Empathy Builds Bridges
- Design Perspectives to Project Leadership

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Abstract

The complex challenges we face in the societies of today are wicked by their nature. Multidisciplinarity, cross-sectoral environments and co-creational projects touch more and more people. Working in these novel and unstructured environments requires deliberate skills to tackle the difficulties that stem from the humane layer: pre-assumptions, clashing motivations, lack of common understanding and commitment towards common goals. Facing these challenges, this study explores the role of empathy in finding common understanding from the perspective of leadership.

The study explores empathy and its benefits as a theoretical construct and puts special focus on exploring the implications through the lenses of design and leadership. Synergies between these two approaches are investigated through expert interviews. The results of this research highlight empathy in leadership as a goal-directed action, which builds on both emotional and cognitive capacities of empathy, as well as ones self-awareness. Through the inside-out and outside-in functions that are concluded in this work, this study highlights the importance of supporting the individual from inside, and seeing the potential of utilizing empathy from outside to create ownership, commitment towards the common goal creating meaningfulness for the work. This study is an effort to deepen understanding of how empathy works and to inspire individuals to benefit from this emotive resource as a design instrument. The ultimate aim is to promote better project outcomes.

Keywords: empathy, design, wicked problems, project leadership
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MOTIVATION

During the past years of studying and working I have been part of many sustainability-related projects which are built on co-creation involving a mix of cultural, academic, professional, organizational, sectoral, personal and even geographically diverse knowledge and people. The wicked societal challenges that the projects meet often address layers of social, economic and environmental objectives. Through these experiences, as well as observations and discussions with people who have worked in similar projects, I have continuously seen that most of the challenges in the practical work and fulfillment of the project goals lie in the ability of being able to create something new together, to build on each other’s knowledge and in lack of common understanding through the different phases of a project. These experiences and discussions have raised my interest in the challenges that lie on the humane level of collaboration, especially on the level of common understanding.

In 2015 I was invited to co-facilitate a workshop in a leadership festival for adult scouters. The co-facilitator partner had a background in leadership and service design, which she had been integrating in her work. That time we were both interested in empathy in our work, and ended up building a workshop around empathy: combining designerly tools with leadership traits and find potential of designerly empathy in leadership. It was something that connects both of our professional backgrounds and so we brought our designerly and leadership skills together. The workshop ended up carrying a name "Empathy Intelligence in Leadership", and the goal was to demonstrate if and how empathy could be used in leadership, supported by designerly tools. This was achieved through a role-play exercise of decision-making in complex problems, where consensus finding between various stakeholders was crucial. The outcomes of the workshop inspired further research on the topic and finally elicited my interest in learning more about empathy as a problem solver, especially from the leadership and design perspectives.

At the same time, empathy and leadership were widely addressed in media. As a designer, with empathy being a central part of the work as well as reflecting on my previous experiences, I became interested in finding ways of how and what I could learn about the leadership perspective, and also what could I as designer bring into the context.

Through this research I aim to gain understanding of how to prepare and start developing skills for using empathy more consciously in future work, including cross-cultural, cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary collaboration in creating solutions to the complex societal challenges, also called wicked problems. I also hope that this research would help others find ways how of benefiting from the power of empathy to bring one’s projects to the full potential, starting from the very humane level.
”I wonder if empathy is the basis of all collaboration between human beings?”

- Interviewee
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REFERENCES
Pre-phase

As a background research, I conducted five case interviews with people who work as project leaders, -managers, -coordinators or facilitators in projects which aim at creating impact - either societal or developmental. The interviewees work closely with all the levels from the "doers" to the strategic level and hold a picture of the whole, as well as responsibility for the fulfilment of the project goals. Combining factors for the projects were that they all try to push for new ways to working, co-creation and build on continuous learning from each other. They also work with societal issues and people across cultures, disciplines and backgrounds. The interviews helped to create wider picture of the challenges that lie in the collaborative layer in complex environments, and therefore created a good starting point for the further study. Even though the outcomes of these interviews are not discussed as a part of the study, they help creating lenses through which this study can be observed. The key points are summarized below. The "setting" pictures the default environments through different levels, and the next page pictures people involved, challenges in work in different layers as well as goals.

**SETTING:**

**PROJECT WORK:**
- Every project is different. There are no ready set steps to follow step by step that everyone is familiar with.
- The process equals the people and partners involved and the "how we do" is evolving all the time and depend on the people and partners involved.
- Roles complexity, flexible roles
- Need to stand continuous uncertainty
- Extreme diversity and multidisciplinarity between the individuals and partners (i.e. compare to more homogenous Finnish teams)
- Builds on continuous learning for and from everyone

**INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:**
- Different challenges in every day working lifes
- Different project related motivations and goals
- Cultural affecting factors like hierarcy

**PARTNER LEVEL:**
- Different vocabularies
- Everyone perceiving the project differently
- Sticking to own ways of doing
- Own goals and strategic plans
"We can't change the structures, but what we can do, is to influence in the individual level."

(A pre-research interviewee talking about working in a co-creational setting)

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**THE DOERS WHO?**

People from all sectors, different societal and occupational groups, cultures, age groups, positions etc. Like: Small business entrepreneurs, students, organizations, public offices, freelancers, consultants, researchers, large companies, volunteers.

---

**THE WORK HOW?**

**CHALLENGES:**

**COLLABORATION LEVEL**

(= team, project, sectors)

- How to make everybody to collaborate efficiently?
- How to break prejudices and boundaries?
- How to transform knowledge?
- How to create connections between people?
- How to create trust?

**INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**

- How to motivate?
- How to create ownership?
- How to get their full potential for the use?

**GOALS**

- How to make the work in all layers to support the project goals, but also the deeper underlying goals?

---

**PROJECT GOAL WHY?**

Common project goal

---

**DEEP GOAL WHY?**

Development impact / societal impact/ educational impact
1.1 Background

How to operate in the complex world of today? How to create meaningful solutions that satisfy the people involved as well as the people affected, create minimum harm for the environment and create shared value and impact? How to find balance in promoting sustainability, create impact, but on the other hand be aware of other realities of work? These are questions that businesses, NGOs, private people, media, academia, governments, designers, social scientists, engineers, politicians and business people face in their everyday life and work.

Today’s challenges are wicked by their nature, which means that they represent a "class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing.” (Churchman, 1967) (also Horst et al., 1973). Individuals, organizations, governments, and economies are all part of interdependent networks, part of a bigger whole rather than independent actors (Lee et al., 2012). Sustainability agendas are more and more attached to people’s everyday work and the problem solving environments are extremely complex. Co-creative processes, where companies, consumers and other stakeholders collectively bring their expertise and interests together, are already widely practiced in facing wicked problems.

Co-creation refers to environments, where diverse actors build equally on each other’s knowledge, perspectives and expertise (Sanders et al., 2008, Lee et al., 2012). Working in these processes is rather inspiring and rewarding, but extremely demanding. Even though collaborative skills are more and more required in the work life (Alasoini et al., 2012), cross-sectoral collaboration, multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity bring often unexpected and superior challenges with them. For example, different mindsets, world-views, organizational cultures and ethnic cultures lead to communication gaps (Sanders et al., 2008).

At the same time with the wicked problem, co-creation and collaboration discussions, empathy is widely raised as one of the most crucial factors in facing global challenges (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013; Futures Conference 2017). Empathy skills are widely considered one of the most important traits in the future, and it’s role in the future of the mankind has been brought up by scientists like Stephen Hawking, politicians like Barack Obama and corporate heads like Arto Hiltunen.

Empathy is recognized as one of the greatest influences in building social interaction, motivating us to cooperate, share resources and help each other (De Vignemont et al., 2006). What makes empathy so interesting is that it is built into us as human beings as part of our hardwiring (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013; Iacoboni, 2009) but still it is a skill that can be developed through one's lifetime (Krcznaric et al., 2015). Empathy is nowadays adopted to different fields and contexts.

”Empathy is the force that makes a community whole through recognizing the interconnectedness and interdependencies among us rather than it merely being a collection of individuals”

(Pavlovich & Khranke, 2012, p136)
During the past decades, interest towards emotions at the workplace has gained rapid interest and led to various research bodies across various fields from psychology. The research of emotions has evolved into a variety of research fields and topics vary from those concerned primarily with felt mood or emotion, publicly displayed emotion and requirement to perform 'emotional labor' (Fisher et al. 2000). At the same time, psychological concepts like narcissism and empathy have became important topics for other humanistic sciences, such as organizational study and design.

The role of empathy in the organizational context, especially in leadership has lately emerged as a popular topic in media. During the past decades the emerging role of emotions at workplace have sparked significant interest among researchers, adding understanding of behavior in organizations (Fisher et al., 2000). Research is consistent with linking emotional abilities, particularly empathy, with effective leadership (Kellett et al. 2006). Emotional skills, in general, are generally acknowledged as one of the most important skills for a leader (Lappalainen 2012; Goleman, 1995).

As leadership is one of the mechanisms molding an organization's culture and communication style, special attention should be paid to the role of leadership in promoting empathy. Parmar (2015), a developer of the ‘Global Empathy Index’ frames that "Empathy pays, and it pays best when it comes from the top," which emphasizes that leadership has an important role and responsibility to bring empathy into work and interactions.

Another interesting discussion of empathy in work contexts comes from the field of design. The field of design has acknowledged the potential of empathy already in the end of 1990's and has since developed ways of adopting it as a central part of work, not only as understanding of the world of the potential users, but also lately to enhance collaboration between multiple partners and facilitating collaborative design events to build rapport between users and stakeholders (De Lille et al. 2012; Mattelmäki et al., 2013). Since the nature of design problems is almost by default colored by wicked problems (Buchanan, 1992), designers are said to be used to applying empathy in contexts of uncertainty and complexity (De Lille et al., 2012) which creates an interesting link to the previously discussed themes.

Because of the nature of co-creative projects and processes, more and more people will be part of projects that tackle wicked problem challenges, independent of their background, role, knowledge and status. At the same time, work will be more project based, people want to do meaningful work (i.e. Jousilahti et al., 2017) and we are more responsible of our actions and ethical businesses. Acknowledging the power of empathy and its implications, it creates a need for more understanding about empathy in the context of future work, where organizations, stakeholders and individuals are by default part of a large ecosystem, and creation of shared value plays a critical role.

Even though the topics are interconnected, multidimensional and operate on different systems levels, it all comes together into us, individuals – our knowledge, expertise,
motivation, will, skills and relationships. There is a visible need for dynamic, scalable and adaptive ways to solve the challenges, starting from the most humane layer.

Empathy as a leadership tool sets many critical questions, empathy as a design tool different and empathy as a psychological phenomenon of human interaction is an umbrella layer, where it has not become politicized. Empathy could offer some directions to face collaborative challenges, but since it is much hyped up at the moment, we are often only offered mass-produced definitions about it – like to step into someone’s shoes – and lack deeper understanding of this multidimensional concept.

### 1.2 Objective and Research Questions

Collaboration is a cornerstone for any project that strives to tackle wicked problems. Challenges related to the humane layer of collaboration are acknowledged, and projects put a considerable effort to creating ways to foster trust and constructive interaction. When the contexts become wicked and projects structures more complex, also the challenges in not only creating but also maintaining the common understanding become more accentuated. This urges us to explore more sustainable solutions.

This research acknowledges that the challenges in co-creational project context an collaboration are complex and multi layered and therefore need holistic approaches. This specific research is narrowed down to researching how **empathy** could enhance project success, and more specifically, how empathy could help individuals to reach their full potential and bridge the gaps caused by humane phenomena like misunderstandings and pre-assumptions and create shared value. Since the nature of these kinds of cross-sectoral, multi-partnership projects is often more unstructured than structured (discussion with Tytti Nahin, 21.4.2016), this research is interested in the role of the leader as an empathic agent.

Acknowledging the important role of leadership, the potential of design in promoting empathy and the power of empathy, this research aims at finding out if and how empathy is harnessed to enhance more productive and meaningful collaboration between diverse people in collaborative project situations. Bringing together empathy, design and leadership, this study aims at finding new ways to confront challenges in collaborative situations. Co-creational wicked problems provide the present context, and the aim here is to accumulate knowledge about the three areas and their

**Challenges in the collaborative layer and their importance are widely recognised and action are taken to find ways to support the creation of common understanding. For example, Atlas game is a tool that is developed to find concensus and help decision making in different stages of a co-creational project (http://atlas-research.fi).**
relations. The designerly and leadership approaches towards empathy attach empathy to the work life context and provide a window to learn about its practical implications.

To sum up, the overall objective of the study is to create deeper understanding of empathy and its application in design and leadership, and to find out if they could be channeled to support one’s work in complex collaborative situations, which are solving wicked problems. The goal is to offer a starting point for future implication in practice and find synergies between leadership and design approaches.

More specifically, the study aims to respond to the following three research questions:

1. What is empathy?
2. How is empathy fostered in design?
3. What is the role of leadership in applying empathy?

1.3 Scope

Acknowledging that the topic and challenges around empathy, co-creation and wicked problems are extremely complex and multi-layered, this study is narrowed down to research the very core layer. Also, when bringing empathy into the work context, understanding of its core elements and nature might blur. Therefore, this study could be imagined as a step back building background understanding for further implications in practice. Therefore, the main focus is on building theoretical understanding and learning from practitioners. The scope is narrowed down to more theoretical perspectives, instead of focusing on creating practical solutions, by addressing

1. Deeper understanding of empathy
2. The role and nature of empathy in design and in leadership
3. Benefits of empathy in the work context, especially in the context of collaboration
4. Discussion of if and how leadership could benefit from designerly empathy especially in supporting collaboration and creation of common understanding in complex collaboration environments

Empathy as a topic is wide and its applications are plenty. For this research the applications are narrowed down to explore the fields of design and leadership.
1.4 Structure

Chapter 1
Introduction.

Chapter 2
Chapter 2 starts by reviewing empathy in prior literature through its key concepts. Through the review we understand what is empathy and its related benefits and also create understanding of the mechanisms of empathy. Through this we expand our every day understanding of empathy from the "stepping into someone else's shoes". After that empathy is reviewed in design to understand the very nature of empathy in designer's work. Last, empathy is reviewed from the leadership perspective, concentrating on empathy through generic leadership.

Chapter 3
After deepening understanding of the make-up of empathy, the research explores its implementations in design and leadership perspectives through interviews with people who consciously use empathy in their work on different levels of leadership. Since one of the goals is to investigate if design empathy could be used in leadership, the interviewees present empathy from both the design and leadership perspectives.

Chapter 4
Chapter four discusses the finding and their relevance. The discussion also aims at giving thoughts and open questions about empathy in one's work, and concludes the findings together.

Chapter 5
Chapter five discusses the limitations of the work, as well as future avenues. In the end, personal reflections of the process are shortly discussed.
2.1 Introduction to Empathy

There is no shortage of definitions of empathy in the academic and popular literature. While some address it as one of the greatest influences for human interaction and for building a coherent society, others criticize it as a trait that is being trusted with no judgment and see the highlighted celebration of it as a personal and societal threat (Bloom, 2014). Whether pro-empathy or against, it is undeniably a powerful force.

Most often empathy is related to moral sense, altruism, justice and helping others (i.e. de Vignemont et al., 2006). It is argued to be our inbuilt motivator to cooperate, to share resources and to interact with each other - it guides our pro-social action and behavior. Khranke and Pavlovich (2013) argue that when one has enhanced awareness of empathy she/he is more willing to see other perspectives, which increases our willingness to collaboratively engage with others. They continue that in more developed stages of empathic development, people see themselves as part of an interconnected whole rather than as a separate, which helps us to blur the barriers between self-interest and oneness, self and other, and action and outcomes.

Drawing these together, Trout (2009) claims that empathy is a mechanism for shared understanding that moves the focus from I to WE. Pavlovich and Krahnke (2013) continue that empathy is our supporting mechanism that helps us to create meaningful connections between each other. It helps us to build consensus and common ground between each other in finding solutions, but also when we develop empathy we create new neural pathways and enhance our brain plasticity, which helps us to adapt and respond to new situations (Pavlovich & Krahnke, 2013).

Empathy helps us gain valuable information from the surrounding world. De Vignemont et al. (2006) frame empathy as an efficient computation tool for gaining knowledge about the values of surrounding world which provides us with knowledge about important environmental traits. Through empathic connection we can share the other's emotional and motivational meanings and modes, which works as our fastest route to get most precise and direct estimate of the other people's future actions. (de Vignemont et al., 2006)

Empathy is often imagined as a mental state but there is scientific evidence that is also our physical ability. Modern neuroscientific findings prove that empathy is built into us as human beings through a shared neural system (Iacoboni, 2009). These connective neurons in our premotor cortex of the brain are called empathy neurons’ or ‘mirror neurons’ and literally mirror the actions of others and thus work as a system that cre-
ates bonds between each other (Keysers et al. 2008). Therefore, it is argued that we have an inbuilt capacity to understand other individuals and acknowledge the current state and experience of the other individual (Oberman & Ramachandran, 2007; Keysers et al. 2008). Therefore, Iacoboni (2009) describes empathy as a glue that binds us together: “We’re all in this boat together, and mirror neurons help us to make the best out of it.” (p 130).

Even though empathy is our in-built ability and some of us express it more than others, it can be learned and developed (Pate et al., 2013; Shapiro et al. 2002). Especially perspective taking, which as a part of empathy will be studied later, can be learned through the lifespan in shifting perspectives (Atkins, 2013). A study shows that we can also learn empathy towards out-group members through positive contacts (Ilein et al., 2016) expanding the possibilities of the learnability of empathy.

"Empathy makes it possible for us to transcend the boundaries that separate us. Empathy illuminates the fact that beneath human differences lies a "Reservoir made of common developmental themes" that people have in common”

(Bennett, 2001, p.31)
2.2 Empathy as a Concept

2.2.1 Evolution of the notion of empathy

Throughout its journey, empathy has gained great interest in both academic and popular literature. The origins of the notion of empathy stem from Greek and it literally means to suffer with (Carter et al., 2009). After that it was used in German by the art historian Vischer (1847-1933) and philosopher Novalis (1772-1801) who used the word ‘Einfühlung’, describing the still somewhat imprecise concept which was identified with the resonance or mutual interaction between subject and object (New & Kimbell, 2013). The word as we currently know it, comes from the English psychologist Edward B. Titcher, who translated the German word into ’empathy’ (New & Kimbell, 2013), which, as a psychological construct, has been used to describe a broader range of individual’s behaviors, expressions, and feelings that enable one to recognize, to perceive, and to respond appropriately to the emotional state of others (Carter et al., 2009).

Today empathy is a term that is widely used and written about. Throughout the past decades, research about empathy has attracted multidisciplinary interest and today the definitions of empathy are many (Hatfield et al., 1994, p 21). In everyday language, empathy is often referred as to see the world through someone else’s eyes or stepping into somebody else’s shoes. However, empathy researchers are arguing about the definition. Currently, the term “empathy” is applied to more than a half-dozen phenomena. Each of them is conceptually distinct, even though they are related to each other (Batson, 2011). In the following, these concepts will be examined further after defining the differences between sympathy, empathy and compassion.

2.2.2 Differentiating sympathy, empathy and compassion

The terms and casual definitions between sympathy, empathy and compassion are often confused - also when conducting this research. Batson (2011) concludes that for example empathy and sympathy are often mixed and/or labeled similarly. There is remarkable consistency about a same state that some scholars label as empathy and some as sympathy. Therefore, it is important to clarify and understand the three distinct, but rather close phenomena. To support the understanding of the upcoming chapters, following definitions create a framework for empathy in the context of this study.
**Sympathy**, according to Trout (2009) is described as the feeling of another’s pain that can result in short-term action as the affective feeling recedes. It is an affective reaction to the other person’s feelings. ”I feel sorry for you.” ”I pity you.”

**Empathy** is passive and includes an affective state as well as a cognitive state (understanding the perspective). The cognitive capacity leads to more durable outcomes since the experience becomes our own. Pavlovich et al. (2013, p2) postulate that empathy is ”a passive acknowledgment and observation of the experience of another involving both affective and cognitive states.” This passivity distinguishes empathy from compassion. (Pavlovich et al., 2013)

**Compassion, per se** is described as empathy plus acting to ease the suffering of the other and therefore becoming active. Compassion is often discussed in the context of suffering and ways to ease the pain of the other. (Lilius et al., 2008, p 195). In contrast to empathy, Singer and colleagues (2014) conclude that ”compassion does not mean sharing the suffering of the other: rather, it is characterized by feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other’s wellbeing. Compassion is feeling for and not feeling with the other.”
2.2.3 Eight different concepts of empathy

To understand the concept of empathy, Batson (2011) starts by identifying two distinct questions that empathy researchers have been focusing on. The first one is ‘How can one know what another person is thinking and feeling?’, which has been a particular interest to philosophers, cognitive scientists, neuropsychologists, primatologists, and developmental psychologist in the theory of mind. The second one is ‘What leads one person to respond with sensitivity and care to the suffering of another?’, which has been of particular interest to philosophers and to developmental and social psychologists seeking to understand and promote pro-social action. The confusion stems from the scientists’ disagreement on whether empathy refers to a single object and what the object is. Also the terms empathy and sympathy are many times contrasted and used in various ways, as described before. Batson highlights that favoring one scheme over another is not necessary, but it is important for one to recognize the different phenomena, make clear what is the adopted labeling scheme and use the scheme consistently. (Batson, 2011)

Here the eight concepts, examined by Batson are reviewed. Batson (2011) has analyzed the concepts from prior studies and therefore the referred literature sources are not shown in this paper. The questions presented in italics were added by the writer in order to clarify the understanding of different kinds of empathy.

Concept 1: Knowing Another Person’s internal State, Including His or Her Thoughts and Feelings

"I know what you think and feel."

This is also called cognitive empathy or empathic accuracy. Batson argues that ascertaining what someone else is thinking and feeling can be problematic, especially when the clues from the other might be limited. He continues that this might be easier in a close friendship since you might already know the other person on a deeper level and be more equipped to have at least some deeper nuances and details.

Concept 2: Adopting the Posture or Matching the Neural Responses of an Observed Other

"Automatically mimicre and imitate the other person"

Many dictionaries use this as a definition of empathy. This is called facial empathy, motor mimicry or imitation. One proposed theory based on a perception-action model
suggests that one comes to feel the other’s internal state by matching the neural representations. Batson argues that this perspective overestimates the role of all empathic feelings: something more than automatic mimicry must be involved to select which actions are mimicked, and which not. Also, these perceptual neural representations do not always and automatically lead to feeling, whether being matched or not. Humans can also use memory and general knowledge to infer what the other feels and thinks in different situations as well as use direct communication to learn about the internal states. Batson also points out that we humans have the ability and inclination to make inferences.

Concept 3: Coming to Feel as Another Person Feels (AS)

"I reflect/match my feelings to your feelings"

This as well is a common dictionary definition for empathy. Also some philosophers, neuroscientists, and psychologist have used this definition. Many times researchers have qualified this perspective by saying that the reflected emotion does not have to be exactly the same, only a similar one. Batson criticizes this by rising up an argument that "what determines whether an emotion is similar enough is never made clear." In this context also the word catching is used with the emotion matching. Some early philosophers often called this sympathy - coming to feel as the others feel. Psychologists call this emotional contagion, affective empathy, and automatic emotional empathy. One of the most cited studies among this concept is based on a study of infants reacting with cry to non-human synthetic sounds, another infant cry or no sounds.

Concept 4: Intuiting or Projecting Oneself into Another’s Situation

"I imagine myself into other person’s position, even though I don’t know that person."

“What it would be like to...be a young woman that just lost her job.”

This is about imaginatively projecting oneself into another’s situation. Lipps (1903) referred to this as Einfühlung and Titchener translated it into English by starting to call it empathy. This original definition has lately been raised up again in philosophical discussions. This is also called aesthetic empathy. Contemporary psychology rarely refers to this kind of empathy.
Concept 5: **Imagining How Another is Thinking and Feeling**

"I imagine how you feel, based on my knowledge of you." "Imagine other"

Comparing to the previous concept, this one is about imagining how the other thinks and feels based on both what the other says and does, and on your knowledge of her character, values, and desires. This is a specific form of perspective taking, a so called imagine him perspective or imagine other perspective.

This is also called **psychological empathy** to make the difference to **aesthetic empathy** (Concept 4). This is also called as **empathy, projection or perspective taking**, and also as **adopting an empathic attentional set**. This involves a process of feeling into, in which "Person A opens himself in a deeply responsive way to Person B’s feelings and experiences but without losing awareness that B is a distinct other self". Batson concludes this by saying that "An issue is not so much what one knows about the feelings and thoughts of the other but one’s sensitivity to the way other is affected by his or her situation."

Concept 6: **Imagining How One Would Think and Feel in the Other's place**

"I imagine myself into your position”  "Imagine self:"

This is sometimes called changing places in fancy, referring to "the act of imagining how one would think and feel in another person’s situation." This is also called **role taking, empathy, cognitive empathy, projective empathy or simulation**. Some traditions call this also either **perspective taking or decentring**.

This is also called this as an imagine–self perspective, making the difference to the imagine–other perspective of concept 5. These two forms of perspective taking have been confused or equated with one another. This concept can also be mixed with the concept 4, but this one is more focused on the self.
Concept 7: Feeling Distress at Witnessing Another Person’s suffering (BY)

"I’m distressed because of your current state.” "I feel by you”

This perspective has many names, including empathy, empathic distress, and personal distress. Batson describes this as “a state of distress evoked by witnessing another’s distress”. This involves feeling distress by the state of the other, instead of for the other (like in concept 8) or as the other (concept 3).

Concept 8: Feeling for Another Person Who Is Suffering (FOR)

"I feel for you – positive if you feel positive, negative if you feel negative”

This concept is other-oriented, referring to the focus of the emotion: it is felt for the other. This concept is also congruent with the perceived emotion of someone else meaning that the emotion is “positive if the welfare of the other is positive, negative when the perceived welfare is negative.” Batson adds, that “speak of congruence does not imply that the content of the emotion is the same or even similar, as in concept 3. You might, for example, feel sad or sorry for your friend, who is scared and upset.” This has not always been called empathy, but also pity, compassion, sympathetic distress, and simply sympathy.

As a conclusion, reviewing and differentiating the concepts of empathy is important to be able to understand that the ways how we talk and picture empathy can vary a lot depending on the speakers perspective. This also shows the multifaceted nature of empathy and supports the need for creating understanding of empathy before starting to develop ways to adapt empathy to ones work. Through the next section, we will understand empathy beyond the concepts and focus on studying the psychological processes.
2.3 Mechanisms of Empathy

2.3.1 Three elements of empathy

As a general construct, empathy is one's capacity to acknowledge experience and relate to the thoughts, perspective, emotions and experience of the other (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013; Atkins, 2013). This capacity includes affective and cognitive stages, which are both necessary for empathy to emerge (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013). Lamm et al. (2007) draw consensus between different researchers and suggest that empathy is 1) an affective response to another person, which some believe entails sharing that person's emotional state; 2) a cognitive capacity to take the perspective of the other person; 3) some monitoring mechanisms to keep track of the origins (self vs. other) of the experienced feelings (Lamm et al., 2007, p42).

The affective state, also called emotional empathy or emotional contagion, refers to catching someone's mood (Pate et al., 2013). Emotional contagion could be seen as a precursor of empathy or primitive empathy (Pate et al., 2013). Some believe that this entails sharing that person's emotional state (Lamm et al., 2007). The cognitive state, also called cognitive empathy and cognitive perspective taking, is “an intellectual “relating” to another person's situation (Pate et al. 2013). It is about the capacity to understand and grasp the conditions of the other (Gallese, 2009), to acknowledge the other persons feeling without having the same feeling as the other (Pate et al. 2013). De Vignemont & al (p. 435) describe it as “based on my knowledge of you, I infer from your behavior that you are anxious”. The third stage, described by Lamm, Batson, Decety (2007), is a monitoring mechanism of keeping track of the origins of the experienced feelings (p42) also called self-other differentiation (Atkins, 2013). Atkins (2013) states self-other differentiation being one of the most important aspects of sustainable empathy. Singer et al. (2014) frames the lack of self–other distinction as emotion contagion, “a precursor of empathy that is already present in babies”. Self-other differentiation will be studied further in more detail.

Research suggests that emotional and cognitive modes of empathy originate in different parts of the brain (e.g. Shamay-Tsoory, 2011) and are therefore separate and different neurological processes (Pate et al. 2013). Therefore it is possible for one to intellectually (cognitively) empathize with someone else's plight without feeling emotionally connected to it. On the other hand, one can emotionally empathize with someone even if one lacks an intellectual understanding of what the other is going through. (Pate et al. 2013)

As described, affective and cognitive stages are fundamental constructs of empathy. If only the affective side is activated, empathy might lead to short-term sympathy (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013). If only the cognitive side is activated, our ability to feel another's experience is limited and our ability to appreciate the human cost of our actions are repressed (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013). When both affective and cognitive sides are
both activated empathy will emerge (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013). Emotional connection is the starting point for a shared meaning and understanding to begin, but cognitive connection is necessary for empathy to emerge (Decety and Michalska, 2010). Grasping the condition of the other through the cognitive side leads to outcomes that are more durable when the experience becomes our own (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013).

Figure 1. Three elements of empathy
2.3.2 Psychological processes of empathy

So far we have learned that empathy consists of three mechanisms: affective, cognitive and a mechanism to differentiate self from other and that they all need to be activated for empathy to emerge. Next we will take a step further and examine the psychological processes involved. This helps us to understand empathy as a multidimensional and support the further research. The process also opens up the different terms that show up in the empathy discussions. To understand the processes of empathy the next section will introduce the basic psychological process of empathy that underpins "the construction of a sense of self and the capacity to take the perspective of others." (Atkins, 2013). Figure 2. will help to visualize the process.

**Perspective taking** as “the tendency to spontaneously adopting the psychological point of view of others” (Davis, 1983, p.114), is the primary process to notice and apprise another’s experience. After one has understood the perspective of the other a range of possible affective responses and emotions are possible. These secondary processes that stem from perspective taking include empathic concern and empathic distress. Empathic concern refers to the “other oriented emotional response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of a person in need” (Batson & Ahmad, 2009, p.6) when empathic distress refers to “self-focused, aversive reaction to the vicarious experience of another emotion” (e.g. Discomfort or anxiety; Eisenberg, 2010, p 130). Perspective taking can also lead to other emotions like "cold" perspective taking, when one, for example, understands the other's perspective without really caring about them. One potential reaction of it is also to act defensively to avoid the exposure to the suffering of the other, described often in literature as personal distress response. (Atkins, 2013)

According to Atkins (2013), the degree of self-other differentiation is most likely the key factor whether one reacts with personal distress or avoidance, or with empathy and compassion. If one cannot differ the self from the other, it is most likely that the reaction is personal distress. (Atkins, 2013)

Drawing from this, it is evident that there is a paradox of empathy: on the other hand, “true empathy” requires seeing the other's perspective from the inside, to have a sense of oneness and connection (to be insider), but it to lead to effective helping requires the ability to separate the response from your own and the others (to be outsider). (Atkins, 2013)

Pate et al. (2013) suggest that “empathy is strongest when an individual cognitively understands another person’s plight and also emotionally feels what the other person is feeling.” They further suggest that “an individual’s, mental model and psychological perspective of the situation will affect the degree of empathy that individual will feel towards another.”
Research suggests that shared emotional experiences are precursors to feeling of empathy (i.e., Vignemont et al., 2006). This means that for one to feel empathy for the other, they would have needed to have one or more emotional experiences with each other (Pate et al., 2013).

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**Figure 2.** Psychological process of empathy.
2.3.3 Self-awareness

As learned, the third point, being able to differentiate self from other, is held as a cornerstone to reach true empathy. To be able to differentiate self from other, studies of empathy highlight the importance of self-awareness, which is seen as the foundation of cognitive empathy (Pate et al., 2013), or as a perquisite for empathy, (Heaton et al., 2013). One must have awareness of self to be able to recognize the condition of the other (Pate et al., 2013). Also, people with a clear sense of self have been found to be more empathic towards others (Pate et al., 2013). Self-awareness comprehends both objective self-awareness (a person sees herself from outside, drawing attention towards self) and subjective self-awareness (seeing herself from inside, drawing attention away from the self) (Pate et al., 2013). "An individual must be able to perceive himself/herself as distinct from another, as reflected in a mental model of one's own experiences, in order to be cognitively aware of another and, thereby, feel the emotions another person is feeling. If the observer is not distinctly different from another individual, the observer cannot have empathy for another." (Pate et al., 2013)

One’s own mental model based on experiences in a certain issue decides if the outcome is empathy and pro-social behavior, or ignorance and lack of empathy (Pate et al., 2013). The research suggests that “an individual's mental model and psychological perspective of the situation will affect the degree of empathy that individual will feel towards another” (p131). Affecting factors that lead to empathy or lack of empathy can stem from experiences in having been in a similar situation, personal relationships (for example if one likes the other or not) and also the person's emotional state at that time, e.g. in a hurry or tired (Pate et al., 2013). These can be observed further through Atkin’s self-other differentiation model.

2.3.4 Specification of self-other differentiation

To understand self-other differentiation and open up its role in building sustainable empathy, Atkins (2013) describes three 'selfing' behaviors, reviewed on the next pages. They allow us to report our preferences, history and characteristics (content), our current experience that allows social communication and cooperation (process), and reinforces us to continuously discriminate our own experience (I/HERE) form that of the others (YOU/THERE) to have a stable perspective from which we view experience (context). These three senses of self support the rise to three senses of other. This relating to other is perspective taking. Perspective taking can be learned through the lifespan in shifting perspectives.
**AS CONTENT**

"Our abstracted qualities"

**SELF-AS-CONTENT**

Perceived roles, likes, dislikes, job attitudes (characteristically)

Self-as-content is "our capacity to relate one thing to another to conceptualizing (i.e. abstracting) qualities of our own behavior." Through these descriptions others can predict our behavior and create a simplified summary of our history of experience, for example "I am a designer". Over time, these conceptualized images of self can lead to stable but covert beliefs about one's own identity. "In the workplace self-as-content might refer to our job attitudes, the things we characteristically like and dislike, our perceived roles and responsibilities, and our place in a network of social relationships."

**OTHER-AS-CONTENT**

Predicting the other

Other-as-content refers to our continuous evaluation and conceptualization of others in terms of stable characteristics, histories, and roles in order to predict the other's behavior. Conceptualizing self and other is an essential aspect of social interaction. We are conceptualizing each other continuously to predict behavior. This is helpful in empathic responding, but can interfere with empathy being rigid and context-sensitive and foster judgments and projections regarding the other. Self-other-differentiation in content level (self of other as-content) can create disconnection, judgment and separation.
"AS PROCESS  "Our current here and now experience"

SELF-AS-PROCESS

Flexible, dynamic, context-sensitive descriptions

Self-as-process refers to the “reporting of an experience of self in the present moment.” It is about our continuous unfolding of thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories and images that occur here and now. This kind of behavior receives a great deal of social reinforcement. “I am happy” or “I don’t understand what I am meant to do” provide useful and predictive information to others. Over time, such statements about the self also serve useful private functions. To say, “I am happy” may be highly predictive of what will happen in the next instance or in a very similar context in the future whereas self-as-content descriptions such as “I am generally a happy person” provide broad predictability across contexts. Self-as-process descriptions are more flexible, dynamic and context-sensitive than self-as-content descriptions. Being able to flexibly monitor our own state is the basis of successful self-regulation."

OTHER-AS-PROCESS

"Moment-to-moment construction of the other"

Imagine other: "Imagine how he sees his situation" (= empathy)
Imagine self: "Imagine how I would see the situation in his situation"

Other-as-process refers to “one’s verbal relating regarding the ongoing experience of the other.” This is a central component of perspective taking and empathic responding. Other-as-process is “based on a moment-to-moment construction of reactions of the other” (Barnes-Holmes, Hayes, & Dymond, 2001, p. 134). Batson (2009) distinguished between an “imagine-others” (concept 5) perspective of imagining how the other sees his situation and feels as a result, and an “imagine-self” perspective that involves imagining how you would see the situation were you in the other person's position. Verbal relating regarding other-as-process could involve either of these forms of constructing another’s experience, but only an “imagine-others” perspective would be likely to be experienced as empathic in the sense of “standing in the shoes of another”. Accurate other-as-process is the basis of a psychotherapist effectively engaging with a client, or a speaker successfully reading their audience."
Self-as-process and other-as-process are fundamental self-regulatory processes associated with empathy. They are important for experiencing empathy without unhealthy personal distress. Most effective dialogue happens when all parties operate as others-as-process. Self-other-differentiation in process level is a key component of mature empathy. Atkins (2013) summarizes this as "[...]we must notice our own experience, the other’s experience and the difference between the two."

AS CONTEXT

"The continuity of a point of view from where we experience the world."

SELF-AS-CONTEXT

The transcendent self

Self-as-context refers to "the context within which verbal relational framing is occurring." It is understood as the point of view or locus from which events are experienced. Self-as-context is awareness, but it is awareness conditioned by the prior acquisition of context dependent framing. There is always a sense of an I or ME as the observer. Because we can never observe our point of view from outside our point of view, self-as-context is transcendent and happens HERE. Therefore it fosters sense of oneness between self and other.

OTHER-AS-CONTEXT

Understanding and defining other-as-context is rather complex. Other-as-context happens "when the speaker is psychologically connected to the listener as a purely conscious person" (Barnes-Holmes, et al., 2001, p. 135). From this perspective the other and the self are one, because here and now are the same moment (Barnes-Holmes, et al., 2001). Atkins suggest that to be able to experience other-as-context it requires experiencing the other as "beyond time, location and, in a sense at least, separation" and thus fosters a sense of oneness between self and other rather than differentiation. Both parties operating at the other-as-context is the basis of unconditional love.
2.3.5 Key conditions needed for empathy to emerge

The review of the psychological processes of empathy crated understanding of what are the inner processes needed for empathy. As empathy happens in time and place, it is also important to understand in what kind of conditions empathy can emerge. Hollingsfoth (2008) defines four preconditions that are needed for empathy to emerge as Interpersonal attunement, Intrapersonal Attunement, Relational Safety and Shared Narratives. We will review these through Berry et al. (2013) reiterated understanding of the concepts.

**Interpersonal attunement**, also described as the sense of emotional resonance and the connecting power, is the caring relationship and experience of emotional connections with the other (Hollingsfoth, 2008). When we feel felt and understood by others, we express a form of emotional attunement with the other, which makes higher levels of well-being possible. "The secure and attuned attachment over time enables an individual to love more and fear less; this makes one more capable of sharing the feelings and sufferings of the others and increases the chances that action to alleviate misery will be taken." Interpersonal attunement consists of being conscious and aware of things and objects around, but also about the consciousness itself. It is about being present in Now and giving the full attention to the things around without judgment. Especially cognitive empathy is strengthened when we understand the emotions of the others, their causes and changes over time, and are able to predict or create "what if" analyses. (Berry et al., 2013)

**Intrapersonal attunement** concentrates on self-awareness. Being aware and non-judgmental of one’s own emotions, feelings and bodily states affects to the level of fear, inflexibility and defensiveness towards being more adaptive, calm and balanced. This ability is seen as being the basis for one to feel connectedness with others. These can be developed for example through mindfulness training. (Berry et al., 2013)

**Relational safety** is the “sense of security that people feel within themselves” that encourages empathy. Referring to Maslow (1943), feeling of safety and security are fundamental psychological conditions in human survival. Without safety, both economical and social, we separate ourselves from self, which can lead to closing off empathic connections with others. Safe, relational environments provide a platform for people to open up to each other and themselves. Being in the moment and feeling connected create the basis for Relational Safety. (Berry et al., 2013)
Shared narratives create the context for the resource of emotional integration. They “require participation of people’s conscious memory, knowledge, sensations, feelings, and behaviors.” Through narratives, we can share other’s experiences without losing the hold of our own perspectives. Shared narratives can raise the awareness of concern towards others and motivate one to stay on the side or “solidarity” of the others. (Berry et al., 2013)

2.3.5 Summary

Through studying the mechanisms and per-conditions of empathy we have added to our understanding of empathy and understand that empathy is constructed through different processes and can also lead to other outcomes like distress. The further summary will point out some of the main takeaways.

- Adopting the psychological point of view of the other spontaneously.
- Perspective taking needed to understand the other’s experience
- That leads either to a self regulatory self-other differentiation (top-down information processing) (1) or feeling of connection and oneness with the other (bottom-up information processing) (2)
- These together lead to empathic concern (=to empathize), which is other oriented.
- (1) leads to effective helping
- (2) leads to true empathy
- (1) and (2) are both needed, which creates the paradox of empathy (be outsider but be insider)
- Understanding the other’s perspective might also lead to self-other confusion which leads to personal distress.

So far, we have studied empathy as a separate phenomenon. We have studied the concepts of empathy as well as empathy as a psychological process. The next two sections will steer the focus towards the implications of empathy in design and in leadership.
2.4 Empathy in Design

Design is often related to cars, websites, logos and beautiful ergonomic objects. What is new for many who are unfamiliar with design is that the field of design has been in a big change during the past decades spreading its roots from the traditional image of product and website design towards designing services, solving societal challenges, and helping organizations to develop as whole. Designing for a user has always been a central part of a designer’s strengths, but for many the connection with empathy is still irrational. To create understanding of the role of empathy in design, this chapter will first review it from the historical perspective, which also opens a door to the modern history of design, and then shift towards the concept of empathic design, and last, bring it to a more abstract level to understand the nature of empathy in design.

2.4.1 How empathy became part of design?

The use of empathy in design roots itself to the late 1990’s when companies started to face new kind of challenges in creating competitive innovations for their customers (Koskinen et al., 2011; Leonard et al. 1997). Designers, design researchers and industry realized that to be able to innovate even more desirable products and services, ergonomics and user-centered approached were not enough (Mattelmäki et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2016). They needed deeper customer understanding to understand people's everyday lives, needs and values (Leonard et al. 1997). The concept of empathic design stem from facing this challenge and started to create approaches that able to see the user's world from a deeper lever, understand their everyday experiences, emotions and meaningful practices and turn the gained understanding into emotionally desirable objects (Mattelmäki et al., 2014; Leonard et al. 1997).

An early empathic design article by Leonard and Rayport (1997) suggested a mindset of combining subjective and objective approaches, and design competence in field studies (Mattelmäki et al., 2014). Empathic design was described as a set of techniques to find out the user’s unarticulated needs and turn them into emotionally desirable outcomes (Leonard et al. 1997).

Since then, the development of empathy in design has developed hand in hand with the development of the design field. In the beginning empathy was used mainly in product design (Leonard et al. 1997), but has since spread out to benefit even more complex systems like changing organizational strategies and addressing wicked systemic challenges, such as education, healthcare, and organizational efficiency (Battarbee et al., 2014; Mattelmäki et al., 2014). During the past years, the world changed rapidly and people have became even more connected and part of large ecosystems. Empathic design has taken this as an opportunity to spread and develop design empathy to cover whole ecosystems of 'people and businesses involved' (Battarbee et al., 2014). This means not only
focusing on understanding the users, but also looking into bigger ecosystems and seeing the larger picture through the eyes of empathy. Even though empathic design has gone through evolution, Mattelmäki et al., (2014) note that the core of it has remained the same from the beginning.

It could be stated that for a modern designer empathy is already merely a central part of every day work. Even though the benefits of empathy in design are generally remarkable, it is good to acknowledge the still novel history of empathy in design, which is seen in the still rather narrow perspectives that the literature offers. The further study aims at bringing understanding of empathy in design in a general level and in the end brings up some key questions considering the conceptualization of empathy in design.

### 2.4.2 What is Empathic Design?

Instead of a one special skill or a tool, design empathy is described as an approach, practices, sensitivity and mindset to uncover people’s unspoken latent needs, feelings and moods, and then address them through design solutions (Battarbee et al., 2014; Mattelmäki et al., 2014; Leonard et al. 1997). It is a creative process that translates observations of people’s real world experiences and behavior into ideas for positive change (Battarbee et al., 2014; Fraguelli et al., 2015).

Empathic design places a user, their interactions and behaviors in the center as a source of inspiration (Fraguelli et al., 2015). It approaches challenges from the bottom-up perspective. It is about the designer seeing the world through the users’ eyes - stepping into the shoes of the other (Battarbee et al., 2014; Mattelmäki et al., 2014). The gained empathic understanding of the users world helps to find inspiration for emotionally meaningful solutions, whether it be products, service networks or service development in public organizations that satisfy and support the end-users needs, hopes and dreams (Battarbee et al., 2014; Mattelmäki et al., 2014). In other words, when a designer gets to see the world through the user’s eyes, she is better equipped to create solutions that satisfy the other and better fit to the everyday life (Mattelmäki et al., 2014).

Design empathy is used in a context of a pre-defined challenge or a problem but it is not dependent on a specific topic or set of challenges. Empathy in design is a set of core key ideas, that can be applied to almost any context (Mattelmäki et al., 2014) - it is a personal connection between designer and user (Mattelmäki et al., 2002), which happens in a certain context but is not limited to it.

The benefits of design empathy are recognized especially in commercial world, where one of the core motivations is to use it is its promise to bring financial reward (Leonard et al. 1997). This means not just creating more desirable products for users, but also being able to understand the latent needs of all the stakeholders from users to supply
chains, the design solutions can be aligned to benefit everyone (Battarbee et al., 2014). Leonard and Rayport describe it also as a low-cost, low-risk way to gain critical customer needs as a source of new product ideas and transform companies businesses (Leonard et al. 1997). Against many misconceptions, it is not a substitute for technological and functionally oriented approaches, but is rather complementary (Fraguelli et al., 2015). Mattelmäki et al. (2002) see that design empathy has an important role when designing for personal experiences and private contexts, in comparison to designing for practical functions.

2.4.2 How does empathy materialize in design?

Battarbee et al. (2014) highlight that empathic design is always an intentional action to understand the perspective of the user. This means that in empathic design should be observed as a conscious action and also something that happens in a time and place and has a conceptualized nature.

Empathic design materializes through different kinds of practices, namely tools and methods, for example observation, different kinds of tangible probes, photography, video and games. Through these, designers try to get under the skin of the users and also clients, to see and feel the world as they see and feel it (Battarbee et al., 2014). Instead of bringing the users into a laboratory context, the empathic research focuses on the user’s own environments (Battarbee et al., 2014). The tools and methods are always modified according to the context of research (Mattelmäki et al., 2014), which requires creativity and careful preparation inventing, tailoring and using tools (Battarbee et al., 2014). This means that one method or process cannot be copied from project to project, but creativity to tailor them to fit the context is needed. This shows that empathic design requires time, preparation and resources.

Tools and methods are probably the most visible appearance of design empathy, but they could be seen as a tip of the iceberg. They play a key role in gathering information (Leonard et al. 1997), but as mentioned earlier, design empathy stands on design competences, which creates the basis. This basis layer consists of visual ways of working, designer-based imagination, a certain mindset and sensitivity (Battarbee et al., 2014; Mattelmäki et al. 2014). Also open-mindedness, curiosity, “fresh-eyed” observational skills and collaborative skills in interdisciplinary environments are crucial (Leonard et al. 1997).

Sensitivity is a crucial element of empathic design and it touches all layers of a process. Mattelmäki et al. (2014) define the current focus of design empathy around four layers of sensitivity; Sensitivity towards humans (“gathering inspiration and information about and making sense of people and their experiences and contexts”), techniques (“application of generative, prototyping, and visualizing tools to communicate and explore the issues”), collaboration (“tuning the process and tools according to co-designers, deci-
sion-makers, and organizations alike") and design ("seeking potential design directions and solutions and posing "what if" question") (Mattelmäki et al., 2014, p 77). They highlight that when design acts as a moderator of change, sensitivity towards collaboration is exceptionally purposeful. Drawing this together, empathic design is a combination of tangibility, and personal and professional traits.

**Designerly tools and Visualization**

Visual ways of working are central part of the work (De Lille et al., 2012). Throught visual ways or expressing, designers can make abstract matters tangible, translate and communicate fuzzy insights into potential futures (Evans, 2011). Though visualization designers can uncover unmet consumer needs, wants, desires, and use these insights to inform, for example, future generation products and services (DeLille et al., 2012).

**Designerly mindset**

Fighting against misconceptions of designerly approach as visualizing, prototyping, creativity and so on, De Lille et al. (2012) state that the real value of designerly approach "lies in the mindset of designers": seeing problems as opportunities and thinking in terms of creating new possibilities in stead of selecting between existing alternatives (Boland and Collopy, 2004). Since the design problems can be said being wicked problems by nature (Buchanan, 1992) and always future oriented, designers are also familiar with handling uncertainty in the processes (DeLille et al., 2012).

### 2.4.3 Four approaches to gather understanding through empathy

To open up in more detail how designers build empathy we discover three approaches: dialogical, narrative and imaginative identified by Wright and McCarthy (2008) who have researched design empathy in the context of experience design, specifically in HCI (Human–Computer Interaction). Wright and McCarthy talk about empathy from a pragmatist perspective, which means understanding an other or more specifically, 'knowing the user' in their lived and felt life, involv[ing] understanding what it feels like to be that person, what their situation is like from their own perspective." They find three types of methodological approaches for pragmatic empathy: the dialog-based approach, the narrative approach and the imaginative approach.

These three approaches open up different ways to approach gathering empathic understanding and draw a rather clear and descriptive image about empathic design in practice. These approaches were selected to support the special interest of the research to understand the role of empathy in design holistically.
1. The dialogical approach

The dialogical approach is about social interaction between the designers and the users and includes acting with others as well as perspective taking. The approach aims to understand what it feels like to be the other by creating a relationship between the user and the designer through observing and participating in the users’ lives. In dialog, the “perspectives come to constitute us as understanding and agentive selves.” This approach highlights the importance of each person engaging from his or her own perspectives, and appreciating the other’s perspective as other. Dialogical approach maintains strong connection to the ethnographic tradition.

"In an empathic relationship the ‘designer’ does not relinquish his/her position to ‘become the user’, a position from which nothing new can be created, rather the designer responds to what they see as the user’s world from their own perspective as designer. By holding onto their own perspective, each person is able to creatively respond to the other from their own perspective. In contrast with philosophical debates that have separated the sociocultural and agentive self when conceptualizing empathy, adopting a dialogical perspective does not diminish the importance of individual intuition and agency.” (Wright and McCarthy, 2008, p. 639)

For example: "Design Probes", which is an artistic-influenced tool that helps designers to see the life of the user as it could not be seen through traditional ethnographic methods. (Mattelmäki, 2006 )

2. Narrative approach

Narratives try to capture the user’s day-to-day activities, motivations, personality traits, values and attitudes into short stories, for example into scenarios, characters and abstracted personas, that are expressed through visual and literary techniques aiming at the reader to be able to identify and get part of the emotions of the other. The narrative approach involves little or no direct engagement between designers and users, but builds upon the research findings of literature (like certain genres of novels, writing and reading) and can work as cultural tools that evoke empathic encounters between the reader and the characters.

For example: different literary techniques and storytelling, which bring into mind and emotions of the other.

3. Imaginative approach

This approach focuses on gaining empathy through the imagined other. It works as a way of giving designers insight into what it feels like to be a user. An example of imaginative tools are role-plays and experience prototypes that are employed as ways of
engaging with imaginary users or imaginary user experiences. "Experience prototypes are methods and techniques of simulating experience with a product, space or system in order to understand what it might feel like to engage with it." Imaginative approaches rely on the designer’s ability to empathize with imaginary users as well as effective dialogue. "Empathy then is not the outcome of the process but a pre–requisite for it."

These three approaches present more traditional forms of empathic design and create understanding of how designers build empathy in practice. To support the context of this research, we will add a fourth approach, which is here named as facilitative approach, which isn’t separate from the previous, but helps to understand empathy in design in a broader sense.

4. Collaborative approach

Especially in the context of Nordic participatory design empathic design is most of the times an iterative event–driven process where stakeholders participate by bringing in their expertise and collaboratively engage with others for example to design services (Mattelmäki et al. 2014). This approach is based on the fact that the more complex systems are to be designed and challenges solved, the more expertise is needed to solve them. This means that also non-designers, stakeholders and users, must contribute to design activities and 'become empathic designers on their own'. In these kinds of situations, the professional designer acts as a facilitator of the process. Mattelmäki and Sleeswijk Visser’s (2011) identification of four directions of co-design help us to understand the role of empathy in collaboration. The first direction aims at accessing the users’ expertise for example by observation and interviewing. In the second direction designers provide tools to trigger the participants’ expressions and imagination, and the participants do the analyzing. The third direction is about collective creation where both the designers and participants are active actors. The final perspective is about facilitating the stakeholders in the collaborative process. In these contexts, empathic design can also help building rapport between the stakeholders and users (Soini, 2015).

Drawing these together, the facilitative approach expands empathic design from designer–user interaction into a bigger net of actors. In these situations, empathy is often facilitated and forwarded using benefiting from the above mentioned three approaches.

The four co-design directions: A) The users are given voice and their expertise is utilised in the design process; B) Users contribution is facilitated with tools provided by the designers or researchers; C) The designer is not only a facilitator but participates in the collective creation; D) Designers and design researchers support and facilitate a collaborative process of various stakeholders, not just users.

Figure 3. Image and caption duplicated from Mattelmäki and Sleeswijk Visser (2011) p. 5.
2.4.4 Designer’s role

As mentioned in the previous empathy literature chapter, empathy is a human innate ability. Therefore, it sets many challenges for the designer’s role. When designers use empathy in the work context, Battarbee et al. (2014) highlight that deliberate practice is needed to find the balance between self, other and work. "We must intentionally seek opportunities to connect with people in meaningful ways and to set aside reactions and behaviors that will interfere with it. And, once empathy is achieved, it needs to be moderated: apply too much and our thinking loses focus; apply too little and the depth of our insight suffers." (Battarbee et al., 2014, p. 3) They highlight that “Empathic design is not about being emotional all of the time. It is about creating a balance between empathizing with an experience and analyzing its nature and components. Managing this in the design process is an ongoing and exhausting, but highly rewarding collective effort.” (Battarbee et al., 2014, p. 3)

Empathizing with the users also affects the designers own behavior. Decety and Ickes (2011) state that when one sees the world through someone else's eyes, it affects to the cognitive style and enhances which Battarbee et al. (2014) find supporting the designers ability to receive and process information and field-dependent thinking. "This type of thinking helps us put information in context and pick up contextual cues from the environment, which is essential when we're seeking to understand how things relate to one another, literally and figuratively." (p. 3) They also highlight that empathic encounters enhance the designer’s personal motivation to create better design solutions. "Because we are more helpful and generous after an empathic encounter (Decety and Ickes, 2011), empathetic behavior personally motivates us to solve design challenges." (p. 3).

These draw an image of design empathy as something that is deeply attached to the professional context, but balances between the personal self. Mattelmäki et al. (2014) point out the danger of falling into the empathy trap, which means about losing the focus between self and other and can lead to empathic distress, as studied earlier. They point out that "If designers are not vigilant, the attempt to be empathic might articulate popular reflections instead of innovating more radical futures. Roberto Verganti has recently and forcefully argued that the best designers not only listen to people but also follow their own reasoning and instincts." (Mattelmäki et al., 2014, p 73). This creates a new level for empathic design – self – and points out the importance of self-awareness.

Acknowledging the importance of the empathizers self-awareness, the role of self in relation to the role of a designer is often neglected especially in the popular design literature. This might be because of the focus is more in the practical work, or designers role in general. As the above review opens up, designer self plays a role in not only in the outcome of the work but also personally and therefore is extremely important.
2.4.5 Designerly empathy is aesthetic empathy

So far the focus of the design and empathy review has been in the concept of Empathic Design. We have aimed to understand the ways how empathy shows and benefits design in processes and creates meaningful outcomes. To understand the meaning of empathy in design, we shift the focus to design empathy. In literature the terms design empathy and empathic design exist and often go hand in hand. Unequivocal differentiation between them is rather hard to find. Mattelmäki et al. (2002) state that "Design empathy means that people are seen and understood from where they stand, not as test subjects but as persons with feelings." "It has two directions: towards the participants to create an empathic and respectful dialogue and towards the designers to support empathic understanding." (Mattelmäki et al., 2002). In this sense, the difference between design empathy and empathic design is rather philosophical, but important in the context of this study.

To picture the nature of designerly empathy, New & Kimbell (2013) draw a comparison with stereotypical opposites of empathy in design and empathy in traditional consulting. Based on their findings, they frame designerly empathy as aesthetic empathy as "I try to understand what it would be like to be you", comparing that to rationalist empathy mindset of "I try to understand your problems by locating it within a universe of familiar problems", which they adapt to traditional consulting empathy. According to them, the strengths of the designerly way to use empathy is that it aims to holistic understanding of the client and their users with an open mind, having no ready-made solutions (or "being ok" in unknown). They also call designerly empathy as a 'creative leap to the experience of another'. The rationalist empathy focuses on diagnosis and prescriptions, when the focus of aesthetic empathy is on interpretation of a representation(s) of the situation. They highlight the designer's ability to empathic imagination, which requires an aesthetic sensibility to make the intellectual and emotional leap to see the world like the other does, instead of imagining what it would be like in the client was more like self as a traditional consultant might think. (New & Kimbell, 2013) Also Wright and McCarthy (2008) second the notion of design empathy as 'aesthetic seeing', or 'creative understanding' of the other that draws on aesthetic sensibilities. They compare aesthetic seeing to scientific inquiry. Aesthetic seeing “involves a felt, valuational response from one’s own particular, unique value position to the other (the user) who is also seen as a separate and unique center of value.” This means that designerly aesthetic empathy isn't a "neutral, indifferent contemplation of the user", but can involve strong feelings between self and other and is thus be more than instrumental contemplation (Wright & McCarthy, 2008). Aesthetic empathy links to Batson's Concept 4, which was about 'Intuiting or Projecting Oneself into Another's Situation', meaning that "I imagine myself into other person's position, even though I don't know him." and 'What it would be like to...be a young woman just having lost her job."
Taking a step further to clarify the nature of designerly empathy New & Kimbell (2013) explain the role of affective and cognitive empathy in the context of a design process, continuing drawing the difference between the above mentioned consultant and designerly mindset. As an example, a consultant might collect data about the process of a handicapped buying a travel ticket, or imagine how it would be like for a person in a wheelchair to buy the ticket. This being a sort of empathy as well, as a comparison a designer might use a wheelchair herself and try to understand the interactions in the whole process. They point out an important finding that these experiences might only feed the cognitive part of empathy. To gain deeper engagement and involve the affective empathy, also emotional responses are needed. That could be for example experiencing anger or anxiety when buying the ticket. They conclude that “it is not that one can rationally appreciate the fact of another’s emotion, but that one has the emotion oneself.” Based on that, New and Kimbell (2013) draw an image of 1) rationalist affective 2) rationalist cognitive 3) aesthetic affective 4) aesthetic cognitive. From these, according to them 2) is normal domain for consulting, when 3) and 4) are normal domains of designers (design thinkers). Figure 4 summarizes these:

![Diagram](image-url)

Figure 4. Versions of Empathy. Based on New & Kimbell (2013) p. 7
2.4.6 Discussion about designerly empathy

Drawing the previous together, empathy can bring true benefits and impact into designers' work and it seems self-evident why empathy is such an important part of a modern designers "toolbox". It can help one to create meaningful solutions for users and organizations and through the conceptualized form, it is scalable and easy to adapt in almost any context. Acknowledging the power of empathy and the benefits it brings with it, it is definitely a tempting concept. However, design empathy is often pictured as a supreme value and leaves blank or only touches the critical sides of it. One reason for this might be the still rather narrow design research field or the nature of design field which is generally more practice oriented. One reason might also be the current trend to 'mass produce design' – the explosive popularity to quickly adapt design into outside of design which blurs the lines towards educational design. However, it is important also to observe the use of empathy for design purposes through a critical lens, especially after the review of the previous empathy chapter, which highlighted empathy as a powerful psychological human factor.

In general, empathy feels like a justified method for design, especially through its ability to celebrate users as a most valuable source of inspiration. However, there is a danger of illusion - Is it really possible to step into someone else's shoes without knowing the other? Who can say if and when we have understood the users right? Also, how do we know that we 'do it right' and how big gaps can empathic design bridge between the designers and users? When empathy is more and more popularized and conceptualized, for example through the explosion of the number of service designers, it is extremely important to think critically when empathy is used to justify one's own work and when the users are truly heard and there is evidence that the others point of view is truly taken into account. An interesting question is also the role of personal self and if anyone can truly be an empathic designer? And what role does design education play? How design empathy takes into account the empathizers self-qualities and the personal level of empathy? These are rather interesting questions and show how multidimensional empathy can be especially when bringing it into work context. Through the empirical research, some of these questions will be discussed further.
2.5 Leadership as a channel for applying empathy

So far we have studied empathy as a separate phenomena and it’s implications in design. This section will build on our knowledge by studying empathy in the context of leadership. It should be acknowledged that empathy in the field of design, and especially in leadership have their own field specific paradoxes. In leadership, the paradoxes are more highlighted and create an interesting dialog for example between soft and hard - being empathic but still execute leadership actions, but as well as noticing the direction where leadership is going.

2.5.1 Roots of empathy in leadership

Role of empathy in leadership has gained popularity in the public discussions and in the research field. There is a growing body of research that suggests that having and displaying empathy is an important part of the 21st century leadership (Hoit et al., 2012; Humphrey, 2013). Empathy is even called a construct that is fundamental and crucial to leadership (Humphrey, 2013; Sandri et al., 2011). Some studies highlight it as one of the leader’s top qualities (Holt et al., 2012; Hiltunen, 2015). Being empathic does not automatically make one a leader, but being able to have and display empathy is an important part of today’s leadership - empathy is claimed to be the most important predictor of leadership emergence (Sandri et al., 2011). A leader’s empathy is also seen as an important contributor to ethical business and as a manifestation to more responsible future. Holt et al. (2012) argue that “empathy is an essential aspect of 21st century leadership and can no longer be ignored if we want to prevent continuation of ethical disasters in the business world”.

Empathy in leadership is connected to at least these leadership styles: Effective Leadership (Mahsud et al., 2010), Transformational leadership (Luthans et al., 2001), Servant leadership (Humphrey, 2016), Heroic leadership (Humphrey, 2016), Adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al. 2009) and Primal Leadership (Goleman et al., 2002)

2.5.2 What is empathy in leadership?

In a popular article ”What makes a Leader?” Goleman (2004) defines a leader’s empathy as ”the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people” and ”a skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions”. It indicates to an ability to develop others, sensitivity to cross-cultural differences and expertise in attracting and retaining talent (Goleman, 2004). Leadership empathy is also described as putting thought into considering employee feelings and understanding their other claims in the process of making intelligent decisions and other actions (Goleman, 2004). Luthans et al. (2001) second Abraham (1999) and highlight that a leader’s empathic understanding of the other’s feelings and distress helps the leader to modify his/her way of communication and improve performance feedback (Luthans et al., 2001). These draw a picture of leader-
shiply empathy as emotional focused, which supports the paradox of being soft but still hard at the same time.

Empathy is often described as a skill among other leadership skills, but still plays a central role. Goleman (2004) has found that for executing effective leadership and strong performance, intellect and cognitive skills like big-picture thinking and long-term vision are especially important, but emotional intelligence, including empathy, is twice as important as technical skills or IQ (Goleman, 2004). Despite of the rising popularity, Holt et al. (2012) point out that empathy, among the other "softer" emotional-driven skills, has still not yet been generally accepted among the other generally accepted qualities such as intelligence, charisma, responsibility, vision and passion.

As one can see, empathy in leadership builds on huge contrasts. Therefore it is easy to understand that since leadership has a hard echo, empathy is often assumed being 'wishy-washy', 'touchy-feely' and 'overtly feminine', as described for example by Parmar (2015). Arguing against this misconception, Holt & Marques (2012) frame empathy in leadership as a "soft skill that leads to hard results in business" and underline that that's why they should not be underestimated. "Leaders empathy is not sympathy: People wonder how leaders can make hard decisions if they are "feeling" for all the people who will be affected. But leaders with empathy do more than sympathize with people around them: They use their knowledge to improve their companies in subtle but important ways." (Goleman, 2004). Luthans et al. (2001) note that leader's empathy is not necessarily about pleasing everyone, but more likely considering the other person's feelings when making decisions. These examples bring us closer to understand empathy in leadership: it does not compete with the traditional leadership traits, but rather complements them.

### 2.5.3 What can a leader achieve with empathy?

Instead of focusing on empathy as an added soft trait, empathy in leadership can also be seen through its benefits. Leadership theorists argue that leader's expression of positive emotion have motivational consequences (Lewis, 2000). Goleman (2004) takes an example from coaching and mentoring saying that "Outstanding coaches and mentors get inside the heads of the people they are helping. They sense how to give effective feedback. They know when to push for better performance and when to hold back. In the way they motivate their protégés, they demonstrate empathy in action." (Goleman, 2004). Approaching this from another perspective, Gentry et al., (2016) have found out that leaders can use empathy to be aware of others and to show their followers that they care for their needs and achievements, which enhances motivation.

Motivation links to effectiveness (Holt et al., 2012). It is also understood that empathy is positively related to job performance and effectiveness is highlighted as one of the main outcomes of empathy (Gentry et al., 2016). Also Goleman (2004) draws a clear connection between emotional intelligence (which empathy is a central part of) and the effec-
tiveness of a leader, stating that emotional intelligence is the one crucial connecting factor within all the effective leaders (Goleman, 2004). Sadri et al. (2011) summarize that in order to be effective, a leader should be able to convey empathic emotion to understand what the followers are feeling. This pictures well empathy from multiple layers.

Goleman (2004) argued that empathy can also play an important role for a leader in teamwork contexts. Teams - 'cauldrons of bubbling emotions' as Goleman pictures them - often suffer from formation of alliances, clashing agendas and difficulty to reach consensus always multiplies when the number of team members rises. In these environments, Goleman highlights the importance of the team leader to be able to sense and understand everyone's point of views. When talking about this, he gives an example of an troubled team and how an empathic leader overcame the challenge and triggered success by giving everyone the time to let out the hard feelings in one-one sessions and then directed them to work together. When the leader uses empathy, he can understand the team's 'emotional makeup'. Goleman points out the value not just in increased collaboration, but also in the business success. (Goleman, 2004)

Empathy has an important role for others, but it is also interesting to observe the positive effects on leaders themselves. Humphrey et al. (2016) call empathic leaders 'Heroic' leaders for whom empathy has a highlighted value in steering towards pro-social behavior. Empathy can also motivate leaders to take risks on behalf of others (Humphrey et al., 2016). It can also help a leader to become more effective by helping to establish empathic bonds that unite them with their followers. This helps leadership to emerge and allows one to mobilize resources to take action (Humphrey et al., 2016). Humphrey et al. (2016) also argue that empathic leaders can more easily achieve a heroic status in an organization, which can be beneficial in transmitting organizational values and missions to the followers.

From an organizational perspective, leaders empathy improves chances of success (Gentry et al., 2016). Parmar talks about enlightened companies that are increasingly aware of that delivering empathy for their customers, employees, and the public is a powerful tool for improving profits (Parmar, 2015). This is supported by the latest Lady Geek Global Empathy Index, according to which businesses are more profitable and productive when they act ethically, treat their staff well, and communicate better with their customers (Parmar, 2015). Through their research, they have found that there is a direct link between empathy and commercial success. These expand our understanding of leadership empathy from followers to stakeholders as whole, but also its role in organizational level. Parmar (2015) put emphasis on the notion that the most successful organizations have realized that empathy is a two-dimensional issue and they should promote empathy towards both clients and employees. A company's success and outstanding performance are also a central part of the reasoning behind Goleman's emotional intelligence theory and he states that emotionally intelligent leader is a key factor in a company's success.
Even though a company's success is a crucial factor to having more motivated workers and more satisfied customers through the leader's use of empathy, also more humane factors can be found behind leader empathy. Ciulla (2010) talks about a leader's 'duty to care' especially in the moment of crisis, when leaders should act with empathy and sensitivity, along with moral solidarity, commitment, concern, and physical presence. Pessi, (in Hammarsten, 2016) reflects on her experiences in talking about compassion at work that some leaders see that the wellbeing and commitment brought by empathy advanced productivity which brings money, when the others see compassion as a intrinsic value and 'the money will follow'.

Empathy is also regarded as central skill for leaders to be able to operate in the changing world and interconnected environments that are increasingly diverse (Sadri et al., 2011). According to Luthans et al. (2001), empathy can help reduce misunderstandings in global cross-cultural interchanges. Centre For Creative Leadership emphasizes the importance of empathy for a leader in leading people, collaborating with others, being able to cross organizational and cultural boundaries and in the need to create shared direction, alignment, and commitment between social groups with very different histories, perspectives, values, and cultures (Sadri et al., 2011). Role of empathy in these people-oriented leadership requirements is seen as crucial (Sadri et al., 2011). Goleman mentions globalization as another reason why empathy is so important for business leaders. He notes that because empathic people are attuned to subtleties in body language and able to hear messages behind the spoken words, they are better equipped to navigate in the cross-cultural dialogue where misunderstandings and miscues are easily born. (Goleman, 2004).

As the designerly approach to empathy focused on the practical tools and methods for empathizing, leadership literature highlights more basic humane interaction skills, like listening, asking and perspective taking (i.e. Gentry et al., 2016). Since capability to demonstrate empathy depends on each person and it is a learnable skill, companies use for example trainings and coaching to improve the leader's skill to empathize (Gentry et al., 2016). “Individuals can be taught to ask questions to enhance understanding that builds connection between people and helps them to perceive the emotions of others” Weinstein (2009 p. 21). In general, leadership literature puts remarkable emphasis on promoting the importance of empathy (and other emotional) training.

2.5.3 Discussion of leadership empathy

In general, it could be noted that leadership is gaining more human touch and empathy might play a role in that movement. In this review, the focus was more towards generic organizational leadership, but the change in the attitudes can be seen when observing the current trends for example in media.
Through the overview of leadership empathy, some similar questions than in designer empathy, remind open in the leadership discourse. For example, even though the benefits of empathy, especially in the global environments, seem to have a highlighted value, it is good to acknowledge that empathy cannot reach all levels of interaction and work. When operating across cultures, one has to step not only into the shoes of the other, but also into the world of the other culture. Empathy might help reflect on one’s own actions and other’s immediate reactions. Empathic understanding surely reaches until some point, but there is a clear danger in trusting it too blindly. As in the designer approach, empathy is a tempting topic, but it should be noted that empathy does not automatically make one a great leader or equal to company success and motivation.

Being empathic does also not automatically lead to success. A research by Hattula et al. (2015) found that the higher the level of empathy which the manager performed, the more possible it was that they used their personal preferences to predict what the customers want. They also learned that the more empathic the leaders were, the more they ignored the customer market research that was provided to them. They found and interesting link that many highly empathic leaders, instead of thinking how the other thinks in a certain situation (=empathy), think what they would do in their position (= not empathy). Similar notions came up from the New & Kimbell (2013) article where they compared the stereotyped consultancy empathy with designerly empathy and named it as “rationalist cognitive” empathy, meaning that this kind of ‘sort of empathy’ is more likely based on rational images and leaves out the emotional perspectives. These leave many open questions regarding the purpose, trustworthy, nature and use of empathy in leadership.

2.6 Summary

The previous chapters have aimed at creating understanding of the nature and implications of empathy in design and in leadership. Here the main findings are summarized in the table under the questions of What? How? Why? and When?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHAT</strong></th>
<th><strong>LEADERSHIP EMPATHY</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most often empathy towards users</td>
<td>Most often empathy towards followers (and clients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designers gain empathic understanding by intentionally uncovering people’s unspoken latent needs, feelings and moods around a certain context (design challenge)</td>
<td>Showing care and compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic Design is one of the key concepts</td>
<td>Somewhat intentional, depending on the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional</td>
<td>Skill among other skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete with abstract humane elements</td>
<td>Often connected to noticing negative emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turns intangible empathy tangible</td>
<td>Abstract, based on basic humane skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In modern forms, also about forwarding empathy and facilitating it in organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHY</strong></th>
<th><strong>LEADERSHIP EMPATHY</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathic understanding inspires and gives direction to the design solutions so that they are meaningful and satisfying for the end-users, as well as in complex systemic challenges benefit a wider net-work of stakeholders</td>
<td>To motivate people, which increases job performance and effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique understanding</td>
<td>Helps leader’s communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic understanding towards the users can also promote empathy in the organizational culture</td>
<td>Organization’s success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leader’s personal success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polish the image (trendy topic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HOW</strong></th>
<th><strong>LEADERSHIP EMPATHY</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the core is a designerly mindset and sensitivity</td>
<td>Active listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic understanding is gained through concrete tools and methods</td>
<td>Asking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through an iterative process</td>
<td>Perspective taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research method: ready planned, aims at some where (even though the outcome isn't clear)</td>
<td>Showing compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing one’s personal skills like being able to switch self-modes and get out of one’s roles and mental models.</td>
<td>Showing respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designerly skills like visualization to gather and share empathy forward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using empathic artifacts for example to facilitate empathy in organizations to promote organizational change towards empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different design approaches like design thinking, co-creation, participatory design are built on the empathic design practices</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHEN</strong></th>
<th><strong>LEADERSHIP EMPATHY</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In design processes</td>
<td>Daily interaction with the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crisis or problematic situation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, designerly empathy is more organized and conceptualized than leadershipy empathy, which stands more on basic humane skills. Leadershipy empathy concentrated more towards the "followers", when design empathy creates understanding from the outsiders. Designers are professionals in turning intangible emotions tangible and also fostering the emergence of emotional connections. Designerly empathy is always intentional action, when leadershipy empathy might also be more unintentional.
The previous chapter specified empathy through literature from the theoretical level to its applications in leadership and design, and created understanding of how these fields approach and benefit from empathy. In this chapter, the focus shifts towards personal perspectives and learning from experiences in working context.
3.1 Empirical Design

3.1.1 Semi-structured interview method

The empirical study was conducted through expert interviews following a semi-structured method. The semi-structured interview is suggested as a method for qualitative research especially when there are only few interviewees and when the topic of the interview is pre-defined but not too strictly - it gives the interviewees the freedom to share their thoughts more freely. Semi-structured interview consists of a list of suggested questions, which are generally the same for every interviewee but might vary slightly depending on his/her background and expertise. The order of the questions is not pre-defined. The value of the method (compared for example to structured interview) is that the information gained is deeper and allows discussion about more sensitive and personal topics, which suits well when talking about empathy in one’s position at work. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001; Metsämuuronen, 2006).

The goal of the interviews was to encourage the interviewees to freely share their opinions and experiences about empathy in their work and to gain insights from the selected practitioners’ personal experiences and thoughts as deeply as possible.

3.1.2 Interview design

The interviewees were selected in an early phase of the research process before the more formal literature review to avoid too strict pre-assumptions towards the topics. The interviewees were selected with two criteria:

a) Empathy-consciousness: the interviewee is known for consciously using empathy in the work.

b) The person uses empathy at work in the field of design or in a position of a leader, or both.

Questions for the interviewees:

1. What is empathy for you in your work?
2. What is empathy for you in your everyday life?
3. Why do you use empathy in your work and why do you think it’s important?
4. What are the related benefits of empathy?
5. Who do you empathize?
6. Where do you aim at with empathy?
7. Can empathy help creating common understanding? How?
8. Do you see any risks or negative sides of empathy in your work?
Altogether four interviews were conducted during the spring of 2016. The duration of
the interviews was between 1.5–2.5 hours and the language was Finnish. Conducting all
the interviews in Finnish was important since research suggests that empathy has dif-
férrent values to job performance in different cultures (Sadri et al., 2011). The interviews
were recorded and transcribed. Since the language of the interviews was Finnish, the
citations selected were also translated into English.

The goal of the interviews was to hear from the practitioners about their thoughts and
experiences about empathy in their work. Before the interviews, every interviewee was
sent a short, open description of what the interview would be about and what kind of
topics would be covered. Since all the interviewees presented different backgrounds
and areas of interest and work, the questions differed slightly with every interviewee,
following the semi-structured interview procedure. The same topics were discussed
with every interviewee, but the emphasis varied depending on the interviewees’ own
interest and knowledge according to different topics about empathy at work.

When conducting the interviews, it soon became clear that for these selected "empa-
thy-conscious people" empathy meant something really personal and everyone was
really enthusiastic sharing their thoughts about empathy. Even though some pre-set
questions were planned, the questions were more like guiding tools rather than a list of
questions. From the very first interview on, it became clear that it is really fruitful to let
the interviewee to tell about empathy as they see it and what kind of topics they rise.
Therefore, all the interviews started to focus towards slightly different tracks. This can
be observed from the emphasis of the interviewees inputs on the selected themes. How-
ever, this made it possible to observe different perspectives about the same topic, even
though the sample was limited. After the interviews they were transcribed and then,
following and iterative process with the literature review, organized under themes. The
themes were not pre-set, but they rose from the interviews.
3.2 Cases

Here every interviewee is presented and their perspective to empathy. The interviewees are given pseudonyms to be able to observe them as cases and avoid too much subjectivity.

**Satu Puronen** - Female - 17.3.2016
Puronen's perspective comes from her background as a portfolio entrepreneur in service business sector and design ethnography. Her roles include brand manager, service designer, design ethnographer, project manager, concept designer, storyteller, copywriter and board work. Currently she is working as design ethnographer and business developer in health and social service sector. Puronen presents the most designerly approach towards empathy.

**Matti Hattula** - Male - 16.2.2016
Hattula's perspective presents the most purely leadership approach. His expertise comes from years of experience as chief executive officer, chairman in national corporations and companies and leading corporations in Finland. Empathy plays an important part of his work and he has recently written a leadership book, where empathy is a central element.

**Helle Aaltonen** - Female - 9.4.2016
Aaltonen's perspective comes from her background as a portfolio entrepreneur in service business sector. Her roles include CEO, project manager, service design, sales, strategic future thinker and board work. Currently she is working as a business designer in the field of business development in health and social service sectors and as a chairman of the board. Aaltonen presents both leadership and designerly approach towards empathy.

**Meri Jokinen** - Female - 25.4.2016
Jokinen's perspective comes from her years of experience in the field of service design in public healthcare organizations. She has a strong view on leadership and in-house consulting. She also brings her experience from operative customer service, user perspective, and customer marketing. Jokinen brings together the designerly approaches in the leadership context.
3.3 Empathy through the interviewees’ eyes

Here the findings of the interviews are presented under ten themes. Different vocabularies, especially in the citations, might confuse one while reading. Mostly, based on the perspective from which the interviewees talk, it is helpful to think about client, employee and individual as the object of empathy, and leader and designer as the empathic actor.

3.3.1 EMPATHY IS PART OF THE PROCESS WHICH AIMS AT ACTIONS

All the interviewees highlight empathy as a central part of their work, but frame it as a core rather than an added quality.

Aaltonen states that "empathy is leader’s resource" and Hattula frames that "empathy is a tool in a leader’s toolbox".

These comments line with the literature review, but continue framing empathy as a tool or a resource alone draws an image of empathy as something that is taken out like a tool from a toolbox when there is a need to fix something. This brings up conflicting thoughts and raises a question of what is it used for as a resource or a tool? To answer this, the interviewees point out the empathy is a tool to answer the need to understand.

"The need is to understand, empathy is a way to get it.” Hattula
"Through empathy you try to gather understanding.” Aaltonen

Understanding is highlighted through all the interviews, but to grasp why understanding is so important, we have to observe empathy from a broader perspective, as a part of a process. That can be observed through the following thoughts:

"In collaboration situations there [is] a need for understanding different world views and creating common understanding about the common goals.”...”When the understanding is reached, then create mechanisms that utilize the strengths of the both sides, supporting the common goal.” Hattula

"With the help of empathy you can understand different people’s points of views and understand how the employees tick” Hattula

"Through gaining empathy you can recognize values, get "corners" and touch points. And get tools for communication.” Aaltonen

"Understanding help to find the right tools from the leader’s toolbox” Hattula
These examples create an image of a process: empathy leads to understanding, which aims at something that is happening in the future. Therefore, to understand how empathy is used as a resource, it is important to see that empathy is not an isolated element, but rather something that is used as an resource to reach a certain goal. Reaching a goal creates a rather conflicting image of empathy in relation to how we generally imagine it. To clarify this, Aaltonen draw a picture of the nature of empathy in the working context: it is goal directed, solution oriented and context dependent. She visualizes that through comparing leader's logic to a designer's logic, and at the same time shows synergies between the two perspectives that are central in this research:

"Leadership should be solution and goal oriented....My point is that I don't want just to complain, but [as a leader] I want to think about a solution. That is where the designer’s logic comes in. There are people who empathize and complain, and forward the complain. But I think that's not enough, leadership should be goal-directed and solution-oriented." Aaltonen

Creating an image of empathy as something that aims at creating solutions, the interviewees point out that empathy is also dependent on the context. For example Puronen frames it as:

"...if you haven't defined what you want to achieve with it [empathy], it's bit of a problem especially in a business context."

Therefore, it is also important to notice that empathy relates closely to the context where the operations happen and where they aim at: it should be seen in a context where it increases understanding within the boundaries of a specific topic. This is one of the factors that stands out throughout the interviews and differs the working empathy from the "everyday empathy", which will be discussed later. During the further sections one can see that the goal and solution orientation are repeated often, especially in the citations.

When asking from the interviewees when they see a highlighted value empathy in their work, the answers could be raffly shared in moments, environments and roles. Some of the moments mentioned are meetings, project team coaching and one-one situations like interviews and discussions. The environments mentioned are for example collaboration situations, decision-making situations, negotiation situations and conflict resolution situations. Both, single situations and long term processes were mentioned, and also in general leading an individual or leading a group or a mass. The roles mentioned include facilitator, chairman, researcher, designer and also "hidden leadership".

"Leading an individual" Hattula

"Leading masses: you have to understand the backgrounds and the situation-related move-
ments in the minds, and the single movements of minds in the masses.” Hattula

"Decision making situations: if you for example have to make big decisions affecting the life of an employee, then empathy helps the leader in executing the action with the least harm possible.” Hattula

"Difficult negotiation situations you have understanding of the world-views and values there are on the backstage. Only then the compromises are possible.”...”The traditional model of selling and buying does not work in environments where there are nothing to sell and buy.” Hattula

Answering to the question how empathy differs when situations, environments and roles change, Aaltonen concludes that

"It's all the same what the environment is: meeting, sales meeting or starting a project team or what ever, same mechanisms of empathy are needed.”

This draws an image of empathy as something that is always the same, but can be adapted to many contexts. After creating an image of empathy as a solution and action oriented resource that is context-dependent, this comment triggers an interest to find out more about the mechanisms of empathy as the interviewees see it.

3.3.2 EMPATHY IS A MOTIVATOR

"Individual’s motivation is the main reason I use empathy.” Aaltonen

"I use empathy so that I understand one’s motivations, reasons, background, why do they work like they do and how would they want to behave?” Aaltonen

Motivation plays an important role throughout the interviews. The interviewees highlight the value of leading people from inside out, and the importance of respecting the individual from one’s own starting points. Aaltonen describes motivating others as

"...making people to work and function as they wish themselves”.

"It is about continuous sensing of peoples current situation and motivations like 'Is the one interested in?' 'Is the one motivated right now?' It's about continuous evaluation of the person's life, work and problems.” Aaltonen

They state that when approaching individuals from inside-out, you create more sustainable processes where people are motivated and take ownership of the issues at hand. Hattula notes that even in the today's corporation world the old top-down approach
does not function anymore. From this perspective, he says, it is a cultural shift where empathy plays a key role.

Jokinen points out that motivation links closely to ownership, which is crucial especially when working together to meet a common goal. Comparing the experiences, it can be seen that instead of motivation and ownership being separate or straightforward issues, they are both rather interconnected and happen in many layers.

Aaltonen’s examples open up the role of motivation in a process and creates links to the actions:

"Being a project leader I use empathy to constantly trying to figure out what everyone would like to do and how they would like to do. And then I try to share the tasks according to that and to take care that everybody is aware of where we are going."

Drawing from that, she continues that

"Empathy in leadership is needed for two things: First, how do you want and how does it fit into your [the others] life? Then I support that as a leader. And second, I understand you [the other], what motivates you [the other] and so on. How I get you to operate towards the goal [to act]." Aaltonen

"It’s about to take the power in one and to bring that to the goal", drawing a bridge to selling. When one has identified the person’s situation, she tries to bring solutions through leadership.

These examples give a good image of the leadership perspective but at the same time support the leadership empathy paradox: on the other hand, it is about highlighting the value of the individual and steering the others from inside out, from the others own staring points. But on the other hand there is a clear conflict that supports the traditional image of leadership: is it more about using the others to get personal benefits, or does it really highlight the value of the other and respect of the individual. The next theme will try to find answers to this.

### 3.3.3 EMPATHY IS EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE

Through the image of empathy, that this study has creates as a rather hard resource, the question of whether empathy is a hard tool or soft skill is important for understanding the very nature of empathy in the interviewees’ work. The comparison between warm and cold, soft tool and hard tool made the interviewees to share various perspectives.

One perspective highlighted empathy as means of drawing a line between understand-
ing and agreeing. Being empathic does not equal to accepting everything and changing one’s own behavior according to the other’s opinions and situations. Aaltonen illustrates this by drawing a comparison to her image of compassion:

“For me, compassion in everyday language is something that I have to conform it, you agree on it, like “yes, agreed, she is stupid”, and then I should accept it. When empathy for me is that “oh, you think like that, how does it feel for you and Oh! That is how you feel. I understand you!”. But then, I don’t have to feel the same.”

Puronen continues that by giving thinking it from a perspective of “pretending empathy”:

“Sometimes I have to pretend empathy. I mean if, for example, I’m not agreeing with the other. Or people open up to me about things that [are against my morality]. Then I have to conform the other and their opinions in the situation. In that case empathy is a tool for me.” ... “And maybe it’s like a mindset. I’m here to gain information and trying to understand this person. I don’t have to agree but this is not the place to tell that. But we are here to solve a problem.... But in the situation you just have to bee like ‘yes, agree, that’s true!’”

Asking about the emotional side of empathy Hattula argued against common misunderstandings:

“People think that empathy is about being soft and kind and tapping someone on a shoulder. And then they ask that can an empathic leader get angry? Of course you can and you have to!... There needs to be different kind of tools in the leader’s toolbox to choose from and then, based on the understanding gained through empathy you take the one that best fits to the situation and the person.”

Because of that Hattula sees the cognitive side of empathy more important than emotional empathy for a leader. He frames that:

“The understanding part is more important for executing the action.”

Asking if empathy in working context is different from the empathy that is used in everyday context, the opposites were named in the interviews as ‘work empathy’ and ‘friend empathy’. Aaltonen shared her thoughts about the difference but also about the importance of friend empathy in working context:

“It’s about the friend empathy when you are like this [tapping on one’s shoulder]. You need that also. For example when some people have a click, somebody has a bad moment or something like that. One can’t process any new information or be able to continue before the ‘knot’ has been opened. That is the moment when you have to use friend empathy to find the status to let the people to pull out everything. After that, we can concentrate on the
things that we are doing. There are kind of many layers."

Asking about the role of empathy in this kind of situation Aaltonen concludes that in both contexts, work and friend empathy, the way to 'collect data' is the same, like sensing and observing. Just the goal is different - to set the base or aim at actions.

To avoid visualizing empathy as a purely cold mechanism, which could be easily thought as an unethical way to manipulate the others, Aaltonen rises a really important point about the importance of the "warm" side of empathy saying that:

"... I can take the feeling and be empathetic. It's easy to open up to me. If people do not find it easy to talk with you, they do not open up and share their life with you. Like if you're just cold, like "Yeah, yeah.. I'm just observing you", the other person closes up."

When asking if a cold person can be empathetic she continues that:

"Of course, cold people can gather empathy... or, i don't know. Sure they can! But then they don't open up to you so much. That's just a fact."

Concluding the discussion about emotional and cognitive -discussion, Hattula concludes that:

"There needs to be the spirit needs involved"

These comments draw rather two-sided image of empathy. It seems like the cognitive side of empathy plays a bigger role since, as it came up earlier, the goal is to understand. On the flip side of the coin, the emotional mode of empathy is seen as a founding factor, which creates the base for any understanding to happen. Drawing from that it could be concluded that friend empathy is a fundamental factor that sets the base and work empathy makes it purposeful in a certain context by aiming at actions to fulfill the desired goal. They are not separate, but rather situation dependent and complementary.

Balance

Continuing discussing about the friend empathy, all the interviewees pointed out the challenge with emotional side of empathy. Even though the emotional connection is truly important, it comes with risks. The interviewees describe situations when much emotional involvement has affected fulfilling the desired actions and also their own wellbeing. All the interviewees agree that finding the balance of how close but still far you can watch the other is the core thing to learn and keep in mind when using empathy in a working context.

"Too much compassion and emotional empathy - if it goes even a little bit over it might become a problem... Then it might be that you don't do something that you should because
of the high level of emotional connection.” Hattula

"Leaders challenge: where to draw the limit: how deep into someone’s emotions can you go in work life context?” Aaltonen

Aaltonen describes the process of empathy as its best as

"Take the feeling – Oh! This is it! - Give it back, kind of away from you. Then continue and don’t leave with the feeling"

She continues that

"The goal is to get part of the feeling into you, feel it yourself [to be able to understand it]."

She highlights that from her experience this is the desired process how it should go to reach the most sustainable outcome. She also adds an important notion that this is something that many “naturally” empathic people have to learn by doing - how to draw the limit.

The challenge of balance links closely to the theory about falling into the empathy trap and at the same time moves the focus towards empathy back towards self. Even though empathy is observed in the context of work, it should be also seen as a human factor.

3.3.4 EMPATHY CREATES A FOUNDATION FOR TRUST

When building interaction on an empathic basis, especially Jokinen, Puronen and Aaltonen point out the importance of putting attention to setting the interaction on a trustful and respectful basis. This must happen on both the individual layer, where you interact with the other, and also on the collaboration layer, where there are more people interacting together. Aaltonen highlights that whatever the situation is, you have to create trust between the person and yourself.

"The trust is created when the other feels like being understood and heard. That you understand the one right in the moment.” Aaltonen

Jokinen continues that:

"When you let the other to talk about one’s work and oneself the way one wants himself, they tend to tell a lot more and more freely." and continues that "...afterwards you hear comments that it was so nice to talk with you!"
Again, when the interaction happens in a context and has a meaningful goal, seeing the other person holistically, not just as a person, but also as an important and active part of the process that aims to reach a goal is crucial.

"Take the situation and the individual as whole. What kind of a person one is? How does his/her role and work affect to the whole?" Jokinen

As described, building trust starts from the individual layer, and creates the foundation for empathic interaction. Trust is also the most important thing in the collaborative layer. As the interviewees describe it from the leaders perspective it starts from acknowledging potential conflicting role structures and pre-assumptions, but also the organizational structures that affect the work that might harm the process of creating deep empathic connection between each other. Puronen talks about the importance of "clearing the air" to be able to work together. Related to this especially Aaltonen points out the importance of friend empathy in identifying and releasing tensions in a group. She adds that being a number one thing to be able to start concentrating on the doing. On the other hand, Puronen gives an example of working with a client where the attitude was that ‘We are not allowed to do anything’.

"So in some level we [as designers] have to know the history and the practices to understand why these people react like they do so that we can start creating something together...”

Aaltonen summarizes this reflecting on her way to benefit from empathy as first understanding the individuals, then making everyone to shine reflecting on their current role and status, which creates an environment of trust and can lead to a situation when they “take the ownership and keep understanding each other.”

They describe that one way to do this is by going through everyone’s fears and expectations, which gives the individuals the possibility of being heard and understood from their own circumstances, but also creates understanding of the context and underlying factors that the future solutions will be built on.

Puronen points out that as the goal is to create positive interventions for the future, it is also important to learn how they would like to see the future. She gives an example of letting the individuals to visualize their dream future. This builds not only trust, but also gives hints of the direction of what kind of challenges exist, and also steers the work towards the more positive future in that specific context.

Aaltonen’s example places trust in the context of our pre-defined functions of empathy as a process:
"I consciously and continuously go through everyone’s status and evaluate it (i.e. if the one is on the map, is he bored etc), then I support it as a leader, reflecting on the person’s role... to make everyone to shine." She continues that "...this creates the atmosphere of trust, here you can be dumm", which she has experienced as the cornerstone for any action or collaboration to happen. Aaltonen summarizes that "it’s about empathic sensing, then conscious use of it, like linking things together so that one sees things important to herself".

Drawing from these, especially emotional empathy plays a key role in building trust. It starts from noticing the current situation, everyone having the feeling of being heard as they wish themselves, and noticing and releasing potential tensions. Only after this, one can bring the issues in the middle and start building on those. Once the environment of trust is built by empathy and understanding the individuals, it is more likely that the other’s catch the "culture" and start understanding each other.

Comparing to the previous theme, which highlighted the more cognitive approach, this theme turns it upside down stating that emotional empathy is the cornerstone for any interaction to succeed. In that sense, there could be seen another interaction paradox: need for being soft and hard at the same time, and could also be seen as a challenging process for the empathic actor. This we will explore through the next theme.

3.3.5 EMPATHY IS A TOOL FOR SELF-REFLECTION

Being an empathic actor, Aaltonen and Jokinen highlighted the consciousness of one’s own role in a process. Especially from the leadership perspective, awareness of one’s personal role and positioning in relation to the other was held important and is rather interesting. Jokinen’s thought opens this up from the very basic level when introducing yourself to the other:

"What do I tell to the other person about myself? Do I tell that I’m an engineer or something else that describes me? It is important in creating the starting point and attitude between us." Jokinen

Another issue that touches this is one’s ability to adapt to the other person’s world, where for example language plays an important role. Aaltonen says that:

"It’s the number one thing that you talk to the person with one’s own language. People’s language just is different. If you are talking in the strategic level with suit men, the terms, discussions, motivations are different that when you would be in the executing step where you talk about the practical stuff with their and their clients language." ..."If you only talk the clients’ language then you are not convincing in the other end – and the other way around... Still, if I talk about the issue X to the investors, coders or our employees, the issue is still the same and true all the time." Aaltonen
Being a project leader Jokinen describes her role as a "play-dough", as she called it in the discussion. This means that she consciously reflects herself along the situations and transform according to the quickly changing environment, people and issues at hand, but keeping the focus in mind. She draws a comparison to designer's role, which in many cases is about behaving along the environment with a certain mindset, as described in the earlier chapters. Jokinen also links this with the above-mentioned language saying that it is also about being flexible and able to talk to different hierarchies, for example how does she talk to the other if he is a cleaner or an executive director.

The topic of self-reflection is rather interesting. Literature often talks about empathy as giving tools for communication, but these comments deepen this as turning the empathic understanding also to touch one's personal behavior as whole. In these, empathy could be seen as a pre-condition to be able to change ones own behavior. Being aware of the experience and the level of empathic consciousness of the interviewees, it could be pointed out that being able use empathic understanding in this level is difficult and might also depend on the other personal traits of one. Still these show that role of empathy in working context might have multiple different forms.

3.3.6 EMPATHY IS A PROMOTOR OF COMMITMENT TOWARDS COMMON VISION

The previous themes have focused more on general and leadershipy approaches. This theme brings in more designery perspectives shifting the focus of empathy from the "follower"/individual towards the users. Through this theme, the interviewees share how they benefit from user empathy to enhance collaboration.

Empathy through user perspective and human contentedness play a key role especially in Puronen and Jokinen's work. They have seen its highlighted value in committing people to work towards a shared goal by giving it meaningfulness. Puronen and Jokinen explain that in the most basic layer, empathic understanding to the users can be used to create meaning for the work and it tells the core of why we are here:

"This is why we exist" Jokinen

Puronen continues that, for example, when they bring the empathy into the work through different tools like personas, also the stakeholders realize that why they exist because there are citizens - they would not exist otherwise and therefore it gives the work a deeper and shared meaning.

Earlier we discussed about the importance of being able to talk to one in his/her own language. When talking about a collaborative context, creating common language is
repeatedly mentioned as extremely important to be able to work together. Puronen and Jokinen have seen its value in enhancing collaboration through creating common nominators for everyone. Jokinen says:

"when the client in the middle is forgotten, it will end up in fights."

When there are people from various backgrounds and organizations collaborating towards a common goal, there is a need to create a common project related language, which increases the context dependent tuning. Jokinen has seen that the user perspective can create a common language:

"When the doctor and the nurse talk about different things, but when you tell them to put the "patient’s glasses" on and see the problem through the patients eyes, they naturally find the common tune." Jokinen

This means conscious enforcement of seeing the world through the other’s eyes. Putting on the user’s glasses is one tool that is often used to consciously reinforce seeing the world through someone else’s eyes and is often used in designerly work. Empathic understanding of the user’s world can also support steering everyone’s work towards the common goal.

"User in the middle tells the 'Job to be done'. She has a problem, how can we help her?" Jokinen

Another example shows how empathy and user contentedness can help building and commitment to common vision. Puronen gives an example of working with one Finnish city and creating strategies for housing services for autistic people.

"We kind of outsourced the city and the service providers in a way that this is our goal in ten years and that’s where we are then, and here are the people that we are creating solutions for. And not so that the city just tells what is going to be done. But so that it’s another way around. Of course, we could have told them [the city] that here we have these four user profiles and here is your vision and we think that you should bids this package. But then if they would have got to the service providers with that [package] that now we will bids this model, I’m certain that it would have ended in a cat-fight. Comparing to the option that ‘Hey, this is our vision, what would you suggest?’ So that they can also see their own input in the development of the service.”

These examples show well how user empathy can be used as “flipping things upside down”. Taking a step further, user empathy can also enhance building trustworthy relationships and have long-lasting benefits.

"As an example of this municipal service acquisition case, when there was the city and
twenty service providers... we just assumed that they all collaborate with us, with each other and share their ideas in front of the competitors. But then when the city and the acquisition were not in the middle, but instead, the client and its story. Then when the starting point was like that, in the end they told us that even though only one of them [service providers] got selected, they had a really good spirit and no hard feelings. And everyone had worked hard and contributed for it. And also then when one got selected [as the service provider] when we went to the negotiation and contract phase, we had really good dialogue. The relationship built in a certain way when we had built it from the very beginning having the user in the middle.” Puronen

These examples visualize well how empathy towards a user can create will and commitment to common vision. This pictures well the difference between empathy how we think about it normally giving examples how empathy towards others can support commitments to vision, create common language, enhance partners relations, and help pushing towards common goal. In these examples, empathy has been in the middle and it has materialized through the tools and methods and created shared understanding.

Therefore from this perspective, the biggest value of the designerly empathy perspective comes from the user centeredness and the continuous "flipping around". It is a way to create emotional connections and through that grows everyone to push towards the same direction. However, it should be noted that when talking about bringing user empathy into working context, the interviewees pointed out often the importance of designerly mindset. Reflecting on the design empathy literature review it could be framed that being able to really benefit from user empathy it needs professional skills and experience and should be observed critically and in close relation to the empathic actors skills.

**Storytelling as an instrument**

The previous examples showed how empathy can work as an instrument in enhancing collaboration and creation of common understanding. To be able to achieve the empathic connection between the people working on a project (or the client) towards the users, it must be first created and made tangible. Therefore, we take a closer look into Puronen's work, where empathy is constructed around storytelling to create emotional attachments between the client and the user.

In her work, Puronen uses different forms of storytelling to forward empathy and as well to create image of the environment where the future actions will happen. She first puts herself on a position of the empathizer to create understanding of the users and create understanding about their everyday lives, their problems and world where they live in. In her example, the gained understanding she transforms into "user profiles" (an empathic design tool) of the people and forward them as stories for the clients. She highlights that stories are an effective way to forward and create emotional attachment:
"First we asked the autistic people what does home mean to them, what is a good home, good housing service and how should one's life be like...and then we built profiles that these are the guys who you are buying services for."

"A story should be credible, but also emotional, so that you get a feeling that I could do something better."

She says that stories work for all audiences, because of the “humanity aspect”.

"For me empathy in my work means that we have a client who doesn’t know about the users thoughts, what she does, what is important for her and what does she value in her life. And then our task is to go and tell them [the client] that [the user’s world] so that they realize that this is the problem that I have to solve, this is the reality where the user lives in and does this and that. "And what I like the best is that we have to create the feeling, to tell the user’s story so that they [clients] have to react on it. It must create an emotion in you and then you want to change the situation...that’s what empathy is for me in my work."

Puronen

In storytelling, one can find all the previously described aspects: they aim at actions in a certain pre-defined context and show a vision of the future. She concludes that: "For me empathy also means that if I have the understanding [of user], then [storytelling] is a tool to share it and confirm other people that this the thing!" Puronen

Puronen also mentions that they use direct citations as a tool to share their clients the user research outcomes.

"We do not conceptualize it so that they want this and that, but so that the [workshop] participant said like...It like.. This way they question us less. When we say that it is a direct quote from the user’s mouth. It’s not our own idea or conceptualization. There is no more story around the person but through direct quotes we can create understanding of the language they use and how it describes them. And then you can picture the person in your own head and write your own story of how that person is." Puronen

Stories and citation can also work be used as sharing sensitive feedback, when they work as a buffer or "middle man" and create a neutral atmosphere. In that sense, Puronen describes stories as a good way to draw distance, where a designer is a sort of a mediator. On the other hand, she is the one who the users can share their thoughts with and on the other hand designer is a neutral person to forward that to the client. It is about forwarding the voice of the user to the clients. Storytelling, in the form that Puronen describes it, is closely related to empathic design. During the interviews, also probes, profiles, service paths and visualization in general were mentioned supporting empathy in different stages.

When describing storytelling, Puronen frames that it is important that the stories are
easy to identify yourself with and that it creates a feeling or emotion in you. But as described earlier, when it comes to the context where the goal is to create solutions, an important factor is that it affects a certain action.

"So that you react on the story."

Stories could be said as forwarding empathy, or as design literature called it - facilitating empathy. Drawing from the previous examples it can be concluded that bringing empathy from outside relates and affects closely to motivation. It creates a counter perspective to the more leadership approach to motivate, which concentrated on the individual perspective. Therefore, motivation from the interviewee perspectives could be divided roughly into two: motivation from inside and outside. Psychology uses the terms intrinsic and eccentric (Frymier et al., 1996). The inner motivation is more leadership approach, aiming at supporting the person from one's own perspective in relation to the desired goal, and the outer is more designery approach, bringing empathy from outside to motivate the individual to take ownership and to operate towards a desired goal. The divide into the two perspectives is rather simplified, but helps us to understand empathy in the context of this research.

3.3.6 EMPATHY IS A TOOL FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the study the role and importance of self has became a valuable aspect of empathy. During the interviews, we discussed everyones personal relation to empathy and what is the basis of them practicing empathy at work. Especially Aaltonen, Jokinen and Puronen saw empathy as their natural self-quality:

Aaltonen:
"It's my natural quality to sense people and situations around me all the time" "I do it even unconsciously all the time"
"I am a warm person by heart and people feel easy to tell me about things."
"Natural psychological interest to people as such."

Jokinen:
"I am an empathetic person by nature"
"It's my natural quality that I'm just truly interested in the other person."
"I didn't realize that I'm an empathetic person before people started telling me that. So I have just later realized that because other people told me that."

Puronen:
"I think I've always been a really empathetic person"
"I think I'm born with it. I don't think it [empathy] as a tool, it just comes."
For Hattula, instead, the basis of empathy was more related to conscious self-development. He highlighted the learning part of empathy reflecting on his own journey becoming an empathic leader:

"I've just tested these things in practice and learned through that. Seems like to work!"

These comments show that people might have really different starting points for empathy. They also bring up an important question of the use of empathy especially in the work context. An interesting finding is that the naturally empathic people did not mention anything about self-developmental aspects. However, Hattula, for who empathy seemed to be more self-learned trait, highlights the role of conscious learning in developing one's ability to empathize with different kind people. As studied in the empathy literature review, empathy can be developed throughout one's lifespan, especially in shifting perspectives, and this perspective should not be left outside. He points out really practical ways to prepare for interacting with people with different mindsets and backgrounds:

"Reading about different things with a mindset of understanding without judging. Being open minded is the key factor. So that you would understand different phenomena"

"Make friends with different kinds of people, have hobbies where you meet different kinds of people, have interest to different directions. This gives you understanding about the different world-views and values people have. And you understand that people do things the way they do because they truly value them that way. They don't do them to annoy one. ”

"Predictively try to understand how people function. (I.e. Studying educational theory)"  "Stay in the development"

"Understanding that they [people from a different community] really believe in their own values. They don't do that to be mean."

Knowing the complex nature of, for example complex collaborational environments, variety of different world views, languages, terms, personalities, thoughts, everyday issues and so on, as well as the "bubbles" where you live yourself in, one cannot argue that developing one's skills to empathize strangers wouldn't be important. Even though the more naturally empathic people did not mention the developmental aspects of empathy, they pointed out other self-reflective notions. Jokinen pointed out that for example having experiences being "them" (working in similar duties that the followers/team members do), has helped her in operating in an empathic manner, because she knows what it looks like "inside". Aaltonen reflects on her own experiences being led and says that

"Me myself, I don't want to be led by orders. I want to be led in a way that I'm doing something meaningful now."

Hattula also points out that one can learn from reflecting on the past situations to be
able to develop one's skills in a situation:

"You can reflect on the situations afterwards thinking why that person didn't react or act the way I thought or supposed. Are there some underlying factors in her that I should be aware of?"

Concluding the theme of self, Aaltonen rises an important point about one's ability to be empathetic. Even though empathy would be one's self quality, there might be moments when it would require deliberate focus. Situations and moments are different and it is impossible to claim that one would be able to perform emphatically every single second. Aaltonen says that:

"Sometimes you have the readiness to use it, sometimes you can't concentrate so much."

This citation brings empathy's feet back on earth. Even though empathy is practiced consciously in one's work, this gives an image that as it is a humane factor, it should be always observed in relation to the empathizers self and therefore it should not be overlooked.

### 3.4 Summary

The table summarizes the themes main points from the empirical study.

| EMPATHY IS PART OF THE PROCESS WHICH AIMS AT ACTIONS | - resource  
| - goal driven, solution oriented, context dependent  
| - part of a process, aiming at actions |
| EMPATHY IS A MOTIVATOR | - supporting people to function as they want themselves  
| - and therefore motivating the other through meaningfulness |
| EMPATHY IS EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE | - emotional and cognitive are both needed  
| - different depending on the situation  
| - importance of balance |
| EMPATHY IS FOUNDATION FOR TRUST | - trust is the basis of empathic interaction  
| - empathy also builds trust |
| EMPATHY IS A TOOL FOR SELF-REFLECTION | - reflecting one's own role according to the situation  
| - tools for communication |
| EMPATHY IS A PROMOTER OF COMMITMENT TOWARDS COMMON VISION | - commitment towards the shared goal, common language  
| - turning things upside down (user first)  
| - storytelling as a tool |
| EMPATHY IS A TOOL FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT | - empathy as a self-quality  
| - conscious self-development  
| - self-awareness |
Figure 5. Visualization of the interview findings. This picture simplifies the key points and their relations through a system map. The 'self' presents a leader, 'other' can be seen as a follower and 'users' as people who will be affected by the work. The findings will be discussed more in detail through the next chapter.
DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapters reviewed literature and the content of the case interviews, and aimed at expanding our understanding of empathy from theoretical and practical perspectives. In this chapter, we will discuss the findings and draw together the different aspects of empathy based on this study.
4.1 Discussion

EMPATHY IS PART OF THE PROCESS WHICH AIMS AT ACTIONS

In the work context, empathy is rarely discussed on its own, but rather as a part of other functions and contexts. The empirical study pictured empathy from the interviewees perspective as a process that aims at creating actions and solutions, has a goal and a context. This image is rather different from how empathy is usually pictured as rather stable and momentarily construct. The same could be said on a general level from the leadership perspective. However, this kind of approach is more in line with the image of empathy by design literature, where empathy is pictured as being used in a pre-defined context and a set of challenges aiming at creating solutions for challenges (i.e. Battarbee, 2014). Designerly empathy also pictured empathy as a process which happens in many layers, as described in the literature review.

A goal-directed, solution oriented and context-dependent approach to empathy pictures a new kind of definition to empathy in the work-context, showing potential of seeing empathy as something dynamic, aiming at creating human-centered change for the future. This kind of approach is especially important when observing empathy in a project context, where the processes have a clear start and end, instead of being an ongoing process.

As a conclusion, empathy happens in many layers. From the interviewees’ comments, one could divide the process into three: now, bridge and future. The now is about using empathy to understand an individual’s perspective and world at the moment. The second part the bridge is about finding out what she/he would like to be. Through these you can be able to reach the third part, future, which is about using the gained knowledge to steer him/her in the desired direction and towards the goal.

EMPATHY IS A MOTIVATOR

Motivation as an outcome of empathy is confirmed by literature. Leadership empathy literature concentrates more on the inside-out perspective - steering people from inside, and outside-in perspective - creating outer motivations is more rooted in design literature, as one can observe from the literature review. Leadership literature highlights the power of empathy to motivate followers, but the outside perspective to empathy could be said being rather unknown especially outside of the modern forms of design. Exploring this perspective further is rather interesting, also because during the past years empathic design has concentrated more and more on collaborative environments, where designers work as facilitators (Mattelmäki 2013). For example Katja Soini’s doctoral thesis (Soini, 2015) discusses
"reciprocal empathy between different stakeholders" and the conclusions support the previously mentioned benefits of designerly outside-in empathy as building ownership, mutual understanding and trust through the tools of design empathy. These benefits in relation to steering people create an interesting and potential connection with the challenges in complex collaborational contexts.

**EMPATHY IS EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE**

In the work context, both emotional and cognitive layers of empathy are needed, even though the highlighted value and role of them might differ depending of the current context and situation. Finding balance between these layers is a hard task but it is still the most critical lesson to learn. Working between these layers is hard, but possible, since there is scientific proof that even though our emotional and analytical brain networks are rival and therefore try to suppress each other, we are able to be both analytical and emotionally empathic at the same time through an inbuilt neural constraint (Jack et al., 2013).

As the interviewees stated, balancing between these layers can affect the outcomes of the work, but also have major impacts on the personal level. The risk or falling to the empathy trap is critical, especially if the emotional side of empathy takes over. Seeing this perspective from a broader perspective, Atkins (2013) draws an example from the traditional ways of making organizations more empathic relying either on emotional intelligence training or communication skills training. He criticizes that both of these approaches assume that improving skills leads automatically to improved empathy. Even though these approaches can be effective, he argues that there is a deeper aspect of empathy that these approaches tacitly ignore: sustainable empathy requires deeper understanding of "the capacity to balance a felt sense of connection with ongoing differentiation from another". Without well-differentiated sense of self there is a high risk of empathizing leading to secondary stress and burnout (Atkins, 2013). These examples demonstrate that being emotional and analytical are not either - or, but rather complementary. Although, to reach sustainable empathy, monitoring mechanism of self and other is needed (compare to Lamm et al. 2007).

Throughout this research the importance of emotions in the context of empathy and work has risen. Empathy, even though used from the work perspective, aims at the understanding, but to create connections and common ground, and to reach a level that could be framed as empathy, emotional resonance is crucial, and thus the most effective thing. It is evident that the role of emotions not only are highlighted by design literature (like Lee et al., 2016), but also throughout the leadership literature starting from Goleman's emotional intelligence theory.

This study shows that even though empathy would be framed as a goal-oriented action, which might give one a cold image, the role of the emotional side of empathy is essen-
tial. This turns over the pre-assumption that empathy in work could be used as a hard tool and the soft part was only for everyday friend empathy.

**EMPATHY IS FOUNDATION FOR TRUST**

According to the study, building trust plays a key role in any empathic connection to emerge. Especially the interviewees highlighted the importance of letting the other to be heard as she/he wants. Berry et al. (2013, p 47) point put this same adding the layer of spirituality: "To do everything possible at work to feel and help others (empathy) will stem from being accepted, understood, and respected (spirituality). Spirituality gives us a direction to the path of empathy, which makes us who we are." From another perspective, when we witness trustworthy actions, the levels of "cuddle hormone" (oxytocin) rise and create feeling of trust and empathy (Zak, 2012). This supports the finding that especially the emotional side of empathy has an important role in creating trust.

This also creates an interesting contrast to the goal and solution-oriented framing of empathy. Creation of trust can be seen as a more stable thing, which needs presence and deep focus on the other, seeing the one beyond one's role and the ongoing processes, but as a person with one's own will, challenges and needs. This also shows that empathy is something that is constructed piece by piece and only thinking it as a forward running process gives a rather weak image of it.

Building trust in the forms of giving the other the power to be who one is could support also the challenge of being able to build on each other's knowledge. When one can tell about oneself more freely, it might be more likely that the other is understood more as a whole and other's can become aware of the skills, dreams and weaknesses and then start combining and building on those.

**EMPATHY IS A TOOL FOR SELF-REFLECTION**

When addressing leadership, the role and importance of self-reflection was said to be crucial, especially to be able to operate in changing environment across hierarchies, fields and topics, leadership needs to be humble and sensitive to the self-mode and positioning to create respectful and deep connections and also to give ownership to others.

Being able to reflect and adapt oneself with the environment is discussed especially in the design literature. Battarbee et al. (2014) talk about the importance of developing a mental habit of switching modes: "To think and feel, rigorously and deeply." This means about being sensitive about the self-mode and be able to switch from a mental habit to another when needed. They also point out the importance of letting go of one's role, status, opinions and expertise, don't promote empathy because of the conflicting thoughts, experiences and mental models. Leadership perspective does not highlight
changing one’s personal mode, but that might tell about the different roles of designer and leader. Leader has more power to the followers, when designer’s role in relation to the users is more likely a researcher.

When discussing self-reflection, it should not be forgotten that empathy always needs at least two parties and therefore the other should not be neglected. Sadri et al. (2011) say that leaders should be able to both actively share their emotions with others and passively experience the other’s feelings. Also the role of mirror neurons support this: “Mirror neurons have particular importance in organizations, because leaders’ emotions and actions prompt followers to mirror those feelings and deeds.” One operates always from the perspective of self, when the other person is the ‘other’. Therefore in empathy that happens between two people it should be always noted that in empathic interaction there are two others and two selves (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008).

**EMPATHY IS A PROMOTOR OF COMMITMENT TOWARDS COMMON VISION**

The empirical study, as well as the design empathy review suggested that empathy can be seen beyond its normal forms and used as a tool to bring people together and commit them towards common goals through the ‘humane power’ that connects us and creates the will to help others. Earlier we learned that empathy has the power to move the focus from I to WE, increasing our willingness to see other perspectives and collaborate with others (Pavlovich & Khranke, 2013). Reflecting on that, bringing empathy form outside can move the focus from US (working team) to THEM (who we want to help) and draws the focus from solving our challenges to solving their challenges.

Storytelling was described as one of the ways to bring empathy from outside. The power of stories is undeniable and so is their interconnection with empathy. “Storytelling is both the seductive siren and the safe haven that encourages the connection with the feared “other.” (Manney, 2008). Storytelling could be seen as an intentional way to utilize the function of empathy as creating will to help others, which can be really beneficial when used with sensitivity and purposefulness. Storytelling is also a lot discussed in the business context (like Monarth, 2014) but special attention should be put towards design field. The field of design is continuously developing tools and methods to forward empathy though stories, to spread empathy across boundaries (Battarbee, 2014), and to make stories tangible.

Creating commitment towards a common vision is one of the most crucial aspects of creating purposeful collaboration. This creates a connection to motivation, which was discussed earlier. In the end, creating commitment towards a common vision is about creating inner motivations to others, which steers them to push towards a same direction.
EMPATHY IS A TOOL FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT

When discussing empathy, we often talk about the importance of focusing on and understanding the other. However, the study turned the interest more towards the empathizers self: in the literature review, we highlighted the importance of self-awareness and self-other differentiation, and the empirical study brought up interesting perspectives on self-reflection as well as source of empathy as personal or developed traits.

Self-awareness, as the main component is also supported by many theories and literature. For example, Goleman (2004) sees self-awareness as the most basic component of emotional intelligence, referring to deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives, is brought up as well. Building self-awareness is often related to themes like self-leadership, which is regarded as the foundation for one’s ability to collaborate in the work context (Åhman, 2003). It could be argued that self-development is important when developing empathy skills. These traits were not discussed as such with the interviewees, but brings up the question of how to develop self.

Especially leadership literature notes the importance of the role of empathy and emotion in education (Holt et al., 2012), pointing out for example coaching and spiritual training, like meditation, common sense and moral judgment. An interesting topic is also development of consciousness, which is said to link closely to one’s development of empathy (Heaton et al., 2013). They state that empathy is different in different stages of consciousness, which strives for deep personal development. “How one understands one’s world changes as one progresses through stages of development... As the brain and consciousness of the subject changes, so also the expression of empathy will change. Thus growth of empathy and development of consciousness go hand in hand.”

“Research on ego development (Loevinger, 1976) has observed that as one matures psychologically, one becomes better able to appreciate multiple viewpoints and interact collaboratively in social situations.” (Heaton et al., 2013). Shapiro (2002) brings this into a bigger picture suggesting that teaching empathy should focus not only on a skills-based approach, because that leaves out the richness of empathy. Empathy development, especially in the form of teaching should take into account both attitudinal and behavioral aspects. Shapiro highlights that teaching empathy should not concentrate on discrete behaviors that can be analyzed and learned.

One of the interviewees pointed out the importance of being conscious about one’s own mental models and “bubbles” and to continuously expand one’s knowledge to empathize especially with people outside of your familiar environments. Even though this aspect only came through one interviewee, its importance for a leadership in complex co-creational settings essential and therefore an important aspect to highlight. Krzaric (2010) describes that we find it easier to empathize with the weak and miserable, but have hard times realizing that we also need empathy to the strong and bad - we need to be able to empathize with the enemy to be able to build a better world.
"I suggest that we should approach empathy as the ultimate form of travel, a means of transporting ourselves into other lives in ways that can illuminate our own. There is no need to limit where we take our journeys. We must extend our empathetic imaginations not just to the dispossessed or disadvantaged, but also to those whose views and actions we might oppose or disdain, from wealthy bankers to bombastic politicians to racist work colleagues – even the sibling who broke a favorite toy. There are few better ways of bringing us face to face with our own prejudices, uncertainties and inconsistencies. That is how empathy can become both a moral guide and a basis for a philosophy of living. Socrates saw the path to the good life in the effort to “know thyself.” The lesson of empathy is that we will only discover ourselves by stepping outside ourselves.” (Krznaric, 2010, p. 129)

One interviewee addressed this, saying that sometimes we also need to pretend empathy, but reflecting on the words of Krznaric, on higher levels of empathy empathizing with the enemy is something more than just pretending empathy. As it is a fact that everyone of us observes the world through a certain perspective and the environment where we live affects our own world-views, developing skills to empathize ‘with the enemy’ should not be overlooked as only touching the ones with lower natural levels of empathy, but rather everyone independent of the natural strengths.

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

This research has interacted between designerly and leadershipy approaches aiming at finding synergies that could potentially support each other. Therefore, at this point, it is meaningful to ask what both fields can learn from each other. The strength of designerly empathy is definitely the tangibility, the benefits of which are plenty when it comes to finding common understanding. However, it is often event-driven and requires much preparation for example when bringing people together around same table to create empathic connections through games - it is intentional but not lacks spontaneous. On the other hand, leadershipy ways of using empathy are more adaptable for on-going everyday situations. Through this simple and characterized division, one can see the need of benefiting from these synergies. Design and especially empathic design has proved its flexibility and adaptability to adapt to new areas, so it is certain that there could be a lot more to learn from the synergies between empathic design and leadership. Arguing for these new directions, Fraguelli (2015) proposes to “extend our understanding of empathic design.” proposing a term 'Creative Empathies' as "a way to describe a systems-view that looks at the manner and iterative journey in which ideas might emerge”.

The mindset and logic of a designer stand out often in the literature and interviews. The literature highlighted the importance of being able to think in a ‘designerly way’ and also some of the interviewees brought this up as a key factor for their work. Having a designerly mindset is unquestionably an essential part of being able to benefit from designerly empathy. However, this should be observed through a critical lens as well
and not be taken for granted. People who work as designers, have built that capacity for years of experience and education, and that is not a skill that is learned from books, but requires practice. Having an user centered mindset and being able to empathize also other stakeholders, is often discussed and popularized as "Design thinking" (DeLille et al., 2012). Talking about design thinking, De Lille et al. (2012) support this by arguing that 

"[design thinking] is not only about working visually, organizing workshops and using lots of post-its...Using a designerly approach is about getting the right mindset to think about the future, to be able to take risks, to see solutions where others see difficulties and to adopt an outside in view that co-exists with the inside out view. It really is quite a challenge that shouldn’t be taken lightly." The same question could be asked in the context of these findings: What is needed for one to have the designerly or leadership mindset and skill to use the tools and what is required from one to be able to learn these skills? When combining that to the skills to empathize, there is a big question what it needed for one to truly be able to benefit from the different implications of empathy how can one achieve it.

The same applies to empathic design, as pointed out by Mattelmäki et al. (2014). They highlight the importance of knowing the historical background where empathic design tradition roots itself. Design empathy needs deliberate practice. Reflecting on the interviewees examples of the tools of how they utilize empathic design in the forms of storytelling, probes and profiles, the interviewees have executed these tools for years and developed them as their skills thought practice – successes and fails. Therefore I argue that being able to utilize the power of “outside-in empathy”, one needs to build that through practice and know the historical background.

When empathy is used to steer people towards a goal, it is relevant to question barriers between empathy and manipulation. In the work context, especially from the leadership perspective, where the goal is to steer people towards a certain direction, the line between using the understanding gained through empathy for reaching something and manipulation is really thin. It is self-evident that empathy brings a huge responsibility with it. Discussions with the interviewees about the cold and warm sides of empathy showed that, at least for them, the importance of “friend empathy” as a part of the process was really important. As the theory brought up, empathy brings us to the humane level and commits us to each other. Therefore this brings up the question if one’s experience of “true” empathic resonance with the other can allow one to manipulate the other or is that always dependent on the empathic actor him/herself and the situation? In this case, it should be noticed that the researcher’s “sensing” the interviewees in a situation, as well as subjectivity might blur the ability to draw conclusions. The question of manipulation therefore stays open, but as a starting point, building awareness of self, balance and empathy might work as a basis.

This links closely with the question whether empathy is always the outcome of a process, especially from the design perspective. This question is brought up also by
Wright & McCarthy (2008), when talking about empathic design approaches. They highlights that emotional attachment is not an automatic outcome of empathic design tools. Therefore, empathy should be taken as an automated process with a clear outcome - empathy. When describing storytelling, one interviewee described its constructs through four different perspectives, that must be all taken into account when using it to reach empathic attachments that strive for working towards the hoped goal.

This research concentrated on empathy in one’s work as a conscious construct. Reflecting on the findings of this research to the background interviews with various project leaders, there are many links between their methods and ways to work and the findings of this research. The difference was that they had not named it as empathy, but a part of their way of working. To mention some, one project leader mindset of working links closely with the inside-out perspective, where the individual’s own perspectives are the main source of inspiration, which creates trust and commitment, through what they found the combining factors of everyone and created links between them. Another project leader talked much about being sensitive about the people in his teams and reflecting on his own behavior and finding ways to motivate the others. These remind that empathy in work can be both, unconscious and conscious. But also question what can be named as empathy: is human contentedness always empathy?

This research has focused on empathy through the leadership perspective, but it is self-evident that empathy must not only happen in various layers and it should be expanded to the whole working culture to make the best out of it. Leadership literature talks about organizational empathy (i.e. Parmar, 2015), and design literature, especially Battarbee et al., (2014) highlights the importance of keeping empathy alive and sustaining empathy suggesting using tangible empathic artifacts to share the empathy gained and promoting continuous empathic culture. This is especially important when bringing empathy into collaboration level. Battarbee et al. (2014) also talk about the need of "understanding, enthusiastic champions who will tell and retell stories that keep empathy alive". Parmar (2015) shouts for "enlightened leaders", who are the gate keepers in creating more empathic culture. This study concentrated on the leaders perspective, but this bigger organizational picture of empathy is good to acknowledge.

Another interesting question related to using empathy at work is if one can one always be empathic? One interviewee touched on the topic by saying that "Sometimes you are just too tired to be empathic". Also Battarbee et al. (2014) highlight that in an organization, stress and other practical hurdles might easily hinder the will for design empathy. This draws the empathy's feet back on the ground: as a humane factor one's ability to use that cannot be overestimated, and highlights that empathy as a humane trait has its limitations.

As mentioned earlier, the role of emotions is important. In the literature and in everyday language empathy is often discussed in relation to noticing negative feelings, through-
out the study the question of can empathy also emerge with positive feelings became
interesting? Kleinlogel et al. (2013) argues that we are generally more sensitive to other’s
distress than well-being. We also focus on helping the ones signaling distress, while
failing to help others who might feel the same distress and need the same help, but do
not signal it. Based on this emerges an important notion especially towards ethical de-
cision making, saying that one should not make decisions based on the individuals who
have expressed feelings of distress, but also to consider the ones not showing any signal
but might be in the same situation. This study has also shown that empathy in working
context can reach a lot further than negative feelings, talking about dreams and positive
motivators.

So far, we have discussed empathy through the leadership and designerly perspectives
and explored its functions, roles and layers. Even though empathy is seen as an import-
ant part in many of these, it is also relevant to ask how far can or does empathy reach.
There is a clear danger of seeing empathy as an answer to all problems in interactions
and see it’s role even there where it does not exist. One interviewee framed empathy
as a "valve" saying that "...when I get the feeling that someone has to help, then I phrase
it as a story. 'I can't solve this but you can!'... so for myself it's a tool to solve things till
the point that I can." This comment gives a good framing for empathy in the sense of
knowing the limits, either personal, methodological or situational, and being honest
with them.

**EMPATHY BUILDS BRIDGES**

The previous discussions have aimed at bringing perspectives towards empathy through
the leadership and designerly perspectives and also rose some questions about empa-
ythy. The reviewed topics have been discussed as somewhat separate and therefore it is
essential to ask what is the crosscutting theme that connects all of the themes – or is
there one? One of the most important crosscutting themes could be seen as the role of
empathy as creating links. Theoretical perspective discussed about role of empathy as
creating bonds between people and having the power of making us to see each other
as an interconnected whole rather than separate by helping us to find the connecting
factors that help us to relate to each other. In the empirical study, one interviewee high-
lighted role of empathy as helping to finding ways to link things and people together to
make one feel the issues important for herself, other interviewee talked about her role
as a "glue" that ties pieces into a whole, one perspectives described how storytelling
create meaningful connections between users and the individuals, and one mentioned
the importance of finding consensus - in other words finding common links and nomi-
nators between people's motivations and goals. Based on these, the most important role
of empathy is to work as connector in and between all layers touching both individu-
als and issues. As it was brought up throughout the interviews, empathy as such isn't
enough and in the work context turning the understanding gained to actions - and I ar-
gue that linking things together it the most important action that empathy can achieve.
Therefore, it can be argued that empathy is about building bridges.
4.2 Picturing Future-Oriented Empathy

This study has aimed at understanding how empathy could look from leadership perspective. To understand this, the following visualizations will answer the question of this study's interpretation of empathy. The empathy pictured through this study is named as **Future-Oriented Empathy** to differentiate it from the "normal empathy".

4.2.1 Process of Future-Oriented Empathy

The research pictures empathy as future-oriented empathy that builds on through different phases. The study finding are in line with Pate et al., (2013) model of the progression of empathy, adding context-related phases which support the future orientation. In Pate et al.'s (2013) model the progression starts from self awareness (objective awareness of self), and continues through phases of cognitive awareness (of another), emotional contagion (emotional connection to the other's feelings) and empathy, leading to pro-social behavior. This study's findings add further layers:

![Diagram of Future-Oriented Empathy](image)

**Figure 6.** The process of Future-Oriented Empathy adding on Pate et al., (2013, p 135) model. **Bolded** ones are added based on this study.
4.2.2 Layers of Future-Oriented Empathy

Empathy in working context requires operating across all layers, as discussed before. Putting the layers into the context of collaborative work, the layers identified in an hierarchical order could be seen as presented in figure 7. Self, in the means of self-awareness, self-development and empathy awareness, form the most important layer. The next layer is 'other', which highlights the important role of gaining understanding of individuals. The third layer is collaboration, which includes understanding each other, as well as understanding us as a whole. That layer also includes other functions like common language. Action layer is important since that is where all the understanding is implemented. Goal, as the top layer is the 'tip of the iceberg', which is the ultimate aim, where all the previous layers aim at.

The bottom layers build base for the further ones and there is continuous iteration between all the layers. Therefore the layers should not be seen as step-by-step process, but more likely as a tool to understand their relational importance. For example, instead of only focusing on enhancing collaboration, one should build understanding of the individuals, which builds on yourself (self-layer). At the same time, the processes in collaborative layer should aim at actions, to fulfill the goals.

Figure 7. Visualization of the layers of Future-Oriented Empathy
4.2.3 Four perspectives of Future-Oriented Empathy

To be able to picture empathy and its functions in the context of forward pushing actions, four separate empathy-related perspectives identified are pictures as following. Concluding from the findings, leadership and designerly empathy approach from two direction: inside-out and outside-in. The inside-out perspective highlights that the individual is motivated when she is heard and understood right and thus is motivated to work. The outside-in perspective is about bringing empathy from the outside, for example user empathy, which steers the focus and can commit towards the desired goal. In the middle of these, happen the bridging, where the individual’s own desires are steered towards reaching to the common goal. The functions of Future-Oriented Empathy are: Bottom-up and Top-down, Inside-out and Outside-in and Building Bridges. Figures 8 and 9 will picture these through simple visualization.

Figure 8. Visualization of the five perspectives of future-oriented empathy
Bottom-up:
The bottom-up perspective highlights the role of self as the cornerstone for one to use empathy in working context. Self-awareness, awareness of empathy, continuous and conscious self-development able one to be sensitive towards situations and transform along the environment, but also be able to balance in the working environment. This concentrates on one's own role and also functions self-reflectively.

Top-down:
Top-down perspective gives meaning for the work. It pictures the future, creates the context where the future actions will aim at, as well as sets the focus. This layer differentiates working empathy from the everyday empathy. This is the hidden driver for one to use empathy.

Inside-out:
Inside-out perspective illustrates the role of empathy in supporting and steering the individual from inside out from his/her own circumstances. Empathy helps to find the individuals latent motivations and creates understanding of how this individual wants to be understood. It is about holistic understanding of the other where empathy plays a key role. Comparing to more traditional image of 'making the other feel like being heard and I as a leader use that as a tool to support my own aims' this perspective focuses towards empowering the individual and giving them the ownership about themselves. Leadership's role is to find links between the common goal and the individual's motivations. Building trust and setting the base is a pre-condition for this perspective. 'I'm heard and understood the way I want.' Operating in this layer, it is important to understand the other in relation to the other's history, current, but also future. Understanding future is important to be able to steer future actions.

Outside-in:
Outside-in perspective illustrates forwarding or facilitating empathy from the "outside". Creating empathic attachments for example towards the users, which, through the emotional connections, commits the individuals to act towards the other and see his/her own role and potential in creating better futures with/for the one. Therefore, it has an important role in creating ownership towards the issues at hand and motivates one to act towards that direction. In other words, it aims as creating a feeling of "I want to do something to help?" and then shifts the focus to "How could I help with my own skills?". In collaborative situations, outside-in perspective can create common language, and tune people together to work towards the same goal and steer the focus towards right direction. This perspective is especially important in creating common understanding by outsourcing issues through empathy as a mediator. Empathic understanding of the user's world can be seen as a counterforce that gives direction for the work. Outside-in perspective can be about the users, but also about other stakeholders, which one defines being outside of ones own in-group.
Building bridges:
In the middle of all as the combining factor is the action of linking things together. This layer touches all the above-mentioned perspectives and can happen through our natural abilities to empathy or through conscious actions that base on the empathic understanding. Bridging should not only be seen as an outcome of empathy, since it already happens through the empathic process, where one starts creating connections between the caught emotions and the cognitive perspective taking. For leadership, conscious bridging is the most important way to implement empathy and the gained understanding, since these bridges build between people, issues (motivation, topics etc.) and actions create the base for collaboration. Therefore the bridging can be seen happening at least between:

1) emotional -- cognitive
2) leader -- individual
3) individual -- individual
4) individual -- outsider (i.e. User)
5) individual -- actions and issues
6) leader -- actions and issues

Figure 8. Visualization to support the understanding of the network of bridges.
4.3 Conclusion

Empathy is a truly affective bond between human beings and it should be given the respect it deserves, but also observed critically. Being nice does not automatically mean that one is empathetic and either just understanding the other - everything humane is not empathy. The interviews as well as literature research showed that empathy is often mixed with compassion and sympathy, as well as emotional intelligence. Also, the interviews showed that empathy, especially if a central part of one's work, is a rather personal thing for everyone, and therefore it means a bit different things for everyone. It is an inbuilt capacity that is constructed into us as human beings and drawing a line between "You are empathetic and the other isn't" is rather complex and also personal. When consciously brought to the working context, understanding the different concepts of empathy might still be beneficial. Empathy truly is a powerful force, but to avoid the inflation of the word, for example understanding Batson’s eight concepts (presented in Chapter 2) could work as a good starting point. Concluding this, when talking about empathy, its role should be seen in a whole, and not as a thing that touches and solves everything.

Based on the literature and interview findings, future-oriented empathy should always be observed through the context where it happens, as well as the context where it aims - it is goal directed, solution oriented and context dependent. It is always part of a bigger whole - it is an interconnected network of actions that happens in multiple layers of processes rather empathy than an isolated element. Empathy also has different meanings and purposes in different levels than in a single moment, but most importantly, it is a starting point for sustainable human interactions and outcomes. Therefore this study suggests that in leadership empathy should be always seen as a future oriented action, which aims as gaining understanding to finding ways to create meaningful solutions and highlights the importance of being able to turn the gained understanding into action. One interviewee names this as "empathy intelligence" stating that "It's the empathic understanding and intelligence to use the gained knowledge for fulfilling a desired goal."

Emotional and cognitive aspects are both crucial for empathy to emerge. Both emotional and cognitive sides of empathy are also important for future-oriented empathy, although their hierarchy changes according to situational requirements. Emotional side of empathy is more important in getting close to people, creating meaningful emotional connections and building trust, but highlighting seeing empathy as a cognitive instrument is important to be able to be analytical and see the gained understanding as a part of a bigger whole, and turn the gained understanding into actions, which links to the future orientation.

Trust is the cornerstone of empathy, especially when it comes to the context where one aims at gaining as deep an understanding of the other as possible. Trust is built when the other feels like being heard and understood the way she/he wants. As a conclusion
the emotional side of empathy play an important part in trust building, and related the closest to the everyday empathy or friend empathy.

Empathy opens the door to understand an individual’s inner motivations, which helps build bridges between the other’s motivations (what the other wants to do) and the desired goal (what needs to be done). It is about understanding the individual’s world and as well as the client’s reality and creating solutions that benefit the both, and at the same time link them to support the common goals. The study shows that empathy as motivator can be used from two directions: inside–out and outside–in. The inside–out respects the individual as a person with motivations, feelings, everyday problems and personal goals and argues that when supporting these, the individual can give his/her best, and therefore have the biggest value for the work. This is the close interaction between the leader and the individual. The outside–in perspective brings empathy from outside, for example the users. Empathizing the users has benefits in many layers: it can create ownership, give meaningfulness for the work, steer the focus and also help creating common language. Role of empathy as motivator is undeniable and therefore it is a key aspect of empathy for leadership.

Empathy has an inherent potential to connect us as human beings on the unconscious level. Acknowledging this value, this study shows that can also be steered towards more conscious use of it, to find and connect in situations when it is missing. Drawing together the findings, the most important function of empathy is to create links, find connections and glue pieces together in and across different layers - in other words to building bridges. Empathy as such works as a glue that creates meaningful connections between people and therefore enhances pro-social behavior. When brought into the context of work, the understanding gained through empathy can help one to link things together in meaningful ways. Through empathy one gains valuable understanding of the others. When one has holistic understanding of the goals and other’s motivations, one can create meaningful connections between topics, issues and people. Connecting these factors together is one of the most essential parts of one’s work, especially in the context of collaboration, where there is a need for finding common ground. Therefore empathic leader is a glue that consciously creates meaningful links between people and issues, current and the future.

Empathy needs continuous creation, especially for the leader. Events, teaming up things, tools and methods where people are create empathic bonds between each other are important, but for leadership this is a rather limited view of empathy. However, it should touch all levels and situations and build constantly. Therefore this study suggests that depending on the purpose and situation, different kinds of "empathies" are need-ed, which require sensitivity and development of one’s skills. The four perspectives of Future-Oriented Empathy work as a starting point for this.

One of the most important points that the study highlights is the role of self. Building self-awareness and continuously developing ones skills to understand different per-
pectives as well as learning self-other differentiation are crucial for benefiting from empathy in working context. It not only relates to the question of what is "true empathy", but its pitfalls can lead to personal harm, for example, lead to empathic distress, which is rather harmful in the working context from both personal wellbeing perspective, as well as disturb the actions. This also requires skills to be able to work between the subjectivity and objectivity and being able and sensitive to the balance between them. Building awareness of the mechanisms of empathy might be beneficial as it visualizes the potential processes of empathy and where it might go wrong. Therefore, I argue that awareness of the processes of empathy can help one in the challenges of finding balance and support the general understanding when conceptualizing such a multifaceted topic than empathy. As a central part of self, leadership needs to be able to act like a chameleon - be skilled to switch modes according to the context when needed, and be able to step out from one's ego. These are crucial for true empathic understanding to emerge. Drawing these together, the base of empathy lies in oneself, and is a factor that should not be underestimated. To be able to use empathy consciously, it needs deliberate practice, starting from your personal self and therefore it could be states that being naturally empathic does not automatically make one an successful empathic leader.

The level and development of empathy is a personal factor and therefore it questions in which light for example the results of this research should be observed when brought to future implementation. As studied, empathy is our innate ability, but the level where we operate can be extremely different. This makes the idea of empathy as a resource truly interesting, while for someone is can be an ability that cannot be turned off, when for some it might be a chain of learned actions.

Empathy literature, as well as leadership empathy literature concentrate more towards the caring aspects of empathy, the focus being on noticing the other in distress and other "feel good" aspects. Design literature highlights the purpose of empathy to do something, like gaining empathic understanding to create meaningful products and services. Creating emotional connections with the out-groups is a central part of designerly approach. When the goal is to strive towards shared goal, designerly empathy tools and artifacts utilize this power and build empathic bridges to create emotional attachment to users. This can provide useful applications there where the common vision lacks commitment. Leadership perspective therefore concentrates more towards the connections between the in-group members. Based on the interviews, empathy from outside can only work when the individuals are heard, which highlight the importance of approaching from both directions. Forwarding empathy from outside can be always seen as forwarding stories. Storytelling is an efficient way to create empathic connections that steer the work towards a desired goal among the other related benefits.

Concluding these, empathy in one's work is a really personal thing, but when brought into the practical work it might lose its focus when conceptualizing it too much. Empathic design literature draw an image of empathy turned into general tools and meth-
ods, and therefore conceptualized. But it is still unclear, in the context of this research if empathy can be conceptualized as such. Leadership taking advantage of the two approaches cannot rely on methods and "cold" things, but it must have the spirit involved.

Therefore, I would prefer suggest that to be able to use empathy in ones work, it is something that must be developed throughout time. Literature can support the learning and create awareness, which is especially important in for example being able to avoid the empathy trap. As a concluding thought, this study raises an important topic of being able to expand ones own horizons to be able to empathize with not only the ones with sorrow, but also the ones with power and different morality than your. When doing so, one must be able to find the balance between the context, self and other to be able to create solutions - first build bridges across the prejudices and then build them towards common goals.

Therefore, this research has shown potential of benefiting from the synergies of design-erly and leadershipy empathy in order to enhance complex collaboration.
5

LIMITATIONS, FUTURE AVENUES & REFLECTIONS
5.1 Limitations

This study aimed at creating understanding of empathy and its applications for leadership in complex collaboration. This section will reflect on the limitations and boundaries of the work and discuss the potential implications.

The empirical study presented empathy through four interviewees. The limited amount of the interviews is acknowledged and therefore only gives a narrow perspective of the potential in the field. The interviewees were also more leadership oriented and none of the interviewees presented pure design educational background, which could have brought great value. However, since the writer's background is in design, the highlighted leadership perspectives not only supported the goal of the work – to support leadership, but also helped to study that field more in detail.

Researcher's knowledge of leadership from the theoretical perspective was limited. On the other hand, one of the hidden motivations of this thesis was to learn about leadership approaches, but it is acknowledges that leadership in the context of this research can occasionally be seen too broadly.

It is acknowledged that empathy presented in this study can be seen as giving a limited view of it and it does a lot more than that was brought up in these research outcomes. Since empathy is such a wide topic, the outcomes are aimed at focusing towards creating wider understanding of the phenomena and potentials. Therefore, the outcomes are simplified and conclusions are drawn in the limits of this research. Some interesting topics related to detail level are discussed in the discussion section. The goal was to create base for further implementation and development.

The final outcomes lacked testing and iteration with, for example, project leaders, which would have given more validity and opened up new perspectives and given more focus towards the final outcomes. This work could also have benefitted from more iterative processes with experts, empathy specialists and other people form the field, especially from the field of design. However, as the goal was to take a step back and research the vary basic layers, the outcomes of this research are in line with this, even though they might have provided validity for the research.

Partly the study lacks critical perspectives to empathy. However, being critical in a trustworthy way requires deep understanding of the topic, and this study has built a good basis to start seeing empathy also from a more critical perspective. Through this study many personal misconceptions of empathy were questioned and being able to put effort in deeper understanding of a topic that will be a big part of my future work showed more and more important and showed holes in the knowledge.
5.2 Future avenues

This research has shown that empathy can do lot and highlighted the value of transforming the gained knowledge into actions and bridging things together. Due to the limitation of this thesis work, the questions of how the transformation happens in practice, have been left out. Therefore, one of the future topics should focus on the "how" question and bringing the knowledge into practice.

The ideas presented in this research highlight the potentials of expanding our definitions of empathy in collaborative contexts. It approaches the topic through leadership, but leaves blank any more specific definitions of who is the empathic actor in the leadership position. Through the pre-interviews, it became clear that especially when working in co-creational context, leadership happens in multiple layers. A workshop facilitator, team leader or even team member can all be leaders on situations, and would need skills for not only focusing on the outside world, but also seeing close. In the future, more and more designers will work in the contexts of societal, political and global positions, and therefore new skills across the boundaries of own work should be emphasized to get the best out of everyone, and therefore expanding the designers leadership skills would be needed. Holistic empathy is definitely one skill for a future doer.

This research has shown that empathy can provide value in multiple layers in the work context. Outside-in empathy can create common language, steer everone’s work towards same direction and create ownership and therefore to motivate one to find ways how to help the imagined other. Empathy from outside can also work as a mediator resucing preassumptions. Inside out empathy has showed its strenght in making the individuals to give their best as well as giving them the change to be understood as individuals, not only through their profession or set of most visible qualities. Therefore, I argue that empathy, especially brought in through leadership from the two perspectives can have impact in collaboration context. Even though the challenges in co-creational context was a starting point for the study, concentrating on that was limited out to keep the focus on the core – empathy. For the future steps, the findings should be steered and tested in co-creational contexts Synergies could be found for example with sense making practices, which research similar topics from a slightly different perspectives.

When conducting the research, one of the early questions was if empathy can help us to understand wholes. This topic was limited out in the early phases of the reserach, but an interesting blog writing by Thomas Wendt (2017) brought this guestion up again. Because of the special longer term goal is to learn to benefit from empathy in the sustainability related project work context, opening up the topic for future is rather critical. The blog criticises empathy as only concentrating on humans, which is seen risky especially in the world of wicked challenges, where economical and environmental, as well as cultural aspects should be acknowledged as a central part of the work. In other words,
helping people isn’t just enough, but also things from the environment should be con-
cidered as important. Krznaric (2015) gives an interesting perspective to this, suggesting
using "human-to-human" empathy to create solidarity and common values for example
as reflecting on how environmental catastrophes affect to the local people, instead of
polar bears, which we are harder to relate to. As the study showed, empathy, especially
designerly empathy is powerful in creating common understanding and commitment to
create better futures. This, supported by the thoughts of Krznaric, bring up an extreme-
ly interesting potential and question if empathy could be expanded to touch also issues
outside people and create a will to expand our commitment to touch larger eco-systems
around us and how leadership could work as the facilitator for this? In that case, poten-
tial synergies could be for example found with system’s thinking and especially systems
intelligence.

5.3 Reflections

Finally, I will reflect shortly on the research process and personal learnings.

The starting point for the research was rather wide, even though it was clear that the
focus will be on empathy, design empathy and leadership empathy, and how they could
create common understanding in collaborative contexts. In the beginning, the purpose
was only to concentrate on the practical level of how to create common understand-
ing, but especially through the interviews it became clear that the approach left some-
thing really important without attention: the meaning of self development and also the
importance of building base (awareness and understanding) before bringing empathy to
practice. That was something that I had thought to not to focus on, thinking it as irrele-
vant for the practical work. The interviews helped me to see empathy in work in a bigger
picture, as something that stands on personal development and the importance of it.

This helped me to start seeing empathy in work as not just a "hard tool", but as a mul-
tidimensional process, which isn’t that simple that I had thought before. Empathy isn’t
black and white, soft or hard, “touchy-feely” or manipulation, but rather needs all of
these to first of all, be called empathy, and second, to be applied into one’s practical
work.

Moreover, this research has been a journey to discover myself as a designer and find
answers to the eternal question: what is design and what is my own positioning in it.
I have got my designerly education mostly in a learning-by-doing environment, expand-
ing from industrial design towards designing more sustainable futures in a systemic
level, and just now I have realized many things in theory level and found out reasons for
different mind-models, but also a lot of hidden potentials that I didn’t expect.

Along my studies and work, I have often faced the challenge that as designers we are
professionals in understanding the "others", the users, but as “empathy professionals”
we are often not able to understand each other and use the same skills of empathy when interacting with our team members across sectors and fields. In my opinion, designers work is often really close to leadership, especially when we expand our wings to new areas of policy making and other systemic challenges. Through this study I hope to inspire not only leaders, but also designers to see inside the box when looking for outside the box to the users. One person cannot do everything, but reflecting on the future directions of societies and work in general, I am certain that we need more understanding not only about the tools and the others, but also about each other, our selves and especially the roots of our ways of operating the way we do, for example thorough empathy.

It is said that we need empathy to make this world more sustainable. But how can we assume that the world will become more empathic, if it is so hard to be empathic with the people who we work with, the ones that we should make the world more sustainable with?
“Empathy refers to one’s ability to understand the feelings transmitted through verbal and nonverbal messages, to provide emotional support to people when needed, and to understand the links between others’ emotions and behavior”
- Polychroniou (2009, p345)

”The biggest deficit that we have in our society and in the world right now is an empathy deficit...So much of what binds us together in society and allows it to function efficiently depends on it [empathy]. And so much of what is wrong with how we interact, and so much of what is wrong with our politics has to do with the absence of that quality of empathy.”
- Barack Obama, 2010
“...in order to develop a sustainable and robust global environment, we not only need to develop mature levels of empathy, but we also need a deepened awareness of factors that constitute empathy to more broadly understand the effects of our actions on others—economically, environmentally, socially, and spiritually.”

- Pavlovich and Krahnke (2013, p3)

”Empathy is the mental habit that moves us beyond thinking of people as laboratory rats or standard deviations.”

- Brown (2009, p49)
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