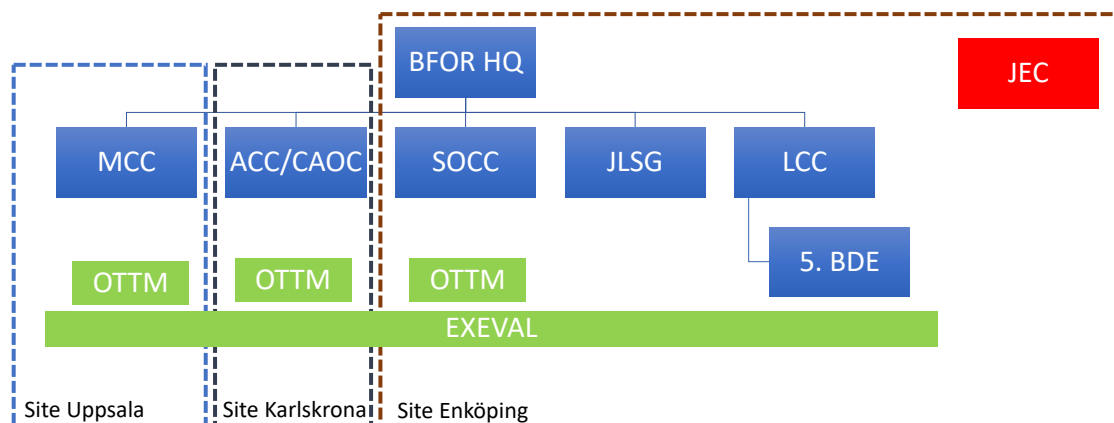
Picture 1: The CJSE organization 2017
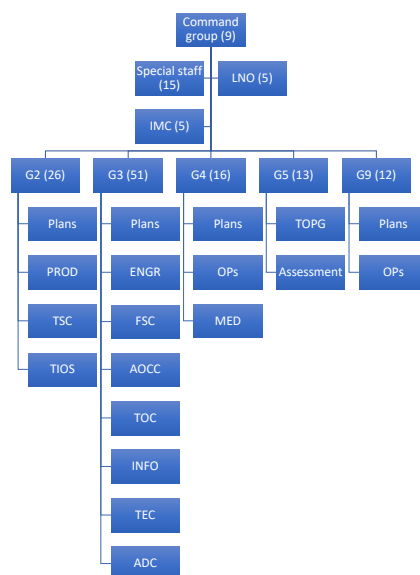
Picture 2: The Land Component organization 2017

The pictures reveal that a crisis management organization is functionally organized. The more generic picture (picture 1) shows that the components have their dedicated staff organizations. The second picture (picture 2) reveals how tasks and responsibilities are functionally distributed within

the land component. Land Component's (LCC) part of the operation is led by a commander (COM), who is supported by the chief of staff (COS) who is in charge of the LCC staff organization. The leadership model can be called 'pooled at the top' (Denis et al., 2012). The authority is formally divided in military organizations. It is the commander's task to lead execution of the operation[2], with the aid of observations, strategies, plans and commands prepared by the staff organization lead by the chief of staff. Further, the LCC staff exercise organization consisted of various branches (G2: intelligence, G3: operations (short term), G4: logistics, G5: planning (long term), and G9: CIMIC (Civil cooperation). Each of these organizations have their dedicated tasks and responsibilities, and they are further delegated to various teams as shown on the picture.

Of particular interest to this research paper is the organizational design element where these teams have their responsibilities divided based on a temporal segregation: the G2 branch is responsible for planning activities that require immediate, day-to-day reaction (0-48 hours), the G3's responsibility lies on the near future (some days, typically 2-10 days), and the G5 branch takes responsibility for activities having a longer time frame (from two weeks to six months). Issues and incidents that happen in the world, simulated or real, do not typically have a 'Best Before' stamp but their temporal relevance is based on somebody's subjective assessment of an incident's character: it is not always easy to estimate whether an emerging issue has relevance on the short or the long term, on both terms, or no relevance at all. Military operations are characterized by uncertainties, sometimes called the 'Fog of War'. These uncertainties relate both to the capabilities (own and the adversaries') and the intents of the various stakeholders operating in the battlespace[3]. An interesting research topic is to observe how the staff organization makes such assessments, manages the division of labor in work processes and negotiates and organizes the tasks and responsibilities in the flow of continuous events in the everyday of the (simulated) peace-keeping operation. I shall delve into this theme in the empirical section of this paper.

In addition to having the prescribed command structure, the organization engages in the running of various cross-organizational processes. These individual tasks and wider processes are managed

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[2] The reader should be reminded that in this particular exercise, the line organization existed only as a virtual, simulated force roleplayed by the game planners. Main focus of the exercise was in the staff operation, and only that organization was manned with real, 'flesh and bone' officers.

[3] For the argument on how a historically static battlefield has enlarged into a contemporary dynamic battlespace, see chapter 5.4 "Growth of battlespace" in Hanska (2017).

according to North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) protocols, procedures and standard operating procedures (SOPs). For the international participants, the NATO SOPs and terminology with its plethora of acronyms and specialized military jargon provides the shared operational platform and a 'common language'. The organization members work cross-organizationally in various teams and task groups throughout the exercise.

Research focus

During my first observation day, an experienced OTTM officer told me that a well-working staff organization keeps itself "ahead of things". A competent staff officer needs to be able to screen huge loads of incoming information, pick the relevant information and react on it accordingly. According to this officer, to succeed a staff organization needs to have free capacity available at all times to be able to react to unexpected situations. In an unrelated incident, midway through the exercise, the LCC chief of staff (COS) addressed the staff with a similar message, instructing the crowd on how "Our job is to look into the future: the near future and the later future." He explained to his audience how the organization needs to learn to anticipate things: "To solve a problem in five days, we have to start now.", and internalize the inertia and time lag inherent to a large organization: "This organization is a carrier – it takes time to maneuver."

These kinds of individual and collective capabilities are vital insights in any organizational setting. The officers above referred to two kinds of understandings. An organization needs to have an a) accurate external view: a refined recognition of the change patterns in an organization's environment and b) honest internal view: a realistic understanding of the capabilities and reaction times of the organization. In the military, these capabilities are often described under the heading of *situation awareness* (Endsley, 1995; Lundberg, 2015)[4]. Accurate and up-to-date situation awareness is required to pierce the Fog of War. According to Hanska (2017: 122) in the past the bottleneck in military decision-making was the acquirement and transmission of information to the commander. During the current Information Age, the bottleneck lies in analysis and understanding

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[4] Terms situation awareness and situational awareness are used more or less interchangeably in the literature.

of the huge quantity of information available. Even though advances in information technology boost the processing of available information, the human element still acts as a critical factor in the decision-making cycle. Situation awareness is the key element in these processes.

Situation awareness (SA) is used to refer to a) a state where these kinds of insights are internalized in individuals and social groups, b) to technical and organizational systems used to enhance SA, or to c) the process through which these insights are individually and organizationally gained (Lundberg, 2015). Such insights have concrete value to an organization. For example, a relative advantage in situation awareness allows a combatant to get inside the enemy's OODA loop (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act) (Coram, 2002) giving him a competitive edge in making quicker and better decisions and gaining an upper hand in influencing the combat situation, i.e. 'creating the combat context'. In the business context, these capability areas are typically referred to as 'strategic advantages'. Leaders on every level of an organization require topical, accurate information about their organization and its environment and furthermore this information needs to be transmuted to knowledge, i.e. framed in relation to the objectives, risks and other contextual elements to be effectively used in decision-making. In such processes individuals and groups can be seen to engage in *sensemaking* (Weick, 1995; Weick et al. 2005; Weick, 2006) where these actors try to cognitively reorient to the construction of new meaning for the uncertainties and breakdowns ever present in organizational life.

To sum up, one of the key learning objectives of a staff exercise is to enhance the individual situation awareness skill set and train organizations to 'see beyond the current situation or setting'. Yet, how is this actualized in an exercise? Looking to the future is never easy, even if furiously attempted throughout human history[5]. Both individual experts and organizations are known to be notoriously bad at making accurate predictions of what the future brings. Another recognized feature of organizational life is that despite their stated efforts to focus on visionary leadership and future strategizing, organizations use most of their time and effort in reacting to and tackling with the problems of the present (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2003; Holmberg &

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[5] For example, in ancient Babylon Barûtu diviners read omens from the entrails of sheep. During the Roman empire, augurs interpreted the will of gods from the flight of birds. In modern times, the techniques of forecasting consist of the emplotment of (mostly linear) trends of past and present data to the future. Budgeting may provide an illustrative example of this: in many organizations budgeting is managed by procuring last year's numbers and then adding a few percentages to come up with this year's budget.

Tyrstrup, 2010).   Such developments might also ail military organizations, as, according to an OTTM officer interviewed during the exercise, a recurrent situation is that staff resources are transferred from long term planning to short term planning to deal with some immediate problem resulting in less focus in issues that are relevant if not acute. Therefore, the present, pressing need 'borrows' from the future, more ambiguous needs.

 In this research paper, I will focus on the practices through which the staff organization aims to increase its situation awareness of the temporal future. My focus is not on individual level cognition, but on the social practices the organization adopts and applies in coordinating its future planning. I do not see situation awareness as organizational capability (a basis) but rather as an organizational objective enacted via continuous social activity (an end result). From a leadership perspective, gaining situation awareness is both the objective of an individual staff officer, the commander and the total organization. In the studied organization, situation awareness is a 'shorthand' for all the knowledge required in organizing, coordinating and directing the planning activities of the officers. Having an accurate view enables the organization to make better decisions, yet the accurate view is acquired through entanglement with the issues, both internal and external, related to the activity at hand. Furthermore, this research paper does not aim to isolate a 'blueprint for success' or to compile a list of 'best practices for Situation Awareness enhancement', but rather it discusses the challenges and problems that emerge when people in the staff organization attempt to learn to 'know the future' inside the functionally organized hierarchy. I will observe and discuss the ways the current hierarchy and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) influence people's SA and how the organization tries to cope with its structure in the attempt to learn to 'keep ahead of things'.

In the next chapter, theoretical concepts and views that are relevant to my analysis of temporality in the staff organization are presented.

Temporality in organizations

The most common view of time in contemporary, western organizations relates to clock time. Clock time, or chronological time, refers to a perception of time as objective (existing independently of us), unitary (subject to only one interpretation), linear (progressing steadily from the past via

present to future), and mechanical (consisting of discrete moments subject to precise measurement). Clock time, through its objective, measurable quality, helps organizations tremendously to organize things: to schedule, to set timetables, deadlines, to resource activities, to coordinate activities etc. Clock time is also inherently connected to productivity (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988: 303). The concept of productivity is based on concepts of resource inputs, produce outputs and the speed through which such transformations occur. Gulick (1987: 116) concluded that "in management the basic elements are: time as an input, time as an output, time as an assembly line, time as gap, and timing as a strategy." This view also commodifies time; time becomes a scarce resource in organizations. It can be bargained for, borrowed, used wisely or spent unwisely among other things. Majority of the reward systems in organizations are based on the time people spend in work activity.   The clock time view of time was a prerogative to the emergence of modern, industrial organizations: Fredrick Taylor's conceptualization of Scientific Management (Taylor, 1914) could never have been possible without a measurement system based on time.

It is worth noting that the idea of the classic bureaucracy, as it was described by Max Weber (1947), does not include a time dimension. In the bureaucratic organization system, time has no relevance: bureaucracy is about making accurate decisions, and the time it takes to reach decision is not an important aspect from an organization's point of view (even if it typically has huge difference to a bureaucracy's client…). Yet, most contemporary organizations, military organizations included, still base their logic of action on bureaucratic principles and the tayloristic ideas of productivity. The contemporary organizations are formalized into hierarchical (timeless) structures and sequentially ordered business processes where the process efficiency is understood as the ratio of inputs and outputs in time. These generic principles also guide the organizing in the military staff organizations.

Yet, the dominant view does not mean that it is the only view of time, or that the world is organized only in a linear fashion. Our work life is also organized around event-based i.e. cyclical temporalities. We get to the office in morning, do our thing, return home and repeat this procedure over and over. The various organizational practices and routines provides us a daily/weekly/yearly rhythm, which is based on repetition of events and pauses between such events. We associate meaning with important events and use them to structure our existence into a coherent whole. We give order to our lives by providing it with patterns, both individually and organizationally (Gell, 1992). When the surface of any linear progress story is scratched, we recognize how it has actualized through various

organizational practices, where organizations and individuals perform routinized, sometimes even ritualized activities in yearly or quarterly cycles. The timeframes are entangled, where the cyclical, repeated activities, i.e. practices (Schatzki, 2001; Nicolini, 2012) are expected to produce a linearly developing organization and they in return are further influenced and redefined by the achievements and non-achievements on the progress trail. Phenomenologists argue that action fuses rhythms and finitude into a coherent whole. It is important not to lose sight of one whilst focusing on the other. Therefore, rhythms and irreversible processes must be understood together since, on their own, neither could account for that which is expressed by the idea of time (Adam, 1990: 33).

The previous paragraphs show how organizing is simultaneously rooted on different temporal frames of reference. In reality organizations adopt multiple time systems simultaneously, and people in organizations evoke these frames of reference according to their sensemaking needs. Furthermore, different cultures and collectives have constructed differing ways of relating to time systems. For example, Hall (1983) examined time as an invisible language employed differently in different cultures. He distinguished between monochronic and polychronic approaches to organizing time. Monochronic refers to an approach where events are scheduled as separate items – one thing at a time – whereas polychronic refers to an understanding that people may be involved in doing several things at once. In Hall's original study he referred to people from Nordic countries catering more to the monochronic approach and people from the Mediterranean countries to the polychronic approach. Famous early sociologist Durkheim (1915/2008) distinguished sacred from profane time. Gurvitch (1964) argued that various groups, organizations or societies manifest differing time perspectives, that they situate themselves differently with respect to their history and development, and that the resulting variations of temporal perspective present an extremely difficult problem in terms of social integration. Different cultures, even different classes or groups within cultures, move with different rhythms and with different temporal perspectives (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988: 301). In the CJSE setting, where people come together from different national cultures, professional cultures (military vs. civilian), and military branches (navy, army, air force, engineers etc.), it is predictable that people need time and effort to become aware of the various temporalities guiding their counterparts' actions. The CJSE can be classified as a temporally asymmetric organization (Zerubavel, 1981) where various groups and individuals act in coordination

yet subscribe to differing temporal orientations. A research interest in this paper is to discover the practices aiming to cater to this coordination requirement in the organization.

Another field of inquiry involving time in organizational studies relates to studying the time orientations of managers. Jaques (1982) concluded that organizations allocate different tasks to different hierarchical actors based on the time span of the related tasks. At the lower levels of the organization, a task may be completed in mere days or weeks. However, at higher "strategic" levels the longest tasks may take even decades to complete. Jaques argued that different individuals, with different capabilities, are required to undertake the tasks that involve longer time spans. This would imply that strategic military planners are required to be able to identify, describe and assess organizational and environmental change and development over long time frames. Research has shown that managers who are guided to think about past events, spontaneously increased the length of their planning horizon (El Sawy, 1983 in Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988). Weick (1979) argued that managers who engage in future perfect thinking (i.e. set goals in the future perfect tense, "I will have closed ten deals by the end of the month") will plan more effectively than those who think in the simple future tense ("I will close ten deals"). Weick implies that future perfect tense is a way to think about the future like the past and thus provide more detail about it, improving planning. Yet, future challenges organizations face can be either recurring or unique. People working in the fashion industry are expected to be able to anticipate the trends of the upcoming seasons, as for the strategists at Nokia were unable to respond in satisfactory way to the novel smart phone released by Apple in 2007.

In the earlier paragraphs, I have introduced two perspectives to understanding time: a) as an objective, independent feature of the world, measurable using natural science method, and b) as a subjective experience of the world, intrinsic to a sentient organizational actor. Both perspectives are important to our exploration of the temporalities in organizing and need to be discussed in a more abstract fashion. Philosopher McTaggart (1927) identified two ways of talking about time: objectively, by differentiating between earlier and later states; and subjectively, by implicating the observer in the analysis. He suggests that events are conceptualized in time where the relation between them is defined in a permanent and absolute way. To illustrate, if event X happened before event Y, then X will always be earlier than Y. Thus, Rome collapsed before United States was founded or people are young before they grow old. Such temporal relations may be expressed in terms of

timelessly true statements. McTaggart called these 'tense-less' relations between events the B-series of time. On the other hand, the A-series of time is related to statements about the past, present and future. These statements are relative, because the definition of something as past, present, or future depends on the observer and surrounding relations. Tensed statements are fundamentally context-dependent and therefore they are inherently relative, impermanent, and associated with change and temporality. In this sense, the observers' narrations are bound with their personal, collective and societal pasts, presents and futures. Bergmann (1981) points out that all human societies differentiate criteria related to both A- and the B- series of time. Members of all societies distinguish between events that are happening now, have taken place in the past, or might possibly occur in the future. We know past events by records, perceive present ones directly, and know future ones in our imagination only (Adam, 1990).

Henri Bergson (1910) used the concept 'presencing' to express continual creation of the present. According to his theory of time, the past and future are not just bound by memory and intent: they are constantly created and recreated in the present. Even while the events of the past are undoable, in its meaning and the way it is preserved, evoked, and selected, the past is revocable and as hypothetical as the future. The past is continuously recreated and reformulated into a different past from the standpoint of the emergent present. Emergence inevitably reflects into the past and changes its meaning (Mead, 1932/2002). A simple example of this is the updating of the Curriculum Vitae –practice required from academic researchers as part of a funding application. Many researchers take pains to rewrite their CVs for the different funders even in situations where their current position has not changed, or they have no new publications. Researchers rewrite their CVs to emphasize certain facet of their careers, believed to be relevant to the funding party. In rewriting our CVs, we also rewrite our histories with the aim of convincing the funder that an investment in us would be a safe bet in the future.

Similarly, a military plan as a construction extends to both the past and the future from the present. In strategies and plans continuity and change, conservation and revolution interpenetrate. Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013) studied the practices through which strategists in a technology company made projections about the future of their business. These actors engaged in problem solving efforts in the present; identifying the problems at hand, making decisions, and taking action. The researchers observed how the projections into the future (both diagnoses of possible trajectories

and potential resolutions) were critically shaped by the strategists' reconstructions of the past. The strategists drew on their repertoires of past experience and these interpretations guided their attention and shaped their interpretations of the situation. Therefore, when making decisions in the present to project something into the future, we draw from our memories of the past. In our common thinking we think of the past in terms of truthfulness: whether something happened is either true or false, and about the future as possibilities: anything can happen (Gell, 1992: 253). Yet, as the phenomenologists have argued (Bergson, 1910; Mead, 1932/2002; Schütz, 1932), and the contemporary organizational research empirically observed (Brunninge, 2009; Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller & Huy, 2017), this past is as malleable as the future. So, paradoxically, strategies; imaginative constructs of a desired future state, are grounded on the past. The history of an organization, the capabilities it has developed and acquired set constraints on what strategists see as achievable for an organization in the future. Still, history is not solely a constraint, it is also a resource enabling future-making. Organizational strategists have been shown to purposefully use reconstructions of history to guide strategy-making (Brunninge, 2009), identity (Anteby & Molnar, 2012), and organizational adaptation and change (Coraiola et al. 2017; Suddaby & Foster, 2017). In literature, such activity has also been called 'sensegiving' (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) or 'management of meaning' (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Strategists acknowledge the history of the organization, the incremental development path on which the organization has progressed towards the current state of affairs. Therefore, strategy is a construct that is built on perceptions, interpretations and assertions of past, present and the future.

Ethnographic research process

The research behind this research paper was conducted using ethnographic research approach (Eriksen, 2001; Watson, 2011; van Maanen, 1988, 2011). Ethnographic research refers to the study of cultural phenomena in a collective through a field study. The researcher enters a collective to observe and reflect on the cultural practices of that collective. The researcher's task is to become familiar with the everyday life in an organization, observe the events as they unfold, discuss their relevance with the members of the collective and reflect on his findings and conclusions. The primary data collection methods in an ethnographic study consist of observation, participation and discussions, of both formal and informal nature, held with the organization members. In a typical

ethnographic study this data collection phase takes a lot of time. It takes time for the researcher to become acquainted with the organization members, and for the organization members to become accustomed to the researcher. Ethnography is a holistic research approach: the researcher makes extensive field notes during his stay with the organization, writing down observations and making early interpretations of the phenomena he witnesses. The researcher may discuss his observations and interpretations with the organization members, gaining more in depth understanding of the cultural practices of the organization in question. The analytic process, which follows the principles of the interpretative research paradigm (Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Burrell & Morgan, 1979), continues after the field study phase as the researcher continues to relate his observations to previous research, theorizing his findings and reflecting on his observations and initial interpretations. In his research reporting, the researcher typically describes his observations and conclusions in a realist style (van Maanen, 1988), while complementing his reporting with sections where a more intimate and personal writing style (van Maanen, 1988) is adopted.

I joined the CJSE for the first time during 2016 as a visitor. During this one-week visit, I visited the three exercise sites with the officers managing the exercise and was able to widely observe the exercise grounds and practices. During this first field trip I did not explicitly collect organizational material for research purposes but limited myself to writing personal notes of my observations. After this phase, I crafted a research plan to study the many facets of temporality in the exercise context. This research plan was formally the exercise organizing parties later during 2016. It was settled that I would take part in the 2017 exercise in a researcher role.

During the first day of the 2017 field study I negotiated with my client representatives and the other researchers taking part in the exercise about which organization would best fill my requirements for data collection. During the earlier visit, I had come to recognize that following the total BFOR organization would be unpractical because of the wide geographical dispersion of the activities. Therefore, it was decided that I would focus my data collection on one staff organization. The Land Component (LCC) was chosen because the facilities where the LCC worked allowed for free movement between its teams and branches. The LCC organization was located in a big hangar-like building with a large auditorium and two separate areas where the teams were placed in an open office configuration. The LCC commander gave his permission for the research and I took my leave to frequent the LCC organization during each day of the exercise.

I stayed with the LCC staff for seven days. My routines for the days followed the routines of the other exercise participants. Due to my researcher status, I was housed in a hotel with the commanding officers in the town outside the military area. Each day I would wake up at 0600, shower, eat breakfast, and drive to the barracks at 0745. I would spend the day in the LCC staff building joining in meetings, strolling around, talking with different people, sitting by the coffee machines, and typing notes on my computer. It took me a day or two to familiarize myself with the daily meetings and briefs in the LCC and to make up my mind about what repetitive events I would follow. I came to pay attention especially the Commander's Update Briefs (CUB), OTTM meetings, various G3 and G5 meetings, and the Chief of Staff's (COS) update brief. At times, I would have individual meetings with various people taking part in the exercise. The lunch and the dinner provided important milestones during the days, and I typically searched for a familiar face in the dining quarters to complement eating with discussion. The exercise day would end circa 2015-2030 with a meeting where the staff team reflected on their day's performance. This was the last meeting I observed during the day. After that I would drive to the hotel, refresh myself and join the commanding officers for a beer, gossip and military talk in the hotel bar. This routine became very persistent during the exercise. During the first days, I felt exhausted by the length of the day. But in a few days, I had become accustomed to the rhythm even when no one was controlling my whereabouts or providing me with guidance on how to do my work. I came to appreciate the military daily rhythm that took over me: the rhythm made me feel part of the organization. I had become *entrained* to the staff organization. *Entrainment* refers to an organizational process where the "pace or cycle of one activity is adjusted to match or synchronize with another activity" (Ancona & Chong, 1996: 251). Entrainment can appear between an individual and an organization, between teams, processes and functions and between the organization and stakeholders from the external world (Bluedorn & Jaussi, 2008). Arguably some entrainment is bound to appear also on the battlefield between enemies. To me it felt as if I was doing something noteworthy, even when no one in the organization knew in detail what I was doing. I noticed how the small details started sticking with me, like I came to recognize different nationalities based on the camouflage texture of their uniforms. The rhythm seemed to provide me with a sense of security: even if I did not know whether the research results would account to anything, I was at least doing my work in line with how my focal organization was operating.

I kept a research diary during the exercise. I wrote daily memos where I described my observations, short transcripts of my discussions with various people and research ideas and hypotheses. The length of the memos varied between 600 and 2200 words. All in all, my notes during the exercise consisted of 9500 words. I also applied for a special permit to photograph the event. After the permit was granted I took approximately 20 photos as my research data. Due to security reasons, no electronic material was allowed to be taken from the exercise. I had access to the exercise IT systems and had permit to print exercise material to be used in research. All in all, I printed circa 50 documents from various forums and teams in the exercise. This material rounds up to approximately 500-600 pages of material (Excel sheets, Word documents, Powerpoint presentations). Later I also received the final exercise assessment reports and was able to reflect my findings in comparison with the assessments made by the military reviewers. The exercise documentation helped me refresh my memory of the events, and it also verified some technical details especially about the various acronyms used in the organization.

After the exercise I made an extensive reading of the organizational, sociological and anthropological literature on temporality. My objective was to link this literature with my earlier understanding of leadership literature and practice theory. In addition, I familiarized myself with some military literature, especially on operational art, military strategy and tactics. I used these literatures to make sense of my field study findings and used the chosen theories and arguments to consolidate my explanative story (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991).

Military exercise as a research setting

It needs to be acknowledged that even if the CJSE is a huge event, it still is only an exercise. This exercise setting influences the research process and the findings. The generalization of the research findings is discussed in more detail in the discussion chapter, but in this section, I discuss the exercise as a research context. All in all, the exercise aims to train the people for a role in an actual military campaign. The exercise is a training event, and the participants are there to learn about their possible future tasks and roles. Majority of the exercise participants have not held a similar role to what they train for. Therefore, they cannot be considered 'hardy veterans' in their staff tasks. In

addition, the exercise organization is ramped up very quickly and the organization members are almost immediately required to identify their roles, responsibilities and tasks and cooperate with other organizational units and members. Furthermore, most of the people do not know their immediate colleagues beforehand. Even further, the exercise lasts only for a week, providing only a limited view on how the peace-keeping operation evolves in the story.

All in all, the events during the exercise happen like in a fast-forwarded film: the organization is totally filled with people in new roles, people do not know each other, they have only cursory understanding of the events that have brought the exercise narrative to its current state, and they know that after a 10-day period the event will be over. The organization needs to be brought into a working status very quickly (in a day) to provide a satisfactory training experience. These features were clearly recognized by the game organizers, mentors and players. Furthermore, the simulated training exercise setting was evoked to by the participants as an explanation especially when the organization was not working as it should be. I had multiple discussions where people started making a point with the phrase "As this is only an exercise…" referring to the lack of individual and organizational competencies in conducting the various tasks. Some commentators would also downplay the importance of the exercise by stating how "…things were different in Afghanistan". It is worth considering whether the observations made about leadership, organizing and temporality in this artificially hurried environment would emerge in a similar fashion in a real campaign.

However, the fast pace of the exercise and its novelty to the participants also allows for a rare glimpse on what happens when organizations are filled with new people: how do the practices emerge when people start applying them as they are discussed in SOPs and manuals? The 'quickened' processing may allow us to witness new or rare aspects of organizing. Therefore, things may happen more quickly than in real life during the exercise, yet this may also influence peoples' perceptions of their tasks, responsibilities and the game setting. As people join the exercise for only a week, and then move onwards to other tasks, it may be that people do not have a proper possibility or incentive to assess the game situation long term. It is probable that the staff officers in Afghanistan, where some campaigns have now lasted for 16 years, adopt a more long-term perspective on the evolution of the operation than in a simulated exercise with a long textual evolution narrative, but only a week's performance. Still, I feel that the phenomena that are important for this analysis are not to be assessed solely based on these contextual factors. I believe

they will reveal generalizable facets of temporality in leadership and organizing that have relevance beyond an exercise context.

In the next chapter I present my key findings following my research visits to CJSE events in 2016 and 2017.

FINDINGS

Commander's update brief as an entrainment practice

A rainy April morning has broken at the barracks of Swedish Military Forces in Enköping, Sweden. Circa 150 military and civilian professionals; the staff of the Land Operational Command (LCC), have gathered in a large auditorium. Subtle chatter can be heard from the rows.

The officer in charge of the brief takes a peak at his wristwatch and informs the crowd "*One Minute*". The minute passes, clock hitting exactly 0830 bravo time[6] and the officer raises his voice "*All Rise*."

The crowd is quick to raise on their feet. The commander of the LCC; a Swedish general, marches to the hall.

"Attention!"

The officer announces the brief to the commander. The commander addresses the crowd.

"Good morning, Peacekeepers!"

"Good morning, Sir!!"

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[6] Bravo time refers to local Swedish time (Central European Time, CET). Zulu time was a concept used to refer to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Zulu time as a concept is especially helpful in situations where the organizational sites are located in different geographical time zones. During the exercise the official time keeping was changed to Zulu time referencing.

"Please be seated."

This vignette describes the ceremonial beginning of an organizational event that repeated itself almost identically every day during the exercise. The Commander's Update Brief (CUB) was held at exactly the same time every morning and it lasted between 25-30 minutes. This repetitive, cyclical temporality created structure and meaning in the daily life of the staff officer. The brief acted as a temporal milestone among the everyday routines of the organization. While most staff teams had already begun their daily work before the morning brief, the majority of the LCC staff members organized their timetables so that they could take part in the CUB. During the brief the audience would hear the various staff factions present their operational status reports to the commander and witness the commander's questions and comments. I, among the other participants, would start paying attention on what details would draw the commander's attention this morning, what would irk him in the presentations, and would eagerly wait on how he would phrase his motto for the day. In this highly routinized practice my attention was drawn to the tiniest, changing details in the institutionalized routine. Therefore, the brief guides and directs the collective awareness: the participants would hear the reports from the various factions, hearing what they considered important in their dedicated areas of responsibility. This information would support and contextualize the participants understanding of both the 'big picture' and his personal areas of responsibility. Furthermore, the participants would be able to observe the commander's reactions, comments and feedback on that information.

As a routine, the CUB was an important temporal marker in the daily rhythm of the organization. It could be stated that the commander's punctual appearance in the auditorium synchronized and set the organization's daily clock ticking[7]. The CUB works as a *zeitgeber;* i.e. a signal that reveals a

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[7] The time-related behaviors are an important facet of commander's leadership work. They take part in the construction and sustainment of status hierarchy in the organization. It is not a coincidence that the commander enters last and the action begins with his appearance. It is a general feature of social life that the more powerful can keep the less powerful waiting more so than vice versa (Levine, 1997). On another occasion I observed a change of meetings where the commander was supposed to be present in both meetings. The first meeting ended, and the participants of the new meeting started appearing in the room. The commander left the room between the meetings for a minute or two. It may have been that he needed to refresh himself, but my interpretation of the situation was that he left the room in order to be the last person to enter the new meeting. This behavior carries strong symbolic connotation: it is the commander with whom action opens and closes, his time and presence are especially valuable and to be held in high

rhythm's phases and serves as pacing agent leading to the entrainment of daily organizational activities (Ancona & Chung, 1996; Bluedorn & Jaussi, 2008). While the various individuals and teams in the LCC organization had their own schedules of various briefs, meetings and breaks for the day and the week, they were mostly subsidiary to a more general schedule, called 'The Battle Rhythm' and the CUB was the most important individual piece in it. It is important to recognize that the LCC daily schedule was not static: every evening the Battle Rhythm was tweaked and refined for the coming day in the COS coordination meeting, yet the CUB schedule was considered sacred; it would not be tampered with. The CUB created a converging point of reference for the staff members; both cognitively, physically and temporally. The participants would accompany the same brief as the commander and notice his interests, and this would happen in the shared space at a regular time. After the brief, the staff members would disperse to their individual duties across the LCC and other staff organizations.

The organizational everyday builds from routines and practices, such as the CUB. Such routines can be regarded as the primary means by which organizations accomplish much of what they do (Feldman & Pentland, 2003: 94). In the military, the staff officers' role is about planning, either crafting strategic plans for an operation or planning on how to execute a certain task. The working day includes information gathering, analysis, and dissemination. On a more practical level, the work includes reading, one-on-one discussions, meetings, preparations of various messages, reports and presentations. In other words, the work consists mostly of reading, writing and talking. The tools used in the work consisted of various IT systems, email, telephone, forms and manuals, Excel sheets, Word documents and Powerpoint presentations. I, an organizational scholar who has worked earlier with public sector and business organizations, was a bit startled by the commonalities between the staff officers' work tasks and, for example, production planning in industrial organizations or strategic planning in municipal organizations. If one omits the plurality of maps and the military uniforms donned by the participants, the work done in the staff organization was quite similar with the 'knowledge work' done by various professionals in large organizations[8].

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regard. These temporal routines not only manifest and repeat the leadership status hierarchy, they also enhance and sustain it.

[8] In fact, one of the JEC professionals running the game software had placed a patch in the sleeve of his uniform titled 'Powerpoint Warrior'. I understood it as an ironic reference to what he was doing.

The training exercise aims to train the participants in their occupational roles and responsibilities. The roles are adopted via the participation in the practices carried out in the organization. The practices offer the participants models of what the work is all about and how to perform it effectively. Both the technical skills and the identities of the professional soldiers are adopted through this kind of action. The practices are not individual, they are social. For example, the CUB is a social practice that requires the presence of the presenters, the commander and the audience to become the ritual it is. Practices also evolve, they do not stay the same (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). The presenters hone their skills, adopting the socially expected suave and succinct style. The CUB as a practice has, in addition to facilitating the creation of a collective situation awareness, a leadership element. In the symbolic performance of the CUB, both leader and follower roles are claimed and granted by the participants (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). During the CUB, the role of the commander as the ultimate decision-maker and carrier of responsibility is emphasized. The organization serves the commander, serving him the knowledge required in the daunting task. Retired US general Stanley McChrystal (2015: 227-229) wrote about the importance of such briefs from the commander's point of view. He acknowledged the symbolic role of the briefs and recognized how even his smallest reactions were observed and interpreted by the participants. Therefore, for a commander the brief is not solely a mundane forced routine regulated by static rules, but also a performative leadership challenge where the elements of the routine are used adaptively and in an improvisational way to set a pace for the organization and to direct collective situation awareness towards coveted issues.

Planning teams attempting to take control of their allocated futures

The first day of the exercise is characterized by individual activity and collective disorganization. People spend a lot of time reading the training manuals and SOPs in order to recognize their individual roles and tasks. Teams assemble for the first time, people familiarize themselves with their colleagues and try to make and give sense to their collective task during the exercise. In this activity, the linear interpretation of time became dominant in peoples' minds: the ramping up of the organization takes time. The early process is hindered by various glitches: meetings are double-booked, people do not know which meetings they are expected to join, they join the wrong meetings, and people with multiple roles are expected to be simultaneously in several places. After

the internal organizing of the teams starts to produce a coherent pattern, the focus moves to inter-team coordination. This phase starts to emerge more or less during the second exercise day. Coordination across components, upwards with BFOR HQ, or downwards with the brigade would take even longer to appear. It is this microlevel organizing: the allocation of people and tasks, scheduling of individual meetings that is required for the total organization to start functioning. During the first days, this work required a lot of effort as everything was needed to be coordinated for the first time. During the following days, the amount of this daily, microlevel organizing effort lessened somewhat, yet never ceased totally. Various changes were required every day and the organization had to react to them over and over again. Every detail cannot be derived from the SOPs: people have to meet, check, recheck and coordinate their individual timetables on how and when are they going to work on certain details to produce a routinized larger organization. As Jarzabkowski et al. (2012: 907) have argued: 'coordinating mechanisms do not arise prior to coordinating but are constituted through coordinating'. The organizational structure does not exist beforehand, but is enacted by the exercise participants. The seemingly stable and structured organization requires constant microlevel adaptation and effort from the organization members on every hierarchical level. When one looks from a close range, the seemingly static organization is reorganizing itself constantly (Weick & Quinn, 1999). During the first days I heard people lamenting about the number of meetings they were required to take part in. The familiar point raised at this stage was: "When am I supposed to do the actual work that is expected from me?". Time was understood as a scarce resource and working on the planning content tasks seemed to compete against action coordination tasks[9].

To the exercise participants the unorganized phase appeared directionless. The junior officers were eager to reach a state where the activities, tasks, roles and responsibilities would be clear. They wanted to reach a state where the organization would be efficiently tackling with the challenges of the peace-keeping operation, yet paradoxically the organization created and developed these coordinating practices via tackling with the external incidents provided by the game.

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[9] In an early G3 formulation meeting a young officer addressed this on a more humoristic note. As yet another coordination requirement emerged in the meeting, this person exclaimed "I am everywhere!" raising laughter from the participants.

Interestingly, simultaneously as the organizing starts to form, it also starts to erode. People are moved, in a seemingly ad hoc fashion, to new positions across the organization. A liaison officer I was talking to during the first exercise day was transferred to a new position on the Uppsala site during the second exercise day. Later during the week, a team leader was explaining to me how he had so far had three different political advisors during the course of the exercise. Some teams never seemed to reach a state where they could count on having an enduring staff count. Such repeated personnel changes frustrated the team leaders, as they felt that various tasks needed to be started anew several times. Therefore, in addition to organizing processes, the organization also had various disorganizing or dismantling processes underway during the exercise.

During the exercise I came to pay special attention to a particular team: the G5 team of the LCC. This team was formally allocated responsibility for the long term planning within the land component: from two weeks to six months into the future. The G5 team also held responsibility for the assessment of the campaign progress. The assessment was the primary task of two officers within the G5 team, and they assembled a cross-organizational team from other LCC team representatives to produce the assessment.

The LCC G5 was not the only team in the organization supposed to peek into this particular temporal horizon. Other teams, on different hierarchical levels, were also supposed to focus on the same future frame. Higher up in the hierarchy a long range planning task was allocated to BFOR HQ J5 team, and lower down in the hierarchy the responsibility lay with brigade level G5 team. Crucial, however, would be the coordination and linking of the teams' planning activities across the total organization. The SOPs provided the guiding logic on how the coordination should unfold. The fundamental bureaucratic and scientific management principles of hierarchy, linearity and sequentiality provided the idea of a waterfall model of coordinated action. The teams expected that planning guidelines would trickle downwards in the organization. It was explained to me how the planning tasks differed between the hierarchical levels. On the BFOR level the planning should focus on defining the purpose of the operation, component level should confirm that the organization had adequate resources to fill that purpose, and the brigade level should focus on the means of the operation. This mode of operation has a strong attachment to the logic of industrial production planning: first set the objectives, then procure the resources and lastly define the action steps.

However, this industrial paradigm logic carried also another premise that wasn't too fitting to the knowledge work at hand in the organization: the principle of *irreversibility*.

During the exercise the idea was that the work done by BFOR level J5 team would provide the planning guidelines for the LCC level G5 team. Moving onwards, the work done by the LCC G5 would then act as the preliminary data for the brigade level planning team. Teams on all levels expected that the teams higher in the organizational hierarchy would provide them with guidelines and premises for their dedicated planning work. Yet, things did not roll like this during this exercise. As the teams began their work simultaneously at the beginning of the exercise week, the sequencing of planning did not happen[10]. Rather, the work was parallel. The members of the LCC G5 team grew anxious when the linear idea of the sequential waterfall model did not work. Furthermore, feedback from the brigade level revealed that the LCC was unable to provide the required information downwards in the organization. The team members were uncertain about their tasks, they questioned themselves whether they were doing "somebody else's work" in the organization and whether the work done in a less coordinated fashion would be overlapping rather than supplementary. Later during the week, for example, one of the G5 officers was explaining to me how several planning teams were "trying to take control" of the Gotland operation producing unwanted complexity. The "ownership of the future" was therefore ambivalent in the organization. The teams had hesitations to act when they were lacking formal guidelines and structure, even when majority of the information used in the planning was available.

From my perspective, the most interesting aspect in this 'organizational malfunction' was the strong enforcement of sequentiality and irreversibility in the teams' action. The leadership expectation was traditional: the team members were socialized into hearing from their higher-ups. The waterfall model was further enforced when the lower-level teams finally received confirmation of what the higher-level teams had planned: after the guidelines became formal, the lower-level team began to adapt their plans to fit these higher-level plans. What I did not witness is an informational ebb and

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[10] I did hear that there was some BFOR level long range planning already done during pre-training phase, but apparently it did not carry the planning work far enough to be able provide component level team with a confirmed basis of action. I was also told that the Finnish national practice is to start similar exercises earlier for higher level planning teams. This set-up lessens the waiting and ambivalence during the exercise. Yet, such practice does not question whether there are challenges in organizing knowledge processes as if they were material manufacturing processes.

flow across the hierarchical levels or components where the 'tide of information' would run from that party best prepared to those coming in behind especially before decision making phases. Concurrent planning practices did not emerge beyond the component boundaries. This happened partly because the teams seemed to adopt an instrumental rather than a substantive rationality stance (Weber, 1947): having your plan formally accepted and closed carried more weight than what was actually stated in the plan. This stance enforced the sequential and irreversible organizational logic integral to the planning process.

This problem of "planning teams stuck in limbo" was recognized by both the OTTM and the LCC commanding officers and they worked to facilitate the planning. They acted to bypass this temporal problem with mutual adjustment between the teams on different hierarchy levels. On the third exercise day the G5 team leader and their OTTM officer had set up a meeting with BFOR J5 team. I joined them, and we walked to the other side of the garrison to meet with the J5 people. We, however, had either misunderstood or were misinformed about the role of the meeting. Rather than having an informal adjustment discussion of what the J5 and G5 were doing, the meeting was a formal J5 presentation given to the BFOR commander and 50 other interested parties. No actual possibility for questions or comments appeared. The G5 team leader commented the meeting to me by saying: "It seems that we have now done parallel rather than supplementary work." This episode further enhanced the feeling that the G5 team was lost within the organization: its members did not very well know whether their work would have connection with the other future planning teams. The team continued to feel directionless in the situation.

The LCC chief of staff also worked to solve this situation. His suggestion offered detouring alternatives for the typical process flow. It was suggested that rather than wait for the BFOR guidelines, the LCC team, as well as the brigade team, could use LCC G3 (short term) work as their planning basis. According to some commentators, this practice is used in the Swedish national exercises. The component level would then produce its own plans, with less linkage with joint level planning. In other words, organizationally the joint level and the component level were expected to be tightly coupled, yet they ended up being only loosely coupled (Weick, 1995). Here the COS worked 'against the protocol' by overruling the process defined by the standard operating procedures and rerouting coordination in the organization. During the final day of the exercise, in the G5 planning team closing meeting, the sentiment in the team was that the topics they had been

planning on were now owned by another team in the organization. My assessment was that the ambivalence related to the team's tasks and outputs had had a negative effect on the team members' spirits. However, when I asked the team in the meeting whether they had felt at loss on what to do, they did not support this interpretation. Rather I was answered that "Once we get clear instructions, things will be again working okay". To me this remark tells about the team's need of direction – in other words, leadership. The team would have wanted more explicit guidelines on what to work and on what basis. The organizational structure and operating procedures were not able to provide this knowledge, and the supplementary human action was able to correct the situation only in a limited way.

One particular reason why the coordination of the future planning activities according to the waterfall model did not work very well in the BFOR organization is related to the enhanced rate of the exercise. The planning horizon (weeks and months) and the temporal window allowed for the planning (hours and days) were clearly mismatched. It is not the most rewarding task in an organization to plans months ahead during an exercise lasting only a week. Furthermore, it needs to recognized that cooperation practices across the component and hierarchical levels were the very slowest to appear. The more distant people are from each other physically and organizationally, the less likely they are to communicate and cooperate (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981). In fact, it was apparent from the beginning that the G5 planning task would not be finalized during the exercise, and this can be seen to add to the ambivalence in the team's work. The exercise setting directed the teams to hurry in making future plans they would see neither finalized nor actualized as part of the operation. The need for concurrent planning practices was very evident to the participants, however, the SOPs or the organizational structure in general did not support nor enforce their adoption.

However, rather than focus on the teams' performances in this particular exercise, I am more prone to draw attention to the cognitive blueprint behind the operating procedures. The future planning followed a logic that is described in strategic management as the classic planning school where strategy is perceived as the outcome of linear *sequential* activities of analysis, development and implementation (Mintzberg & Lampel, 1999). This was the dominant logic applied by the teams during the exercise. Yet, strategy constitutes much more than just planning activity. Mintzberg (1994: 24) wrote that "organisations plan for the future and they also evolve patterns out of the

past". Strategy can also be considered as a pattern that emerges over time based on experimentation and discussion (Paroutis, Heracleous & Angwin, 2013: 4). However, within the CJSE activities related to the past or the evolution of the campaign were mostly ignored. The planning practices kept the participants' focus tightly on the present and near future challenges. Far less emphasis was placed on contextualizing the current events and looking at the evolution path of the campaign. In the next section I will describe how the past influenced the planning procedures and practices of the LCC staff organization and why the past should be better acknowledged in the planning processes.

The tricky convergence of past documents, present action, and future plans

The primary task and function of the military staff organization is to aid a military commander in controlling the complexity related to the administration of massive modern armies. Matheny (2012) has argued that the general staff was the greatest military innovation of the 19th century. It is the task of the staff personnel to cover all preparatory work, to produce the information required by the commander and provide him with the time and space to lead the operation (Hanska, 2017: 254). This administration, control and planning is the core craft of the military staff organization. To manage it, the staff organizations have developed their operational procedures and functions to process the complex entanglements of intelligence data, capabilities, resources, scheduling and the likes.

The staff organization's impact is best revealed via the tangible outputs of its work: the documents containing the various plans and orders used to communicate the commander's intentions and will to the response forces. The CJSE staff organization produces huge amounts of documents daily. The documents constitute an elaborate system of coded information and knowledge. Furthermore, a document begins to age the very moment it is produced. Whereas events have dates, documents, as material objects, have histories (Gell, 1992: 28). Paradoxically, but for the immediate moment of its creation a plan for some future becomes a historical thing, an object from the past. Therefore, the evolution of the operational planning insights can be traced via the documents the staff organization has produced. An important aspect of administering a crisis management operation is the understanding whether the operation is proceeding as planned. The assessment process carried

out by the LCC G5 team revealed some interesting facets of how an organization experiences time and handles the discrepancies between 'past futures', 'present futures' and 'future futures'.

The planning and assessment processes are very much dependent on the organizational documentation. It could be even argued that it is the documents and the officers *together* that constitute the actors who are expected to act in a collective (Latour, 2005: 75; Cooren, 2004). The teams use the documents prepared in earlier settings by different people to conduct their work. It is the documents that convey people the capacity to reach beyond space and time in an organization. People during past exercises have prepared the orders that are being enforced during the current exercise by new people. Furthermore, this means that in the process of conducting their tasks the current teams continuously engage in cognitive work that aims to make these documents and their contents comprehensible to them. I witnessed how the teams tried actively to make sense of the intents of the various documents. In one particular discussion the assessment team focused on how an achievement titled "initiate a DDR process" should be defined. When one member drew a question "What does the word 'initiate' actually mean?", the team reacted to this with a tired laughter, and turned to discussing the various denotative and connotative meanings of the word. The military staff work included many examples of such 'semantic labor', where the officers wondered, negotiated and worked to define various concepts to fit their current needs. These semantic struggles reminded me of the work done in business and municipal strategy processes; the definitional and semantic challenges of "what do we actually mean with these phrases?" in the military staff organization were very similar to its business and public counterparts' challenges.

The success and failure of a crisis management operation and its general progress is measured against a system of orders and decisive conditions. The various plans and orders constitute a hierarchy, where the concept 'plan' is used to describe longer term intents and activities and the concept 'order' shorter term objectives and actions. For example, the CJSE long range plans describe the desired end state of the total crisis management operation, consisting of criteria such as a) democratically elected, working government is in effect in Bogaland; and b) the country holds an effective military and police force that is able to keep peace and protect the civilian population in

the country[11]. This level of planning is actualized on the BFOR HQ and STRATCOM level. These plans and the end states depicted in them act as the planning premises for other teams. The lower level teams are supposed to derive midrange objectives and operational orders from these higher level plans with the help of supplementary information. Within the land component such midrange orders are called Land Coordination Orders (LCO). Furthermore, the system of orders also includes short term orders called Fragmentary Orders (FRAGO) that are used to communicate changes in the earlier, higher level orders or to cover a more limited operational activity. In practice, these plans and orders are the documents where the intended operational activity; its objectives, resources, means and timetables are depicted. It could be argued that the main activity in the military staff organization is the production of these documents.

During the 2017 exercise the G5 team faced a synchronizing problem. According to the paper process (the currently effective LCO), the land operation was, after 43 days of its beginning, still in operational phase 1. Yet, the operational situation had progressed in the simulated environment and the planning teams were actually planning orders that by definition belonged to phase 2. The problem was that certain decisive conditions defined in the LCO for phase 1, turned out to be very difficult to reach and therefore the effective LCO1 had not been terminated and the operation had not been moved onward to phase 2 (defined in LCO2). For example, one of the decisive conditions was related to the securing of the Bogaland borders. During the assessment the team held multiple discussions on what would constitute a secured border: the members kept pondering whether it would need to refer to a total closure of the border between Bogaland and a neighboring county. In the simulation the BFOR forces had not enforced a total shutdown of border traffic, because of a regional tribe located on both sides of the border. This tribe currently benefitted from legal and illegal trade across the border and the operation lead was under the impression that the closing of the border might result in a tribal offensive against the BFOR forces. To cope with this possible development, it was discussed whether border security should be defined in a more lax way. The question therefore was whether the documentation (LCO1 decisive conditions) or the military action (how BFOR was responding to the border issue) should yield? Should the operation be led as was planned in the now historical order or should the decisive conditions in the LCO be

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[11] I represent these two end state elements only as generic examples. The full end state description is a much more elaborate document, including a hierarchy of criteria, consisting of dozens of themes and subthemes.

interpreted more loosely fitting the current operational status? The team debated and tried to assess whether the concept 'border security' could be seen as strategically ambiguous or not.

The decisive conditions of the finalization of the phase 1 presented therefore a problem for the assessment team. They felt that they could not fill the requirements set in the LCO1 and therefore on paper the operation could not be moved to LCO2. The assessment team leader commented this to the team saying: "I do not like these criteria, but I do not know whether we can change them". The discrepancy between the past future and the present future created a challenge for the team and in the ambivalent situation the younger officers were prone to revert to following the texts rather than the situation as it was perceived in the moment. The LCO document held textual agency (Cooren, 2004) in this situation: it had staying capacity in the organization by resisting its reinterpretation. In this way it guided and influenced the assessment team's work. Interestingly, I had discussed this situation with the senior staff earlier during the same day. I had asked the LCC deputy commander (DCOM) about this case and whether the unfillable decisive conditions in the current LCO could be redefined. He had answered to me: "Off course, we have defined the earlier command ourselves and therefore we have all the power to change its contents." The senior officer therefore saw the documented order more as generic guideline than as a strict rule of law, to be followed in every detail.

This indecision whether the operation could move onwards from LCO1 to LCO2 resulted in a situation where the present events caught up with future plans. As the planning processes lagged, the ongoing game events reached them. This resulted in the situation where the orders could not be closed, but rather new events and knowledge requirements emerged continuously from various parties, including the commander. In a sense, planning for future lost its relevance as the present events caught up with it. Planning for future became planning for present. Both the OTTM officers and the COS discussed this development a day before the exercise ended and tried to come up with a practical solution to the situation. The COS's solution was that no new orders or plans would be opened at this stage, but the emerging knowledge needs would be integrated as parts (FRAGOs) of ongoing planning processes. Similarly to the second vignette, the COS made an intervention where he redefined the operational procedures adopted in the organization.

This vignette shows how the military operation proceeds on three interrelated temporal levels: future intents and ideas, present operational needs and historical documents. These temporal levels have their own, important roles in the work of the staff organization, and are connected in various ways. The paper process, constituted of the orders defining the operational phases, was meant to structure and push the operation forwards. However, during this exercise it became a force that hindered the progress of the operation. The order document represented a 'past future' and when the current operational reality produced a 'present future' that differed extensively from the order, it caused uncertainty and indecision in the organization. The staff organization turned its effort into conforming these differing futures and this drew attention away from the actual requirements set by the gaming situation (present future and future futures).

The creation of an order is an organizational reification practice that is supposed to create a *point of irreversibility* (Denis et al., 2011) where certain conditions and actions would be made concrete, they would be symbolically confirmed as an important decision, and they wouldn't be opened up again. In organizations reification practices solidify commitments of the various organizational stakeholders and create the common grounds required in collaboration and coordinated activity. Formal leaders' task is to legitimize such orders, infusing them with guiding power. However, in this case, the discrepancies between what was planned in the past and how things unfolded currently in the operation resulted in strategic ambiguity and caused the order definition activity rather to become a *point of reversibility* (Denis et al., 2011), where the LCO1 became an object of repeated decision making. To solve the problems related to LCO1, multiple alternatives were researched and proposed, and the arenas of decision making were reopened several times during the exercise. This collective ambivalence and the widening scope of decision making prevented the operation from moving forward and the operational present overtook the planning of the future activities resulting in a moment of inoperativeness in the organization. According to earlier research (Denis et al., 2011) it is especially the coexistence of these points of reversibility and irreversibility that creates a network of indecision in an organization causing decisions that result only in further need for decisions rather than operational execution.

The LCO1, whose fundament was to enhance the execution of the operation had turned into an *agent of indecision* as it kept hindering and inhibiting other future planning processes and requiring new decisions to be made about itself. The problems with LCO1 required the organizational

stakeholders to return to its contents and made it difficult to produce a stable decision in the matter. Furthermore, the different interpretations held in the organization of the LCO1 status further escalated the indecision: the assessment team considered it as the point of irreversibility and held on to its contents during the process; as for the commanding officers the LCO1 contents were a point of reversibility to be molded to suit the current operational needs. In the end, the process proceeded according to the commanding officers' interpretation, yet valuable time had been lost in the confusion and the planning processes lagged during the exercise.

Conclusions

I set the research objective of this paper to discovering how the military staff organization leads and organizes its future planning activities to 'keep ahead of things in the battlespace'. I was interested in the social practices the organization adopts in aiming to increase its situation awareness and the challenges and problems it faces in this task. I applied both objective i.e. clock time and subjective i.e. constructed time readings on how temporalities are involved in the organizing effort during the crisis management exercise.

I described and analyzed three series of events from the exercise where organizing, leadership and temporalities were linked. The first one of these series focused on the Commander's Update Brief (CUB) practice. I described how the CUB works as an entrainment practice in the organization, helping to produce a rhythm for the organization members. These entrainment practices do not solely work on a cognitive level, but also on an embodied level, offering a shared time and place for the organization members and helping them synchronize their activities to the cyclical, daily beat of the staff organization. I also described how the CUB practice both creates, manifests and sustains the leadership status hierarchy in the organization via the symbolic role granting and claiming performances given by the leaders and followers during the practice. Furthermore, I explained how the CUB also promotes collective awareness of the current and expected activities and challenges in the battle space.

The second series of events focused on how organizing emerged in the future planning teams. I discussed how this happens linearly through time. First, the individuals and their proximal team

members came to terms of their intrateam organizing practices and work rhythms. Second, the component level intergroup coordination began to appear and many of the team members took on new, supplementary roles in cross-organizational teams working on the land component level. Finally, the focus turned to cross-hierarchical cooperation across BFOR, component and brigade levels. However, probably due to the limited time frame of the exercise, on the cross-hierarchical cooperation level the coordination practices were limited to the formal coordination practices derived from the standard operating procedures (SOPs). There did not seem to be enough time for the teams and team members to create informal working relations across hierarchy levels that would support mutual adjustment of the planning objectives and the work tasks among the more distant teams. On the intrateam level and across teams within the land component, the informal mutual adjustment had emerged as a coordinating mechanism and it *supported* the formal coordination mechanisms provided by the organizational hierarchy and formal operating procedures. Mutual adjustment, i.e. informal person-to-person discussion and agreement on how a thing will be handled, is a coordination mechanism that is especially important in the very simplest and the most complex organizations (Mintzberg, 1979). The lack of mutual adjustment across the organizational hierarchy showed how the formal procedures and structures are not enough to get things done in an organizational setting. As Czarniawska (2013: 22) has argued, an organizational structure may facilitate organizational processes, but does not guarantee anything.

Indeed, the second series of events also showed how the formal structure of the organization actually hindered the intended activities of the organization. The military staff organization follows the bureaucratic-tayloristic organizing principles. Work tasks are functionally and hierarchically segregated across the organization and coordinated following a classical planning school of thought promoting sequentiality and irreversibility. The planning was supposed to unfold following the waterfall model of coordination, where higher level tasks would be finished first and they would then act as inputs for the lower level tasks. However, this organizing logic was not working in a satisfactory fashion, as the exercise context did not support it. When all planning teams on all hierarchical levels began their work at the same time, the waterfall model was defunct[12]. This

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[12] In addition, even when working the waterfall model is very slow. The long planning cycle from the top of the organization to bottom layers may take weeks. This is probably far too slow for contemporary military campaigns, were the operational speed requirements have increased tremendously because of technological innovations (Hanska, 2017). Therefore, concurrent planning models may be required to gain the upper hand through quicker organizational reaction times.

resulted in anxiety and confusion among the teams and also a 'a fear of parallel planning'. These problems became visible especially in the cross-hierarchical relations, where the informal mutual adjustment practices had not emerged. The operational command tried to facilitate this confusion and find ways where the operational logic provided by the organizational structure could be bypassed. Their ideas consisted of loosening from cross-hierarchical coordination to intracomponent planning coordination or tweaking the exercise context to such a configuration where the current organizational structure would work better (i.e. start higher level planning sooner). In these cases, the human leaders worked to overrule the prescribed structure, providing new organizing principles. In Kerr & Jermier's (1978) original 'substitutes for leadership' theory, the idea was that organizational structure or procedures may supplement human leadership, yet in this case it would seem more appropriate to call the human leaders aiming to supplement the guiding power of the hierarchy and procedures. These practical ideas were interesting in the sense that they help solve the emergent problem in this exercise or in the future exercise, but do not challenge organizational configuration per se. My observation was that the organization and its members were deeply dedicated to the military staff organization configuration. The paradox in the issue lies in the fact that the military staff organization is configured according to the organizing principles derived from the industrial paradigm even when the work done in the organization consists of knowledge acquirement, analysis and synthesis. While some military authors (McChrystal, 2015; Hanska, 2017) have started to question whether the traditional organizing principles still suit the contemporary needs of military staff organizations, the new contemporary organizational solutions and configurations developed in and proposed for information age organizations were not visible in the exercise organization[13].

The third series of events focused on the discrepancy between a past future (represented in formal documents, i.e. orders) and a present future (represented in the current operational activities). The uncertainty whether the criteria for the decisive conditions defined in the past could be redefined to suit the situation at hand caused a period of indecision in the organization and hindered its operational effectiveness. We saw how people acknowledged the principle of irreversibility: the order is a reification of past will and needs to be followed even if the events have made it more or less redundant. Rather, in this situation a reinterpretation of the past was needed, the past criteria

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[13] For example, the Agile Management movement that was developed in software development context.

for success had to be seen in a different light. To make the organization work, the past had to be seen as malleable as the future (Gell, 1992). On the other hand, we also saw the challenges caused by continuous reversibility: the organization also faced a situation where the orders were not finalized but tweaked over and over again. No closure was reached, and operational execution lagged. These two phenomena resulted in the paper process losing its head start in relation to the operational events. This development caused the future planning process to become more or less the planning of the present activities. Situation awareness of the external world was suffocated by inoperation of the internal procedures.

Discussion

The CJSE staff organization is a large, complex organization that aims to extend its control across both space and time. Not only does it want to control the various geographical regions in Bogaland now, it also wants to know and influence what happens to Bogaland in the future. Assuming this control effectively is the challenge the staff organization faces. The staff organization is a functional organization; with highly specialized components, unit and teams. Temporally, the various units cater to both different operational rhythms (e.g. slow vs. quick tasks) and to different future orientations (present, near future, distant future). Furthermore, to succeed the organization needs to effectively coordinate the activities of these units. This coordination is managed via the organizational hierarchy and the standard operating procedures but also through the daily, informal microlevel activity: the mutual adjustment the organization members adopt in their everyday tasks.

The basic organizing principles in the military staff organization follow the logic of an industrial organization. Desired end-states are defined, the resources required to reach these end-states are procured and operational steps to reach the goals are developed. The temporal orientation is towards the future and the practical concern is on how to get there. In some military tasks these principles work well, for example in the orchestration of an attack towards a recognized military threat. Yet, during the exercise situations emerged where the production planning logic was not working for the organization. As time passes, certain end-states may lose their relevance and become redundant. Golembiewski (1990) discussed this phenomenon in relation to organizational change processes. He differentiated between alpha, beta and gamma changes. Alpha changes refer

to situations where the criteria for success can be defined beforehand: we want to reach that destination and if we get there, we can call it a success. Beta changes refer to situations where the criteria of success change during the endeavor: we started towards that goal, but as we learned more, we found out another goal suited our needs better. Gamma changes refer to paradigm changes, where the whole frame of reference for success or the identity of the change agent changes: success is not for example about beating our enemies but about securing peace in the region. The CJSE organization has been designed to handle alpha level change efforts very well. However, as depicted in the third empirical vignette, the organization is less prepared to handle beta level change efforts, not to mention gamma level change processes. My view is that this relates to the industrial organization 'DNA' dominating the staff organization with its focus on closed-system problems where standard solutions can be provided for the challenges the organization faces.

I argued in the previous paragraph that the staff organization's primary temporal orientation was towards the future. This orientation was visible in the organizational effort that was put into managing the different future temporal frames. Past evolution path of the operation stayed hidden in the operations and the social practices during the exercise. I could spot only one organizational routine procedure that explicitly took the past into consideration; the assessment. Yet, the assessment procedure was built on a linear alpha change understanding of the relationship between the past, present and future. The assessment tool seemed be constituted of a rather crude project management aid which does not recognize that future plans (i.e. objectives and means created for organizational plans) have only a limited role in recognizing how development paths actually unfold (i.e. experiences of lived organizational processes) (Bullock & Batten, 1985). Furthermore, during the exercise I did not witness a single presentation or a report that would have tracked how the operation had unfolded in the simulated 'real life'. The operational focus was always on the next step. This shortening of the frame of operational reference is partly due to the exercise context. We have to remember that the exercise lasted only for a week, and the participants had only limited possibility to orient towards the simulated situation. Ziller (1965) suggested that members in open groups (where the membership is unstable) will tend to have short-term time perspectives in regard to group affairs, whereas closed groups (those with stable memberships) will tend to have longer-term time perspectives. Moreover, because of the setting the participants are both enforced and encouraged to focus on their immediate task rather than drift their awareness to secondary issues.

This makes the work in the long term planning teams especially difficult: they can expect only limited feedback from the simulation to validate their ideas and future prognoses.

However, if we take into consideration what the early phenomenologists (Bergson, 1910; Mead, 1932/2002; Schütz, 1932) or the contemporary empirical organization researchers (e.g. Kunisch et al., 2017; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013) have argued about the role of the past in making sense of the future, then the military staff organization may be losing a lot of potential in reaching better situation awareness: having a more comprehensive view of the history and development path of the organization could provide for more convincing prognoses of the potential futures. Again, we need to pay attention that the 'thorough focusing on the near future' may be due to the fast-paced and short exercise context. It may be that experienced staff officers who are working in Afghanistan for an extended period of time, are better equipped to discern both repeated actions and anomalies in the progress of the campaign. Yet, rather than focus on individual capabilities or the officers' personal time perspectives, I argue that the organizational configuration of the CJSE does not explicitly promote the emergence of situation awareness.

To sum up, the primary organizational tasks, structures or procedures did not very well support a learning orientation or a reflexive stance among the participants. However, such practices were present during the exercise, yet they were included as 'supplementary leadership practices' rather than as integral elements of the organization structure. Here I propose a critical role for human leadership action in guiding the organizational attention from instrumental to substantive issues (see Weber, 1947). Both the LCC commanding officers and the OTTM embraced the training dimension of the exercise. They repeatedly encouraged the exercise participants to reflect on the events and kept the issues on the generic agenda. The teams held briefs were learning objectives and achievements were discussed. The LCC chief of staff addressed the staff on the third day of the exercise on how the organizing had unfolded and what the participants should look for next. The deputy commander held a DDT (Design, Develop, Test) session for a cross-organizational planning party, where the discussion among the senior and junior officers was remarkably unhierarchical[14].

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[14] In this session I was drawn to the discussion when the DCOM asked "What would be the researcher's choice of offensive maneuver in this situation?".

Still, these discussions related to learning focused on the individual rather than organizational learning.

Therefore, the senior officers encouraged the junior officers to become reflective and proactive in their organizational roles. They emphasized the learning aspect of the exercise and explicated the learning objective of acquiring situation awareness capabilities. Yet, the majority of the junior officers were more occupied with understanding their primary task in the exercise and expected the organization to operate smoothly as depicted in the SOPs. According to my interpretation, many people had a rather idealized understanding of the staff organization and its operation: people expected a lot from the organization. When the organization did not work immediately as it should, people felt annoyed. Still, as mentioned in the empirical part of the paper, the organizational erosion started coincidentally with the ramping up of the teams and units. Most organizations, exercise or the real thing, never work at an optimal level. Rather, in most cases 'satisfizing' level will do.

My final discussion remark is related to the relationship of plans and planning activity. A famous quote[15] is cited to US president Dwight Eisenhower who stated the idea on several occasions: "Plans are worthless, but planning is essential." The essence of this quote can be witnessed in the activities of the military staff organization. The direction setting is enacted as the planning activity. It is the social practices through which it is organized, i.e. the collection and analysis of external and internal information, the creation of objectives and goals, the assessment of resources and means, are what creates and maintains the organizational situation awareness. In order to 'keep ahead of things', the organization needs to constantly engage in the things at hand, things that can be lurking around the corner, and on the things that have just passed. These ideas, challenges and risks are then put into words on paper, some of which are further reificated as orders to be used as the bases of collective action. However, whenever a plan materializes on paper, it starts to lose its relevance. And yet, in complex, dynamic and ambivalent organizational settings, people can easily seek and revert to the tangible things, such as plans, for concreteness and security. Therefore, a documented plan always represents a 'past future', and its adoption should therefore require a critical review of whether the 'past future' and the 'present future' still have a family resemblance.

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[15] See the website 'Quote Investigator' for further details:
https://quoteinvestigator.com/2017/11/18/planning/

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