Leadership cultures in transition:

On the cultural construction of leadership in university change processes

by

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Abstract

In contemporary organizational research, the development of leadership norms and ideal in public sector reform has been a recurring theme. The current change processes in the higher education sector is in this paper analysed as the changes in leadership cultures, i.e. as processes in which discursive understandings of leadership are drawn upon in the construction of norms, ideals and practices related to the production of organisational direction. The aim of this paper is thus to analyse leadership cultures under production in the reforms of higher education, in a discursive context of increased managerialism and leaderism. Building on a perspective on leadership as a cultural phenomenon emerging in interaction processes in which societal, sectorial and professional discursive resources are invoked, we intend to add to earlier studies on how notions of leadership are involved in the transformation of higher education organisations. This perspective does not only allow a more fine-grained analysis of how these transformations unfold – involving not only clear discursive clashes but also instances of hybrid cultures and creeping changes in the discursive resources drawn upon – but also a critical analysis of changed power relations as 'truths' on professionalism and leadership are gradually re-formulated. Departing from two vignettes from sessions with junior tenure track participants at a Swedish university, our analysis centres on the emergence of hybrid leadership cultures in which several discursive resources are drawn upon in daily interaction. Where earlier research often tends to handle the relation between traditional academic/bureaucratic discourses and emergent managerialist/leaderist ones as a clear and distinct shift, we emphasise how hybrid cultures develop through confirmation, re-formulation and rejection of discursive influences.

1. Introduction

In contemporary organizational research, the development of leadership norms and ideal in public sector reform has been a recurring theme (cf O'Reilly and Reed, 2010; Fitzgerald et al, 2012). Based in a 'managerialist' discursive notion of leadership, public sector management in profession-based organisations such as schools and universities is increasingly to be founded upon market mechanisms, corporate organisational structures, and clear principles of accountability and responsibility, intended to replace earlier policy technologies based in professionalism and civil service-inspired bureaucratic ideals (Ball, 2003). It is a shift that also involves changed assumptions and practices related to leaders and leadership.

According to O'Reilly & Reed (2010) managerialism has by time also been extended by a complementary discourse, 'leaderism'. Leaderism adds notions of individual leaders as radical change agents with abilities to define organisational agendas and solutions, unify diverging interests and create enthusiasm and shared values in organizations – notions that have become widespread both in leadership research and practice (cf Alvesson & Svenningson, 2003). Thereby, leaderism has introduced the general notion of the individual, powerful heroic leader in settings where leadership has traditionally been executed by representative political bodies, civil servants or collegial forums. In an era when higher education institutions are granted formal autonomy and at the same time expected to participate directly in societal innovation systems, leaders and leadership are thus emphasised as central to university change agendas (Marginson and Considine, 2000) – as solutions to efficiency problems, as arenas for rational control, as ideals for the professional employee, as symbols for successes and failures.

The backdrop of these changes are of course the professional values and traditions of the higher education system, often related to notions of academic freedom and expansion of human knowledge as the *raison d'être* of universities. In this traditional discourse leadership is closely tied to excellent scholarship, in which important decisions are made in collective and collegiate manners, in which the success and prosperity for the institution rest upon its ability to create a safe, allowing and predictable context for their professionals. As noted by Henkel (1997), managerialist interventions into higher education organisations often tend to challenge these values through increased focus on administrative rules, centralisation and homogenisation of regulations and procedures, decreased job security, and disintegration of the academic profession, and unitary command leadership forms borrowed from private sector

corporations. Not surprisingly, the analysis of current changes often depart from individual- or organisation-level studies of how traditional professional norms are overridden by emerging managerialist/leaderist notions based in New Public Management and the private business sector (Bolden et al, 2013).

The current change processes in the higher education sector is in this paper analysed as the changes in leadership cultures, i.e. as processes in which discursive understandings of leadership are drawn upon in the construction of norms, ideals and practices related to the production of organisational direction. By linking cultural changes in organisations to societal discourses on leadership, management and public sector governance, we want to contribute to an understanding of how general discourses are invoked in change processes in higher education organisations and thereby becoming part of local/cultural understandings of leadership work. Leadership is thereby studied as relational and cultural phenomenon produced and reproduced in local daily practice as actors draw upon discursive resources (i.e. various societal discourses) related to leadership, public sector governance and professionalism (cf Fairhurst, 2009). Leadership cultures will thus build upon discursive understandings of what leadership is, how it is to be exercised and not, why leadership should be practiced in certain ways, who are and should be considered as leaders, etc (jfr Alvesson, 2011), resulting in inter-subjective notions on and practice of, e.g., who is included and excluded from leadership, how different subjects participate in the development of the organization, how assumptions and narratives are mobilized, etc. Leadership cultures are produced and sustained through language; by stories, metaphors, myths, heroes and villains, traditions and symbolic events, by performative leadership ideals borrowed from leadership training, media or professional traditions.

In situations where different cultural understandings of leadership meet – that is, where conflicting and heterogeneous discursive resources are mobilised – processes of change unfold where leadership cultures are combined, produced and reproduced. Beyond the dualist notions of profession based leadership vs. private sector leadership there are ongoing daily practices where leadership ideas and ideals are constantly under production in interaction (Bolden et al, 2013) – where ambiguity and conceptual confusion is normal (Ford, 2006) and where cultural hybrids appear, are reproduced and sometimes rejected (cf Fitzgerald et al, 2012.

To sum this up, dominating leaderist and managerialist discourses tend to lend primacy to heroic individual managers as 'incarnations' and 'carriers' of effective leadership in the transformation of higher education (cf O'Reilly and Reed, 2010; Bolden et al, 2013) As these discursive notions often tend to be contrasted to traditional notions of collegiate leadership in universities, current changes are usually analysed in terms of clashes between academic professionalism and private business ideals. As noted by Bolden et al (2013) this may result in simplified notions of change processes – such as that firm beliefs in collegiality and meritocracy are replaced by un-reflective and naive expectations on empowered vice chancellors or deans. The concept 'leadership cultures' offers a possibility of a much richer and more nuanced understanding of leadership discourses and organisational change as an ongoing cultural production, by moving the focus to how leadership norms and practices are formulated, combined and disposed of in the organising of daily work.

The aim of this paper is to analyse leadership cultures under production in the reforms of higher education, in a discursive context of increased managerialism and leaderism. Building on a perspective on leadership as a cultural phenomenon emerging in interaction processes (Uhl-Bien, 206; Crevani et al, 2010) in which societal, sectorial and professional discursive resources are invoked (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003), we intend to add to earlier studies on how notions of leadership are involved in the transformation of higher education organisations (cf Deem, 2004; Bolden et al, 2013). This perspective does not only allow a more fine-grained analysis of how these transformations unfold – involving not only clear discursive clashes but also instances of hybrid cultures and creeping changes in the discursive resources drawn upon (cf Fitzgerald et al, 2012) – but also a critical analysis of changed power relations as 'truths' on professionalism and leadership are gradually re-formulated.

2. Managerialism and leaderism taking hold of universities: understanding university reform through discourses

2.1 Discursive resources in higher education reform

Our development of the concept of leadership cultures is in this paper taking place in a general context of New Public Management-inspired changes in the Swedish higher education sector. Since the 1980's, NPM is a general trend in public sector reform across the world,

driven by policy discourses constructing the public sector as bureaucratic, conservative, self-serving, ineffective, dominated by internal professional norms (Hood, 1995).

At the core of NPM, we find the *managerialist* discourse – emphasizing the management of public sector organizations through instrumental rational structures, standardized procedures, clearly defined notions of responsibility and accountability (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Pollitt, 1990; Reed, 2002; Terry, 1998). Managerialism has been introduced as a set of organizational and social technologies for the efficient management of organizational matters, construing public sector organizations as in need to be 'managed' and the clients/taxpayers as consumers operating in a turbulent marketplace (Ball, 2003). According to O'Reilly & Reed (2010), managerialism contains an aspect of entrepreneurship (non-bureaucratic organizing for innovation in a competitive market) and an aspect of culture management (aligning policymakers and public sector managers in terms of beliefs and strategic orientation). Managerialism thus projects most of its hopes through the deeds of liberated managers, who are best informed and best suited to deal with the challenges facing their respective organizations. More specifically, hope is projected onto a desired *image* of the liberated leader, an ideal and simplified image of a rational and omnipotent actor to which the fates of complex organizations can be trusted (Meindl et al, 1985).

In the words of O'Reilly & Reed (2010) there is an emerging discourse of 'leaderism' complementary to managerialism, a discourse emphasizing leaders as radical change agents, emphasizing the possibilities of unifying a diversity of stakeholders into common visions, but also emphasizing leaders as autonomous. They are not only implementing reforms, but also designing them within a general framework set up by policymakers, they are "authors of their own reforms". Moreover, an image of leadership as a positive and inspiring phenomenon - that is, a moral, aesthetic and spiritual addition to functionalist managerial techniques - is as the center of this discourse (cf Currie & Lockett, 2007).

In current critical research on higher education reform, managerialism and leaderism are usually contrasted to what is often referred to as traditional professional academic values (cf Henkel, 1997), or Old Public Management (Deem, 2004). Ball (2003) argue that the education reform 'package' as it is applied in schools, colleges and universities are embedded in interrelated policy technologies – the market, managerialism and performativity (in the sense of increasing performance). These technologies have different emphasis in different

cultural settings but they are inter-dependent in the processes of reform. They are set over and against other and older technologies as professionalism and bureaucracy:

> "Policy technologies involve the calculated deployment of techniques and artifacts to organize human forces and capabilities into functioning networks of power. Various disparate elements are inter-related within these technologies; involving architectural forms, functional tests and procedures, relations of hierarchy, strategies of motivations and mechanisms of reformations or therapy." (Ball, 2003: 216).

The values that are suppressed and replaced in the current reforms are related to a series of professional and bureaucratic discursive notions of what academic work used to be about and how universities were supposed to be organised. In a study of academic leaders having experienced the introduction of New Public Management, Deem (2004) point at the far reaching self-regulation of work for academic professionals, collective and collegiate decision-making forms, a view of leadership as focusing on creating the best possible conditions for knowledge-intensive work, and an egalitarian and meritocratic view of both students and employees. Leadership was an aspect of senior scholarship, something that was nurtured and developed incrementally in the same way as academic reputation and respect. It did not contain aspects of corporate management such as internal auditing, performance measurement, customer orientation and the current emphasis on societal usefulness and participation in innovation systems.

2.2 Understanding higher education leadership: Towards a cultural perspective

The available discursive resources in society related to leadership tend to grant primacy to the notion of the single, heroic, masculine leader as a norm for modern and effective leadership (cf Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Crevani et al, 2010; O'Reilly and Reed, 2010; Bolden et al, 2013, Holgersson, 2013). This resonates well with the general developments in the field of leadership studies, which has traditionally been leader-centered, i.e. focused on the individual leaders and their traits, abilities and actions (Wood, 2005), placing the abstract phenomenon of 'leadership' into distinct individuals that are detached from their cultural context (Barker, 2001). The general research agenda in the leadership field can be characterised as both *positive* and *normative* (Lindgren et al, 2011), generally portraying leadership as an inherently

'good' phenomenon that has an important role to play in improving for example economic growth and conditions of living, as already Meindl et al. had highlighted (1985). Leadership research is thus seen as a vehicle of finding the best leaders and leadership practices needed for the achievement of desired outcomes (Wood, 2005). This implies a strong normative intent to find out how leaders are supposed to be selected and trained for maximal success and to identify tools and practices that may enhance their performance even more (Carroll et al., 2008; Gronn, 2002; Fletcher, 2004).

The leader-centrism inherent in this dominating discourse has been heavily criticized by an increasing number of leadership scholars and alternative ways of thinking of and practicing leadership have been proposed (cf Crevani et al, 2010; Denis et al, 2012; Fitzgerald et al, 2012). While such alternative ways – such as shared leadership, distributed leadership and so forth (cf Crevani et al, 2007) - are usually framed as new, alternative and suppressed notions of leadership, they are at the same time well established in traditional professional discourses of higher education (Bolden et al, 2013). Therefore, it seems even more paradoxical that organizations traditionally characterized by collective forms of leadership and shared responsibility, such as universities, are now moving towards an individualistic and heroic leadership ideal by invoking current dominating managerialist and leaderist discourses:

> "...emerging forms of leadership and management practice may be experienced as conflicting with ideals of collegiality academic freedom, education and scholarship, ultimately distancing and disengaging the very people that universities seek to influence and involve in institutional governance, strategy and change." (Bolden et al, 2013: 2)

As noted by Bolden et al (2013) this is neither a straightforward nor unidirectional development, since notions of 'academic leadership' are related not only to issues of individual and organisational performance, but also to broader social and cultural processes. What we see when employing a perspective on academic leadership as cultural processes in which organisational direction is produced are encounters and clashes between different norms and practices (Marginson and Considine, 2000; Deem, 2004) as actors invoke various discursive resources in their ongoing leadership work (Clarke et al, 2012). What are crucial for the development of a higher education organization in certain directions is not the single individuals occupying certain formal positions, but the kind of leadership culture(s) being shaped and reshaped during such change processes. While such an aspect is downplayed in traditional leadership discourse – which is still dominated by viewing individuals as

autonomous, independent selves ordered in a subject-object relation(Hosking 2011), - a cultural perspective – highlighting how we organize matters in daily interaction and thereby produce and re-reproduce norms and practices – challenges such assumptions and enables to study and to practice leadership differently. Our way of relating to each other becomes a central aspect of leadership cultures, defining the possibility and premises for people to join the doing of leadership, which in turn means that the ways in which leadership is produced in an organisation are crucial for what kind of actions that are seen as possible/impossible and desired/unwanted. Leadership cultures thus enables and sustains the *space of action* for people in the organisation, and hence the organisational *direction* that unfolds (Crevani et al, 2010).

2.3 Leadership cultures, organisational change, and its consequences

In the ongoing production of leadership cultures, different discursive resources meet and are re-produced, combined, reformulated etc. Cultures build "success" and "failure" versions of the world (Luke, 1995) by producing "truths" of what we should do as members of Academia. The analysis of how discursive resources are drawn upon will thus enable us to how leadership norms change over time, what of tensions and paradoxes that appear, how the space of action is produced, and what old truths about academic leadership that is reinforced and what new truths that emerge (cf Gordon, 2002). This also means that we are interested in analysing how discourses actually defines, construct and positions human subjects, connected to the power of "truths" about the social and natural world in general and leadership in specific. ..."truths that become the taken-for granted definitions and categories by which goverments rule and monitor their populations and by which members of communities define themselves and others" (Luke p 8-9). Following our interest in change processes in universities, such an analysis will focus on how the invocation of discourses implies re-constructed spaces of action through changes in leadership cultures. New discursive resources may both enable actors to perform certain aspects of leadership, but also constrain them from others.

3. Two empirical vignettes: The production of leadership cultures in the reform of a Swedish university

During the last decade, the Swedish higher education sector has been subject to several reforms and changes. The government recently launched a series of deregulations based on a claimed need for academic autonomy, at the same time as several national and international systems for performance measurement and assessment has been introduced. In the wake of such managerialist reforms, the internal debates on what constitutes professionalism, excellence, careers and professional autonomy are on the increase – often against a backdrop of scepticism against New Public Management and utilitarian expectations on producing employable students and profitable innovations. At the same time, emerging technologies for performance measurement – such as bibliometrics – also imply a renewed emphasis on traditional professional values linked to top-quality publishing and rankings of institutions, departments and individuals. Higher education reforms have thus resulted in several tensions and conflicts.

In recent inquiry texts, the Swedish government draw upon leaderist discourses on claiming a need for improved public sector leadership in general and renewed academic leadership in specific (Ekman Rising et al, 2010). At the same time, the debate seem void of any distinctive set of leadership ideals beyond general claims that 'strong' leaders like those in private corporations are essential to the survival of the sector. From our view of leadership as a relational and cultural discourse, the study of how various discourses are drawn upon in the production of leadership cultures in Swedish higher education is therefore of importance in understanding the ongoing changes.

3.1 Methodology

The empirical study reported in this paper as a basis of our development of the leadership cultures concept concentrates on a major Swedish university currently undergoing a series of internal changes in the wake of governmental deregulation. The university has a long history with well-established professional traditions and norms. Along with the governmental deregulation, university management has undertaken a series of strategic and operative changes, which makes it interesting since the differences in leadership norms at play become even more important, giving raise to paradoxes, tensions and possibilities.

The empirical material is produced by means of participant observations and of the collection of a number of texts produced during the (still ongoing) change initiatives. Methodologically, we combine a traditional qualitative study of change initiatives over a long period of time with participant observation. The material is in this paper condensed into selected vignettes representing significant episodes from the ongoing change programmes in which leadership cultures are in transition. These are by no means isolated episodes. Rather, they represent the kind of talks and actions common at the university during this period. They thus offer interesting examples of instances of talk and action in which we can see how the different discourses are invoked as the situation unfolds. We do not claim that the limited material presented is representative of all practices going on at this university, rather these are significant interactions in which it is possible to observe leadership cultures in transitions. In this paper, we analyse two such episodes here called "Kittens peeping into the organization", a shorter one, and "Excellence ambassadors", a longer one.

One of the major changes undertaken at the university in the wake of governmental deregulation was a career development reform aimed at young, promising faculty. Framed as a 'tenure track system' it was intended to give those who were accepted for the system defined career paths and professional support in their development towards becoming future academic leaders. The system represented a long-term commitment on behalf of the university and were intended to add predictability and a sense of procedural justice to the career paths for junior faculty. Everyone was to understand what was required to pass or fail each step in the formally designated career, and there was also a timetable for the successive evaluations and assessments. Formal managers at all levels were bound to follow the regulations and make sure that they applied to everyone in the same manner.

Like many other Swedish universities, top management thereby responded to governmental expectations on taking on an increased and professionalised responsibility for strategic Human Resource Management instead of treating it as an internal everyday matter for departments, research groups and senior professors (Ekman Rising et al, 2010). The university offered financial support to grant the selected participants time for individual research, but also required that they took part in a series of training sessions and evaluations designed to assist them in their personal development. Our vignettes both take place in such contexts – they are explicitly designed to foster future leaders at the university and they are

also meeting places between young faculty and university management in which current leadership cultures are produced and re-produced.

3.2 Kittens peeping into the organization

A central part of the organisational processes constituitng the tenure track system was Experience Groups, in which assistant professors regularly met to exchange experiences on their role, articulate reflections on their work situation and train for future leadership assignments. Through the Experience Groups, university leadership was to become more professional and the intention is also to integrate general notions of good leadership in society into the academic profession. In the end of the Experience Groups process, participants compile their reflections and insights through group work and present them to university management at an internal conference. By finalising the process by such a session, participants are enabled not only to formulate shared understandings among themselves, but also to offer feedback to the university to be used in the development of the tenure track system.

At such an occasion, the group choose to visualise their experienced work situation by using a 'kitten' as a metaphor for their role. Standing in front of the vice chancellor and other high-ranking managers in a crowded lecture hall, group members explain that they feel small and insignificant in their capacity as Assistant professors, peeping into the organisation without understanding much or having any possibility to make a difference. They continue their metaphorical reasoning by voicing a desire to 'sharpen their claws' and developing into 'tigers'. As kittens, they are playful, innocent, cute creatures that had to be protected, fed and taken care of – as unleashed tigers, they could instead be flexible, powerful, recognised and allowed some space of action. Afterwards, the discussion centre around issues of job-related stress and the lack of long-term employment forms for young faculty, but no one commented upon what the group had said about their feelings of exclusion. When the discussion is over the session leader moves on to the next item on the agenda.

The significance of this vignette lies in the fact that this group consisted of high-performing men and women who had been carefully selected to become future full professors and high academic leaders. What are the dynamics leading to the junior faculty positioning themselves and their spaces of action in such terms? What are the consequences for the leadership done

and expected? What leadership cultures were involved in this episode and how were they shaped and re-shaped?

3.3 Excellence ambassadors

In the tenure track system, time-limited assistant professorships were inserted between post doc-positions and Associate professorships as a possibility for selected junior faculty to develop their own research and teaching portfolios. Assistant professorships were open for application for anyone, and usually included a four year guaranteed salary and limited teaching requirements. After two years, each holder of such a position is assessed according to a predefined model, where a self-assessment along the overlapping dimensions of "Education" (teaching skills), "Research" (research skills) and "Scholarship" (academic leadership skills) is evaluated by an appointed committee. This half-time evaluation is important as it is supposed to result in a shared understanding of what the Assistant professor has to achieve during the following two years in order to be promoted to Associate professor. If the candidate cannot be promoted, he/she has to find a job elsewhere. The half-time evaluation is explicitly geared towards assessing the "excellence" of Assistant professors. The candidate shall be able to display excellent pedagogical skills, excellent research skills characterised by independence and own specific contributions, and excellent leadership skills linked to supervisory and managerial experiences. In order to develop a shared sense of what such excellence entails, Assistant professors are expected to take part in a series of development sessions. One of them is the setting of our next vignette.

At this session, several participants are soon bound to undergo their half-time evaluations. There are a lot of discussions in the group and many of them are frustrated and stressed over their work situation in relation to the demands on excellence inherent in the evaluation criteria. The mentor program leader decides to invite a member of the central Faculty Board, a long-time Professor at the university, to answer questions on the evaluation and give some advice on how to proceed. The professor gladly accepts the invitation as he is most committed to these issues and has things to say as he is actively involved in the ongoing development work with the tenure track system. He arrives well prepared with a PowerPoint presentation.

The first slide shows how faculty at a well-known US university take pride in their workplace and how they actively work to promote themselves, their research and their institution. They are portrayed as "excellence ambassadors" for the university in the surrounding society, actively assuming responsibility for sustaining it as a top-notch institution by taking part in social media exchanges.

The session participants clearly did not expect this initial message. They agree that it is important to promote and disseminate their research, but as Assistant professors they also have to demonstrate excellence in terms of publishing, external grants, teaching, pedagogical and managerial development, and so forth. Unlike the US university brought up as a role model, their own university does not have a clear strategy for dissemination and marketing, and if indeed such a strategy exists, they have not read it. The question of what the demand to be "excellent" means remains unanswered.

The invited professor moves on to the next slide, which centres on citations. Their university is now being compared to the same US institution, both on university level and when it comes to some individual leading scholars. He explains that citations are how academic excellence is measured, and that increased excellence is the same thing as becoming increasingly cited in high-ranked journals. The advice to the session participants is to seek co-authorship with well-cited researchers in order to get more citations themselves. The session room is now more or less silent. The session leader is clearly uncomfortable with both the silence and the message and finally asks "But what is it that drives research?" The professor does not hesitate: "I want to have more citations than my colleague, of course! I am competing with him!"

After the session, participants gather around a table with coffee and rolls, still silent. They have got the message - that excellence is measured in terms of citations and that their future careers at this university depends on their ability to get increasingly cited. The session leader encourages them to articulate their feelings and reflections on this, which evokes some reaction. One of them says that "I am not sure that I want to be at a place that has this view. It does not suit me. My passion for research is based in making good for society and contributing to important issues, not in getting cited!" Another participant adds "I cannot think in terms of competition in research, I must think in terms of cooperation if it shall be possible to work. That does not work for me. I should never be able to take such a stance towards my co-workers, it would not work." A third voice around the table exclaims that "But

this was really good to know. Now we know where our university stands. What really matters. The rest is just talk."

4. Discussion

In this section we will use the empirical vignettes to initiate a discussion on how various discursive resources are drawn upon in the production of leadership cultures. First, we will analyse the vignettes and the tenure track system as showcases of the production of hybrid cultures – that is, how traditional and emerging discourses are invoked simultaneously through confirmation, re-formulation and rejection. Then, we will discuss the consequences thereof for production of 'truths' and space of action in the construction of organisational direction.

4.1 Production of hybrid leadership cultures: Confirmation, re-formulation and rejection

In the two vignettes studied, we found leadership cultures under production through the invocation of several discursive sources. Besides general and often discussed ones such as managerialism and leaderism, there were also discourses on academic professionalism, public service, pedagogy etc. In line with extant research (cf Deem, 2004; Bolden et al, 2013) we have condensed these discursive resources into a traditional discourse emphasising academic values and impartial bureaucracy, and an emerging one built on managerialism and leaderism. While the two vignettes provide instances of such discourses, we also base our classification and the analysis of the dynamics highlighted between the discourses on the rest of the empirical material collected in the course of our longitudinal project. As already noted in this paper, there are several possibilities for overlaps between them – not least because both discourses are under construction as they are drawn upon in societal development.

As earlier mentioned we analyse the change processes taking place in the cases as based in three modes of invocation of the two discourses; confirmation, re-formulation and rejection (see fig 1). Confirmation is one of the major aspects of cultural change, i.e. that emerging discourses confirmed and sustained already established cultural patterns related to leadership.

For example, the traditional emphasis on excellence in research appears to fit well with emergent aspects of bibliometrics – citation measurement put emphasis on successful and recognised research rather than on administration and internal politics, upgrading high-quality research in relation to basic teaching or participation in societal innovation systems – as we see in the second vignette. Likewise, the traditional academic governance culture, which mainly limited collegiality to senior professors and encouraged admiration for academic heroes, is well reflected in emerging discursive notions of management functions as effectively distanced from everyday operations and of the frenetic search for future elite scholars – a tenure track system has been instituted, and we see in the vignette that the practices involved produce distance between academic leaders and those supposed to become academic leaders. A related aspect was the instances of re-formulation taking place, i.e. when established aspects from the traditional discourse is sustained through a process of changing labels, adding or removing certain meanings or implications. For example, hierarchy is sustained while power in the hierarchy is gradually moved from professorial to managerial cadres. Being an excellent researcher is still commendable, given that one also embrace organisational needs to impress stakeholders and increase medial visibility, as we see in the second vignette. In the same vignette, we also observe that excellence is still highly valued, but it must be possible to register through bibliometrical and other research assessment instruments. In this way, the hybrid leadership cultures do not only imply a mix discursive influences from various sources, but also creeping changes in meaning and emphasis by which some cultural aspects become less visible and less visible and others gradually replacing them.

Instances of outright rejection were harder to find in the material. By rejection we mean aspects that were constructed as impossible in the ongoing cultural production and hence mobilised out of the picture. Traditional notions related research as an altruistic endeavour and university life as secluded were more or less impossible to sustain in the cases studied. Instead, they were constructed as unwanted, ineffective and even immoral. Likewise, there are aspects of the emerging managerialist/leaderist discourse that (yet) is not included in the production of leadership culture, such as full-fledged corporate governance systems populated by non-academics, far-reaching integration of diverse disciplines and subjects despite 'market demands' of such, or of even more elaborate systems for individualisation of academic work.
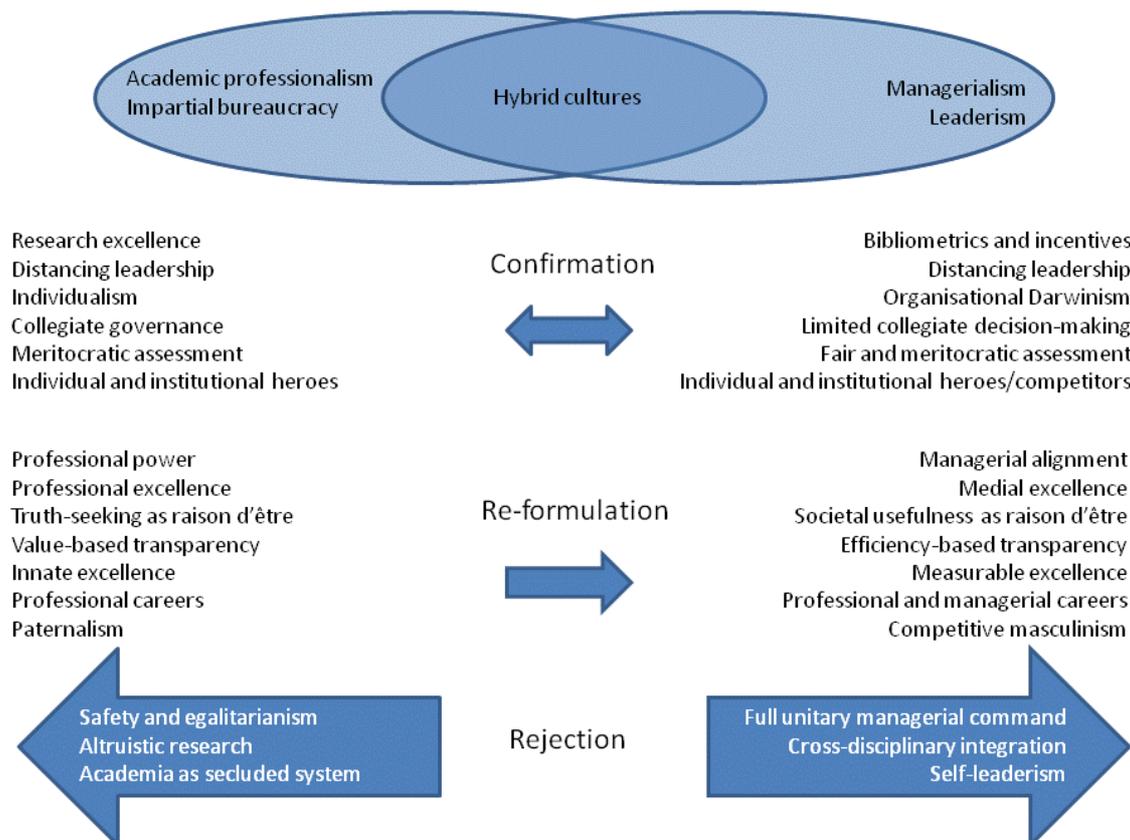
Figure 1: Hybridisation of leadership cultures through invocation of traditional and emergent discursive resources

4.2 Leadership cultures in transition: Production of truths, space of action and direction

In the above section we attended to the hybridisation of leadership cultures at the studied university, emphasising how traditional and emergent discursive resources are combined in various ways. We will here continue by analysing the consequences of this in terms of how space of action and organisational direction is produced in hybridised leadership cultures, attending specifically to how 'truths' are established (Luke, 1995) and how organisational members become constrained and enabled (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996).

Analysing the kitten/tiger vignette as a case of leadership cultures in transition, we attend to how the junior faculty repeatedly constructs leadership as something from which they are excluded, as located in a distant, comfortable and transparent core of the organisation. They

perform followership in a traditional way by invoking a clear leader-follower distinction (cf Collinson, 2006; Grint, 2009) and emphasise the distance inherent in the dichotomy by employing a genre alien to the situation (fables and fairy tales) in their view of self. The rest of the university is not made subject to the kittens and tigers metaphors, it is rather assumed to consist of somewhat ignorant human beings that hold the power to unleash them into tigers. As kittens, they are not to be allowed in certain groups, not to be offered power-laden tasks, to be isolated in small work groups separated from the university as a whole, only being able to "peep into" the rest of the organization. By voicing a desire to become 'tigers' they construct a set of current constraints that prevent them from assuming the tasks of leadership, from taking responsibility for transforming and disciplining themselves into capable and high-performing subjects (Ball, 2003). All these accounts point to an organization in which leadership distance is constructed and enacted through a number of practices and where leadership – while having been emphasised and upgraded as a desirable quality in young faculty - has also become less available to their identities as professional and successful academics (Gordon, 2002). It also represents a highly gendered notion of their future subject positions as active and successful leaders (tigers), and of their current selves as powerless and precarious kittens whose space of action is limited to the traditional responsibilities of assistant professors rather than to promising future leaders (cf Holmer-Nadesan, 1996).

At the same time, the construct of leadership as distant and as something to be practiced elsewhere, by someone else, is not a new theme in this organization. In the extant professional culture leadership is exercised by a small number of senior professors who occupy the seats of all central decision-making bodies. The managerialist/leaderist discourses drawn upon does not deviate from this other than through an emphasis on professionalism in leadership at all levels, a professionalism that involves capacities beyond pure academic excellence and thus is constructed as unavaible, almost mystified (Gordon, 2002). The alternative discursive notion that faculty members should take responsibility for each other and for the organization, together, is thus not considered. On the other hand, it is thanks to the managerialist/leaderism discourse that arenas as the one that gathers these junior faculty members have taken form. Arenas that provide the possibility for junior members to come close to each other and articulate alternative meanings over what academic work is about. In practice, the junior faculty is therefore already contributing to re-formulating leadership culture, although from a relatively marginal position.

Analysing the excellence ambassadors episode as a case of leadership cultures in transition, we attend to how the junior faculty find themselves in the midst of an unexpected discursive tension between two constructions of the ideal future academic leader at the university. On the one hand, being 'excellent' is constructed in managerialist terms by the invited professor as involving performance measurement, calculation, competition and individualism. On the other hand, being excellent is also constructed by the participants as unconditional love for research that should have a positive impact on society and should be pursued together with colleagues, thereby drawing upon traditional academic discourses. The second construct can only be sustained if channelled through the norms of the first; if it results in measurable and competitive results in line with stated norms and targets defined by the organisation (Ball. 2003).

The managerialist interpretation of excellence also results in producing cultural truths on the benefits of distance between both the academic work and society and between employees in Academia. The researchers' focus should be on increasing his/her impact factor in terms of citations, and fellow academics are produced into competitors to beat – unless the 'other academic' is a highly cited researcher, in which case opportunistic closeness is highly valued. This cultural construction also results in an emphasis on closeness between Academia and society in other terms, i.e. that the academic should be able to act as an ambassador for the university by 'medializing' his/her own persona and thus prove the usefulness of himself and his university to society at large. Such a construction strongly invokes a leaderist discourse, in which leaders are strong, competitive and visible, individualism is highly valued, and success is granted to "the fittest" (Ball, 2003). Managerialism is also vividly present in terms of accountability and responsibility for individual performances that can be quantified and thus controlled (O'Reilly and Reed, 2010). On the other hand, the glorification of known professors, the competition for prestige and for the possibility to "set the agenda", the separation between senior and junior faculty, and the prioritization of research activities over teaching and administration is not something new, rather already present in a traditional professional discourse. What is new is the simultaneous erosion of common professional identities and "the construction of new forms of institutional affiliation and 'community' based upon corporate culture" (Ball, 2003: 219). This results in redefined spaces of action in which conformance to performance objectives and organisational strategies become new ingredients of excellence. What is suppressed as a consequence of this are other forms of closeness between Academia and society beyond large-scale cooperation with major

corporations, for example traditional forms of action research and outreach towards weak and underprivileged sectors, communities and populations.

The kitten/tiger vignette is also an example of how discourses on leadership and empowerment are drawn upon in the ongoing hybridisised cultural production of leadership. The emerging leaderist discourse invoked in the construction of the tenure track system is in this way an enabling construct, posited against a constraining version of the traditional professional discourse in which the university is indeed managed in a collegiate way, but by full professors only. The organisational change processes of which this vignette is a part here seem to have resulted in temporary hybrid cultures and possible re-formulations of discourses of leadership, professionalism, excellence, and hence of the spaces of action experienced by and available to different actors. Actors have even internalised the notion of space of action in their choice of metaphor; the traditional professional culture of the university may be seen as alimenting the kitten-tiger distinction, while the tenure track initiative (new to this setting) is expected to be an attempt to break with such culture through the introduction of a of managerialist and leaderist way of working with leadership development. In this case, a managerialist initiative is constructed as a promise to junior faculty to become involved in the leadership of the university if excellence is achieved. At the same time, the professional culture is contributing to sustain exclusion and a notion of leadership as not requiring specific training or experience other than having achieved the rank of Professor.

In the excellence ambassadors case, the presence of these various constructions results in producing a hybrid culture of distance between the assistant professors, who are supposed to become future leaders and to have entered a clear and defined career path, and the senior faculty at the university, represented by one professor, providing them with one more task to attend, being ambassadors, and condensing excellence into citation figures. Interestingly, the leaderist and managerialist discourses inform the ambition with the new formalized career path: there are clearly defined performance criteria, responsibility and accountability are placed onto the individual, leadership is defined as one of the core competences to be developed and demonstrated (cf O'Reilly and Reed, 2010). A traditional bureaucratic discursive notion of meritocracy is thus sustained but also re-formulated into a more managerialist construction of "up or out" careers, motivated by an explicit ambition at the university to break with informal nepotistic tendencies that often play against women and minorities. For example, administrative tasks, contributing to organizational development

rather than to one's own career only, are also to be evaluated. In this way, practicing the new career system is achieved in a complex cultural interplay of individualism and organisational Darwinism on the one hand – the assistant professor stands on his/her own objective merits and should not be helped by close relation to senior faculty – and of a bureaucratic impartiality – they can rely on being supported, treated equally and fairly, that all tasks should count and they shall be less left to the discretion of their senior colleagues. This "up or out" system also produces distance in another way, given that the position as assistant professor is a temporary position based on the assumption that not everyone will succeed in fulfilling the requirements posed for advancing to a permanent position. The assistant professor is thus places in a liminal space between belonging and not belonging – but then paradoxically asked to act as an ambassador of the university, as if s/he would be closely located in the centre of the organization. A further consequence might also be what Ball (2003) refers to as 'fabrication', i.e. a covert expansion of space of action by including into one's own notion of professionalism the ability to carefully craft and articulate performances in a manner that is measured and recognised as good research, good teaching – and indeed, good leadership. Fabrication is in this sense both a way of displaying competitiveness and ability, but also a way of escaping humiliation (Czarniawska, 2008) for not being good enough.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we set out to analyse how leadership cultures are under production in the reforms of higher education, in a discursive context of increased managerialism and leaderism. Building on a perspective on leadership as a cultural phenomenon emerging in interaction processes (Uhl-Bien, 206; Crevani et al, 2010) in which societal, sectorial and professional discursive resources are invoked (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003), we want to add to earlier studies on how notions of leadership are involved in the transformation of higher education organisations. The perspective outlined were intended not only to a more fine-grained analysis of how these transformations unfold, but also a critical analysis of changed power relations as 'truths' on professionalism and leadership are gradually re-formulated.

Departing from two vignettes from sessions with junior tenure track participants at a Swedish university, our analysis centres on the emergence of hybrid leadership cultures in which

several discursive resources are drawn upon in daily interaction. Where earlier research often tends to handle the relation between traditional academic/bureaucratic discourses and emergent managerialist/leaderist ones as a clear and distinct shift, we have emphasised how hybrid cultures develop through confirmation, re-formulation and rejection of discursive influences. This also implies that there is no clear development as to what kind of space of action that is under construction in Academia, the managerialist/leaderist discourse may constrain certain practices, but enable other. We are looking at a space of action that is organically changing shape.

In the processes of cultural production taking place as different discursive resources are invoked, actors in the organisation re-construct action space. In the vignettes, for instance, participants positioned themselves as powerless and located far from the leadership processes going on, thereby drawing on both traditional discourses on professorial management and on emergent leaderist notions emphasising professionalised corporate management. They also opposed to, but partly subjugated to, the increase of bibliometrical evaluations as a core ingredient in notions of excellence – again a notion in which traditional values and emerging ones reinforce each other. The gradual replacement of traditional notions of affiliation and communitarianism in Academia by emergent notions of competition and "up or out" careers – emphasising the formal relation between individual performing subjects and organisational strategies and evaluation systems over informal professional research values – is a third example of this.

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