

Department of Industrial Engineering and Management

Making Leadership

Performances, Practices, and Positions that construct Leadership

Jouni Virtaharju

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construct Leadership

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Aalto University
School of Science
Department of Industrial Engineering and Management

Supervising professor

Professor Matti Vartiainen, Aalto University, Finland

Thesis advisor

Associate Professor Saku Mantere, McGill University, Canada

Preliminary examiners

Associate Professor Gazi Islam, Grenoble Ecole de Management, France

Professor Arja Ropo, University of Tampere, Finland

Opponent

Professor Keith Grint, Warwick Business School, UK

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This dissertation separates from the traditional leadership view that leadership stems from the actions of leader characters. Rather, it argues that context is the source from which leadership arises in organizational settings. In the dissertation leadership is understood as a social construction. Leadership is defined as a meaning of collective mobilisation towards a purpose: people perceive such a state as leadership.

The dissertation is comprised of four individual essays. In the essays the construction of leadership is studied in two different cultural/organisational settings. Three of the essays study how organisational changes in an industrial organisation affected supervisory leadership. Contextual changes in supervisory tasks, practices and positions influenced the perceptions that organisational stakeholders had of supervisors and their leadership. The remaining essay focuses on presidential leadership. The essay analyses how ritualistic performance (an informal fishing ritual) was mythologized in media, creating a lasting interpretation of the presidential leadership. The studies adopt an interpretative research approach and apply narrative analysis as their primary research method.

Overall, the dissertation shows how context partakes in the construction of leadership. It explains how leadership is not the direct result of the leader actions, but becomes constituted in an entangled web of sociomaterial elements and actors. The study shows how the leadership constituting elements have a common, mundane quality; by nature, they have no exclusive leadership character, but become infused with leadership in a meaning making process. The dissertation lays the ground for novel ways to both study leadership as contextually generated action and to develop leadership through contextual organisational interventions.

Keywords Leadership, context, practice theory, sociomateriality, supervisory leadership, presidential leadership, cultural social theory, social constructionism

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Tekijä

Jouni Virtaharju

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Tämä väitöskirja haastaa perinteisen johtajuuskäsityksen, jonka mukaan johtajuus muodostuu johtajien suorien toimien seurauksena. Tästä poiketen väitöskirja väittää, että johtajuus kumpuaa organisatorisen/yhteiskunnallisen kontekstin sisällöstä. Johtajuutta tarkastellaan väitöskirjassa sosiaalisena konstruktiona. Johtajuus määritellään tilaksi, jossa joukko pyrkii yhteisesti saavuttamaan jonkun tietoisien tai tiedostamattoman päämäärän. Tämän tilan ihmiset merkityksellistävät johtajuudeksi.

Väitöskirja muodostuu neljästä esseestä. Esseissä johtajuuden muotoutumista tarkastellaan kahdessa eri kulttuurisessa ja organisatorisessa ympäristössä. Kolme esseistä tutkii, miten eräässä tuotanto-organisaatiossa tehdyt organisatoriset muutokset vaikuttivat työnjohtajien johtajuuteen. Kontekstuaaliset muutokset työnjohtajien tehtävissä, työkäytännöissä sekä sosiaalisessa ja tilallisessa asemassa vaikuttivat käsityksiin, joita organisaation jäsenillä oli työnjohtajista ja heidän johtajuudestaan. Yksi esseistä tarkasteli valtiojohtajan johtajuutta. Tässä esseessä tutkittiin miten rituaalinen käyttäytyminen (epäviralliset ystäväpiirin kalastusretket) mytologisoitui julkisessa mediassa synnyttäen pysyvän käsityksen valtiojohtajan johtajuudesta. Esseissä kuvatut tutkimukset ovat luonteeltaan ymmärtäviä ja niissä sovelletaan narratiivista analyysia keskeisenä tutkimusmenetelmänä.

Kokonaisuutena väitöskirja selittää miten konteksti osallistuu johtajuuden tuottamiseen. Työ osoittaa miten johtajien käyttäytymisen tarkastelu on riittämätön tapa jäsentää johtajuutta, vaan miten johtajuuden kehkeytymistä on perusteltua tarkastella yhteennivoutuneiden sosiaalisten ja materiaalien elementtien ja toimijoiden yhteisvaikutuksen tuotoksena. Tutkimus näyttää, miten johtajuutta tuottavat elementit ovat luonteeltaan arkisia ja tavallisia. Erityisiä johtajuuselementtejä ei ole edes olemassa, vaan ne saavat johtajuusluonteensa yhteisessä merkityksenantoprosessissa. Väitöstutkimus tarjoaa herätteitä ja uusia tapoja sekä johtajuuden tutkimiseen kontekstuaalisesti muotoutuneena toimintana että johtajuuden kehittämiseen organisaatioissa kontekstuaalisten interventtioiden avulla.

Avainsanat Johtajuus, konteksti, käytäntöteoria, sosiomateriaalisuus, työnjohtajuus, valtiojohtajuus, kulttuurinen sosiaaliteoria, sosiaalinen konstruktionismi

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And the first rude sketch that the world had seen was joy to his mighty heart,
Till the Devil whispered behind the leaves, "It's pretty, but is it Art?"

Rudyard Kipling: The Conundrum of the Workshops (1890)

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Leadership narratives and thesis projects share a style where the credit is given to a single person in the end. In practice, many people participate and contribute in both endeavours in addition to the protagonist. Quite a few individuals have pushed me onward during this thesis project. This is the part where I remember and thank them for their effort. It seems to me that many times they have had much more faith in my capability to finish this project than me. I thank for that trust and for the persistence these people had in making me do this.

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In Raseborg, September 2016

Jouni Virtaharju

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Essay I

What is leading the leaders: Contextuality as a perspective to leadership

Virtaharju, J., Liiri, T. & Kostamo, T.

A paper presented in Academy of Management Annual Meeting 2013, Orlando, FL.

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Essay II

The Fishing President: Ritual in constructing leadership mythology

Kuronen, T. & Virtaharju, J.

A paper published in *Leadership*, 2015, Vol. 11 (2), 186-212.

Essay III

Work practices as constructors of leadership

Kostamo, T. & Virtaharju, J.

Unpublished manuscript

Essay IV

Being in the centre – leadership emergence as the outcome of contextual repositioning

Virtaharju, J. & Liiri, T.

Unpublished manuscript

1. Introduction

What is leadership made of? What creates leadership in an organisational setting? Despite the fundamental character of such questions, they are seldom asked either by leadership scholars or organisational practitioners. Questioning the topic might even be considered a bit odd. If we were to persist with this line of inquiry, we might receive an answer "well, the leaders of course". This hypothetical thought experiment illustrates how leadership is very commonly associated with leaders. Both academic and lay discussions on leadership drift very quickly to leader characters: leadership is what leaders do to followers, right? Barker (2001: 474) has called this stance the conventional leadership wisdom; that a) leadership is all about leaders and their 'functions' in an organisation, b) leadership is the sum total of the leader's performance, and c) performance is the result of some characteristics of the leader vis-a-vis the conditions of the environment. Yet, I, among others (Barker, 2001; Drath et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010; Kort, 2008; Ciulla, 2011) claim that this 'common truth' is delusive: it is problematic both conceptually and empirically.

Therefore, in this thesis I consciously distance myself from the traditional, leader-centric line of thinking. I argue that mainstream leadership theory in the 20th and 21st centuries holds a similar faulty stance as that which the proponents of phlogiston theory argued about combustion during the 17th and 18th centuries. Phlogiston theory claimed that a fire-like element called phlogiston is contained within combustible bodies and releases during combustion. It was this mysterious substance that caused things to burn. The theory argued that substances that burned in the air were rich in phlogiston and that air could absorb only a finite amount of this mysterious substance causing things to extinguish in enclosed spaces. Later, an oxygen theory of combustion supplanted the phlogiston theory by showing how a gas called oxygen amply available in atmosphere increased the mass of the burned residue. Therefore, it was oxygen available in the surroundings of the actual combustion process that was providing for the chemical reaction. Analogously, leadership theory has implicitly assumed that leadership gets its essence from leader persons: that it is the leaders who create the process of leadership. I argue the opposite: leadership derives its resources from the organisational/societal context and it is this contextually constituted leadership that actually makes us perceive some people as leaders and/or followers. I therefore turn over this assumed, 'conventional wisdom' causality of leadership and illustrate how elements considered contextual, i.e.

performances, practices and positions contribute to the emergence of leadership and consequently leaders and followers.

The research objective of this thesis is to understand and depict how leadership context, i.e. the cultural situation and environment¹ wherein leaders operate, influences the formation of leadership. Special focus is put into understanding how changes in the leadership context influence the leadership interpretations of the organisational stakeholders. Therefore, the conventional wisdom of leadership, that leadership is the sum of leader action, serves better as an empirical starting-point for research, not as the conceptual premise for theory building.

This study addresses leadership from a cultural perspective. I conceptualize leadership as a meaning given to collective, organized activity. In other words, leadership is an explanation people give to situations where organisations are working well. It works as a caption to the complex organisational situations and the multidimensional phenomena affecting them. My objective as a researcher is to shed some light on these things 'below the leadership caption' causing us to consider something as leadership. This study joins a group of leadership studies assuming that leadership is a social construction: leadership is constructed by organisational stakeholders in a shared, relational process, by all those parties categorized as leaders, followers and other participants (Drath & Palus, 1994). To study how leadership as a meaning emerges in collectives, I adopt an interpretative research approach (Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Prasad & Prasad, 2002). The interpretative research approach is an appropriate methodological choice for studying leadership as a meaning as the interpretative methods focus on illustrating and understanding subjective experience.

The thesis is actualized as a synthesis of four individual studies. The individual studies are described in the four essays constituting this thesis. The essays are available as appendices to this summary. In the essays I make different readings of how context influences the emergence of leadership. Even though I have individual studies where the contextual influence is studied in different leadership contexts, in line with constructionist research, I do not promote a variance approach. I will not make systematic comparisons between the individual studies, but rather see each of them tackle the question of the relationship between context and leadership in a unique fashion. In addition, the scope of the leadership collectives varies substantially between the studies: in one of the essays (Essay No. 2), national leadership is studied, in others the focus is on leadership in one particular department of an industrial organisation. The various theories are applied as 'lenses', which reveal and highlight certain characteristics of the phenomenon. The various theoretical viewpoints help construct a more diverse and complete reading of the relationship between context and leadership.

This summary is organized as follows. In the next chapter I formalize my research objective, and formulate a research question. After that I form and discuss the theoretical basis of the thesis. I first lay out cultural social theory as the

¹ Cultural referring here to a wide sortiment of views, i.e. textual, performative, social, symbolic, knowledge, material, and embodied (see Reckwitz, 2002). A more detailed discussion of what context in general and leadership context in particular refers to follows in the theory section of the thesis.

wider basis of studying leadership. After this, I briefly describe the generic evolution of leadership theorisation. Following that, I discuss the problems related to the mainstream leadership approach, and present socially constructed views on leadership as my chosen theoretical basis. I follow this with a consideration of context and how context is included in my theoretical approach. This section concludes my literature-based theory development. Theory sections are followed by a methods section where I discuss the key premises of my chosen approaches; the interpretative research paradigm and narrative analysis. I move closer to the technicalities of my research process when I describe in detail how the thesis process unfolded in practice. Thereafter, I describe the key research findings of the individual studies in a section titled 'Essay summaries and contributions'. The summary is concluded by the discussion, where I synthesize my research results, provide my concluding thoughts, and discuss both the limitations and the practical applications of the research.

2. The research objective and questions

I promote a research agenda where leadership is understood as a name or an explanation to organized activity, ground on a multifarious web of individual and collective beliefs and practices. For leadership to appear, action and cultural cues linking that action to leadership beliefs and practices are required. Using this theoretical approach allows me to form an empirical research question that illustrates how this actually happens in the world of organisations. So, my research interest is on understanding

How context partakes in the constitution of leadership?

I aim to answer this question with the four essays constituting this doctoral thesis. Each essay has its individual research questions, yet when brought together each essay adds to our understanding of how contextual elements influence the leadership experience in a collective. Table 1 presents in more detail the individual research questions of the thesis parts.

Table 1. The thesis research questions

Thesis title	Making Leadership: Performances, Practices, and Positions that construct Leadership			
Primary research question	How context partakes in the constitution of leadership?			
Study	E1: What is leading the leaders?	E2: The Fishing President: Ritual in constructing leadership mythology	E3: Work practices as constructors of leadership	E4: Being in the centre – Leadership emergence as the outcome of contextual repositioning
Research question	How does the organisational context and contextual changes shape the way supervisory leaders act in the organisational setting?	How a 'tribal' recreational ritual was used in constructing an effective leadership mythology in a particular context?	How does leadership emerge in and through the everyday practices in organisations?	How positional change influences the leadership experience of the organisational stakeholders?
Thematic add-on to the thesis	Context	(Ritualistic) performance	Practice	Position

Essay 1: What is leading the leaders was chronologically the first study I conducted. In this study we developed the argument of how context influences leaders in an organisational setting. The research setting is tentative and generic in relation to this summary. The primary merit of the study to this thesis is the description of how supervisory leaders adopted their behaviour according to the leadership environment (conceptualized as Complex Adaptive System according to Complexity Leadership Theory) they acted in, and how contextual changes influenced their daily leadership behaviour.

Essay 2: In *The Fishing President*, the focus is on how contextual elements, i.e. private and public photographs were used to construct and promote a certain leadership image; a leadership mythology. This study contributes to this thesis by showing how a certain repetitive performance, a ritual and the visual images depicting that ritual became a generative source for a certain interpretation of leadership. The recurring ritual, the visual images, and the texts linked with the images provide a powerful example of how contextual elements influence the interpretation and representation of leadership. The study also shows how persistent the leadership meanings can be, as the leadership meaning promoted in media outlasted the performance of the focal group and the individual.

Essay 3: *Work practices as constructors of leadership* shows how changes in supervisory practices generate changes in leadership among the organisational stakeholders. This study illustrates how work practices and leadership meanings are connected in organisational settings. The study's merit is the theoretical connection between the tangible, supervisory action and the meanings associated with the action. The study also shows how leadership can change as a result of changes in organisational practices.

Essay 4: *Being in the Centre* takes another contextual element, the position of the supervisors, as the starting point in the interpretation of leadership. The study enlarges the understanding of position from its sociostructural origins to include spatial and action-oriented elements and shows how spatial closeness of supervisors to a material actor, the production line, influenced the leadership associated with them. The study contributes to this thesis by providing another example of how new supervisory actions, conceptualized and categorized further as different action contexts, influence the leadership interpretations made in an organisation.

3. Theoretical background

To gain new insight into the relationship between context and leadership, I develop a view where leadership is understood from a practice theory and sociomateriality perspective. Practice theory develops a view where knowledge, meaning, human activity and sociality are aspects and effects of the total nexus of interconnected human practices (Schatzki, 2001). Meaningful, purposive, and consistent human conduct, leadership being one particular example of such action, derives from participating in such a nexus of practices. Practices are the foundation of meaningful human activity. They are not mere descriptions of what people do, rather they produce order, form identities, and create meaning (Nicolini, 2011). In organizational research, practice — or a bundle of practices — can therefore be adopted as a unit of analysis of meaningful human activity. Further, sociomateriality describes and explains the nature and character of practices.

The sociomaterial argument is a descendant of theories promoting a view where organisations are considered to be social constructions. In the social construction movement, organisations were studied predominantly as and via texts and/or language use. Later performative and practice-based approaches (Czarniawska, 2008; Nicolini, 2012; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011) to organisation and management studies have pointed out that the so called 'mental' organisational activities, such as sensemaking, cognition, learning, knowledge and perceiving are not solely situated in the ideational realm, but that they are also tangible sociomaterial practices, enacted in various organisational arenas by corporal actors (Carlile et al., 2013). According to this view, to know involves both the material world as much as it involves the mind. A somewhat related argument was introduced already in the 1950s in the form of Socio-Technical Systems Thinking (Trist & Bamforth, 1951), which indicated that organizing processes entails both people and material technologies. However, the Socio-Technical systems researchers saw social and technology as relatively self-contained, and focused on finding ways to jointly optimize the social and the technical system. The sociomaterial view emphasizes the constitutive entangling of the social and the material in our lives. The social is realized through material and the material is given meaning in the constant performative and recursive processes constructing our societies and organisations.

Yet, to make my primary thesis question meaningful, I need to extend the description and explanation of the extant theories of organizing and leadership.

To answer the research question credibly, I will present the evolution of the related social theory and leadership theory. First, I will base my research within the field of social theory. Following, I will introduce the reader to the generic evolution of leadership theory. Next, I will pinpoint some of the conceptual problems in mainstream leadership thinking and present a theoretical alternative with leadership as a social construction. I will explain in further detail my theoretical positioning within that literature. After that section, I am ready to present my primary theoretical argument on the sociomaterial quality of the leadership context.

3.1 Social theory as a basis for the study of leadership

The modern scientific study of leadership originated from the field of applied psychology. Psychology gave the concepts and methods that were used to explain leadership-related phenomena (House & Aditya, 1997; Hunt, 1999). However, towards the end of the 20th century, other fields have also begun to contribute to the field of leadership studies, even if psychology remains the most common basis for examining leadership. Currently, most scholars see leadership research belonging to the wider field of organisation studies. Organisation studies as a discipline is multiparadigmatic (Hatch, 1997) and adopts its premises and instruments from several other disciplines. In addition to psychology, a field that has significantly contributed to the study of leadership in organisations is social theory. Leadership can be argued to be inherently a social phenomenon, with the simplest leadership definition being ‘having followers’ (Grint, 2010a: 2). Sociological understanding of organisations and social theory are the wider scholarly context that forms the premises for this thesis. Therefore, before going into leadership research in detail, I will introduce how my research relates to social theory in general and cultural social theory in particular.

Reckwitz (2002) has examined the evolution of social theories. He sees three large disciplines among social theories. He names them Purpose-oriented theory of action, Norm-oriented theory of action, and Cultural theory. With Purpose-oriented theory of action Reckwitz refers to Rational Choice Theory, which premises on a ‘homo economicus’ research subject. This theory explains action by having recourse to individual purposes, intentions, and interests. Social order is from a Rational Choice point of view a product of the combination of single interests (Reckwitz, 2002: 245). On the other hand, Norm-oriented theory of action refers to classic sociology practiced by historical figures such as Parsons and Durkheim. The model of ‘homo sociologicus’ explains action by pointing to collective norms and values. Social order appears as a result of normative consensus (Reckwitz, 2002: 245).

Reckwitz’s (2002) primary interest, as does mine, lies in the third major stream of social theory, that of Cultural theory. Cultural theory constitutes a field of social theories, which explain or understand action and social order by referring to symbolic and cognitive structures and their social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Reckwitz states that the field of cultural

theory has not reached a state of conformity, but that its elements can be pieced from the works of various social theorists of the 20th century, such as Bourdieu, Giddens, (late) Foucault, Garfinkel, Latour, and Schatzki. He argues that cultural theories are based upon a different form of explaining and understanding action, namely by having recourse to symbolic structures of meaning (Reckwitz, 2002: 244). The novelty that cultural theories bring to social theory is in the way they explain and understand actions by reconstructing symbolic structures of knowledge which enable and constrain agents to interpret the world according to certain forms and behave in corresponding ways. Therefore, according to cultural theory, social order does not appear as a product of compliance of mutual normative expectations, but is embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures, in knowledge which enables a socially shared way of ascribing meaning to the world (Reckwitz, 2002: 245). Cultural theory adds to our knowledge in an area where rational and normative views fall silent. Cultural theorists' interest lies in understanding the implicit, tacit or unconscious layers of knowledge, which enable the symbolic organisation of reality. This knowledge, represented in various forms, often in language, helps us understand which aims are worth aspiring to and which norms are legitimate in particular situations. One merit of cultural theory is in showing how social order is reproduced even when normative consensus does not exist (Reckwitz, 2002: 245), for example during times of organisational change.

Cultural theory is important for this thesis, as it forms the backbone of its argumentation about the nature of leadership. However, as cultural theory is not a uniform field, I will next introduce the major lines of thought among cultural social theorists and show how I apply them in this thesis project. The variations of cultural theory offer different explanations of what social and eventually leadership is.

3.1.1 The theoretical streams within cultural social theory

Reckwitz (2002) continues his analysis of cultural theories by separating them in to five different streams of thought. He names them objectivist mentalism, subjectivist mentalism, textualism, intersubjectivism, and practice theory. These theoretical streams hold differing ontological views of the nature of the social; that is, they view the social residing in different 'locations'. Mentalism locates the social and the collective in the human mind. As mind is the place of knowledge and meaning structures, the social must reside there. Classical structuralism developed by semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure, and further applied in anthropology by Claude Lévi-Strauss is a prime example of objectivist mentalism. Structuralism saw human action as an effect of the symbolic structures of the unconscious mind. Therefore, the primary unit of social analysis according to objectivist mentalism are shared unconscious symbolic systems. Among leadership studies, the psychodynamic views of leadership (e.g. Kets de Vries, 1988) have applied such an understanding of the nature of the social. On the other hand, phenomenology represents the stream of thought Reckwitz calls subjectivist mentalism. He discusses classic Husserlian phenomenology, which turned attention away from the unconscious and toward the intentional acts in

consciousness. For subjectivist mentalism, the social is also located in the mind, yet it analyses the social as the subjective acts of interpretation and the interpretative frames used by agents (Reckwitz, 2002). In the field of leadership studies, Implicit Leadership Theory (Shondrick et al., 2010) is another example of a mentalist leadership theory. It locates leadership in the minds of the followers, who hold certain prototypes (schemes) of what ideal leadership is all about.

Culturalist textualism differs from mentalism because it situates symbolic structures outside the mind, in 'texts', such as discourses, signs, symbols, photographs etc. It is in these material elements that the social is located. Mental qualities are concepts in discourse about something described as mental (Reckwitz, 2002). In general, the poststructuralist project in its decentring of the subject is a prime example of this movement. Among leadership theories, discursive leadership (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012) represents this line of thought.

Culturalist intersubjectivism locates the social in interactions, most often in the use of ordinary language (Reckwitz, 2002: 249). Agents do 'speech acts' applying pragmatic linguistic rules, yet the social appears in the interaction, not in the language used per se as suggested by the textualists. Agents endowed with minds interact with one another. These agents internalize and use the contents and patterns of the oversubjective, 'objective' realm of meanings in their mutual speech acts. Interaction therefore is a process of transference of meanings, which have been internalized in the mind. Intersubjectivistic understanding of the social has been modestly popular among contemporary leadership scholars. Particularly relational constructionists, such as Hosking (1988), Dachler & Hosking (1995) and Koivunen (2007), can be seen to adopt such an understanding of the nature of leadership.

Finally, practice theory places social outside mind, discourse, or interaction. It places social in 'practices': that is, in routinized types of behaviour, consisting of various interconnected elements such as bodily activities, mental activities, 'things' like objects or instruments, and varying contextual knowledge used to frame situations (histories, motives, goals, know-how etc.). A practice constitutes a 'block' whose existence depends on the existence and interconnectedness of these elements, and it cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements. Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) elaborate on the idea that practices are composed of smaller elements and argue that practices are defined by interdependent relations between three elements: materials, competences, and meanings. Materials encompass objects, infrastructures, tools and the body; competence refers to different forms of understanding and practical knowledgeability; and meaning represents the symbolic meanings, ideas, and social and symbolic significance of participation. Practices therefore have an inherently sociomaterial character. In addition, practices can also be understood from entitative and performative viewpoints. Practice-as-entity refers to the idea of the practice and practice-as-performance refers to the acts whereby the elements of a practice are brought together to reproduce the practice in action (Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012). When a practice is carried out by an agent (individual, or a pair, or a group with bodily and mental capacity) not only does bodily behaviour acti-

vate, but also a certain routinized way of understanding, knowing how and desiring. These 'mental' activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring are, according to practice theory, the necessary elements and qualities of the practice, not of the individual carrying out the practice (Reckwitz, 2002: 250). Schatzki (1996, 2001) further argues that practices are the source of meaning for social actors and that human action ultimately emerges and attains meaning and intelligibility from social practices. Among leadership studies, research papers adopting an explicit practice interpretation of leadership have appeared during the last decade or so (Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010; Denis et al., 2010; Endrissat & von Arx, 2013; Raelin, 2011b). We can also see the practice approach influencing leadership theorisation indirectly or implicitly. A prime example is Drath et al.'s (2008) alternative ontology for leadership. For Drath and his coauthors leadership emerges from success producing relational routines in an organisational setting.

My thesis applies cultural social theory in understanding leadership. More exactly, this summary especially adopts a practice theory perspective to further our understanding of leadership. My answer to the mystery on how context and leadership are linked is formulated using a practice theory interpretation of leadership. However, in the individual essays I adopt a wider basis of cultural theories as a basis of analysis of leadership. In the first essay: 'What is leading the leaders', we make an interpretative reading of leadership change in a particular organisational setting, adopting a complexity perspective. Our approach is similar to that which Tsoukas & Hatch (2001) called a second order complexity approach: we use the complexity metaphor (Morgan, 1997; Tsoukas, 1993) to depict leadership. The outcome is an interpretative narrative of the leadership change as a complex, contextual phenomenon. This research setting draws from both intersubjectivist and practice-based cultural theories, as the leadership is seen to emerge from the interaction of the human and non-human actors in the complex adaptive systems in the organisation. The second essay: 'The fishing president', on the other hand, is influenced by both objective mentalism (Lévi-Straussian structuralism) and textualism (visual discourse analytic approach). Essays 3 and 4 adopt a practice theory basis for their understanding of leadership. The third essay: 'Work practices as constructors of leadership', aims to build a conceptual bridge between practice theory and phenomenology² (subjectivist mentalism). Yet, the studies behind essays 3 and 4 both come to understand leadership as practical activity, including embodied, spatial, instrumental, and symbolic-cognitive entangled elements.

I have now formed and explained the platform from which I perceive leadership. In the next chapters, I will delve deeper into the field of leadership studies. To further show how my research links with the generic body of knowledge among leadership research, I will first describe the generic evolution of the field of scholarly leadership thinking. After that, through critique directed towards the mainstream leadership research, I will position my research approach in

² The Heideggerian variation of phenomenology. Reckwitz (2002) refers primarily to Husserl in his description of phenomenology. Husserl depicted humans as conscious experiencers whereas Heidegger saw that one's existence cannot be reduced to one's consciousness of it.

more detail in line with the constructionist interpretations of leadership arising from the premises set out in cultural social theory.

3.2 The evolution of leadership theorisation

The story of the evolution of leadership theory during the 20th century has been told many times by prominent scholars (see for example Yukl, 2006; Bryman, 1996; House & Aditya, 1997). For the purposes of this thesis it suffices to rather briefly remind the reader that the focus of the research in the field has been the differentiating factors between leaders and non-leaders and their link to leader efficacy.

3.2.1 Leader-centric approaches in leadership theorisation

The first wave of leadership scholarship between 1930s and 1950s studied the traits of leaders, or in other words the individual characteristics that universally would differentiate leaders from non-leaders. This line of research surfaced a large number of personal characteristics such as gender, height, physical energy, appearance, and psychological traits and motives such as authoritarianism, intelligence, need for achievement, and need for power (House & Aditya, 1997) as defining leader characteristics. Yet, the problem with the research results was that only very few, if any, universal traits that could be associated with effective leadership, were found. The early years' research had also methodological problems. Only a few replicative studies were conducted. In addition, personality models and theories were quite undeveloped during the time and the traits surfacing in the various studies were operationalized differently. The trait approach remained dominant until Stogdill (1948) wrote an influential review on leader behaviour, which led to a virtual shutdown of trait research by leadership scholars (Hunt, 1999: 132). Yet interestingly, from the 1970s onwards and especially during the 1990s we saw the return of the trait paradigm into leadership research as part of what Bryman (1996) called the 'new leadership paradigm'. The rise of the charismatic and transformational view (referred to in more detail a little later) in the 90s returned the idea of a remarkable individual to leadership discussion and we saw, for example, a rise in the popularity of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000) in assessing leaders and leadership. The lure of the remarkable leader person is indeed strong and continuously influences leadership discourse.

The second wave of leadership thought was the leader behaviour paradigm prominent during the 1950s and 60s. After the trait paradigm did not seem to produce lasting answers, scholars turned to observing leader behaviour in laboratory settings, or asking people in field settings about the behaviour of individuals in positions of authority (House & Aditya, 1997: 420). Major empirical contributions from this research were the identification of two broad categories of leader behaviour – task-oriented and person-oriented behaviours, later to be widely referred and discussed under the headlines of management and leadership. Still, this line of research was also unable to identify leader behaviours that

had universal or near universal effectiveness. House and Aditya (1997: 421) argue that this was due to the researchers' failure to consider the specific role demands of leaders, the context in which they functioned, or differences in the dispositions of leaders or followers.

The third wave of leadership scholarship has been called the contingency paradigm, or the situational view on leadership. This wave peaked during the 1970s. The theories joining the contingency wave were interested in specifying how situational variables interacted with leader personality and behaviour. The research focused on finding key moderators that would influence leader effectiveness. One of the lasting contributions from this family of leadership theories was provided by Hersey & Blanchard (1977) who postulated four leadership styles that would be appropriate for different situations defined by subordinates' 'maturity' level. Follower characteristics were therefore deemed to be an important factor in leadership effectiveness. Another important facet of the contingency school was that it nudged the interest of leadership scholars a little from the leader towards the leader-follower relationship as seen, for example, later in Leader-Member Exchange Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Contingency theories were able to list many situational variables, but in the end the theorists settled for only a limited number of moderators. Despite these methodological restraints, the theories have been criticized for ambiguity that limits the possibility to derive specific, testable propositions (Yukl, 2006: 239). The research suffers from lack of accurate measures and reliance on weak research designs that do not permit strong inferences about the direction of causality (Korman & Tanofsky, 1975; Schriesheim & Kerr, 1977 in Yukl, 2006). In addition to scholarly criticism, the contingency school in particular and leadership research in general also received harsh practitioner-oriented criticism. For example Mintzberg (1982) stated that leadership research was irrelevant to "Bill" and "Barbara", i.e. to typical leadership practitioners. Some scholars even argued that leadership is an outdated and irrelevant concept (Pfeffer, 1977; Meindl et al., 1985) and that much of the research on it is "fragmentary, unrealistic, trivial, or dull" (Lombardo & McCall, 1978). Hunt (1999) has called this period the "Doom and Gloom" era of leadership research.

Resurgence in leadership research appeared in the late 1970s and became dominant during the 80s and 90s with the advent of charismatic and transformational leadership. This movement has been called 'new leadership' by Bryman (1996) and 'neocharismatic theory' by House and Aditya (1997). The new paradigm got its inspiration from outside the psychology-based contingency school. A major influencer was James McGregor Burns (1978) who wrote about political leadership. The scholarly focus turned back to the leader person, and especially to those individuals positioned on the top tiers of various political, business and military organisations. The understanding that leadership influence worked on a symbolic domain; that leadership consists of management of meaning (Morgan & Smircich, 1982; Shamir, 2007) appeared. Another new element in leadership research was successful organisational change, or rather organisational transformation. Religious concepts such as vision and mission were adopted in the discussion of the change leaders who empower, inspire and

motivate their followers with their outstanding communication skills and strong intuition for a better future.

The transformational leadership paradigm has dominated the leadership discussion during the early 21st century. The theories have made important contributions to our understanding of various organisational leadership processes. They provide explanations for the exceptional influence some leaders have on their subordinates, something the earlier theories had not done. These theories also emphasize the importance of followers' emotional reactions towards leaders, and therefore add to our previous, dominantly rational-cognitive conceptualisations of leader-follower relationships. Still, the transformational and charismatic school is also criticized. There are methodological problems associated with the positivist premises that have dominated the leadership research. Lately, van Knippenberg & Sitkin (2013) and a little earlier Yukl (1999) have pointed out grave conceptual and methodological weaknesses in many of the established operationalisations of charismatic/transformational theories. Alvesson and Kärreman (2015) claim that the theories' success results from their ideological basing on hero/religious mythologies rather than from their descriptive or explanative power (see also Kelly, 2014). From the viewpoint of this thesis, the theories in this school focus too narrowly on dyadic processes (Yukl, 2006: 273). The theories are leader-centred, and they emphasize the unidirectional influence of the leader on followers and omit the idea that leaders are in many ways also dependent on their followers and organisations. And the transformational school is still restrained by the same acontextuality that has troubled leadership research over its evolution, or as House & Aditya (1997: 409) state:

The field is primarily concerned with the relationship between leaders and their immediate followers, and largely ignores the kind of organisation and culture in which leaders function, the relationship between the leaders and superiors, external constituencies, peers, and the kind of product or service provided by the leader's organisation... almost all the prevailing theories and 98% of the empirical evidence are ... individualistic rather than collectivistic, stressing follower responsibilities rather than rights, assuming hedonism rather than commitment to duty or altruistic motivation, assuming centrality of work and democratic value orientation, and emphasizing assumptions of rationality rather than asceticism, religion or superstition.

3.2.2 Post-heroic approach to leadership theorisation

During the early 21st century we have again seen an evolution in leadership theorisation. These latest theoretical ideas on leadership have various ontological and ideological bases, yet what they have in common is a critical stance towards charismatic and transformational leadership theories. This newest movement has been called the 'post-heroic leadership perspective' (Fletcher, 2004; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007). Post-heroic leadership is a scholarly school of thought that distances itself from the psychology-based origins of leadership theory. It takes a critical stance towards neocharismatic leadership thinking, accusing it of promoting the 'Great Man Theory' (Carlyle, 1841; Spector,

2015) of heroic individuals. It aims to redefine the ontology of leadership, being uncomfortable with the essentialist notions of leadership being the capacity (and responsibility) of a lone individual. There are many theoretical variations among the post-heroic scholars, yet many promote a linguistic view (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) on the phenomenon.

Fletcher (2004) has characterized post-heroic leadership to distinguish from the traditional individualistic models especially in three accounts.

- i. Leadership is a shared and distributed practice: Post-heroic models conceptualize leadership as a set of shared practices that can and should be enacted by people at all levels. Post-heroic frameworks acknowledge the interdependencies inherent in leadership and signal a shift from “a single-minded focus on individual achievement and meritocracy to an emphasis on collective achievement, social networks, and the importance of teamwork and shared accountability”. (Fletcher, 2004: 648). Leading and following are two sides of the same set of relational skills that everyone in an organisation needs in order to work in a context of interdependence.
- ii. Leadership is a social process: From a post-heroic perspective leadership is portrayed as a dynamic, multidirectional, collective activity – more of an emergent process than achieved state. Leadership occurs in and through relationships and influence networks of egalitarian, less hierarchical and more mutual leader-follower interactions. In contrast with the traditional models, which emphasize the positional leader’s unidirectional effect on others, the relation is understood to be collaborative and fluid, with influence flowing in both directions. Fletcher uses the term ‘positional leader’ and argues that these positional leaders and followers “must have the ability to use the full range of skills and move easily from one role to the other even while their positional authority remains constant” (Fletcher, 2004: 649).
- iii. Leadership results in learning and growth: The human interactions that can be categorized as post-heroic leadership differentiate from other social interactions by virtue of their positive outcomes. The outcomes include mutual learning, greater collective understanding, and ultimately, positive action. The task of leadership is to create a learning environment where these outcomes are not achieved only for oneself, but for the larger collective. (Fletcher, 2004: 649)

Fletcher’s depiction of the agenda of the post-heroic turn is admirable. It aims to re-envision the age-old cultural readings of leadership, the ‘who’, ‘where’, ‘how’, and ‘what’ of leadership. Post-heroic leadership scholarship attempts to lower leaders from their pedestals and remove the extraordinary from leadership practice. The project is emancipatory: leadership is everybody’s business, and everybody can (and should) be a leader! The normative agenda is telling us that in well-working collectives every member practices leadership regardless of his/her organisational position (Raelin, 2011a). Yet, it is worth noting how Fletcher uses the terms positional and personal leadership, actually replicating the contrast that Chester Barnard introduced in 1938 in his discussion of the authority and personal characteristics of leaders.

To sum up, in many ways the post-heroic leadership agenda is not that radically different from the older readings of leadership. It promotes the view of leadership as a force for good, as an (this time as a collective rather than individual) elixir that exists in well-working organisations. The normative tone is

evident. Post-heroic leadership scholarship advocates a strong spirit of western democracy. The theories embody and promote, yet often do not acknowledge this ideology (see Kelly, 2014). Therefore, the post-heroic school similarly holds an ideological basis as neocharismatic leadership (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2015), albeit a different one. The school repeats the idea that leadership is not about position, but is not able to discuss leadership without including the positional and authority aspects, as seen, for example, in Fletcher's discussion of positional leadership vs. personal leadership. In fact, in many of the studies promoting a post-heroic view, the research setting is built on contrasting 'traditional' authority- or position-based leadership and 'new leadership' (see Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce, 2006 as an example of such a setting). Such studies are built on a premise that there are *several types of leadership* present in organisations: the traditional building on the prescribed organisation, and then the 'new' emergent characterized by an illustrative adjective used in the theory title. There are a lot of examples available, such as collective leadership (Contractor, DeChurch, Carson, Carter & Keegan, 2012), relational leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012), shared leadership (Ensley, Hmieleski & Pearce, 2006; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Shondrick, Dinh & Lord, 2010), collaborative leadership (Collinson, 2007), and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000, 2002, 2009; Spillane, 2005; Oborn, Barrett & Dawson, 2013) to name a few. Ospina and Foldy (2010) use the term 'relational leadership as a trend' to discuss these types of studies. The studies see the strengthening of horizontal relations emerging from the functional demands of contemporary organizing and see relationality as a novel feature in leadership behaviour.

All in all, the current status of leadership research is that the past work has accumulated a huge heap of theories, with different foci and takes on the subject phenomenon. Theories are piling up, yet none seem to lose their relevance. Rather we see a constant surge of new alternatives being suggested. Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) reviewed leadership studies published in a group of most prominent research journals over the past 50 years. Their results show that the research field is theoretically highly pluralistic. There is a lack of theoretical integration, rather scholars adopt a single theoretical perspective and only rarely frame their work using multiple theories. Their review also revealed that none of the 'waves of research' described earlier have disappeared or become outdated. Both trait, behavioural, contingency, and meaning based leadership studies are continually published in the most esteemed journals of the organisation and management field. However, Glynn and Raffaelli (2010: 379) discovered that the field is dominated by quantitative methods, with circa 80% of the studies applying a quantitative and 12 % a qualitative method. Therefore, methodologically the field has much higher consensus.

3.3 The definitional problem in mainstream leadership perspectives

In my view, the contemporary development in leadership research; that is, studying leadership from a wider unit of analysis than in the past, is a solid advancement to leadership theory building. The inclusion of followers, networks, and various contextual elements moves the studies in a direction that has been desired by many commentators over the decades (House & Aditya, 1997). Yet, the fact that many of the studies either disregard many of the lasting elements of the formal organisation, including authority, or see them as contrasting elements to what they are calling organisational leadership, is in my mind a grave shortcoming. In my view, more of the elements promoting the appearance of leadership should be brought together rather than separated from the analysis. So, my study caters more to a view where relational leadership is taken as a *lens* (Ospina & Foldy, 2010: 294). This ‘constructionist approach’ (Uhl-Bien, 2006: 293) views leadership as the outcome of human social constructions emerging from the rich connections and interdependencies of organisations and their members.

One key reason for this divide to ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ leadership is historical. The organisation studies field has throughout its evolution promoted a dualistic approach (Collinson, 2005), starting probably with Roethlisberger’s and Dickson’s (1939) discussion of formal and informal organisations. In leadership such dualisms are, for example, leader-follower, leadership-followership, transformational-transactional, participative-autocratic, organic-mechanic, rational-emotional, change-stability, individual-collective, quantitative-qualitative, traditional-novel, and of course leadership-management (Collinson, 2005). The problem with dualistic thinking is that individual research focuses on one part of the dualism, and disregards the other. This causes an understanding of the concepts as oppositional binaries (Fairhurst, 2001), and the scholarly rhetoric of ‘both-and’ study is replaced by an ‘either-or’ empirical practice.

The post-heroic agenda of ‘everyone is a potential leader’ has also been criticized by many scholars (Grint, 2010b; Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Even Fletcher (2004) focuses in her paper on the persistence of the heroic models of leadership despite the moral superiority of the post-heroic models. The key criticisms include that if everyone is a leader, who then is the follower? And, if everyone is a ‘mini-leader’ of sorts, and many of their actions consist of social influence, do we dilute the concept leadership to a level where it includes everything and loses its applicability?

In fact, it may be that our generic definitions of leadership are not very helpful in the first place. Alvesson (1997: 458) wrote that “language is too ambiguous and meaning too context-dependent for abstract definitions to work very efficiently”. Could it be that the universalisation of leadership through acontextualisation is a theoretical dead end? Yukl (2006) states in his famous textbook that “most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organisation”. The ‘lowest common denominator’ is therefore that leadership is a

social influence process. Pondy (1978: 87) commented that most things that involve more than one person (e.g. group work, organizing processes, social facilitation effects, shared group decision making) are also defined as social influence. The idea that leadership is a specialized role with its counterpart the 'follower', is mostly disregarded in the generic definitions. Grint (2005a) refers to Hughes et al. (1999) who very poignantly state "leadership is a process, not a position". Grint points out that immediately after stating this piece of information the authors explore leadership through three minicases of globally famous and prestigious military, political, and business leaders. Grint (2005a: 15) comments that "Now by any stretch of imagination these three are leaders in a positional sense, irrespective of the processes that they employ, and we have at best a contested concept and at worst a contradiction". To sum up, many leadership scholars have attempted to separate leadership from both the leader and the formal organisation, yet have not been very successful in this attempt.

3.3.1 The definitional ambivalence –leadership versus management

One particular area of leadership research where the dualistic program is evident is the discussion of the relationship of the concepts management and leadership. Leadership has often been defined by its alleged opposite, management. The discussion of the differences between management and leadership has been mostly present in leadership textbooks and popular business journals³. Especially influential have been the papers published in Harvard Business Review, particularly by Zaleznik (1977) and Kotter (1982, 1990, 1999). In any case, the concepts 'leadership and management' or 'leaders and managers' have become an established part of the global business vocabulary. Most Western practicing managers have had that much leadership training that they know about these concepts, and are able to use them with some skill.

However, when one reads the texts depicting leadership and management, it is quite difficult to come up with a clarified impression of what the concepts actually mean or to find a convergence of views. The variance inherent to the leadership discussion is also present in the discussion on these concepts. Zaleznik (1977) opened the game, by claiming that leaders and managers were of a different breed altogether. They were different individuals, with different personalities and life histories. For Zaleznik managers were tough, persistent, smart, analytical, good-willed, and their job was to solve problems and direct people and affairs. Yet, an organisation needs leaders to inflame employees' passions and imagination. According to him, leaders, like artists, tolerate chaos and lack of structure. Leaders work with the future in their minds, and are never truly part of the organisations. Managers, work with the now, provide stability, and as stated by Zaleznik "it takes neither genius nor heroism to be a manager". Zaleznik hypothesized that the difference between leaders and managers can be tracked back to childhood experiences. Yet, he also complicates things by writing in his article that "leadership is really managing what other people do".

³ According to Fairhurst and Grant (2010) the terms were largely interchangeable until neocharismatic discourses "made leaders into changemasters and managers into taskmasters who implement the change".

Other definitions were also presented. Bennis and Nanus (1985: 21) saw the difference to lie in the framing focus of individual action. They claimed that “managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right things”. Other authors (Kotter, 1988; Mintzberg, 1973) viewed leading and managing as distinct processes, rather than as characteristics of different individuals. Mintzberg (1973) depicted leadership as one of the 10 managerial roles. Fiedler (1996) wrote that leadership is that part of management that concerns the supervision of people. Barker (1997) argued that management was about maintaining stability and leadership aims to create change. Grint (2005b, 2010a) separates between leadership and management based on the context where they are practiced: management is the equivalent of *déjà vu* (seen this before) whereas leadership is the equivalent of *vu jà dé* (never seen this before). Managers get to apply standard operating procedures to solve tame problems. Leaders need to facilitate the construction of an innovative response to a novel or a recalcitrant problem. Grint also differentiates a third mode, the ‘command’, which is required in critical (time sensitive) situations. Kotter (1990) differentiated between management and leadership in terms of their core processes and intended outcomes. To him, management was about producing predictability and leadership about producing change. Yet, they both involve deciding what needs to be done, creating networks of relationships to do it, and trying to ensure it happens. However, according to Kotter, the two processes have incompatible elements: strong leadership can disrupt order and efficiency, and strong management can discourage risk taking and innovation. Yet, a telling example about the vagueness of these concepts is told by Pye (2005: 35). She makes a point about Kotter who wrote a reflective commentary on the HBR 1999 reprint of his 1982 paper 'What effective general managers really do'. Kotter stated in the commentary that he was surprised that he had not described the general managers’ work as leadership at the time of the writing as it was now clear to him that what they were doing was leadership. After years of writing about the difference between leadership and management, Kotter seemed to be somewhat confused about how to categorize the managerial practices in the field. Many critical or poststructuralist -oriented leadership scholars distance themselves from the previous authors by not making a difference between leadership and management (e.g. H. Mintzberg’s later work; see also e.g. Fairhurst, 2001; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Hosking (1988)), or they talk about practicing managers doing leadership (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2003a,b,c)

Therefore, we have strong impressions used to depict leadership, yet we have very distinctive differences in how they are actually conceptualized or understood in the field. Management is typically associated with things like efficiency, administration, routines, now, order, control, rationality, and stability. Mintzberg (1999) suggested that really good management is boring. Leadership on the other hand, is linked with heroism, change, emotions, vision, effectiveness, future, inspiration, and drama. Leadership is depicted the interesting element, and management has been made the culprit. The image difference is contrasting, and the conceptual bifurcation is strong both among leadership scholars and practitioners.

Yet, studies conducted by Alvesson & Svenningsson (2003a,b,c) show how these concepts are as fuzzy (or even more so) to practitioners in business communities as they are to John Kotter. Alvesson and Svenningsson (2003b) illustrate how practicing managers use the contemporary discourse of ‘great and good visionary leadership’ to describe their work on an abstract level, yet when talking about the practicalities of their work, they only have the ‘managerial toolkit’ at their disposal. Or what the managers describe as their leadership action, is not understood as leadership at all by their subordinates (Alvesson & Svenningsson, 2003c). Yet, leadership expectations are especially directed towards people who hold organisational positions associated with power and authority. Kort (2008: 424) names them purported leaders. Our society wants and expects people in such positions to ‘act as leaders’.

The arguments and evidence presented above show us that ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ are not natural but theoretical concepts. Yet, our field has been using the terms for so long that the categories have been objectified (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and the divide is nowadays enacted (Weick, 1995) in the organisational fields. In addition to the previous, leadership has been attributed to the person, and management to the system. This dates all the way to Barnard (1968/1938), and has been continued ever since. In many ways the classic hero leader theory has built a picture of a maverick, a person who is anti-organisation, someone who mostly needs the organisation to succumb to his will. The dependencies are less discussed in the hero myth. But, as we now witness, with leadership theory becoming more contextual and system-level approaches emerging, we need to reconsider how we link management to the leadership equation and seriously consider whether the divide between leadership and management has caused enough trouble and has run its course. What then dissects leadership and management, if the leadership does not ‘flow from the individual’, I ask? The explanations that the formal authority and structure would not have anything to do with ‘true leadership’ strike me as odd and dated. The field would benefit from research that looks at the prescribed and emergent simultaneously, as intertwined elements building the leadership experience in both leaders and followers.

3.3.2 Leadership as an essentially contested concept

The previous sections have shown that despite the huge amounts of scholarly and practitioner work, there is a lack of consensus among scholars on what leadership actually is and how it should be operationalized. Stogdill (1974) famously commented that there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it. Grint (2005a) discusses this incommensurability and argues, referring to Gallie (1955), that leadership, akin to power, is an ‘Essentially Contested Concept’ - that is, in the end what leadership is, is irresolvable. Grint (2005a: 18) goes on to argue that definitions of leadership seem to include the following dimensions⁴:

⁴ Kempster et al. (2011) added another dimension to the heuristic: Leadership as purpose. Adding yet another element to our understanding of leadership would suggest that the original idea of leadership as an essentially contested concept does hold some merit.

- Leadership as person: it is the WHO leaders are that makes them leaders,
- Leadership as results: it is the WHAT leaders achieve that makes them leaders,
- Leadership as position: it is the WHERE leaders operate that makes them leaders,
- Leadership as process: it is the HOW leaders get things done that makes them leaders.

Grint defines these features as Weberian ideal type elements of a heuristic model, and suggests that empirical examples of leadership embody characteristics from all these forms. He further argues that this heuristic helps us understand the confusions and complexities attended to leadership, interestingly adding “because leadership means different things to different people”. Grint therefore adopts a subjective, a social constructionist understanding of leadership: leadership is what people make it be. In this thesis, I will base my work on a similar ontological premise.

In the next section I will delve in more detail into how ‘leadership as a social construction’ has been understood and studied among leadership scholars. I will use the description to position my own research approach among the socially constructed leadership views.

3.4 Socially constructed leadership as a research approach

Another interpretation of why the ‘objective theory of leadership’ has not provided satisfactory results has to do with the fact that leadership as a concept was not invented by social scientists (Calder, 1977). Rather scholars borrowed it from practitioners and ever since have tried to make sense of it by dissecting it from lived experience, universalising, objectifying, and dividing it to various analytical parts and parcels. Yet, originally and in ‘the real world’ leadership is a lay concept people use to make sense of the world around them. The positivist project where theorists and researchers attempted to impose external definitions on an inherently subjective phenomenon has tried to decouple leadership from its lay psychology origins. The results of this project as they have been referred to earlier in this thesis have made some scholars argue that both a new direction and new premises are required in leadership scholarship. Meindl (1995) argued that rather than resist we could embrace the idea of what actors and observers construct as normal part of their social experiences as a focus of our study.

These ideas nudge our thinking on leadership away from its psychological, especially its objective and cognitive roots towards more subjective, social and cultural interpretations. New emphasis is put into analysing leadership and leadership communication as a systemic meaning making process instead of the older, more established way of seeing leadership communication as individual

transmission by meaning making agents (i.e. leaders/managers of meaning (Smircich & Morgan, 1982)).

Fairhurst (2001) illustrates the individual – collective dualism inherent to leadership research. She argues that historically the dominant view of leadership has been shaped by a psychology-based view of the world as a figure-ground arrangement where the individual is the figure, the system is the background and leader-follower communication is understood as transmissive. The new leadership theory, with its congenial allies in organisational communication and organisation development theories, builds on the premise that the locus of leadership is not in the individual, but in a patterned sequential behaviour of leaders and constituents who form an interactional system (Fairhurst, 2001: 383). Fairhurst does not call for the abandonment of the individualistic approaches, but for an integration of wider relational, systems and individualistic concerns. To me, the key differing feature of the new theorisation is linked to the direction of leadership emanation between the individual and systemic levels. If the traditional theory has mostly seen the leader influencing the organisation with his (inherent) leadership resources, this thesis rather sees ‘things happening’ in a system that makes someone or something appear as a leader and/or leadership (see Drath & Palus, 1994). So, in this thesis the research interest lies in understanding the ‘contextual forces’ of the system that are both implicitly and explicitly constructed as leadership. Or to borrow from Fisher (1985): to see leadership as an emergent property of group (or even a wider collective, like a nation) interaction and analyse it from such a premise.

In the next paragraphs I introduce the key theories that developed the idea of leadership as a socially constructed property of a collective and thereafter I position my theoretical agenda in more detail in this particular subfield of leadership theory.

3.4.1 The advent of the socially constructionist leadership perspective

The idea of leadership as socially constructed appeared during the 1970s with the work of Calder (1977) and Pfeffer (1977). Pfeffer (1977) addressed the definitional problems depicted earlier in this summary and argued that leadership is of interest primarily as a phenomenological construct. Social action has meaning only through phenomenological processes. Pfeffer (1977: 109) wrote that leadership is attributed by observers. The identification of certain organisational roles as leadership positions guides the construction of meaning in the direction of attributing effects to the actions of these position holders.⁵ Whether or not leader behaviour actually influences performance or effectiveness, people believe it does. To Pfeffer, a leader is, in part, an actor. He claimed that leaders attempt to reinforce the attribution processes with their actions and statements, through a manipulation of symbols. Successful leaders succeed in separating themselves from failures and associating themselves with successes.

⁵ In traditional leadership studies, position and leadership are separated. Management has been said to be inconsequential to leadership. Yet, Pfeffer argues that leadership is expected from people in position. The concepts are entangled and their separation is a scholarly act. The separation is problematic because it does not catch the lifeworlds of the practitioners in organizations.

Yet, he also argued that once in a leadership position, the leader's discretion and behaviour are constrained. The leader's embeddedness in the social system creates a role set and the expectations of the peers, subordinates and superiors pressure the leader to conform. Pfeffer (1977:111) concluded that:

Leadership is associated with a set of myths reinforcing a social construction of meaning which legitimates leadership role occupants, provides belief in potential mobility for those not in leadership roles, and attributes social causality to leadership roles, thereby providing a belief in the effectiveness of individual control.

These ideas that were iconoclastic at the time were further developed by Lord and Maher with their implicit leadership theory (ILT) (1991, 2002, see also Shondrick et al., 2010) which studies (among other things) the social categories discerning between leaders and non-leaders. Their work was important in acknowledging the importance of the follower in the emergence of leadership. According to Lord and Maher a leader is a leader when a follower recognizes and acknowledges him/her as a leader. Followers have mental representations of what leaders ought to be and do, and they compare these models with their real world experiences and make up their minds whether someone is a leader or not. The developments in ILT have shed light on the characteristics of leader prototypes and how different prototypes are preferred in different contexts (Shondrick et al., 2010: 962). For example, according to Solano (2006) people preferred democratic leader behaviour under civilian contexts and autocratic leader characteristics under military contexts. Another example is Scott and Brown (2006) who have shown that agentic behaviour produced by females is not often recognized as an instance of leadership, but similar behaviour produced by males is easily classified as leadership.

Another theory development that challenged the essentialist leadership theories was the 'Romance of Leadership' (RoL) theory created by Meindl (1985, 1995, see also Bligh et al. 2011). Meindl et al. (1985: 79) argued that people, both scholars and practitioners, "have developed highly romanticized, heroic view of leadership – what leaders do, what they are able to accomplish, and the general effects they have on our lives". Meindl and his partners claimed that leadership is a psychologically attractive, yet biased account used to assess organisational successes and failures. The theory has helped the field to widen the discussion on why leadership is held in such high esteem in human collectives. RoL has challenged the rational leader-organisation causality, 'successful leadership enhances organisational performance' argument and shown how belief in leadership provides us with a sense of comfort and security, reduced feelings of uncertainty, and provides a sense of human agency and control (Meindl, 2004: 464).

Gemmill and Oakley (1992) took the argument even further by referring to leadership as infantilizing social myth. Applying the social construction of reality view (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) they argued that leadership is reified in a process of social construction and mystified and accorded an objective existence. According to them, the leadership myth functions as a social defence whose central aim is to repress uncomfortable needs, emotions, and wishes that

emerge when people attempt to work together. In their critical reading they suggest that leadership is a serious sign of social pathology, that it is a special case of an iatrogenic social myth that induces massive learned helplessness among members of a social system. The major function of the leader myth is to preserve the existing social system and structure by attributing dysfunctions and difficulties within the system to the lack of, or absence of leadership. Gemmill and Oakley (1992) write: “As social despair and helplessness deepen, the search and wish for a messiah (leader) or magical rescue (leadership) also begins to accelerate”. Their view on leadership is extreme, and they decline to see anything positive about leadership. Rather they consider it to be a false consciousness among followers, something to get rid of once organisation members and organisations mature. Yet, practical experiences show us that most enduring human collectives, with only a few exceptions, seem to have leaders (Grint, 2010b). Apparently, humankind matures quite slowly. This thesis does not apply such a critical reading of the phenomenon of organisational leadership, nor does it promote a radical transformation on how leadership should be understood or practiced in ‘real world organisations’⁶. Still, what is interesting about the previous quote from Gemmill and Oakley is how they argue for the importance of the situation for the emergence of leadership. A similar proposition is made by charismatic leadership research which argues that crisis situations, i.e. periods of stress and turbulence are most conducive for charismatic leadership (Weber, 1947; Conger, 1999).

Differing from Pfeffer’s view, the RoL literature sees leadership relationships as independent from the hierarchical power and authority (Meindl, 1995). What is particularly important for this thesis is the proposition put forth by the RoL literature that the behaviour of followers is much less under the control and influence of the leader, and more under the control and influence of forces that govern the social construction process itself. RoL research has, for example, shown how interfollower and social contagion processes are important in the constructions of leadership (Bligh et al., 2011).

3.4.2 The various approaches of leadership as social construction

Lately, the social construction of leadership has become an established area of leadership research⁷. Fairhurst and Grant (2010) provide a review of social constructionist leadership research. They state that a social constructionist (SC) leadership view sees leadership as “co-constructed, a product of sociohistorical and collective meaning-making, and negotiated on an ongoing basis through a complex interplay among leadership actors, be they designated or emergent leaders, managers and/or followers”. Yet, they argue that the increase in SC research has resulted in a wide variety in how a social constructionist lens is both

⁶ Fairhurst (2007) suggests that all constructionist leadership research holds the stance that leadership is not inevitable (Type I). She continues that some leadership research also hold the following stances: Type II: leadership is bad as it is and Type III: The world would be better off without leadership or if leadership was radically transformed. I cater to the first stance, but not to the types II and III in this thesis.

⁷ See a Special Issue in *Management Communication Quarterly* May 2010; 24 (2).

understood and applied. Their article proposes a 'sailing guide' to chart the waters of published SC leadership literature. They dissect the SC leadership literature among four dimensions that they adopt from Pearce (1995). These dimensions are (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010: 177):

- Construction of Social Reality vs. Social Construction of Reality,
- Theory vs. Praxis,
- Critical/Emancipatory vs. Pragmatic/Interventionist, and
- Multimodal vs. Monomodal.

According to Pearce (1995, in Fairhurst & Grant, 2010) the construction of social reality foregrounds perception and the social construction of reality foregrounds action. The former line of thought emphasizes the cognitive products of social interaction, such constructions as social categories, implicit theories, attributions, and sensemaking accounts, and the latter emphasizes the interactions themselves. The early SC theories like Implicit Leadership Theory and Romance of Leadership are interested in the schema based and sociocognitive categories that define leadership. These social constructions of the perceivers can be studied using traditional scientific methods (Meindl et al., 1985).

Fairhurst and Grant explicate two other positions on the construction of social reality vs social construction of reality axis. The next position moving from perception towards action is titled attributional theories and sensemaking accounts of leadership. In these studies leadership refers to ordinary language descriptions and they study the vocabularies and narratives of leadership actors as sensemaking accounts (Weick, 1995) in which leadership identities, contexts and roles are enacted and generated. They title the third position 'social interaction processes' and place it at the social construction of reality end of the axis. These studies study how leadership is a sociohistorically negotiated discourse. Some of these studies are interested in the Foucauldian 'Big D' discourse (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). They see leadership as a constellation of ideas, ideologies, assumptions and practices naturalized in the studied world, which typically is our contemporary western capitalist society. According to this view, 'The Leadership Discourse' is a strategic resource that is adopted in leadership action by the leadership actors, such as leaders, followers and researchers. Yet, what is most applicable to this thesis, including both the summary and the essays, are the studies applying the 'Little d' discursive approach where leadership is understood as a perception or an attribution of emerging structure in a dynamic or chaotic system (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). Leadership is seen as an organizing activity, the 'leadership acts' contribute to the structuring of interactions and relationships. The focus of research is on the leadership process where definitions of social order are negotiated, accepted or declined, implemented and renegotiated (Hosking, 1988: 147). These studies take an explicitly interactional approach and study the performances of the leadership actors emphasizing the sociality and the interactionality of these processes (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010: 181).

The second dimension of the sailing guide is the Theory vs. Praxis continuum. Fairhurst and Grant define these positions as an interest in theoretical knowledge per se versus an interest in a more practical use of the theory in management practice and education. The authors use the term 'phronesis', i.e. practical wisdom, to capture the praxis position. However, this thesis, in both the summary and the essays, caters more to a knowledge interest that lies in the Theory position of the continuum. Still, in the fourth essay we move a little towards the praxis end when we develop some ideas on how to adopt our chosen concepts to practical organisation development use.

The third dimension of the sailing guide is the Critical/Emancipatory vs. Pragmatic Intervention continuum. This dimension is linked with power. In the critical/emancipatory corner lurks a critical scholar who critiques the power and dominance related to what managers and leaders in general do. The critical author has the emancipation of the oppressed on her agenda. The pragmatically based interventionist position addresses power-related issues more lightly, naturalizes them or omits them from his analysis. According to Fairhurst and Grant this may be due to pragmatist scholar's desire to engage with the leaders/managers and what they do. In this thesis research I cater to the pragmatic view. I do not contest the actions or the positions of the leaders/managers I have studied. Rather I have organized sessions where the researchers' interpretations were presented to the members of the studied organisations and I am continuously interested in how the research subjects of these studies react and interpret the scholarly results. These valuations clearly place my research in the pragmatic intervention corner.

The fourth and final dimension of the guide is the Monomodal vs. Multimodal position along an axis. This dimension concerns whether the researchers limit their attention solely to leadership actors' language in organisations (monomodality) or whether they focus on other means of generating meaning (multimodality). Fairhurst and Grant (2010: 190) name the use of space, the body, clothing and technology as examples of these other means. This thesis adopts a multimodal view on the social construction of leadership. To be precise, describing the multimodality of the leadership construction is its primary research agenda. During the time the sailing guide was published (2010), only a limited number of studies promoting such a view existed. Therefore, Fairhurst and Grant mention only a few studies catering to multimodality. However, the emerging leadership-as-practice studies work to fill this research area (Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010; Denis et al., 2010; Endrissat & von Arx, 2013; Raelin, 2011b). I will describe the current research adopting the contextual, practice and sociomaterial views on the construction of leadership in the final theory section of this summary.

The next section describes leadership research that includes the organisational context in the analysis, and builds a new understanding on what elements promote the experience of leadership in organisations.

3.5 The sociomaterial context of leadership

The importance of context in organisational behaviour in general, and in leadership theorisation in particular, has been acknowledged for decades by prominent writers. Yet, empirical research settings or theoretical models have either discarded it or reduced it to a few moderating variables (as in the contingency school). The scholars have known for a long time that contextual factors are important, but have had problems in integrating them into their models. Lately, especially during the last 10-15 years, we have seen an increase in the explicit attempt to include context in the theorisation (Barker, 2001; Osborn et al., 2002; Johns, 2006; Liden & Antonakis, 2009; Fairhurst, 2009; Iszatt-White, 2011; Endrissat & von Arx, 2013) of our field⁸.

What, then, does context actually mean? A dictionary definition is a good starting point for tackling this question. Merriam-Webster (2015) online dictionary gives the following two definitions:

- i. The parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light on its meaning.
- ii. The interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs: environment, setting, 'the situation in which something happens'.

The dictionary further reveals that the first known use of the word 'context' dates to 1568, and that the word derives from the Latin word 'contextus' which means connection of words, coherence. This latter term was derived from a more technical term 'contexere', which means weave together.

The two definitions represent different worlds: the former emerges from the world of linguistics and the latter from the material world. Interestingly, these two meanings are present also in the world of leadership scholarship as in the Human Relations 2009 special issue on the contextuality of leadership there were two introductions; the first one discussing context in the psychological leadership research (the objective, 'real world') (Liden & Antonakis, 2009), and another discussing context in discursive leadership research (the subjective, 'linguistic world') (Fairhurst, 2009). The different schools of leadership scholarship have varying interpretations of what context means (see Johns, 2006 for a review of the use of context in organisational behaviour research).

The more realistically oriented authors have classified leadership context in various ways. Osborn et al. (2002) introduced four conceptual contexts (Stability, Crisis, Dynamic Equilibrium, Edge of Chaos) and argued that these contexts appear at different levels of the organisation (They stated that dynamisms increase as focus moves upwards on the corporate ladder) and can be used to anticipate leadership behaviour. Avolio (2007) states that historical (prior events), proximal (the work climate, task, group and performance characteristics etc. the leaders and followers are embedded into) and distal contexts (organisational culture, societal environment) need to be included in the new integrative lead-

⁸ Especially, see the special issue of Human Relations in November 2009: The context of leadership. Human Relations 62 (11).

ership theories of the future. The research has focused on discovering the variance caused by various contexts in leadership behaviour. Liden and Antonakis (2009: 1596) sum up the psychological research on leadership context and state:

... vast majority of this research has focused on the influence of context on leadership or relationship between leadership and both individual and organizational outcomes. Relatively neglected has been the influence that individuals may have on the context.

Among the social constructionist leadership scholars, context has been discussed differently. For a constructionist, knowledge is locally constructed: it is contextual and perspective in every way. Constructionist studies are less keen to compare leadership in different contexts, but rather dive deep into a particular context to understand better the dynamic interplay between actors classified as leaders and/or followers. In line with the first dictionary meaning above; to understand a word or a passage, the surrounding text needs to be considered. Therefore, the word context may not even be mentioned in a similar sense as that among the realists. Some discursively oriented scholars see Managerial Discourse (with a capital D) as the context both restraining and directing identity work of managers suggesting them to become 'entrepreneurial leaders' (du Gay, Salaman & Rees, 1996). Grint (2005b) showed how decision-makers actively construct their organisational/societal contexts and use this sensegiving work to legitimize certain actions. Endrissat and von Arx (2013) argued that the relationship between leadership and context is recursive: leadership is produced by, but also produces the context to which it refers.

3.5.1 How context generates leadership

If one returns to the previous paragraphs on leadership context and analyses them, one can discover how the context has been operationalized as 'everything else but the leader (and sometimes the follower)'. The literature, both the old and the new, cling to the age-old essentialist notion of leadership residing in the leader character. Drath et al. (2008) borrow from Bennis (2007) and call this the 'tripod' ontology of leadership; consisting of leaders, followers, and shared goals. These entities are considered essential and indispensable to leadership and therefore what a leadership theory should discuss. Drath and his co-authors suggest an alternative ontology based on leadership outcomes: leadership as direction, alignment and commitment (DAC)⁹ (Drath et al., 2008: 636). Their argument is that the tripod ontology basically seeks to answer the questions: Who are the leaders, and how do they interact with followers to attain shared goals? These primary questions have led scholars to concentrate on issues of leader characteristics and behaviour. The authors wish to propose an alternative ontology for understanding and studying leadership. In the DAC ontology, theory

⁹ Direction: widespread agreement in a collective on overall goals, aims, and mission. Alignment: the organization and coordination of knowledge and work in a collective. Commitment: the willingness of members of a collective to subsume their own interests and benefit within the collective interest and benefit. (Drath et al., 2008: 636)

would seek to explain how people who share work in collectives produce direction, alignment and commitment. No longer is leadership essentialized to a social influence process flowing from prescribed influencers (leaders) to influencees (followers), but leadership emerges as the collective cooperative meaning making in a community (of practice) (Drath & Palus, 1994:10).

Instead of individual characteristics or behaviours inherent to classic tripod ontology, leadership is, according to DAC ontology, produced by individual/collective beliefs and relational practices (Drath et al., 2008). Beliefs refer to any aspect of how to produce DAC in an organisation, including but not limited to leader/follower characteristics. Beliefs are both individual and collective, and consist of a) beliefs about the value or need for DAC in an organisation, for example such that a shared goal is vital to team effectiveness; b) beliefs about the individual characteristics and behaviours that enhance or hinder the production of DAC, for example such that the leader is a person who takes charge during crises; c) beliefs about the practices that produce DAC, for example such that decisions should be made by consensus. The beliefs do not stand by themselves, but are supported and justified by other beliefs, constituting a web of beliefs (Rorty, 1990).

Leadership beliefs are instantiated in practice. Practices refer to the total pattern of interactions and systems that produce DAC, again including but not limited to leader-follower interaction (Drath et al., 2008). While not all beliefs may be instantiated, but remain only as potential practices, all practices reflect some leadership beliefs held either individually or collectively. Practices are understood as *collective enactments* such as patterns of conversation or organisational routines that include but transcend individual behaviour. Practices also constitute a web of mutual support and justification and resist being changed: to introduce and assimilate a new leadership practice requires the total or a significant portion of the webs of practices and beliefs to be rewoven (*recon-texere*), that is, to change other, yet related, practices and beliefs in significant ways. It is worth emphasizing that the webs of beliefs are collective and practices relational: singular actions are interpreted in the light of the wider web of leadership beliefs and practices. For example, the practice of issuing commands: a sergeant giving an order to a soldier, is, despite its autocratic style, a relational practice. Both the soldier and the sergeant hold constitutive beliefs about the situation: a sergeant believes he is entitled to command, the soldier believes he is under obligation to obey. Both beliefs contribute equally to the production of the practice of giving command. Therefore, the practice is not only about giving commands; it is about giving and receiving commands (Drath et al., 2008: 645). It is the beliefs and practices out of which commanding and receiving commands emerge that bring into being the possibility of there being commanders and those who are commanded. Notice how the total context is inextricably bound to our assessment of leadership in this case: we need to understand the military disciplinary tradition and the possible future deviations, i.e. changing expectations of commanding and receiving commands, to provide a useful description of the practice.

Drath et al.'s (2008) DAC ontology is a practice theory argument applied to leadership theory. Even though the authors make no references to the work of acknowledged practice theorists, the premises adopted and the arguments proposed are alike with what practice theory suggests. Drath et al.'s (2008) work adopts the tenets widely shared by practice theorists according to Nicolini (2013: 214):

- Discursive and material actions are made possible and acquire meaning through practices.
- Practices are inherently contingent, materially mediated, and cannot be understood without reference to specific place, time, and concrete historical context.
- Practices are social accomplishments. Social actors emerge as a part of the web of relationships and mutual dependencies.
- Practices require human carriers in order to be accomplished and human capability results from taking part in one or more sociomaterial practices.
- Practices are mutually connected and constitute a nexus or a network.

Both leadership meaning and identity emerge from practices, and through practices. For human action to be meaningful it needs to be recognized as something intelligible. What this something is, is defined by the associated practice/practices. Thus, the same action can be identified as leadership in certain situations and in other as not. For leadership researcher, therefore, the task becomes to understand how and why certain practices are, become or unbecome leadership practices. Meaning and identity are provisional and relational, not absolute. To understand them, we need to understand the contingencies, how the practices through which they unfold relate to other practices, stakeholders, objects, materials, histories, ideologies; that is to context.

The role of context in DAC ontology differs from the tripod ontology. Drath et al.'s (2008) argumentation is in line with Schatzki (2005: 467), who writes:

Human coexistence inherently transpires as part of a context of a particular sort. This in turn implies that a certain type of context is central to analysing and explaining social phenomena.

Leadership is not only embedded in context (Osborn et al., 2002), it is an inseparable part of the context (Hosking, 1988). As, according to DAC ontology, leadership exists when there is a shared amount of direction, alignment and commitment, the context plays a *constitutive* or *generative* role in leadership (Drath et al., 2008: 646). Or as Ladkin (2010: 178) states: the very appearance of leadership is totally dependent upon its context and cannot be separated from it. Context is not the more or less independent variable which affects the dyadic influence process. Leadership beliefs and practices constitute mutually supportive and justifying webs ranging from individual beliefs, which further reflect larger organisational, tribal, ethnic, or national cultural webs. The production of DAC leadership is bound up in multiple and multi-level webs of belief and

practice that do not just have an effect on the production of DAC but generate and justify the beliefs and practices by which DAC is produced. Context and leadership are mutually interacting interdependent elements (Drath et al., 2008: 646). Contextual elements such as organisational structure, physical technology, corporate values, professional history, and situated moments are constitutive sources of the beliefs and practices by which people in a collective produce DAC (Drath et al., 2008: 646). Therefore, from a DAC perspective, studying leadership context means studying the origins and originators of leadership, the beliefs and practices, of that state where the collective is organized. Therefore, context is co-created, contestable, and locally achieved. The multi-layered and dynamic view of context is captured when we are able to demonstrate how individual, dyad or group, organisational, and socio-historical influences, reflexively interrelate at particular moments in time (Drath & Palus, 1994).

Well, if context is the generative source of leadership, then how to address it? Is it, as defined by the dictionary, a discursive whole or is it the realistic environment or situation. Or is it both, or neither? I adopt a view where context consist of both of these worlds. As mentioned earlier, my research agenda is multimodal (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010: 190) grounded on a practice approach. I address multiple means of generating leadership meaning, with the essays addressing the contextual sources of leadership differently. The concept I use to describe the character of leadership context in general is sociomateriality (Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Carlile, Nicolini, Langley & Tsoukas, 2013). The sociomaterial view postulates that materiality is integral to organizing, as the social and material are *constitutively entangled* in everyday life (Orlikowski, 2007: 1437, emphasis in original). The notion of constitutive entanglement presumes that there are no independently existing entities with inherent characteristics (Barad, 2003: 816). Classic sociology adopted and applied an essentialist setting towards agency; things are either subjects or objects (Latour, 1992, 2005). Rather, the new view sees agency as a capacity realized through associations of actors (both human and nonhuman) and therefore relational, emergent, and constantly shifting (Orlikowski, 2007)¹⁰. Cooren et al. (2006: 11) state that agencies are not defined a priori, but through a process of studying how worlds become constructed in a certain way. According to Orlikowski (2007) the sociomaterial view replaces the essentialist substances with *performed relations*, to underline and address recursive intertwining of the social and material as they emerge in on going, situated practice (Latour, 2005). Orlikowski (2007) refers to Pels et al. (2002: 2) who state "it is not so much what materials ... symbolize within social action that matters but their constitutive agentic effects within the entangled networks of sociality/materiality". Humans are constituted through relations of materiality – bodies, clothes, food, devices, tools, which, in turn, are produced through human practices. The distinction

¹⁰ As presented earlier in this thesis: the same goes for classic leadership theory. This is the same ontological contrast as the one provided by Drath et al. (2008) in their comparison of tripod ontology and DAC ontology of leadership.

between humans and artefacts, in this view, is analytical only; these entities relationally entail or enact each other in practice.

And so it is also with leadership. Leadership is constructed through collective enactments in sociomaterial space. It is a social accomplishment, even when it is attributed to individuals. Leadership is leadership only because the members of a particular setting inter-subjectively negotiate the shared understanding that this act by this person in this setting inter-subjectively negotiate the shared understanding that this act by this person in this setting constitutes leadership, and the social context of the actions are an intrinsically inseparable part of the actions themselves (Iszatt-White, 2011: 120). Further, it is leadership that creates leaders, and not (prescribed) leaders who apply leadership as a special, particular behaviour or craft, as we have seen (mostly implicitly) argued in mainstream leadership theory. Nicolini (2013: 177) provides an example of the ordering of 'becoming' (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) a leader:

You are an umpire within the practice of an organized game of baseball. If baseball is forgotten, outlawed, and not practiced any more, there is no umpiring to talk about. Umpiring thus comes before umpires, and the same holds for other phenomena such as gender and leadership.

Another example can be drawn from leadership in feudal times. During that era certain individuals were born to become leaders. It was customary that the first born son of a noble was granted the future title as birthright. God was typically evoked to legitimize such hereditary rule, yet the actual agency was with the people who believed in and upheld the societal practice through their action.

Therefore, whenever a leader appears it is the result of a process of everyday organizing, meaning mediated through entangled social and material resources, such as authority, historical understandings of the role of leaders and followers, the line of industry, the practices applied in everyday organizing of work, technologies of leadership ranging from the use of Powerpoint to strategy discourse, body postures, dress (uniform being the most evident example), and so on and so on. Frankenstein's Monster is a fitting delineation of a leader: the different pieces brought together created the unique monster both loved and hated by its maker. A leader is a weave knit from various contextual strands by a collective. Leaders are 'hybrids' (Grint, 2010a; Haraway, 1991) generated in a co-creative process from social and material contextual resources available to a collective. Humans and things/non-humans are not defined by oppositions, by dualities or negativities, but by constant exchange and mixing of energy, properties, and competences (Olsen, 2013: 179).

Next I will delve into the methodological questions pertaining to the thesis. My studies adopt the interpretative research approach and therefore, I will introduce that research paradigm. In addition, I will discuss narrative research methods, as my empirical analyses builds on the narrativisation of data. After that I will describe in some detail the empirical details of the individual studies presented in the essays constituting this thesis. Following this, I will describe my research process, or how this thesis emerged from the insights I had during and after the execution of the individual studies.

4. Research philosophy, method, process, and settings

The theoretical bases of this thesis lie in cultural social theory and the socio-material construction of leadership. To do empirical research from such a stance, I need to choose appropriate research methods. The research methods should be compatible with the theoretical choices; in other words, the ontological and epistemological standings of the theories and methods should be aligned. To follow this line of thought I adopt an interpretative research approach (Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Interpretative research aims to understand the world at the level of the subjective experience. To an interpretative researcher, social reality is a constructed world built in and through meaningful interpretations (Prasad & Prasad, 2002: 6). The intent of the research is not to capture the elements of some pre-existing world presumed to be available ‘out there’, but to understand the process of symbolic ‘worldmaking’: how the social world is ongoingly accomplished. The interest lies in understanding the very bases and sources of social life. Interpretative research in organisation studies has traditionally been associated mainly with local meanings and everyday symbolic worlds. Burrell and Morgan (1979: 28) eloquently stated that within the interpretative paradigm “everyday life is accorded the status of a miraculous achievement”. This ontological and epistemological commitment is at the heart of interpretative research. From an interpretative point of view, the scholar is not a detached observer of organisational action, but an active participant in the sensemaking process. Hatch and Yanow (2003: 69) explain how interpretationists emphasize the context-specificity of knowledge: knowledge is created in a situation and is of that situation. The interpretation, as done by both laymen and scholars, follows the conventions and styles developed and accepted by their dedicated communities (see Czarniawska, 1999). Therefore, within the interpretative paradigm the final claims made by a study are assessed according to coherence rather than a correspondence theory of truth (Schmitt, 2004). This also means that the quality of the research is not assessed with the inherently positivist concepts of validity and reliability but with verisimilitude: the ‘lifelikeness’ or ‘believability’ of an argument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

All my essays consider leadership from a sequential perspective: events and actions occur in time and influence leadership interpretations (or do not).

Therefore, I am studying changing leadership to understand the contextual elements influencing leadership in general. The outcome of my work: the explanations of how context partakes in the construction of leadership, are stories that describe the processes, the sequences of events, that connect causes and effects (Pentland, 1999: 711). To create a theory, the descriptions need to move forward to explanations, to provide more profound argumentation about why certain things become understood as leadership.

To achieve this, I have adopted narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995; Boje, 2001, see also Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012) as my guiding research method. The individual essays describe in more detail the particular research methods that have been applied within them. Yet, the essays share a generic methodological approach. Polkinghorne (1995: 6) makes a distinction between ‘analysis of narratives’ and ‘narrative analysis’. Analysis of narratives is a type of inquiry, which uses stories as data and produces paradigmatic typologies or categories as a result. Such analyses expel time in the analytic process: they start with diachronic data and end up with synchronic interpretation. Narrative analysis, on the other hand, is a study whose data consists of actions, events, and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories (e.g. biographies, histories, case studies) (Polkinghorne, 1995). In contrast to analysis of narratives, narrative analysis applies synchronic data (e.g. what is leadership in our organisation now?) and constructs a diachronic explanation (e.g. how leadership changed and what caused the change?). Diachronic explanations are produced in a story format. In narrative analysis the researcher provides a plot that serves to configure or compose the disparate data elements into a meaningful explanation of the protagonists’ responses and actions (Polkinghorne, 1995: 18). Therefore, the function of a narrative analysis is to answer how and why a particular outcome came about (Polkinghorne, 1995: 19). I apply narrative analysis as my primary analytic method. I therefore construct explanative stories from my data. My style of writing is primarily what Van Maanen (1988) depicted as realist: an objectivist point-of-view is adopted.

The analytic process followed abductive reasoning (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). Empirical data and interpreter’s theoretical and practical preunderstanding bounce in a reflexive process, from which new understanding of theory may evolve. At the heart of the analysis is the interplay of etic (outsider) and emic (insider) readings of the phenomena at hand (Morey & Luthans, 1984; Boje, 2001: 122). A researcher draws external ideas from extant theory and places them in comparison with the categories in use by the insiders allowing himself to be surprised by the outcomes. Boje (2001: 127) reminds us that these categories are not static, but the etic/emic duality is circular: emic may become etic and vice versa. The essays follow different routes in this interplay of etic/emic interpretations. In essays 1 and 2 we make an etic reading of leadership: we impose our interpretation of leadership on our empiria. In essay 1 we argue how a Complexity Leadership reading can explain the changing supervisory action in the organisation. In essay 2 our analysis reveals how the fishing metaphor was used to promote a meaning of a competent leader of a nation.

In essays 3 and 4 our starting point is an emic interpretation of leadership: We take the locals' interpretation - their announcement - that there is leadership involved in the situation and expose our explanations on how and why it can be considered leadership. Our analyses then followed by looking intently on the case details, with an intent to understand the interpretations of leadership, and further explaining how the contextual elements added up to these perceptions of leadership action.

More detailed methodological settings of the essays are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The methodological features of the essays.

Essay	Case description	Research setting	Data	Analysis method
E1: What is leading the leaders	Change projects in industrial organisations (4). Focusing in one particular case organisation. Supervisors in the department (15) were the focal interest group.	Cross-sectional interview and document analysis	Interview data: 28 interviews in 4 organisations, final focus on one case organisation (6 interviews). Company documentation on the change process	Content analysis. Narration of the change process.
E2: Fishing President	The recreational fishing trips of president of Finland Urho Kekkonen during his tenure 1956-1981. The presidential 'tribe' was the focal interest group.	Historical research design, focus on visual aspects	Archival data. Photographs (423), correspondence (521), media material (192)	Visual discourse analysis. Construction of a photo essay.
E3: Work practices	Change process in a logistic terminal. Supervisors (6-8) were the focal interest group	Longitudinal. Two data collection phases in 2008 and 2011-2012	Ethnographic data. Shadowing of supervisors (6 8-hour shifts in phase 1, 17 8-hour shifts in phase 2, interviews, observations, field memos	Narration of the research data. Abductive analytic process.
E4: Being in the centre	Change process in a production department. Supervisors (15) were the focal interest group	Longitudinal. Three interview phases: 2010-11, 2012, 2014	Interview data from essay 1, 6 additional interviews on three occasions. Corporate documentation (1300 docs) from 2006-2011	Narration of the research data. Abductive analytic process.

In the next section I will address how my research unfolded in practice and how the research process came to focus on the question of the relationship between context and leadership.

4.1 How the thesis process unfolded

In 2007 I was approached by an organisation development consultant acquaintance who suggested that I and my faculty would become their academic partners in a publicly funded development program. The focus of the program was the future of supervisory work in the food and beverage industry. My professional history in the faculty had focused particularly on organisational development, so I became interested in the proposition. During this time I had no idea that this project would be a doctoral thesis project – for that I had different things in mind. I recruited a colleague (T. Kostamo) to join me on the program. A two-year program (called JOEL) was successfully organized with two companies, and our team participated in the program primarily through building a concept for mapping supervisory work. We also collected some of our research data during this project. In 2009 this program was finalized. It was considered a success by the participants, and as a result the consultants ramped up a new, more operationally focused development program in four beverage industry organisations. The first program had made us aware that industrial supervisory work was not really studied any longer either in Finland or internationally, and we felt that this was an area where new research would be beneficial. Therefore, we applied for public funding to study the development program organized by the consultants. We received our funding, but due to timetable reasons, our scholarly project and the operative development program started a year apart. Therefore, our data collection setting eventually settled in us following the effects of the consultants' efforts in the four organisations. Even still, we collected data from the organisations during 2009-2012. I recruited two new junior researchers (T. Liiri and M. Tiitinen) to the program and we collected data from the organisations. The junior researchers finalized their Master's theses and we finalized a research report on the topic in 2012. Again, this program (called 1manager) was deemed successful by the participants and the formal project was closed in fall 2012. Yet, during the data collection phase, our work focused mainly on internal project reporting and some national publishing of the results.

Even though I have worked in academia for two decades, for many years I wasn't keen on writing a doctoral dissertation. I enjoyed my teaching work and the various organisation developments projects I managed and did not come to grasp the academic reality that in order to stay in the game, one needs to do a doctoral dissertation. In the end, I was more or less forced by friendly but persistent parties around me to focus on doing a dissertation in 2013. I took to the task reluctantly and with hesitation.

My original idea of what the dissertation would be was different from what came out of the process. I had thought that I would do just one full study, write it out as a monograph and be done with it. I had for years planned on doing a study on organisational change. I even had an original data set that would be applicable to such an endeavour. However, in the meantime I was working as a project manager organizing and leading various research projects focusing more or less on leadership related issues. As time passed, I never did seem to have the time or the energy to focus on an auxiliary thesis project. Yet, at some stage I came to a revelation that I could compose my thesis from the scholarly work I

had already done. Still, when I made this decision to build up the thesis from the current elements, my primary concern was how to build a coherent package of the individual articles applying various data sets, collected with varying methods, and framed with varying leadership theories. I felt that the individual papers were incommensurable; that they did not have a proper common nominator, either on the data set level, method level, or theory level.

I came to a conclusion that the common nominator would have to be discovered primarily on a theory level. Yet, in addition I felt that we had created an original idea that could lead my thesis in some satisfying direction. This idea, which was presented in the first article, was that the research interest should focus not on how leaders influence organisations (a traditional thought), but on how organisations influence leaders, or rather ‘make them what they are’. This thought had made us consider context during the writing of the first article, and also made both of my writing colleagues (T. Kostamo and T. Liiri) interested in discovering more about context. Still, at the time we felt that our contextual analysis was not taking us further as context can be understood as an epiphenomenon: if one focuses on it, it becomes the focal topic, and context has moved away. So, it seemed that context is impossible to consider directly.

After this phase I worked on the presidential leadership piece, which is in many ways more traditional reading with its’ charismatic twists. Still, the analysis made me see how the presidential leadership was not Kekkonen’s property – it was much wider and deeper thing than that. This made me more certain about the fact that there are things vital to leadership outside the prescribed leader person, or even outside the relationship between leader and follower, in Kekkonen’s case in the culturally powerful image of a virile, masculine hunter, a provider for a tribe. Was it the cultural image or the man who was in charge? I came to see the ritualistic performance of the presidential tribe as a cultural resource to leadership.

The idea of contextual influence has been more explicit during the writing of essays 3 and 4. The contextual elements, however, are theorized somewhat differently in the papers, even if the organisations and situation in the studied organisations are quite similar. The second ‘P’ of my title, practice became an important theoretical concept in understanding the linguistic and material resources influencing leadership interpretations. The discovery of Drath’s (Drath & Palus, 1994; Drath et al., 2008) and Ladkin’s (2010) work helped me conceptually distance leadership from the leader character and guided me to seek for other sources of leadership.

Yet, the final theoretical synthesizing has happened during the writing of the summary. The decisions to look at leadership from a cultural perspective and to approach contextuality with the help of practice theory and sociomateriality emerged during the summary writing. Even further, I came to understand the recurring methodology I had almost implicitly followed over the years at this late phase in the dissertation process. I comprehended that my research work was based on constructing stories of changing leadership in organisations.

4.2 Data sets used in the thesis

The data we collected during the two projects focusing on supervisory work consisted of the following bundles.

During the first research program (JOEL) T. Kostamo shadowed supervisors in the logistics terminal of a participating brewery. This phase took place in 2008. My role was to instruct the data collection, contribute to data analysis, and manage the overall research effort. This ethnographic data set was later used in essay 3 as data representing the first field phase.

During the second research program (1manager) T. Liiri conducted 28 interviews in the four participating organisations in 2009-11. I acted as his instructor in the process where he finalized his Master's thesis based on the collected data. I participated in two interviews, instructed the data analysis, and managed the feedback process with the companies. A year later, in 2012, T. Liiri did another round of interviews in the four organisations (6 interviews) under my instruction. This data set was used as the empirical material for essay 1. Even later, in 2014 we did a complementary interview together in the production unit of a brewery and gained access to extensive corporate documentation. This data set, in addition to the set T. Liiri collected earlier, was used as the empirical material for essay 4.

During the second research program (1manager) I also hired another junior researcher (M. Tiitinen). Her task became to do another round of ethnographic shadowing in the same organisation (the logistics terminal of the brewery) where we collected data during 2008. M. Tiitinen shadowed the supervisors, held interviews, and wrote extensive field memos of her experiences during 2011-12. My role was to act as her instructor, help with the analysis, and take part in the company feedback session. This data was later used in essay 3 as data representing the second field phase.

In addition, during 2010 I was approached by another colleague (T. Kuronen), who was writing his doctoral thesis on President Urho Kekkonen. I became his informal instructor in topics especially related to leadership, mainly charismatic theory. In the thesis process I contributed to his theoretical framing of the research findings and to conclusions made based on the research findings. His doctoral dissertation (Kuronen, 2011) was finalized at the end of 2011. During 2012 we began reworking his thesis content into a journal article. The manuscript was accepted for publication in *Leadership* (Sage) in 2013 and published in April 2015. This article is represented as essay number 2 in this thesis.

4.3 How the essays were written

The essays that constitute this thesis were written in the following fashion. The first essay (E1: What is leading the leaders by J. Virtaharju, T. Liiri and T. Kostamo) was written after our second research project (1manager). During spring 2012 I was asked to contribute to a thematic number for a Finnish periodical focusing on leadership. Our research team wrote the Finnish article during fall 2012 (Virtaharju et al., 2012). In the writing process all authors (J. Virtaharju, T. Liiri and T. Kostamo) contributed equally to the writing effort. All

authors had been employed in the research project, and therefore were well acquainted with the research setting and the data at our disposal. In the writing process, T. Kostamo took main responsibility for the generic leadership theory, T. Liiri wrote the case description and the Complexity Leadership Theory section, while I took primary responsibility for the discussion section, and managed the overall article structure. After the article was published in the Finnish periodical, we translated the article to English with T. Liiri and submitted it to the Academy of Management Annual Meeting in January 2013. The article was accepted and we (T. Liiri & J. Virtaharju) presented it in Orlando, Florida in August 2013.

The second essay (E2: The Fishing President by T. Kuronen and J. Virtaharju) was co-authored by T. Kuronen and yours truly. T. Kuronen became the first author as the article was based on the original idea presented in his doctoral dissertation. In the article writing during 2012 and 2013 both authors contributed equally to the process. I contributed especially to framing the article to leadership theory, the introduction of the article, and the discussion of the article findings. T. Kuronen contributed especially to research context, method section, the empirical findings (photoessay), and the theorisation of the myth. The article was published in 2015 (Kuronen & Virtaharju, 2015).

The preliminary idea of the third essay (E3: Working Practices by T. Kostamo and J. Virtaharju) originated during winter 2012. We had finalized the article presented as essay 1 in this thesis and had turned our interest to the differences between the first ethnographic data collection round in 2008 conducted by T. Kostamo in the logistics terminal of our case brewery and the second round conducted in 2011-12 by M. Tiitinen. The differences in how the same informants spoke about leadership turned our attention to the case. We wrote our first version of the paper, with T. Kostamo as the primary author during Spring 2013. The first version was presented at EGOS 2013 in Montreal by T. Kostamo. Based on the response we wrote a second version and both presented it at ISLC 2013 in Rome in December 2013. After this version we submitted the paper to Organization Studies in August 2014. The paper received a revise decision and was resubmitted in September 2015. The revision received a non-acceptance decision in November 2015. Currently, we are considering where and when to submit the paper again. Our writing roles have alternated extensively during the process. Originally T. Kostamo wrote the theory section and the results section based on the first field trip. In those versions I wrote the methods section, the results based on the second field trip, and the discussion section. In the current version, both authors have equally contributed to all sections of the article.

The fourth essay (E4: Being in the Centre by J. Virtaharju and T. Liiri) is an evolution version of the article presented in the first essay. The response we received from Academy of Management on the first article made us thoroughly rework the piece to a different study. We returned to collect more data from the company as depicted earlier in this chapter. We totally rewrote the theoretical section, the case findings, and the conclusions. The first version of the paper was presented at ISLC 2014 in Copenhagen in December 2014. After that, the paper was again rewritten and was submitted to Leadership (Sage) in June 2015. The

paper received a revise and resubmit decision in January 2016. It is this particular version that is included in this thesis. Both authors have contributed equally to the writing of the article. In the thesis version, I wrote the theory and method sections, and the discussion. T. Liiri contributed primarily to the empirical parts of the article.

I wrote the thesis summary in two phases between February and June 2015 and January 2016 and March 2016. I wrote it individually.

In the next part of the dissertation, I will introduce the primary research findings of the essays. More detailed coverage of the conducted studies can be found in the actual essays in the appendices section.

5. Essay summaries and contributions

This chapter discusses the key understandings of my research and justifies their theoretical relevance. The primary research questions and contributions of the individual essays are summarized in the following table.

Table 3. The primary research contributions of the essays

Essay title	Essay's research question	Essay's primary contribution
E1: What is leading the leaders: Contextuality as a perspective to leadership.	How do the organisational context and contextual changes shape the way supervisory leaders act in the organisational setting?	Supervisory leaders adapted their leadership style according to the Complex Adaptive System (CAS) (e.g. production line) they operated in. Contextual elements, especially the production technology impacted the leadership action of the supervisors. Organisation development actions affected the CAS and the supervisory leadership in the organisation.
E2: The Fishing President: Ritual in constructing leadership mythology.	How a 'tribal' recreational ritual was used in constructing an effective leadership mythology in a particular context?	The study showed how ritual and mythology are associated in the leadership context; how they intertwine and separate in time. Introduction of a primal leadership archetype: the hunter.
E3: Work practices as constructors of leadership.	How does leadership emerge in and through the everyday practices in organisations?	The study showed how changing networks of work practices created specific leadership experiences. Practices 'carry' leadership moments, inseparable from the practice. Study explains how organisational practices constitute leadership, and how practices interact in such a constitutive process.
E4: Being in the centre – Leadership emergence as the outcome of contextual repositioning.	How positional change influences the leadership experience of the organisational stakeholders?	The study showed how a network positional change from periphery to centre influenced the leadership practices and experiences of supervisory leaders. Conceptualisation of position as an action context.

Essay 1: What is leading the leaders

The first essay studied how contextual elements influenced supervisory leadership action in an industrial setting. The essay set itself apart from the traditional leadership conceptualisation where individual leaders are seen to unilaterally influence organisations, but in contrast focused in analysing what constrains and enables supervisors to lead in their particular work context. To do this, the essay introduced Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT), and adopted key fea-

tures of the theory to analyse the case material. The study identified three supervisory leadership contexts, i.e. Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) embedded in the different production lines of the brewery. Each CAS constituted a rather independent and tightly coupled leadership context. The supervisory leadership actions differed between the production lines, implying that the operational context influenced them. By using the CLT concepts, administrative and adaptive leadership, we described how on the bottling line CAS the supervisory leadership was primarily administrative, on the reusable plastic bottling line administrative and adaptive leadership were balanced, and on the can line supervisory leadership was primarily adaptive.

We argued that the leadership contexts enforced the supervisory leaders to act in a certain fashion. Barley (1986: 107) noticed long ago that “technologies do influence organizational structures in orderly ways, but their influence depends on the historical process in which they are embedded”. Each production line had its own unique history: the production line technologies dating from different decades required varied operating procedures from the line organisations. The supervisory work and consequently leadership had evolved to differing directions on each of the production lines. The ‘sociomaterial spaces’ of the physical production technology and historically evolved working practices on the production lines required the supervisors to perform in different ways in different contexts despite the shared hierarchical position and the common organisational rules and regulations. The actual concrete and steel of the production lines carried with them the ‘memory of how production is to be organized’ – something an individual human agent finds difficult to override. The material environment was in this sense leading people in the organisation - both the supervisors and the workers (see Ropo, Sauer & Salovaara, 2013 for a discussion on how spaces and places construct leadership). We also analysed how organisation development interventions changed the can line CAS, strengthening both administrative and adaptive leadership, and how the changes in CAS actants and relationships enforced and guided the supervisors to change their daily supervisory action towards a more ‘leaderful’ (Raelin, 2011b) orientation.

The essay showed that the organisational context influenced supervisory leadership. Supervisory leadership acts had adapted to suit the needs and requirements of the production lines and their operators. Our conceptualisation of leadership context as CAS was tangible: it included material actants such as production line technology, tasks, operators, supervisors and managers and the relationships between them. Changes in actors, relationships and working practices in the CAS also enforced changes in the supervisory leadership action. Leadership was developed indirectly: the intervention focus was not so much on the leader individuals, but more so on the sociomaterial environment where the supervisory leaders worked and the various tasks and routines through which they worked. The supervisors were re-placed in a renewed context and the context both enabled and enforced them to ‘act as leaders’ in the organisation. This empirical observation made us understand the limitations of seeing leadership solely as a quality of the focal character or the human-human social relation-

ship. Therefore, we proposed switching the traditional view of individual-centrism upside down: leaders lead in ways enabled by the leadership context. We also felt that there is a possibility for a theoretical contribution, as we recognized that leadership theory is not very strong in recognizing such a view.

Other aspects that struck us as important were the materiality and the ordinariness of this 'performing as leader'. The 'leadership issues' in the brewery involved common organizing challenges like machine breakdowns and operator absences. The supervisors required technical competence; detailed understanding of the production line machines, to gain respect in the eyes of their subordinates. Leadership was not something mysterious, special or extra, but it was embedded in the skilful organizing of the everyday production in the brewery, or as defined by (Ladkin, 2010: 28) as "the collective mobilization towards an implicit or explicit purpose".

Essay 2: The Fishing President

The operational leaders in the first essay, the supervisors, were not leaders who would craft their own contexts (Grint, 2005b) but it was more or less created for them by other parties. Urho Kekkonen, a leader of a nation state, worked on a different level. While he was constantly under the scrutinizing gaze of the commoner, he had ample opportunities to influence how he and his actions were presented to the public. The second essay's conceptualisation of leadership context departed from the first essay: it focused on the cultural constructions of president Kekkonen's leadership during his tenure. In the essay we studied how a private and recreational fishing ritual of Kekkonen and his friends, 'the tribe', influenced the emergence of a public national leadership mythology. We applied structuralist anthropology and charismatic leadership theory as our interpretative lenses. Our analysis tracked how the informal ritualistic performance became mythologized in media and photographs taken from those rituals were used to create an image of a strong leader of a nation, that of a providing hunter. Our essay also revealed how the ritual diminished over time. Yet, the mythology persisted as it was repeatedly renewed in the popular press. The study showed how a primal interpretation of the leader as an able hunter, a provider for a tribe was a powerful and compelling representation of a leader in Cold War era Finland, with its strong cultural roots in agriculture and forestry.

The second essay conceptualized context as the symbolic sphere where a powerful interpretation of presidential leadership emerged. The essay described how a meaning of leadership was created: how a ritualistic performance was interpreted and institutionalized to a mythology. Our analysis showed how leadership construction does not rest solely on the shoulders of the leader person. In our study the focal character, Kekkonen, provided 'leads' that media eagerly followed and enhanced and circulated as an interpretation of the 'fishing president'. The common people acted as consumers of this symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) constructed around Kekkonen's person. The images and texts told the public a simple yet powerful narrative of what it means to be a leader, how a leader is the ablest of us all, and how he acts as a provider for his domain. The

essay also showed both the strength and the persistence of the symbolic sphere of leadership. The mythic interpretation of Kekkonen's leadership lasted even when the person and the ritualistic performance were withering away. The mythology prevailed because it drew its contents from the Finnish national cultural legacy; the traditions of the Fenno-Ugric tribes, and not from the leader person. It was Kekkonen who was 'fitted' to such a symbolic context and from which his leadership gained legitimation. As we wrote in our essay: "We view leaders to be the great reference points of their societies: in a way 'created' by the context within which they are embedded. In other words, there is no 'leadership' out of context, as suggested by Ladkin (2010)."

Essay 3: Work practices as constructors of leadership

If the first essay studied leadership context as a material entity and the second essay discussed it as a symbolic dimension, then the third essay's objective was to build a conceptual bridge between the material and the symbolic domains. The essay studied how organisational practices are involved in constituting leadership meaning among organisational stakeholders. Our approach linked practice theory and phenomenological understanding of leadership and argued that changes in work practices influence the way people understand and relate to organisational leadership. We applied the concepts 'being-in-the-world', 'leadership moment' and 'leadership mode' to supplement the practice approach. We argued that during our first field visit the 'putting out fires' supervisory practice acted as an anchoring practice (Swidler, 2001). It carried particular ways of being for supervisors (active and competent) and workers (passive and incompetent) and the attached leadership moment of authoritative leadership had become a dominant leadership mode in the organisation, comprising a constitutive rule of action within the organisation. During our second visit, new supervisory practices allowed for the emergence of new ways of being and leadership moments. This resulted in more congenial relationships between the supervisors and workers and in an impression of a more collaborative leadership mode.

Theoretically, we presented how practices, supervisors and workers were entwined: activities, knowledge, humans and things all took part in the constitution of leadership. The work practices were relational: both supervisors and workers participated in their enactment. For example, the 'putting out fires' practice would not have been what it was without the passive way-of-being of the workers. Leadership emerged from the working practices, through the associations of human and non-human actors and the ways-of-being they entailed. The practices included both social and material dimensions. Practice theory helped us see how the meaning and the material were constitutively entangled in the everyday life of the brewery. The changing network of supervisory work practices were the constitutive, contextual source from which leadership arose. The new practices moved supervisors closer to workers, enabling and guiding them to work *with* rather than *for* the workers. This contextual change

empowered the workers to a more active role in the everyday organizing enhancing the collective mobilisation towards an efficiently functioning logistics terminal.

Essay 4: Being in the centre – Leadership emergence as the outcome of contextual repositioning

The fourth essay examined the relationship between position and leadership. We developed a network viewpoint to position and argued that a central position in a network is equated with leadership. A central position enhances the agents' opportunities to gain access to important knowledge and to powerful others who control resource flows (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006). Those who control the structural holes of a network gain social capital (Burt, 2000). Further, skilful use of these positional resources in everyday relating and organizing constructs the meaning and reality of leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006). In our case account, we tracked how supervisory work was redesigned in a production facility so that supervisors moved from a peripheral, supplementary and administrative role to a central, operative role and how this change was perceived in the organisation as 'leadership change'. We applied the concept 'leadership action context' (Kort, 2008) in our analysis. This concept helped us understand why certain events and actions in particular circumstances promote the emergence of leadership. In the situation, before the organisational changes the supervisors worked in a disjoint action context in relation to the production line workers and therefore were perceived as distant managers. After the changes, the new work practices and routines created a joint action context, with the supervisors and workers participating in the everyday organizing of the production. The supervisory leaders were guided and enforced to use the new network resources and as a result became perceived as leading the operative organisation.

The fourth essay showed how the network resources were not particular 'leadership resources', but included resources that would be typically categorized as 'technical' or 'managerial'. However, leadership in this particular organisation emerged through them. The study highlights how the scholarly task of separating management (hierarchy) and leadership for definitional purposes has left important elements related to the everyday leadership/managerial practice unconsidered. We showed how the managerial and leadership elements are entangled and interrelated: the positional elements are important 'tools' or resources in the performance of everyday leadership in organisations. This result can also be put into applied use. The practical take away from the study is that ordinary, everyday work procedures and tasks and how they are organized have important consequences on how and where leadership emerges in an organisation. Leadership action context could also be used as a tool in leadership development. The concept could be used to diagnose and design new leadership enhancing practices and positions. It may become an important means in analysing why certain managerial practice or task configurations inhibit or enable leadership proper to appear.

In the next section, I will describe how these findings answer the dissertation's generic research question. I will discuss the theoretical relevance of my research findings and link them with the current understanding of leadership theory. Further, I will discuss the practical implications of my research findings. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of this study and novel research possibilities.

6. Discussion

The essays have presented four different readings of how context influences leadership. In the next part I will discuss how this thesis answers its primary research question: How context partakes in the constitution of leadership?

I have argued that context is the essential source from which leadership arises. That it is the sociomaterial contextual elements that generate leadership; a meaning, which is sometimes associated with leaders, like oxygen available in atmosphere allows fire to burn. I developed the answer with the literature review and the empirical studies. I tracked how context had been conceptualized in leadership studies. Traditional objective views saw context as a separate entity from both leader and leadership. Context was considered mostly a factor constraining leadership. The objective research tradition primarily argued that different contexts require different leadership styles for leadership to be successful. Unsatisfied with this view, I adopted a leadership as social construction (SC) perspective and studied how that literature refers to context. From a SC point of view the question of context and its impetus differs from the traditional view. For a constructionist, knowledge is locally constructed, contextual and perspective. From a constructionist point of view, we, both scholars and laymen, require contextual elements to even identify and recognize some action as leadership (Kelly, 2014). Only when we see action in relation to other actions, to organisational history, to corporate aspirations, to actions of others etc., can we come to a conclusion on whether some action fills the often implicit assumptions we hold for leadership. Therefore, context is inseparable from leadership. Even more, I argue that context is generative in relation to leadership. Leadership arises out of a context, and leadership helps us mark the leaders and followers in a social setting. My study joins the school of leadership thinking where leadership is no longer reduced to an act of social influence between such categories as leader and follower. Instead, leadership involves a new unit of analysis, practice, where multimodal elements such as discourses, material objects, bodies, subjectivities, attributions, non-human actants, networks etc. jointly partake in the construction of leadership and consequently leaders and followers. Kelly (2014) displays a bit of sarcasm when he notes that lately new schools of leadership thought have sought leadership from everything else but the leader character. This emphasis is probably a reaction to the leader dominant history of leadership. My view is that we should not omit the leader person from our analyses of leadership, but find a more balanced role for this traditional leadership culprit. Sometimes the associations of leadership with prescribed leaders are well grounded. Sometimes they are not, as for example presented in a 1979

Hal Ashby film 'Being There'¹¹, which is a wonderful description of how people's assumptions may guide their interpretations in a totally wrong direction.

I further argue that we should understand leadership context as a socio-material construction. This means that leadership context has both intangible, i.e. collective beliefs about what can be considered leadership and tangible elements, i.e. relational practices and actions where organisational actors perform (Drath et al., 2008). The social and the material are in an entangled and recursive relationship to each other. Beliefs provide meaning for the action we witness and/or take part in. The material elements – applied in competent, relational performances by organisational actors – make leadership concrete and observable.

We can further our understanding of leadership using the classic definition of a sign derived from structuralist semiotics (de Saussure, 2011/1916; Eco, 1976). A sign has two components, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the material form (which can be perceived through our senses) and the signified is the conceptual form. Leadership is a sign consisting of these two components, having both a material and conceptual form. Kelly (2014: 906) argued "leadership as a term or concept should be understood as an absent presence: one that must always be described and represented by *somebody* or *something* else" (emphases in original). According to Kelly, leadership research has focused on searching these bodies or things and has omitted the discussion on what is the ontological nature of leadership. Using the semiotic terms, he is arguing that leadership research has focused on the signifier and omitted the discussion of the signified component of leadership. He further argues (Kelly 2014: 906) "'leadership' does not signify anything specific or fixed, but instead serves to create the conditions of possibility for many competing and complementary definitions, meanings and interpretations".

My empirical studies have shown how the signifiers of leadership vary between organisations, situations and levels and lines of business. In my industrial cases, in the brewery shop-floor, leadership materialized through elements often considered to be 'low key' in comparison to a typical leadership study conducted with CEOs or other 'higher-ups'. The tangible elements that took part in the construction of leadership were new supervisory tasks, shop-floor rounds, and formal and informal meetings between supervisors and workers. In the case of presidential leadership, the signifiers of leadership were different. They were the photographs that were given a mythical interpretation adopting implicit beliefs about a nation's ancient past. I argue that different things are interpreted as leadership in different organisations and on different organisational levels, yet on the level of the signified the meaning persists. Our definition of leadership as 'collective mobilisation towards an explicit or implicit purpose' reveals a signified in leadership. Here my view diverges from Kelly (2014). To Kelly, both the signifiers and signifieds are in constant turmoil, and can have almost any content. He writes:

¹¹ In the film Peter Sellers plays a child-like, simple gardener who is mistaken to be a profound political and economics analyst. The false assumptions held by people pave the way for his rise to political power in Washington.

Linguistic term, 'leadership' occupies a curious position in everyday talk in that it is a signifier that has multiple possible signifieds. Likewise, the term can slip and slide along a sign system to also become either signifier or signified – to exist as both means and end; cause and effect. The only thing that stops leadership as a term from losing meaning altogether is the context in which the language of leadership is used.

I do not think that leadership is a totally empty concept. I argue that leadership differentiates from un-leadership on the level of the signified. My structuralist view (in comparison with Kelly's) is that there are some lasting meanings associated with leadership, successful organizing being one of them. Our research on President Kekkonen in essay 2 revealed how providing for a collective gains leadership significance. Our phrase "feeding is leading" illustrates how leadership is associated with satisfying the needs of a collective, sometimes with food or protection from enemies, sometimes with some other shareholder value. I would also argue that our scholarly field is vigorously attempting to identify answers to what leadership signifies (e.g. leadership as dominance, leadership as social influence, or leadership as meaning making, see Drath & Palus, 1994).

In my methodology section I wrote that context can be considered an epiphenomenon, directly unreachable. Now at the end of the thesis process, I could argue that leadership has also become an epiphenomenon, a concept whose final nature cannot be solved. In a sense, these concepts 'leadership' and 'context' have been fused together. There is no use considering the one without the other. In that sense, talking about contextual leadership or contextual elements constituting leadership is not very helpful. The concept mostly works as a description for the school of leadership scholarship that tries to build new conceptualisations for leadership. The term contextual leadership works best when we contrast it with the traditional individual-centric views on leadership, it implies that we take leadership to emerge from a wider domain.

The previous section has discussed the focal concepts and their relationship. What is missing is a focus on the 'How' word, which framed the research question. Using a 'how' question turns our interest to processes. This thesis has described four processes of changing leadership. We have shown how mundane organisational changes in work practices and positions amount to reality constructions. In addition, we have shown the interplay of various organisational actors, supervisors and workers, and presented how the processes are shared and relational. The process descriptions have shown both the mutability of leadership in the case of industrial supervisors and the persistence of leadership mythology in the case of Urho Kekkonen. Leadership has also a processual character (Wood, 2005): it emerges through the shared organisational events and actions of organisational stakeholders, who come sometimes to be seen as leaders and/or followers.

6.1 Practical implications

What are then the managerial implications of this thesis? Can this knowledge be put into practice? Can a practicing manager/leader benefit from the findings of this thesis? I concur that writing almost 200 pages on how leaders are co-created by contextual elements can leave a practicing manager looking for functional suggestions empty handed. Yet, I personally feel that there are a lot of elements that can have practical managerial value. In the following, I will develop three suggestions on how the acknowledgment of contextually constituted leadership has managerial relevance.

First, I suggest that the argument that leadership emerges from a socio-material context should guide us to think about how purported leaders are equipped in organisations. When soldiers are sent to the front they are given a rifle, a rucksack and various other tools to handle the business of war. How could we equip our leaders better in the future? This is not a trivial question. Typically, corporations have various management systems and protocols built to serve financial planning and reporting. In addition, corporations enforce the use of various HR methods and tools by practicing managers. Further, managers and team leaders may receive training in various areas. The practicing managers also craft their own toolkits: they adopt and/or create their own practices and procedures to supplement the corporate requirements. Seldom are these analysed together to see how they help a practicing manager in succeeding in leading a team.

We could think about equipping our leaders better. In laymen and practitioner discussions this question often leads to a discussion of the power available to leaders. Power is important, yet, I argue that we should also think about how we could design organisations where there were more possibilities for leadership to appear. What objectives are purported leaders given? What means and methods are they trained to use? To what task do they give their time, and with whom and where do they actually work? Are the current tools/objectives/practices/tasks in balance in our organisation? Do contemporary directors and managers actually have realistic possibilities to succeed as leaders in their fragmented work lives (see Tengblad (2002) for a description of the contemporary workweek of a CEO)? The industrial cases in this thesis showed how the supervisors' daily routines; their tasks, the objectives set for them, and the environment where they worked were hugely important for the emergence of leadership. How to build action contexts where leadership may thrive? Future development work in organisations should better contrast leadership expectations and the managers' actual work tasks. An analysis and discussion on what are the actual managerial action contexts and could they be redesigned to better facilitate the emergence of leadership, might help practical leadership development work.

We can also take this discussion beyond managers and other purported leaders. Do our organisations support cultures where leadership may thrive? How can we build organisational environments where people self-lead themselves and their teams, and create collectives where heedful interrelation (Weick & Roberts, 1993) may appear? During my days of organisational consulting I have

seen far too many companies where there were not any practical possibilities for their subunits or teams to thrive, yet they were expected to deliver.

My second practical suggestion is related to the leader characters: who can and should lead us? This is an ancient question already discussed by Plato¹². The debate still runs in our contemporary society, especially in relation to communities of professionals, such as medical doctors, university researchers and soldiers. Among the professionals there is a strong undertone that professionals can only be led by another member of the professional caste. Over the past decades there has, however, emerged a new syndicate of professional managers who are not experts in any particular line of industry. These new professionals have entered and have also been granted positions of power in these old professional institutions. Is this development desirable? Can and should professional organisations be led by generic managers? To me, one important aspect of answering this question rises from the fundamental definition of leadership that we hold. If we think of leadership as a special but universal set of skills and competencies that supplement other kinds of knowledge, then we would see that professional managers can succeed as leaders in professional expert organisations. This is the premise evident in traditional leadership theorisation. If, on the other hand, we understand leadership in line with this thesis, as something that emerges from the cultural contexts of the collectives where it is practiced, then professional managers are left lacking. The professional basis is an important source of leadership and those not competent in it will be less likely to be perceived as capable leaders in a community of professionals. In our industrial cases, it was the supervisors' enhanced knowledge of production technology that was an important element in them being understood as leaders. Being perceived as technically competent in the production line increased the association of leadership to them. To become recognized as leader an outsider must become part insider. Becoming an insider requires learning the delicate cultural beliefs of a collective and gaining the acceptance of insiders. Another level in the debate can, however, be opened by asking what is the proper context for a professional organisation. Are modern organisations primarily generic 'businesses' that can be led through a profound understanding of managerial subculture? Or is the heart of the organisation in the craft of what it does, e.g. health care, army or university. Which is more primal: generic business or the specialized craft? The debate will probably continue.

My third practical implication is related to how leadership meanings are used by certain parties. A well circulated quote from Lao Tzu, the father of Taoism (died 531 b.c.) states "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves". According to Lao Tzu (1963), a wise leader focuses on the purpose and the organizing, less on the appearance. Alas, Lao Tzu's advice is not always heeded by people in power. Especially in the field of political leadership, we see political candidates using various image building tactics and procedures. Political leaders like to associate themselves with success and recognizable symbols of power and leadership. For example, US presidential candidates repeatedly emphasize their war experiences in their campaigns as "military and especially combat is central to

¹² Plato's famous answer to this question was those with the 'virtue of wisdom' (Republic, ch4). Later in 'Republic' he inferred that therefore philosophers should be kings. Yet, what is less known, is that Plato changed his mind later in life. In 'Statesman' Plato argued that leaders were like weavers. Their main task was to weave together different kinds of people – the meek and the self-controlled, the brave and the impetuous – into the fabric of society (Ciulla, 2012: 531).

the hegemonic masculinity that symbolically identifies the American male and is of great importance for the cultural image of a successful presidential candidate” (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996: 344). In the world of business organisations, John Kotter counselled (1995: 65) change leaders to create ‘short-term wins’ to keep urgency up in an organisation. The double hermeneutic bind (Giddens, 1984) works here in the sense that it is not only that contexts create leadership, purported leaders also learn to use contexts to make them seem ‘leader-like’ or choose and create contexts where their actions are deemed as good leadership (Grint, 2005b). As depicted in essay 2, president Kekkonen did not object to being depicted as a ‘the best hunter of his tribe’, on the contrary. Therefore, a crafty purported leader may learn to construct leadership omens. An omen refers to an event or happening that people take as a sign of something to come. Typically such omens are fabricated ‘post-hoc’, for example in leader memoirs. In any case, a leader should learn to read the symbolism supporting an interpretation of successful leadership in order to succeed in his craft.

6.2 Limitations and future research

Through the study, I have applied a working definition of leadership as ‘collective mobilisation towards explicit or implicit purpose’. This definition holds a bias that is important to acknowledge. The definition includes an unwritten value statement. This unstated element can be illustrated by adding the word ‘successful’ in front of the definition. With or without the word, the definition refers implicitly to positive cases of leadership. It illustrates leadership in the light of such cases where the collective mobilisation actually exists and works. Yet, when one turns one’s attention to the ‘real world’, one recognizes that not all cases involving leadership are successful or positive. We have also cases of weak, ineffective leadership or failing leadership, or no leadership at all.

Therefore, my theoretical propositions work only for certain manifestations of leadership. Still, I am not alone in making such a presumption. It is a common characteristic of both generic leadership research and SC leadership research to focus on the working and successful manifestations of leadership. The negative elements and manifestations of leadership are covered in a much smaller subliterature of the wider body of knowledge (see e.g. Tourish, 2013 as an example). The DAC ontology of leadership by Drath et al. (2008) on which I build my argumentation carries the same bias: it defines leadership through collective success (as direction, alignment and commitment) and then works onward from such a proposition towards what causes this success. The theorisation stays silent about incidents where such success does not emerge. Practical observations about leadership and how people address leadership reveal that leadership assumes other forms, too. To put this in semiotic terms, we could argue that, in addition to having a multitude of signifiers representing it, leadership also holds other signifieds than just the ‘successful organizing towards a purpose’. Potential examples – and I am now making speculative guesses - of other signifieds might be ‘leadership identifies collective scapegoats: leaders bare responsibility

for all the evil haunting collectives' or 'leadership makes people make impossible choices: leaders are forced to do evil to do good'. Future research could, therefore, enlarge the research to discussing other, less positive aspects of leadership. What other signifieds does leadership hold? Are the other conceptual forms of leadership represented through the same or different signifiers? What contextual elements influence our interpretation of leadership as successful or unsuccessful?

Another aspect of this research is that it departs from the mainstream view of leader voluntarism. Both popular and academic texts on leadership commonly hold a view of leaders as autonomous and independent actors influencing organisations. Much less is written about the dependencies of leaders on their organisations. My research view can be criticized for downplaying the potential influence leaders can have on their organisations. It could also be argued that some leaders, especially Change Leaders (a concept popularized during the 1990s) would not let the sociomaterial realities of an organisation to obstruct them in driving their purpose. Rather they construct and sensegive their meanings to followers and bring in their own cultural values and the organisation succumbs to their will. Still, it could be argued that these views enforced by the popular management press are a bit hyperbolic. It is worth remembering that in Smircich & Morgan's (1982) seminal paper on leadership as the management of meaning, their case study depicted a leader who was not successful in exerting his interpretation of the situation, "Operation June 30th" to his staff. My opposite view, where leaders are more or less described as pawns of organisational context, however, has been a conscious choice. Even though I have studied leadership in change, my view has been focused on organisations changing leadership rather than leadership changing organisations. Alvesson (1997) warns against uncritically reproducing conventional ideas in leadership. Knights and Willmott (1992) encouraged scholars to produce new frameworks of interpretation of the processes to which the term leadership is usually attributed. This has been my intention. Still, future research might combine the contextual – individual emphases by studying how similar contexts are interpreted and utilized by different leaders. Such comparative analyses might, for example, follow several individuals working in a similar position and see where contextual elements vary and where they stay the same. Such a study might reveal new information on the leaders' interpretative skills.

In addition to the theoretical constraints, this study also holds methodological limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, this thesis could be accused of duplicity as in its theory sections it preaches about the need to focus on leadership rather than leaders, yet in the empirical sections the prescribed leaders are again presented as the protagonists of the leadership stories. The empirical analyses focus on the actions of the industry supervisors and the president of a nation and the role of followers or other parties remains limited. The primary reason for this bias is that our research began with a traditional leadership setting where the focus is on prescribed leaders, and our theoretical insight about the priority of leadership in relation to leaders emerged only afterwards. Therefore, our data collection focused too much on the prescribed leader characters

and should have been better supplemented with data tracking the evolution of other stakeholder groups, too. Yet, it was this research setting that directed us to seeing how contextual changes influenced the actions of the prescribed leaders, therefore our empiria provided an important lead for developing our theoretical argument in the chosen direction. Yet, in the future, novel research could adopt more innovative research settings for studying how changing action context influence leadership and leaders and followers. In such a setting, the views of prescribed leaders, followers, and third party stakeholders could be collected in a balanced setting and further compared with the observations of the researchers.

In addition, there are other methodological aspects that, if developed, could provide new interesting bases for leadership research. The studies conducted for this thesis include only limited data – there are only two distinctive spheres of leadership studied – the industrial first-level supervisory leadership setting and the national presidential level leadership setting. Leadership could and should also be studied in other settings, in different organisations to see what contextual features would emerge as crucial to leadership. More cases might help us develop patterns of how to better perceive what cultural forms leadership may find. In addition, the studies conducted for this thesis have been rather exploratory in character. In the future, the research questions set for the leadership studies could be more focused resulting in a more explicit research setting. In general, I do believe that continuing qualitative and especially interpretative research on leadership holds great promise for adding up to our understanding of leadership. Doing leadership ethnography is difficult to organize, but it can produce deep, new understanding of the processes related to leadership construction and change in organisational setting. The leadership research community has had a very conservative undertone, with a strong emphasis on quantifying and universalising the phenomenon through statistical methods (Glynn & Raffaelli, 2010). This bias has been recognized for a long time by prominent scholars (House & Aditya, 1997; Yukl 2006) who have suggested that research should consider leadership context better. Hopefully, this thesis will provide encouragement for other scholars to find daring and innovative ways to do leadership research in the future.

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