



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

Postprint

This is the accepted version of a paper presented at *EIASM workshop on Moral Foundations of Management Knowledge*.

Citation for the original published paper:

Crevani, L., Lindgren, M., Packendorff, J. (2006)

Towards sustainable management: On collective constructions of leadership.

In:

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:kth:diva-49115>

Sustainable leadership and management knowledge: - On collective constructions of leadership

Lucia Crevani, Monica Lindgren and Johann Packendorff

KTH – Royal Institute of Technology
School of Industrial Engineering & Management
Lindstedtsvägen 30
10044 Stockholm, Sweden
E-mail for correspondence: johann.packendorff@indek.kth.se

*Paper for the EIASM workshop on Moral Foundations of Management Knowledge,
Oct 13-14, 2006, ESSEC, Cergy-Pontoise, France.*

Abstract

Within the field of leadership practices, there is an emergent movement towards viewing leadership in terms of collaboration between two or more persons. The basis of this is an increasing emphasis on what we may call “sustainable leadership”, i.e. a search for leadership perspectives that (1) enable people in modern society to actually work with leadership without sacrificing everything else in life, and (2) can enhance the legitimacy of leadership in a society that raises serious moral doubts concerning the content and consequences of modern management practices. In our own earlier studies, we have seen examples of both dual and collective leadership in several entrepreneurial enterprises, and we have also seen how individuals may go beyond taken-for-granted identity bases in society (such as the single hero entrepreneur) through articulation and reflection. What is still rarely challenged is the notion of leaders as one single person or the notion of leadership as something that is exercised by a single person, notions that also shape leader’s identities in society. The idea of unitary command is thus still strongly contributing to the ongoing construction of leadership in society and the ongoing construction of leaders’ and followers’ selves.

In the paper, we start out by discussing the theoretical roots of the unitary command perspective. Following that, we instead argue that all leadership can be seen as processes of interaction between several individuals – by shifting perspective from viewing leadership as a single-person activity to viewing it as collective construction processes, we will see new patterns in how decisions are made, how issues are raised and handled, how crises are responded to etc.

We then present data from four case studies of organizations which on the surface are organized by unitary command, but where the everyday construction of leadership and leader identity is a collective one. A discussion towards future research agendas where the articulation and questioning of the moral and ideological foundations of leadership practices and leadership research are central to the development of sustainable leadership ideals concludes the paper.

1. Introduction: Shared leadership and modern management knowledge

Within the field of leadership practices, there is an emergent movement towards viewing leadership in terms of collaboration between two or more persons. Increasingly, the public debate recognises states, corporations and organisations as lead by several persons rather than by single charismatic men. What seems to be the claimed reason for this is that organizational leadership is nowadays a complex and exhausting job that demands too much of single individuals, and that dual leadership is a way to broaden the competence and personality bases of management and to relieve each other from time to time.

The basis of this is an increasing emphasis on what we may call “sustainable leadership”, i.e. a search for leadership perspectives that (1) enable people in modern society to actually work with leadership without sacrificing everything else in life, and (2) can enhance the legitimacy of leadership in a society that raises serious moral doubts concerning the content and consequences of modern management practices. Leadership has always been discussed both in terms of what leaders do/should do to lead, and in terms of what makes others confirming and making themselves subject to leadership. Therefore, a sustainable leadership ideal is one where leaders themselves find it possible to go on with their current way of living despite vast responsibilities, and where leaders and followers share a view of leadership practices as legitimate both in terms of effectiveness and morality. In our own earlier studies, we have seen examples of both dual and collective leadership in several entrepreneurial enterprises, and we have also seen how individuals may go beyond taken-for-granted identity bases in society (such as the single hero entrepreneur) through articulation and reflection (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2003).

At the same time, traditional literatures on entrepreneurship, leadership and organization theory are dominated almost exclusively by the perspective that leadership is something that is exercised by a single person – the idea of unitary command. Later developments in these fields has emphasised cultural values, visions and leadership as an interaction between leaders and led (Bryman, 1996). What is still rarely challenged is the notion of leaders as one single person or the notion of leadership as something that is exercised by a single person, notions that also shape leader’s identities in society. The idea of unitary command is thus still strongly contributing to the ongoing construction of leadership in society and the ongoing construction of leaders’ and followers’ selves. Leaders as well as followers (terms that in themselves are representatives of dualistic and dichotomous identity constructions) incorporate such taken-for-granted assumptions in society and make them a part of themselves and their ongoing

interaction with others. One has rather almost automatically assumed unitary command as a natural perspective on leadership, in the same way as entrepreneurship research has assumed the notion of single individuals as the natural perspective on entrepreneurship.

Several of the most acknowledged studies on leadership has explicitly had this perspective, such as Carlson (1951) and Mintzberg (1973) who both followed single CEO's in order to understand what leaders do and what leadership is all about. The same perspective can also be found in formal and informal regulations and practices in society in the notion that only a single person can be held accountable for a defined economic area of responsibility – a notion that have far-reaching consequences for who are seen as leaders and what is seen as leadership in the modern corporate world. Insofar contemporary leadership research can be seen as an important influence to the ongoing construction of leadership ideals and practices in society, the question of what basic perspectives that guide this research should be more than only of theoretical interest

In the paper, we will start out by discussing the theoretical roots of the unitary command perspective. Following that, we will instead argue that all leadership can be seen as processes of interaction between several individuals – by shifting perspective from viewing leadership as a single-person activity to viewing it as collective construction processes, we will see new patterns in how decisions are made, how issues are raised and handled, how crises are responded to etc.

We will then present data from four case studies of organizations which on the surface are organized by unitary command, but where the everyday construction of leadership and leader identity is a collective one. The leadership in these organizations are seen as ongoing construction processes where leaders, expectations on leaders, idea generation, decision making and arenas for leadership are continuously negotiated and re-formulated over time (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). In the four organizations – two independent schools, a private theatre company and a music industry non-profit, we find different processes of construction of leaders and leadership. A discussion towards future research agendas where the articulation and questioning of the moral and ideological foundations of leadership practices and leadership research are central to the development of sustainable leadership ideals concludes the paper.

2. Questioning the unitary command perspective

2.1 The institutionalisation of the unitary command perspective

Modern leadership theory started to emerge during the decades of the Industrial Revolution since leadership was then first given attention by economists (Pearce & Conger, 2003). At that time, the concept of leadership was centred on command and control. With the beginning of the new century, the principles of Scientific Management (Taylor, 1911) became dominating in the management and leadership field. The idea of distinguishing between managerial and worker responsibilities implied that the command-and-control idea was reinforced, with management giving orders and providing instructions, and workers following them. The contribution of Fayol and Weber in Europe can also be considered important for strengthening the image of a top-down leadership based on command-and-control (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

General management theory then expanded from its base in Scientific Management through inclusion of psychological and sociological theory and through new understandings of the environment in which managerial activities were performed, and so did leadership theory. Early explanations of leadership effectiveness were based on the notion that leaders possess certain psychological traits and personal characteristics that distinguish them from ordinary people. These theories are all individualistic in the sense that they focus on the individual leader, and they thereby supported the general taken-for-granted assumption that leadership is a single-person task.

Later developments came to emphasise effective leadership as a question of leadership behaviour in relation to specific situations. Moving focus from individual characteristics to what leaders actually did in different contexts and situations, new insights were gained that pointed at the importance of choosing the right leader for the situation at hand. Thereby, researchers could also distinguish between different leadership styles in terms of effectiveness. Often, these styles are described as composed by focus on task, focus on maintaining a good social climate in the group, and the focus on change and development.

During recent decades, there has been an increasing interest in viewing leadership as a social process, where leaders emerge from groups over time as they come to personify what it means to be a member of that group at that point of time. As is often the case in management theory, this development is both based on theoretical advancements and on changed values and practices in organizations. A processual view of leadership is thus not only a consequence of a search for new and better conceptual and methodological tools for the understanding of

leadership, but also of the new knowledge-intensive economy where neither people nor information can or should be controlled in the way they used to be. In this new brave world of “visionary”, “idea-based” or “charismatic” leadership, the notion of individual leaders still seem to persist. The leader is now not only the one who leads and give orders, but also a symbol and source of inspiration.

If leadership theory thereby seem to take the unitary command perspective for granted, the same can be said where general organization theory is concerned. Despite the search for new, post-bureaucratic organizational forms that acknowledge both the pace of change in the marketplace and the new values held by the young generations, managerial posts are still always treated as single-person assignments. People must know who is in charge, and whom to hold accountable.

To sum up, the unitary command perspective lives on in good health, although it has never been scientifically proved that it is always the most effective form. Individual leaders are still used to personify companies and countries, and most new management books treat leadership as something that is exercised by single individuals. In the same vein, the theoretical language of the field seem to incorporate the new environment for leadership activities through re-using old concepts rather than inventing new ones, thereby affirming the notion of heroic, individualist leadership. One prominent example of this is the recent stream of literature on “charismatic leadership” (Conger, 1999, Müllern & Elofsson, 2006), where an old weberian concept for exceptional, radiant leaders are suddenly (and to us un-convincingly) used to portray today’s relational, democratic and trustful leadership styles. At the same time, in the practical world, we can see a development where leaders in all sectors are met with scepticism and contempt, and where young talents pursue other career forms than the managerial ladder.

2.2 Sharing leadership in practice: Why and how?

Historically, the fact that leadership is shared is not something new. Rome, for example, had two consuls in ancient times and, during a period, also a triumvirate (Lambert-Olsson, 2004, Sally, 2002). The reason for these collective institutions was manly to avoid concentrating power in only one person’s hands. In the same way, in some countries, as for example the USA, the legislative, executive and judiciary power are divided and assigned to different institutions. This is however not the main reason for sharing leadership in an organisation. It is anyway interesting to reflect on the fact that an idea (that of sharing leadership) that most of

us almost spontaneously tend to reject has indeed already been applied in different historical contexts. In the following table, the main arguments for shared leadership are summarised:

<p>Organizational perspective (shared leadership as a way of enhancing leadership effectiveness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-person leadership cannot reflect and handle the environmental complexity facing most organizations – several different competences / skills / roles are required • Communication between professions can be enhanced through mutual leadership. • Co-leaders can have a larger span of control together and they have more time for their co-workers and for reflecting on the strategy and the basic values for their unit • Shared leadership means that more parts of the organization/different interests can be represented at the same time at managerial level – one consequence can be facilitation of change processes • Workers have become more aware of the drawbacks of being a leader, as regards private life and stress; therefore, young potentially interesting leader candidates may renounce to have a career and the company loses, in this way, important resources. • Both stability and change can be represented by a dual leadership, thereby facilitating organizational change. • Less vulnerability in case of leader absence or resignation • Lower risk for sub-optimal solutions if the leadership of an organisation is truly shared by the management team 	<p>Holmberg & Söderlind (2004), Pearce & Conger (2003), Sally (2002), de Voogt (2005), Denis et al (2001), Yang & Shao (1996), Bradford & Cohen (1998).</p>
<p>Co-worker perspective (shared leadership as a way of enhancing the correspondence between employee values and actual organizational practices)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The young generations are used to work in teams with some degree of shared leadership. When they rise to higher organisational levels, they are more likely to continue share leadership and to resist to traditional solo command. • Expectation for co-leadership created by the experience of living in modern (at least Western) family models, where both parents have the same participation in decision-making, reinforced by experiences of working in teams • Young employees expect more “democratic” leadership in modern organisations 	<p>Sally (2002), Bradford & Cohen (1998).</p>
<p>Individual perspective (shared leadership as a way of enhancing the lives of those who work in managerial positions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solo leadership “consumes” people and there is a risk for high level of stress and anxiety. • Balance of work requirements and personal responsibilities/private life. • Better sense of security and stability in decision making and implementation • Enhanced possibility to learn having the co-leader as an example and as a feedback giver 	<p>Döös et al (2003), Holmberg & Söderlind (2004), Sally (2002), Fletcher (2004)</p>
<p>Societal perspective (shared leadership as a way of maintaining and increasing the legitimacy of leadership and management)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When power is too concentrated, it may result in immoral and/or illegal actions taken by individual leaders struck by hubris. • Shared leadership increases the possibility of including minorities into managerial positions, thereby increasing the legitimacy of leadership. 	<p>Lambert-Olsson (2004)</p>

Table 1: Summary of arguments in the literature in favour of shared leadership practices

Two different personalities or competence areas completing each other are common for those forms of leadership that are not formally regulated but that are shared in practice. It can be the case of tight collaboration between a CEO and the chairman of the board or the CEO and the COO in a corporate or of a coach and his collaborator in a football team, as the Swedish couple Sven-Göran Eriksson and Tord Grip. Likewise, the cultural and media sectors are full of dual leadership models (de Voogt, 2005, Lambert-Olsson, 2004). An “emotional leader” and a “task leader” has been an arrangement used in famous international corporations as Microsoft, HP, Boeing, Intel (O’Toole et al, 2003). Shared leadership is also described as a better alternative than a single leader when “the challenges a corporation faces are so complex that they require a set of skills too broad to be possessed by any one individual” (p 254) or when companies are dealing with very complex technologies that make the communication between technical and non-technical persons difficult. If two co-leaders would work together under a period of time, they could develop a common language and understanding (Sally, 2002). Team work in projects and discourses of team members’ empowerment seem also to set the premises for sharing leadership within groups. Some research (quantitative) have been done on particular types of teams, as product development or change management teams and the degree of shared leadership has been claimed to be related to team effectiveness (Pearce & Sims, 2002).

Despite these premises, there are not so many organisations that are explicitly implementing forms of shared leadership today. A recent survey made in Sweden in 2003 among managers showed that most of them were positive to introducing shared leadership (Holmberg & Söderlind, 2004). This seems to suggest that the interest for this new model is large, but up to now the number of formal co-leaders is still very limited and the new model has not had the big impact it was expected to have yet. One possible reason could be that the understanding of leadership as an individual trait and activity is very well rooted in our culture: every one of us has in his/her mind clear the images of famous leaders as Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. but we tend to ignore the team of people on which they relied (O’Toole et al, 2003). Large corporations in the business world are also identified by the personality of their leaders, the focus is concentrated on them. Moreover, as the same authors also underline, people in Western cultures seem to need to identify one single individual to be responsible for the performance of a group. We are instinctively reluctant to accept that two persons can share this responsibility, in the same way as we can be sceptical on the capability of two or more persons to make quick and clear decisions together when necessary. Even those that have shared a leader position with another person seem to have a

need to specify that in certain situations a single person leadership is probably more appropriate, as for example in the army or during the coaching of a football team (Lambert-Olsson, 2004). On the other hand, there are also co-leaders witnessing that the opposite can happen. Having the co-leaders seriously and deeply discussed visions for their group, basic understandings of their role and approach to their activity, decisions can be made quicker and are better grounded (Holmberg & Söderlind, 2004, Döös et al, 2003). Moreover, the fact that the decision is made together with another person can give more confidence to both leaders and allow them to shorten the time of reflection (they have already reflected and agreed on basics values and ideas). So, there are some positive experiences, even if the very majority of organisations have not tried any explicit form of shared leadership yet.

2.3 Post-heroic leadership and sustainability

In the introduction to this paper, we viewed the issue of sustainability in terms of leadership ideals that (1) enable people in modern society to actually work with leadership without sacrificing everything else in life, and (2) can enhance the legitimacy of leadership in a society that raises serious moral doubts concerning the content and consequences of modern management practices. In other words, that leadership should become a natural part of many people's lives rather than as a hard and lonely temporary situation for a chosen few.

During recent years, there has been an emerging debate on what has been called post-heroic leadership, which seem most important to the issue of sustainability. According to Eicher (2006), the old heroic ideal is a lone leader who feel that his leadership is based on superior knowledge and information (omnipotence), who fears failure more than anything (rightness), who keep up his appearances at any cost including blaming others (face-saving), and who views his subordinates as inferior creatures in constant need for assistance and rescue (co-dependency). Against this, Eicher pose the post-heroic ideal, where the leader wants other to take responsibility and gain knowledge (empowerment), encourage innovation and participation even in ambiguous situations (risk taking), seeks input and aims for consensus in decision-making (participation), and wants others to grow and learn even at the expense of himself becoming dispensable (development). To us, the heroic ideal creates both unhappy and stressed leaders and also problems of legitimating leaders and leadership in the eyes of employees and citizens. While the post-heroic ideal represents both individual situations and societal norms that enable people, organizations and societies to live on and develop.

Fletcher (2004) examines the power and gender implications of this new understanding of leadership. According to her, “doing leadership”, “doing gender” and “doing power” are related to each other and not being aware of these connections means a risk for failing in introducing shared leadership in organisations. Shared vertical leadership does not imply eliminating all formal leaders, but recognising that the “visible positional “heroes” are supported by a network of personal leadership practices distributed through the organization” (p 648). One example of metaphor used to represent this “collaborative subtext” (p 648) that supports the visible leaders is that of the iceberg (McIntosh, 1989), with its larger part invisible to the eyes. The individual focused perspective is changed with a view of leading and following as “two sides of the same set of relational skills that everyone in an organisation needs in order to work in a context of interdependence” (p 648). This means that, even if formal positions remain unaltered, who will take the role of the leader depends on the situation and individuals are required to move fluidly between the two roles. In such a context, the classical notion of self as an independent entity could be replaced by the self-in-relation notion, where interdependence is instead the basis.

Describing shared leadership in this way, we assign it many traits that are traditionally seen as feminine, that is traits that have been “socially ascribed” to women, as for example “empathy, vulnerability, and skills of inquiry and collaboration” (p 650). On the contrary, traditional forms of leadership are more characterised by masculine traits, as “individualism, control, assertiveness, and skills of advocacy and domination” (p 650). This does not mean that every man has all the masculine traits and all women all the feminine. These are social constructions that influence our identities and that are continuously reconstructed/deconstructed. Fletcher also speaks of the “logic of effectiveness” that underlies heroic vs post-heroic leadership. Heroic leadership relies on a masculine logic of effectiveness on “how to produce things” in working life, while post-heroic leadership relies on feminine logic of effectiveness on “how to grow people” in domestic life (pp 650-651). The two spheres are socially constructed as dichotomies (“separate and adversarial”, linked to men vs women, and evaluated in different ways: skills and complexity vs innate nature). This may not be the case in “real life” where both sexes participate in both spheres, but, “at the level of discourse”, they influence our gender identities.

Here we could find one possible explanation to why post-heroic leadership is mostly invisible in companies. When leaders tell about their leadership, they still use the classical hero individual-focused narrative. If we consider that we construct our identity each time we have an interaction with another person and that a relevant part of our identity is our gender

identity, we can see that also when working we are “doing gender”. The fact that the working life has long been dominated by men suggests that “doing work” is linked to “doing masculinity”. So, since practices related to post-heroic leadership are unconsciously associated with femininity and powerlessness, this new form of leadership violates gender and power assumptions about leadership. These gender and power related questions make the change to the new leadership model more difficult and delicate, since we are speaking of highly charged aspects.

A possibility, at the individual level, is to adopt the “self-in-relation” stance instead of the usual individualistic “self”. The “self-in-relation” concept was proposed by the Stone Center (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003) and was developed within a model of human growth. While traditionally growth is seen as a process of separation from others and of achieving autonomy, the Stone Center sustains that growth occurs as a process of connection. “The ability to connect oneself in ways that foster mutual development and learning is what characterises growth” (p 27). In this way, interdependence is the basis and the self is seen as a relational entity. Mutual influence and co-creation through interactions are evidenced.

2.4 Collective construction of leadership: From emerging practice to research perspective

Our analysis of the existing literature on shared leadership portrayed above is that it can, roughly, be divided in two related streams; (1) one that focus on the practicalities of why and how managerial duties and positions should be assigned to more than one person, and (2) one that assumes a basic perspective on all leadership as being collective construction processes with several people involved. Although these two traditions do not exclude each other, they imply quite different research agendas.

In the first tradition, which has been described above, we find several reasons why and how managerial tasks shall be divided splitted up on several individuals. Concepts like “post-heroic leadership” are used to discuss the inhumane workload of the modern manager and the need to enable him (and sometimes also her) to live a balanced life (Sally, 2002, Pearce & Manz, 2005). Modern decentralized ways of organizing – through high-performing teams rather than through bureaucratic command structures – are also used as arguments (Walker, 2001, Lambert, 2002, Pearce, 2004), and also the observation that an increasingly complex world requires top management competence profiles broader than what can possibly be expected to be found in one single person (O’Toole et al, 2003, Waldersee & Ealgeron, 2002, Pearce, 2004). By reference to established theories on group composition and role

complementarity it is also usual to describe managerial tasks as requiring several different individual roles at one and the same time (Yang & Shao, 1996, Denis et al, 2001). Sometimes we also meet arguments linked to the general legitimacy of leadership, such as that organizational and societal change processes may be facilitated by having several different perspectives and/or interest groups represented in the managerial function at the same time (Denis et al, 2001, Sally, 2002, Ensley et al, 2003). In case this literature refer to actual empirical experiences, it is usually in the form of successful instances of shared leadership (usually from top management settings) and practical advice on how the co-working leaders shall distribute tasks, roles and informations amongst each other in order to make things work (O'Toole el al, 2003). Some authors still also maintain the continued need for traditional vertical unitary command in many situations; shared leadership is primarily suitable for tasks characterized by reciprocal interaction, creativity and complexity (i.e. advanced teamwork situations).

One problem of this perspective is that it views shared leadership as an exception to “usual” leadership, an exception to be practiced in extraordinary situations. Shared leadership is also defined out from the number of involved individuals, rather than out from the individuals’ experiences on if the exercised leadership was actually shared or not – i.e. a focus on formal organizational arrangements rather than on practical everyday organizing. The alternative, as we see it, is to apply a basic perspective on leadership as something that individuals construct together in social interaction (Gronn, 2002, Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Gronn discuss this in terms of level of analysis, i.e. that the level of analysis should be the exercised leadership rather than the single individual leader. Meindl (1995) and Reicher et al (2005) claim that traditional leadership models contribute to the institutionalization of a dualism of identity between leaders and followers in society – a dualism that may be challenged through studies of leadership identity construction. Fletcher (2004) takes this line of reasoning one step further in her discussion of post-heroic leadership in terms of collective, interactive learning processes. She do think that such a theoretic development will run into difficulties, difficulties that may better be understood from a gender perspective. The traditional images of leadership is strongly masculinized, she says, and the feminization that is inherent in the post-heroic perspective will challenge several deeply rooted notions of leadership. Among these Fletcher find the taken-for-granted individualization of society (reinforcing unitary command as the only viable solution), and also the contemporary idea that problems of gender inequality are finally being solved (implying that any basic redefinition of leadership would be unnecessary since we have already found the most

suitable forms) (cf Vecchio, 2002). A social constructionist research agenda where leadership, leader identities and masculinization/feminization as constantly constructed and re-constructed (cf Lindgren & Packendorff, 2006) should thus be central to advance both leadership theory and leadership practices in the direction of sustainable leadership.

3 Empirical study: Collective constructions of leadership

The empirical study reported here was made with a narrative approach, through individuals' stories about processes of leadership. During the last decade, the narrative approach has been taken far beyond its origins within the field of literary analysis (Czarniawska, 1997; Boje, 2001; Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001). It is emphasised that human beings are exposed to numerous different, sometimes contradictory and competing, discourses, and the narrative on the personal work life episodes can thus fill a sense-making function for both individuals and their social contexts. Recent developments in the use of narrative methods stress the importance to make a distinction between narratives and stories and to take into consideration what happens 'before narrative' (Boje, 2001). A story can be seen as an account of incidents or events, and a narrative comes after. "Story is an 'ante' state of affairs existing previously to narrative; it is in advance of narrative. Used as an adverb, 'ante' combined with narrative means earlier than narrative" (Boje 2001:1).

This implied that individuals were asked for their spontaneous story on their life including both work and life in general within the current organization. These interviews were recurring in the sense that we re-visited the organizations several times, and they lasted for about one-two hours with each person. In the end of every interview, we spent some time to clarify details and critical incidents in their stories. Out from our theoretical preconceptions we had identified some themes to be covered by their stories: their view of how organizational leadership has developed, by who and how leadership was exercised, how leadership activities involved several people, how leaders in the organization lived their life both at and outside work, and how their leadership was regarded both inside and outside the organization. After typewriting the tape-recorded material, we extracted different narratives linked to the ongoing production and re-production of leadership in project-based work by means of thematic analysis. Boje (2001) describe thematic analysis out from deductive and inductive approaches, and in this case it has been a combination of these two ways, where a number of general theoretical themes have formed a framework for the inductive extractment of specific narratives. Inspired by Martin's (2001) method we have thus emphasised

narratives concerning the production and re-production of leaders and leadership. We took a special interest in contradictions, competing discourses and critical incidents in the interviews (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1999; Lindgren and Wåhlin, 2001). Below in section 4, the empirical material is organized along different narrative themes that that were extracted given this interest.

The empirical material of this paper is taken from four different organizations that were studied as examples of new leadership practices in emerging industries. Two of them are independent schools (schools financed by municipalities but run by private organizations or individuals), one is a private theatre, and one is a rock festival that has grown into a small music industry corporation. The cases can be summarised as follows:

Organization	The Söderbaum School (TSS)	Viktor Rydberg High School (VRG)	Rockcity and the Hultsfred festival (RCH)	Stockholm Improvisation Theatre (SIT)
Operations	Independent school in Falun for children 12-15 years old.	Group of four schools in Stockholm and Djursholm, of which three are high schools.	Rock festival, restaurants, education, production, marketing, venture capital.	Private theatre company specialising in improvised theatre. Plays, company gigs, course programs.
History	Founded 1994 as a company. Co-owned by founders until 2003. Now owned by a private person.	Founded 1993. Operates as a private trust, no individual owners.	Founded 1981 as an open music club. Today the club owns several companies.	Founded 1989 as a theatre club. Re-started in 2002 as a company after bankruptcy.
No. of employees	60	100	50	7 (+ 30 free-lancers)
Managerial structure	Two married founders, of which one is the headmaster	Two founders who work with strategic development	Collaborative structure with boards, management groups, networks. Informal core of founders.	Five owners, of which one is theatre manager. Groups and committees.
Study focus	Leadership work by founders.	Leadership work by founders.	Leadership work in all managerial positions and tasks.	Leadership work in all managerial positions and tasks.
People interviewed and cited here	John (founder, CEO, owner) Kerstin (founder, headmaster, owner)	Louise A (founder) Louise W (founder)	Patrik (founder, group chairman) Frederika (subsidiary CEO) Putte (founder, group CEO) Lasse (subsidiary CEO)	Nathan (owner, theatre manager) John (owner, director, actor) Patrick (owner, director, actor) Sofia (owner, actor) Ursula (actor)

Table 2: Summary of the empirical case organizations

4. Empirical themes

All four organisations are rather new, and also still more or less in the hands of their founders. The relation between foundership, ownership and the actual managerial structure is not straightforward, however. In each of the organisations, special conditions have implied special solutions. What is common for them all is that leadership is practiced as a shared task and constructed collectively in the sense that many people inside and outside take active part

in discussing, formulating and re-formulating what leadership means locally. We have extracted different themes from the stories concerning important dimensions of leadership constructions. However, we also want to emphasize the ongoing social construction of leadership as continuous process over time. Before going into our thematic analysis of the four cases concerning how they construct leadership in their respective organizations, we exemplify this development over time by a set of quotes from the Stockholm Improvisation Theatre, which underwent a painful transition from an ultra-democratic club to a limited company:

We were too many people that wanted a piece of the same cake, and we did not achieve anything. Everybody had to know everything, everybody had to be everywhere – the organization was a collective and that was impossible to change. We had different ideas on where the theatre was going, and if anyone tried to make decisions we ran into conflicts. (Patrick, SIT)

”Everyone who worked here was a member of the board, and boardwork was not a difficult thing. After the bankruptcy we realised that it is indeed a difficult thing to be a member of the board. We were very naïve. I think that the idealistic heritage made us blind the fact that we made decisions on large sums of money and could loose our own jobs if these decisions went wrong.” (John, SIT)

”It was not a good group, not a functioning group, a lot of un-solved conflicts. The bankruptcy actually came as a relief for me. I wanted to go on playing improvised theatre, so I just had one thing to do; to participate in a bid for the theatre. And then we tried to build it up again. We did not put in a lot of money since there were five of us that bought the theatre together.” (Sofia, SIT)

”Already before the bankruptcy we knew that we liked to work together, the five of us. And the bankruptcy also implied a break-up, some people left the theatre. That would maybe have happened anyway, but the bankruptcy made it all quite clear. Some of them think that we went behind their backs. And yes, some of them we did not want. We never asked them to participate in the bid because we did not like to work with them.” (John, SIT)

”The five of us, at the time when we bought the theatre, had a common view of what we wanted to do. We all have broad competences, and I think that we feel that we can grow together, develop in different directions, allowing some space for our own personalities. If I like to work with something I can say that to the others, and I can also accept to be voted down. We trust each other, we can always argue about things without loosing our basic friendship.” (Patrick, SIT)

”We now have different roles, you always know exactly who to ask about different things. John is extremely good at inventing funny concepts and funny names, to put diverse ideas together. If you need that you go to him, he is very smart. Nathan is our face outwards, good at networking, he become friends with all customers and course participants, he is our safety net. I am important because I try to communicate and delegate

responsibilities, and I also work a lot to make us better improvisators. I want to put forward emotions and artistry, and I often become an important speaking partner to Patrick who always present new ideas on everything.” (Sofia, SIT)

“The actors never know exactly what will happen the next week, they have a slightly more foreseeable work schedule than I have. I spend my time solving problems all the time. My dilemma is that I never find time to plan and build administrative structures.” (Nathan, SIT)

In this case, the bankruptcy and the creation of the company SIT became a critical incident for the organisation where leadership had to be re-constructed. Collectivity and the lack of professional management were constructed as problems to the organization, problems that were solved through exclusion of the people that trusted and complemented each other. The creation of different roles in the organization was, however, not an easy process, and there are remaining problems in building and maintaining adequate administrative structures. In the micro-case above we thus find several discursive themes concerning the construction of leadership. We will now discuss them more in detail with reference to all the four organisations. The themes that emerge from this thematic analysis are

4.1 Leadership as a task in need for professionalization

One general theme in the interviews in the four organizations is that leadership and management must be handled professionally. The idea on professionalism is described in several ways. One way is to claim that friendship and personal relations may imply less rational decisions and that some people are treated better than they deserve, i.e. an image of leadership as making tough and unpopular decisions:

We are a bunch of old friends, we were always together in the beginning. If there was a party, we were there together, and other friends came along. But I think it was an initial strength that we were a quite small gang that were behind a lot of things. Today it is not really the same thing, people have families and want to get away from work sometimes. This has meant difficulties in handling budget overruns or layoffs; we have not been professional in such occasions since we are all old friends. This is a sensitive thing, we must be professional but it shall also be fun to work here. (Patrik, RCH)

Professionalism is also something that is derived from educations and other sources of occupational legitimacy. For example, a professional school manager is not the same thing as a professional pedagogical leader:

"I am interested in pedagogy, but I do realize that I am not professional. I have stepped in from time to time when there was an urgent need and I like it, but I don't feel knowledgeable. The most fun was physics and if I had started in a teacher role, maybe I could have become a good teacher, but now my respect for the job grows for each time I step in. I have appreciated the hands-on character of school work. Intellectually the financial job was very stimulating, where different parties could sit and work on a deal. But that is not emotionally rewarding as this one is. You look at the children and this warms you inside. But in my relation to Kerstin it is our education, roles and knowledge that limit what each of us does." (John, TSS)

To be professional is also described as being skilled in creating action out of decisions. In that sense, a leadership that does not result in changes and development is not sufficient:

"We had one week when the whole gang worked together last summer, and we really got united about the future. On the other hand, you get very often stuck in the old expression "Last night I had hundreds of good ideas and this morning I did like I always do". It can really be like that here. We have lots of good ideas, but the everyday activities take a lot of energy. You think of so many things, but... It's about planning and structuring, and now it feels like we are getting better than ever at it." (Nathan, SIT)

4.2 Leadership may gain legitimacy through representativity and extension of management

In one of the organizations, Rockcity/Hultsfred, there have been periods when the leaders of the organizations have been seen as far from legitimate. The organization has a history of clashes between cultural and commercial norms, which affects the ongoing construction of leadership. Those acting as leaders must thus inevitably handle these clashes:

There is a history here governing what you can do and not, a conflict between cultural and commercial values. The festival culture is still around, and some people have had rough times when trying to deviate from that. There have been a lot of discussions about the festival brand, and we are not through that at all. I think that it is important to stick to the original foundations for what we do. RockParty is the cultural part and the Metropol companies are the commercial part. (Frederika, RCH)

Often, the solution to a lack of legitimacy is to extend the managerial group in order to make more sub-groups represented:

"I became a member of the Metropol board although I was newly employed and woman. Putte got more and more to do outside and he was our face outwards. Metropol is his baby and he wanted someone he trusted there. I became the one everyone came to, I did that in parallel, while my job was to work with public relations. After my maternal leave I started to work full-time and then I became CEO of Metropol.

The old gang can't be involved in everything; it was really a pretty clear signal to the whole organisation when Putte wanted me to take Metropol." (Frederika, RCH)

Extending the managerial group is not that easy, as some people expect a certain individual to represent the organization at all occasions. One way of handling this is to consciously construct a multi-face organization to outsiders:

My strategy is not to be seen locally. I might be on the cover page of *Entreprenör*¹ and looked upon as the great businessman and all that, but at home I'm not seen at all. Instead, it is always the one that has been responsible or actually did the job that is to be seen. It's important that you always try to put the others in the light, and I've tried to do that for five or six years now. (Putte, RCH)

4.3 Individualism vs collectivism as a problem in leadership

In the general understanding of leadership, the notion of individuals and collectives is problematic. Leaders are expected to be individuals and individualists, but at the same time many decisions and actions are collective by nature. For example, leadership is usually constructed in terms of loneliness and power distance, which affects how people behave in relation to each other:

"I don't drink coffee in the teachers' room, I take it with me to the office, mostly because I realise that if I sit down maybe I will kill the conversation. We have a trustful atmosphere in the staff room, but I feel like one of the managers. It is impossible to be a manager. Things you say are interpreted on the basis that you are a manager. This is of course worse for Kerstin. But this has led us to avoid participating in certain situations in order not to dictate the meetings, just being there creates problems." (John, TSS)

The problems of individualism in leadership is also linked to different forms of material benefits and advantages, such as high salaries and large offices. In that sense, the local construction of what leadership means also affects the organizational norms on what is desirable and unwanted behaviour and attitudes:

"We were 30 shareholders when we formed the first company, Metropol, but we have all sold our shares back to RockParty. We earn decent salaries, but nobody has become rich. We run big business and have vast responsibilities, but I usually do not think about it, I might have a hard time sleeping in the night. Some people in Hultsfred have earned a lot of money, like those owning the festival grounds, coffee shops, restaurants and so forth, but we are not among them. It is a good thing that we haven't owned this ourselves, even though that could have made some difficult decisions easier to implement. On the other

¹ A leading Swedish business magazine on entrepreneurship and business creation.

hand, the spirit in this building might not have been the same. In the end, this whole organization is about daring to test ideas. (Patrik, RCH)

4.4 Role complementarity as important in leadership work

Among the interviewees, the construction of leadership is much centered around reasoning on that different people with different personalities may complement each other in the ongoing management of the organization. Some may even take psychometric tests in order to understand their interaction better:

”We were helped by a personnel consultant that mapped out the personality type for potential personnel when we started the school, even our types. Kerstin and I were very different. But this helped us. Kerstin is economical, I am an economist.” (John, TSS)

Often, the actors are well aware of what their respective strengths are and how they should interact in order to perform at their best:

”I have a theory on why we have been since 1997 on this journey that speeded up our association except for the festival. Erkki comes first. He is the one that finds everything, he really finds everything in a project, he comes to me and Putte. “We can do this and we can do this, send in this application for EU-financing, etc.”. And suddenly there is a “click” in Putte’s head and so he says that “I want this, we shall do this”. And so he jumps onto the barricades and gets the people to follow him, he gets them going. I come in at the third stage. I know you have to filter the talk; if Putte says that it gives 35 millions then it gives maybe 5 millions, etc. But I knew that, it was the rule of the game in order to convince people about impossible projects. I take over his grand projects and make them happen. The last link in the chain that made it possible for us to take things to the national level was Per who worked at MRV Records in Stockholm. He is born in Vimmerby and wanted to move home, and during the same period they established a regional government here. They became responsible for entrepreneurship and business development, and we suggested that they should employ Per as business developer. Our national music industry center here is the result of a collaboration between Per and Putte.” (Lasse, RCH)

This view of different actors playing different roles in managerial processes can also be found in the other cases. Usually, the actors have reflected upon this and also established practical ways of using this in the best way possible:

”A cooperation often begin with a common idea and then you have a meeting and then each one does what’s needed to meet again. When I draw our organisation, I draw a circle for myself that overlaps John’s circle. Overlapping is recruiting, wages, we work together on the budget even if John prepares it, both of us participate in management team meetings, marketing meetings together. Then we have distinct

own areas, I have the contact with parents, John has the contact with banks, etc. When banks invite us to dinner I go, however. At the board meeting I am the secretary and also present issues within my areas.” (Kerstin, TSS)

”Our organization is a little special in that our principals are pedagogical leaders and we take care of everything else regarding premises, administration and we are discussion partners for the principal. The principal takes care of everything that as to do with the personnel, nothing that as to do with rebuilding premises and similar matters. You can think of a newspaper with a CEO and a chief editor – then we are the CEO and the principal is the chief editor. We work with marketing, strategy and lobbying, it’s our tasks.” (Louise W, VRG)

What is also evident is that the construction of complementary managerial roles is something that develops over time. Initially, people are not aware of their roles and often try to do everything together:

”We were more together at the beginning, and now we have more clearly separated tasks. We inform each other, but we don’t need to consult each other on everything. I think this is mostly positive since it gives us some tranquility, we feel more confident in our roles. When needed we are there for each other, but we do not sit on each other’s laps. It felt a little like that at the beginning, the sea in storm, the others against us, from time to time. We are not needed in the same way now either, and they don’t confuse our roles anymore, which make it easier. Still people do anyway believe that I also know what they said to John, because it was like that at the beginning. We did also commute to Sandviken, so we had a few hours during trips that we used to exchange information. It is just a little funny sometimes now when we find out that we don’t know.” (Kerstin, TSS)

The role construction processes are not always harmonic, however; some actors may feel stuck in a certain role while others find it hard to assume new roles while maintaining the already existing ones:

I’m a big critic and always ask who is going to pay for all this and who is going to make it happen. It’s a pity that I always assume that role. But I can live with that, in the end it’s always better not to let the visionaries run ahead all the time. I also have visions myself, but mostly I keep things together. (Patrik, RCH)

”I think that I work about the same amount of hours as before the bankruptcy, but I think that it is even more funny and rewarding now. If I have done a good performance at a company gig and we get new orders, I also feel that I have made some money for the theatre and for our survival. It was like that before as well, but it is different now when we own the theatre ourselves. That is important, it is a kind of identity. A mixed identity; sometimes you think that you became an entrepreneur when you actually

wanted to be an actor, and then we are also employers. It is important to think about yourself in all these terms.” (John, SIT)

4.5 Heroes expected: Individuals as uniting symbols

Notwithstanding the actual managerial work practices where the actors lead their organizations together by means of role complementarity, they still adhere to the expectations on leadership to be embodied into single persons. The world around their organizations expects single leaders, and sometimes there are also internal reasons to put forward charismatic and heroic persons as symbols and change agents.

Putte had decided to do what Roskilde² had not been able to do, to create spin-off's from the festival. The person that decides to do such a thing must be able to handle the reactions from the rest of the organisation. When he declared that we were going to do other things using the festival brand, a gigantic conflict broke out. If it had not been Putte, he had been thrown out at once. They wrote angry letters to each other and called me to meetings where they told me that I destroyed the festival brand and so on. (Lasse, RCH)

”I went myself in a school where everyone knew who the person that started and ran the school was, and her ideas lived in the school. It's easy for the students to understand the idea with the school when persons are visible, because people personify ideas.” (Louise A, VRG)

”And then we decided that to be successful we needed one face outwards, and then I should become that face. So we decided that I should symbolize Hultsfred.” (Putte S)

4.6 Patterns of cooperation

Practical leadership in the studied organizations imply close co-operation and an ability to sense what the other co-leaders may think of different matters:

“I remember when a consultant that was going to work on our website came with the first proposal, where there was a picture with young people and cell phones. Louise was not there then. The pictures were so much ”spaced out”. I had an image in my mind a tree and the sky in order to symbolize knowledge. The consultant thought that we were so modern with IT and everything. But we didn't understand each other at all. Then Louise came and I showed her the pictures without saying anything. Oh no, Louise said, I had imagined some oaks. We had the same opinion without having talked to each other about it, and still we are different. Louise is good at numbers and she likes that. I have studied business administration, it is true, but I don't like it. I love to write while Louise doesn't. So it works so well.” (Louise A, VRG)

² Danish university town housing one of the other major rock festivals in Europe.

“But then one develops one’s roles, now after 9 years we know which roles we have.” (Louise W, VRG)

“We do write a lot now, but before we write so we always review what we should write and Louise has a lot of comments and then we look at that together, the same with numbers. When Louise is away I feel very lost. To be single manager as many men are is really tough.” (Louise A, VRG)

“But I don’t think that nine years and two schools and one company have worn us out. Of course we have worked a lot, but just because we are two persons, there is some relief. We strive a lot to have fun and to laugh all the time, because this results in that you have more energy. If you are alone everything becomes heavier and more serious and that makes it more difficult to get things moving. We are very aware that it is said that women are more cautious so we try to push and incite ourselves. If we had been men we had been bigger as an organization.” (Louise W, VRG)

No matter how close and integrated the actors are, societal structures such as gender differences still find their way into the practical everyday situations, however:

“I am the only woman here among the owners, and sometimes I regret that there are no more women. I feel that. We all communicate in a masculine fashion, and it is not easy to be too much of a feminist in our meetings. It works all right, but there is a macho attitude among us that becomes a part of our culture. I speak openly about this because I want all people to be attracted to this theatre, not just tough guys. If one of the guys is in a bad mood, everyone tip around on their toes, people yell at each other and so forth.” (Sofia, SIT)

What is also problematic is the tendency that actors may get stuck in modes of working and that the shared leadership practices cause stagnation since all changes depend on consensus

“I have followed this theatre for a decade, and it has both developed and stagnated at the same time. We have the same discussions year after year; how to behave outwards, how to guarantee a certain quality, how open are we to be to others, what is secret and what is not, are we too tough on each other and so forth. We are dealing with some delicate people here, and it is very important who communicates things, how information spreads – eternal dilemmas. We tend to discuss new issues all the time; first we decide on principles but suddenly a new issue appears that make us abandon the principle. So I try to decide on my own instead.” (Ursula, SIT)

Another aspect of shared leadership practices that might become problematic in some situations is the relative informality and lack of clarity that follows when organizational roles are not clearly assigned:

”What fascinates me is that you need each other, so I could go to someone and they came to me when they wanted to learn. Different people but the entrepreneurial spirit is the same in all of us. We meet at breakfast in different constellations. People come up with things, that’s why it is good to exchange ideas with people. It is not necessary to have Putte sitting at a table in order to have ideas coming up. It is different people that take ideas that came up with them. There are informal ways to get people on one’s side, Putte and the other founders, if it has to go quickly. It was even more in this way before, because then we were not so many people.” (Frederika, RCH)

4.7 Leadership as network construction

Among all interviewees, network building is a central aspect of leadership. Networking is both an internal activity by which an increasing number of employees are attracted to participate in leadership, and an external activity where relations to different actors are seen as essential to organizational survival and success. In the social construction of leadership, many individuals have a larger common network than a single person, and their intention is often to increase the total number of relations by exchanging contacts:

”Since a couple of years we try to see what kind of networks people have. And we try to reinforce the networks of those who have some gaps. Networks are really important, and the larger the network the better it is. It becomes much easier to do business – 80% of all the businesses are based on personal relationships. The day after tomorrow there will be a meeting on public procurement at the municipality, and we don’t give a damn about public procurement. But at that meeting there are 10 companies that we want to work with, so we are there anyway in order to support them in the discussions with the municipality, we are in the same gang. And next time we meet those companies so we have something in common, a belonging. It is about building trust, at the end. It is also one of the rules we have; you can’t get something without giving something. And if it is about new contacts so you almost always have to start by giving.” (Putte, RCH)

The opposite thing, i.e. a lack of broad networks, is usually seen as a problem:

”I work a lot. I have no children. When I do not work here I work with other projects. I write, I read, I travel, I see people. Many of my friends are from the theatre world and from this town, and as an outsider I am stuck with them. I think it is a drawback for me that I have no other social arenas. No natural relations.” (Patrick, SIT)

4.8 Managerial work as consuming the individual

A last theme in the narratives on leadership is that managerial work often tend to become the central thing in life:

“I work 50-55 hours a week, sometimes weekends too. I can’t let go of it, I burn for it. And I am always lagging behind. The atmosphere and all the activity here is most exciting, but it consumes me. You can never focus on anything, as soon as you are into a discussion on important stuff someone calls or knocks at the door.” (Nathan, SIT)

Although shared leadership practices may relieve individuals from heavy workloads, they can also lead to an increasing amount of work discussions outside regular work hours:

“Patrick and I are best friends, we spent the weekend together in Italy, we do not talk work much. But somehow work and private gets mixed, suddenly you realise that you sit at a restaurant in the evening with a glass of wine and discuss work.” (John, SIT)

“Kerstin and I follow a bad pattern as regards our relation during the day. We decide that we should meet, but everything else comes in between and we pass each other all the time. It is actually about prioritising the other party, it often feels a little presumptuous to prioritise my wife. So we talk a lot in the car about how it did go and so on. Of course we talk job, but not that much anyway.” (John, TSS)

5. Leadership, collective constructions and morality

In the empirical themes above we have emphasized that leadership is something that is negotiated, reflected upon and constructed during daily interactions between people. By focusing on stories on leadership activities rather than on stories on individual leaders, we have tried to put forward the processes of leadership and how they develop over time. Below, we first briefly discuss the empirical themes and how they can be related to the unitary command perspective, whereafter some notes on future leadership research are presented.

5.1 Empirical themes: Constructing and re-constructing the unitary command perspective

The unitary command perspective, which is the perspective that we have chosen for critique in this paper in our search for sustainable leadership perspective, is both confirmed and re-constructed in the studied organizations. It is confirmed in the sense that unitary command norms of single-person leadership are maintained as necessary and natural features of the managerial structures, but it is also re-constructed as all four organizations strive to find leadership procedures that involve many people and make use of the diverse competences that exist. Although the unitary command idea is not embraced anywhere, it is still a taken-for-granted norm in society to which all actors must relate in one way or another.

One example of this is the discussions on individuality and collectivity, where all organizations in the study try to find ways how to make collectivity work without moving back into individuality. That was a problem in SIT, but especially in RCH where there was a huge conflict between individuals who wanted to put themselves in front which resulted in that the “we-culture” of that organization was further strengthened and institutionalised. When conflicts make values visible you need to really reflect upon them and therefore they can even become stronger than before.

There are also important to notice that during time people construct roles together and find patterns of interaction. In the beginning it is more flexible and they sometimes do the same thing, but after a time people find their places in the interaction pattern. In TSS there are some overlapping in the beginning even if they have decided that Kerstin was the pedagogical expert and John was the economist. In the other cases there have been many shifts in work task between persons involved. But, it is also clear that people seek for structures both at organisational and individual level. We can see this in different dimensions. In SIT they want to have a functional organisation because of the problem the collective free form was generated. Now they have their roles and have also find a way to work together. In VRG they did most things together in the beginning but after a while they recognized that they were more pleased to do separate things in the venture, they have also a strict organisational separation between themselves and the administration/pedagogical management of the school. In RCH they still seek for structures in a way but have manage to go through different crises by means of solidarity and hard work.

The power of individual heroes in society is also visible when they talk about how to put one single person in front. A single person is a visible symbol that may personify what the organization stands for, and a single person is also what the environment expects. Even if they do not organize themselves in that way, they still find it necessary to conform to expectations.

5.2 Sustainable leadership: Notes towards a research agenda

The basis of this paper is what we have called “sustainable leadership”, i.e. a search for leadership perspective that (1) enable people in modern society to actually work with leadership without sacrificing everything else in life, and (2) can enhance the legitimacy of leadership in a society that raises serious moral doubts concerning the content and consequences of modern management practices.

To us, it seems that sustainability, both in practical and theoretical terms, is a matter of viewing leadership as collectively constructed. Practically, the notion of collective

constructions would imply that leadership is created by many people in interaction and that not all responsibilities need to be placed on one single person. The consequences of that can be most important to many organizations. It will e.g. imply that different individual roles are seen as important to leadership, that the notion of role complementarity may become even more important in the composition of managerial teams, and that single individuals may be relieved of unrealistic and harmful workloads. In addition, this might also result in new views on how the daily operations of the company can be organized; if employees are recognized as responsible and accountable co-leaders rather than as un-trustworthy subordinates, they should be entrusted to make decisions not only on operative matters but also on governance matters. The principle of inverted delegation (i.e. that tasks are delegated upwards rather than downwards) is one possible outcome of this, and it also may become natural that the composition and role structure in a management team is a matter for the team's subordinated to decide upon. This is not to say that hierarchies shall not exist, but rather that hierarchies should be seen as systems of relations that is open for construction and re-construction by all of their members. Which, of course builds on the assumption that the members are responsible people who view their organization as a common interest that must be maintained into the future. By this, modern leadership practices might become both less harmful to individuals and more legitimate in the eyes of its beholders – i.e. increasingly sustainable.

Theoretically, viewing leadership as collectively constructed implies several things that should be of importance to future research. Moving focus from leaders to leadership activities (Gronn, 2002) is one such important stance. Thereby, it may be possible to follow the construction processes where power, organizational roles, definitions of reality are negotiated in social interaction (cf Smircich & Morgan, 1982), viewing these processes as leadership even though they may not result in clear decisions, unitary action strategies etc. In that way, moving focus from leaders to leadership activities is also a way to move focus from leadership outcomes to the processes of leadership.

By advocating a sustainable leadership perspective, we argue that studies within the field of leadership need to take one step further towards the inclusion of axiological or ideological perspectives. Leadership activities are thus not only interesting as processes of social constructions, they are also interesting in the sense that they are important manifestations of hidden and/or taken-for-granted ideological and moral norms in society. Like several other fields within general management research, the leadership field maintains a mainstream perspective where the object of study is essentially a positive thing with desirable outcomes. If these desirable outcomes are indeed delivered, the processes preceding them are

rarely questioned. When critical researchers and/or voices in society demands ethical perspectives or humanistic perspectives, or indulge in criticism of psychopathic leaders, greed and other modern phenomena (Jackall, 1988) they actually advocate a leadership research where not only the processes and outcomes of leadership should be studied, but also the hidden ideological and moral meanings on which modern leadership practices and theories are based. Post-heroic leadership is to us one such way towards leadership theorizing where the articulation and questioning of moral foundations is central to theory development.

In this paper, we have focused our discussion on one central – but often hidden and taken-for-granted - aspect of leadership: the unitary command perspective. By discussing both the roots of unitary command and the recent challenges to this perspective in leadership literature, we have portrayed a development where both established leadership practices and leadership norms are questioned, both in terms of what they do to people in organizations and what they do to the general views of leadership in society. Our empirical voices shows the ambiguities inherent in this practical development, even for organizations that strive to organize leadership collectively. While questioning the forms and consequences of unitary command and also actively promoting the perspective that leadership is something they create together, they are still not able to discard all traditions in the field. Not least because they operate in a society that expect single, powerful, hard-working leaders that deliver decisions and strategies and who can control their organizations and be held accountable for everything that happens there. In that sense, questioning the unitary command perspective is one way of articulating and questioning the moral foundations of modern leadership knowledge, which we see as the necessary first steps towards the formulation of sustainable leadership ideals – in single organizations and in society as a whole.

References

- Alvesson, M. and Sköldböck, K. (1999). *Reflexive Methodology. Interpretation & research*. London: Sage.
- Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. London: Sage.
- Bradford, D. L. & Cohen, A. R. (1998). *Power Up: Transforming Organizations Through Shared Leadership*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Bryman, A. (1996). Leadership in organizations. In: S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy & W. R. Nord, (eds.). *Handbook of organization studies*. London: Sage.

- Carlson, S. (1951). *Executive Behaviour*. Stockholm: Strömbergs.
- Czarniawska, B. (1997). *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Denis, J-L., Lamothe, L. & Langley, A. (2001). "The dynamics of collective leadership and strategic change in pluralistic organizations." *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4): 809-837.
- Döös, M., Wilhelmson, L. & Hemborg, Å. (2003). "Smittande makt: samledarskap som påverkansprocess." *Ledmotiv*, 3: 58-71.
- Eicher, J. P. (2006). *Post-heroic leadership: Managing the virtual organization*. [<http://www.pignc-ispi.com/articles/management/post-heroic.htm>], read 2006-08-25.
- Ensley, M. D., Pearson, A. & Pearce, C. L. (2003). "Top management team process, shared leadership, and new venture performance." *Human Resource Management Review*, 13: 329-346.
- Fletcher, J. K. (2004). "The paradox of postheroic leadership: An essay on gender, power, and transformational change." *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15: 647-661.
- Fletcher, J. K. & Käufer, K. (2003). "Shared leadership: Paradox and possibilities." In: C. L. Pearce and J. A. Conger (eds). *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*. London: Sage.
- Gronn, P. (2002). "Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis." *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13: 423-451.
- Holmberg, K. & Söderlind, E. (2004). *Leda genom att dela: Om delat ledarskap i praktiken*. Navigator Dialog.
- Jackall, R. (1988). *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lambert, L. (2002). "A framework for shared leadership." *Educational Leadership*, 59 (8): 37-40.
- Lambert-Olsson, H. (2004). *Delat ledarskap – om äkta och oäkta dubbelkommandon*. Stockholm: Svenska Förlaget.
- Lindgren, M. & Packendorff, J. (2003). "A project-based view of entrepreneurship: towards action-orientation, seriality and collectivity." In: C. Steyaert & D. Hjorth (eds.) *Entrepreneurship: New Movements*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Lindgren, M. & Packendorff, J. (2006). "What's new in new forms of organizing? On the construction of gender in project-based work." *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(4): 841-866.

- Lindgren, M. & Wåhlin, N. (2001). "Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals." *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 17: 357-377.
- Martin, P. Y. (2001). "'Mobilizing masculinities': women's experiences of men at work." *Organization*, 8(4): 587-618.
- McIntosh, P. (1989). *Feeling like a fraud, Part 2*. Working paper #37. Centers for Women, Wellesley College.
- Meindl, J. R. (1995). "The romance of leadership as a follower-centric theory." *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6(3): 329-341.
- Mintzberg, H. (1973). *The Nature of Managerial Work*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Müllern, T. & Elofsson, A. (2006). *Den karismatiska chefen: En bok om att utveckla det egna ledarskapet*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- O'Toole, J., Galbraith, J. & Lawler III, E. E. (2003). "The promise and pitfalls of shared leadership: When two (or more) heads are better than one." In: C. L. Pearce and J. A. Conger, (eds). *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*. London: Sage.
- Pearce, C. L. (2004). "The future of leadership: Combining vertical and shared leadership to transform knowledge work." *Academy of Management Executive*, 18 (1): 47-57.
- Pearce, C. L. & Conger, J. A. (2003). "All those years ago: The historical underpinnings of shared leadership." In: C. L. Pearce and J. A. Conger (eds). *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*. London: Sage.
- Pearce, C. L. & Manz, C. C. (2005). "The new silver bullets of leadership." *Organizational Dynamics*, 34(2): 130-140.
- Pearce, C. L. & Sims, H. P. Jr. (2002). "Vertical versus shared leadership as predictors of the effectiveness of change management teams." *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 6 (2): 172-197
- Reicher, S., Haslam, S. A. & Hopkins, N. (2005). "Social identity and the dynamics of leadership: Leaders and followers as collaborative agents in the transformation of social reality." *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16: 547-568.
- Sally, D. (2002). "Co-leadership: Lessons from republican Rome." *California Management Review*, 44 (4): 84-99.
- Smircich, L. & Morgan, G. (1982). "Leadership: The management of meaning". *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 18(3): 257-273.
- Taylor, F. W. (1911). *Scientific Management*. New York: Harper & Bros.

- Vecchio, R. P. (2002). "Leadership and gender advantage." *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13: 643-671.
- de Voogt, A. (2005) *Dual Leadership as a Problem-Solving Tool in Arts Organizations*. Paper presented at the 8th International Conference of Arts and Cultural Management, Montréal, Canada.
- Waldersee, R. & Eagleson, G. (2002). "Shared leadership in the implementation of re-orientations." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 23(7): 400-407.
- Walker, J. (2001). "Developing a shared leadership model at the unit level." *Journal of Perinatal and Neonatal Nursing*, 15 (1): 26-39.
- Yang, O. & Shao, Y. E. (1996). "Shared leadership in self-managed teams: A competing values approach." *Total Quality Management*, 7 (5): 521-534.