PERTTU SALOVAARA

FROM LEADER-CENTRICITY TOWARD LEADERSHIP - A HERMENEUTIC NARRATIVE APPROACH

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

To be presented with the permission
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for public defence in the PINNI LS B1096 Auditorium,
Kanslerinrinne 1, Tampere,
on October 28th, 2011 at 12 o'clock

UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

From leader-centricity toward leadership

Perttu Salovaara

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– a hermeneutic narrative study

TAMPERE
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Academic dissertation
University of Tampere
School of Management

Sales
Bookshop TAJU
Street address: Kalevantie 5
P.O.Box 617
33014 University of Tampere
tel. 040 190 9800
fax (03) 3551 7685
taju@uta.fi
www.uta.fi/taju
http://granum.uta.fi

Layout and DTP: Maaret Kihlakaski

Cover: Mikko Reinikka

ISBN 978-951-44-8582-4 (nid.)

Acta Electronica Universitatis Tamperensis 1123
ISBN 978-951-44-8583-1 (pdf)
ISSN 1456-954X
http://acta.uta.fi

Tampereen Yliopistopaino Oy – Juvenes Print
Tampere 2011

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Abstract

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The present study explores how the participants in a leadership training programme experience their learning path. The black box of training, as it has been called, is opened by searching for what kind of meanings the training participants attach to leadership and how they apply their new learning insights in practice.

This study argues that there is a clear distinction between leader-centric approaches and leadership. Leadership is here redefined as a social and organizational quality and not as an accomplishment of a single person.

Drawing on empirical materials the study illustrates that leadership is not only about success stories and great achievements; instead of maintaining the traditional heroic leadership image, the analysis shows that leadership learning includes side-steps, negative learning and failures as well.

Methodologically the study combines phenomenological, hermeneutic and narrative traditions. It creates a method called The Fieldpath Method, according to which the researcher proceeds with an attitude of wondering and wandering. The aim is to retain an openness to the phenomenon of leadership without being bound to any specific prejudices or predefined concepts.

The Fieldpath journey advanced in practice through three stages of analysis. First the materials are grouped into thematical units that, taken together, create the company's "Leadership Code". In the second stage the materials are presented through vignettes, as glimpses of reality. The vignettes reveal that the whole story of learning is not very straightforward or linear, and they thus deconstruct the Code.

The analysis of vignettes leads to the insight that there is something missing in the Code. In the third stage the material analysis leads to the creation of core constructs

that give meaning to and enhance the inner unity of the text. The missing elements are core constructs: in order to get from leader-centricity to leadership, the core constructs incompleteness, embodied and artistic are missing from the discourse.

The findings of the study imply that leadership learning is often restricted to leader-centric views, even if it is in practical terms a social task. For learning, little if any external knowledge, but much more experiential learning and embodied attachment to one's own learning than is usually implicated. To distinguish between the terms leader and leadership turns into the most important quality.

This research shows the importance of widening the methodological means for studying leadership. Purely rational accounts of leadership are increasingly being expanded by the aesthetic leadership approaches that include embodied and emotional elements as relevant sources of knowledge.

Acknowledgments

"*The most important things you cannot see with your eyes, but only with your heart.*"

First of all, big hugs and thanks go to my wife and my children. Lyyli and Tyyne, you are such a fun and joy. And my wife Anna, without your patience and endurance, and your heart, indeed, this endeavour would have been impossible to me. Despite my occasional mental absence and irritations, I think we did this fine.

I could not have completed this work without the help of my academic friends either. I had the great pleasure and privilege to have professor Arja Ropo as the dedicated godmother of this dissertation providing the necessary help when needed. It is through our discussions that I got a view of the researcher's work. Another person who helped me enormously is Erika Sauer – to Erika I owe great thanks for being there when the journey led into dead-ends and paths that became too narrow. Your creative insights have helped me to discover and maintain my own voice, and I'm awfully grateful for all the conversations and phone calls we have had during this work.

There are numerous other people from academic circles I want to acknowledge for supporting me along this journey. Professor Päivi Eriksson set this project in motion and Nina Koivunen was one of my early discussion partners at Tampere University. Anne-Maria Kummunmäki has shared her views on embodiment and dancing. When sitting in my study in Budapest the occasional phone calls with Sanna Väyrynen, Anita Malinen and Martti Kejonen at critical moments helped me to take the next step. Saku Mantere, Päivi Mattila and Risto Puutio have also been my discussion partners at particular stages,

thanks to all of you. And Saara, Magdis and Minna I want to thank you for re-creative lunches together in Suomenlinna.

I also thank my academic teachers at Budapest Corvinus University, Henrietta Primércz and András Gelei – your way of thinking of qualitative research is admirable.

My friends, Vesku and Krisu and my brother Teemu – I hope you recognize yourself in this piece of work. Special thanks go to my friend Puppe, who has been the down-to-earth role model for me when thinking about real leadership challenges, and to Kaba for music, hiking and deep friendship.

There are two special friends, two soul mates, I want to mention: Róbert Jack and Attila Bokor. Guys, I don't thank you for anything special, but for just being there.

I also want to thank my Innotiimi colleagues for teaching me so much about change and being a human. A special thank-you goes to the ones with whom I started this journey, Vexi, Nina, Mertzi and Jontte, and to further leadership enthusiasts like Ansu, Tommi, Pekka and Matti. Adriaan Bekman has been a great partner in dialogues on leadership and organizing.

Another group of people I would like to thank are my Hungarian friends. With my consultancy colleagues Istvan "Koszti" Kosztolányi and Laszlo "Sziszi" Szalay I share a passion for change and stories.

SEBU training participants provided the substance for this research, and I want to thank you for letting me be part of your life for that moment. There is one person that made this all possible at SEBU: Esko, thanks for being my 'partner in crime'. Ulla and Mika provided the background information and a chance to understand SEBU better.

A special thanks goes to Alan Anderson who did the proofreading and helped to improve the quality of the manuscript with his thoughtful comments. Inadequacies in language that have remained are due to my additions and changes *after* his proofreading.

I gratefully acknowledge financial support from Työsuojelurahasto (The Finnish Work Environment Fund) and Tampereen Yliopiston

Tukisäätiö (Tampere University Foundation), and I thank the Finnish Academy for advancing the future of this kind of research.

Finally, I also thank my parents in law, Kaija, Simo, Marja and Pertti. My greatest thanks go to my mother Krisse and my father Jore. This work is dedicated to you. I know that you have always believed in me, and that's the greatest support one could ever get.

Helsinki October 1st 2011

Perttu Salovaara

1. PROLOGUE: WHY STUDY STORIES ON LEADERSHIP?

While finalizing this doctoral dissertation I stayed a few nights in a tiny island hotel in the southern-Finnish archipelago. As it was late autumn there were only few guests and one evening I started a little chat with my room-neighbour. I wondered what he was doing there at that time of the year and he told me he was building an industrial estate on the next island. When he asked what I was there for, I replied that I was trying to finalize my doctoral dissertation. He asked me what kind of PhD it was, and I said that it dealt with leadership. I continued: "It's been interesting to notice that academic research considers leaders as separated individuals, as if they were not part of the system and need to be corrected…" He interrupted me right away with a surprised voice: "Well, well, now that's quite correct! As soon as they become leaders they get detached from us workers – and then they really are alone. Last winter, I remember, I had to work on a rooftop in -28 degrees of frost, and the boss came up there for few minutes saying wow it's cold, and then he disappeared back into his car. And I'm working there the whole damn day! He doesn't think of us at all!"

As anecdotal as that is, it addresses the core of this study. Leaders tend to be seen as separated individuals and not part of 'us'. This

widespread view is shared by the public, by those who are being led, by leaders themselves, and – not so surprisingly anymore – by leadership research. In this study I acknowledge the commonly held subject-object positioning (leaders are not equal to the led) as a starting point and argue for a more nuanced understanding of *leadership* in place of leader-centricity. The use of the terms leader and leadership might be a little unconventional for the reader in the beginning, but in this work I argue that there is a fundamental difference between these two. By exploring the difference in theory and through empirical materials I will argue for a redefinition of leadership and for a change of the paradigmatic perspective through which we consider leadership. In that respect it is impossible to provide a full definition of these terms in the introduction, as that is the aim of the whole work.

Furthermore, the above story also illustrates how I entered this leadership study: through stories. I have been surrounded by stories for all my life. My grandfather, a second world-war veteran, used to tell me and my brother stories about little ants and big ants. It was fascinating to imagine how little ants were much smaller, yet they always won, because they were so much cleverer. I only later realized what the small and big ants stood for in my grandfather's context.

As a child I often accompanied my father, also a military officer, to the officers' club traditional Tuesday evening 'open male sauna'. Once a week the local officers gathered together in a sauna to have a couple of beers and chat freely. In a cosy sauna-lobby, in a dimly lit room with a built-in fireplace they told lively stories about simple soldiers, fellow officers, training camps, weapons, naval ships and what happened informally – without missing out any juicy bits and even adding a twist here or there. The room was often filled with laughter and swearing. The story-telling mode revealed what happened "behind the curtains", informally, as if a door to an invisible world was opened. Even if I didn't understand it all, I realized that there was a difference of day and night between the official image of the army and the way these men talked about their work experience.

As a leadership development consultant I constantly hear personal, off-the-record transformation stories that to my mind explain a lot of informal goings-on in organizations. That was the starting point of my leadership research: the daily reality consists of micro-incidents, but if only the large-scale official achievements are acknowledged, there is often little understanding of how things were actually accomplished in practice. Through my readings in narrative techniques and modern leadership theory I formed the view that making the narrative reality visible might reveal different perspectives about leadership than the traditional leader-centric viewpoints do.

However, most of the leadership research I came across was pretty technical number crunching and based on surveys and quantified data analysis, and even the language and terminology of leadership research were at odds with the practice of leadership as I saw it. I also learned that leadership research in the 1970s and 1980s has been accused of being insufficient and ineffective, boring because of its methodological one-sidedness and not able to produce significant results or cumulative knowledge.

Observing the loss of details and liveliness of leadership phenomena in academic research, I was rather amazed: is that the same subject of study that I come across in workplaces? Is this the same place where people work with each other, have their lives and souls at stake, and where juicy anecdotes and life stories are told? To me, leadership appeared as an expanding repertoire of stories – how can that be boring or not cumulative? Polkinghorne (1988) in "Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences" describes his personal conflict between his work as an academic and as a practising psychotherapist, because the academic research is not of much help in his other profession. I must say I developed a similar concern: that the academic leadership research has evolved a bit too far from what I experienced with practising leaders. If we want to know how leadership in practice comes about, we need to understand how individual and social actions take place. This basic attitude is analogous to that of the strategy-as-practice school that shares an interest in how strategy is adopted and brought about by individual members of an organization (cf. Whittington 1996, 2002; Mantere 2005)

In short, leadership research traditionally focuses on individual leaders, and correspondingly most leadership development programs aim at enhancing individual leaders' skills and capabilities. The most used tools for measuring the leaders' improvement vary from self-reflection and coaching to 360-degree feedback and use of psychological personal inventory tools. These tools focus on an individual leader, but the real problem of implementation occurs when the social environment, that is, the organization as a system is in taken into account. The effects of the organizational environment are so complex that they cannot be measured in a mechanistic way. The learning that leadership program participants need to pay attention to is also directed towards the system within which they operate. Applying new ideas is the challenge, which means that it becomes an Aristotelian issue of *phronesis*, of practical wisdom instead of just knowing and doing.

Storytelling is regarded as an adequate source of knowledge in academic research (Boje 1995, 2001; Bruner 1991; Czarniawska 1998; Gabriel 2000; Riessman 2008; Taylor et al. 2002). That is certainly no news, but I had to confront first another difficulty: the organizational and other research I found helpful for my leadership research was narrative, ethnographic and anthropologic by nature (Geertz 1973; Kunda 2006; Orr 1996; van Maanen 1989), and as such pretty much marginalized in leadership research. Yet to get hold of lived experience of leadership requires a different set of background assumptions than that emploted by mainstream leadership research employs (Whittington 1996; Weick 1997; Hansen et al. 2007). That is the change in the paradigmatic perspective: moving from leader-centred literature to cultural studies. Leadership as a social construction is not a quality of an individual but of an organization.

Applying narrative research, and combining it with my philosophical background in hermeneutics provide a whole new paradigmatic perspective into the phenomenon of leadership. Through narrative and hermeneutic lenses leadership is not pre-defined as a heroic, individual male accomplishing great deeds. Instead, it can be recognized and analysed by language use, through stories that people tell and with

the help of other interpretative means. With a combination of the hermeneutic approach and narrative methods I could get a stronger hold of a socially constructed *leadership* instead of *individual leaders*.

On the other hand this kind of methodological approach calls for a developed sense of researcher-author responsibility (Rhodes and Brown 2005). The researcher-author's own likes, dislikes, prejudices and opinions will find their way into this writing too, and it is therefore important to make these prejudices transparent. My 14 years of experience in management consultancy and leadership development provide both advantages and disadvantages, and I will make my own standpoints available in the following chapters.

So why to study *stories* on leadership? Stories reveal a different kind of social reality concerning leadership in action than do conventional research or survey methods. To understand how things get implemented in practice – to this purpose social sciences and narrative means, in short, stories seem more adequate than the methods of natural sciences. The quantitative methods of the natural sciences are to some extent ill-suited to the investigation of something that is in constant movement or in the state of becoming (…*during the process*…), so when the interest is in the emergence of leadership, the methods need to be in accordance with the research interest.

"I do not believe that the solutions to human problems will come from developing even more sophisticated and creative applications of the natural science model, but rather by developing additional, complementary approaches that are especially sensitive to the unique characteristics of human existence", Polkinghorne (1988: x) states. Gadamer makes a similar point by claiming that experiences of such modes as philosophy, art and history "cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science" (Gadamer 2004: xxi). Crevani et al. claim that "there is a clear need for a deeper empirical understanding of everyday leadership practices and interactions" (Crevani et al. 2010: 84). I hope this work will contribute to that growing body of leadership research both empirically and theoretically.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Context of study

Qualitative research focuses on things and events in their natural context, and tries to understand the meanings that are attached to these locally, in that natural setting (Klenke 2010; Silverman 2000; 2004). An attempt to illustrate 'a natural setting' is yet epistemologically and ontologically an ambiguous and by no means an unproblematic issue. I do not claim to create a realist or objective (van Maanen 1989) account, a "grand narrative" (Lyotard 1984) or the truth, but rather admit that the following contextualization is a researcher's construct that steers the reader's perception and thinking. A story on context never deals with 'just' a context, because the way things are revealed already introduces a perspective (Gadamer 2004; Nietzsche 1988a). The following story about the organization in question is a collection of multiple voices and narrative reality (Bakthin 1984; Boje 2001; White and Epston 1990); it is a "fusion of horizons" between the researcher, the empirical materials and – last but not least – the reader (Gadamer 2004).

The empirical materials for this study were collected within the framework of a 9-month leadership programme at a company that

will be here called SEBU[1]. The aim of the study was to find out how participants experience their own development throughout the program, and the research followed and analysed how the participants' personal transformation process was reflected in their language-usage, that is, how participants referred to leadership and their own role at different stages. The aim was not to evaluate the training programme but to find out how participants experienced a transformation from leaders towards leadership ideas in practice. The training provided the context of study – and the framework –, where the participants had agreed to try and develop leadership.

The way I became acquainted with the context was not directly through research but by starting discussions about a leadership development program. Here is the so-called SEBU-story that defines the context of empirical materials:

> "*Leadership at SEBU derives from post-war times – we think it is time to change it*", proclaimed SEBU internal development consultants Lisa and Max at the first meeting with two leadership consultants (one of them me, the researcher-consultant) in their shiny, new office complex.

SEBU is a Scandinavian company that has grown into an international player in its field. Advanced and innovative technical solutions in engineering have been the 'engine' of the company and they have helped SEBU to internationalize further. This provided them a very comfortable situation even in global markets, and innovations became part of the SEBU story: competitive advantage through innovation.

Yet in Max and Lisa's view SEBU leadership was not on an equal footing with their state-of-the-art, technologically advanced and innovative high-end products and processes. The first and foremost worry concerning leadership was that if leadership turned out to be a demotivating factor and employees were therefore not able to show and utilize their talents, then that would have an impact on both efficiency

1. The name SEBU is a fictional acronym derived from the company's new strategic orientation Service Business.

and financial results. Other anticipated long-term negative consequences were that if young talented people joining SEBU grew into a post-war leadership, in the long run that image would not promote SEBU as an attractive employer.

Additionally, the patent rights for the most innovative parts of their product would soon run out, which created a momentum for rethinking the SEBU business model. When a new CEO entered, SEBU's new strategy became "service business", meaning a shift from product focus to emphasis on customer demands. In 2008 Lisa stated retrospectively that "a quantum leap has taken place within the last five years" in regard to customer orientation. How did that happen?

The change that SEBU got involved in in the late 1990s and early 2000s was that the front-line business units took increased responsibility for the customer interface. This challenge was recognized in HR as a global leadership issue too: leadership must support this trend. Soon *Communication, Coaching, Goal-setting and Self-leadership* became the new globally defined Key Leadership Competencies. "People need to be empowered and given more freedom and responsibility, because they have to be able to make decisions and give answers to the clients on the spot. For this purpose they need to be lead with an attitude of coaching", Max explained.

Here is an extract from company materials explaining what coaching is:

> "Coaching is one of the four defined SEBU Leadership Key Competences. Understood and used in a proper manner, coaching is an efficient tool for leading people and achieving results. There are some **basic principles** that should be internalised during the training:
>
> - Coaching is ultimately about raising the level of performance; it's first of all performance focused and secondly it's person focused. Coaching always has a target, a goal to reach.
> - Coaching is about drawing out, not putting in.

- When and how coaching can be done depends on the situation and the person being coached. So coaching is situational and person-related.
- The main prerequisite for successful coaching is trust. Without trust in the relationship between the coach and the coachee there will be no positive outcome."

Out of the above SEBU story resulted a 9-month training program called "Coaching as a Leadership Competence". The training process was designed to last nine months and to include altogether six days of training, plus two individual coaching sessions. Empirical materials for this research project were collected during two of those programs, and the total of 18 people that were involved in the study were actual training participants. Their positions varied from informal leaders (project leaders in a matrix organization) to factory or site manager. Most of them were middle managers, about 30% female and with an average age of around 45 years.

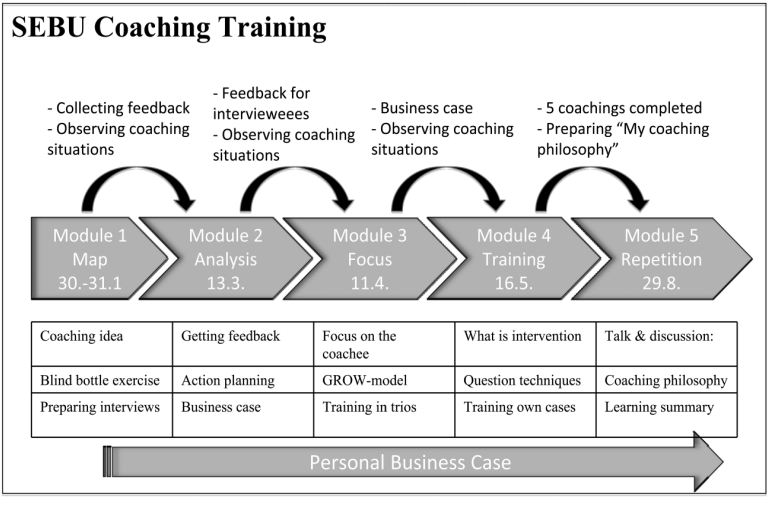

Figure 1. SEBU "Coaching as a Leadership Competence" Program

This figure illustrates "Coaching as a Leadership Competence" program. The program consists of five modules with special topics (the first one 2 days and then one day) and two individual coaching sessions with the trainers (the yellow "coaching" boxes). There were also tasks in between to enable step-by-step training and adaptation of skills, and a business case that carried along the whole program.

In Lisa's opinion SEBU leaders needed coaching skills because "the way of working has turned around. The whole thing is now outside-in, not inside-out. Technology-driven was inside-out, now everything starts with the client, outside-in. That, by definition, changes the whole approach to what we do."

Instead of earlier mass production, now SEBU could not produce *anything* without a specific customer order. A big change in factory layout and logistics (streamlining material flow) was that the conveyor belts were turned into smaller production cells.

Nowadays the company congratulates itself on its web-pages for "listening to and working with our customers to meet their Special Needs, to which end a new internal process is designed. SEBU has a long history in the industry and we are known as the number one in innovative solutions." A research article in an HR journal (2004) states: "Having the right people joining them, and then giving these people the opportunity for improving themselves, learning and self-development – these are qualities that enabled SEBU to become one of the most respected companies in the industry".[2]

I leave it open whether this particular program has something to do with those results, but I have already stated my interest in what happens when participants enter this kind of program. The research has been guided by the question: *How do the leadership training participants experience their learning path?* In the course of the study I developed several more-or-less focused versions of the research questions, yet the more the study advanced, the more it turned out that – instead of concentrating on parts, fragments, stages or individual leaders – the question needed to touch the process of how leadership comes to be.

2. This quote has been altered and the source is not provided because the company could be identified through it. The meaning yet remains the same.

In management studies the problem of translation means converting concepts taught in the classroom to practical action in the workplace. Leadership and organizational researchers (Barker 1997; Kempster 2009; Kornberger and Clegg 2003; Pfeffer and Sutton 2000) agree that knowledge is not easy to translate into actions, and that formal training has limited powers in forming leadership behaviour:

> "(…) it is relatively easy to develop the seven steps of this or the ten ways of that, and to present these ways and steps very effectively. But as every trainer who has done so, and is candid, will attest, the value of these ways and steps rarely finds its way beyond the classroom. What sounds good in the training seminar may not translate well into practice. The problem of translation is based in the gap between the simplistic ways and steps, and the complexities of social and organizational processes" (Barker 1997: 348).

Barker defines the "problem of translation" roughly as a gap between an explicated model and its practical application at work. The same problem occurs when trying to turn strategy into practice too: "Thus, any plan realises first and foremost the problems of implementation, the process of translation from the strategic vision to the concrete forms" (Kornberger and Clegg 2003: 124). Translating a plan into action becomes a problem when the translation does not take place. There is reason to believe that this is not a straightforward issue. Also Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) observed that a "knowing-doing gap" exists between the knowledge of well-educated leaders and their practical actions. The problem has lately been taken up by James and Collins (2008) and Kempster (2009) too.

While the trainings advanced I observed that the problem of translation or of a knowing-doing gap emerged frequently. It became evident during the SEBU program in situations where a participant was rationally and verbally able to conclude the kind of coaching actions s/he would accomplish, but then utterly failed in practice. To use a popular expression, they could not "walk the talk"; or they

did not know how to turn knowledge into action (James and Collins 2008). For instance, when preparing for a meeting with an employee, a participant could explain clearly the meaning of open questions and the value of supporting the other's own thinking, but in an actual situation she very soon acted in a totally different, advocating manner. It is like someone telling you "yes, I can ride a bike", explaining you in detail about a saddle, pedalling, steering, balance and the like – and the next moment failing in actual biking. Developing one's own skills and creating a socially shared leadership culture seems to require more than an ability to verbally and cognitively give an account of the upcoming events.

The above contextualization is presented in the fashion of a "realist tale" as a neutral company introduction, where the fieldworker-author basically disappears and the text relies on descriptive elements rather than experiences or personal explanations. (van Maanen 1989) The account excludes emotions, possible struggles and conflicts, and the voice of leaders or employees is not heard. However, the materials I collected offer a thicker description. As we proceed into the analysis (Chapters 5-7), the voice of the leaders becomes central. I will concentrate on relational discourse, that is, on the conversations where leaders refer to connections and relations with people, because on these occasions they act out their role and make it visible.

2.2 Empirical materials

Two years prior to this study I conducted a pilot research where I studied a group of Competence Development Program participants and how they transformed their ways of working. Those materials got collected as video-tapings of one-to-one coaching sessions, where I functioned as the coach. A key insight I developed was that even when the participants attend the same program, the practical actions they initiate are individual and unique. Taking their different and unique

life and work situations into account. A common nominator yet was that they were all responding to the program and wanted to develop themselves, and because of that I gave the name 'change narratives' to these multi-voiced stories.

The majority of empirical materials consist of the video-tapings that were recorded in live training and coaching sessions. These materials present people talking, acting and relating to each other, and the context in which they take place is SEBU leadership training. The SEBU coaching program was run 6 times during 2003-2006, and I collected the materials from trainings groups five and six. I had designed, delivered, and trained in the previous programs too. Taking all these experiences together extended my relation with the empirical materials considerably: during the four-year period between 2003 and 2006 I spent some 400 hours with SEBU people in training sessions, negotiations, one-to-one coaching sessions and at formal and informal meetings and discussions. All in all I collected 16 hours of videotapes, wrote about two hundred pages of research diary notes, and collected training and other company materials.

Are 16 hours of video-tape a lot or a little? On the one hand, it is not that much, especially if we compare with hundreds of interviews or one-year participant observation. On the other hand, if one starts to analyse the video-tapes by paying attention to language, describing the setting carefully, noting each hand movement, laugh, body positions, gesture, facial expression and other action that the participants take on a video-tape, the amount of possibly observable materials increases enormously. In that respect it is certainly enough for this kind of study.

Apart of the retrospective interviews of Lisa and Max in 2008, the materials do not contain any interviews or survey questionnaires. This is noteworthy, because these two methods are the most common devices for data sampling in qualitative leadership research. In Bryman's (2004) review, two thirds of qualitative leadership studies had utilized self-administered questionnaires, and 85% included interviews as a method. As Kvale (1996), Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) and Alvesson

(2003a) point out: because of the asymmetry of power interviews or questionnaires are by no means a neutral vehicle of gathering data. The interviewer defines the situation and the topic to a very large extent. Another point that biases interview data is the personal relation: an interviewee would never tell exactly the same story to another interviewer, and the story might be different even to the same interviewer the next time.

For further progress of this study it might help the reader to say few words about 'what was taped', that is, about the content of the materials. The video-tapes are live recordings from the training and they display group discussions, small group work and pair discussions. The people don't 'act' or play a role for the tape, but they mainly either discuss their own challenges at work or practise new leadership ideas in small groups. *The empirical materials were video-recorded with the presumption that this study will become an in-depth inquiry on how the participants experience the learning path, regardless of what they achieve.* Why that focus? In organizations and in leadership research there is an ever-growing demand, even a cry to enhance leadership, yet only little attention is paid on how leadership comes about and is learnt (Kempster 2009). Through the pilot study I saw that a) participants do start a lot of various actions, and b) personal development and change is possible, c) most of what happens (actions, learning, applications) does not follow a mechanistic model of implementation. Applied to leadership these insights imply that managers do have a possibility to learn more leadership, but the learning path is expected to be – well, emergent. Whether – by any measure – they become 'fluent' in leadership or reach a particular level is a different story. In this study I do not take stand on 'how much' leadership these participants internalize or which level they reach. *The empirical materials were video-recorded with the presumption that this study will become an in-depth inquiry on how the participants experience the learning path, regardless of what they achieve.* No doubt, some achievements and success moments will be reported, but also at least as many try-outs that did not turn successful. My interest in recording the events goes for the research question

How do participants experience their learning path? I will work out this question more in the next chapter.

Because of this interest I follow Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) by calling the sample "empirical materials". The difference to 'data' is that I do not claim the materials to be objective representations or even 'true' in a traditional sense. They have been influenced by the particular research approach (phenomenological ontology, collecting narratives, using video) and by the researcher-consultants presence in the situations. To be aware of this "fiction of facts", as Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) call it, is an unavoidable part of empirical studies. To make it transparent, the researcher-consultant (me, PS) influence can be observed through the following instances:

- PS co-designed the program and ran it.
- PS chose, which scenes to tape. Criteria for choosing were a) the practical possibility of being able to use the camera, and b) personal evaluation of whether there will be a chance for participants to talk about leadership.
- Out of the previous follows, that PS decided not to video- tape some other events. These were then, however, observed without a video-taping.
- PS did not choose to shadow the participants in their daily work, so the materials represent the training reality and talk in that environment. Yet the participants observation occasionally happened in that daily work environment too (one-to-one coaching sessions in the office, visiting a site, attending a meeting, having lunch and coffee breaks together during their work day).
- PS chose the materials that are documented in this work (vignettes, extracts).
- The descriptions are selected writings by PS.
- The interpretations are limited to PS views and some peer reviews.

If another researcher had been collecting the materials, they would be different. Personal involvement in a lived reality does not rule out

the possibility of an inquiry, as it represents a positive resource too (Alvesson 2003a), and in hermeneutic the possibility of understanding anything at all (Gadamer 2004).

Taking all these instances into consideration I join Alvesson and Kärreman in stating that the materials have more of a metaphorical than a factual quality, and that they are "constructions" and "an artefact of interpretations" (Alvesson and Kärreman 2007: 1265). As long as this background is made available, the empirical materials are naturally as valid as any other material. I will discuss the implications of these limitations in the concluding chapter (Chapter 8) in more detail. Throughout the study I will practice further self-reflection, especially in chapters 3 on methodology, and in the context of the materials (Chapters 6 and 7).

By taking stand on the validity of the materials we are touching a methodological issue of how to represent the natural or social world the research is dealing with. I will return to this issue of researcher reflexivity in more detail in the next chapter on methodology (Chapter 3.2.2 Role of Prejudices).

There are obvious pitfalls related to the double-role of researcher-consultant. Alvesson (2003b: 183) notes that a self-ethnographic approach is at risk of producing "a flattering view of oneself and the site of which one is a member". That risk is a serious one, especially in a setting where the professional status of the researcher-consultant is in question, like here. I have been conscious about this risk from the beginning, and there is an implicit intention to avoid a) a flavour of self-justifying study that shows how successful or great everything is, or b) an attempt to legitimize a training program by academic research. I try to be aware of these risks. But the main focus of this research is on leadership that comes across from the materials, not on self-reflection, consultant interventions or training program success.

2.3 Research question

Despite the research being conducted in the SEBU context, this is not a study about SEBU. Orr (2006), reflecting his now classic study of Xerox service technicians in "Talking about Machines", describes about the focus of his study as follows:

> "It is also true that the technicians appear not so much to be enacting a version of Xerox as enacting their own community, which is in some tenuous relationship to the rest of Xerox. (…) This is, perhaps, the principal reason that *Talking about Machines* is not about Xerox the organization but about the work of technicians within Xerox. The question motivating the book was: what might be learned by studying work practice instead of accepting the word of management about how work is done?" (Orr 2006: 1807).

Analogically this study is not about SEBU but leadership in the making, as it were, and the speculation is the same: what might we learn if study leaders' stories instead of accepting the official talk about it? Thus the present study advances an approach that emphasizes understanding the "black box" (Kempster 2009) of leadership emergence. Writing a book is an example of this: the end-result does not tell what happened during the process of years or about the different versions and erased parts. It is one thing to evaluate results, another thing to give an account on how they are achieved.

My research has been guided by the following question: *How do the participants of a leadership training experience their learning path?* Learning path here refers to a continuity of activities that aim at a person learning to apply leadership at work. It is a process-like continuity, because applying new ideas in practice does not happen in an instance. The processual nature of leadership learning will in this work be described as "becoming" and "emerging" leadership. Both terms emphasize that that which takes place right now can include unexpected, surprising elements, thus forming itself rather into an antenarrative

than a traditionally developing story. (Boje 2001; Tsoukas 2009) On the other hand the question implies that there might a personal change or transformation at stake. That kind of presumption is easily seen in the question. However, the first hypothesis includes the option that the movement that takes place is not a traditional 'learning more' or development, but can also turn into negative knowledge (Parviainen and Eriksson 2006), dropping old things off (Weick 2007a), or that nothing really changes. All these are possible experiences during the learning journey.

In philosophical terms the question implies that the understanding of leadership is here based in a process and becoming ontology instead of realist ontology. I will return to this in the chapter on methodology (Ch. 4), so it should suffice to say here that I am not searching for an end-state or definitive qualities of leadership, but developing a more nuanced understanding of the continuation of the activities, may they be actions, talk or self-reflection.

Especially in the early stages of the research I felt an urge to formulate the research question more sharply, more distinctively and more precisely. But one of the underlying aims of the research methodology I join, hermeneutics, is not to break human experience into abstract pieces but rather to create a more coherent understanding of the whole. Thus the above question survived in its broad formulation.

In practical terms the research question is directed towards the change and transformation those in leader positions undergo, when they proceed in their own approach from leader-centricity toward leadership. The results of also this research show that this process is not linear, mechanistic or causal by nature, nor does it follow a predefined course, and that it includes more disruptions, irregularities and unforeseen complications than the participants anticipated. As Gravells (2006) says about his own transformation from a leader back to a student: "For this personal experience of transformation came as a painful and timely reminder of the unpredictability of change and the emotional impact it can have on the individual" (Gravells 2006: 284) Despite the good intentions and practical try-outs, the becoming

or organizational change projects by means of transforming people's ways of working is mainly slow and adventurous.

Kempster (2009) blames that if all we know about leaders' learning is that it happens through "informal, accidental, naturalistic, everyday activities of their lived experience" (2009: 19) then we still do not know too much. As stated, the research question is pointed to that unknown spot, the black box of learning, to the process and continuation. Since much of research has already been done, there must be something particularly intriguing or resistant in this black box. With the above research question and the chosen phenomenological-hermeneutic method I believe the discussion can be opened to novel paths.

2.4 Outline of the thesis

The First Chapter is a general introduction into how I became involved in studying leadership from a narrative and hermeneutic perspective. It also introduces the research question.

The Second Chapter describes the how the research was designed and conducted in practical terms. To achieve this it explains the background of the research, the research context and empirical materials.

The Third Chapter is about methodology. The method chosen for this exploration is that of wandering and wondering, of letting things speak for themselves and only after that interpreting and classifying them. However, from a hermeneutic perspective we cannot but understand in the first place, and therefore we must also include presumptions. Following Heidegger (and phenomenological-hermeneutic approach) I have named the approach The Fieldpath Method.

The Fourth Chapter discusses the development of qualitative leadership research in more detail. In this chapter I define some key terms and frameworks that provide the platform for further analysis. Leadership becomes defined as a social construction that will be studied here with an aesthetic leadership approach.

Chapter Five is the first analysis chapter and it establishes SEBU leadership through routines. As much as this is a study about how leadership emerges, the repeating patterns and routines become one of the central interests: they are the platform upon which new mindsets and routines are built. This chapter explains how any change attempt is based on something that should be set in motion.

Chapter Six is a further encounter with the materials. If the previous chapter aimed at describing the Code, the vignettes of Chapter 5 offer extracts of trying to crack the Code: to change repeated patterns of actions into new ones. A *Vignette* is a sequence, a momentary episode of an ongoing event, a glimpse into the conversations and actions of SEBU participants. The chapter consists of three vignettes. First, participants enter the training. After these they take part in an outdoor exercise called The Blind Bottle, an exercise that is divided into two rounds. In the third vignette the participants discuss the preconditions for personal change. Each of these vignettes is commented from the research point of view and they reveal various of issues in leadership learning. The main outcome of the vignettes is that show the vast variety and complexity of possible readings of the situation. Now matter how organized the leadership discussion at SEBU looked like after the first reading of materials (SEBU leadership code in previous chapter), the reality is much more complicated.

In *Chapter Seven* I take these various readings as pointing to new entries to leadership. The three core constructs represent elements that are often missing from the leadership accounts, and they serve as explanatory devices for creating a fuller picture of what is needed from leaders on their path toward socially shared leadership.

The core constructs say, firstly, that those in leader positions should – even in the midst of the well-oiled processes of an organizational business machine – accept their own and others' incompleteness as human beings. Second, embodiment refers to felt experience, and that leadership involves the person as a whole, not just as a rational, thinking mind. Third, artistic means that to cope with complexity and fast-paced changes in the business, and with the human in organiza-

tions, requires artistic creativity and sensitivity from those who want to develop themselves.

In *Chapter Eight* I conclude that with more sensitive qualitative methods we can make sense of leadership in novel ways. The kind of micro-analytical perspective employed here is important for understanding the concrete situations of people, and to enhance the professionalism of those who deal with leadership development. Practical implications will be drawn for professional consultation and for change agents who design development programs.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I discuss epistemological and ontological choices, and then describe how these build up a methodology, a theory of inquiry. Methodological concerns address the question "How should we study the world?" (Klenke 2008). As methodological means for achieving the ends that were set for this work I have chosen phenomenology, hermeneutics, and narrative analysis as the research methods.

Before getting any deeper into these, an explanation for choosing these methods is needed. Social and natural sciences have a different scope in their relation to reality, and there have been extensive debates on the role of hermeneutics in natural and social sciences. Rorty (1979) claims that hermeneutics is an important feature of both natural and social sciences, because methodologically both require hermeneutic understanding about their basic assumptions. Hermeneutics, according to Rorty, destroys the belief in a position of a neutral observation in any science, but as Warnke (1985) argues, this is a misreading. Hermeneutics (Gadamer 2004; Taylor 1995) defends the view that these do have two distinct vocabularies and sets of norms.

Hermeneutics makes a distinction between the social and the natural sciences in how they relate to practical rather than theoretical knowledge. (Warnke 1985: 339). In Aristotle's terms this is the distinction between *phronesis* as practical wisdom and *sophia* as theoretical knowledge. The former refers to particular practical cases where no room is left anymore for speculation, whereas the latter also accepts abstract constructs as valid knowledge (Gadamer 1998; Taylor 1995). For Aristotle, pure rational and scientific knowledge, *episteme*, deals with nonmaterial, eternal and non-changeable reality, and the highest kind of theoretical knowledge, *sophia*, relies on this. Episteme is derived out of logical analysis of (right) premises, whereas practical life situations cannot be made the subject of a similar kind of purely analytical account. This is due to the enormous number of contingencies of a situation, whereby a mathematical analysis of the situation becomes impossible.

The object of this study is leadership as a social construction. Because of the social nature of the subject, it will be here studied by means of the methodologies of the social sciences that are capable of dealing with a changing, particular and subjective reality (as opposed to an understanding of reality as static, general and objective).

By first discussing methodological issues and then theory I acknowledge that the chosen methodology is a way of co-constructing the object of the study, because it predefines that which we are about to study and the epistemology used. That the method precedes the matter seems to be commonplace in qualitative leadership studies recently, since both Klenke (2010) and Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) in their reviews also start with methods rather than theory.

3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is commonly associated with an intellectual stream initiated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and his followers. How-

ever, an earlier influential work that carries the name was "The Phenomenology of Mind" (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*) by G.W.F Hegel, published in 1807. In this work Hegel describes consciousness as an evolution of the mind through several stages. The first stage of mind is simply "consciousness", where everything that is observed is taken at face-value: it is as it appears through sensory experience. This kind of natural stage of consciousness is not the end-state: in order to acquire real knowledge (or absolute as Hegel calls it), the mind has to go through further stages (consciousness – self-consciousness – reason – spirit – religion – absolute knowledge).

There are four key points that make Hegel's phenomenology relevant for further reading of modern phenomenology. First, Hegel regards human consciousness in its early stage as rather unreflective – and importantly, he does not consider this stage as the natural state or end-state. In epistemological terms this means that whatever we observe does not exist as an objective reality from which we just simply gain the right knowledge. Human knowledge is not knowledge about an objective reality as such or pure perception, as consciousness always contains self-reflection (even if a non-reflective fashion).

The second point is that phenomenology in Hegel's terms is continuity: whatever we observe can change. Because of the movement of the mind from one stage to another, the thing observed does not remain the same for human understanding. This realization reflects well one's experience of the arts or of getting to know another person: each time we encounter the work of art or the person we might experience them differently. Perceiving something is processual. To Hegel what is real is not only substance, but as much subjective (Hegel 1986: 23), which underlines that perception is influenced by consciousness. And as consciousness develops so does that which is perceived.

Third, phenomenology in the Hegelian sense means to work out the living process that produced the result (Hegel 1986; Heidegger 1994). Using the example of leadership, to approach leadership in phenomenological terms means to work out the living continuity, the happenings that produced that which we call leadership. Writing

a book is another example: the end-result does not tell us what happened during the process of years or about the different versions and parts that were erased. It is one thing to evaluate results, another to give an account of how they were achieved.

Fourth, the famous slogan of Husserl's phenomenology, *zu den Sachen selbst*, is to be found in the foreword to The Phenomenology of Mind. The Phenomenology of Mind is the first part of Hegel's system of sciences, and the foreword touches on the whole system, not only that book. Hegel wanted to stress that no approximate relation to things is good enough for scientific purposes (Heidegger 2007: 76-77).

For Husserl the aim of phenomenological description is an illustration without preconditions. This freedom from prejudices is what Husserl calls *epoché*, a Greek term that is translated as "to stay away, abstain" (Moustakas 1994) . In this "bracketing out" we need to bypass our prejudices, likings, theories, preconceptions and opinions, and relate to things the way they appear in their natural state (Moustakas 1994; Safranski 2001). "To things themselves" was therefore the slogan of phenomenology, and it essentially requires overcoming "natural attitude". This is Husserl's prescription:

> "...we must exclude all empirical interpretations and existential affirmations, we must take what is inwardly experienced or otherwise inwardly intuited (e.g., in pure fancy) as pure experiences, as our exemplary basis for acts of Ideation… We thus achieve insights in pure phenomenology which is here oriented to real constituents, whose descriptions are in every way "ideal" and free from… presupposition of real existence" (Husserl 1970, in Moustakas 1994: 84).

Husserl recognized the central role of the human mind in structuring our experience: rather than calling the observed an object or substance he called it a *phenomenon*. *Zu den Sachen selbst*, to things themselves, became the slogan of phenomenology. But what is the thing? In Husserl's account human consciousness is a factor blurring the way to real knowledge. Consciousness dims things and makes them appear in

different lights. '*Phenomenon*' is that which shows itself. In this regard Husserl's phenomenology shows a great respect towards "what is there" (in contrast to Hegel, who still in a German idealistic/romantic fashion put more emphasis on the work of mind). In Husserl's terminology suspension of judgment by "bracketing" prejudices is called *epoché.* "In this sense, it is a "withdrawal" from the realism of the natural attitude, such that the focus is no longer on the object, but on its pure givenness in appearing" (Figal 2009: 4) . Both Hegel and Husserl agree that our naturally given consciousness does not grasp the things in their real character, but that the mind has to work on the issue in order to gain more truthful knowledge about it. This feature is common for philosophy since Plato's Allegory of the Cave.

A phenomenon also possesses the possibility of changing its character, just like we observe the moon changing its form or interpret rain at one moment miserable and at the next a pleasure of nature. Being able to grasp a wooden chair in many ways – as a seat, as a ladder, a hiding place or burnable object for warming up the house – certainly reflect our everyday experience: the meanings attached to objects may vary and thus make it more a phenomenon than an object.

The things we encounter are in Husserl's terminology situated within the Lifeworld. The concept of Lifeworld emphasizes the scope of phenomenology: the things that we encounter, the way we use them and the meanings that we attach to them take place within a human system. For this purpose the above example of a chair is illustrative: whatever features or qualities the wooden materials have, where the wood was grown or how the chair was designed, might be important in one context but forgotten in another. Our definitions of things are embedded in the culture, context and our personal background, in aims and wishes. In Lifeworld things appear as meaningful.

Heidegger's philosophy is sometimes called existential phenomenology, and it creates a link between phenomenology and hermeneutics. Heidegger, who was Husserl's student, yet gives an interesting twist to his teacher's ideas of *epoché*. Heidegger sees the risk that "bracketing" the natural attitude leads to objectifying that which is.

"A philosophy that proceeds in an objectifying fashion, that conceives of everything as thing-like, existing only to be observed, researched, and determined, misses the original access to things, according to Heidegger" (Figal 2009: 5) .

That we do not perceive things *per se*, but always as embedded in our environment, Heidegger calls "environmental experience". This term underlines that human understanding is tied to that which the environment offers to us. In Heidegger's account even the experiencing "I" is not only me but dissolves into a lived experience that occurs "according to its essence" (Heidegger, orig. 1919, in: Figal 2009: 36-37). If something proceeds according to its essence (rain falling down, tree growing, a child crying), it is easy to understand that an environmental experience is not dominated by human intentions. Nevertheless, observing exactly these events (and not something else) and making sense of them indicate the way we relate to the world.

This kind of holistic in-the-world thinking is a rather radical re-formulation of Husserl's slogan "to the things themselves". In Heidegger's realization of phenomenology the human "being-in-the-world" becomes part of the perception: not only the sensory data, the experienced thing or memory, but also our way of existing must be regarded as a co-determinant of that which is. If we consider the possibilities of giving an account of our how we relate to things and from how many different perspectives they can be interpreted, then we see that in this view the accounts of reality can be endless, and that there is no final truth about, say, leadership.

But in (simplified) methodological terms this requires a great self-awareness on the part of the researcher, as well a willingness to analyse the influence of the "big picture" on the details. The advantage of such a phenomenological approach is that it considers leadership as a phenomenon – not as a given thing – and tries to illuminate it from different angles. Phenomenology in this respect matches well with the idea of social construction and story-telling, since these approaches treat the phenomenon as a multi-voiced construction.

Another aspect that Heidegger emphasised early on was that prejudices are not necessarily a negative instance that needs to be bracketed off. As human beings our understanding does not operate without any preconceptions, and therefore also prejudices count as a positive and constitutive instance for consciousness. The point is to become aware of them and to acknowledge in which way perception is prejudiced. This view naturally stems from the idea of environmental experience: if embedded, then this embeddedness has to be taken seriously, if we want to understand ourselves and what is.

3.2 Hermeneutic touch

For philosophical hermeneutics the object of the study and the methodology – truth and method – are inseparable, yet method precedes truth. If we describe that which we encounter, the phenomenon, by means of predefined research language, we allow our observations of reality to be limited by those terms (paradigmatic knowledge) and thus set barriers for what we can perceive. The title of Gadamer's main work "Truth and Method" (2004, orig. 1960) should be understood as *Truth or Method*, so strong is his insistence on *not* following a methodological ideal, but to ask what goes *beyond* the reach of methodology (Tietz 2005; Figal 2008). The hermeneutic call for understanding turns to an imperative that requires stretching outside the pre-thought paths and urges walking "off the beaten track". What kind of methodological understanding could serve that purpose?

3.2.1 The Hermeneutic Circle

The hermeneutic circle describes the principle according to which an understanding of a whole happens in regard to its individual parts, and the understanding of individual parts in regard to the whole. The

way Gadamer describes it, the first and foremost task of an interpreter is to be led by the issue at stake, and he has to keep his eyes on "the things themselves" (*auf die Sachen selber*) (Gadamer 1959: 59) . It is of course no coincidence that Gadamer uses the expression that had previously inspired Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. Now, the step from the classical hermeneutics of Schleiermacher to the philosophical hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer is that the hermeneutic principle has been explicitly elevated from textual reference to apply to human understanding in general. Contrary to Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger (and Gadamer) appreciate the constitutive value of prejudices:

> "*(…) if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just 'sense' it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up.* (…) What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way. (…) In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing" (Heidegger 1962: 194-195 – italics in original).

A vicious circle would mean remaining in a logically repetitive structure that relates back to itself, yet to be able to appreciate the idea of the hermeneutic circle one has to imagine it as a continuation, not as a closed circle. To understand the idea of the hermeneutic circle more precisely, it is good to give space to its critics too. Krämer (2007) argues that none of the three words 'the hermeneutic circle' is correct. First, the rule of whole and parts as a cycle or circle is a misconception, because the understanding does not return to its starting point, but evolves. The direction of movement is rather indefinable, maybe a funnel or an abyss. Second, the hermeneutic principle is neither a hermeneutic invention nor a hermeneutic invention: already Aristotle uses the same idea for generating 'categories' out of particular instances, and as Gadamer recognizes too, it is an issue relating to epistemological certainty and logic. Third, as the relationship between parts and whole is not

defined very clearly, we cannot talk about 'the': the model is merely an idea and a metaphor, not 'the' definitive model.

The hermeneutic circle takes place within the limitations of a (for the researcher) given language. To borrow Foucault's terms, this régime of truth induces effects of irreducible power. I will pay attention to the terminology I use, and also the ideas behind that language will be made visible. We shall see that language, indeed, contains power issues that might remain hidden if they are not explicitly thematized. The language and the apparatus of understanding that the researcher possesses form a general instance (the whole) against which any material (the particular) is understood. That language will also reveal certain dependences, relations and preconception, and these must be known for the findings to make sense. This is how the principle of the hermeneutic circle will be evidenced during the research process. The power issues fit well into the introduction of the hermeneutic circle.

3.2.2 The role of prejudices

Seen historically, the Age of Enlightenment still believed in a final perfection, a truth, which means that once superstition and false beliefs are set aside, we can get to the bottom of the original meaning (of the Bible, for instance). That is called the myth of logos. The Enlightenment call for *sapere aude*, dare to think for yourself, i.e. that one should make use of one's own intellect and use one's own judgment instead of believing prejudices, was a radical confrontation with dogmatic opinions offered by the authorities and the church of those times (Gadamer 2004: 274-276).

If we question authoritative truths or 'objective' history, what would an interpretation then rely on? Gadamer expresses the question by referring to the role of prejudices: "What is the ground of the legitimacy of prejudices? What distinguishes legitimate prejudices from the countless others which it is the undeniable task of critical reason to overcome?" (Gadamer 2004: 278). In contrast to Husserl, who aimed

at bracketing prejudices (*epochê*), hermeneutics does not regard prejudices as a hindrance to interpretation but rather as an enabler *sine qua non*. Gadamer distinguishes between legitimate prejudices and those we need to overcome. In short, by correct prejudices we understand and by false ones we misunderstand (Gadamer 2004: 298).

Gadamer claims that in order to answer the above questions we to need ask the epistemological question in a fundamentally different way than we have done so far. By stating this Gadamer opposes both positivist truth claims that are too simple and knowledge that is detached from its origins. Hermeneutics criticizes the idea (positivist) of representing knowledge as detached from the historical conditions in which they were created. Hermeneutically constructed knowledge should make visible that the knowledge is embedded in and enabled by certain kind of conditions. Taking into account the historical context in which Gadamer's main work "Truth and Method" was written (the post-war Germany of the 1950s which can be characterized by for instance a strong belief in scientific and technological development), one can say that the aim of hermeneutics was to reconstitute a balance between the humanities and the natural sciences (Grondin 1999). On the other hand Gadamer claims that philosophy also has to take a different stand on epistemology than it has: instead of trying to detach knowledge from a human way of knowing and market it as the truth we should acknowledge the limitations of knowledge production. As interpretations, and through human personal touch and history, knowledge becomes an embodied and experiential product (from latin *pro-ducere* – to lead or bring forth). I will discuss this point further below under embodied hermeneutics (Chapter 3.2.4).

Hermeneutics makes a twist back to history by claiming that "In fact, history does not belong to us; we belong to it" (Gadamer 2004: 278). The knowledge claims that man's finite and historical mode of being allow are bound to history. According to that, what is the way back to the things themselves, *zu den Sachen selbst*? One possible answer is an archaeology of subjective knowledge, influencing factors and of the environment. This would mean that we – researchers, read-

ers, interpreters – should become aware of the influence of social and historical conditions on our perceptions. This does not mean only self-descriptions: "The self-awareness of the individual", as Gadamer puts it, is "only a flicker in the closed circuit of a historical life" (Gadamer 2004: 281). The methodological task is to work out how we belong to history, that is, the conditions in which we as leadership researchers are embedded (the research we read, views we have developed, the departments and people we are attached to, the personal background that influences interpretation). This is the hermeneutic claim for more awareness toward our cultural and personal historicity, and situatedness. That line of thinking differs greatly from the tradition of natural sciences, where the validity of truth claims does not depend on the context or historical period, but should rather be the same for all times, as untimely truths.

The nature of (and trouble with) prejudices is that we are not aware of them in the same manner as we recognize judgments. According to Gadamer (2004) a way of noticing prejudices is, for instance, when one reads a text that challenges the current thinking. This challenge has the logical structure of questions, since questions open up new possibilities. By providing ideas more room to play, as Gadamer describes it, we allow the subject to emerge more in its own right and its own terms instead of limiting it by our preconceptions in the first place. If that allowing shows us – not yet what it is, but – that our own prejudices do not prevail, then already this recognition (of prejudices) means to understand. This way the subject has taught us – 'we belong to it', as it were, we have found a new connection. As Figal (2004; 2006) points out, understanding does not only depend on ourselves, but also on the "hermeneutic object" (this is the hermeneutic way of expressing the ontological concept "thing" or "being"). Interpretations represent an actualization of the hermeneutic object:

> "What must be interpreted, therefore, is also not a thing in itself whose interpretations would then be its appearances. To be sure, it is accessible; what is to be interpreted does not withdraw" (Figal 2004: 25).

The hermeneutic object of study is not an object, but a *phenomenon* that give an impulse or "impetus" (*Anstoss*) for interpretation (Figal 2004: 26). As an impetus it opposes the interpreter and challenges her/him. Figal's hermeneutic object is very much in line with Moustakas' use of the term "phenomenon": "Any phenomenon represents a suitable starting point for phenomenological reflection. The very appearance of something makes it a phenomenon" (Moustakas 1994: 49). On the one hand, as Gadamer put it, the hermeneutic object is bound to historical conditions (like leadership is an issue now but was not in a similar manner 100 years ago), yet on but on the other hand this historical selection, as it were, leads to the moment that we need to analyse the impulse more closely.

Hermeneutic objects or phenomena do not exist as such, but they become. They can thus be recognized when something appears to us in a new light or a new form than before. Then that which is becomes a movement, a possibility, and an option.

The questions that were set forth in the beginning of this chapter regarded the grounds of the legitimate prejudices and those that need to be overcome. When we recognize the perspective that a prejudice maintains (e.g. belief in leader superiority maintains leader-centricity), we can legitimately explain how a certain thing is constructed. However, only when we are able to express other options of understanding the same thing and to illuminate the why and how of our perception of that which is, only then are we in a process that makes the thing into a hermeneutic object or phenomenon. The epistemological question that links with prejudices concerns the way we perceive reality, that is, whether we are attached to a realist epistemology of reality that exists independently of our perceptions of it, or whether reality is regarded as a matter of choices, options and becomings. The role of prejudices is to remind us about the latter.

3.2.3 Fusion of horizons

A further fundamental term for hermeneutics is "fusion of horizons". In hermeneutic tradition what is meant by "fusion of horizons" is a merging of a text's and an interpreter's horizons into an understandable whole. The sole fact that fusing horizons is considered possible indicates that 'commensuration' is the focus of hermeneutics. When this is extended to the way we humans exist in the world, the fusion of horizon refers to the way we perceive and understand our environment and surroundings in general – and that too is commensuration. The metaphor that Gadamer uses for fusion of horizons is a conversation during which new realities and understandings are talked into being: the conversation's partners have a possibility to listen to what the other says and to change their insights. The fusion should not however be led by over-hastiness, as this can effectively maintain current illegitimate prejudices. Therefore the fusion achieves its name only when something can grow (Nietzsche 1988a: 252) or the vision can gradually expand (Gadamer 2004: 301). Operating with a limited horizon makes one overvalue that which is close to her/him. For Gadamer this is a point to criticize positivist scientific method: with a prescribed method the object is limited in advance.

The hermeneutic term horizon has been influenced by Nietzsche whose concept of horizon implies that each person has a unique and personal, rather closed horizon, which can be as limited and narrow as the view in an Alpine valley (Nietzsche 1988a). In Nietzsche's terminology horizon is a metaphor for a person who has not realized how s/he is constrained by history and traditions (lat. *tradere* – to carry), that is, by prejudices one is not aware of. A horizon can be more or less open or closed, but it is always true for the one possessing it. For Gadamer, horizon characterizes the way understanding is embedded in culture and traditions, language, one's origins and limitations. Horizon in Gadamer's terms is a dynamic concept that can grow and be expanded (Gadamer 2004: 301).

As a process, that is, as a continuation of happenings, fusion of horizons takes a form which Gadamer calls a hermeneutic conversation. We normally call a conversation a communication situation where two people talk to each other, both arguing for their own cause. In contrast, a real hermeneutic conversation is unknown and not conducted by either of the parties (Gadamer 2004: 385–386). As the issue is explored freely together and no one knows the outcomes, a hermeneutic conversation has the ability to surprise. This results in abandoning the certainty of the assumptions that thus appear as *prejudices* (Figal 2006: 7). In a good hermeneutic conversation something is allowed to emerge rather than forced to follow prescribed lines.

To try this out we can use the example of a work of art. The experience of a work of art results in "increase in being" (Gadamer 2004: 135). "It is enough to say that we understand in a *different way, if we understand at all*" (Gadamer 2004: 296). This notion is backed up by the experience that the next time we see the same work, it is not the same: the relation between observer and phenomenon has undergone a process of change and becomes different. Another example of this is Heidegger's Fieldpath conversation between the researcher, teacher and academic, where the discussion partners were led by the language (see above Chapter 2.1).

> "Hence, there is no 'original' that can be grasped by means of interpretation", Strati claims (1999: 80). In hermeneutic terms there is the impetus of something we refer to (Figal 2004: 26) and that gives the impulse for interpretation. A fusion of horizons shows itself by legitimate prejudices.

However, the fusion of horizons as a concept has also been criticized by Critical Hermeneutics for neglecting social power relations and for not being sensitive enough to implicit meanings in language (Kögler 1999) .

First, Foucault describes the power issue as follows:

> "Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true (…)"(Foucault 1980: 131).

While fusion of horizons assumes horizontal power relations between interpreting subjects, it neglects the possible vertical and social power relations. For instance, it might be possible for a manager to go and start a conversation with an employee, but not vice versa. These kinds of relations imply that there are – in Foucault's terms – general politics of truth, and practices and discourses that are socially more accepted than other ones.

Second, words are not innocent vehicles of meanings. Whenever we use the word leadership, for instance, it evokes images of leader and power, as illustrated by the anecdote in the prologue to this work. Who gets to choose the words we use? Leadership in that respect is a language game too. From a philosophical perspective the issue at stake here is whether understanding is possible at all. In the famous Gadamer-Derrida controversy Derrida criticized hermeneutics for taking uniform linguistic meanings for granted, as understanding would automatically take place. Derrida's point was that because of variety of meanings, the happening of understanding as fusion of horizons is merely an idealistic constellation.

How to deal with this "fear of violence" (Kögler 1999: 218) that we do to the other? Methodologically an option is to uncover power relations between the researcher and the materials. This is an essential step in hermeneutics, because otherwise the researcher's inevitable connections and relations to his background might remain an invisible influence, in which case the researcher would not be interpreting in a hermeneutic sense, but rather imposing his prejudices without making these transparent. A hermeneutically sensitive theory of power also considers potential blind-spots and misuses of meaning making that emerge via the language use.

In practical terms the power and language issues are visible throughout a qualitative research process: What stories are neglected or marginalized? Who gets to choose the language that is used? What is not reported and what have I not paid attention to? How have I chosen to interpret the materials in this particular way? Whatever the empirical materials are, the responsibility of the researcher is to explain the origins of the language and of the key terms he uses. I will return to these questions in chapters 6 and 7, where I will explain my language use with reference to the chosen vocabulary.

As we have seen, understanding can only take place when a sensible amount of largely implicit pre-understanding is at hand. All these hermeneutic terms – hermeneutic circle, prejudices, fusion of horizons – imply that accepting prejudices is a constitutive part of interpretation. This inevitable structure is a starting point for a hermeneutically oriented research methodology. Yet hermeneutic analysis also acknowledges that its own methodology is possible only when the subject matter is regarded as a phenomenon, or as a hermeneutic object, as defined here. In the next chapter we shall see how this phenomenological-hermeneutic method was applied in practice in this work.

3.2.4 Embodied hermeneutics

In a significant sense there is no embodied hermeneutics, because hermeneutics is embodied by its nature and, hence, it should be needless to use an expression like "embodied hermeneutics". Yet this contradictory statement requires a clarification of the terms "embodied" and "hermeneutic experience".

It seems that interpretation is often regarded as a purely intellectual achievement, and that is a false assumption. As stated earlier, Gadamer clearly stresses the degree to which human beings belong to history and are embedded in the cultural traditions of their society: we grow into an inescapable framework of culture and inherited habits. This growing is naturally not only an intellectual growing, but we belong

to that tradition with our whole body and soul, as it were. However, the bodily aspects of hermeneutic experience have not been underlined too much. That is partly understandable, because one of the main tasks of Heidegger's phenomenology was to work out the existential situation of "Dasein", of human beings. That, again evidently, includes the bodily dimension.

On the other hand, leadership research has also been accused of concentrating solely on the rational elements and neglecting aesthetic, emotional and bodily dimensions. The aesthetic leadership approach has paid particular attention to working out the meaning of bodily aspects of leadership (Hansen et al. 2007; Ropo and Parviainen 2001; Ropo and Sauer 2007). I will return to the aesthetic leadership approach in more detail in the section on theory (Chapter 4).

The division of mind and body has of course its roots in western philosophical thinking:

> "Dominant management thinking (…) is driven by rationality based on the Cartesian assumption, better, the prejudice, that *res cogitans* determines and controls the mere inert and passively reacting *res extensa* (…)" (Kornberger and Clegg 2003: 76).

Representing hermeneutics in the form of embodied experience thus problematizes the popular, nowadays almost commonsense separation of mental substance (mind) and corporeal substance (body). Instead of maintaining the Cartesian dualistic notion of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, and instead of promoting neither materialism nor idealism, I employ the more 'mutually constitutive approach' by presuming that the physical and mental structures precede and enable, shape and are shaped by social structures.

Against this background there is still a need to explain embodied hermeneutics, and for that purpose I will now illustrate what the terms "hermeneutic experience" and "embodied" mean in this context. A hermeneutic experience is an experience of something that differs from one's experience so far. This definition implies that an experience in

hermeneutic terms is not a repetition of an earlier known moment, but something that fundamentally opposes and challenges our expectations (Gadamer 2004). Since prejudices are largely acquired through culture and tradition, and these in turn have been acquired through the process of growing into a tradition, prejudices also have a bodily dimension and structure. Bodily dimension means that a) prejudices do not 'live' only in our head or intellect, and that b) when we want to understand the role of prejudices we need both *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, that is to our body, emotions, experiences and intellect. These ideas concerning embodied hermeneutics are backed by several further arguments. First, Heidegger in "Being and Time" discusses how we never start perceiving or interpreting with an empty head or *tabula rasa*, but are embedded in a fore-structure of understanding (*Vorstruktur des Verstehens*; Heidegger 1962: 191–192). This he illustrates by the terms pre-having, fore-sight and fore-conception. *Fore-having* (*Vorhabe*) is what we have in advance: the culture and the tradition we have inherited, the frames of reference and routines we are grown into. It thus includes both practical and theoretical backgrounds. *Fore-sight* (*Vorsicht*) is the lens through which we 'read' any text or perceive anything. Perception is not innocent but always directed into something. Fore-sight emphasises the meaning of intentions and possible uses: we read with a more or less conscious purpose in mind. *Fore-conception* (*Vorgriff*) refers to the presumptions and prejudices we have, but also the tools of communication and understanding: language and words. The purpose of highlighting the issue of the *fore*-structure of understanding is to underline that any understanding is deeply embedded in human existence, and therefore the bodily dimension should not be forgotten when thinking of hermeneutics.

Second, more recent research also claims that our culture and science are obsessed with the brain. Noë (2009) argues that brain research has its own value, but human consciousness cannot be reduced into events in the nervous system.

"You are not your brain. We are not locked up in a prison of our own ideas and sensations. The phenomenon of consciousness, like that

of life itself, is a world-involving dynamic process. We are already at home in the environment. We are out of our heads" (Noë 2009: xiii). According to Noë, consciousness requires a constant relation between brain, body and world. Because of this ongoing brain-focused tendency in research, a need to restate the argument for an embodiment of understanding still exists.

Third, since the 1920s and 30s organizational researchers have been interested in the role of emotions in the work place, although they became addressed explicitly in leadership research only in the late 1980s (Fineman 2003; Sauer 2005; Yukl 2010). This research has tended to take a rational approach to emotions, and the studies were mainly quantitative and positivist (Sauer 2005). As Sauer writes, people are yet "bodily creatures with all their joys and pains" (Sauer 2005: 88): having been hurt physically or emotionally leaves scars and stigmas, and these experiences can awaken again later. Therefore embodied hermeneutics relies on an assumption that our current perceptions and experiences are also influenced by previous bodily experiences.

Fourth, Taylor (1995) notes that epistemology has historically favoured certain freedom-related key theses about human agency. First there is a picture of the human subject as disengaged, autonomous, free and rational, whose identity is not dominated by the environment but his own free will. Second, the self is seen as punctual and out of this position it can instrumentalize the world around and change it according to its taste. The third characteristic is a social consequence out of the two previous notions: that society is constituted by individual agents for individual purposes (Taylor 1995: 7). Taylor notes that these theses are controversial and questionable. Instead he stresses the importance of engaged agency, and critiques atomism by claiming that separated instances of knowledge or action cannot be intelligible in abstraction from the outside world.

These four arguments all illustrate the same point from different angles: human beings are embedded in their environment in ways that are both complex and profound. What does embodied hermeneutics mean in practical terms for a research like this? The concept explains

something of the way the interpretations in materials analysis were conducted. Interpretation does not consist solely of 'brain-work' or rational argumentation, but expects that the interpreter relates to the issue at stake through his/her experience, heritage and intellect. Embodied hermeneutics requires in a particular manner that the background assumptions are made visible too – and these need to involve revealing some personal convictions and experiences too, as no interpretation is a sole intellectual achievement. I will explicate my own commitments in relation to empirical materials and analysis at the beginning of those chapters (Chapters 5, 6, 7).

3.3 The Fieldpath Method – off the beaten track

3.3.1 The Fieldpath Method in theory

In this chapter I want to take the reader for a walk along a fieldpath. The methodological aim is to remain conscious of the way we walk the fieldpath, that is, about the manner in which we approach things and come into the circle of interpretation. This way we are not directly asking what leadership is, but opening up new paths for relating to it. I want to stress one more time that leadership is not studied here as a fixed object or as a given that we can instrumentalize; instead it is defined as a *phenomenon* that we are trying to interpret, and thus take part in *establishing* it. I approach the phenomenon of leadership with an attitude of exploration, wandering around it (see Väyrynen 2007; Ladkin 2010). I will employ withness-thinking about the issue instead of aboutness-thinking, that is, I will get acquainted with the issue on its own terms instead of being guided by the descriptions from outside of the phenomenon, 'about it', as it were (Shotter 2006). Withness-thinking includes emotions and does not aim at objectifying the issue, but rather tries to anticipate how it feels to be in that situation. For the

sake of the method we should study the phenomenon first, and not to take it for granted, as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003a) suggest.

The name for the method I have created here, The Fieldpath Method, is derived from the German existential philosopher Martin Heidegger. In the so-called fieldpath conversations (*Feldweg*) Heidegger (2000) takes three persons – a teacher, a scholar and a researcher – for a walk along a field path, *off the beaten track* on the hills in the countryside. In the dawn they wander away from a village and wonder about the scenery around them: What is it that they see, how do the things around them get constructed, how do they know about these things? Being (of things), the conversation partners summarize, has in Kantian tradition been defined as an intentional act of will, and they wonder whether it is possible to be guided by a will to a not-willing attitude. This non-intentional attitude towards their environment they connect with letting go, releasement to the things (*Gelassenheit*); with an attitude of allowing things to emerge in their own right, instead of intentional observations or being guided solely by preconcepts.

At the core of The Fieldpath Method is a view of language as a constructive element of reality. How does this method see reality as constructed through language use? An example from the fieldpath conversation: the researcher says a sentence about 'willing' which the two others find very descriptive and very fine. The researcher replies that the articulation was not up to him, but to the dawn that calls for noticing and approaching things slowly, carefully, without violence. The others affirm/accord that slow and cautious walking encourages a decelerated thinking mode. They call it 'inconspicuous escort' (*unscheinbarer Geleit*, Heidegger 1959: 32) of words that enable such a thoughtful formulation. It is added that this kind of "escort" is needed when the conversation grows difficult. The unordinary requires inhabitual thinking. The way a researcher employs The Fieldpath Method is by using (at least) the three perspectives that Heidegger introduces: a teacher, a scholar, a researcher. For research purposes the three roles mean that the fieldpath advances in a dialogue and creates a fusion of

horizons between these perspectives, as in the hermeneutic circle (see Chapter 3.3 on hermeneutics).

Leadership research has a specific challenge with the word "leadership". Weick in his 1969 "*The Social Psychology of Organizing*" introduces an enactment theory that says that by seeking to study an object we create it. We create leadership by stating that "we need or have no leadership", "she showed real leadership", or "this is a leadership study". Whatever we mean by these remarks, the phenomenon is co-constructed through the act of talking about it. In such statements we make the phenomenon real and give it unique features. This creation of a phenomenon by talking about it I will call social constructionism (Burr 1995; Hatch 1997). On the other hand we should remember that that the meanings attached to leadership as a social construction still vary, and that we cannot grasp all the possible meanings. This being the case we can also legitimately ask whether we really understand each other at all, and whether – because of the non-existing uniformity of meanings – there even is a social construction of leadership.

Metaphorically, The Fieldpath urges us to leave ready-made definitions, concepts and habitual thinking behind us, to be guided by the phenomena, listen to the language and to think anew. Being guided goes in this sense beyond language. The three partners notice that their path follows the given forms of nature, of the environment. An environmental experience as Heidegger describes it consists of an "I" perceiving something and resonating along with this other; yet not resonating with just anything, but with something that is caused in me, by being. "Whenever and wherever it worlds for me, *I* am somehow fully along with it" (Heidegger 2009: 35). By dwelling in what Heidegger calls "world", and letting it be, something else is revealed than when things are characterised using conceptual tools and predefined language. "The meaning of that which we study must not be projected into it; it must be derived from the phenomenon itself" (Thachankary 1992: 220). That requires sensitivity towards the phenomena without a pre-attachment to any particular theory, yet it does not mean that one can proceed without a theory but that

we should identify the frameworks we bring into that environmental experience (Thachankary 1992; Väyrynen 2007).

Gadamer (1960) uses the expressions "language of the thing" and "the nature of the matter" to underline what Heidegger implies by *Gelassenheit*: the things and matters exist on their own right, not just as our tools or means for purposes. We ought to listen to the language and nature that things have, and connect with them. With the opposite procedure, describing phenomena by means of predefined research language, we reach the world in those terms (paradigmatic knowledge) and set barriers to what we can perceive. Gadamer insists on *not* following a methodological ideal, but to ask what goes *beyond* the reach of methodology (Tietz 1999; Figal 2008). That is the basic idea of truth and method: that with method we can only reach that which fits into the limits and frameworks of the method, but a phenomenon in itself is not necessarily fully understood by any particular method. Leadership, in this respect, is created as result of several perspectives, not by a description of a single method.

The unravelling idea that is thus introduced is: we should ask what goes on in what we call leadership that is beyond the reach of methodology. As Ladkin (2010) notes, leadership research still has a possibility to stretch into areas "not often considered within current theorizing". The empathetic hermeneutics of understanding thus transform into an imperative that requires reaching beyond the prethought paths.

By underlining an openness of thinking and being The Fieldpath Method questions the habitual attitude with which we encounter our environment. Heidegger (2000) proposes that we can challenge habitual thinking by means of meditative thinking. He uses technology as an example: Meditative thinking means not resisting technicalization, but relating to technology insofar as it is indispensable, and learning to let go to the extent that it puts insistence on us. In that way our relation to technology can become calm and clear. This letting-go Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit*, releasement (Heidegger 2009). It is associated with meditative thinking (Bambach 2004) and a meditative

attitude (Kupiainen 2005) towards the way humans are in the world, that is, how we encounter and interpret phenomena. The contrast to this would, in Heidegger's terminology, be calculative thinking that predicts and analyses.

Meditative thinking urges slowing down, which then leaves time for perception, reflection and finding details even in the midst of messiness and chaos. This links with Weick's (2007b) description of *richness*: "It is an argument for detail, for thoroughness, for prototypical narratives, and an argument against formulations that strip out most of what matters. It is an argument that the power of richness lies in the fact that it feeds on itself in ways that enlarge our understanding of human condition." (Weick 2007b: 18)

This kind of simultaneous appreciation of detail and preserving a distance is here called phenomenology. Phenomenon will be understood in opposition to object: object is something ready-made and ready-to-hand, whereas phenomenon is allowed to show itself and is subject to interpretations. As said earlier on, a phenomenon thus becomes more movement than stability (Figal 2004; Wohlfart 2003). In this respect Wohlfart (2003) ends up with a definition and wording that correspond to the terms that have been used here. A phenomenon "is obviously not a matter of marking of a final *establishing* or persisting, but much rather of the characterization of a passing or (in the future) *emerging*, that is, a matter of a *process* of a *changing-into-one-another*, or of a *becoming*" (Wohlfart 2003: 45).

A phenomenon is not exemplified in its momentary physical form, but rather in what it might change into and become for us, that is, it is defined by its possible meanings and openness. This is of course close to Heidegger's definition of truth as *aletheia*, uncovering (Heidegger 2007). This way the question of ontology (what is there) is interlinked with epistemology (what can we know): our method of knowing defines what can be encountered, i.e. conception precedes perception. Just as what we encounter can inform our concepts to be right or wrong, the thinking here follows the hermeneutic circle: it is a co-creation.

When talking about something emerging and using an expression like "listening to the things", a common misunderstanding is to associate listening with either no method at all or to believe in an idealised notion of listening without any presumptions. First, hermeneutics is based on the idea that understanding is built *upon* presumptions, as these are the instances that enable any understanding in the first place. Heidegger explored this embeddedness of interpretations in "Being and Time" (1962) with "fore-structure of understanding". Second, The Fieldpath Method does not mean applying a not-knowing attitude or pretending that the researcher/listener could proceed with a technique of 'empty head' (Shotter and Wetherell 1987). These considerations have a history in modern philosophy. Whereas Husserl urged the research to break into "things themselves" by bracketing prejudices (empty head), hermeneutics legitimized prejudices.

Heidegger's insistence on letting-go has an equivalent in our times. Weick (2007a) calls on researchers to reconfigure management education and to "drop your tools":

> "Consider the tools of traditional logic and rationality. Those tools presume that the world is stable, knowable, and predictable. To set aside those tools is not to give up on finding a workable way to keep moving. It is only to give up one means of direction-finding that is ill-suited to the unstable, the unknowable, and the unpredictable" (Weick 2007a: 15).

The methodological challenge for walking The Fieldpath is to resist descriptions that do not fit the nature of the subject, leadership. To let go of the tools one has, the tools of mainstream leadership research, reveals a reality that, in the moment it happens, becomes more incoherent, because it is "multi-voiced, rich with fragmentation and lacking in linearity" (Boje 2001: 8), and fulfilled with messy and chaotic details (Weick 2007b). If we aim at catching the shaping, becoming or emerging of things, our research repertoire needs to include a concept for not expecting things to form in a linear manner.

But how do we perceive social reality? How to make sense of what other people experience? Understanding "is not based on transposing oneself into another person, on one person's immediate participation with another. To understand what a person says is (…) to come to an understanding about the subject matter, not to get inside another person and relive his experiences" (Gadamer 2004: 385) .

This is but another way to repeat that the research task is to avoid authority over the issue and to preserve releasement toward things. That way we construct thicker and richer accounts (Geertz 1973; Kempster 2009; Weick 2007b). Kempster also notes that his informants' enactment shapes behaviour beyond the capability of an individual to express (Kempster 2009: 178-179).

Before giving an account of how I applied it in practice, I would like to conclude how interpration according to The Fieldpath Method takes place. Neither the research language (ready-made concepts) nor the data leads the inquiry, but rather the fusion of horizons: blending data, researchers' observations and language into a novel research story. This kind of 'conversation' between the parties has a special meaning in hermeneutic tradition. Latin *con-versare* means to circle or turn something around together. In methodological terms it means to walk around the issue, wonder at it. The way Gadamer (2004) puts it, a real conversation cannot be steered by anyone, but we need to allow that around which we circle, *versare*, to talk. Thus for instance leadership discussion circles around that term, and the phenomenon leads the discussion, but it does not exist without those discussing it. Again, their dialogue is an open-ended conversation, and it is not dominated or steered by any of the people taking part in it. When the researcher listens to that kind of conversation, it holds a possibility of surprising and allowing constellations to emerge that were not predicted or anticipated abd nor were they prescribed in the concepts with which the researchers entered the conversation.

The knowledge that an ethnographic researcher gains through participant observations is not limited to linguistic or cognitive instances, but collecting materials is also an emotional and a kinaesthetic,

bodily experience. Aesthetic epistemology (also present in Heidegger's fieldpath dialogue) refers to holistic knowledge that consists of rational, emotional, kinaesthetic and spiritual elements (Ropo and Parviainen 2001; Parviainen 2006). This kind of holistic view offers the researcher a wide new variety of expressions to be encountered, analysed and later to be conceptualized. Whatever the researcher confronts can evolve into a phenomenon to be studied. Materials are co-constructed and nothing is objectively 'given' (Alvesson & Kärreman 2007). This study is inspired by both phenomenology and hermeneutics, yet in contrast to purely phenomenological studies I take the fusion of horizons as a given part of the research process and do not claim to proceed totally without a framework. I am influenced by the framework of philosophical hermeneutics and utilize – occasionally and explicitly – philosophical frameworks in the analysis.

To be more precise about this, in hermeneutics the reader's perspective and the text are mixed by means of fusion of horizons, which as a scholarly task means to work out a "hermeneutical situation" in a "regulated way", to acknowledge the difference between the present reading and the text (here empirical materials), and to explicate this indifference (Gadamer 2004: 304-306). By exercising withness-thinking or philosophical hermeneutics the aim is not to *reconstruct*. The issue becomes a co-constructed phenomenon, something we can share. Convincing the audience of the choices is then not only a question of arguments – you against me – but of us both creating the meaning. This is not meant to diminish the value of convincing and logical argumentation, but it should nonetheless heighten the awareness of the reader: how does s/he create validity? Reading, as discussed, never happens with an "empty head" or without prejudices, but rather in a dialogical and co-constructive manner: by means of application (research report) the interpreter adds his/her horizon to the text.'

This method can be compared with solving a mystery (Alasuutari 1994; Alvesson and Kärreman 2007). For the origins of the mystery metaphor we can again turn to Heidegger, who in his text on *Gelassenheit*, releasement (2000) draws a distinction between calculative

thinking (*das rechnende Denken*) and essential or meditative thinking (*das besinnliche Denken*). Calculative thinking is characterized by planning and rationality, since it counts and analyses given circumstances for certain purposes. It is not concerned about the meaning of things. Calculative thinking is more dominant, and in Heidegger's opinion one reason for this might be that meditative thinking requires more time and is subtler. The latter leaves chance for something unexpected and unintentional to emerge – this possibility Heidegger calls "openness to the mystery". He argues that these two, releasement and openness to the mystery, imply a kind of showing rather than pressing into a mould, yet they do not happen arbitrarily but only through constant courageous thinking. If we rely on the philosopher's word, this kind of method requires courage to inquire into an unknown, and persistence to follow it through to an uncovering. To be very clear about the Fieldpath: when we start the journey, we cannot know where we will end up.

3.3.2 Walking The Fieldpath

I will now describe more concretely how the analysis was made in this research, that is, how I walked The Fieldpath. The journey led through four stages, that is, four rounds of analysis that I finally conducted. Those four stages are a retrospective constellation, since the actual process was not very linear, but rather iterative and cyclic. In the beginning I had a vague idea (it felt pretty strong at the time) about the materials (leadership training) and context (SEBU strategy & organization development). The pilot study had convinced me that collecting the needed materials through video-taping should not pose any particular problems, and that turned out to be the case. I then started by studying the taped scenes and what takes place on the tapes. My aim was to do that without any particular preconditions. To some degree that was easy, but I had such a strong connection to the scenes that it felt really awful to watch the tapes in the beginning. The main

reason was that there was also my personal work and style of working at stage. Basically I was just very ashamed, wondering whether the conversations we as professional consultants run make any sense or are of any help to anybody. To overcome this hesitation, during this phase I started to write a manuscript of tape contents, which is a collection of sentences and notes on what is going on. The manuscript helped to distance myself from the materials and released me to the task at hand: to get to things themselves that took place on the tapes.

Through writing I often got sucked so deep into the events and discussion on the tapes that I really did not see the big picture anymore, or what I was supposed to do. To get out again I needed reorientation. This I sought in literature and through discussions, and usually after a struggle of days things clicked into a new position: I understood again what I was doing, but the picture of the whole endeavour was different. After such a clarification I could concentrate on materials again, but sooner or later, as the materials did not fit into the frame anymore, the big picture was destroyed again.

The awful feeling I experienced in the beginning, and being ashamed, helped me become more aware of some of my own convictions and prejudices, and I will explain my background assumptions in more detail in the next chapter. From a professional consultancy point of view I had grown tired of some common organizational practices and approaches:

First, our clients sometimes ask for 'quick-fixes', which means that they – those who requested our intervention, like HR or a development manager, and sometimes participants – just want a solution, no matter if it is quick and dirty, and not fully comprehended. It would be 'oh so easy and nice' to tell people what they should do with their life and in the situations they are faced with. Sometimes it is possible to give one's opinion, but in general this is not the way I as a professional consultant work. I tend to focus more on the process than the content – I am not an expert in very many fields, but I try to learn processes. My approach is client-centered, narrative, hermeneutic, and it relies on questions and aims at helping the other one to think for

himself (compare with the Enlightenment motto *sapere aude*, dare to think for yourself, do not rely only on authorities).

This reminds me of the motivation for this research: I wanted to learn more about the people I worked with (and with whom I tried to create a professional helping relationship). My intention was to understand what really happens with those persons: what do they do, how does their thinking and acting develop, what are the consequences. As I have explained in the first chapter, it seemed to me that the organizational change processes were largely unexplored and under-developed in this respect.

The second issue touches the heart of the matter, the difference between leader-centricity and leadership. Many leadership situations and problems are not only trying to be solved by individual-centred psychological inventories or tools, but often also *created* by this approach. Using individual psychology in situations that call for socially created solutions is counter-productive in many cases, because the focus should be on relations and how to help the leader cope with the group rather than to cope with himself. Of course one needs to understand oneself too, it is a basis for being able to understand others. However, the focus often remains on the leader-individual and not on the leadership that the group could accomplish together.

Third, in today's organizations there is a tendency to stick to fact-based argumentation when emotions are seemingly at stake. This relates to the first issue in terms of time: how much time can be invested for solving these problems? In the workplace the work needs to be done, and the question is what to do with emotions. The emotional atmosphere in workplaces varies a lot, and a bad working atmosphere causes a lot of stress and burn-outs, and leads to sick leaves. Seen that way, well-being in the workplace is nowadays an issue that creates most of my revenue as a consultant. As pointed out, emotions are a newcomer on the map of leadership research.

The hesitation and being ashamed came out of the dilemma of the professional helper: you do what you can, but you cannot save the world (Lindqvist 1990; Schein 2009) . Yet what we can do seems sometimes

so little. As a consultant I do not always need to be neutral, and being honest to my own convictions can be an asset. As a qualitative researcher I do not always need to be neutral either, but I have to make my own standpoint visible. How the above convictions play into the analysis of the materials will be discussed further in the coming chapters.

On the other hand I learned to love watching the tapes, because as a researcher I could now lean back and enjoy the comments – to wander along. When this kind of methodological wandering and being, led by the conversation, is taken seriously, it includes the possibility of being mistaken and not finding the right path directly. Gadamer's (2004) reminds us that understanding cannot be commanded or steered, and it therefore might happen or not.

In this fashion I allowed myself the attitude of wandering in the midst of the materials – with the result that I was soon even less convinced what leadership is, and instead getting more confused. When I started the research there were certain ideas about the purposes of this study (utility for leadership development practitioners and research), but I have left room for the results to emerge first and to decide only afterwards where they fit in. Despite my familiarity with the context (SEBU and previous programs), I prefer to create explanations rather than test my presumptions (hypothesizing). No matter what kind of presumptions I had, I must say that the study has really been an exploration, a walk along the fieldpath, because the outcomes were certainly not foreseen or predicted, and they surprised me too. I thus in practical terms became very aware of the challenges involved in making sense of what comes across and only after that to contextualize the discussion.

Watching the video-tapes transformed my role into a kind of ethnographic researcher. The texts I used as my inspiration at this stage were mainly written in an ethnographic manner, where, in order to get hold of things and to see how they became constructed, the researcher had in one form or another conducted participant observation. For instance, Van Maanen (1989) and Ekman (1999) describe police work from an insider's perspective: Van Maanen took courses at a police

academy and joined the patrols, Ekman had worked as a policeman previously. Orr (1996) gives a detailed account of the work of Xerox copy-machine service technicians. At the time of his study, Orr was employed by Xerox and had previous experience as a copy-machine technician himself. Bragd (1999) joined the Volvo design-team for one year to observe their work. Väyrynen (2008), having worked with drug abusers as a social worker and therapist, takes the readers to the "misty mountains" of drug abusers by interviewing young women about their lives in the drug scene. Kunda (2006) illustrates the life and culture in a high-tech corporation. Sauer (2005), having observed a theatre company's leadership then joined a group as a technical assistant. My role was very comparable to these, and through the double role of researcher-consultant I had a good access to what was going on between the people and what they were relating to. Yukl (2009) supports by stating that studies of teams and organizations can provide useful insights about leadership, as they uncover relations and influences that can be defined as leadership.

The research task, to put it emphatically, is first to understand (use of local language), then to be understood (getting beyond 'data). The question I pondered for quite a while was that of reporting: how to write so that we – as readers and researchers – do not get too detached from the lived reality and so that the subject of study does not get too objectified? Examples of creative reporting of data are van Maanen's impressionist tales (1988) and Sauer's caricatures (2005). A further example of using data creatively is research employing creative arts as materials, for instance theatre plays (Taylor and Ladkin 2009), paintings (Adler 2006) and poems (Lindstead 2000; Morgan 2010). These studies mix facts with the researcher's own perspectives, thus producing a fusion of horizons in the reporting phase. As van Maanen (1988: ix) puts it, his study "is about how one culture is portrayed in terms of another in an ethnography. It rests on the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of these others." Sauer (2005) describes her research path as reaching "from anthropology via ethnographic

research to fictional narratives and caricatures" Sauer (2005: 55). My research path went from the SEBU leadership routines to vignettes and core constructs. In total I spent approximately two years analyzing the videos and walking through the four rounds of analysis. I also discussed the phases of analysis in three qualitative-methods seminars and had more thorough evaluations of particular analysis rounds with four other researchers. In addition I discussed the stages with some participants, in order to check whether they could still identify themselves in the analysis story.

In *the first round* I conducted a thematic analysis of the materials. I first viewed the whole video-materials twice, and during the second viewing I constructed a script of scenes and basic contents of what happens on the tapes which I have termed "vignettes". That manuscript is around 40 pages in length. The manuscript underwent a textual analysis of the key concepts (leadership, change, transformation). I realized that each time the participants refer to their role as a leader they are describing relations: instead of looking at the individual leader's actions, the emphasis was now on how they construct *leadership* through relations. The first round consisted of four steps (see Chapter 4), which ended up in formulating SEBU leadership routines, later called The SEBU Leadership Code. The last step of the first round of analysis was to "crack the code" (an expression used by Geertz (1973)), which resulted in a social constructionist story on how the Code and certain routines are currently maintained at SEBU.

But in this kind of coding there is a categorizing tendency: even if the thematic (discourse) analysis functioned as a sense-making device, at the same time it 'killed' the living materials and the liveliness of narrative story-telling. Therefore in *the second round of analysis*, I dropped my tools of analytical research in a Weickian manner (Weick 2007a). To be sure, it was painful and heartbreaking to turn my back on the many concepts I had intended to use and to start anew as it were. I started to search, evaluate and compare different methods of reporting the materials, such as the examples mentioned above. I had a need to search for – and co-create, as I understood it – a qualitative

researcher's tool-box that keeps the process nature of events alive. This pondering and search took me over a year, but it is part of The Fieldpath method: to explore the environment, try out different new perspectives (three roles) and to let something emerge.

Finally, after the time thus spent and after several mismatching papers I came up with the idea of *vignettes*. In Orr's (1996) utilization of vignettes, situations and scenes that make up the design of 'an average day' can be traced back as short stories that follow the events as glimpses of reality. Vignettes enable a more hands-on approach to training reality and an opening of a "black box" of learning (Kempster 2009) as they produce a more detailed and vivid picture of the internal reality of training "in flight" (Chia and Mackay 2007). This approach is sympathetic to the "unheroic work of ordinary strategic practitioners in their day-to-day routines" (Whittington 1996: 734) and acknowledges the central role of emerging practices for an organizational becoming. The solution fits the nature of the materials too, as the video-taped situations mainly consist of glimpses of reality.

The fourth round of analysis started with an uneasiness: Had I answered the research question through vignettes? No, not yet. Looking at leadership from the perspective of *embodied hermeneutics* (including aesthetic and bodily knowledge) something was missing in the narratives, and it seemed to me that without recognizing the missing elements, that is, the way the participants in practice confronted their transformation, the emergence of leadership and a human change process remain unexplained. The core constructs that I ended up with were certainly a surprise for me, something I did not anticipate. If they are *not* found in empirical materials, how are they constructed? As well as analyzing what is there, in interpretative studies we sometimes need to be sensitive to what is *not* there. Seeing what is not there – how does that happen?

My research was an iterative process, a wandering back and forth between different elements and stages of research. This movement means that I was at one moment involved with very detailed materials, and in the next moment pondering the question of how does this all

fit together with what I had found out earlier. This movement between the details and the big picture represents the idea of the hermeneutic circle. To illustrate this typical movement of qualitative research in another way, I will employ Maxwell's (1996) model of interactive research design.

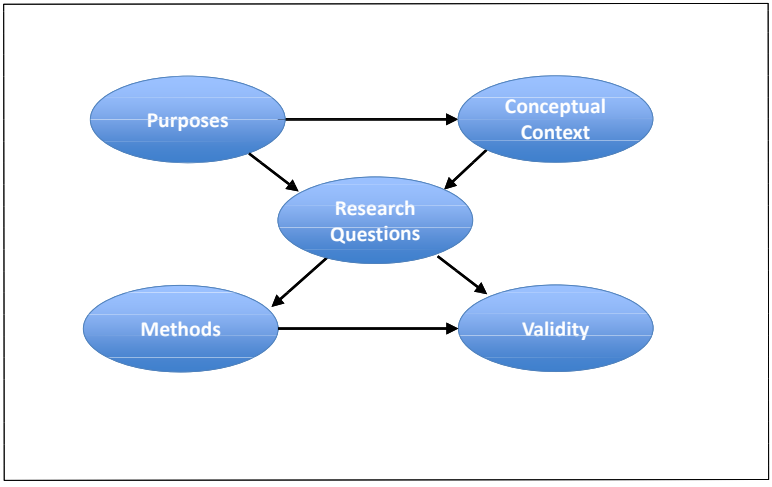

Figure 2. An Interactive Model of Research Design (Maxwell 1996)

The interactive model consists of five elements that are interconnected and flexible. It introduces a research design that "does not begin from a fixed starting point or proceed through a determinate sequence of steps, and it recognizes the importance of interconnection and interaction among the different design components" (Maxwell 1996: 3). The model thus illustrates the qualitative research design as a flexible procedure rather than "a linear, one-directional relationship with one another" (ibid.: 5). The present study can be characterized that way too; it was a flexible project between different elements – a process movement and becoming between detailed research on the one hand, and conceptual sense-making and attempts at creating a big picture on the other.

Now, what are the open questions and limitations in regards to the Fieldpath Method at this stage? I think some general concerns about qualitative research fit here too: researcher bias can direct the research in many ways, the sample is not representative, and the quality of data is difficult to check afterwards (video-tapes are not open to the public).

To start with the researcher bias, the Fieldpath Method is based on the assumption that the research *will* be biased and that the prejudices are at stake, but (in a Heideggerian manner) the way we enter the subject must be made visible. This is done along the way, as I have mentioned, and especially in the beginning of material analysis chapters 5, 6 and 7.

What about the sample size? Are 18 people out of the six groups of about 60 people representative? The sample is certainly representative of those 60 people, but the question is a) what kind of generalizations can be made out of 18 people, and b) what about the validity of findings? The reason for calling the materials not a 'sample' or 'data' but 'empirical materials' is that they are not collected as external, detached or neutral materials, but in a way that makes the researcher a co-constructor of materials. On the other hand my aim was not to create quantitative data that explains something, but to understand what happens during the learning path of these individuals. Even one person can offer insights for new understanding, and if when we make a close-up study of what 18 people say, the sheer amount of 'data' is over-whelming. Against this background the questions concerning generalizability and validity can be answered as follows:

> The results reflect modern western work life in the beginning of the 21st century, and they are not eternal truths. Out of the materials I have however discovered issues that, when compared with the leadership research literature, are missing. These missing elements I call the core constructs (Chapter 7). The SEBU Leadership Code (Chapter 5) and vignettes are in terms of generalizability a pre-stage to core constructs. The core constructs would not have been possible

> to create without empirical materials, and also not without research literature on leadership and organization theory. In this sense the core constructs are a real fusion of horizons, a merging of two perspectives. As a result of interpretation, their generalizability and validity belong to the hermeneutic domain. The natural scientific concepts of (statistical) generalizability and validity are, as such, not consistent with the assumptions of hermeneutics. On the one hand a lot has already been said above about the basic assumptions of hermeneutics and phenomenology, but on the other hand the hermeneutic answer to these questions can still be concluded.

The hermeneutically re-formulated question could be, for instance, "how to ensure the trustworthiness of the account?" or "how to create a coherent story that convinces the reader about the validity of the account?" For hermeneutics the generalizability problem is the same with any interpretation: how to ensure the trustworthiness of a certain reading of the law, the Bible or of a story? We need to remember that a hermeneutic object is not defined in realist terms, and because of that ontological status interpretation can always be a subject for revision and correction. Interpretation relies on the basic concepts of the hermeneutic circle, prejudices and fusion of horizons. Further, understanding is understanding of something *as* something. The Fieldpath Method is based on these presumptions. The trustworthiness, coherence and validity – all these terms refer to the same phenomenon, and that is the reader's conviction and possibility to evaluate how the results were achieved. This procedure, even if this now may sound repetitive, is called fusion of horizons – of the text and of the reader. Therefore the hermeneutic presumptions described above are valid here too: explicate how you got into the research, make your preconcepts visible, treat the materials so that they become available and understandable, write coherently, provide explanations for interpretations and so on. Walking the Fieldpath means to do these things. Walking the Fieldpath requires an extra portion of self-reflection.

3.3.3 Self-reflection during the Fieldpath

Philosophical descriptions and illustrations of walking and wandering often turn inwards, to self-reflection (Heidegger 2000; Thoreau 2010), and in this study it is also a methodological requirement to do that. Following this ethos this Fieldpath journey begins by a short self-reflection. In order to see what kind of value I give to informal organization, I will start by describing my early experiences of work life. Since I was sixteen I had for twelve years summer-jobs and part-time work as a waiter, gardener, tourist guide and warehouse worker. No matter which workplace, we workers used to share with each other our opinions about our superiors and the organization. We knew how things really were, whether they worked or not, what the clients want, how others think – and we knew how things should be. Due to the equality of Finnish society and of the school system, and the fact that all men meet again in the army, I think it was possible to obtain a view "through the ranks", as you get acquainted with people you might not otherwise talk and live with.

After graduating I worked for 13 years as an organization consultant, which has allowed me to gain insights into dozens of large and small organizations, private and public. In these instances I continued to observe informal organizations and leaders in action. Additionally to consultancy work, the last three years I have acted at the consultancy company Innotiimi as the managing director for 45 consultants.

My sensitivity to the main ingredients of informal organization, language and meaning, is supported by my education in philosophical hermeneutics[1] at the (for me foreign-speaking) University of Tübingen in Germany. Growing into another language and culture for five

1. I still recall the early days of this study, when Professor Päivi Eriksson suggested linking philosophy and leadership: What would Nietzsche or Kierkegaard say about leadership? I think my reply was a polite negation of the idea, but in my mind I was horrified: I would not prostitute Nietzsche, one of my favourite philosophers, with an issue like leadership! It would only lead to misreading and misinterpretations, I thought. I learned I was wrong. Philosophy can well be used, and should be used, for practical matters like work-life and leadership.

years, and having lived with our family in Hungary in 2006–2009, has taught me that if I want to understand the meanings attached to terms, I need to dwell on things until they turn into lively phenomena again. This procedure hermeneutics calls interpretation and its results understanding.

My more recent interest in the power of narrative forms arose around 2003–2004, in the time when US soldiers in the Iraq war used e-mail and the Internet to tell the home front about the war reality in the way they experienced it. As these messages became public, the media started to pay attention to the difference between official accounts and the battle scenes the soldiers wrote about, as there were, for instance, more casualties in stories than in the official news. Soon the soldiers were banned from free access to the Internet and they were prohibited from revealing accounts of "their war", as it were. An example of the books that this genre soon generated is Colby Buzzell's (2006) "My War: Killing Time in Iraq".

Po Bronson's (2005) "What should I do with my life", a book consisting of stories of fifty people who radically changed their life, represents a similar storytelling approach. The reason for him to write his book was that the stories written at the time "no longer mapped the depth and drama of human life as I experienced it" (Bronson 2005). Bronson's stories offered one more piece of evidence that reinforced my view that storytelling is also an interesting and effective means of describing human experience.

In one-to-one coaching sessions I heard how organizational members advanced their development programs through their daily practices, but if compared with the organizational measurements, the formal and informal organization rarely met on an equal footing. My original research interest goes to change stories in the context of organization development. From that perspective it would not have mattered to me whether I would be studying employees or managers. The pilot study I had conducted had shown the strength of the informal organization with regard to change, so I decided to continue with that.

As I was choosing where to collect the materials, I also had other options. When the project with SEBU then gained momentum and they permitted the research, I became more focused on how the leaders try to develop first themselves and then their organization. In one-to-one coaching sessions I heard again things that made me sometimes curious, sometimes speechless: the everyday work reality and how things hang together can be really interesting – just as interesting as life itself. So I got to the source of the juicy living stories again. And again I could observe an inconsistency between the leadership stories and organizational measurements. These leaders did a lot of things, sometimes right, sometimes wrong, but what mainly got followed were official organizational measurements. As such, the figures and sums show the end result, but if we want to understand the logics of human organization behind the figures, we need to turn to stories, I still believed.

The trouble in designing a leadership study was that most of the leadership studies are conducted from an external point of view, that is, from the researcher's, trainer's or change agent's point of view, which in literary terms can be called an omnipotent author, or a knowing subject-position. No matter what is claimed, the set-up is in the researcher's control. From that perspective the subject of the study is objectified in advance, either consciously or as a way of following a certain research tradition. The existing literature did not directly support, for instance, an ethnographic approach.

Leadership researchers have acknowledged the gap between research (or education-based research) and actual leadership practices too (Barker 1997; Burke and Collins 2005; Day 2000; Dexter and Prince 2007). Yet the majority of leadership-development impact or evaluation studies represent numerical facts generated by survey methods. In such generalized numerical illustrations (e.g. Mumford et al. 2000; Parry and Sinha 2005) or in turning the learning effort into methodological language (e.g. Day 2000; Burke and Collings 2005) even more of the phenomenon that was originally under scrutiny gets "Lost in Translation" (the 2005 US movie). In other words we seldom

hear the micro-stories and personal transformation narratives in an organizational context, even if I thought they make sense of the informal organization in a manner that would help to design better change processes too. By "better" I mean ones that would take the human aspects behind the results into consideration, and by doing that the change process could be run and sponsored in a different way too.

The gap between formal and informal accounts, between formal and informal organizations, thus became visible in many areas. I was not alone in wondering about this inconsistency between official and unofficial accounts and stories. Here is how Ibbotson (2008) describes his experience of talking with leaders:

> "I talk to many business leaders in the course of my work and I have noticed that when they are more relaxed – after a few drinks, perhaps – their success stories change and they begin to admit that rather than having made a successful company solely by dint of careful planning and consistent execution, they have benefited from an enormous amount of luck. (…) They were lucky, they bluffed, they had good people around them, they took a chance and it worked out. This process of guessing and reframing, of following a hunch and then scrabbling to consolidate when the hunch works out, is a process I recognize" (Ibbotson 2008: 1).

The informal stories sometimes illustrate the internal human logic of an organization in a different light than the official accounts do. In this pursuit I join Ladkin (2010) who says that current debates "keep silent about certain things in leadership" and that there is a need "to stretch the leadership debate into areas not often considered within current theorizing".

Taking these kinds of statements seriously indicates a shift in what are considered interesting, plausible or fruitful issues and problems in leadership research. In the course of this study I will not use the expression "paradigm shift" (Kuhn, orig. 1962), but it is worth remembering Kuhn's views on the nature of the accepted ways of doing

research, and to think what the following would mean if we were to apply it to leadership research:

"[A] paradigm is a criterion for choosing problems that… can be assumed to have solutions. To a great extent these are the only problems that the community will… encourage its members to undertake. Other problems... are rejected as metaphysical… or sometimes as just too problematic to be worth the time. A paradigm can, for that matter, even insulate the community from those socially important problems that are not reducible to the [familiar] puzzle form because they cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools which the paradigm provides" (Kuhn 1996, in Hamel 2007: 12).

Because of my personal background in organization development and the coaching work I did with people in organizations I had become convinced that many of mainstream management tools do not quite fit the kind of leadership research agenda I can subscribe to. But little by little I came across narrative and ethnographic research that seemed able to keep the subject alive, and that combined my interests in storytelling and leadership. This research was often based on the social constructionist approach, I learned.

My decision to start the post-graduate studies at Tampere University was determined by the social constructionist paradigm that, to my mind, reminded me of hermeneutics. In some other universities where I visited the post-graduate seminars, the students and the professors spoke a lot about qualitative research, but to my disappointment most of the presented studies – even if indicated and accepted as qualitative – still basically employed a quantitative mind-set and background assumptions in their data sampling and interviewing of a quantitative nature. With my background I felt more attached to The School of Management at Tampere University, because the kind of research I was involved in and the kind of professional self-understanding that I had could be more easily accepted and supported there.

Now, how do narrative and interpretative means contribute to keeping phenomena alive?

To avoid the leadership research tendency of losing an experienced phenomenon in quantitative descriptions or generalizations, the hermeneutic-narrative approach aims at creating new insights out of irregularities and marginal stories. The primary idea of the research design in this study is to focus on the transformation stories of a group of leaders who want to develop their thinking and practices about leadership. Although leadership learning is certainly a life-long journey, I concentrate here on the part when leaders join a training program and make a conscious effort to apply new leadership approaches to their daily practice. This I call the learning path or journey.

3.4 Discussion on methodology: Process ontology, narratives, and hermeneutics

The central themes running through this methodology chapter are narrative approach, process ontology and hermeneutic basic assumptions. Additionally, phenomenology and social constructionism have also been mentioned as the key research commitments. In order not to present these only as separate methods I will now discuss their common underpinnings.

Does hermeneutics with its emphasis on historicity of understanding fit paradigmatically with process ontology that emphasizes the on-going, emerging qualities of being? What are the methodological and other implications of this? To answer these questions I will first introduce linguistic ontology and current theories on process ontology, and will then turn back to the above questions.

Research literature on narrative forms of knowing is extensive, and I think the point that by language we create realities and relations has cogently been made in the writings of Polkinghorne (1988), Bruner (1991), Czarniawska (1998) and Riesman (2008). Storytelling is recognized as a research method in its own right too (Gabriel 2000; Taylor et al. 2002). For philosophical hermeneutics language also plays

a key role, for instance the last parts of Gadamer's "Truth and Method" (2004) are dedicated to "The ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language".

The idea that language is neither an object nor a transparent medium, and that it therefore does not directly represent reality, was captured by Enlightenment philosophers of the 18th century like Herder, Hamann and Vico (Gaier 1988). In the view of German Idealism the creative, compounding feature of language emerges in poetry in an exemplary way. This view on language emphasises the subjectivity of perception, which could well be observed in Hegel's (1986) notion that reality is both substance and subject.

Austin (1962) captured the image of language as an activity with his famous "How To Do Things With Words". He is associated with the speech act theory, which says that language is an activity that not only maintains but also creates reality. In a similar fashion Berger and Luckman (1967) emphasised the role of language in maintaining and establishing social realities. A social reality in their view is based on "typification" and "habituation" that lead to commonly accepted institutionalization of what we then call everyday reality. Words and language expressions are such an institutionalized typification par excellence. That we can still attach different meanings to things and that these meanings are context-related makes this theory relational, but - because of the nature of social institutionalization – not yet relativist. In general the linguistic ontology of Romanticism, speech act theory and social constructionism rejects the correspondence theory of truth that claims that true statements correspond to the actual state of reality. Because of that rejection it also contrasts with the idea of an analytical language for scientific use (Gadamer 1970: 179) .

Trying to understand the meanings attached to local language use is a key principle of qualitative studies. When a researcher explores colloquial language usage and different meanings, he studies reality as a language construct. The works where I got most inspiration for how that kind of research is accomplished in practice are ethnographic works such as those of van Maanen (1989), Orr (1990) and Kunda

(1995) and by more recent dissertations by Ekman (1999), Bragd (2002), Sauer (2005) and Väyrynen (2008). These studies are written in a manner that preserves the language of the studied object(s), allows the field materials to guide the meaning making, and remains open to the sensitivity of phenomena without being bound to any particular concepts or theory.[2]

Hermeneutics is especially well suited to studying organizations because of its dual interest in language and history (Thachankary 1992) . Approaching organizations as "text" and by means of "paradigm of a text" (Thachankary 1992: 197) does not in hermeneutics mean to focus on purely textual references such as words, letters or utterances. In that respect hermeneutics urges an expansion of linguistic ontology to include historicity and the tradition of the interpreter to that concept. So how do the materials speak to us? What to pay attention to? Where and how to find leadership?

The option I will employ here is not to pay attention solely to 'leaders' or 'followers', but to the relation between these two, and especially how the relations are reflected in the use of language by the SEBU training participants. Both relational constructionism (Dachler and Hosking 1995; Hosking 2007) and an integral approach to leadership (Küpers 2007; Küpers and Statler 2008; Küpers and Weibler 2008) offer views on what this means. (I will discuss these under leadership theories in Ch. 4).

As the methodological presumption goes, these constructs and engagements are represented in language. As stated, I use the social constructionist approach to language, which in practice for this study means that those occasions where leaders relate to others (verbally or physically) also form leadership. My aim became to watch and listen to leaders' insights on how they build relations. In the view applied in The Fieldpath Method, the emergence of leadership does not take place only in occasions or statements, but as a process. I would now like to define what is meant by process ontology in organization studies.

2. However, I am not joining grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), where the theory one creates is generated by the data during the research process.

Ontology asks about the being we are facing, and as shown, hermeneutics and a narrative approach do not consider reality in objective or in ontological realist terms. If we want to understand how leadership as a phenomenon becomes or emerges, we need to study the *process* of becoming. This kind of interest is not a novel endeavour: already Hegel's "The Phenomenology of Mind" (orig. 1807) intends to clarify how reality is actually conceptualized. In Hegel's terminology: a goal alone is a dead generalization and the naked results are the corpse that the producing tendencies have left behind (Hegel 1986: 13). The aim of process ontology is to work out the producing tendencies and the process of becoming. For instance, a book as an end results tells us very little about the actual continuation of activities that were needed to accomplish it, such as writing, thinking, structuring, observations and reporting. Considering the huge investments in consultancy and the training industry it is justified to ask what happens within "the black box" (Kempster 2009) of training and to make the process that participants experience more transparent. Following these phenomenological foundations the consistent aim of this research process is to work out the living process that produces leadership.

Process research in organizations is yet a fairly new research stream that has evolved a great deal lately, that much can be summarized from the Process Research stream at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management in Chicago, Illinois. Taking the concepts of time and event as key terms, Tsoukas (2009) summarizes different process understandings in the following table:

Table 1. Four Perspectives on Process (Tsoukas 2009)

Process as	TIME	EVENT	PROCESS
Development	Chronological	Fait accompli; patterns of events	Closed
Historical reconstruction	Chronological	Fait accompli; patterns of connections between events	Determined
Unfolding	Chronological and kairological	In flux; experience	Open-ended
Becoming	Kairological	Tentative; on the verge of becoming	Incomplete

In this table process is defined as development, historical reconstruction, unfolding or becoming. These four approaches to process are based on different sets of background assumptions, and thus also produce different kinds of research agendas and results. The perspective on time is one decisive factor. With *chronological* time is meant objectively measured time, for instance clock-time, whereas *kairological* time refers to a subjective and experienced time (Tsoukas 2009). The same objective time of 10 minutes can subjectively be a long time or a short time, depending on the context. Timing can also be wrong and we have to wait for the right time – the things like skills acquisition sometimes take their time (compare with the expressions "language and nature of the thing", Gadamer 1960 and the Fieldpath Method "letting-be").

Analogically to Tsoukas' difference between a process as a development or becoming, Shotter (2005) makes a distinction between ordinary and extraordinary, living changes:

> "The Cartesian world is a dead world, a world of mechanical movement, a world of forces and impacts in which change is thought of as changes in the spatial configuration of a set of separately existing parts. Many changes in the human world, however, are of a very different kind. Rather than changes taking place *within* an already fully realized reality, instead of changes of a quantitative and repeatable kind, i.e., *ordinary* changes, they are unique, irreversible, one-off changes, novel changes of a *qualitative* kind, i.e., *living* changes, changes *in and of reality* itself. And as living changes, such changes are creative, developmental changes, changes making something possible that before was impossible. Such changes — against a Cartesian background — strike us as changes that happen unpredictably, unexpectedly, not according to any laws or principles, but capriciously dependent on circumstances. Indeed, such changes can be surprising and can strike us with amazement or wonder, for they are *extraordinary* changes" (Shotter 2005).

An ordinary change here means following a chronological and mechanistic mind-set, and its subjects are separated parts, whereas an extraordinary change is – among other things – not based on the Cartesian dualistic division between the mind and the body. This rejection of dualism anticipates that interpretations do not necessarily follow an analytical or causal reasoning but instead follow, for instance, an aesthetic epistemology that has no methodological constraints to accept this kind of unpredictable and creative change. And indeed, the learning experience of SEBU training participants do not follow expected or predicted paths, as will be seen.

The relation between hermeneutics and process ontology can be illustrated in Tsoukas' above terms too. With regard to embodied hermeneutics I have already discussed how hermeneutic experience does not distinguish between the intellectual and the emotional and bodily content of experience. Hermeneutics is also grounded in phenomenology, and accordingly the phenomenon or hermeneutic object is defined in terms of process and becoming, not in realist terms. From that perspective "the full identity of any phenomenon cannot ever be completely known" (Ladkin 2010: 37). Hermeneutic ontology thus shares features of becoming process ontology, but not very much of process as development. Social constructionism can be well linked with the process as development, because the process of becoming stops in what Berger and Luckmann (1967) call "institutionalization". This means that when certain social patterns become habits and it is socially observed that these patterns can be repeated in the same manner, they become institutionalized practices that through the social process basically maintain their character. In this respect the Tsoukas' model of process ontology helps to explain some differences between hermeneutics and social constructionism.

How does process ontology connect with leadership discussions? Ontology studies assumptions about reality, being and existence. In terms of ontology, leadership research has concentrated on studying individual leaders and leader traits and qualities, that is, on leader individuals. The underlying basic assumption that leadership equates

to leaders is here called leader-centricity, and it has also maintained rather than challenged the subject-object position between leader and led. Crevani et al. (2010) express the challenge of future leadership research in these terms very clearly:

> "If we want to take leadership research beyond the leader-centered tradition, we must also challenge our deeply-rooted tendency to make the abstract notion of 'leadership' concrete in the guise of individual managers (…)" (Crevani et al. 2010: 78).

This notion supports the validity of the methodology chosen for the task at hand. We can right away see how it fits the materials, when we ask what kind of change the participants of SEBU program experienced? How is that process to be understood? According to the pilot study, in Tsoukas' above terms this much can be said here: the transformation process includes unpredictable and unexpected elements. It follows kairological, subjective time rather than chronological time. The targets of the process can be determined, but in terms of personal learning and transformation it is eternally incomplete. And finally the process is made up of events like confrontations with people, where it is impossible to say how the others will react, and therefore the process is in flux, tentative and on the verge of becoming.

In process ontological terms leadership is viewed as a shared, dispersed activity that is accomplished by a number of people involved in organizational tasks. However, this formulation evokes some questions too: if we assume that anybody (or everybody) can be involved in the process of leadership, how can we separate leadership from other actions (non-leadership)? In other words, if leadership is constructed in social interaction (Hosking 2007; Küpers and Statler 2008), are all social interactions leadership, or what can we as researcher – or as practitioners – concentrate on? Pragmatically: how can we recognize leadership when we meet it? Or is it just a relativist notion where 'anything goes'?

Joining the hermeneutic, narrative and social constructionist theories does not mean representing a relativist view on reality. All

these views have their framework and limitations. I think Freedman and Combs (1995) summarize effectively the key ideas:

1. Realities are socially constructed.
2. Realities are constructed through language.
3. Realities are organized and maintained through narrative.
4. There are no essential truths." (Freedman and Combs 1995:22)

And from the hermeneutic perspective I would add:

5. The truth claims are embedded in tradition and historicity.

Following this theoretical ethos I have made the choice, first, to construct a view of leadership as it exists within the particular SEBU context as a social and linguistic construct (Chapter 5). That view is reconstructed out of the discourse of SEBU participants, so the approach is similar to the Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003a) study where leaders were asked what leadership was in their minds. Through a linguistic analysis of six leadership routines The SEBU Leadership Code was established, which – in Tsoukas' (2009) terminology – is a historical construction. Second, after a further analysis of materials I found inconsistencies that broke the routines. From an ontological perspective this implies that the once coherent linguistic leadership narrative is scattered and something else emerges. In narrative terms the dominant story (Leadership Code) got challenged by marginalized stories (White and Epston 1990) . These inconsistencies are illustrated through vignettes (Chapter 6) that show how open-ended and kairological the process actually is. It is almost as if anything goes, except that the researcher's and reader's historicity and how they are embedded in a common culture limit the possibilities. The common tradition we as readers are part of makes up the validity claims. Finally, through process ontology (Chapter 7) I illustrate a possibility to ground the discussion in social constructionism, and I join the aesthetic leadership approach with its critique on mainstream leadership research.

4. THEORY: LEADERSHIP INSTEAD OF LEADER-CENTRICITY

More than 100 years of leadership research has produced an array of leadership theories and models, and the more that academic research has widened its scope and cultivated the inquiry, the more there seems to be a widespread agreement on one aspect: there is no universal agreement on leadership and its nature. Academic scholars state that almost as many definitions of leadership exist as there are writers (Stogdill 1974, in Yukl 1989); that there is no universal approach to leading (Kempster 2009); that after numerous studies and books we do not understand leadership very well (Barker 1997); and that we know little about leadership and too much about leaders (Burns 1978). Also, the leading figures of leadership development (interviewed in Doh 2003) remark that leadership too often gets mixed with leader traits and takes a single leader point of view, that is, leadership becomes entangled with leader-centricity. In the 1970s and 80s there were disputes on whether leadership research was capable of producing anything valuable, and there was disagreement in the field and disappointment in the lack of accumulative knowledge (Yukl 1989; Bryman 2004). Yukl in 1989

asserts that the "field of leadership is presently in a state of ferment and confusion" (Yukl 1989: 253).

Yet today leadership is hailed as a major explanatory factor for organizational performance. Meindl and Ehrlich (1987) found that people gave better evaluations of outcomes that were linked with a person in a leadership position than they did of the same performance that could not be directly linked to leadership factors. They call this "the romance of leadership", because it romantically views leadership as the cure-all. Rosenzweig (2007) coined the term "halo-effect" of leadership, a tendency to explain company success by attributing it to the company's values, culture or leadership. He argues that this is a delusion and error of logic, and that other factors such as conjunctions, competitors or launching new products are more accurate means of explaining success. Among the published articles in Academy of Management Journal between 2007–2009 leadership was the second most popular topic (after team performance), and it seems that the pendulum has swung from a state of despair to another extreme, to leadership possessing a larger-than-life explanatory value (Meindl, Ehrlich, Dukerich 1985; Morrison 2010).

But all this is just a brief overview, and a more thorough look into the development of leadership theories is still needed. In the following I will sketch the leadership approaches in three steps. These steps: Industrial paradigm, Leader-centric approaches, New leadership approaches, are not in a chronological order. The idea is that they exist today simultaneously. For instance, in global industrial practices the tradition of scientific management might be more relevant than any new approach. The reason for including the tradition of scientific management in a leadership study is that in popular accounts this tradition still lurks between the lines. The principles of scientific management are also very much used today in production and organization development, albeit often as unstated prejudices, or as commonly held truths.

4.1 Evolution of leadership theories

4.1.1 Leader- and follower-centric approaches

Most studies under the name of leadership research, Barker (1997) argues, rely on a feudal view of leadership. This paradigm "can be characterized as approximating the structure of a feudal kingdom: an image of a powerful male leader who sits atop a hierarchical structure directing and controlling the activities of subjects toward the achievement of the leader's goals" (Barker 1997: 346). The leadership theories that rely on the king image he calls "industrial leadership theories" (ibid.)

How come the king image has survived so well, even if it has found its critics? A reason might lie in organizational practices and management theories in general. Scientific management that started with Taylorism was originally a revolutionary movement in the way it increased productivity and efficiency. The same revolutionary thinking influenced Ford, who in his heyday constantly introduced new improvements in production. Even if Taylorism and Fordism may not exist in their original forms anymore, scientific management and industrial thinking are today applied in both production and service industries (Buchanan and Huczinsky 2004). The kind of economical thinking that these models rely on is nowadays taken for granted and elevated to the position of a new metaphysics, an ultimate reason that requires no further explanations, Holvas (2009) argues. Because of the ontological and epistemological premises on which positive science's methods are based, also economics thinking maintains subject-object positioning, where the knowing, rationally analytical subject manages the organization and its actors. Thus it is no wonder that the king-image still dominates within economic thinking about leadership. Also other research reaffirms that person-centred trait theories, even if thought by some authors to be a relic, still hold a dominant role in leadership studies (Glynn and Raffaelli 2010).

In most definitions 'leadership' points to a person, position or authority. As varied as leadership definitions are, most of them "reflect the assumption that [leadership] involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization" (Yukl 1994: 3). In the following I will give an account of the most notable leadership theories that, in the view applied in this study, represent leader-centric approaches more than leadership. I will also include here the follower-centric models that define followers within the subject-object framework, that is, that despite the shift of emphasis from leaders to followers, there remains a separation of these two:

Trait theories concentrate on describing the characteristic ways that individual leaders react, perceive, feel or act. Having their origins in the period before the Second World War, these theories were designed to elicit a difference between leaders and followers. During wartime it seemed essential to find out who the soldiers would follow or not, and who would suit a leader role. In trait theories it is questioned whether leaders are born with these qualities or whether they can be learned. For instance MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), one of the most widely used personality type analysis tools nowadays, was used extensively during WW II when there was a need to find the most suitable fit for a bomber crew, and to see what additional qualities a trustworthy pilot should possess under a stress situation beyond the ability to fly the plane.

Behavioural theories are interested in action patterns and behaviours of effective leaders. In contrast to trait theories, behavioural theories are based on the belief that leadership can be learned. Leadership in this respect is not a product of inborn qualities or inner mental abilities, but of visible actions and correct behaviours. The leaders do not work on similar tasks as subordinates, and for instance the famous Michigan and Ohio Studies in early 1950's found the critical characteristics of effective leaders to be task-oriented behaviour and relation-oriented behaviour together with participative leadership.

Charismatic leadership (Weber 1947; Conger and Kanungo 1998) is based on the assumption that the leader's "divine gift", charm, grace or other personal qualities – including verbal and body language – attract others to follow them. Charisma has to be experienced as such by followers, and thus the influence of charisma has been studied from both perspectives, the leader (charismatic qualities) and the follower (what is interpreted as charismatic). As in the next theory, visionary leadership, here it is the followers who create the leader: without someone regarding the leader as charismatic or visionary there would be nobody to lead. The research on charisma and vision can therefore be extended to include cultural and social aspects too.

Visionary leadership opens up new perspectives and introduces future challenges that unite the followers in common tasks. Like charisma, vision is also nothing without followers, as Smircich and Morgan's (1982) example, of a CEO whose vision does not get implemented, illustrates. Smircich and Morgan were among the first leadership researchers to introduce the meaning-making aspect of leadership, whereby framing and defining situations became a central activity for leaders. Meaning-making differs from effective communication in that it emphasizes the followers' actions rather than the leader's visionary or charismatic powers. (Ladkin 2010) The more a leadership theory emphasizes interpretation (Gadamer 2004), sense-making activities (Weick 1995) and construction of reality as an activity of all the organizational members (Berger and Luckmann 1967), the more it evolves towards the new art of leadership research (see below).

Transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1981, 1985; Avolio and Gibbons 1988) is defined as bringing about change in individuals and organizational systems. The idea is to influence the motivation of followers towards the explicit goals. This the transformational leader brings about by being a role model, connecting the individual with the organizational vision, inspiring the followers to take the initiative, and by assessing the followers so that the leader can recognize the need for support of specific individuals. The critical question is: Whose goals are we following? When these are defined by some influence or group

(CEO, change agents, project group, developers, HR…), we are dealing with the power issue again. Nevertheless, a group that takes the "king-position" and defines the direction will function as a substitute for an individual, and it is not up to everybody to define the goals. Nowadays also Kotter's (1996) influential "Leading change" with his practical and widely accepted 8-Step Change Model can be included as a concept for transformational leadership.

The term resistance to change stems out of these discussions and it is usually used about those who are not in favour of the intended change or direction. Ford, Ford and D'Avolio (2008) further argue that resistance to change is a term used by the change agents (those in favour of the change) about those who do not accept the proposition, and that the term is therefore more a rhetorical device and a social construction than an objective change phenomenon.

Authentic leadership starts from the leader person, relying on a core identity and true self that each individual possesses (Avolio and Lufthans 2006). Promoting personal values, "unbiased processing" and "personal psychological capital", authentic leadership focuses on individual leaders, and can be regarded as belonging within the evolution of leader-centric theories. This classification is supported by the fact that social constructionist theories (see below) regard identity in a very different fashion than an authentic quality. However, in contrast to purely leader-centred theories, authentic leadership further applies some central principles of positive psychology – hope, optimism, resiliency, self-efficacy – at an organizational level too. (ibid., 91)

4.1.2 Situational and shared leadership

There are several reasons why the leader-centred theories failed to answer all the leadership needs: the globalization since the 1980s, the rise of team, virtual and knowledge-specialist work; avoidance of top-down and hierarchical models; and the turn to more strategic thinking in organizations. No longer is the leader needed to control

the employees, but rather to stimulate and empower them. Situational and shared leadership models challenge the notion of leader-centricity by re-focusing the leadership issue on a group-level.

Contingency theories of leadership suggest that leadership varies according to situation, actors, goals and so forth, so that very few predictions or generalizations can be made about what kind of leadership leads to successful outcomes. These theories helped the leadership research to move from leader-centricity towards leadership. Whereas the previous scientific management systems or leader-centred approaches failed in complex circumstance, the contingency theories acknowledged that there is no one best fit of leadership. Fiedler (1964) postulated that a 'situational contingency' results from the interdependency of two factors: leadership style and situational favourableness.

Along the lines of contingency theories, Hershey and Blanchard created in the early 1970s *Situational Leadership Theory* in which they state that an effective leadership style depends on the situational factors of follower maturity level and motivation (Hersey and Blanchard 1988). Morgan (2006) extends the "Images of Organization" to include various models that might all fit, according to situation and needs. To balance the organizational and situational needs, the leaders need to be flexible and to adapt to the unexpected.

Taken broadly, the *Substitutes for Leadership* model (Kerr and Jermier 1978), *Shared Leadership* (Pearce and Conger 2003) and *Distributed Leadership* (Spillane 2005) argue that leadership need not be appointed to one person, because the typical leader tasks can be shared by the team members and/or distributed to other organizational actors. Sharing does not therefore mean an equal share, nor does it mean delegating, but rather understanding how the task is completed together. It therefore includes an understanding and responsibility for the process, not just for a part of it or of one's own task, as the common misinterpretations go. In this fashion these approaches enable the organizational members to act more according to their self-initiated goals and responsibilities. In the evolution of leadership theories they introduce empowerment, self-management and team involvement as essentials of organizing and leadership.

Along these lines of thought – and in contrast to leader-centric approaches – in an article on leadership "Management of Meaning", Smircich and Morgan (1982) emphasize that leadership gets constructed through social interaction between leaders and led. This is also the first article to employ social constructionist ideas explicitly in leadership. The paradigm shift points to group processes instead of individuals (Barker 1997: 356).

This is not to say that there had not been opportunities for these new approaches earlier. It is exciting to note that the development might have taken other paths too. Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933) was one of the first writers to challenge the implicit feudal-view. She noted that many qualities traditionally connected with leadership, like dominance, charisma, aggression or pugnacity, had a negative effect on performance and employee motivation. From her writings stem the terms "power-over" and "power-with". With power-over is meant the traditional authoritarian king-image, whereas power-with refers to "we" who share the power. Follett equates the teacher-student relationship with leadership. "In all these opportunities of the teacher, how far is it legitimate for him as leader to "influence" his students? I have deeply regretted that many in our labor colleges still have the idea of the teacher-student relation as that of leader-follower." The aim of education should not be to propagate the teacher's opinions (at least not by traditional leader tools like authority and power-over), but to train students in arriving at the best insights themselves (empowerment).

Despite Follet's early writings, academic interest in human relations in organizations can be traced back more to the Hawthorne studies in the 1920s and 30s than to Follett. These studies demonstrated that social aspects, rather than being dominated by physical structures, are influential in their own right. The increasing interest in organizational leadership, as opposed to management, represents a *shift* from an objective managerial approach to employees as a mechanical work force (or human capital) *towards* understanding the meaning of social interaction.

In their review Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) divide leadership theories into five categories: Behavioral, Contingency, Dyadic, and Trait

theories, and theories on the Meaning of Leadership. The following table is an applied summary of their overview:

Table 2. Leadership theories coded (adaptation of Glynn and Raffaelli 2010)

Category	Focus, features	Examples
Behavioral	Focus on leadership actions and style, transformational or transactional actions, initiating structures, "leadership grid"	Transformational leadership, Managerial Grid Model (Blake and Mouton 1957)
Contingency	Context matters, path-goal-theory, situational models of leadership (culture, industry)	Situational leadership (Hersey and Blanchard 1977)
Dyadic	Focus on dyadic relations, reference to leaders/followers or supervisor/ subordinate, relations	LMX – Leader-member-exchange theory (Dansereau, Graen, Haga 1975), Visionary leadership
Trait	Focus on traits, skills, self-confidence, charisma that effect leadership and responses to it	Trait theories, MBTI, Charismatic leadership, Authentic leadership
Meaning	Theories on meaning of leadership	The Romance of Leadership (Meindl et al. 1985), Barker 1997, Aesthetic Leadership Approach, Sensemaking (Weick 1995)

Apart from theories on the meaning of leadership, most theories maintain a leader-centric view: The dyadic theories rely on an assumption that the leader is still the central-figure in leadership: no matter what are the relationships within the organization, leadership always refers to leader person. The same applies to contingency theories: the context in which the *leader* finds himself defines his actions. It is characteristic that these theories do not refer to leadership situations *without* a leader.

The theories on meaning of leadership are rather varied in their approaches, yet their common feature is that they search for new ways of grasping leadership and/or they introduce novel methodologies. Where do we stand now? What are the future directions of leadership

research? Is there anything more to say about the "theories on meaning of leadership"? The discussion in the next chapter is directed along the lines of these questions.

Finally, it has to be noted that leadership research does not develop in a linear fashion, as anticipated and expected by some authors. In reality many theories co-exist simultaneously and overlap each other, and in that respect also the above characterizations do not evolve chronologically, or one stream of research does not stop when the next one emerges (Glynn and Raffaelli 2010).

4.1.3 New art of leadership research

In the 1990s and 2000s new research options started to emerge in the field of leadership studies. These approaches consciously try to avoid leader-centricity, the subject-object trap and dualistic mind-body problem of the earlier leader-follower discussions. The question then becomes: where to find leadership if it is not of necessity attached to a person? The approaches that redefine leadership represent themselves in the form of aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual theories, and pay attention to social constructions, relations and practices. These approaches challenge the traditional categorizing by beginning from fresh assumptions about the nature of leadership. They mostly share different epistemological and ontological groundings than the previous concepts.

First, both *social and relational constructionism* (Berger and Luckman 1967; Dachler and Hosking 1995; Hosking 2007) and the integral approach to leadership (Küpers 2007; Küpers and Stattler 2008) offer new ideas for leadership research. The integral approach aims at connecting different leadership approaches – may they be subjective or objective by nature – and at recognizing complex and inter-related relations (Küpers 2007; Küpers and Statler 2008). This approach situates leadership into a domain where leaders and followers link, and it regards this domain as an ongoing, processual activity (Küpers 2005).

This approach thus has similarities with the phenomenological and hermeneutic epistemelogy. Relational constructionism does not locate leadership in leaders, followers or situation either, but concentrates on relations and how leadership is constructed by language use and talked into being. According to Dachler and Hosking (1995) the key to understanding relational approaches is epistemology: knowledge claims are to be assessed against the cultural backgrounds that perform these truths. Truth is thus a matter of relational social processes. In general a social constructionist way of approaching leadership can then also be to call it invisible management (Sjöstrand, Tyrstrup and Sandberg 2000) or invisible leadership that is marked by 'absences' and 'presences' (Ladkin 2010). These authors share an understanding of leadership as a social phenomenon that is acted out by several organizational actors and is situated in several places and incidents simultaneously.

In Dachler and Hosking's (1995: 3–4) view, leadership research is an epistemological topic that has ontological consequences. They claim that in studies of organizations the prevalent approach is to understand individuals, and even groups or organizations, as separate entities. This means that these phenomena are not analysed as connected, interdependent or co-constructive. Their second claim is that the actions and goals that these entities pursue are again mainly regarded as if they were in control of external and internal forces (egocentric metaphor of manhood).

In the "possessive individualism" perspective 'followers' are understood as vehicles or objects of the leaders' activities in two ways: leaders' intentions are communicated to the subordinates, and leaders possess the power to control reality construction. In this respect "the central concern is implicitly always that of how the leader/subject gets the follower/object to think, talk, or act in ways that reflect the leader's perspective". (Dachler and Hosking 1995: 9) In relational constructionism one cannot attribute certain qualities to leaders, because that would mean to step in to the trap of entities again. It pays attention to inviting questions about social processes, and therefore rather than asking '*what* is leadership', it would ask '*how* does it come to be through social relations'.

Hosking (2006) states that identifying taken-for-granted assumptions about leadership and how the research is conducted depends on the local cultures we are involved with, and, along the lines of Bryman (2004, 2006) urges the leadership researchers to engage with other modes of research than their usual options. This recommendation is naturally in line with the constructionist view on multiple realities where no singular standpoint has the upper hand. She directs the attention to leadership attempts that: "go beyond overly simple 'outsider' assumptions about who are leaders and who followers, embrace the possibility of distributed – and not just focused – leadership, take seriously the involvement of (what some might call) 'followers' in leadership processes, and finally give space to developing 'followers' into leaders" (Hosking 2006: 2).

An *integrated leadership approach* (Küpers 2007) of leadership and followership is useful for examining interrelated process of leadership and followership, and how these roles are assumed. In this approach leaders and followers are perceived both as wholes and as separated, and integration comes about where these two parties meet in terms of leadership/followership occasions. That, to a certain degree, describes also my unit of analysis: the occasions where leadership and followership become integrated. These relations are occasions for reality construction. Leadership only comes into being and exists when it is acted out in the occasions.

One of the central elements of the new leadership approaches is the tendency to regard *leadership as a process* (Creviani et al. 2010; Hosking 2006; Ladkin 2010). This is also the way that sensemaking (Weick 1995) and hermeneutics (Gadamer 2004) would construct a phenomenon: understanding is a reflexive process, and when linked with process ontology, these approaches underline the socially constructed nature of leadership as *a common process in which the organizational members find themselves and through which they negotiate the becoming of commonly shared phenomena*. This definition of emerging phenomena is close to hermeneutic "fusion of horizons".

Further contemporary leadership concepts are the ethical, spiritual and aesthetic leadership approaches. *Ethical leadership* (Brown and Trevino 2006) and ethical stewardship (Caldwell 2007) have gained in importance after the several scandals in different organizations that range from Enron in the early 2000s to sports doping scandals and the financial crisis and suspected ethical misconducts in 2007–2008. In place of authenticity and self-awareness (authentic leadership), ethical leadership emphasizes moral management and awareness of others; in place of of visioning, faith and work as vocation (spiritual leadership), it emphasizes moral management; and in place of of vision, values and intellectual stimulation (transformational leadership), it emphasizes ethical standards (Brown and Trevino 2006: 598).

Spiritual leadership (Fry 2003) calls for "more holistic leadership that integrates the four fundamental arenas that define the essence of human existence—the body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions, feelings), and spirit" (Fry 2003: 694). In this approach human spirituality is an element of human organization, but it has so far been effectively neglected by organization and leadership research, even if more familiar concepts like 'company spirit' or 'atmosphere' are often referred to as motivational factors influencing efficiency and promoting the well-being of an organization.

Finally, *aesthetic leadership* has recently been introduced to suggest that leadership occurs and is constructed not only in the intellectual mind of the leader and the followers, but also in and through the sensing and experiencing bodies (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer, 2007; Ladkin, 2008; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; Ropo and Parviainen, 2001; Ropo, Parviainen and Koivunen, 2002; Ropo and Sauer, 2008; Sinclair, 2005) and through emotions and intuitions (Fineman 2000; Sauer 2005). Aesthetic is here understood as "sensory knowledge and felt meaning" (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer, 2007). Leadership is equated with arts and the art of leadership, and Hatch, Kostera and Koźmiński (2006) propose three faces of leadership: manager, artist and priest. A recent issue of Leadership Journal was devoted to the topic of leadership as art; six articles explored different variations on the theme (Ladkin and

Taylor 2010). In short, as Adler (2006) summarizes the new developments in leadership research "the time is right for cross-fertilization of leadership and the arts"..

As stated above, the tradition of leadership research is by and large cognitively oriented (Hansen et al. 2007), focusing on the person of the leader and her/his ways of utilizing her/his power – following the feudal metaphor of the king (Barker 1997). The *Aesthetic leadership approach* takes a different epistemological standpoint by regarding knowledge not only as a matter of cognition, but including emotions, experience and practical wisdom, "knowing in action" (Adler 2006; Hansen et al. 2007; Ramirez 1995; Ropo et al. 2002; Ropo & Sauer 2007; Strati 1999, 2007). In addition to rational knowledge and cognitive processes, aesthetics emphasizes "*sensory knowledge and felt meaning*" (Hansen et al. 2007: 545) as essential ways of knowing. Even if "management and leadership theories are explicitly more familiar with the discourse of control, profit, and effectiveness than with aesthetics" (Ropo et al. 2002: 24), aesthetics in epistemological respect is an undeniable element of organizational reality (Strati 1996).

The view of leadership as a socially constructed phenomenon is illustrated by Hansen et al. (2007) as a shift of focus in leadership research as follows:

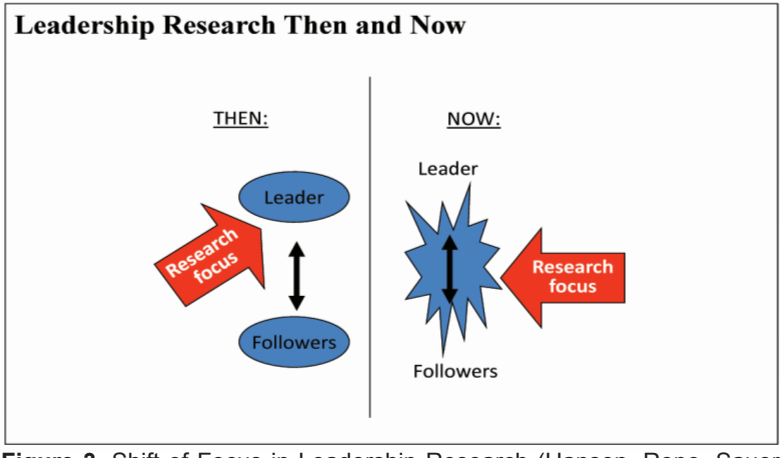

Figure 3. Shift of Focus in Leadership Research (Hansen, Ropo, Sauer 2007)!

The shift of focus is from leader-centricity towards relations. Even if "there is no leader without followers" (Hansen, Ropo, Sauer 2007: 548), traditionally the followers have been defined by the position of leader, so the shift is a more radical move than that which the more purely follower-centric theories suggest. Leadership is not a momentary glimpse in time, Hunt and Ropo (1995) argue, but has a processual character. If we regard leadership as an evolving and growing relationship between leader and followers, not an object or stable entity to which unchanging characteristics can be attributed, then leadership studies ought to take a similar time-perspective into account too.

To sum up the new leadership approaches perspective: Leadership is not a quality of an individual, but of an organization. Leadership is also not only a rational capacity, but involves the whole embodied experience of being a human. Nowadays also the ethical and spiritual aspects of a workplace are taken into consideration, as the more holistic approaches, including wider epistemological and ontological considerations, have gained a foothold in organizational studies. After decades of despair and frustration there are winds of change in leadership studies and the future with a new impetus looks bright.

4.2 On qualitative methodology in leadership research

The evolvement and nature of *leadership* research can be traced further back by giving an account of two methodological streams, quantitative and qualitative research[1]. I will first discuss the meaning of quantity and quality, and will then provide an overview of the specific nature of qualitative leadership research.

What does quantity in leadership studies mean? Latin *quantitas* relates to considerations of amount or size and to something that is capable of being measured. In quantitative analysis, leadership is

1. From this point of view leadership discussions reflect the organization theories debate on paradigm incommensurability (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Gioia and Pitre 1990; Hassard and Kelemen 2002; Tsoukas and Knudsen 2003).

transformed into a commonly accepted standardized unit or category e.g. size, price, degree, level, or amount, or metrics such as time, variability etc. – that can be measured accordingly. In quantitative studies leadership is defined as an object of study through valid and verified measurements, and leadership is a result of that heritage – partly a given. The issue of what leadership is or is not, is not particularly stressed. Quantitative leadership studies often take a leader (instead of leadership) as their object of study. It is noteworthy that this objectification or reification of the object of study (making an idea into a thing) has to take place *prior* to the analysis. What to analyse, if it was not there?

Quantitative methods are based on the premises of the natural sciences, where research traditionally focuses on objects (frog, tree, star) that can be studied neutrally from a distance, in laboratory conditions and/or with scientific tools without the researcher's personal influence. The rigour and scientific quality of research in the natural sciences is measured by testing its validity and reliability.

"Quality" on the other hand takes the question of being as its starting point: latin *qualis* inquires "of what sort" and leads to *qualitas*, state. Qualitative interest poses questions to the being we are confronted with: what is it, what sort and what state. Note the formulation: it is not 'asks questions about the being' by assuming that there is 'the' being of leadership, but poses questions *to* the being. In leadership research these considerations are highly valid, since the nature of leadership does not equate to directly observable and measurable objects such as apples or cars, but to notions that are created between humans, like friendship, anger or love. We create the phenomena by studying and naming them (Hatch 1997). Encounters with a socially constructed phenomenon change the issue from the ontological perspective: it is not the same it was before we started the discussion. The same ontological structure takes place with physical objects: if we talk about a chair or a child, their meaning to us evolves. In this fashion both leadership and organization will in this study be considered as social constructs that are not stable physical objects but in a constant movement (Berger and

Luckman 1967; Smircich and Morgan 1982; Hatch 1997). In the social constructionist view the researcher is always part of that construction, and therefore leadership cannot be observed 'out there', but comes to exist by fusion of horizons (Gadamer 2004; Shotter 2004).

The majority of leadership studies are based on a quantitative research approach, that is, on positivist, objective and realist assumptions (Bryman 2004; Glynn and Raffaelli 2010; Klenke 2010; Ladkin 2010). This can partly be explained by the fact that a quantitative approach dominates business research in general (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008).

In their review of theory development in leadership research during the last 50 years, Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) found that almost 85% of the leadership studies employed quantitative methods. In three leading academic journals from 1993 to 2007 (the last 15 years) qualitative leadership studies were published only during 3 years (*Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Quarterly, Organizational Science*, that is, excluding *Leadership Quarterly!*) (Glynn and Raffaelli 2010: 379). They discuss the implications of this: "We can speculate that the shared consensus around quantitative methods (…) might, ironically, contribute to the problem of commensuration. Quantitative methods, particularly the surveys and lab experiments often used in leadership research, tend to be designed for testing or refining existing theories; in turn, this may increase commitment to a particular perspective and contribute to its perpetuation" (Glynn and Raffaelli 2010: 387). Quantitative leadership studies also largely dominate in the materials that Bryman (2004) collected from 1979–2004. Almost two thirds of the studies were conducted with quantitative methods, and despite the emergence of qualitative studies, the field seems to be dominated by only two qualitative methods: 85% of the studies included interviews, and 64% were conducted by survey questionnaires. Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) also note that the use of qualitative methods is very limited.

In his editorial to the special issue of *The Administrative Science Quarterly*, van Maanen (1979) argued for legitimation of qualitative

studies, and Burrell and Morgan (1979) published the same year their highly influential matrix of the sociological paradigms, which legitimized *other* ways of studying organizations than just the dominant functionalist approach that relies on realistic ontology and objective knowledge claims, that is, on quantitative assumptions. In this view no single paradigm can claim authority over what and how research becomes defined or accepted.

Despite the attempts to strengthen the use of interpretative paradigm tools, qualitative leadership studies are often influenced and informed by quantitative assumptions: most of these studies can be characterized as 'qualitative studies relying on objective epistemological and ontological' assumptions (Alvesson 1996; Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008), as there is a tendency for some qualitative research "to look like quantitative research on leadership but without numbers" (Bryman 2004: 762). Even if there is no straight line between qualitative and quantitative studies, and also if qualitative leadership research does not represent a univocal endeavour, the prevailing leadership conceptions are predominantly cognitive and intellectual with the emphasis on mental rather than sensing activities (Yukl 2008). The practical research often mixes the basic assumptions of an interpretative approach with realist ontology and does not seem to pay attention to the debate on paradigm (in)commensurability (Hassard and Kelemen 2002).

In his review on qualitative leadership research Bryman (2004) observes that qualitative research became apparent in other fields of social sciences, like sociology, ethnography and organization theory from the 1970s onwards, but it gained a foothold in leadership studies only in the late 1980s and 1990s. The first article to be found with the key words "leadership" and "qualitative" was published in 1988 (Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth, & Keil). There was a dissertation by Ropo (1989) and a move upstream was provided when The Leadership Quarterly in 1990 created a Qualitative Methods section. Yet only the late 1990s and 2000s witnessed a more significant rise in the number of qualitative leadership studies. The picture that is created is that qualitative leadership studies are relatively few and their history is short.

At the present Klenke (2010) sees reason for optimism about qualitative approaches in leadership studies. The number of general textbooks on qualitative research has steadily increased during the last ten years in different disciplines, ranging from the social sciences to economics, health science and education (e.g. Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Silverman 2004; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008) and lately to Leadership with Klenke's (2010) book on "Qualitative Research Methods in the Study of Leadership".

4.3 Discussion: Distinctive elements of the new art of leadership research

An element is "one of the fundamental or irreducible components making up a whole" and "a cause that contributes to a result" (Collins Concise Dictionary). As a conclusion of the above discussion I would like add three elements that are often missing in theories of leadership. By adding these elements I am still not raising the expectations toward leadership to any extra-ordinary heights; instead I want to stress that if leadership as a social construction aims at discussing leadership in a new light, new elements are needed. The elements are epistemological and ontological creativity, informality and uniqueness. They are partly inspired by the context of the study and by the need of contemporary organizations for leadership that recognizes complexity, fast-paced change, more creative approaches, customer orientation, growing specialization and fewer levels of hierarchy, and that takes virtual and disseminated work into account (Dale and Burrell 2008; Florida 2002; Hamel 2007; Orr 1995).

First, *epistemological and ontological creativity* are needed in leadership research. Basically this element suggests a re-thinking of epistemological and ontological assumptions. An example of this is offered by aesthetic epistemology: The word aesthetics originates from the Greek *aisthesis*, which refers to any kind of sensory experience, whether it

is direct sensory information or interpretation, judgment. In Plato's discussion on *aisthesis* in the dialogue *Theaetetus*, the aesthetic approach denies the existence of pure knowledge. *Aisthesis* implies both sensory information, knowledge and judgment. The reason for *not* separating these instances is based on the Ancient holistic view on knowledge. Aesthetic knowledge is not limited to direct, sense-based or actual sensory knowledge. Instead, it includes personal feelings and bodily felt relations with the world, as Strati (2007) with his examples of roof-builders' balancing acts and "looking with ears" points out. Roof-builders need to balance on the top of the building, and because of the danger the height poses, the the roof-builders Strati talked with used all possible senses to ensure the balance, even "looking with ears". When we think about confronting a colleague, friend, spouse or our child we don't rely on the sensory data alone, but also "hidden aspects" (Strati 2007: 63) such as memories and experiences. The same hidden aspects are found in leader-follower relations: previous successful co-operation, having suspicions or having been rejected, dismissed or hurt by the other – all that affects the present perception. Our body carries the wounds and scars of old incidents – that is part of learning.

An example of ontological re-thinking can be taken from arts-based approaches. Ladkin and Taylor (2010: 239) state that the challenge for leadership scholars is "to attend to those aspects of leadership and leading which are not easily measured, or even defined. Rather than conducting more studies into correlations based on dubious proxies for invisible variables, 'leadership as art' suggests that leadership scholars should engage in critique more akin to art criticism, rather than relying heavily on the tools of logical positivism to analyse leadership practice." The ontology of leadership, that which is under scrutiny, needs to be of central concern for future leadership studies. It is, after all, a phenomenon we are studying, not an object, and the ways of approaching a phenomenon are only limited by our imagination – and by negotiations with the scientific communities we want to involve. In order to make sense of the social becoming of such a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon as leadership, I believe that adding

this element requires use of different methodologies – which cross the existing scientific boundaries.

The second additional element is ***informality*** of leadership, which refers to the shift from leader-centricity toward leadership. The theory of informal organization was born as a side-effect of the Hawthorne studies in the 1920s-30s, as a research group around Harvard Business School Professor Elton studied the effect of work conditions on the productivity of factory workers at the Western Electric company's Hawthorne Works in Chicago. The research group placed 6 female workers in a separate room and increased or decreased the amount of light in the room. Their research showed no clear connection between the amount of lightning and productivity. However, there was clear improvement in productivity during the examined period no matter what the lightning level.

It turned out that the social factors – building cohesion in a team, taking responsibility, being measured and informal conversations – had more effect on the workers than external factors like lightning. Nowadays the theory of informal organization claims that people make sense of organizations and leadership informally. (Ekman 1999) The term "invisible management" describes these discussions. (Sjöstrand et al. 2001)

I stated that this research is inspired by studies like those of van Maanen (1989), Orr (1991) and Bragd (1998). How should Balinese cock fighting (Geertz 1973), police patrolling (van Maanen 1989), a fire-fighter crew's deadly accident (Weick 1993; 2007) or the design of a new Volvo car (Bragd 1998) inform us about leadership? How do these ethnographically oriented studies that do not explicitly study leadership but culture inform us about leadership? All these studies illuminate the informal organization and the way it is practised. From a social constructionist and phenomenological point of view they describe how the phenomenon comes to be.

Mary Parker Follett described the informality and invisibility of leadership – the non leader-centric approach – in the following words:

> "Leaders and followers are both following the invisible leader – the common purpose. The best executives put this common purpose clearly before their group. While leadership depends on the depth of conviction and the power coming there from, there must also be the ability to share that conviction with others, the ability to make purpose articulate. And then that common purpose becomes the leader. And I believe that we are coming more and more to act, whatever our theories, on our faith in the power of this invisible leader. Loyalty to the invisible leader gives us the strongest possible bond of union, establishes a sympathy which is not a sentimental but a dynamic sympathy" (Follet 1941, in Klenke 2010: 315).

But if leadership is invisible, how do we recognize it in the materials? Where to observe it, what to pay attention to?

The way leadership is defined initially makes the biggest difference for the analysis. If we take Follet's suggestion seriously, then we should observe the common purpose, for instance how it is accepted socially and how people become motivated to follow it – and not to concentrate solely on what the dominated leader does. Informal leadership refers to process ontology and avoids leader-centricity. As a social construction, leadership is not only attached to an individual, but even more to an organization and its relations. Leadership is acted out together, and each member of the organization is embedded in it and represents it. Thus leadership is found in practices, interactions and relations (Küpers 2007; Hosking 2007; Crevani et al. 2010), and these can be appropriately studied through culture – as in the above cases by Bragd, Geertz, van Maanen, Orr, and Weick.

The third element is ***uniqueness.*** Rather than generalizing the lively features of materials into abstract formulae, new art of leadership research should keep the phenomena alive as long as possible, and only then to generalize. That way it allows the impressions to have a more lasting effect and does not categorize from the outset. However, the downside of presenting readers with the realities of leadership – e.g. routinized practices, following the common purpose, the impact of

context, leadership as relation-building – is that it is difficult to provide general notions on leadership. Uniqueness calls for studying the phenomena, not to create one more general, grand leadership theory. With that aim in mind, leadership might still, indeed, disappear (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a), or be replaced by another kind of research that yet acknowledges the phenomenon.

Uniqueness is a related term to phenomenon. Phenomenology, the study of what appears to us as phenomenon, "recognizes the subjective nature of knowledge and pays close attention to lived experience as a valid source of knowing. Many of the more traditional ways of exploring leadership attempt to describe it 'from the outside' in accordance with accepted social science methods and assumptions about validity and objectivity. In contrast, phenomenology embraces the significance of meaning within human sense-making processes" (Ladkin 2010: 6).

When we consider leadership as a unique, invisible and informal phenomenon, it means that very little can be taken for granted. As a phenomenon the perceived world appears *first* unique, as a never-seen-in-this-form-before, and only *after* that will it be categorized (defined, modelled). The central quality of the social world is its *uniqueness*: to be precise, there are no two similar individuals, needs, actions, or social situations. In practice leadership always takes place in unique circumstances that never happened before or will happen again in exactly the same manner.

So what do materials look like through these epistemological and ontological lenses that show the phenomenon in an informal and unique, processual light?

5.1 Thematic analysis and why it was used

The first round of analysis was conducted in four steps: thematising discussions, clustering these, creating two basic leadership orientations, and at the end 'cracking the code' (Geertz 1973), that is, narrating the SEBU leaderships story anew. Here are the steps of the first analysis round in diagrammatic form:

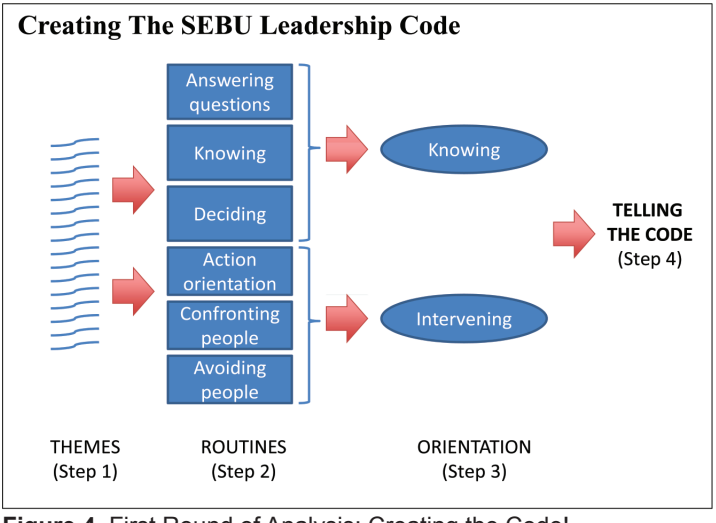

Figure 4. First Round of Analysis: Creating the Code!

The first step was to conceptualize the unstructured materials on the video-tapes. I simply listed and thematized what the participants talked about. This created several thematic units, but in the first place these seemed just arbitrary and odd. In this phase it became very obvious and concrete that it is possible to organize the materials in various ways, all of them depending on the perspective one takes.

The second step showed that there were certain basic images of leadership that the SEBU leaders maintained and reproduced. At first sight I did not even recognize these, because the practices were so obvious: answering questions, decision making, confronting people and the like. This step taken, I realized that these daily actions are leadership routines, and so to my amazement the study of emergent leadership turned into its opposite – studying routines instead of studying change. Based on Potter and Wetherell's (1987) notion that organizations tend to create a set of informal codes of conduct, I started to call these routines The SEBU Leadership Code.

Moving this way, back-and-forth within the materials reflects the basic principle of the hermeneutic cycle: even if we return to the same things, we are not the same people that confronted the issues in an earlier phase; we meet them on a different level and with different understanding.

Out of the video-taped discussion I then produced a manuscript. The issue of (non-) transcription is illustrative for the chosen method: if one was supposed to write down what is seen on tape – each movement, gesture, facial expression, tone of voice, body position, background – just five minutes of video-tape could generate 100 pages of detailed transcription. "The use of recorded data serves as a control on the limitations and fallibilities of intuition and recollection" (Heath 2004: 272).

I mentioned above that the materials could be structured in several ways, and here also Heath reminds us about the limitations and possible fallacies of material use. There are two things one has to consider in methodological terms: first, what kind of power issue the language use introduces, and second the relativist claim of 'anything goes'.

The power issue refers back to the discussion under the methodology chapter, where, according to Foucault, each society creates its own regimes of truth. This is a double-issue, as we shall see, since both the language the participants use and the language the researcher introduces can be at stake. First, in the following analysis the participants' language will be in the following analysis the leading construct. I explored the meanings that the participants ascribe to their own leadership role. This I did by reading the manuscript of the video-taped scenes and analysing each instance where either the word leader or leadership were was used. There were altogether 42 of these instances, and I analysed what kind of situation it was or what kind of meaning what was attached to those terms. The findings show similarities with Alvesson and Kärreman (2003a; 2003b) in two ways. On the one hand the participants do not analyse their own leadership role actively, so there is something like "extraordinization of the mundane" taking place. On the other hand leadership bears such a strong cultural appreciation that a temptation to over-value anything ascribed to it certainly exists.

During the first part of the analysis the language the researcher introduces does not play such a strong role as in later categorizations. To verify this the possibility to crosscheck the 42 instances of 'leader' or 'leadership' exists. However, in organizing the materials and in thematizing the issues the researcher manipulates the materials in many ways, and what I, as a researcher, do is not the truth, but a possible way to make sense of the situation and leadership.

In the following analysis the research method whose shadow shows the most or that exercises the role of a Foucauldian "regime of truth" is linguistic discourse analysis (Potter 2004; Potter and Wetherell 1987). Even if I did not conduct discourse analysis in a strict sense, the thematic linguistic analysis follows the lines of discourse analysis. The semantic analysis could have been produced with data-analysis software like ATLAS.ti for coding the text, but since my manuscript of the videos was only some 30 pages, I decided to conduct this part in an old-fashioned way by identifying the text passages and analysing their context.

As will be seen at the end of the analysis, the social constructionist story of the SEBU Leadership Code (Chapter 5.3) is also a kind of Foucauldian discourse analysis to the genealogy of the Code, that is, to enlighten the system that creates and maintains the Code.

The second question posed above still needs an answer: What prevents us making only relativist 'anything goes' interpretations? How can this way of proceeding be justified? I think the above clarifies most of it, but it is good to be clear about this: the interpretations offered in this chapter refer to the "minimalistic sense" of leadership, as it is talked about, maintained in language use and given different meanings (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a). Leadership is a very rare bird, and here I do not have a need to make the concept any stronger or weaker than the participants present it. This is also a matter of methodology. I think the analysis I make keeps the phenomenon alive to a degree that it is at least spoken about. Making it any weaker might make it very loose and without a point of reference in real life. Here that reference still exists. On the other hand making it stronger would not correspond to reality.

Yet the triviality of the leadership practices and of the Code left me wondering what these things really say and what is their value. The social constructionist story of the Code finally displays a kind of inevitable (power) structure within the SEBU social system, within which social practices form a particular kind of causal structure of cause and effect.

That story is a similar kind of system to what I have witnessed in another organization with regard to stress and burnout symptoms: in this particular organization most of the employees of a unit were on the verge of burnout, because the majority of the work reached their desk only a few days before the dead lines. In that case they had no other choice than to work like crazy for few days in order to meet the requirements – and this was a constant repetitive pattern. However, it turned out that the perfectionist head of unit, who kept the work and files on her desk until the last moment, triggered the situation. Holding the files left her the maximum time to finalize her part, but squeezed

the time the real experts could use to a minimum. Once recognized, the system and the vicious circle it had produced could be broken.

5.2 Forming the Leadership Code

The first attempt to interpret the vast array of materials (16 hours of video-tapes including large amounts of discourse and actions together with research diaries and documents) took place by conducting a thematic analysis and listing themes that were talked about. Given my background as a leadership consultant and that the particular trainings were familiar to me, it was a challenge to retain an open and sensitive attitude to what is there – to pay attention to things I had noted before and especially to those I had not noticed. The more I watched the tapes, the more themes emerged: I see this, and now that, and those things I haven't noticed before, what are they, and there are these things... These first attempts only increased confusion, but it was a very useful exercise, because it clearly showed that the more aspects I as a researcher am able to perceive in the materials, the more there will be need for structure at some stage.

Based on the initial research interest and the research question, I chose the key terms 'leadership', 'change' and 'practising skills' to guide the analysis. That resulted in a list with some 25 themes. I saw that there were certain repeating patterns of action that SEBU leaders constantly acted out, things like answering the phone and telling people what to do and solving smaller or bigger problems. In general it seemed that they are partly reacting to the environment, partly trying to create their own agenda.

How is leadership acted out at SEBU? It soon became evident that the training participants have certain repeating patterns and recurring actions, *routines*. Cohen (2007), following Dewey, sees routines as a kind of "unchosen" everyday actions that often remain unnoticed:

> "The actions we engage in despite our choices and resolutions seem to be mysteries or minor anomalies in a choice-centered worldview. Yet we enter a meeting room and head for the seat we occupied last time, not because it was optimal then and remains so now, but because now it is familiar. We may even feel some resentment if our seat has been 'taken' by someone else. (…) Unchosen action patterns therefore predominate in our lives, but they remain mere curiosities in a discourse on organization in which cognitively grounded decision is supreme" (Cohen 2007: 777).

Routines are "recurring action patterns" (Cohen 2007) and "*repeated patterns of behaviour that are bound by rules and customs and that do not change too much from one iteration to another*" (Feldman 2000: 611). But how to recognize whether these recurring patterns are leadership routines or some other routines? The Fieldpath Method would advocate listening to the materials without preconceptions with the aim of creating a bottom-up definition: what do people talk about? I have written down in the video-manuscript: "*There are lots leadership dimensions here, what if I'd collect leadership phenomena?*"

Theoretically these clusters could still be constructed in many ways, but instead of generating something extraordinary or striking, The Fieldpath Method produced clusters of phenomena that were *ordinary things, everyday actions* (answering questions, knowing, making decisions…). Realizing this I was at first stunned, horrified and disappointed: Is this really the result of my year-long exploration, such trivialities?

From the perspective of process ontology change is the ruling order of things and stability is an exception, whereas Cohen says that routines as stabilized patterns of actions dominate our lives. What to make out of these seemingly contradictionary notions? From the process ontological perspective the question is not "how does change take place?" but rather "how and by which means do we create stability?"

The routines that I found offer one answer to that question. If the research interest is on how leadership skills are developed in practice,

then it is obvious that the present practices are challenged. In order to understand change, we need to give account of the original stabilized state. Identifying SEBU leadership routines equates to "identification of the organizational actors framework" (Thachankary 1992) which is a central part of the process of interpretation.

Proceeding this way I ended up with an *immanent* and *emergent* leadership definition, which methodologically is in line with process ontology. None of the parties relevant to this study (researchers, consultants, participants, SEBU) has defined leadership in advance or dominated the definition. In the following, SEBU leadership becomes constructed out of that part of *the discourse where participants themselves refer to their role as leaders* and explain their practical actions and thoughts in that role. They are not explicitly saying "I think leadership is…" but the materials that count are those where participants implicitly or explicitly talk from that position and describe their daily routines. In this fashion language and actions *maintain and construct a* certain kind of stabilized notion of SEBU leadership.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) explain that ethnomethodological studies make sense of everyday social life in different institutions and that one of the research strategies for dealing with materials is "telling the code" by giving an account of what is going on from the insider's point of view. "It is a commonplace finding in traditional research that prisons, hospitals and similar total institutions have a set of informal rules which are different from, and often oppose, the official ones" (1987: 19). A similar kind of principle can be seen as a part of hermeneutic inquiry too, when Thachankary (1992: 226) talks about "revealing repetition".

Could a set of guiding principles of SEBU leadership be summarized under a set of informal rules or as an implicit code of conduct? Routines are recurring action patterns (Cohen 2007), consisting of talk and actions. Reality in this view is a narrative social construction, shaped and altered by the way people talk about it (White and Epston 1990; Freedman and Combs 1995). As Couture and Strong (2004) state, maintaining or changing these categories "can be seen as processes and products of people's talk".

Through the clusters I formed the view that, indeed, there is an inherent local understanding of leadership, a culture that is maintained by recurring action, repeated patterns of speech and language usage. These make up a leadership routine at SEBU. Here is an overview of SEBU leadership routines, i.e. what the leaders do in practice:

Table 3. The SEBU Leadership Code

Routine	Idea of routine	Impact on followers	Orientation
Answering questions	If people ask the leader, s/he is to provide an answer	Quick solutions, does not support employees' thinking	*Knowing*
Knowing	Leaders should know and act as experts in their field and in organizing	Leaders know "better", they are believed to have more information	*Knowing*
Problem solving	In case of interpretation, hesitation or problem, leader is to decide	Leader solves the problem, is responsible and can be claimed for mistakes (not team members)	*Knowing*
Action orientation	An urge to follow targets, deliver results, get things done – there is always an agenda	Lean and mean, quick and dirty, walk the talk, "just do it". Little time for listening or reflection.	*Intervening*
Confronting people	If things are not "as they should be", leader is to confront people	Leaders' confrontations with people are essential, but create problems	*Intervening*
Avoiding people	Leaders have hierarchic responsibilities, filling in Excel-reports etc.	Leaders report paper results and avoid people, as these discussions tend to become confrontational	*Intervening*

Reading even deeper into the subject of routines I found theoretical accounts according to which routines do change (Feldman 2000), and change happens when disconcerting effects temporarily unsettle the stability of practices (Lamprou and Tsoukas 2009). But what should I do with these routines and how do they help in explaining emergence of leadership?

5.3 Two leadership orientations: knowing and intervening

Finding out similarities between the six SEBU routines was a key to defining two parallel leadership orientations: an internal one toward self and an external one toward others. The internal orientation, knowing, derives from expert-status, meaning that leaders are often expected to know, answer and decide. A distinctive feature of this orientation is that it is directed from outside towards leaders and that it consists of leader responses to these stimuli. The second orientation, intervention, is an opposite process, from leader to the followers: it is a leader intervention into the system. An intervention (lat. *inter-venere*) literally means to come between, i.e. to come between the flow of events from outside, while not accepting the way things are advancing. The intervening orientation is a result of perception, what is seen 'out there' as relevant, and that perception is influenced by various kinds of background information.

5.3.1 Knowing

The knowing orientation was formed out of three leadership routines of speech and action: answering questions, knowing and problem solving. These three I found when I tracked the word "leadership" occurances in the materials, and then analysed the context and meaning. The first recurring pattern in which the participants described themselves as fulfilling their leader-role was answering questions. It was striking how often participants described answering questions as their main leadership task. "People call me, or they occasionally meet me in the corridors or during the lunch, and they always ask these things", a SEBU leader explained. Another one called himself "one-man call-centre", as most of his time was spent on the phone answering questions about this and that.

The practice of telling adult people what they should do often became a topic, as it bothered the SEBU leaders. Regularly two

opinions were presented: one voice said that there are people who need clear advice, and the other voice said that leaders should encourage independent thinking of their people. Usually this was explained by saying that people are different, and different people need different leadership; yet a view that the participants commonly developed was that most of the questions are such that people could answer these *themselves*, but that if the culture is based on a traditional leader-follower orientation, they ask the leader. There are naturally sometimes questions where it is good to ask someone, but a side effect of asking is that the responsibility for the actions is also transferred to the leader who suggests something ("Well, I am not quite sure about this, but since she said so…"). The idea of a leadership practice of asking questions (what is your idea about this, how would you do it…?) instead of answering was introduced as a result of these considerations.

Even if participants felt that they were not automatic answering machines, the following statements illustrate what happens when the routine of *answering questions* gets challenged:

- But it is rude not to answer a simple question, isn't it?
- Do you mean that I should not answer a question even if I know the answer?
- My people are used to getting direct answers, so they would just get frustrated and mistrusting.
- I don't want to play any hide and seek in real life!
- How do you know what kind of questions to use?
- How to find a right balance between questions and answers?
- Even with questions you can still lead people to a right or wrong track!

These comments imply hesitation, consideration and testing of the new practice, which in the narrative change model is regarded as a natural part of a change process. The narrative change model describes change as a path, a passage in a person's life and consists of three phases: separation, in-between and incorporation. (Freedman and

Combs 1995) Two of the phases concentrate on a state of not-ready-yet, which implies that hesitation, consideration, and the creation of a more thorough understanding are integral parts of a process during which a human change takes place. The comments also talk about the need to separate oneself from previous practices, being in-between and the challenge of incorporating a new idea into practice. This is what they state about their own problem of translation:

a) A tradition of answering exists and it is an actively maintained practice.
b) Maintaining the routine is socially important.
c) Their understanding about the situation has changed.
d) It is not clear why one should depart from the current practice, at least as long as one can't be sure how a new practice would look like or function.
e) There is little experience in trying out a question mode in place of an answering mode.

The problem of translation is created by bringing the past habits (a), current action patterns (b) and future aspirations (c) into existence simultaneously. The situation is similar to what hermeneutics describes with the term 'fusion of horizons'. In fusion of horizons the problem of translation is defined as fusion of the text horizon and the reader's horizon, and in the act of fusion these two combine to create a new understanding – a horizon that did not exist before. Because the reader's horizon is subjective and each reading is a unique act, the resulting new horizon is a unique achievement.

Even if these learning processes and skill adaptations are individual and unique achievements, the following ideas did got commonly accepted:

1. Employees are capable of answering most of their own questions.
2. Creating their own solutions is much more motivating and enables an understanding and appreciation of solutions.

3. In order to make that happen the leaders should first change their way of acting.

Asking questions instead of delivering answers is a difficult task in social terms. As the above quotes state, people expect answers, whereas not getting answers would irritate them, and there is no sense in playing hide and seek. The social construction of leadership would need to change: instead of answering, the leaders ought to support peoples' own thinking. There is an important point to make here: on the one hand the participants have stated that they want to change, on the other hand the above comments indicate a refusal to do so. Getting a chance to learn the required skills can diminish this cognitive dissonance. From a hermeneutic point of view two things are needed: a coherent story that makes the change understandable, and skills training. These two can be regarded as referring to the whole and parts of the hermeneutic circle. The whole (an idea, a story, a mental representation) is applied to practice, and the practical try-outs will teach more about the idea.

Furthermore, there is a difference between change and transformation to be remarked on here. Change means that something is done differently than before, whereas transformation is that which is required to make it happen differently. Change is often described as painful, but in the terminology here it is rather the process of transformation that can be connected with work, effort, joy and pain. The problem of translation that was introduced in chapter 2 is then more a problem of transformation than one of change.

If these leaders want a change, do the above comments mean they resist it? Can we identify individuals that champion the new idea faster, or those who remain indifferent or cynical? (Mantere 2005). From the perspective of a 'change agent' these remarks can be interpreted as signs of resistance to change. On the other hand, Ford et al. (2008) note that resistance to change is a category created by change agents (those in charge of change attempts such as managers, consultants, leaders…) as their own sensemaking device. The perspective of

participants (withness-thinking: Shotter 2006) confirms that they never identify with such categories: they never call themselves change resistant or cynical. The category of resistance to change is an outside construction. Instead the participants have now started to think, digest new ideas, challenge old and new assumptions; they have started to reconsider, re-evaluate and learn.

From a hermeneutic perspective these remarks can be interpreted as clear representations of the process of understanding – of thinking and reflecting. Fusing an old routine with a new idea is an event that needs digesting, because the previous recurring pattern of answering is a tradition they have grown into. Traditions, the way hermeneutics sees them, are building blocks of presumptions, and we are seldom aware of them, yet understanding is profoundly built on these. "Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live" (Gadamer 2004). "Getting rid of traditions" is in a hermeneutic sense not possible as such. Gadamer puts this point drastically: "In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way n the family, society, and state in which we live" (Gadamer 2004: 278). Because of this embedded nature of human understanding in traditions and history, hermeneutics rather calls for a re-thinking, re-interpretation, and re-narration of the inherited presumptions. As several things need to be readjusted before a coherent narrative and understanding is created, the fusion, by its nature, takes time. Yet 'taking time' does not in hermeneutic sense imply reaching the final fulfilment of understanding or knowledge, but that understanding follows kairological logics, where the results of that process cannot be predicted.

Also Weick (2007) reminds us that dropping your gear or toolkit in an acute situation does not usually come automatically, as it requires acknowledging that the current action pattern will not lead to a success. Situational demands can even be such that if one does not perceive an alteration in current conditions, but thinks they are still the same,

the routines, originally designed for another situation, can lead to a catastrophe, as in Weick's example of a bush fire (1993).

The second SEBU leadership routine, *leadership knowing*, is both social and personal in character. Most of these people have previously been in expert-positions, where their identity was based on specialist knowledge. As leaders they admit that specialist expertise is no longer a requirement of their work, adding at the same time that a social expectation of knowing still exists. A leader in this technically oriented environment is supposed to know a lot about the content and technical specifications of the work. Nevertheless, the participants were intrigued by their experience in the outdoor exercise, where thinking for yourself seemed to lead to a higher motivation than being told by a knowing authority what to do. *"As a coach you don't necessarily have to know the answer but you can still coach."* Knowing in this altered form becomes very different, because the training context develops a contradictory view according to which the leader as a coach does not need to know (cognitive dissonance). Nevertheless, answering questions and knowing as basic themes of leadership work are products of the common culture.

The third routine produced by the knowing-orientation is *problem solving*. There is a wide-spread, culturally accepted and maintained *expectation* towards problem solving and decision making. Leadership is very much constructed as an individual task, still depending on the image of a feudal king (Barker 1997), which implies an expectation that leaders solve problems (take an issue on their shoulders and find solutions) and make decisions (by stating yes or no), and thus take responsibility. In that respect reactive decision-making has a character of intervention too.

Because of the widely accepted expectation to solve problems that are posed to him, a leader automatically responses to any concern or question. As means for answering this, leaders tend to create – as they say in empirical materials – "plans, spare-plans, and spare-spare-plans", or they need "an opinion and a second opinion – of my own". Yet they also recognize that their own decisions cannot be "pushed through", because that diminishes the commitment of people.

An expectation of knowing attracts SEBU leaders to act in socially accepted ways of acting as knowing agents, delivering answers, and making decisions. Indecisiveness, being emotional, or relying on feelings and intuition is not talked about – these themes are practically non-existent, and this fact will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7, where the non-existent elements build the core of the argumentation.

To summarize the knowing orientation, there are two issues to highlight here. First, for a human change to take place *time* is needed for adaption. Formal training days are not the place where the adaptation can take place. Second, becoming of leadership includes dropping off long-held beliefs about leaders that still are considered valid in the majority of the organization.

5.3.2 Intervening

The outward orientation of intervention consists of three practices: target orientation, confronting people and avoiding people. These routines, again, were constructed through the thematic analysis of the script, and then, in order to check the context, by referring back to original video-tape. In all these actions the leader actively 'comes in-between' (lat. *inter-venere*) the way things are advancing. In the following I have chosen some extracts to show how participants (all of them leaders) talk about their experience of trying to influence the current actions. Intervention was defined as an orientation towards others, and it often starts by observing that things are not advancing in the manner the leader expects. Here a team leader is venting his frustration:

> "See what I've got, a team of two guys who don't even talk to each other. They're spending eight hours a day together and telling each other to f*** off… These kind of things are hard to recognize while sitting over here [in the office]."

Further similar observations include two field service technicians whose working time is officially from 7 a.m.to 4 p.m. Yet they leave home at 7 and are back home at 4, and they start their day at a gas station cafeteria, thus visiting the first client at around 8.30. And at 9 am it is time for the (in Finland) official coffee break… One SEBU leader spoke of how he went to have a cup of coffee with two service technicians, because these two met each day at a certain gas station at the same time. Their coffee break started 15 minutes early and ended 15 minutes late, and each of them knew what was going on but nobody said a word about the working times. Whether this is a good practice or not depends on the context, but this leader concluded that this was an intervention since the guys now know that he recognizes their habits too.

Another supervisor complains that one of his eight guys has grown so over-weight that he is almost unable to fulfil the assembling tasks in high or narrow places. And still the financial targets are the same for each team. The hard part for the leaders seems to be dealing with these people and confronting them in a positive manner, as this leader states:

> "It is a bit frustrating that there's so much to do and so little time – and that as a result of that you don't easily have time to talk with people. The only times you go to them is when you have to – that is, when there is an 'issue'. That doesn't make me too popular, does it…!?"

A further repeated pattern that did not change too much from one iteration to another (Feldman 2000 definition of routines) was an urge to get things done and to *push* things to happen. Here is a prime example:

> "That's how it went in the previous working place too… I used too much toughness, always called the people back and insisted on sticking to the plans. I participated too, but at least the things advanced. But

> if there is no ownership, it is more difficult. (…) The feedback also stated that I should cool down... But I would like to say that move your ass, get things done. You cannot just start everything and leave it there."

The recurring action pattern of introducing things and reminding people about them is reflected in trainer's talk too:

> "Many of you probably are in a situation that you need to introduce an issue to the discussion or agenda. It belongs to your role: hey, how about this? It's part of coaching that you tell your view, but do not get stuck with it. You have to raise up these difficult financial issues, like, hey, how about these numbers… It's about bringing new things and new words onto the map of thinking, to common conversation."

The above statements illustrate the basic nature of leadership intervention at SEBU: there is a need to pay attention to certain things (strategy) and get things done. Thus it also leads us to *action orientation*, which was witnessed when issues are acted upon and solved. Action orientation or "fire fighting" as they call it is the basic hindrances of learning, as it leads to "quick fix", solving an acute problem but not preventing it happening again. The participants were busy with their daily work, filling in reports and Excel-sheets, dealing with "falling trees" and "fire fighting" (urgent cases, usually client demands or daily occurring problems), so their main learning efforts were practical trials, probing out new techniques in their urgent cases, or in situations that had remained problematic for a longer time. This attitude, based on problem solving and action orientation, has similarities with Weick's (1993) account of the Mann Gulch Disaster, where 13 fire-fighters died: while faced with a rapidly expanding catastrophe the fire-fighters made the best possible decisions with the information at hand. But in the rush of the moment the big picture easily gets lost, which does not necessarily lead to successful outcomes.

A common denominator for these situations is that they start with an observation that the things are not going the way they should. How do leaders know that? Intervention starts with target orientation (derived from strategy): certain business targets are given, and cutting the targets in pieces creates a picture of what or how much is expected from individual workers. Someone coming too late or being physically in a bad shape and thus unable to fulfil the tasks means that others in that team need to replace them, either physically or financially. That is not fair or ethically right, the SEBU leaders concluded. This shows that on the one hand the financial targets lead to a raised awareness of efficiency and productivity, but on the other hand there are also ethical limits: if you are paid, you should work properly too.

The workers often regard intervening in the current flow of things as a problem, which makes the a leader into a kind of trouble maker, as here:

James: After all, I don't personally have any major reasons to resist the move (of the office), it can be nice to change the views for a while… So all I've got to do is to sell the idea to the guys…
Coach: So you don't experience this as a problem but your subordinates do, right?
James: Yeah, or actually **I know** they experience it as a problem.

In this example, James underlines that the office removal will cause problems for the guys, but it is his job to sell the idea to them. We do not know how James knows that the guys will see the removal as a problem, but that is his perception. Part of the problem, as it later turned out, is caused by a tendency to avoid discussions that can be interpreted as negative. The coaching session in which the topic was raised, was a little later reflected as follows:

Trainer: So what happens in this kind of a coaching case?

Fred: The topic he introduced kind of changed – it got deeper, new dimensions appeared. We started from a small case, but behind that there is a worry about the whole organization.

James: Yeah, this isn't actually such a small issue…

In James' opinion a negative issue is linked with the work motivation: what the guys are ready to do and how to introduce other changes and new targets at the same time as the possibly negatively interpreted office move. These meetings with people are experienced as confrontations, so it is no wonder the attitude to meetings is negative. Confronting people is a leadership task that one has to face, SEBU leaders say, and most of the problems emerge out the consideration of how people will react and how one should act in these difficult situations.

Who would like to confront people with difficult issues at her/his work? Sometimes it clears the air, indeed, but as a leadership task it does not sound too tempting. The way confrontation is socially constructed makes the next routine understandable: *avoiding people*. Leaders start to avoid personal contact with their people because their basic job seems to be intervening, which easily turns into confrontational discussions. Intervening is basically defined as a negative task, because a leader anticipates that an employee will take a negative attitude to what s/he brings up. This, I think, is understandable: If you do not see a reason for changing your way of acting, why would you?

Confrontation is partly a consequence of the style that is used. From a theoretical (and therapeutical) point of view the question is: when does the discussion about an 'issue' or problem turn from talking about the problem into a fruitful dialogue that leads to new solutions? (Juhila 2000; Schmidt 2004). In the following example the style affects the substance:

Fred: Could it be a question of style? You (the coach, Harry) have an offensive style when asking, it kinda insists the answer. The other might not be ready to give an answer or doesn't have words in mouth. That is, you pose the questions quite demandingly.

(George smiling and laughing.) That's maybe… That maybe creates a feeling of pressure. (George holding his hands in front of his face and smiling.)

Consultant:

Hmm-m… On whose agenda are we then? – If you as a coach want something, that tends to take a lead, right? – So George, what happened here?

A big question mark

So it is part of SEBU leadership orientation to intervene in the current flow of actions. When intervening, leaders must have internalized a view on 'how things should be', that is, to have an agenda. The agenda is written in as targets, derived from SEBU corporate strategy. The leadership task is then to introduce these issues and create a common sense-making process. In this excerpt Max is figuring out how to introduce the strategic topic of sales:

Max: How to increase sales, that's a topic we've dealt with often. More precisely, sales doesn't mean here something you've sold to the client but the assembly work done by the technicians.

Tim: So do you have ideas? How to increase sales?

Max: They have to realize that their jobs are more secure when they sell. The problem is that the guys are on very different levels.

Trainer: What does this require from your side? I've heard this story too many times. Is it just a funny story? What are you going to do and how?

Max: The guys have to buy the idea and I need to start to coordinate the field…

Trainer: So what will you do to make that happen?

Max: First the leader then the men, we create goals together, and personal goals like what does everybody believe they can sell during the next period. So that they can participate in that

decision making right from the start, get more committed. It has to come from their side.

Trainer: Is that the way it goes?

William: How would you answer their question "what's in it for me?"

Trainer: Yeah, you're kind of suggesting more work for them…

William: And it's your task to see that the guys have a chance to answer that question. And if the answer is not money, the answer can only come from inside of them.

Robin: So does that mean that if you do the assembly work and sales, then this work is a kind of an addition to previous task.

Max: Basically yes.

Robin: So it is like double-job: doing sales results in an added working time at that site.

Max: Well yeah, that's a big question mark now…

When an 'issue' is being reflected on, it turns out that there are further considerations. That was a common feature of many similar learning discussions: when leadership responsibility is taken, the interactions with people increase. On the other hand often, like here, ethical issues are at stake: the leader wants to save the work places. Another ethical issue is that the leader in question does not believe in a top-down approach where he would tell the guys to sell, but that they need to be involved in decision making from the start. That is already implying a change from knowing and a confrontational attitude towards a shared leadership approach.

All in all the routines provide a framework for the training interventions: when routines are recognized, the participants decide on which ones to work – and this happens on an individual basis (uniqueness argument, see above Ch. 4.3). When we consider the context in social constructionist terms, however, participants are never 'alone' or detached from the reality of others, but embedded in it – uniquely. Transforming routines into new action patterns is then not an individual endeavour, but a social construction: to achieve it, the others are needed.

5.4 The SEBU Leadership Code as a social construction

At this point interpreting the materials through the hermeneutic circle attains a reasonable level of saturation (Thachankary 1992) and it is possible to create a story-line of how SEBU-leadership is socially constructed. If the above story in this chapter has been about telling the code, maybe this is cracking the code (Geertz 1973) – but not in a sense that this is the truth, but rather illustrating the logic of events. This is a story of The SEBU Leadership Code and how it is socially constructed:

The feudal king image that still culturally dominates the SEBU leadership understanding implies that a leader governs by knowing and telling the right answers. *He* is almighty. There is still a strong cultural expectation to know, and it is easier to take the knowing-position instead of acting against it (ask questions). If someone knows, he is also expected to solve the problems.

Action orientation, that is, getting things done effectively, is an implicit economic ground rule of efficiency, which is reflected through deadlines, delivery targets and other language of that fashion. However, the target setting requires leaders' active participation towards the goals, especially if it seems that targets are not being reached. Leaders take this responsibility, because it is a cultural role expectation, also manifested in the communication hierarchies. Responsibility for making targets available and visible is left to the leaders. This makes leadership discussions with employees confrontational, and who likes to confront people? It is easier to avoid them and try to lead by sending Excel-sheets by e-mail.

The feudal king image is based in an assumption that people are not motivated, that is, are by nature not willing to do the work, and therefore external control and motivation are needed. In this story free will and intrinsic motivation do not play as important a role as determination and external motivation.

6. VIGNETTES

6.1 What are vignettes and why they are used

It is the responsibility of the hermeneutically oriented researcher to explain the origin of the language, the key terms and concepts he uses. With regard to the previous chapter (The SEBU Leadership Code and the use of discourse analysis) that need was not so obvious, because the routines and leadership practices were derived from the actual language use.

Some of the language, terminology and concepts have their origins in disciplines like philosophy, psychology and organization theory. These concepts are imported as auxiliary devices for to opening up new interpretative perspectives to on the materials. As we shall see, once we can "drop off" the presumptions narrowly defined as 'leadership concepts' defined presumptions, the number of possible relations to the materials expands enormously. This opening up enables us to consider the materials as phenomena again, not as 'leaders' or 'leadership', and therefore the identity and unity of those terms start to get blurred again – they are re-formed as hermeneutic objects or phenomenona again. This procedure was above referred to above as Husserlian "bracketing

the prejudices" and Weickian "droppingoff" our traditional tools, as well as Heideggerian stretching outside the pre-thought paths and walking "off the beaten track". These procedures lead to deconstructing the Code and to Geertzian (1973) thicker descriptions. It also allows more creative use of researcher language and richer descriptions and categories than in the previous chapter.

The following vignettes to some degree deconstruct the previous Leadership Code, with the intention of making sense of the Leadership Code. The question is of the sort "so what": now that we have found out the SEBU Leadership Code – so what? The original chaotic mass of events has been ordered into a structured form that can now be discussed further.

The vignettes below illustrate how the participants experience the process of translation, and they simultaneously reveal the social nature of that translation. Weick (2007) remarks that a sign of a rich account is often the preservation of disorder and confusion, and in that spirit it has not been my aim to offer a clear-cut version of the process. I hope the vignettes enable the reader to step more into the actual practices, goings on and considerations that the participants experienced.

The vignette technique, adapted from Orr (1996) was however not the only or the first option available to cary out the material analysis. For a long time I was pondering how to keep the phenomena alive and which method would allow that and to what degree. Could I use pictures, caricatures, stories, comics...? I discussed the issue with several of my colleagues and after all those considerations I decided to set one limitation: this is still an academic study, and even if many things are nowadays possible, it is better not to try to use the most advanced thing in a dissertation. A second question was the degree of self-reflection: how to maintain the balance between enough self-reflection and too subjective an account? Another technique that I seriously considered was to go into the heads of the participants and to describe the events from the inside. This is what Doppler (1999) uses: when writing about leadership he puts himself in the role of an employee, that is, he changes the perspective of leadership so that he describes it from the position of the led, of the follower.

That kind of change of perspective might have been an interesting option. With vignettes I have tried to create a balance between glimpses of external reality (vignettes) and withness-thinking (Shotter 2006) thinking 'from the inside' (commentary). With the commentary after each vignette I try to remain loyal to local interpretations, while at the same time adding the researcher's voice to the dialogue, thus merging the languages (White and Epston 1990; Gadamer 2004). Furthermore, I will on some occasions exercise self-reflection in order to clarify why certain concepts are introduced. To get into participant's experience we need to begin by examining the very first stages of the training process: the moment people enter the training.

6.2 Vignette One: Entering the training

It all started one winter's morning… The first two-day training module starts at 9 o'clock in a spa-hotel in the city of Nokia, about two hours drive from Helsinki. The first module is an internat type, where people stay overnight, whereas the following training sessions (four times one day) will be held in SEBU premises in Helsinki.

Most of the participants have driven a long way and they don't know each other, so it is customary to offer coffee and breakfast before the training starts. The discussions around coffee tables are informal, participants relating to each other and discovering connections. One can hear bits and pieces like these:

> Oh, you're from R&D! Is Simon still there as the head of the research centre?
> Maintenance services? Doesn't ring a bell, really… I mean, I know what your guys do, but what do you do?
> So you're from Vaasa, right... Is it the new business area we recently acquired there, the XYZ-comp?

Simon, a talkative guy, takes the lead at one table and attracts three others to a lively argument about the meaning of SEBU's key technological innovation's patent running out. This table creates a fun atmosphere with loud laughs, whereas another table remains more silent. Two participants stand chatting with their coffee-cups in hand. The atmosphere is relaxed, but as people do not know each other well, their gazes explore other participants.

This industry is full of engineers, technical specialists and service technicians, who traditionally rely on their technical competence in problem solving. Work life involves a constant problem solving that requires logical thinking, bottle-neck analysis, calculation, streamlined processes and an overview of contact points between systems. Whether the person works in the factory, in R&D or as a service technician, the greatest asset has been technical talent. But change is in the air. The new strategy – customer orientation and emphasis on service business – has been announced, yet for technically minded, enthusiastic engineers and technicians that type of business is still worlds away from their daily practices. However, about the half of the training participants come from service business, and these leaders already face the challenges of customer orientation. For them, a whole new set of incentives, targets and measurements have been introduced during recent years. Introducing these new management mechanisms to their own people makes them appear as trouble-makers, because their people are not too interested in changing the customary ways of working. These two worlds, service and product-orientation meet in these coffee-table discussions too.

"*Okay, how about taking a seat here in the round and starting…*" the trainer raises his voice, which makes some people to start to fill up their coffee cups, whereas others put their cups away, wipe their mouth and choose a chair. Discussions die down, it becomes more silent and there is a certain tension in the air: what is this thing going to be about? Okay, we are sitting in a semi-circle – this is maybe a sign of something different, as someone comments:

No tables, just seats, right? Now, what's the idea here, I suppose you do have an idea behind this, don'tcha? Are we like the Knights of the Round Table, or what? [I do not know what the Knights of the Round Table refers to here, but I suppose it was meant as a joke, relaxing the suddenly more formal atmosphere.]

Another person comments: *Well, this way we can disturb their wise thoughts easier!*

To this the SEBU trainer comments with a brisk voice, laughing: *Yeah, it's easier to cut our bullshit!* People sit down, some looking for a comfortable place, others looking rather uncomfortable at any seat.

As typical as this beginning might be, the training never starts that moment: nobody just enters the training premises, grabs a cup of coffee, chooses a chair, and the things start from there. Participants' work and life histories, reasons for joining, and current life and work situations affect the training participation. These SEBU leaders come from different sites, some of them belonging to the factory organization, others to HR, sales, marketing or maintenance. Also the size of their teams, i.e. the number of followers in the hierarchy, differs a lot. A plant manager might have hundreds of people below him, a service team leader 10 service technicians, a team leader 3–7 team members, and an informal leader no direct followers, only peers.

So, who is there and with what kind of motivation? Here is an overview of a typical group. These characterizations are caricatures (Sauer 2005), meaning that the personal features are exaggerated in a way that on the one hand expresses them clearly and makes them visible, and on the other remains loyal to the original compositions of their personalities:

> Jeff, 42-year old technical engineer, is very keen on learning more about this thing called coaching, because in his opinion he has been coaching his son in sports for years, and he has already adopted those things at work too. He says it is time to conceptualize this thing, in order to make it even more available for him as a SEBU leaders. He

is happy that the company finally offers something like coaching training.

Mary, a 52 years old internal HR consultant, has been talked into joining by a colleague, who liked the training. She does not have anything against the training, but does not feel too motivated to learn anything new either. "Maybe I can learn something, but this is not something I have particularly been looking for", she declares.

A third person, William, 54, a former technician grown to a team leader, has been at SEBU for 30 years and has been sent by his superior. William thinks he has been forced to join and does not see too much reason for changing his ways of practising leadership. "Nothing to complain about", as he says. If you would ask his superior, as I did prior the training, you would hear a different story: that William is under-performing, and that his leadership behaviour is not in accordance with SEBU values (whatever the values are – people do not usually recognize them). In his superior's opinion William's old-fashioned and rigid methods hardly serve the purpose of increasing motivation among the employees. William himself, however, does not know anything about these considerations, which makes one wonder about the responsibility carried by his superior. This phenomenon, *avoiding direct contact about sensitive human issues or issues that are held to be difficult*, makes it increasingly complicated for people to relate to each other. It sometimes seems that ever more sophisticated tools, processes or systems are created in order to avoid personal contact. The more people can be managed by systems, the better. Such is the belief in technical rationality that many participants seem to be convinced that by perfecting the HR, bonus, reward and incentive systems, target-orientation would follow automatically, without any further human intervention. That, it seems, would be the ultimate solution. Nevertheless, the leaders that take the responsibility of conducting even difficult discussions *skilfully* with their people seem to be highly appreciated, as they are often referred as role models or good examples.

Anne, a 38-year old leader of a team of five persons, has different reasons for joining the course. She has been working at SEBU for four years in leader roles, as a supervisor and a team leader. When she learned that SEBU was organizing leadership training, she wanted to join immediately. She explains:"I've been at SEBU for quite a long time, but I have never really encountered a leadership training course. If I now have a chance for it and the company's paying, I'll certainly go for it. (…) I think it is good for me to reflect on my way of leading a team and to share these experiences with others. I hope I will gain new insights into expectations towards leaders at SEBU and maybe gain some practical tools."

Jake, a 52-year old diplom-engineer, applied for the training because he had heard positive comments about it, and he is very keen on exploring new ideas. Theoretical discussions, he admits, make him tick, and the possibilities that coaching might open up for leading people interest him. Is it possible to lead by asking questions? Can I really help people to solve their own problems? The practical side of training new skills is not so much his concern as is the theoretical idea of people participation and self-initiation.

Mats is a 44-year old factory manager from one of the central sites in Finland. He announces that any leadership education he can get is valuable. Leading a factory of 1000 people means that instead of sticking your fingers into each affair, you have to work through people, he explains. He expects that coaching skills can help him to become more skilful in cooperating with people and keeping them motivated.

A longer description of participants would reveal that each person comes with a different background, needs and motivational impulses. This is a clear link with the uniqueness discussion in the theory chapter (Ch. 4.3): each leadership challenge (culture) is different and unique. Therefore also the outcomes are unique and theoretically unpredictable.

Commentary

To take stand on the beginning in this fashion stems from my background in hermeneutics: understanding does not start without preconditions. I think this is an important feature of the analysis and the vignettes: understanding them requires knowledge of the context and realization that every action and speech moment have a history that they intentionally or unintentionally refer to. This Gadamer (2004) calls the logic of question and answer: each statement can be grasped as an answer to a question. Even if we hear the statement, we do not always know what the question is, to which it provides an answer. Furthermore, hermeneutics serves here both as a research and as a professional consultancy attitude. This short personal reflection shows already that the analysis of the empirical materials follows the interpretative and hermeneutic lines of thinking.

The first vignette sets the scene. It is like the curtain call at the theatre: the audience sees a stage set-up, and the content will follow. There is something very crucial revealed right at the start: The basic expectation for the training is that the trainers have the wisdom and that participants will listen to the knowledge from above (something that consultants call "classroom syndrome"). This expectation is confirmed in this vignette by one of the participants wondering about the absence of tables, and the other one commenting about the wise thoughts that the trainers are supposed to deliver. The SEBU trainer attacks that presumption immediately ("…*cut our bullshit*…").

The participants have been used to a very school-like education, reminiscent of the teacher-pupil relation. The training design, however, invites the participants to join a different game than what they are used to play, something where they participate as active co-constructors of the content. Instead of receiving content information, their task is to create a reality where talking about leadership issues, problems of the leadership role, personal challenges and how to achieve financial targets with their people become central building blocks. The content

is not given, but it has to be created. Also the learning process they are going to participate is unique – it is their own.

No leadership training previously. A great deal of training, mainly on technical matters, and courses on IT systems, SEBU processes and products is offered regularly, especially when new technical features of products, services or systems are introduced. The discussions during breakfast and the comments in the beginning can partly be explained by the unknown nature of this particular course. Most of the participants have very little experience of any other education than technical. The previous story that SEBU leadership practices derive from post-war times is validated to a certain degree: out of about 70 participants on six courses, some 10 people had attended a leadership training course within the previous 10 years. Only three of them had done it during their career at SEBU. Some participants had attended various communication or presentation skills training courses, but these courses were not intended solely for leaders and they concentrated on one particular skill.[1]

Although the training starts on the first day at 9 o'clock, for the participants the process starts *prior* the training. There has been no discussion about the content yet, but already their personal history and presumptions about the methodology of training (class-room syndrome: the beliefs of education from the past) affect the situation. Let us focus on the question of beginning, on entering something. Where does a story begin? Charles Bukowkski's *Ham on Rye* begins as follows:

1. It is to be noted that the lack of formal leadership or management education is not a special feature of SEBU but a feature of corporate policies and university education. Sure, there are nowadays (2010) university courses on people management and leadership, but these are rare and usually not obligatory within technical and economic departments – whereas most of the leaders in technology driven business organizations come from these universities. In most of the Master programs I have observed, leadership education plays only a minor role. Practical skills training is almost non-existant at university-level. That is partly understandable as students are not in practical work, but they could be taken through simulations or practical exercises during their studies, and that seldom happens, because university teaching is almost purely rationally oriented and lacking a link to experience.

> "The first thing I remember is being under something. It was a table, I saw a table leg, I saw the legs of the people, and a portion of the tablecloth hanging down. It was dark under there, I liked being under there. It must have been in Germany. I must have been between one and two years old. It was 1922. I felt good under the table." (Bukowski 2001: 9)

Does that passage mark the beginning of the novel? Technically it does, but for the reader that is not the beginning. To comprehend these words – to be able to read a text – a large array of background knowledge and understanding is needed, which means that already the first reading of a text builds up one more 'story'. In the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics we could say that any understanding is built upon prejudices (positively seen) (Gadamer 2004) and thus "The interpretation doesn't start, it constitutes" (Figal 2006: 74). In the above extract the reader is tempted to imagine the perceptions and sensations of a small child. It is an easy task that requires just a hint of imagination. Each reader attaches immediately different meanings to what is said, according to his or her background and history. We make different interpretations and therefore, for a reader, the story began long ago.

The same applies to training course participants: a beginning is always a constitution, a unique personal achievement and a creation. Participants enter the training with the understanding and presumptions – their personal history – which they carry with them, and the training is based on this pre-understanding. To start something is not to start from scratch, because to separate the present from the previous is in human learning not possible. Learning aims at a re-start and preparing for a new attempt (Figal 2009).

Nevertheless, there is a possibility – not to go back to the original 'thing', but – to rely on that which reveals and shows itself (*Gelassenheit* as releasement) as a phenomenon. This pedagogical notion thus makes us ask: how does leadership reveal or show itself to the participants? The aim of the training, as has been explained, is not to

showcase and tell the participants what leadership or coaching are, but to have them explore the issue in an embodied way. In this fashion they co-construct the phenomenon around something that is referred to as leadership. From a pedagogical perspective the point is: rather than feeding information, it is about being able to connect with what participants already have (*Vor-habe* in Heidegger's fore-structure of understanding).

Modern organization theorists share this hermeneutic rule of "entering the cycle of interpretation" too. Weick in his classic "Sensemaking in Organizations" (1995) illustrates sensemaking in a similar fashion:

> "Sensemaking never starts. The reason it never starts is that pure duration never stops. People are always in the middle of things, which become things, only when those same people focus on the past from some point beyond it. (…) There is widespread recognition that people are always in the middle of things. What is less well developed are the implications of that insight for sensemaking" (Weick 1995: 43 – italics PS).

What are the implications of Weick's insight for leadership education? First, from the participants' perspective they do not start a training; they continue, re-start and prepare for new attempts. They are in the middle of their local routines of practice, the nitty-gritty and unheroic battles of the workplace (Whittington 1996). Instead of solely focusing on the training content, the participants make sense of leadership practices. This observation turns the focus of training from *content* to the *processes* the participants are in. In this respect leadership education is about creation, not about ready-made objects. (The shift is analogical to SEBU's move from production-centred thinking to customer orientation. It connects inside past experience with the outside, the current situation now with the future aspirations (Scharmer 2009)).

Second, when we follow this line of thinking, the object of the training then becomes a person with a time dimension: coming from

somewhere, being here now, and going somewhere. The object of adult education is this continuation of past, present and future, not an objectified person with a defined problem, as it were. Past dictates the current understanding, people orientate towards some goals and intentions, wishes and wills (the degree of conscious goals varies) and these two fuse in the present moment. Seen theoretically – and from a pedagogical perspective – attending the training course means opening a horizon between past and future and making sense of that space. From an epistemological point of view this is a subjective approach, consisting of beings that create an identity over time, not of objectives to be maintained or observed. The aim is to let them to do things to themselves and invite them to explore their leadership work.

Third, Weick notes that the things only become things from a past perspective, retrospectively. I interpret his notion to challenge the object of the training again: should it be about things, or rather about processes? An object-based approach differs greatly from process-oriented training (Chia 1999; Lamprou and Tsoukas 2009; Tsoukas 2009; Tsoukas and Chia 2002; van de Ven and Poole 1995). Process-research considers reality not as a stable entity but as constant movement. Also discussions on learning become more fruitful when utilizing that perspective, because learning is then not about moving from one stable stage to another (linear, causal explanation of learning) but rather an ongoing process that incorporates past experiences with the present needs and future anticipations, just as described above.

In this commentary we have come pretty far from the actual training reality and participant narratives. That has to do with my way of reading the situation. By reading Heidegger's and Gadamer's original texts I have created a certain liking towards analysing small things. Heidegger is of course a master of turning words and getting behind the unreflexive and obvious use of language. Hermeneutics is also interested in the history of words and etymology. This kind of understanding of language's hidden meanings is reflected in how I discuss the 'beginning' of the training. Also Weick (1995) gets into this phenomenological-hermeneutic mode of thinking when he writes

about sensemaking that it never starts, because it is pure duration. He changes the ordinary, everyday colloquial use of the term into something new.

That kind of procedure is naturally intentional: in order to create new insights into leadership education we need to develop a more nuanced view about the status of things. Thus we also need a language for talking about the issues related to learning in an organizational context, and that language should engage human as well as financial and technical interests. At the moment there is an overflow of other than humanistic language, so it would seem. In the hermeneutic view, language, understanding and authorship are interrelated topics: "In the organizational context (…) once an event takes place in an organization, it acquires an indefinite potential for interpretation as long as language exists. The intent of the author of the event is no longer relevant." (Thachankary 1992: 208) Accordingly a hermeneutic interpreter, someone like the researcher, has the right to touch the issues and grasp them in his own language.

6.3 Vignette two: Outdoor exercise

This vignette certainly preserves some of the disorder of the actual events. The outdoor exercise included in the first module of the training course is called "The Blind Bottle". While blindfolded, the aim of the group (8-12 participants) is to find bottles in an outdoor area of about 100 metres x 50 metres. The group searches for bottles in two rounds. In the first round they have a non-blindfolded leader who has been shown where the bottles are and explained the task, after which s/he has ten minutes time to plan how they will perform the exercise. The rules are that the leader must not touch bottles or participants, so s/he can lead them only by talking. The time starts when the team is readyand is stopped when all the bottles are back in the basket in the middle of the area. The number of bottles matches the number of

participants, and the bottles are placed in arbitrary spots by the trainer and the chosen leader jointly.
In the second round there is *no nominated leader* and *all*, including the leader from the first round, are blindfolded. Also, no leader is nominated for the second, so there is room for leaders and informal leadership to emerge. Similarly to the first round the group is shown where the bottles are, after which they have ten minutes time to plan how to execute the task.

The surprise of the second round is that the group is now much more motivated and effective. This experience runs contrary to expectations. At the core of the exercise there is an embodied, sensory and feeling-based experience on how it feels to be led in the dark (1st round) and the meaning of motivation.

The first round

It is cold outside, the ground is covered by snow, and the participants are prepared for this by having winter clothes on. After having visited the field where the bottles lie and having planned how to proceed, Tim, the leader, walks back to the group and takes command. He tells to the blindfolded group: Please follow me to the task area. It is about thirty meters from here. Jim, please take the lead, and the others follow him.

The group reaches a low (30 cm) fence that they need to get over. While people at the end of the row stop and stay still, wondering what is going on, in the front end of the group the activity level rises as Jim stops and starts to touch the wooden fence. The leader instructs Jim: *Take your hands down – a little bit more – okay! Now carefully get over it…* Jim shouts to others: *Okay, I'm over. Then one after another!* From the video this part looks funny, because Jim makes this sound a big task, even if the fence is only 30 cm high. But when blindfolded and trying to hold your balance, even getting over a low fence is a challenge. At the fence the participants are sharing information about the environment: *Ground is a bit*

uneven here, so be careful! To which the leader comments: *Yeah, but it's soft* snow*, so there is nothing to worry about, it's just the footprints in the snow!*

Where is the fence, asks the fourth one, and the third person, who has just climbed over it replies with "it's over here", putting his hand on the pole – which the other cannot see of course. They hold each other's hands, providing little cues about the environment or the next steps, and slowly the whole group advances over the fence.

The leader then divides the group into pairs and appoints a team leader out of each pair: *Jim, you are the leader in your pair! Anne, you are the leader in you pair!* One of the participants comments during this phase: *I'm waiting for the leader to instruct!* It is as if he is saying 'no brains needed, don't you think, just follow the orders'. At this stage, the participants have no idea about the task, the terrain, or the direction they are supposed to move in.

As the leader selects a pair for collecting the bottles, a pair at the end of the row comments:

Andy: We are standing here like fools.
Ben: Well, we are not losing time.
Andy: Yeah, we've still got eight minutes.

It is impossible for this pair to really know how much time they have, but losing time makes them feel like fools. Another pair that has completed their part of the task (collecting two bottles with the leader's help and following his instructions) discusses the task:

Carl: Our actions were pretty random, right!?
David (sarcastically):
Hmph, that's one way to do it, oh yes!

They hear that the rest of the group is still searching for bottles:

David: Oh, they still need bottles? – Tim! Tim!

Carl (interrupts):

Ah, don't say anything, let them search.

Soon David continues the dialogue: *How many bottles were there – six, was it? – do you remember?* Carl turns his head to David, with his mouth open, like thinking, and he replies: *Six*. This comment might have been a repetition of the question, yet it is interpreted by Carl as a confirmation. *Six. Out of those, we've got two…*

Here, just by few comments, a reality of six bottles is constructed, even if the leader in the beginning said that there were eight bottles, one for each participant. This shows on a small scale how new realities get constructed, how sensemaking works and how understanding develops: small cues lead to contextual definitions. The new frame (6 bottles) functions as a reference for further actions. Later at the basket this same pair does not say anything when the leader counts the bottles and states that there should be eight.

A little later David continues: *If there are any bottles nearby, we could get more.* The trainer comes and asks how the pair is doing. Superb, they answer, and only ten seconds later they decide to search for more bottles – they start to walk in the snow without any knowledge about the location of bottles, about their own location or about the environment. Here a quick decision is made as a consequence of hearing the leader and others still being busy with the bottle-hunt.

At the same time all the other pairs are walking in different directions in the snow and the leader is running between the pairs to provide them information and to guide them to the bottles. The leader is really busy, while a pair comments: *We've actually completed our part, we could have a cigarette!* They both laugh at this, and since there is nothing else to do, they stop and stay still.

After over 20 minutes all the bottles are in the basket, and the when the group is gathered around the basket they take off their blindfolds.

The participants are asked to reflect on their experience. "*The tools were dropped right away, when we didn't get instructions*." "*Yeah, own*

thinking was forbidden!" That comment creates laughter in the group. "*Another thing was that it was not said how big the area is, one could not grasp it oneself. That would have helped*…" "Yes, I also thought it is totally different, that it would be a playground with a fence around it…", whereas the actual arena of their task was an open, snow-covered field with few special features to it. "*And especially since you're blindfolded, the time goes really slow*." This and the earlier comments underline the level of frustration. What kind of feelings did you experience, the trainer asks. "Well, it was very much about waiting… On the other hand it was easy: you didn't have any responsibility." "Well, it was unnecessary to shout anything in between, you could only stand still and wait for the commands to arrive. Now some of us were complaining and shouting in between, and that only irritates you."

Eric: We found the first bottle easily, and after that we were told to move straight-forward, which we did, but…

SEBU trainer: Yes, you were walking almost on the public road, that's where I stopped you.

Eric: Oh, I thought I'm within the children's playground.

SEBU trainer: Well, you were one metre off the road!

Trainer: How did it feel to stand there?

Eric: It was a long time to wait.

The next pair:

We were told to walk thirty meters, so we took thirty steps and started to wait. (…) It didn't feel bad; we knew that's the name of the game. Tim has a lot of things to do, so we could only wait. The other one adds: While waiting, the time runs slow. (…) We also thought it's not worth shouting, Tim will come when he's got time.

The last pair:

We soon realized that Tim is under a time-pressure, so we thought we wouldwalk and follow the instructions, shouting doesn't do

any good. When we can't go further, it's better to stop – there's no sense in shouting when the things get stuck anyway. We'll work for the team, listen to additional instructions and follow them, that's it.

The second round

After the group has reflected on what happened during the first phase, the second step is introduced by the trainer: in the next round the bottles will be in the same spot, but now everybody will be blindfolded, including the leader. As in the first phase, the group has ten minutes time for planning.

The group starts to move, and Jack says: *Hey, I've got one plan.* Anne stops and replies: *Okay, you tell your plan and everybody listens to it.* The group stands around Jack, who starts to explain. *"I can take the three bottles that stand along the path over there. When we go as a group, I can orient myself by sounds so that…"* He shows with his hands the area and others are looking there. Soon he gets interrupted by Anne: *For me it would be easier to start from the basket and return there.* Clark adds to this: *But wouldn't it be good if one of us goes to the basket to make some noise…"*, to which Jack adds "*At least* one!"

The joint planning session continues with different people adding something, for example Jake: "But we need some basic orientation, so that…" and "this fence is okay, we could just follow the fence." One of participants goes to try the fence, and the group starts to spread around, which action is followed by someone saying "Yeah, measure how many steps you need there…" This comment confirms that most of the group members are planning their own part, that is, the task becomes divided into sub-tasks for individuals or small groups. Half of the group goes to the basket to orient themselves, and everybody is actively walking around, waving their hands and talking to each other: *I'll go here… You go there… Then the basket… We can take those…*

After a while Anne starts asking rather more critically about orienteering. "*How can you define the direction and the distance…? (…) Let's keep the basket like this… Don't touch the basket anymore, don't move it!*"

The group members can be seen walking around the area, measuring steps and planning the way to their bottles. They follow the fence, crawl on their knees in the snow, and touch different objects like poles and big snow balls on the field.

When the trainer announces that there are two minutes left of the planning time, almost all are gathered by the basket and they start to check what each one does. Albert takes the lead: *The start will be there (pointing with his hand), so we all follow the fence to that corner (pointing with his hand), where Jack and Wayne will take their path. Whether anybody else is leaving from that corner, I don't know (No, no, people reply), but from this corner…* William interrupts him: "*Me and Tim will get the two bottles over there. Are you Anne leaving from here too? I'm leaving here to that snow mound over there.*" Jack and Alex… *"Yeah, we take those over there…"* It seems that everybody knows what they are doing, and then the planning time is over. It seems that the task preparations are finished in a somewhat satisfactory manner.

In the first phase the goal was 12 minutes and they needed over twenty minutes. In the second round the group defines 15 minutes as their goal.

When the exercise starts, the group advances to the playground fence again. But the one who leads the group, Albert, soon shows signs of uncertainty: Where are we now? We are inside the fence! Anne takes the outside route and leads the group to the planned two corners, where the pairs then leave each other.

The camera then follows William and Tim, who find the pole they chose as a landmark. They have evidently examined the pole carefully, because William says that he found the little marks on the round pole that show the direction.

As time passes, most of the pairs or individuals do not find their bottles, even if they have practised their task during the planning time.

It is hard to orientate in pure snow, as there are not too many signs in the environment that they could follow. The trainers stop the exercise after 20 minutes, and by then the group has collected four bottles, half of the total. There follows a joint discussion on what went wrong.

After that discussion the trainer then asks: *What if you would have to complete the task in ten minutes? Do you think it is possible?* The second trainer adds: *It is possible to do this thing in two minutes!* After a short discussion new instructions are given: *You have five minutes time to plan it, then you try it again!*

Again the group activity level is very high, these is a lot of talk about the previous experience and how to make it better: *The problem was that we got lost, so we need signs in the environment byto which we can then orientate ourselves.* Another one adds: *Yeah, let's build a little snowball that shows the direction to the next bottle!*

The group seems to have realized that in addition to a mental picture, a physical, embodied experience and orientation, a connection with the real ground is needed too. "*Coordinates, spare-coordinates, and spare-spare-coordinates*" must be constructed, as someone asserts.

The action now becomes very goal-oriented and physical: in order to survive on a plain ground, as many coordinates for sensations as possible are needed. One pair finds a nail on the round pole, and they twist it to show the direction. As she did not find her bottle on the previous round, Anne now builds extra-measures to find the direction and counts her steps carefully, closing her eyes and practising the path. Everybody is involved in a physical activity and using their senses of hearing, touching and balance and creating a mental map of spatial coordinates.

The actual exercise seems to go a little better, even if some pairs still get lost. However, they always re-orientate themselves by the basket or other coordinates. Also helping others takes place: after some people have found their own bottle, they go to help others. Some are still lost, and shout frustrated to others: "Heck, I can't find my snow pile!" By co-operation they now manage to find the bottles in twelve minutes.

The whole second phase is analysed in very different terms than the first round. The phenomenon of waiting is non-existant and the motivational level is high, which can be observed by enthusiastic explanations, smiles and sudden bursts of cheerful shouts. The group has clearly succeeded, and they are happy and motivated.

As a consequence of the exercise this group later constantly referred to 'the bottle-experience' as an explaining factor for preferring coaching to old-fashioned leadership: the experience of being involved and taking responsibility both for your own part and for the whole did not leave anybody cold or unmotivated– as did the first part with the leader.

Commentary

The way the exercise is framed in the first round of The Blind Bottle exercise does not allow the group members to participate in action, except by being led by the leader. In the second round the whole group participates in active planning from the beginning. The move I will now undertake is to step back from the technicalities of the exercise and allow an observing gaze into the flow of human actions.

To start with the first round, it is noteworthy how helpless people are when put under circumstances that prevent direct sensory (visual) experience. Actions become arbitrary. This is clearly illustrated by the first actions where the group tumbles over a low fence, which, as such, should not be an obstacle at all. But such a fence can act as a metaphor and function as a simulation: if we receive limited information it is harder to understand what is going on. This, I would like to add, is often the nature of modern work: it prevents embodied experiences, which makes it harder to really understand, because understanding is not only a cognitive, rational task, but an embodied task – thinking in a Heideggerian sense needs grounding, a sense for the earth and soil (*Bodenständigkeit* – Heidegger 2000), or homeland (Bambach 2004). While sitting at an office desk and in office environment we

tend to forget how important grounding is for thinking. Aesthetic epistemology presents a similar view (Linstead and Höpfl 2000; Strati 2007; Ropo and Sauer 2007), and so does embodied hermeneutics. The implications of this kind of fragmented contact with reality and our own sensations might make us susceptible towards the way we live. *And maybe it even should?*

This discussion reveals a personal standing: my life experience so far is that we tend to forget our bodies at work and therefore mistreat out bodies to a serious degree. I have also made a realization that my understanding of things and current behaviour is influenced by my experiences. In sociodrama studies we played through important scenes of our lives. In the context of that education I also interviewed my parents about the important things in their lives. I came to realize that, for instance, my father does used to compensate his father's inability in techniques and driving by over-enthusiastic driving, whereas I have - because of my childhood experiences – grown into a rather careful driver - who yet likes to speed up occasionally. My childhood experiences at the backseat are not only a cognitive moment, but a life experience that includes emotions and bodily sensations. I still feel the itching in the tummy when daddy starts to chase the next 'catch' on the road, that is, the next one to overtake. Yeah, we're getting there... The same embodiment applies to scarves and wounds that we have: may they be of physical or mental nature, we tend to avoid and be alert about the situations where we got them.

Now, to return to another observation: the way the given frames are entered and created influences any further action more than later improvements *within* those frames. "What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way." (Heidegger 1962: 195) The way the reality became socially constructed in the beginning of each round determined very much what was considered possible and what not. The first round, for instance, created a lot of work for the leader and set very high demands on his creativity, whereas the second round witnessed an ever-heightening level of creativity among the team members. This phenomenon is similar to how a method

produces its own truth-like accounts (compare with Gadamer 2004 title: *Truth and Method*). Why was the exercise conducted? The way the exercise is entered produces very different actions and results, that is, different realities. The felt experience (aesthetic experience) of those realities makes a difference for learning.

We are again touching an *ontological* issue, an issue that is linked with the question what is there, what kind of entities we perceive and deal with. In the first round the frame that the leader (in a leader-centred position) allows himself poses limitations for further interpretations. The openness of one's perspective predefines the possibly emerging phenomena, as The Fieldpath Method describes. The leader creates a certain horizon for interpretations, a social reality that does not leave much room for the group members. In the second round the group gradually *moves away* from the limitations of that reality. This is exemplified in a) their creative use of snow (building signs and paths out of snow) and other environmental cues like sound and touching, b) the freedom they allow for others to create a plan and c) the freedom they take in designing the second round. The reality seems to offer a lot of possibilities, if we start to interpret it in a different way, but the limits of our understanding are the limits of our world. Nelson Goodman in his "Ways of Worldmaking" (1978) urges for "seeing beyond Being and sensitivity to "puzzle of being"" for the re-settlement of things.

Following this ontological entry to The Blind Bottle, the next point is *epistemology*: What is regarded as leadership knowledge? What kind of knowledge is required for a skills adaptation to take place? The SEBU story started from recognition that in the face of the new challenges of customer orientation more coaching in the SEBU leadership repertoire is needed. One could attempt to teach coaching as a leadership skill in a cognitive manner (telling, information), but that would not be sufficient for practical skills adaptation (James and Collins 2008; Kempster 2009). We talked above about the aesthetic approach, yet a further way to describe knowledge is the Aristotelian distinction between different kinds of knowledge. Aristotle calls unshaken, pure

knowledge *episteme*, whereas *techne*, crafts, art, skills, describes the technicality of acting out that which is known and includes concerns over the changing nature of things and the environment.

The moral virtues, however, require adjustment to changing conditions. According to Aristotle two kinds of knowledge apply to intellectual, human virtues: *sophia*, wisdom, and *phronesis*, practical wisdom. *Sophia* refers to universal truth, general knowledge and theory about human virtues, whereas *phronesis* is defined as practical knowledge: being able to act in the right way in particular, concrete situations, and that might be unique in the sense that they are never repeated in the same fashion. *Phronimon*, a person who possesses practical wisdom, is experienced – and in Aristotle's account young people cannot have as much experience as older people. In the case of *phronesis* the knowledge and skills can be adapted to situations that do not follow a prescribed pattern or rule. *Sophia* refers to an intellectual approach, to kind of general knowledge that science produces, whereas *phronesis* is understood as being able to act in the right way in particular, concrete, sometimes unique situations. The central feature of *phronesis* is that the knowledge and skills one has can be adapted to situations that do not follow any prescribed pattern or a rule. For instance, if a situation was not interpreted as an option for coaching, even if one had the skills, they would not be utilized. As leadership knowledge that we are after here is the type that translates into action, then epistemologically we need to apply here the understanding of knowledge as *phronesis* rather than only *sophia*.

Before continuing it is advisable to exercise little self-reflection again. The terms used previously, *phronesis, sophia* and the repetitive references to epistemology and ontology have their origins in the tradition of philosophy. Why to mix up the leadership thing with philosophy? First, as is clear, my education in philosophy is the dominating factor, but it is also an academic tradition to be aware of epistemological, ontological and methodological concerns. Second, it seems to me that many leadership issues and economic terms either stem from philosophical background or they are not founded well enough

in philosophy, but only in current terms of (economic) success. To further the use of philosophy is in both cases an asset: in the former case to be able to continue the discussion with regard to tradition, in the latter case to introduce tradition. Philosophy of leadership exists on its own right already too, but those discussions are more theory than practice-laden. Here I am using the philosophical terminology to show that practical life can well be discussed in philosophical terms. Merging the everyday life and philosophy is a growing trend anyway. (Hadot 1995, 2002; Nehamas 2000; Precht 2007; Schmid 1998)

From the *phronesis* point of view we can return to an interesting phenomenon during the exercise, namely the waiting. *Waiting* is an interesting phenomenon to observe, since as a kind of non-activity it provides an easily neglected instance. It is created when the leader leaves blindfolded people to stand alone, and it therefore notably occurs only in the first round of the exercise, not in the second. In the first round the subordinates cannot start any sensible action on their own, because they cannot see and they don't know what the whole task is about. Waiting in this context is about doing nothing and standing still, being available if needed: it is a non-activity that does not contribute to task fulfilment. The participants fill the space – time and freedom to stand –with talk and silence. Silence is filled with thinking, with sensemaking: if a situation is not defined, the human mind starts to make sense of it by utilizing available cues and interpreting them as if they belonged together and made sense (Gadamer 2004; Weick 1995).

Waiting was partly experienced as positive, because one is freed from responsibility. Some participants commented that since there was nothing to do but wait, you should not intervene in the work either, because that would only disturb it. Standing still or stopping what you are doing can nevertheless be very irritating, which is demonstrated by the pair that starts to search for new bottles without any instructions and without knowing their own position. The chances of finding bottles are close to zero, yet they preferred to do something instead of staying still. Why does it make more sense for them to act than not to act (Code: action orientation)? Is it a way to reduce their loss of

orientation, because it might provide more cues? Action orientation and waiting for the right moment are contradictory frames of mind. An action oriented mindset searches for tasks to complete. At the same time there were voices that supported the idea of contemplation: if you cannot do anything wise, stay still and accept it, the time will come.

Waiting and being commanded clearly raise emotions and feelings. In the first phase of the exercise waiting is interpreted as irritating, but in the second phase there was practically no waiting, since everybody was able to participate out of self-interest, not as means of doing something. Being able to decide upon one's actions and destiny is considered as producing a motivated climate where an individual can fulfil her/himself. I think this is a very important experience for understanding motivation: if the conditions allow, people are willing to join, but if they are not able to join the game, the willingness is not there either (Sauer et al. 2010). Motivation is here based on two contrasting assumptions. The negative one is the idea that people by nature are not willing to work and thus have to be motivated. The second, positive assumptions says that the system needs to allow self-initiated activities. Coaching in a broader sense is about creating space for self-fulfilment, which reminds us about the possibility of creating space as in the narrative account of change.

Waiting leads to *sensemaking* and how it works in practice. A 'culture', a particular system of norms, is created by just a few experiences. The vignette here shows how an interpretation of reality gets constructed out of various small cues (Gadamer 2004; Weick 1995). Especially in a situation where the number of cues is limited, small cues like, "I'll be right back to instruct you more", "did you say six bottles" or a false interpretation of environmental signs can lead to drastic interpretations. "Sensemaking is about authoring as well as reading" (Weick 1995: 7), and the example of the second round, where the space for authoring is offered, enables the participants to a real authoring. Instead of the leader acting *more*, he acted *less*, which creates higher participation and motivation.

If we take the notion seriously – and I think we should – that in both rounds there was leadership, but in the second round no leader, the real essence of leadership is easier to see: *leadership is not about the nominated leader's actions* but rather about the frames and culture within which interpretations (textual reading and authoring) take place. It is, as described in Chapter 2 with the hermeneutic principle of the relation between parts and whole, about framing actions into a certain kind of whole and learning about that whole; leadership, to be clear about it, is not equal to actions accomplished in a leader-role. The aim in this research is close to that of Ladkin (2010), when she writes about the distinction between the concepts of leader and leadership:

> "Whereas many texts conflate the two terms, from a phenomenological perspective the difference between them is argued to be highly significant and even more noteworthy than the traditionally accepted polarization between 'leaders' and 'followers'. Similarly, rather than regarding leaders as central to organizational activities such as 'managing change' or 'sense-making', these processes themselves are closely examined and re-conceptualized, resulting in a different understanding of the role of 'leadership' in their occurrence." (Ladkin 2010: 2)

The picture The Blind Bottle exercise creates about the impact of informal organization is that the social meaning-making process has in 'reality' a more directive character than the leader's vision. Negotiations around the mutual understanding create meaning for actions, not a given path to follow. Ladkin (2010) describes this as follows:

> "This suggests a very different purpose for a leader's 'vision' from that suggested by the picture of the sole individual pointing into a far distant horizon willingly pursued by placid followers. In that rendering the attention is focused on the 'vision' and its power to inspire and motivate others. Creating such a vision is a rarefied and cerebral process. Attending to the space between 'vision' and 'meaning-making' instead suggests a far messier type of engagement. The

> leader may well sight the far off realm but mobilizing towards it requires stepping back into the maelstrom of followers' realities." (Ladkin 2010: 125)

The informal space between vision and meaning making really is a messy type of engagement. Borrowing Ladkin's phrase, *mobilizing* describes what happened in the second round of the exercise: the leader stepped back to become a group member and the group suddenly became mobilized and motivated to solve the problem towards the far off realm.

One more personal reflection, or should I at this stage say revelation, is needed. Both my father and grandfather are former military officers. My family lived in the places where there are always soldiers around, and so I saw enough of that during my childhood. In the army I decided that I have had enough of that: staying in the military as a professional soldier would certainly not be my cup of tea. The way the authoritarian rule eliminated motivation was sometimes just hilarious: even things you wanted to do became suspicious if someone commanded you to do it. I like my parents, and I do not think that I had a bad education as a child, but it still is hard for me to take commands. I believe that this history plays a role in my understanding of the value of socially created leadership and in my certain kind of disgust of great leaders. Commanding does not support your own thinking; instead it functions in a contra-productive manner to individual self-fulfilment.

Let us now return to the outdoor exercise. Creating a connection between bodily movement and emotions is one of the key features of outdoor exercises, in a similar way that dancing can be undertaken as a technical exercise or as performing bodily knowledge that is related to emotions (Parviainen 2006). Experiential learning comes with the possibility to create something that one remembers and through which a new image of things is created; a new image that is more preferable than the previous one, and one knows that through felt experience. On the other hand experiential learning can also be uncomfortable,

Turnbull and Ladkin (2008) remark, as it touches identity and deeply held beliefs about oneself or behaviours.

To conclude, in the first round the participants' motivation is very low and they solely 'follow the orders', whereas the second round is characterized by enthusiastic activity to plan and execute the task. The point, the philosophy of the exercise, is to illustrate the effect *participation* has on task completion. If people feel motivated they are ready for anything, but under a nominated leader who acts in a leader-centric and hierarchic way, motivation remains low.

"Every experience worthy of the name runs counter to our expectation" (Gadamer 1979: 319). Why is that so? An experience in hermeneutics is not recognized only as a cognitive dissonance, but also as an embodied experience.

6.4 Vignette three: Exploring conditions for personal change

After the exercise and the embodied experience it produces, the soup around transforming oneself thickens. One of the group discussions during the first module revolves around changing one's leadership behaviour and old habits that do not necessarily serve the (new) leadership purposes. My summary of the basic learning from the previous blind bottle exercise goes as follows: While working as an expert at SEBU one is expected to have answers, and this behaviour grows into habit. However, an expert in a leadership position who sticks to the routine of answering might frustrate followers who are themselves experts". Another disadvantage of a knowing-status in a leadership role is that it leaves little room for people's' own imagination and creativity. Third, the responsibility for giving answers and the resulting actions remains on the shoulders of the answerer (leader). To sum up, coaching means involving people by letting them explore the ground and the task instead of explaining only.

But are these leaders ready to transform themselves from a knowing position into a more coaching attitude, and is it even possible? And if it is possible, how should a change in personal ways of acting take place? What about a 53-year old technician who has functioned as a manager for 18 years, or a 32-year old engineer, who has recently been appointed to a leader role – how do they make it happen? The following discussion takes place on the second training day and is conducted in an open dialogue circle. The trainers anticipate the challenges of changing one's behavioural patterns, when the context remains the same, and ask the participants to explore this topic. This is a lengthy extract, but it makes an interesting read in its multiplicity of voices and opinions.

Jake: You have to gain something yourself, you know [in order to change yourself].

Tim: Yeah, it has to relate to your work somehow, 'cos otherwise you couldn't care less.

Walter: Motivation isn't really an issue! [Laughs in the group] If motivation doesn't decrease – that's something. If you do nothing for it, motivation goes down. Thanking for performance could be enough.

Jake: Do you need to motivate other people?

Walter: Of course you've gotta! It is even easier to motivate others than yourself! [Laughs]

Henry: Maybe it is easier to motivate others than oneself. [Laughs] Really!

Trainer: But if you could learn here [in the training], do you think it would help you too?

Henry: Of course! I mean – it might be nice to manipulate others, mm you know, but changing oneself…

Theo: You can't fool yourself! [Laughs]

Max: Oh yes you can!

At this stage the atmosphere is much more relaxed than in the beginning of the conversation, people are leaning backwards and enjoying the humoristic comments and the easy-going nature of the conversation. While others are still in the previous mood, slightly smiling, Anne takes up a different thread:

Anne: Own motivation in reference to work can always be tested by asking would you still work if you could afford to do it without a salary. If you could afford working without a salary, would you do what you are doing now?

Jake: If I won five million or one million in lottery, I think I would still work here. I want something anyway… it would be much more meaningful having five million in your pocket…

Max: But if you had five million in your pocket you could be more selective, whether I would do this or that… [Various small comments from others, before Max continues:] Maybe you would not just drop things down, but you would have the guts to say: this thing ain't going my way, so I'll step back for a while and let's see. [Laughs] But since I don't have that five million or even little less – you just don't say these things, do you!

Trainer: Which makes me think – what we were talking about: you said that if you try to change the organization here it is like fighting against windmills – so that makes me think that if you had those five million in your pocket, would it be easier to challenge the organization too? And if it was, why aren't you doing it now – since you would do it in a case where you are being honest with yourself?

Jake: With five million in a pocket you would have more courage to take risks. The possibility – I mean, losing the issue would not matter that much. (…) If I had it, we could much easier try something totally different.

SEBU Trainer: Interesting – so you have to feel secure yourself first…

Jake: Well, I don't know – you should have kinda, kinda (…) – so that not succeeding would not matter, at least on the personal level.

Trainer: How would you involve people into the thing anyway, even if your own fear of change would decrease? Since we are not doing these things alone, especially not as leaders, but with the help of others… (…) This can be asked of anybody, not only of Jake.

Jake: Well, I don't know – maybe it would not change the position on the personal level, maybe something else is needed…

Tom: Well, you would not be afraid of your bonus next month, so you could mix up the cards a bit more – (…) …it would not matter so much.

SEBU trainer: And how would that affect your motivation?

Tom: Well, the reason for doing something would not be the money, but…

Anne: Yes, money is not the motivational factor. Like many rich people say, money is not that important in this world

Jake: As long as you have it!

Walter: You have to feel that the thing makes sense, and… and if the financial situation makes it possible for you to kick over the fence, to make it more meaningful to yourself, well… that might include a risk that your superior or an employer is of a different opinion…

Here the two trainers review and summarize the discussion by stating that the conversation circles very much around the topic of motivation. They ask whether motivation is central to the participants' own change.

Anne: Well, I've realized that it is hard to make changes happen at work: whatever you try to change, it gets knocked out from somewhere – someone – the work here at SEBU is so incredibly hierarchic. At my previous company we communicated directly

to the top and answers came quickly. It certainly affects your own motivation if you can't change a thing. Or if you start changing things it might take two years. (…) We just recently finished a project where it took two years to change a company that delivers materials. That kind of thing eats up your own motivation, it sure does!

Mark: That's a bit like fighting against the windmills, that is… If you have a will to change… Another question is that is it only your will to change? You'll be confronted with that question.

Jake: Yeah, you should concentrate on things that you can affect and change. There's no sense in wasting your time fighting against the windmills. By wasting your time you get tired and start having unfinished things. Better to concentrate on easier things.

William: If nobody ever takes a missing thing on the agenda, it will always remain on the side.

Jake: Well yes, but I won't do it anyway! You do it! [Laughing and pointing to William]

William: Well I will! Like, you know, we have a factory nowadays in China too! [Laughs – this probably means that William would like to travel to China at the company's expense.] But seriously, I think we all share the same thing: Finland is so damn small that our problems mean nothing. Thinking globally, we make one per cent, or one per mill, out of some whole. This has been an issue at least for me. We deliver 20 pieces for Finland, and globally we manufacture 20,000 a year, so if there are some small problems and nobody complains, they won't be fixed. – That, at least partly, eats up the motivation: doing something for nothing.

Ken: The discussion still seems to be attached to motivation, and it is a fairly important issue for starting a change, because nobody starts to act for a change consciously, if there is no reason behind it. What that for each person is…

Then the trainer asks what people are ready to do for a change. He points out that motivation seems to be one of the key issues. What does it require from you personally, the trainer asks.

Jake: What does it require? In some respect – I have written it down here [shows his learning diary] – changing own behaviour, or – I would have to figure out some means for that, I don't know.

Trainer: Would you be interested in what others think, what does it take to change your behaviour?

Jake: Yeah! Barry, how is it in your case?

Barry: I don't know about your case, you've got totally different problems than I do. If I think about my own work and how I get motivated, I would have to become motivated and at the same time committed. I have a certain project that I must do – these things sometimes get me committed to working in the evenings too, if I don't manage to do it in the daytime. First I have to motivate myself and then commit myself, and then I will do it. I must force myself by saying 'you gotta do this'.

SEBU trainer: So what is the change here? (…) Is it a change or pushing through the wall?

The trainers then shift the discussion to another topic, the feedback, by asking: What is the role of feedback, does that make you move or change?

William: On the other hand, I noticed that when everybody was standing in the front [receiving feedback] (…), they said that it was 'about what they expected', so they pretty well knew what's coming, there was not too much extra – I mean there were comments that people expected.

SEBU trainer: What does it mean that you know it in advance?

William: Well, actually you do know that you have these misfits, but you just haven't done anything.

SEBU trainer: So is that positive news, that you knew in advance?

William: I didn't say positive, but everybody knew his or her negative feedback, that is. So everybody knew they have shortcomings, but apparently no one had done anything…

Trainer: So the feedback confirmed that. [Laughs]

Max: I see there a slight difference in degree: you presumed these are the shortcomings, now you know it. [Laughs]

Jake: Now you know that others have noticed it too!

Max: That might give you a little extra-kick (…)! You can't hide behind it anymore, like 'maybe it isn't that bad'.

William: Yeah, you can't fool yourself anymore.

Barry: You hide behind the workload, there is always like so much more work.

William: That's right, when you've got loads of work to do, really, it is easy to hide anything behind that – even family problems and everything.

Robert: I think most of us do know what we should change, at least I know what I should change, but [these things] often remain undone.

Mark: Taking it into practice is the problem. If you get feedback to change your behaviour, you should not change your whole personality…

Jake: It is damn hard to change even one small part of your personality. Really hard. Cos' I think that if you change your personality a lot or one part of it, it might become theatre-acting, and then it doesn't work for the cause…

Mark: Yeah, it might be strange if a new characteristic emerges that was not there before, so then there is something else appearing… It could be away from something else, if you change to some direction.

Trainer: Is change possible? What is this about?

Lars: I chose in the beginning to remain silent, now I must talk. [Laughs] If you change something it goes to theatre-acting,

it goes over the top… The motivation has to be found, why would I do something…

Ken: I still think that the real problem is to recognize and notice these situations, and to slowly establish [these practices] is a bigger problem than that we would start over-acting these things. I think the Finns are pretty cautious in that respect. (…) It is exactly about the situations… If it is over, it doesn't help if you to realize the next evening that then, over there (previous day) I could have proceeded differently! [Laughs]

The discussion continues with small humorous comments on how Finns do not give positive feedback, and someone adds that if his boss does not say anything, the things must be going well. Then the SEBU trainer, leaning backwards on his chair, holding his hands behind his neck, starts to talk with a lowered voice and in a slower pace:

SEBU trainer: On behavioural changes and theatre-acting, I can tell out of my own experience that acting really doesn't work any longer than the first 10 seconds. (…) None of us is such a good actor: it will always be revealed. You lose your defence, or humans read others' body language so well that there is no sense in even trying to fake. – In this program one of the goals is that you find your own style – and you will find it – but don't even try learning a role. Rather try to see where you have your own traits, strengths, and start a discussion on change and motivation on that basis. Behavioural change is always a long process, even if ideas might pop out in seconds.

Then the discussion turns to SEBU workers and staff in general. There are comments that those who joined SEBU a long time ago represent a different group: "in those days they would take anybody". Nowadays, as everybody knows, people are really selected and they have to have a professional education and background.

Ken: I believe that each guy here, workers and players, wants to receive positive feedback from their work and want to do their job properly. If coaching here teaches us to make our work better so that we get better feedback, then why not investing in it.

Commentary

So what does the vignette tell? The first thing to remark on is the sheer number of themes. The conversation touches on several topics, yet circles around change. The number of topics and the non-linear nature of the conversation support Boje's (2001) notion of antenarrative: at the moment of their happening, the things are emergent by nature: unlinear, unfinished, unpolished, fragmentary and not following a coherent storyline. Sense and a coherent narrative are created afterwards (Boje 2001), retrospectively, as Weick (1995) would put it. In hermeneutic terms this kind of exploration is regarded as the central feature of conversation. According to Gadamer a genuine conversation does not follow the will of any of the parties involved: "it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. (…) the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. (…) All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it – i.e., that it allows something to "emerge" which henceforth exists" (Gadamer 2004: 385).

To adapt the above expression, the participants have "fallen into conversation" through which something emerges. It is hard to say what they all agree upon, and it would be naïve to believe that all the golden wisdom and clever thoughts carry through into practice: even if gaining an existence for a while, things are forgotten, and in any case seldom acted upon (Nietzsche 1988a). The documentation, however, reflects the speakers' reality and enables us as researchers to make sense of it (Potter and Wetherell 1987). In a similar fashion to the one in

which Couture and Strong (2004) investigate change in therapy, these vignettes "show how some understandings are talked into being, to the exclusion of others" (Couture and Strong 2004: 91).

Personal motivation is regarded as important: why would you make an extra effort without a good reason? Money is discussed in connection with motivation for quite a while, but no clear link between money and personal change motivation can be shown. Curiously enough, when talking about *own* change, not a single person mentions money as a clear cause for increased motivation to change one's leadership style. Rather on the contrary, 5 million euro might make you even more resistant, sticking to your own ideas because then you would have the guts to say what you really think! In this respect an intrinsic motivation (to act out of personal interest) has a higher value than an extrinsic motivation (the reason for acting is outside, action is not enjoyed for its own sake) (Rheinberg 1995).

So *what* is the intrinsic motivation that enables these leaders to start a journey towards enhanced leadership capabilities? Is there something that is rewarding and enjoyable *for its own sake*? The vignette offers some direct answers: it is not money; if it benefits you somehow, you might change; if you gain something for your work, then that is a good reason for changing; a person who wants to change should concentrate on the features that are under one's own command and that one can have an influence on – that much is said explicitly. Out of these, only the last element – under own command – would count as intrinsic motivation.

Motivation aside, the real crux comes with William's observation: Everybody commented that there was *not too much new in the feedback, they knew most of it in advance*! A very common-sense question is then: Okay, if they at a personal level know what they should be doing, why haven't they done it yet? And from a pedagogic point of view more specifically: If they have not been able to do it so far, how could they now?

Knowledge, in the participants' view, is not the problem, but to translate the knowledge into practice surely is. The purpose of the

program can therefore be interpreted as translating an implicit "vision" or "feeling" into practice. The program ought not to focus on external information, action pattern or behaviour, but about something they already know and possess. Out of this fundamental familiarity it follows that instead of a 'traditionally' input-oriented and teacher-pupil centred approach, the training ought to be learner-driven, concentrating on personal knowledge and following rather a bottom-up than a top-down approach, starting with familiar issues and being confronted with known practices instead of unfamiliar 'best' practices or alien leadership formulas. To make a long story short: the training need is not about what, but about how. This resembles Aristotle's idea of *sophia* and *phronesis*, of knowledge and practical wisdom; instead of knowledge the participants are lacking skills of coping with the familiar.

I want to shed some more light on this by discussing the issue from the *participant* and *training* perspective.

From the *participants' perspective* the feedback is familiar when it touches something they have recognized. It is acknowledged as part of their current identity – and this identity they should change. The way the issue of personality is discussed reflects some strong personal convictions. William notes that taking these things into practice is challenging and involves working with your personality. Jake and Mark think that changing even a small part of your personality is damned hard. Also the SEBU trainer warns about acting out a role. The participants clearly recognize that if things remain the same, it is not good; but changing them poses further problems.

Towards the end of the discussion Ken proposes that the real problem is not over-acting, but to establish new practices. What does establishing new practices mean? On a skills level new practices are an unknown territory. It is unknown because there is no experience of it yet. But how can you prepare for the future before you know what it is? The personal knowledge they possess and know at the moment, the familiar, is basically past and present oriented, whereas that which is to be learned, the unknown practices, is future oriented. The basic observation then is that the participants are not as much concerned

about past experience and present concerns as about the future. In the comments one can hear a widespread consensus on the need for change. Without new practices there will be no change – and they all want a change to happen in both their environment and their leadership style. To make that happen both negative and positive, future-oriented learning are relevant.

Scharmer (2009) supports this view by stating that there are two different sources of learning: "learning from the experiences of the *past* and learning from the *future* as it emerges." Most of the leadership learning models orient on past experiences, Scharmer argues, whereas what the leaders need is oriented towards the future.

> "Virtually all established learning theories and practices are based on the Kolb type of experiential learning: learning based on reflecting the experiences of the past. However, in working with leadership teams across sectors and industries I realized that leaders cannot meet the challenges they face by operating only with a past-driven learning cycle. (…) there could be a deeper learning cycle based on one's sensing of an emerging future, rather than on one's past experiences" (Scharmer 2003: 2).

Scharmer proposes that leaders should learn from the future as it emerges. This happens by a technique Scharmer calls "presencing", a term that combines "presence" and "sensing". I think we can refer back to the Blind Bottle exercise and say that reviewing the exercise is a sort of presencing: it aims at bringing the people to their 'senses' and observing what happened themselves. What happened during the exercise to me? This question is asked so that participants would be able to use their understanding of the moment to define leadership. Otherwise there is a tendency to refer back to past experiences and models on leadership. In practical terms this means that participants can at any stage say what they *think* is leadership, but if they refer to a prior experience and think back about their emotions as they arose in that moment (presence then), they end up in a different definition

of leadership. I think there is a similarity between what Scharmer calls "deeper source of knowing" and reflecting the actual sense-based experience (The Blind Bottle). This point will be developed further in the next chapter under embodied knowing.

The point of this discussion is to illustrate that in both theoretical and practical terms learning takes place in a continuum of past, present and future. Arguing this way means to combine (not contrast) Kolb/Dewey's learning cycle and Scharmer's future oriented learning approaches. Philosophical hermeneutics supports this view by noting that acquiring new learning and understanding is built on the previous understanding and a future orientation. Gadamer calls the expectation that the things we encounter are complete "the fore-conception of completeness" (Gadamer 2004: 294). The future aspirations and needs are projections of what we have experienced so far, and the future orientation reflects the goals towards which learning is directed. Learning revolves around familiarity in three ways:

1. Projections of the past experiences are reflected in the present. Learning is based in present mental models and skills – on the familiar. (Gadamer 2004)
2. The learning task is to let go of the familiar things that do not serve the future needs and aspirations. This dropping off, which will below be called negative learning, needs to be regarded as an integral part of skills acquisition. (Parviainen and Eriksson 2006; Weick 2007a)
3. Presencing: we acknowledge things that we are ready for. According to Scharmer (2009) this is about recognizing the place from which we operate.

For adults to change routines or recurring action patterns requires not only a new way of thinking and doing, but simultaneously moving away from the previous way of doing things (Schein 2002). Training new skills is not solely about gaining something more, about accumulative knowledge, but it also includes "negative knowledge", leaving something behind, bracketing out (Parviainen and Eriksson

2006), and dropping off something that you have been carrying so far (Weick 1993; 2007). Negative learning is often neglected (Parviainen and Eriksson 2006), difficult to achieve (Malinen 2000), and since the routines are so tightly linked with professional status, people do not necessarily know how to drop their tools (Weick 2007a). Even if participants know *what* should be done, the uncertainty about the future makes them concerned about *how*.

So how to make it happen? The message is clear: do not try to act out a role, but be yourself – even when changing. Participants create an ambiguous task to change *and* to remain the same, true to themselves. This is a kind of change paradox that O'Connor (1995) addresses: change runs counter to some of our basic assumptions about the *status quo*, exactly because it challenges the *status quo*. From the first of the two perspectives therefore, that of the participant, personal transformation necessarily challenges one's identity.

A personal reflection might shed some more light on this. I really like the category of the familiar that emerged out of the above conversation. The way the term evolved through the analysis, like in a conversation, shows again the hermeneutic way of proceeding: out of the plenty of details and perceptions the aspect that the participants knew most of their feedback is a striking incident. Knowing something, Heidegger might ask, what does it mean? If you know something, it is familiar to you. You have met it before, you have made acquaintance with it. It does not really have a power to surprise you anymore. Yet the very familiar self still has the chance to surprise us. It is familiar and very close to us, but not totally known. Sometimes we wonder ourselves: where did that come from? – It is this kind of discussing manner to proceed that for some reason turns me on in Heidegger's writings. He makes philosophy out of 'nothing', out of ordinary and mundane, out of everyday reality. My intention in this work has been the same: to work out aspects of ordinary people in ordinary situations. Philosophy, to my mind, has a lot to say about ordinary things, no matter how familiar they look in the first sight.

The second perspective touches on the purpose of *training and training design*: what is leadership training about, if it relies on something

that each person already knows for her/himself? What is the meaning of feedback, if it only tells the person in question what s/he already knows? And if s/he has known it for a long time, why has it not been acted upon? Is it possible to act upon it now, if it has not been possible earlier on? What kind of know-how is missing?

From the perspective of program design we can observe here a shift or re-emphasis, a *return* from an expectation of 'being delivered external contents' to the participants' own issues. Once a reason for doing something has been established (knowing what), the stage for training is set. I call it a *return*, because in the beginning of the training there is such a strong expectation towards external knowledge delivered by consultants. The social construction around the training program – invitations, company materials, expectations, entering into a 'classroom', having 'teachers', the idea of learning tricks of the trade – all attract one to imagine a classical education situation with knowledge poured into participants heads. Recognizing one's own development areas and needs is a return to the participants' daily issues.

To sum up, when we consider the kind of knowledge that is created through experiential learning, the implications from participants' and training design perspectives are:

a. There is little need for external knowledge.
b. Learning new things is directed towards the future.
c. A return to personal knowledge is required.
d. The training efforts should be directed towards learning-by-doing.

The above vignette showed that before a change attempt starts, a cause for change, a personal need or a sense of urgency (Kotter 1996) has to be established. However, prior to that there was a embodied experience, which is only later rationalized, that is to say, the cognitive element is formed after the experience. Because a personal need to change is formulated on a cognitive level after the experience, the goal of training efforts is to offer a chance to create an experience that, in Malinen's (2000) terms, creates a fracture in adult learners mind-set.

The hermeneutic circle describes the happening of understanding as a movement between general and particular, and an analogical movement can be described between rationality and experience. From the learning point of view that means that the initial impulse need not be defined as a linear development starting with rationalizing, but it can be as well a practical incident, experience or emotions that *later* become rationalized. On the other hand Weick (2006) – who has been very keen on cognitive dissonance since his dissertation – states that the theory of sensemaking mainly owes to the cognitive approach. "Order, interruption, recovery. That is sensemaking in a nutshell" (Weick 2006: 17). Those stages are parallel to Lewin's famous and widely used model of change as "unfreezing-change-refreezing". (Lewin 1976) This vignette and the hermeneutic cycle cannot fully support the idea that there was order or unfreezing in the first place. Sensemaking can also be seen in a more post-modern fashion as antenarrative, non-linear and a not fully grasped ongoing process. The materials propose that the moment of interruption in Weick's model – equal to the transition in Lewin's model, or "fracture" of current knowledge in Malinen (2000) – can be regarded as a rational as well as an emotional-experiential happening (not only a moment).

The hermeneutic circle complements the cognitive orientation by emphasizing that any new discovery is based in familiarity, former experiences and emotions. The new interpretation is not a cut-loose-version, but rather a challenge to combine past, present and future states. The training content is built on this continuum.

6.5 Discussion on vignettes

The above extracts show that learning might be there on a verbal level but it does not necessarily translate into corresponding actions, so the question becomes: what hinders walking the leadership talk? And if we take the metaphor of walking more seriously, it includes move-

ment, namely the movement from old routines to new ones. Here is the compiled list of the current routines (the SEBU Leadership Code) and the aimed-at new routine. This table represents a combination of the ideas that were created during the program, and it is comparable with Potter and Wetherell's (1987: 20) eight maxims of the Code.

Table 4. Current and New SEBU Leadership Routines

Current routine	**New routine**
Answering questions	Asking questions
Knowing	Listening
Decision making	Discussing, shared responsibility, sense making
Action orientation	Reflection
Confrontation	Exploring possibilities, listening
Avoiding people	Talking with people, co-creating

The left side describes the existing reality and the right side the emerging new possibilities. This comparison should not be read as "either-or", black and white description. Both of these are possible, but as routines they cannot exist not at the same time.

However, the new routines portray more than a possibility: according to the above vignettes they represent the preferred state. "Conversion stories" are defined as particularly positive accounts of change where people turn "from one viewpoint to another" and move from an old way to a new, better approach (Cox and Bryan 2004). After the conversion the converted seek to prefer the new story to the old one and they wonder about the previous ways of acting. Even if not a conversion in a strict sense, the participants are moving from certain routines to more adequate ones.

How to advance from established routines to adopting new leadership actions? The training attempt (coaching) is illustrated in the form of the following recognition model. (Figure 5) The point of that model is to characterize the difference between natural and habitual routines (Feldman 2006). A habitual routine is something that can be accomplished but is not yet internalized as a bodily experience (Pfeffer

and Sutton 2000), whereas a natural routine represents an established and repeating action pattern.

These kinds of developments describe intended change, yet they tell little of how to achieve it. In Weick's (2007) analysis of fire-fighters, the fire-fighters identify with their tools: if they don't have the tools, they are not fire-fighters anymore. However, the inability to drop the tools can in a fire-fighters life lead to death. One of Weick's (2007) most remarkable examples of not being able to let gois the person who, in an instance of a balloon escaping, kept hanging on the ropes until the balloon had reached the height of 200 meters, where he lost his grip and fell to his death. Even if at SEBU the conditions are not as dramatic, the same applies: the more the leader identifies with the traditional behavioural tools, the harder it is to drop them. The change depends on a capability to acquire new learning and on negative learning, letting go of old tools. If one's leadership identity is very closely connected with answering, knowing and deciding, then dropping that pattern might feel like not being a leader at all.

The more routinized a new practice becomes, the more frequently and automatically it is applied – that was an observation from the SEBU training sessions. To illustrate the time span from thinking about the change to really walking the talk, the following picture was created:

Loops and gap experiences

As mentioned earlier, the mystery of leadership emergence was that even when a certain action pattern became chosen, intended, planned and trained, in the actual situation it did not necessarily occur. It is as if one talks about choosing X, but in actual situations decides for Y. The trouble with converting from one set of leadership skills to another is that the problem of translation cannot be overcome 'automatically'. In regard to leadership emergence it is filled with loops to become stuck in and with gaps to bridge.

As a result of an awareness of the problem of translation, different kinds of loops and gaps between the present and intended state of affairs (between old and new routines) can be highlighted. For instance, when reflecting on "the knowing-doing gap" (Pfeffer and Sutton 2000) in the context of the vignettes, a more nuanced picture of that gap can be described. From the point of view of participant experience the possibilities of failing are many, and therefore the learning process can become fragmented or remain in a loop (in-between) at several stages.

In this figure the actual doing (routine/left hand side) comes before knowing (new routine/right hand side), which implies that the routine action does not reach the level of (better) knowing.

1. The *loop of working* illustrates the habitual routines. At some stage one realizes that there are still problems that the routines do not

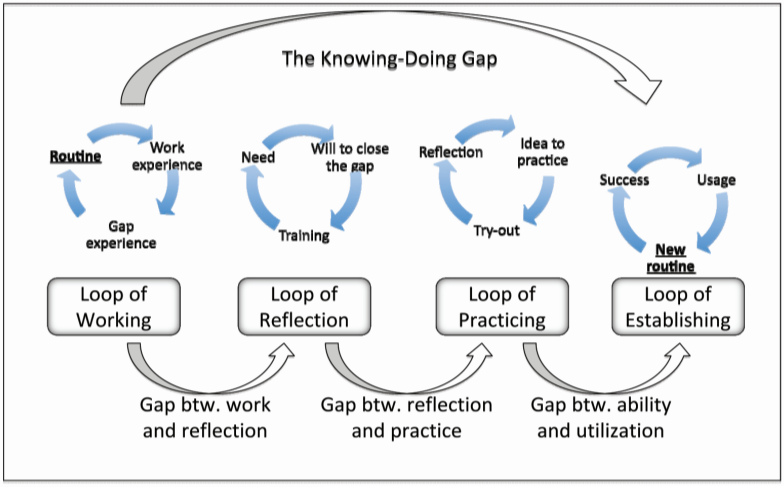

Figure 5. The Knowing-Doing Gap

solve. This is called here a gap experience: a gap between routines and reality.

2. This leads to a *loop of reflection* in which one reflects on the gap, creates a will to close the gap and (in this particular case) decides to

practice the skill. Another possibility is that one has not created a gap between work and reflection yet, but the training gives a possibility of that.

3. Then a *loop of practising* takes place: first one needs an idea of what to do differently, which is followed by practise and rational consideration (plan-do-review). As noted, these three phases are intertwined and it is not determined whether one first experienced something and then rationalized and practiced it, or whether the reflection created an idea and one then started to try it out.
4. In order to bridge the gap, a *loop of establishing* the skill is needed: to establish new skills requires a lot of practice and repetition in order to become usable new applications. An ability is not the same thing as one-time success, as we know: we only talk about skills or routines when they can be intentionally repeated, and acquired at the right time and intensity (*phronesis*).

The figure acknowledges three more gaps within the knowing-doing gap.

1. A gap between *work and reflection* says that it is possible to be good at work, but to not know exactly what one does and how. Someone can be a good communicator by nature, but is not aware what s/he does.
2. A gap between *reflection and practice* implies that when the skill is acknowledged, it still has to be trained. Swimming or being a good listener are good examples of how a skill is learned gradually.
3. A gap between *ability and utilization* finally states that the adopted skill also has to be used. This requires that the person recognizes the situation as requiring the skills, being able to use the right proportion of it at the right time (*phronesis*) and finally really putting the skill to use.

The last phenomenon, having an ability but not the conviction to use it, has been a subject of philosophical interest since Aristotle. When

someone acts against one's better judgement or does something else instead of what s/he aimed at, then we are dealing with an Aristotelian concept of weakness of will, *akrasia* (Aristotle 2005; Charlton 1988; Searle 2001). This concept seemed to clarify diverse options of failing. When analysing the phenomenon of weakness of will, Searle (2001) identifies three further, somewhat parallel gaps between intention and action.

The *first* gap is between "the reasons for making up your mind, and the actual decision that you make". An example from empirical material is a manager who sees the benefits of changing his habits, but the good intentions are overruled by his constant considerations whether that would be "authentic", real me or not. Being authentic means for him staying the way he is, and obviously any change is contradicting that ideal. So even after clear feedback from his staff (good reasons) he won't change very much (actual decision). Despite havingthis knowledge, there is not enough reason to take that particular piece of knowledge as the guiding principle.

The *second* gap is between the decision and the action, which is close to the above gap ability-utilization. For example, if I observe a quarrel between two colleagues and I could intervene, but I do not, then my abilities are deliberately not put to use. Sometimes, even if we could do something, we do not actually fulfil it, but do something else instead.

The *third* gap arises between the start of an action and its completion. As I was teaching my 4-year-old daughter to ride a bike last summer I observed this frequently. This gap – or loop of exercising – can be a miserable and hurtful one (when learning to ride a bike, or making the first developmental discussions), since the action is already being carried out, but without fully developed skills. Either the person does not know how to fulfil the whole task or s/he is not yet fully in control of it. For instance leadership practitioners often manage to show certain skills in optimal circumstances, but when the road is bumpy, they fall.

Despite the non-lineardevelopment of leadership emergence, the procedure can still be very rational: in Searle's (2001) argumentation rationality can include inconsistencies. It might be totally rational to see a reason for doing X, decide to do X, practise skills for doing X – and still consciously deny doing X. This applies especially to actions that meet the limits of courage or the limits of values, for instance parachuting or hunting. A model of action that *includes* the human weaknesses is a more "natural" way of explaining human behaviour. To underline the fact that that weakness of will is not a marginalized research topic, we take a philosophers word: "My own view (…) is that *akrasia* in rational beings is as common as wine in France" (Searle 2001: 10).

Now, what is the meaning of *akrasia* in the study of leadership? First, parallel to the virtues of ancient philosophical schools (Hadot 2004), leadership does not take shape without effort: it has to be made to happen and exercised. That view also owes to Adler's (2006) notion of hope: hope does not happen or exist alone, it is human to have it. Second, the concept of weakness of will bites deeper into the human challenge of bringing intended actions into existence, and it thus illuminates the problem of 'walk the talk', backing up one's talk with action. Bringing these two notions together means that *when we regard leadership as a phenomenon that has to be made exist, then cases of its emergence and becoming – where leadership is only beginning to appear and still struggling for its space – offer for the research a prime example of the problem.* When we want to understand leadership as everyday practice, we need to understand the human logics behind *akrasia* too, otherwise our view on leadership does not take human will with its undetermined nature into account. Interestingly the phenomenon of weakness of will might offer one (philosophically oriented) answer to the disappearing act of leadership (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a).

Weakness of will has been of central interest for philosophy, both continental and analytical, for a long time. Charlton (1988) names three reasons for that prevailing interest. First, the phenomenon chal-

lenges us to connect practical action patterns and ethics. Second, it links philosophy with economics and psychology and gives rise to questions that are not treated by one discipline alone. The kind of irrationality that prevails within our rationalized concepts is of interest in all these disciplines.

Third, the phenomenon of *akrasia* has been discussed since the times of Plato and Aristotle, and it builds a bridge between an ancient theme and modern concerns, thereby creating a shortcut through times and cultures. In ancient Greece an *akronimos*, person who suffers akrasia, was presented as not virtuous, whereas in our times we call them – well, failing in their leadership actions. Both views underline that the phenomenon is often interpreted negatively, whereas my aim here is to preserve the phenomenon, so to speak. Even economic change models might include this kind of phenomenon, if they intend to be of benefit to us.

7. EXPLAINING TRANSFORMATION: THE CORE CONSTRUCTS

7.1 What are core constructs and why they are used

After having stepped on to this fieldpath, what kind of wandering has there been so far? The analysis in Chapter 5 evolved into constructing a story on the SEBU Leadership Code. The vignettes in Chapter 6 demonstrate that neither departing from The Code nor establishing new practices is very easy. The second round of analysis in Chapter 6 confirmed that a) leadership training can well do without traditional teacher-centred knowledge input and instead rely on training participants' life experience, and b) that an orientation towards personal knowledge and know-how (*phronesis*) means a return to the agenda of a learning adult – not to a set curriculum of adult learning. During the process of applying leadership at work the participants face the real-life complications and do not necessarily succeed in their intentions. With the help of "core constructs" Chapter 7 discusses these shortcomings and offers some explanations for what might still be needed in order to fulfil the promise of transformation.

Thachankary (1992) created *core constructs* as research devices that give meaning to and enhance the inner unity of a text. As he explains, in an earlier organizational analysis their research group developed the core concepts *consensus decision making, spirituality,* and *service mission* which helped to create a coherent picture of the corporate culture of the company in question (ICA). Following this methodological approach I found (co-created) three core constructs that function as an auxiliary device for understanding the process that participants go through. The core constructs *incompleteness*, *embodiment*, and *artistic* enhance the inner unity of the text.

The way these particular core constructs emerged in this study is not a mystery, but it was certainly a surprise to me. After the more stable construction of the SEBU Leadership Code, the vignettes set the phenomenon of leadership into movement again. I personally experienced this as moving from the chaos, complexity and multiple possibilities of original materials into the order of the Code, and then sailing into an expressive, creative and joyful storm of vignettes. The vignettes, as I described earlier, opened the interpretive perspectives into totally different spheres than the more analytical study of words in their context. I argue that only this extension of perspectives and vocabulary could bring me to an idea of these particular core constructs. Methodologically that point is important, because on the one hand it shows that it is possible to free oneself from the espoused methodological limitations, and on the other hand that creativity is an asset that each of us can utilize in different ways even in academic research.

What happened after the vignettes was that I was puzzled again. The discussions around the vignettes were interesting, but the question popped up again: Is this all there is? How to make sense of this wealth of discussion? Does this lead somewhere? First it was just a hunch, but I thought there was something missing in this leadership account, and I could not quite put my finger on it. I then expanded this search to the leadership discussions in general: is there something missing? In a seminar in the beginning of my post-graduate studies we discussed the urge to succeed and the stream of nothing but success-stories, and

this brought me to an idea of not-so-successful leadership stories. I had heard dozens of stories about leaders no succeeding, and I thought that it is only honest to talk about shortcomings too. This idea became linked to my readings in the helper's dilemma and the implicit need for a helper to be strong. (Lindqvist 1990, 2000; Schein 2009; White and Epston 1990) Nurse, therapist or consultant are traditional helpers, but leaders and change agents sometimes share the same pain. And the more the leaders turn into change agents and coaches, the more they meet this challenge.

That is how the ideas about incompleteness, embodied and artistic were born: they are missing elements in the grand story of leadership. The reading that I offer with these terms points away from the mainstreamleadership research by introducing a language that is missing in the SEBU leadership discourse.

The term *Incompleteness* I adapted from Lindqvist's (2000) title, where the Finnish word *keskeneräinen* – literally 'an on-going set' – can be translated as incomplete or unfinished. Incompleteness is his expression for defending the humanity in us, a humble plea for not trying to play a god – or the Great Man. This struck a chord, since it coincided with my personal experience of leadership too.

As weak as the term incomplete may sound in an economic context, with regard to leadership it is a deconstructive term: it deconstructs some of the basic assumptions of great leadership. Leadership need not be that great. In other words: leaders do not need to be great, but leadership can still be great. Within the framework of social constructionism, leadership can happen even without nominated leaders. In this study I have relied on the assumption that leaders can also enable leadership, so the leader role does not need to be erased. At the same time I acknowledge that a) currently there are and will be leaders, and b) no radical change of that *status quo* is in view. There will still be a strong role for leaders in the future too, they might be needed even more than ever when we move toward an understanding of leadership as a socially created and shared activity, but that role differs radically from the Great Man image. For creating socially constructed leadership

and common responsibility it might be an advantage to be incomplete, embodied and artistic.

Even if though the rationalities embodied behind the term embodied will be explained below, there is also a personal story to it. I have been exercising doing different sports (football, ice-hockey, basketball, volleyball, badminton, tennis, jogging, downhill skiing…) for all my life to a degreethe extent that I on the one hand got in high school the best grades for sports, but on the other hand I feel today in at the age of 41 that western ball-games are the reason for certain aches. Lately I have changed from these sports to hiking and visiting the gym regularly, and mindfulness meditations and mindfulness yoga have become part of my routines. Through intensive sports I think I have created a sensitive relation to my body. Not oversensitive, but so such that I have skills for listening to my body, what it needs, how it feels and how certain things affect me bodily. I was also diagnosed with a heart-disease some five years ago, and having undergone a heart operation has taught me to listen to my body for symptoms of stress or relaxation in an even more careful manner.

There is a humorous image our Tampere research group uses about the meaning of body in main stream organization understanding: that the meaning of body in work life is something to carry the thinking head from one meeting to another. That picture illustrates the degree to which mind-body dualism and thinking of brain dominate in our society. The Bbodily dimension and embodied hermeneutics are a reminder that thinking and understanding take place in our whole body, not only in the head. Today the bodily dimension has grown in interest, since well-being at work has lately become a huge topic on in its own right and it is commonly associated with a holistic epistemology that naturally includes the human body .

The third core construct, artistic, also links with personal experiences. I have played guitar since I was thirteen, and as a consultant I have always used creative and experiential methods (drawing, painting, hand painting, clay, Legos, Bionicle, wood, games, outdoor exercises etc.) that enable a connection with the personal experiences. Without

artistic methods, thinking often remains on an abstract and rational-level, but the development activities that include the whole body and its experiences work much better. This interest and my experience are reflected also in the use of The Blind-Bottle exercise and in the discussion about experiential learning. Additionally I have worked out relations between the arts, creativity and leadership from a more academic perspective (Salovaara 2007).

In creating these kinds of core constructs we are now somewhat far from actual materials. If compared with Chapter 5 where the routines were named according to the actual language use, here the procedure is reversed: I first created the core constructs, and I ensured whether these are trustworthy and not just researcher's imagination by checking the empirical materials for proof – which I found. This checking can be called legitimizing, verifying and validating, and the proofs are the following new vignettes and extracts from the materials. And if we remind ourselves about The Fieldpath Method, then it is the research task to listen to what the materials might tell us and to lead a conversation with materials. That kind of conversation holds a possibility of surprising and allowing constellations to emerge that were not predicted or anticipated and nor were they included in the concepts with which the researchers entered the conversation. That is what happened with me and the core constructs.

7.2 Incompleteness

The further the SEBU participants advanced, the more obvious it became that their learning paths are not linear or alike, and that in their pursuit of coaching-style leadership they fail at least as often as they succeed. Learning just did not always take place. There was still something missing, that is, there was a *lack* of something. As Rauen (2009) concludes, requiring zero defects – a term adopted from engineering – from a human behaviour means to equal the human with

technical systems. There are technical environments where a zero-defects culture must be aspired to (aviation, nuclear plants), but human interaction is not such an environment. To remind, weakness of will still prevails and irrationality is an elementary part of our human image. (Charlton 1988)

However, being an incomplete human being in the midst of a culture that strives for excellence was very frustrating for many SEBU participants. It was hard to accept that even after several tries they still did not quite reach what they wanted. On the one hand, already that formulation says a lot: if the participants accept only the achievement of *their* wanted outcomes as a success, they are not employing a coaching but a manipulative attitude. On the other hand, participants' expectations of learning might have been exaggerated, which made them frustrated already in the early stages of the learning process. For instance, as will be discussed below, expecting that learning new things "must not feel unnatural even for one second" is an unrealistic image of skills learning.

Can a leader be weak? That is a rather radical reading of leadership in terms of main stream leadership research underlining success and heroic, great qualities of an individual. And this is what I am suggesting with the incompleteness: one can take a weak leader-role that supports leadership. In practical terms this means, for instance, less self-engagement and more people involvement; more delegating than controlling; more empowerment than authority; and coaching-attitude instead of knowing-attitude. Leadership, I claim, is constructed out of a weak leader-position. By saying this I refer to my own experience in the roles of managing director and organization consultant: leadership starts to happen when space is created where people can take responsibility for their important tasks. Admitting that one is not very good in certain things and asking for help is not a trick for cheating people to action, but just a fact of life.

The ready-made features of modern organizations are there to control the human incompleteness and to make organizational processes run smoothly and effectively. At the same time human actions

and learning processes are unfortunately incomplete and unfinished. Ladkin & Taylor (2010) describe arts in the following fashion: "Perhaps most importantly, the arts constantly reveal to us what it is to be human, in all our messiness, confusion and glory." In this respect one of the central tasks of the training becomes to *legitimize* incompleteness in the context of human learning. In Gehlen's anthropology, human is *Mangelwesen*, a being lacking something, having imperfections or defects, also called "inadequacies". Pedagogists largely share this kind of human image. (Malinen 2000; Ho 2000; Lindqvist 2000; James and Ladkin 2008)

The Potter and Wetherell (1989) methodological note that "a way to talk about something is a way to silence another perspective" applies to incompleteness: the human tendency to be incomplete and imperfect, and to fail, is excluded within the rhetoric of mainstream leadership research certain types of organization which I here call "ready-made". Success and perfection, risk management and failure avoidance are the language of the *ready-made* organization. The term refers to a functionalist paradigm (Burrell and Morgan 1979) that relies on rationality, control and predictability along with linear, causal and mechanical logics. Guillen (1997) calls this the "taylorized beauty of the mechanical", meaning that ready-made organizations look for machine-like functionality, as if they were ready to be operated by a button-push. The term comes originally from readymade art and 'found objects' that symbolize purposeful objects. Once taken outside of their purpose-domain, they can become part of the arts, as Duchamp so shockingly for his contemporaries in the 1920s showed.

The same ready-made features can be observed in human life, and they it shows especially when the ready-made for a moment becomes visible as a stranger:

> "The actions we engage in despite our choices and resolutions seem to be mysteries or minor anomalies in a choice-centered worldview"

(Cohen 2007). The human side of an organization[1] does not function in a deterministic, choice-centered way. A need for commensurability between functionalist, normative and interpretative approaches exists (Deetz 1996).

The phenomenon of weakness will that was explored in the previous chapter is a central element for understanding incompleteness. Weakness of will implicitly introduces an idea of human incompleteness, the way we *are* as human beings. In the eyes of ready-made organizations we should be better, more able and complete; to fit better to organizational systems and so forth. Mercy and forgiveness toward leaders are not precisely on the leadership agenda.

Several authors describe different kinds of incompleteness as an integral part of organizing: messiness, chaos, fear, and instability (Hatch 2006), incoherent and unplotted tellings, messy and fictively rational stories (Boje 2001), the nitty-gritty of local routines that are not easily managed from a distance (Whittington 1996), and subjective tacit knowledge rooted in feeling and emotion (Hansen et al. 2007). In a similar fashion Mantere (2005) states that he has grown reluctant about the language use. "I feel the main problem is that there does not seem to be room for uncertainty in the managerial worldview. Every issue has to have a quick, simple and very causal solution. (…) Leaders are central figures in the strategy process, but I think I am biased towards them in two ways: I am quite sympathetic towards their hardships, but the rhetoric they use worries me" (Mantere 2005: 4).

Incompleteness makes visible trial and error, and what happens when, despite all the effort, the results do not follow. Is that a failure, a system breakdown, a humiliation in the face of a successful and glittering ready-made system? Whereas The SEBU Leadership Code maintains a knowing culture, uncertainty emerges when that code is challenged. Uncertainty is inevitable, as the idea of change is to *separate* from a current status quo (White and Epston 1990).

1. With this expression I do not mean that there are organizations that are non-human, but rather aim at describing a tendency to design and think about organizations in these terms.

In the following I will illustrate how incompleteness occurred by three vignettes.

Kathy's Story

> My task is to audit other departments. Auditing means that I check work practices of independent, individual projects and how those projects have followed the company processes. That includes questions about preparation, teamwork, documentation, finances, results and so on – all these are valuable questions, but they might irritate the project leader. A project can be a success in terms of technical results, but it can fail auditing. I think this is a very valuable task, especially now when we are developing our ways of working on the company level.
>
> My trouble is that I usually end up in a quarrel with this particular project manager. I think I should do something differently – after all it is for everybody's benefit, not for annoyance –, and I reckon "coaching" might be a solution in this difficult situation. So what is the basic idea of coaching? Using more open questions, trying to make the other to see the value of auditing too, not pushing or insisting, but listening… I know that the actual situation cannot be planned up to the last detail, but it is good to be prepared with different scenarios, and to have enough options according to how he will react.
>
> When I then tried it out in an actual meeting, the new coaching style seemed to work better than my previous way of dealing with him, but later we ended up into a quarrel again. When reviewing this in one-to-one coaching sessions afterwards I realized that the new behaviour" was not yet quite "my own" but still partly "a stranger". It needs more practice to inhabit new skills.

Commentary

In this condensed story that Kathy told in a one-to-one coaching session she is making sense of her learning path. The story deals with mastering a skill and inhabiting it, as she puts it. Her story is a typical one that alerted trainers and this research about the circular and non-linear nature of change. A typical cognitive change narrative that participants in similar kinds of stories referred to can be reconstructed as having the following elements and order:

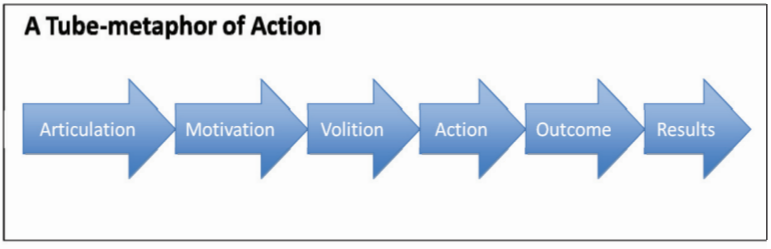

Figure 6. A Tube-metaphor of Action

First a need and a target have to be articulated. Language mirrors thoughts, and if the story sounds plausible, then the action will basically follow a straight line from motivation to volition (self-regulation, perspiration) to action. It is not very often mentioned, but the same line of thought implicitly expects actions to turn into wanted outcomes and intended results (target).

The above picture does not include hesitation, failure, contingency or the messiness of actual events, which is understandable, since this narrative is a retrospective sensemaking device. As Weick says: "When people punctuate their own living into stories, they impose a formal coherence on what is otherwise a flowing soup" (Weick 1995: 128). Kathy's story functions well as an example of the problem of translation. In the story Kathy is both motivated and she sounds committed (volition) to apply new skills. However, motivation and volition do not causally determine a change in the status quo; Kathy is not able to

hold on to the new action pattern and she falls back to her old behaviour. As she says, the new behaviour was not "her own" yet but a bit strange and maybe "acted", and it showed during the meeting in the long run. Inhabiting a skill requires a serious training phase – which is lacking in the above picture: incompleteness…
In Lamprou and Tsoukas' (2009) model a change in routine patterns takes place when a "disconcerting event" challenges the current flow of things:

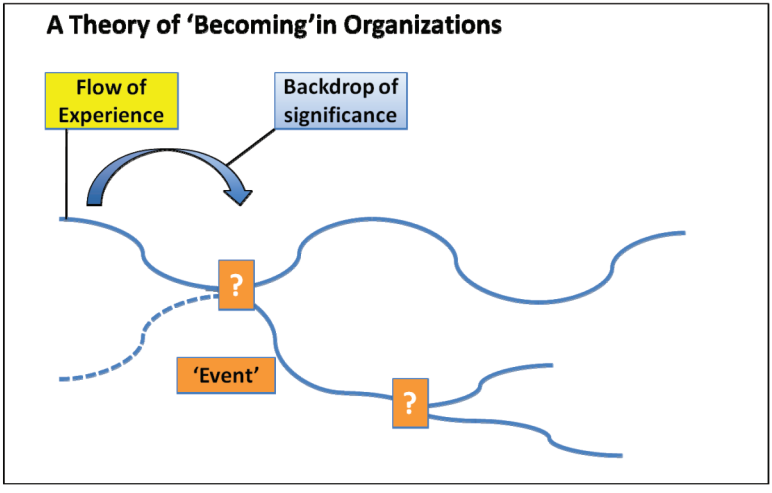

Figure 7. A Theory of 'Becoming' in Organization

In this picture a subjective flow of experience meets with a disconcerting flow at the moment of 'event'. From there on the situation follows a different path than it would have done without these two flows meeting. An example of this from SEBU training is as follows:

> Adam is the manager of a huge construction site, and deadlines and various small problems plague the project. Keeping the schedules is crucial because in the case of missing the deadline there are high penalties to be paid. One afternoon five of his team leaders come to

him: they are all struggling with the same technical problem concerning SEBU's delivery. If the problem is not solved, it can delay the opening of the building. Adam, an experienced and technically skilled manager, has an answer in his mind right away, but since he is in coaching training he hesitates for a little moment and then asks the team leaders: What do you guys think about it? As professionals the team leaders share their views and they create in five minutes a solution and leave right away to implement it. That solution, Adam later explained to us, was far better than the one he had in mind.

In this (retrospective) narrative we see that while Adam is in interaction with his team leaders, a backdrop of significance (coaching idea) clashes with the current flow of things, which makes Adam behave in an altered way. Accepting incompleteness, that one is not always sufficient alone, not relying on managerial wisdom, respecting others and "allowing to be affected" (Lamprou and Tsoukas 2009) by an emergent situation – these all are simultaneously required.

Now, observing these two narratives and models offers some insights into the problem of translation. First, an event is the moment where, as a result of action, the translation is at stake or not: things should proceed in a different manner than if one followed The SEBU Leadership Code. Because of the undefined nature of human (re)actions it is not possible to predict what the next event or the flow of experience will be. A linear flow of actions would follow the pattern from a will to an action and intended results, whereas the theory of becoming in organizations emphasizes the unlinear fashion, the process-nature of events. The process ontology model seems more adequate for prescribing skills adaptation.

In Kathy's story we see that her intention was to follow a certain course of actions, but – in the terminology of Lamprou and Tsoukas (2009) – a rather small 'event' ("not happenings of a broad scope or impact") temporarily unsettles her practices and puts her in a "dithering state of mind". An event, for instance a refusal by the person whose procedure Kathy was auditing, can change the course of actions, if one

is not prepared. But how to prepare for the unknown, for that which is unknown and yet to become?

In his analysis on the Mann-Gulch Disaster and fire-fighters who during a bush-fire lose touch with others, Weick (1993) introduces "social construction in the head". The chief of the fire-fighters, who escaped the fate of others, burned himself an area in the middle of the bushes and lay down there, whereas the others - the 13 that died – tried to run faster than the bush fire advanced. Some of them were still carrying their gear, which means that they were not able to let go of their traditional tools.

So what do these three examples (Kathy, Adam, Weick's fire-fighters) say about becoming, why should it be of any significance? I connect this with the features of 'ready-made', which implies something that is completed and done, as a ready-made object that requires no interpretation anymore. The ready-made is therefore neither receptive or sensitive to changes in the environment, nor does it acknowledge the phenomenological nature of reality. But nowadays organizations are required to be adaptive and flexible in the midst of changes (Hamel 2007), which indicates that apart from causal, mechanistic logics they need to understand more and more organic patterns and unique becomings. Yet to design organizational structures and understanding that allows for both a systematic approach and for flexibility are rare in normative mainstream approaches (Deetz 1996). Research streams that include change as an integral part of their self-understanding include post-modern organization research (Boje 1995; Chia 1995; Hatch 1997), strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski 2005; Chia and Mackay 2007; Whittington 1996) and aesthetic leadership approach (Hansen et al. 2007; Ropo and Parviainen 2001). These streams inquire into the question how to adapt the research methodologies to circumstances that do not follow causal logics.

To be precise on this: each method produces its own truths and perceptions of reality (Gadamer 2004), so by using different methodologies these authors cannot be dealing with exactly the same *phenomenon*. What they do share is an interest in developing organizational research

into directions that do not count solely on stability and objects as their subject of study, that is, methods that more aptly acknowledge change and a *process-nature at the core of organizational ontology*. These methods include an added sensitivity towards the emergent and becoming nature of things.

Another well-suited theoretical explanation for understanding what might have happened in Kathy's story is Argyris & Schön's (1974) view on espoused theories differing from theories-in-use. Like Kathy's story, the change narratives often report difficulties and inconsistencies while attempting to apply the new skills into practice. This confirms the research interest on the problem of translation, but clearly resets the scope. Instead of concentrating on training content and how to translate that into practice, the resetting focuses on participants' own issues and the output *they* interpret out of the seminars. It becomes necessary to understand the whole process of learning, in order to grasp the many various ways through which an individual learner is challenged during the process.

Mission impossible

SEBU leaders often referred to their tasks as 'mission impossible', meaning that they were expected to make things happen that did not seem possible.

The group rehearses coaching skills by interviewing each other in the roles of a client and of a coach. The 'client' has a case, a work related challenge, and the 'coach' tries to help him to advance it. While the rest of the group functions as observers, the discussion here starts with the coach asking what is the case.

Coachee: I should produce materials for a new mini-product. So I've caught this ball that was floating in the air. It has grown into a pretty urgent project, these mini-products, and I've got practically one-month's time to produce some results.

Coach: Where does this thing come from? How does it relate to you? And where do the schedules come from?

Coachee: Well, I suppose from the CEO… You know, we've got this strategy that we need products that create cash flow in the short term.

Coach: Can you manage to make this documentation without some other part of your work suffering under the pressure?

Coachee: Well, that's the point of course, I cannot imagine at the moment how I could do this without neglecting other things.

Coach: Do you think you can manage it in this one-month schedule?

Coachee: I have to neglect other things for sure. And at the moment this is a mission impossible.

Coach (to the group): Now I don't know how to proceed any further, now you could help me (…)

Trainer (to the group): So how did this go?

Comments by others: The situation was too fast-paced and artificial. It was too extempore and an unknown case. That is why the question were so awkward, forced. Too little time for preparation, and a difficult subject-matter… As he said, it is a mission impossible, so how could even a coach help?

Trainer: How much preparation would you need for your own understanding before you can start really coaching?

Mike: There is a difference between training and coaching: trainer knows, coach doesn't. Coach knows how to bring the other one to insights by using proper questions. As a coach you don't need to know the solution, but you can still coach. Then there is a clear line where the coach asks questions for himself, not for the other one to proceed in the challenging matter.

SEBU trainer (to the coach): So what were you thinking about? Answers?

Coach: Yeah…

SEBU trainer: What should you have been thinking instead? Questions! – If an insight is to emerge in the coachee's head, what should

happen in the coach's head? Simply understanding! All you need to do is to understand his situation better.

Another time, another place, a similar discussion on taking a not-knowing attitude:

Trainer: So was this coaching?
Max: The questions were peaceful, they met the object, coach did not put the words in the other one's mouth but asked you to think. It went according to coaching-principles.
William: The coach gave space – especially if there is an extroverted person, he starts to talk when there is a silence.
Marc: It is kind of aunt Mary's couch, a psychologist (laughter, poses changing).
Trainer: That's right. However, coaching is something else than just a place to rest. You have to create trust. On the top of that you can challenge, come to the point, bring him into to the core questions. What was your experience (to the coachee)?
Coachee: More unsolved questions emerged. I've got to find out the background information and sit down with the lads.

Commentary

The idea promoted through coaching is to be able to live with uncertainty, as we cannot always know things in advance: matters are emerging, proceeding, not finalized and might change on their way, they are in flow and constant becoming. Yet we seem to plan things in advance and aim at control. Without letting go of something the task is impossible, so the control has to be loosened for new things to emerge. This discrepancy is reflected through the usage of the term 'mission impossible': things should remain controllable but changes emerge that force the re-building of a new harmony. This could be called cognitive dissonance (Weick 1979), and in respect to skills

acquisition and negative learning I think we can here reframe that dissonance to include bodily aspects too. After all, the person has to act on it physically.

The coachee called his dilemma a mission impossible, so how should even a coach be able to solve that!? Coach does not lead, does not search for a solution, but creates space. It is basically the same phenomenon as leaving space for leadership to emerge. If the coach should provide an answer, we can only wonder on what grounds that answer would stand. Even after a long discussion it would be a mission impossible to understand all the relevant factors: the coachee's skills, his/her relations to peers and employees and so on. This is what the uniqueness argument says too.

At the core of this vignette is how SEBU participants are living through a change from a knowing attitude to becoming an enabler of thinking, in brief: from answering questions to asking questions. The term 'mission impossible' refers to an old routine, knowing attitude, and if that does not change, the task is doomed. Part of the change is to admit the limits of the earlier plan and work schedules (that they were not perfect but incomplete), and to adjust to the new requirements. This also means not taking oneself too seriously, and to accept incompleteness as an elementary part of the work requirements of a modern organization.

In these extracts the participants claim that in order to be able to coach, the coach would need more information from the coachee. This, in effect, leaves the coachee the role of reporting. But as defined by the new code, the coach does not need to operate from a knowing-attitude. In an organization s/he promotes a not-knowing attitude and reminds of incompleteness of human life.

The right time

In this vignette James is talking about his experience of trying to capture the right moment for development discussions.

> I've been trying to take a role of the player-coach – someone who is on the field and cares for the overall well-being and results. One PDD (Personal Development Dialogue) I conducted on the site, other ones elsewhere. It was good to have it by the sea, we had ice-cream and a free conversation. I did have papers with me. Not the way that here they ask this and that, but searching for other things. If you don't know the guy, you don't know what work to give and what they are capable of doing, so again you need an eye for the game to make things roll. We all have our targets and aim at them in different ways.

James was looking for the right time and the right place for the discussion, and these should be found from the role of a "player-coach", as it were, who knows both the real work and the objectives of PDD. Informality and leaving time constraints behind are features of incompleteness. Understanding subjective time, the 'right time', as it were, gained importance during the program. In the next extract the participants describe the kind insights they learned during an exercise they had made before. Many comments refer to the right timing of interventions:

Pete: The way you do it means a lot. I realized that there are different ways of intervening and how they affect.

Mike: Timing. It is important to realize when to do it. (…) You have to think about the timing: too early, too late or not at all…

John: In our case the intervention happened too late and in a wrong manner. When you go to a certain uncomfortable zone, you tend to move things forward… Like I've got these two guys who cannot even discuss with each other. They spend eight hours a day together and they just tell each other to f*** off… It is hard to recognize these things while sitting over here.

Tim: Stepping outside of borders, clear policies. (…) How do you know that such frames exist? Everything has to have frames.

Mary: You cannot intervene all the time.

Ken: The right timing is the key. It has been mentioned twice already.

Commentary

Relation to time adds a further phenomenon to incompleteness. Tsoukas (2009) included both chronological and kairological times in his account of process ontology. The above examples show how participants recognize the kairological time: comments like "*to realize* when *to do it*, *you have to think about timing"* and *"the right timing is the key"* clearly demonstrate this. Coaching skills are connected with kairological time – it would naturally be silly to plan things chronologically like "at 10.32 I will ask this question…". However, it is not silly to expect the train to leave at an announced time. These two logics, two approaches to time easily get confused. In management and when dealing with systems or production, the order of the day is chronological time, but in leadership and coaching more attention has to be paid to kairological time. Further, because of the massive amounts of systems in modern organizations, there is a tendency for the normative, chronological approach (or could we even say paradigm?) to take over some of the human, interpretative and kairological domain, that is, the human processes start to become a subject of technical logics and chronological time elements only, as if human will, learning or experiences would follow that thinking.

The chronological, objectively measured time can be associated with the normative and functionalist paradigm, whereas kairological time is a concept for describing interpretative features of organizing (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Deetz 1996). The absence of incompleteness in academic leadership research indicates that the research still relies very much on the heroic, great man theory: the leader-king is neither supposed to fail and err, nor to lead his troops in wrong directions, nor to show his emotions, nor to play with the arts. Without adding incompleteness to current leadership, the discourses maintain

and reproduce the traditional picture of leadership as an individual, heroic task. And without incompleteness we are one step short of creating human organizations.

7.3 Embodied

"There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom" (Nietzsche 1988c: 40). Indeed, Nietzsche, the real heretic, argued against the spirit of his time by redefining the relation between mind and body so that the mind is a "little instrument and toy of the great reason" (ibid), of the body. The dualistic relation of the mind and body, where mind has the over-hand, is turned up-side down by Nietzsche. His view takes us back to the epistemological underpinnings of this work by highlighting the bodily dimensions of knowing and remembering the (Cartesian) dichotomy of body and mind, upon which the mainstream leadership studies still rely. In contrast to that the aesthetic leadership approach is based on both sensory perceptions and judgments, including intellect, emotions and bodily sensations. It was remarked that in the meaning of *aisthesis* these different instances of knowing are not separated but understood from a holistic perspective.

The relation between body and mind is traditionally understood as being that the mind leads and the body follows – one is subordinated to another. *Embodiment* is a concept relating to aesthetic epistemology, to felt experience. It emphasises the importance of also identifying emotions, intuition and bodily sensations as an instance of valid epistemological data. Embodiment has already been conceptualized by research, and these accounts refer to it as an epistemological issue: embodiment is about status of bodily knowledge. (Ropo and Parviainen 2001; Ladkin 2008) If we think about leadership work with people, it is in a particular manner based on interpretative knowledge, emotions and kairological time, and thus relies not only on the best rational argument or realist view. Especially when leadership is regarded as a

social construction and management of meaning, understanding emotions plays a central role in leadership (Smircich and Morgan 1982; Fineman 2003; Sauer 2005).

The next vignettes show how embodiment is reflected in SEBU leadership training courses.

Gun-fire

The participants noted earlier that even questions are not that innocent: with questions you can still control and lead astray. In general, the participants have realized that there is an ambivalence in regard to questions. In this reflective exercise the groups explore what happened when Pete, from the role of an observer, intervened in a coaching session with questions that become illustrated as gun-fire:

Pete: But… Is it then a wrong style, this like, like what I did to you… I was like tryin' to… get something outta how you've done it.

George: At least I felt it pretty pressing…

Pete: Was it, ay?

George: It was.

Pete: Yeah but, I just wanna know whether he'd done it in a coaching way or have you just been talkin' soft things with boys, kinda "you should do it a bit, and maybe you do if you wanna..." Or is it like, is it the way that if you haven't done it so that you could answer something sensible to that, so then you experience it like pressing, is that it?

George: Yee noo… It felt like breathing down my neck… Like a gun-fire. No matter what I answered there was a new question right after… In my opinion it was not constructive. (Leaning towards his palms, drawing his hands over his face, looking a bit exhausted.)

Fred: Could it be a matter of style? You (Pete) have an offensive style when asking, it kinda insists on answering. The other might not be ready to give an answer or doesn't have words in mouth. That is, you pose the questions quite demandingly. (George smiling and laughing, Max grinning too.) That's maybe… That maybe creates a feeling of pressure. (George holding his hands in front of his face and smiling.)

Trainer: Hmm-m… On whose agenda are we then? – If you as a coach want something, that tends to take a lead, right? – So George, what happened here?

George: The observer started to pose questions, because he knows the case.

Trainer: And then you refused to answer?

However, some five minutes later George talks in a different tone:

George: But I must admit that you (Pete) made me think. I think you're right: I did not do too much in the first place, I was passive, not active.

Pete: Yeah, yeah! And that's what our leadership is all about – about doing something for these things, caring for them! If we don't, who the hell does it then!?

In this latter passage George distances himself ("*I must admit*…") from the emotions that the interrogation created. We can also observe an interesting development here: even if George feels offended in the first place, his emotions turn into a more appreciative mode just five minutes later.

Before commenting on or interpreting the above text in more detail, let me offer a textualization of the same situation in a different key:

> A small room, three by three meters, walls painted in white with no pictures. In the middle of the room a simple grey table with four green-covered chairs around it. On one end a door, opposite it a window

with a roller blind – all very neat, clean and impersonal. Four men, in their fifties, sitting around the table, two of them having a discussion and the two others saying nothing. After a while, one of the silent observers starts to ask questions in a paced manner. The person being asked gets a little slower, hesitates to answer. If the feeling in the conversation had been a bit hesitant and sensitively circling around the issue, it now becomes more poignant and active.

Another man enters the room. It is the trainer, whose entrance stops the 'interrogation' and a general discussion starts. He asks: Oh, so the observer started to ask questions, did he? One of the men starts to explain what happened, and two others start to smile, not really laugh aloud, but you see them grinning and they hide their laughing behind their palms. Why do they smile and laugh and why is that hidden? What happened in this pale room that makes them laugh now, afterwards?

Commentary

In the light of discussion we might be tempted to say that the learning point here is that coaching questions can become too aggressive, and that by such questions the coach loses her/his counterpart's trust, that is, the communication breaks down. On the other hand the extract continues with the concluding remarks of George, the one who started to hesitate with his answers to Pete's provocative questions. The interview had been gentle and understanding so far, but it changed when Pete kicked in. Taking the last comments into account, we can say that Pete clearly has an agenda in his mind: his message is that leaders should care, and he uses this insight for questioning in a more detailed manner. After reconsidering the issue, the participants (here in the dialogue between George and Pete) reconstruct the issue: it was not so much about the subject-matter as it was about caring: do they as leaders care about SEBU issues? If they do not do anything about

it, who would? This care-taking could possible classify as a part of The SEBU Leadership Code's intervening-discourse and especially the routine of "action orientation": care-taking invites actions, because not taking action means sometimes not taking care of something. I do not regard it as a coincidence that care-taking appears under a vignette of embodiment. One meaning of care is to have regard or consideration about something (Collins Concise Dictionary), which again can be grasped as a holistic experience

In this vignette the effects of questioning technique are described as bodily sensations:

> I felt it pretty pressing. This (coaching) seems to be stuck here. I experienced your questions like gun-fire. You have an attacking style when asking.

The participants also used expressions like the topic got deeper, developed more dimensions, and expanded, and things started to resettle and click. These notions are based on how something feels. Knowledge in this kind of exercise (as well as in life and leadership functions in general) includes emotions and bodily sensations. "Stuck" means here that it does not move anymore – but what is moving anyway? The gun-fire metaphor illustrates the experience of being shot at, being interrogated with sharp questions that bite, without a break or time to breath. That is what leads to a sensation of being attacked. Highlighting and mentioning these issues goes in line with the definition of aesthetic leadership and aesthetic knowledge: leader-knowledge is not based only on cognitive, rational or traditionally learned contents. In order to understand human relations, sensitivity towards own bodily sensations seems like a central asset for these leaders. Understanding these things in one's own body first is a prerequisite for understanding others too, which makes the above kind of coaching sessions and reflections an exercise in withness-thinking. The methodology of leadership has a lot in common with the kind of rethinking of empirical research methods that for instance Shotter (2005: 1) exemplifies:

> "If our task was simply that of theorizing process, then there are many brilliant writers and thinkers in the recent past to turn to. But as I see it, these writers are mostly oriented toward helping us think about process "from the outside," about processes that we merely observe as happening 'over there'. But if we are to rethink appropriate styles of empirical research, then we need a different form of engaged, responsive thinking, acting, and talking, that allows us to affect the flow of processes from within our living involvement with them. Crucially, this kind of responsive understanding only becomes available to us in our relations with living forms when we enter into dialogically-structured relations with them. It remains utterly unavailable to us as an external observer. I will call this kind of thinking, thinking-from-within or withness-thinking, to contrast it with the aboutness-thinking that is more familiar to us."

Apart from the way Shotter defines withness-thinking as an element of empirical methodologies, he underlines that we are more used to aboutness-thinking. In saying that he claims, like Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Deetz (1996), that objectifying and "theorizing from outside" have the upper-hand in explanations on how things are. Embodiment as a core construct reminds us about the often missing part of theorizing, the need to theorize from within.

Now, not all the things come that naturally, as the next bits and pieces show.

It must come naturally

Andrew: The feedback session we had the last time – well, what should I do about my challenges? I would have to find out what to pay attention to, I mean, to observe possible coaching situations. But this coaching mustn't be so damned unnatural, these exercises have been unnatural, awful. If it doesn't come naturally, I'll fail in an instant. (…) If I have to think even half a second, it doesn't work.

Commentary

This extract reminds us about one of the earlier discussions on playing a role, where similar kinds of comments were heard: you should start acting but remain true to yourself. In these instances people often refer to authenticity: stay true to your real self, live life according to your inner needs. From a social constructionist point of view that does not rely on fixed identities but rather on continuous negotiations, the quest for authentic self becomes more problematic. "Who am I, and if yes, how many?", as the recent German philosophical bestseller (Precht 2008) asks. Another problem is posed by precisely the above comment: change shakes the current equilibrium. How can you change and train in new skills if it has to feel natural before anything has been tried out? This is one of the paradoxes of participative and self-initiated change attempts: change challenges existing standards and differs from the familiar by definition (O'Connor 1995). However, Andrew seems to hesitate whether the new tools can be applied in the real world and even if yes, whether they will adequately replace the old tools. From a theoretical perspective the new tools will do something different than the old ones. This means that the new tools introduce a different way of seeing reality instead of only a need to cope with the old reality in new ways.

Weick (2007) talks about dropping your tools and how we tend to stick to our learned capacities. Parviainen and Eriksson (2006) introduced the notion of negative knowledge, which involves "'giving up' or 'bracketing' knowledge in certain situations" (Parviainen and Eriksson 2006: 140). But while Andrew would appear to be willing to drop his existing tools, based on what he has experienced, adopting the new ones does not yet seem to him a realistic option. Weick (2007) suggests dropping fixations because "tools preclude ways of acting. If you preclude ways of acting, then you preclude ways of seeing. If you drop tools, then ideas have more free play." Dropping a fixation that a new behaviour has to work immediately and allowing more free room for exploration would be a Weickian reply to the fixation on instant

learning. Based on the above discussion Andrew's fixation on instant learning is a disguised refusal to drop the old tools.

What are the reasons why Andrew did not drop his tools? Analysis of materials, interviews, observations and field notes suggest some answers to this and similar cases. Some reasons can be traced back to the SEBU Leadership Code: the expectations towards knowing and answering are so pressing that hesitation and not knowing are seen as weakness; constant stress, the need to produce results and action orientation also contribute to a quick fix-culture; and finally the tendency to confront people in a direct manner (being straightforward and honest are valued in Finnish culture) does not allow a free play of ideas in the actual situation.

There are also a few additional reasons that are less obvious . Andrew's practical case was about a meeting of an international group of ten people, a situation that Andrew did not in any case feel comfortable in . First, even if Andrew wants to change, the change includes greater risks than retaining the old habits. There is a risk of failing in the new behaviour – as one is not yet familiar with it– and becoming embarrassed and therefore losing authority. As the others then go back to their work, they might do just anything, which makes it even harder to reach the business targets. Another risk is that the results of the new behaviour are unpredictable: one might lose control of things and over people – and who knows what catastrophe that may cause! Second, – and here I follow Weick (2007) – dropping off tools means to admit failure. To keep on the old track means business as usual. However, we know from that meeting that he wants to change the way things advance.

The third reason is that he is irritated about his inability. He did not drop his tools because he did not think he was able to apply the new ones: there was nothing instead, just emptiness, a black hole, black-out and sheer doubt. And that has to do with leadership identity: what is a leader who cannot run operations in an international environment and a meeting of ten international participants? Not a leader, that much we can read from that short passage: the more one

identifies with a certain kind of behaviour, the harder it is to depart from these fixed positions. The issue of identity is similar with fire-fighters who are educated to care for and carry their tools. The more the tools are equal to the identity, the harder it is to drop them. In this sense fixed identities (as opposed to a social construction of reality) prevent negative learning.

The fourth reason is partly included in the above mentioned risks, which is that the social dynamics do not allow for renewal in the midst of a target oriented mind-set, as the others are not willing to change the rules of the game at that time.

But we can dig yet a little deeper into naturalness-discussion. With the word 'natural' participants usually refer to something that is familiar to them and that fits into their fore-structure of understanding, that is, utilizes concepts, vocabulary and future orientation they can relate to. What is natural to you is not necessarily natural to me, so there is a subjective element in this. Naturalness can also relate to what is a difference between technical rationality and human naturalness. It is natural for a machine to repeat one movement, but we tend to say in the long run that such kind of work is not very human. Since human beings are a part of nature, there is an argument that says that human actions cannot be unnatural, so they are natural by definition (Siipi 2005). Knowing Andrew I think he would agree with this and say that that was not what he meant by unnatural. What is it then?

Another entry point to this is the previous discussion (Chapter 5) on feedback that participants received: they basically knew and understood it, it was familiar. The problem was not recognition, but translating this knowledge into actions. For a beginner, playing a musical instrument feels unnatural, but once you train and learn it, it starts to come naturally. Do Andrew's comments represent an excuse for not really trying out the new approach? A further answer lies in embodiment. Rational knowledge and technical things can happen in an instant, but embodied knowledge is not gained in a similar fashion; it is of different sort or kind. Fashion originates from Latin *facere*, to

make, which implicates that fashion has to be made, it does not happen (Collins Concise Dictionary).

This viewpoint introduces the idea of the process from another angle than previously. Leadership becoming is not a stage, state or condition to be reached, but rather a constitution of various intertwined learning and change processes. Where does it start or stop, when are we ready? As a phenomenon and a hermeneutic object leadership it continues to develop constantly.

Yet all this is theory for Andrew. How can he take advantage of the rich variety Weick referred to? And since he claims that the new should not feel unnatural, does he even want it? As I have remarked earlier, all these participants have personally and explicitly stated that they want to advance toward a new leadership approach that will show in their thinking, their reacting and their acting. The images and pictures Andrew uses can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand they pose limitations to learning, and therefore the rich variety of possible solutions is not within his reach as long as he hangs on to a belief that learning must happen instantly. Commitment to "feeling natural" also underlines the central role that emotions and embodiment take in this kind of experiential learning approach. On the other hand it could that he feels he would need to reach the level of "unconscious competence", that it feels natural, and realising this great deal of learning makes him hesitate. In this case he would be very conscious of what it takes to apply new skills.

Knowledge creation is traditionally considered in terms of continuous and linear, positive growth, but negative knowledge involves nonlinear, non-constructive instances of knowledge and facing one's own incompleteness. (Parviainen and Eriksson 2006) As Andrew's comment indicate, the challenge participants face is the problem of negative knowledge, giving up some old patterns of acting, but this challenge is intertwined with the question of what to do instead, the problem of positive knowledge. Putting old knowledge in brackets is difficult even if new positive knowledge would be available. As skills training requires touching motoristic, kinaesthetic and emotional

knowledge reserves, this LD approach is based on a theory of learning from own experience.

One-to-one coaching

In this one-to-one coaching session the coachee (Susan) and the coach are reviewing how her work situation has evolved during the program.

Susan: I think I'm doing fine now, better. In the beginning there were some particular (emphasis) problems, because I inherited a job that used to belong to Doris, and she just couldn't keep her hands off from the old work. The communication between the two of us has been at a minimum level. I think that's because she has a tendency to continue the things her way, with her old methods. I've realized that the less we meet the better. It helps me to stand the stress when I do it my own way.

Coach: So what's the story, how have you settled in your new role? There are these starting points: you, Doris…

Susan: Someone has to introduce me to the job, so Doris's been a natural choice. But already back then I sensed that she is not the easiest person in the world to get along with. I've done what I had to, but the communication has been at the minimum. – If she could be asked, then she has probably experienced a kind of decrease in ranking. Her behaviour has sometimes been under any sensible level, it's been childish for a grown-up person.

Coach: Do you really mean… I mean, do you really honestly mean… – I'm asking this because the information so far is so condensed: Do I understand you correctly that this relation is harming your work?

Susan: Well, she has slowed down the things in many ways. And she doesn't want me to succeed. With her knowledge that's easy…

Coach: Has she made it slower, or has she enabled it at least somehow?

Susan (nervously tapping her chair with her fingers):
Earlier this year I was learning the daily routines, and I didn't have energy for anything else. And at that time she didn't deliver any new orders to service technicians.

Coach: So how was the work accomplished then?

Susan: Well now there is work, a bit too late and a huge amount at one time. (…)

Coach: So how will this continue? And what helps you to succeed?

Susan: I see that this work is full of potentials. With a long-term positive approach there is no way to fail in this. But if there's someone who doesn't want this to work out, then we're lacking a relaxed mood.

Coach: How to get into a relaxed mood?

Susan: There are couple of guys that think she is just aggressive and bossy and playing cat and mouse with them, so they want distance from her. That way her influence decreases.

Coach: Maybe Doris is still thinking she is doing the right thing…

Susan: I don't know. I wouldn't be so sure. (The feeling is tens in a positive sense, like we are talking about sensitive issues.)

Coach: I'm trying to understand her behavioural pattern: if the things are not going her way, maybe she intervenes aggressively…

Susan: In the beginning, in September, she gave me a lift. We were talking a bit, and I told her how I see this thing as a roulette wheel, how it keeps on turning automatically. I said that this is going to be easy… Then I happened to turn my head, and, well, you should have seen her face, many people might have gotten frightened. (Lots of movements with hands.) Her face was, well I can't describe it, but it showed that she felt that I'm underrating her achievements. (…)

Coach: Yeah, that might be.

Commentary

Through this dialogue we can analyse how embodied knowledge is utilized in a leadership role. First, Susan sensed that Doris is not the easiest person to get along with, and later on we hear some reasons for this evaluation: Doris may feel de-ranked and underestimated, and work was not delivered when Susan was absent. The story-telling evolves in opposition to chronology: at the end we hear a story that happened in the beginning of this relation and which serves as an explanation for Susan's previous evaluation.

The last little story on how Susan sat in a car with Doris and the way Doris looked, is a particularly illustrative instance of embodied knowledge. A little unhappy incident, Susan making sense of the work she is inheriting aloud and choosing expressions that sound under-estimating (*the work can run like a roulette wheel, it happens automatically and easily*)… It can be that these careless words provoked a feeling in Doris that her work and skills are not appreciated. We can understand that if someone has been doing a certain work for ten years and then your successor comes and says that this is just a piece of cake, you might feel neglected, not understood and very little valued. The ugly face that Susan saw made her realize that she had made a mistake.

At the core of the story I am retelling here is an attempt to see what it takes to understand others, their behaviour and reactions. A trigger for Susan to start telling the last story is the coach's suggestion to explore the things from Doris' point of view: *I'm trying to understand her behavioural pattern*… The fact that the story immediately emerges indicates that she already has an explanation for Doris' behaviour. Getting hold of reasons for Doris' behaviour and getting inside of Susan's story and experiences is an attempt to see and think, to approach the world with another's concepts (pictures, images, words…). According to Shotter (2006) this style of "seeingful and feelingful thought" can be applied in many fields ranging from interpersonal communication and psychotherapy to management and science. Based on this analysis it is also applied successfully on a daily and natural basis in

leadership – however, so daily that I am not quite sure whether to talk about application or being embedded in human practices. In leadership literature there are some examples of creating a story from the leader's perspective, such as Doppler (1999) who narrates a story from 'inside the head' and Puutio (2002) who examines the language of leadership from the perspective of even small utterances or silences and their meaning.

In hermeneutic terms understanding is always an embodied task, for how could we understand without our body, without previous experiences or the (Heideggerian) fore-structure of understanding? Nevertheless, talking about *embodied hermeneutics* underlines that knowing and understanding are embedded in our bodily existence. Knowledge in this respect is neither atomistic or to be understood from a purely detached position (Taylor 1995), nor is it pure aboutness-thinking (Shotter 2006), but becomes understandable only within a certain context and limitations. Nietzsche (1988a) called these limitations "horizon": anything can be understandable only within a particular context of experience, which equals to the horizon of understanding. These horizons are now becoming problematic, Taylor (1991) claims, pointing to the fragmented qualities of modern life and what Lyotard (1989) calls loss of grand narratives, big truths. Because of the over-flow of information it is difficult to pause and create space for interpretation.

Body, as Nietzsche stated above, should not be subsumed to soul or intellect, but be regarded as constitutive for our existence. Our body is the keeper of our memories and experiences, and it is through our body that we can get in touch with our real future possibilities. Intellect and imagination are needed, but only our body shows what is possible. That, I think, is what often happens with SEBU participants when they are faced with "weakness of will": intellect and imagination are steps ahead, and only when our body does not really follow – we do not know how to handle the situation, do not grasp it, do not find the right words – we realize whether we can do something or not. That is

when the problem of translation, of trying to merge the horizons in practical terms, comes to fore.

All this indicates that leadership will not be defined here as a list of actions or the patterns of successful leaders. It rather requires artistic solutions, which is the topic that the next core construct, artistic, will explore.

7.4 Artistic

Organizations have their aesthetics, and within the past fifteen years business organizations have increasingly been described in terms of arts; the artistic methods and ways of seeing are employed in production, R&D and design; leadership and management are described to be an art; all in all, the vocabulary and imagery of arts have found their way into business organizations in many ways (Adler 2006; Ottensmeyer 1996; Strati 1996, 1999, 2007; Taylor 2008; Taylor and Ladkin 2009; White 1996). Interestingly enough arts and business are yet often seen as contradiction, the arts taking the role of the Beauty and economics the role of the Beast (Salovaara 2007).

The main reason for why business turns to the arts is that art deals with and knows about uncertainty. Artist also have a long experience in how to be creative and productive under stress and the pressure of dead lines. Business today is increasingly complex and its environment is chaotic and business faces an ever more instability and unpredictable changes (Adler 2006). These changes "happen unpredictably, unexpectedly, not according to any laws or principles, but capriciously dependent on circumstances" (Shotter 2006). "Time is right for cross-fertilization of leadership and arts", Adler (2006: 487) proclaims. What does connecting leadership and the arts mean, and what does Adler refer to with the right time?

What the arts teaches ways of worldmaking (Goodman 1978) – whether it be painting, poems, songs, dance, theatre or by creating

an experience in other ways. What counts for arts is on the one hand art for arts sake, on the other hand the experience that the audience or the interpreters get. Sauer (2005) discusses this problematics with regard to theatre: an artistic production needs spectators. Ladkin (2010) notes that both charisma and vision only work to the degree they get accepted, and in that respect the meaning making aspect of the followers is even more decisive than the leader-qualities. When we apply that to theatre it says that the more the spectators get the feeling of being spoken to, touched, and the more they thus can relate to the piece, the more the work of art actually becomes shared. An organizational process of creating common understanding (involving others, bottom-up - Helin 1993) equals to an artistic production in that they both are meaning making activities. How the end-results emerge can be unexpected and also a disappointment.

Now, the SEBU leaders are trying to relate to their people in many ways. Basically such activities are in vain: why should they try to relate anew, when they have a connection anyway? They are, after, not separate or detached from their team in the first place, are they? No matter what the answer, the point with the SEBU training participants is that they all voluntarily expressed their will to develop themselves as a leader. This was checked by asking each individual whether they see a need for personal improvement in leadership or not, and all of them replied yes.[2]

The scenarios that SEBU participants chose for practising new skills require application and improvisation. This is the definition of the core construct 'artistic': leadership in practice seems to require plasticity, which is not flexibility, but an artistic skill to cope with situations and people, and to influence the 'materials' as they happen (emergence). Formal education for dealing with change and creativity is rare in economic, managerial or leadership education, but a common-place in arts education (Adler 2006; Taylor and Ladkin 2009).

2. This scene was also video-taped, and even if one considers the social pressure in such a group situation, my evaluation is that they individually and voluntarily chose it themselves.

The way I use the term flexibility relates Nietzsche's (1988a) use of the term "plasticity". He notes that remembering and forgetting are mental processes that we neither fully understand nor are fully in control of. The way we choose certain memories – and Nietzsche expands this idea to include history in general – is, because of its uncontrollable nature, partly an arbitrary process. For choosing something or keeping something in mind, humans apply what he calls "plastic force": we are obliged to make sense and select. This wilful act, be it conscious or not, Nietzsche later in his writings called the Will to Power.

The core construct artistic also takes up an Ancient Greece thematic of Apollonian and Dionysian forces. In Nietzsche's use of Greek mythology, Apollo, the God of light, represents civilization and form versus the primal nature and lustrous life characterized by Dionysos, the God of wine (Nietzsche 1988b; Gerhardt 1995). Without form, no civilization or understandable structure is created, yet form or structure alone do not sufficiently represent life in its rich and chaotic nature, that is why they both are needed. Nietzsche did not see these two Gods in contrast but rather as a combination, representing different sides of human features that form Greek tragedies (Nietzsche 1988a). Order and form in a very extravagant Nietzschean way are used as means of calming down the constant flow of possible perceptions and interpretations; basically for 'anaesthetic' purposes, to cause a loss of bodily sensations or consciousness (Collins Concise Dictionary).

The way Nietzsche characterizes Apollonian and Dionysian forces resonates with several images discussed in this work previously. First, this study can be described as being based in a Dionysian need to include the daily nitty-gritty and unlinear nature of learning efforts into LD accounts, for the form and function are taken care of by the majority of academic LD research anyway (Chapter 2). Second, Apollonian and Dionysian forces parallel the academic discussion between normative-functionalist and interpretative studies and Gadamer's insistence on searching for truth beyond methods too: one approach emphasising the form (method), the other life as a process and collection of daily practices (truth). This has been illustrated previously in

this work as an ontological issue. There is a third, not previously mentioned aspect: art replaces war (fight, strategies, units) as a metaphor and language for understanding organizations (Sauer et al. 2010). The art metaphor opens up discussions on leadership in organizations into new directions, and thus allows those who are interested to see more. Art has therefore a generative and reproductive power. In theory those leaders who apply artistic abilities have more options of acting and they see reality in multiple ways. This is in line with Morgan (2006) who suggests that the more metaphors we have, the more we are able to see, or to put it the other way round, a limited range of metaphors leads to limited views on reality. This artistic freedom might well also stand in opposition to existing organizational principles:

> "By undermining old beliefs and releasing imagination, artists introduce chaos in both destructive and productive ways. Embracing the face of the artist means that leaders must sometimes welcome the opportunities for change that chaos brings. Unfortunately, change often breeds fear. Artists and other innovators may be feared precisely because people believe that the chaos they unleash will negate the benefits of order and undermine the security the order brings." (Hatch et al. 2006: 50)

The last line describes the previous discussion on Andrew's comments too, where it was analysed that the fear of losing control might prevent him acting in a new way. That is why artistic is the third core construct: transformation requires courage to step into insecure and unknown directions. That involves a plastic capacity: to give the unknown a new form or shape.

Learning and the arts

In participants' discourse learning is often associated with creativity and openness. The need for creative solutions co-incides with com-

plexity, and the ability to be perceptive and open to the environment has become a generally required asset.

William: It (learning) requires curiosity, enthusiasm, creativity and a will to develop oneself."
Mary: The way I'm doing it just ain't a good way, something must be done differently.

The next is an extract from the final review phase of a coaching exercise, where James' case was discussed, a case he had at the beginning of the discussion announced as a small case.

Coach: The issue he introduced kind of changed – got deeper and gained new dimensions. We started from a small (incident) but there was a concern about the whole organization in the background.
James: Yes, this isn't actually a small issue…
Coach: But it kind of expanded really interestingly… (rising tone, emphasising)
James: Yeah, I admit – and not much is needed, it affects you when you've got to think (pointing his head) – so that when you challenge a bit the things start to resettle in your head.
Mary: You know, the advantage is precisely how the things get resettled in your head. When you think and think alone the thoughts follow the same track on and on. But when someone asks they start to click.
James: You kind of mumble, talk aloud.

The next dialogue occurred between a trainer and a participant. Tim had indicated in the group conversation that he has tried out something at work and that he has now learned it. The trainer asked afterwards what he has learned:

Tim: I'm usually very impulsive. This has taught me to listen and wait for the other one's solutions. Maybe I don't rush into the things with my own solutions

Trainer: How did you learn that, how did that happen?

Tim: By doing, at work. I always have a learning diary with me. I've taken stopping and listening as tasks.

Trainer: So where did you get the idea to stop?

Tim: I don't know.

Commentary

Learning can sometimes be described as stepping into a virgin area, into something we do not know and which therefore needs adjustment and adaptation from our side – creativity. One has to be curious and enthusiastic about it, which functions as a verbalization of "allowing to be affected" (Lamprou and Tsoukas 2009).

There are portions of unlinear thinking in moments when Tim talks about the issue freely. A new realization is that 'mumbling, talking aloud' can have a positive effect. Even if the 'knowledge' that talking aloud can clarify your thoughts might be culturally inherited, it is notable that they report the same effect that Freud called *catharsis*, the therapeutic effect of a talking cure (Fineman 2003: 12).

The last notion is the relation between knowledge and arts. Knowledge has already been handled in terms of a not-knowing attitude, mumbling aloud, creating a new kind of awareness and a healing effect, and as drawing out knowledge by giving room for it to emerge. There is one more term that can be coined in connection with knowledge, Nietzsche's (1988a) concept of "dead knowledge". History as a science, when it is understood in only the form of grand narratives and truths (Lyotard 1989) and closed knowledge, is a dead-end street, Nietzsche claims, for history is also needed for life and living. Not only remembering, we also have a necessity of forgetting: there is a level of "sleeplesneess" and "restlesnees"; of repetition and

knowledge intensiveness; of hanging back with the past that brings disadvantages to life, for we ought to live the present and create the future, the big deeds, not only dwell on the past. The future, according to Nietzsche, is based on our ability to construct the plasticity of living for great futures.

Being able to shape and design emergent materials like an artist and not to rely solely on past (dead) knowledge, is an asset of modern leadership. This means that, more than knowledge, they need the skills of thinking and helping others to think – to see the big picture and create liveable futures out of fragmented perceptions and pieces of knowledge. Both methodological awareness (functionalist-normative skills) as well as artistic skills are called for.

At this point, interpreting the materials through the hermeneutic circle attains a reasonable level of saturation. "Deciding the point of saturation is only an arbitrary cut off; theoretically, the hermeneutic circle is indefinite" (Thachankary 1992). The steps that were taken in analysis chapters 5, 6 and 7 followed in a certain way the narrative change process: separation, in-between, reincorporation. Chapter 5 explored what it is that should be separated from: what is creating the stability? Chapter 6 confused the things by discussing several options and variation of what happens when the equilibrium of The SEBU Leadership Code gets challenged, but as the chapter did not offer ready-made answers, it rather contributed to a stage of in-between: the former patterns should be moved away from and a new picture created, but there is little understanding of how to get there; leaving something behind, yet not knowing what to do instead, so to speak. Finally in this chapter the aim has been to outline some key concepts that would explain how to reincorporate the SEBU leadership role in a new way. It is time to step out from the midst of the trees and see the woods again – time to draw some conclusions, discuss these observations on a more general level and evaluate the results in the light of their methodological soundness.

7.5 Summary of findings: Weak Leadership

So what is the meaning of core the constructs? Taken together, what do these terms stand for? As an outcome of the research they surely surprised me – I did not count on anything like that in the original research design. I mean, when I came to the realization that there is seldom incompleteness in the world-view of academic research on leadership or organizations, I thought it was interesting, but I could not make sense of it. Embodiment, too, as it started to offer itself as the next concluding term, was somewhat known to me, but just as mysterious with regard to conceptualization. It still remained unclear to me what these terms stood for. Only when some months later I read Thanchakary's (1992) article again, where he used core constructs as a methodological device, dis I start to give my new findings the name core constructs. However, I had already made it clear to myself that these terms represent some kind of missing steps in the process through which the participants were journeying.

After having taken the three core constructs together as the final findings of my study, I suddenly came across an article "Leadership as Art: Variations on a Theme" by Ladkin and Taylor (2010), where they explicate three key motifs called embodiment, holding contradictions and artistic sensibilities. These motifs are so close to my core constructs of incompleteness, embodiment and artistic that I was shocked, horrified and glad at the same time. I was shocked that someone had published the same discovery just before me, horrified that that I do not have "news" anymore, but also very glad that I was not alone with this kind of strange terms in the thick forest of leadership.

What to make of these similarities? How come Ladkin and Taylor's "themes" are so close to my core constructs, even the wording? First, I can prove that I had named my core constructs before their article was published in July 2010 – with tongue-in-cheek I am wondering how they got hold of my computer's unpublished data? It is remarkable that in a new area within leadership research two independent

projects come to similar conclusions. That in my view strengthens the argument put forth in this study.

Despite the coincidence, these two studies were conducted in a very different fashion, Ladkin & Taylor reviewing six articles while I used empirical materials. In the present study I have attempted to show the chain of thinking that results in the three core constructs, whereas Ladkin and Taylor arrive at their results by looking for clear patterns and connecting themes from the six articles they reviewed. The present study provides an empirical background and explicit, transparent analytical thinking as a means of arriving at these results, whereas Ladkin and Taylor's findings show that these results, as obscure to conventional leadership studies as they might look, might be relevant indeed. In any case, for this study the three core constructs are part of the analysis, not the only outcomes.

Nevertheless, the common findings speak for themselves. The three constructs are based on an arts metaphor and aesthetic understanding in a distinctive manner that is not found in mainstream leadership research. They are products of arts understanding. I referred to them as missing elements for leadership research, and it therefore could be said that the arts metaphor complements the cognitive approach by highlighting those elements that would otherwise remain marginalized, neglected or invisible. On the other hand they are elements that have grown more important for leadership understanding lately. Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) in their review of qualitative leadership research found that qualitative leadership research often introduces new topics into the area of leadership. It is most probably also a sign of the times that the three core constructs/motifs emerged as important elements of leadership now.

After these findings I would like to present the 'big picture' of the research results. I call it weak leadership, and in the context of academic leadership research the name corresponds to the movement from leader-centricity toward leadership. Weak leadership refers to a shift from the Great Man theory toward socially shared and constructed leadership.

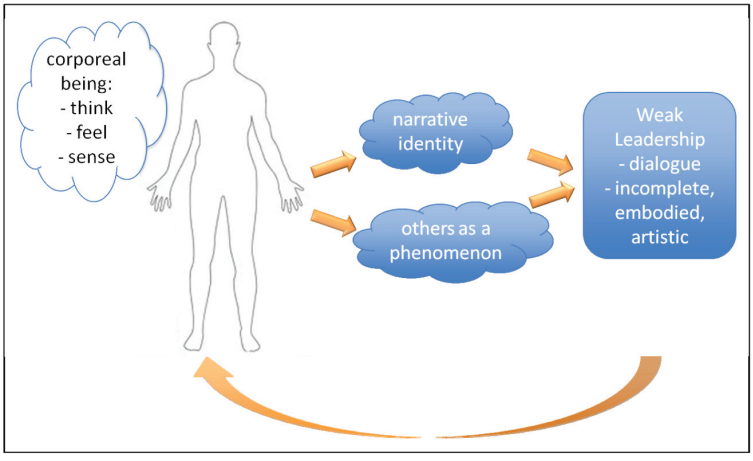

Figure 8. Weak Leadership

The above figure page illustrates the key ideas of how to make leadership happen. The figure starts with the question how do we know the world and what do we count as valid knowledge. In epistemological terms I join phenomenology and aesthetic leadership approach, and the answers provided here represented under the heading "corporeal being", following an article by Ropo and Sauer (2008) on corporeal leaders. Corporeal is a reminder about the embodied aspect of being a leader. Understanding oneself as a leader in these terms allows one to respect the others in similar terms. Moving to the two 'clouds' on the figure, these imply two basic attitudes towards the self and the others. It is basically the two sides of the same coin: understand one's own identity and that of others as a movement, as something that evolves, is in movement and adapts to different circumstances and people. If we see others as a phenomenon, we do not objectify or instrumentalize them. Acting from a weak leadership position means to create realities in dialogue. Further, it means to accept one's own humanity and identity as incomplete. To succeed in that weak leadership role towards strong shared leadership, embodiment and artistic applications are surely needed (see above Ch. 7.3 and 7.4).

In order to make leadership happen, that is, to allow others space to join in, to let their ideas flow into the work processes and to encourage their own thinking (*sapere aude*), the leader-role must not take control in creating realities. The leader role as such can be strong, maybe even stronger than ever, but with a very different meaning than before. The key skills are not commanding or showing direction, but allowing room for exploring and creating communities that make sense. This, I argue, requires internal strengths, not necessary the traditional external strength (showing off, taking the leader role in public, image of a great leader, being right). Weak leadership relies on the dialogue between people, and in a dialogue it does not matter who is right, but to follow the common reasoning. Leaders can thus err and be wrong – in short, incomplete.

Weak leadership is a term that might irritate some people. It argues against the great leaders that are called forth in times of crises. I can hear the cry of corporate leaders already: We don't want weak leadership, we want strong leadership! There is no need to worry: as I have stated, leadership does not mean brushing leaders aside. Quite the contrary, in times of leadership good leaders (able to support the common sense-making) are probably needed more than ever. At the stage where research and leadership practices are, the term weak leadership is meant as a provocation; a reminder that if we want leadership to take place, we need to abandon our dearly held ideas about leader-centricity.

8. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

"By definition, a hermeneutic inquiry will not bring back the same level of understanding one started with"
(Thachankary 1992: 219).

8.1 Contributions to leadership research

The research question motivating this study has been: How do the participants in the leadership training experience their learning path? The answer is based on the Weak Leadership figure (Ch. 7.5 above); it is two-fold, and presents the perspectives of both the leader and leadership research.

a) Leader experience: "Learning new leadership skills and applying them in practice takes time, not just weeks, but months and years. As a learner I experience a gap between what I do now and what I want to do, and my learning path is difficult to define, yet for sure it unlinear. I can tell that I learn, but I do not always succeed too well in executing these things. This learning also means that I need to challenge some of my basic beliefs. Even if the environment expects me to be better and stronger, it could be that I have to leave more space for others, that is, not to be so decisive as I used to be. This is a weakening of my authority role and a move toward dialogic relations with others".

b) Leadership research perspective: Leadership is not an individual, detached instance, but from an organizational point of view a social task, and from an individual point of view a corporeal and dialogic exploration. It is natural that leaders experience gaps and loops of learning ('weakness of will'), and therefore the development process must take these into account as natural ingredients, not as disrupting exceptions or change resistance. Being able to relate to earlier experiences and to that which is already familiar helps the learner to apply the content in practice. Most of all, learning leadership versus leader-centric skills requires a re-thinking of basic philosophical assumptions concerning learning and the nature of knowledge.

To repeat some basic methodological presumptions: The Fieldpath Method leaves a chance for something unexpected and unintentional to emerge. Wandering along the Fieldpath requires releasement and openness to the mystery, and these imply a kind of showing rather than pressing into a mould, yet they do not happen arbitrarily, but only through constant courageous thinking. When we start the journey, we cannot know where we will end up. For me these attributes have become true.

The aim of this study has been to work out the living process that people experience during their learning path. That is the phenomenological process of finding out the producing tendencies that create the outcomes (Hegel 1986; Heidegger 1994). From that starting point onward this work has tried to create alternative ways of discussing and describing leadership. For that purpose different concepts and perspectives from philosophy, pedagogy, psychology and organizational studies were linked with leadership. What kind of implications can be drawn out of these discussions for leadership research?

The first implication touches on the epistemology and ontology of leadership research. Phenomenological ontology and the hermeneutic approach to knowledge in general imply an interest in the micro-process of organizing. The underlying assumption was that the mainstream leadership and organization research with their more

natural scientifically oriented methodology do not perceive personal change stories as adequate data. That leads to a reading of reality that tends to neglect the practices and experiences of the actors, whereas the phenomenological-hermeneutic approach allows the reporting of a more detailed and vivid picture of the grassroots level change attempts and their meaning.

The second implication relates to the first, but it is subtler andhas to do with the attitude with which we encounter the object under scrutiny. The Heideggerian and Gadamerian attitude of listening to the things and their language, and contemplating the scenery represent a different research attitude than an urge to squeeze the observed into categories that fit our method. Truth and Method, as Gadamer pointed out, go hand in hand, and this is a matter of what kind of truths we are inclined to live with. The hermeneutic approach of paying attention to historicity and tradition also implies a respect towards that which is.

Further this implies a fundamental change in the attitude towards organization: organizations are for humans and not vice versa. All research has ethical implications that we as researchers need to reflect on regularly.

Third, I regard the core constructs embodied and artistic as an attempt to further the research agenda of the aesthetic leadership approach (Hansen et al. 2007; Ropo and Parviainen 2001; Sauer 2005) and aesthetic organization research (Linstead and Höpfl 2000; Strati 1999). The current discussions on well-being, work-life balance, stress, and burn-out support redefining organizational knowledge to include emotions, intuitions and bodily sensations on the agenda.

One of the major implications concerns the nature of leadership. As discussed, leadership research might be in trouble (Barker 1997; Ladkin 2010) and doubt has been cast on whether there is leadership at all (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a). Now, in the section on vignettes I wrote about the beginning of the training. Weick (1995) says about sensemaking that it never starts, because it is pure duration. In this respect "start" or "beginning" are just metaphors for making something visible. For leadership this implies also that leadership

never 'starts': leaders and leadership have a history already. Leadership in this sense is an inevitable timely construction – and it should be studied in that respect. The being of leadership is embedded in time and historicity. A lot of opportunities exist for future research that takes these into account.

The fifth implication is about the paradoxes of change. New leadership practices create a paradox of change, for "they work against standard organizational practices" and "run counter to fundamental interests of management, such as control, stability, predictability, rationality, and economic results" (O'Connor 1995: 770). As the 'new' does not fit into the existing economic, management or control systems and language (it is hard to define it in terms of an industrial paradigm), the new leadership is easily brushed aside. SEBU leaders were no exception.

In this respect I cannot but raise a concern that current leadership research has not yet explicated: How to create socially constructed leadership in a systematic manner within an organization that relies on the industrial paradigm? This question is at the heart of many organizations currently, as they are struggling with the balance between the functionalist paradigm (Burrell and Morgan 1979) and providing a locus for human sense making (Weick 1995). There are authors from different fields that acknowledge this kind of problem (Deetz 1996; Morgan 2006; White and Epston 1990), but none of them has really conducted research in this area.

There are several implications for leadership development and for professionals in education in general. It was noted that with regard to learning leadership only a little external knowledge is needed. Indeed, there seemed to be often rather a need for negative knowledge and dropping off of the tools we have been using so far. Nietzsche's (1988a) concept of 'dead knowledge' touches the fundamentals of the learning path: rather than authoritative knowledge, participants relied on experiential learning and procedures that encouraged their own thinking.

This certainly had to do with the nature of the program, but the same point has been made by Schein (2009), and narrative therapy relies on the same assumption (Freedman and Combs 1995; White and Epston 1990). A further related point was that change and learning do not follow mechanistic patterns, but rather an ante-narrative of change – something that runs counter to expectations. These features tell us that the way we have traditionally thought about change and learning are in need of profound revision. The narrative means employed in this study indicate that change takes place constantly, and that there is no halt to it – the only place that is really worried about change seems to be the literature on change management. Underlining occasions where the intended change is already taking place might further and speed up the development remarkably. It is therefore an epistemological issue of what is regarded as valid knowledge in an organizational context. The companies that use extensive qualitative data are few.

Last but not least, the philosophical terminology that has been introduced here seems to fit leadership research too. Partly that effect is achieved by the usage of philosophically grounded methodology, but I suppose that should always be the case in academic research. One could almost talk about correlation here between leadership as a phenomenon and philosophical constructs. This merging of the two can most probably be built up on a much wider basis, and I believe that both leadership research and philosophy would benefit from this fusion of horizons.

During the past two years I have talked about the core constructs with a lot of people in leadership development (researchers, leadership educators and consultants, leaders, lay people), and for most people they seem so self-evident that it is a wonder how it has been possible to neglect them. However, the terms are now increasingly used, I must add. Yet, as mentioned above, I was really surprised to find almost the same three terms in the an article by Ladkin and Taylor (2010). Their article convinced me that I am not alone in the forest. To be sure, it is a thick forest – but not totally impenetrable, as there are paths, albeit almost imperceptible.

A novel feature of this research has been to employ process ontology in a leadership study. Both leadership and leadership learning can well be characterized in process ontological terms (Tsoukas 2009). Understanding leadership as a social, constantly becoming process, enables us to capture the phenomenon in flight and to retain its lively features. With process ontology I have intended to connect leadership research with everyday life and to narrow down the gap between academic leadership research and management practices, a little bit in the manner that Po Bronson explains in the introduction to his best-seller "What Should I Do With My Life":

"Most importantly, when I say that these are ordinary people, I mean they're real. They're messy and complicated. You hold in your hands the *antithesis* to all those books which pretend their one-size-fits-all formula will result in rosy, happily-ever-after Hollywood endings. I'm a chronicler; this is (foremost) a social documentary of people's lives; it just so happened that I learned a ton in the observation. The result might lack the comforting ease of a cure-all, but it makes up for it with integrity. (You want a step? Step one: stop pretending we're all on the same staircase). This theme is going to reappear throughout: It's not easy / It's not *supposed* to be easy / Most people make mistakes / Most people have to learn the hardest lessons more than once. If that has been your experience, the people herein will comfort you. They did me. That alone was worth the trip" (Bronson 2003).

In this study I have given a voice to leaders who wish to turn their talk about leadership into actions. If it is a messy world, then maybe exactly that will bring academic research and practice closer to each other. I would like to claim that these are ordinary people who face ordinary leadership challenges – the kinds of things that people in a business organization come across. The results should be seen in the light in which the study was created: as a qualitative, phenomenological and hermeneutical study of a group of leaders in a Western-European organizational context. In that specific context, I would like to summarize four features that contribute to the paradigmatically qualitative leadership research this study represents. They are described here in

the form of 'instead' – instead of what mainstream leadership research often does.

First, instead of breaking leadership down into pieces like traits, behaviours or situational influences, that is, to isolate the parts, I have tried to understand and interpret leadership more holistically (Barker 1997), including more holistic ways of knowing (aesthetic epistemology, emotions – Fineman 2000; Hansen et al. 2007). As in interpreting works of art – poetry or music say – deductive analysis does not do justice to the elements that are beyond the reach of deductive analysis: some part of the analysis needs to be read 'between the lines' or be emotionally experienced (Morgan 2010).

Second, instead of applying a deterministic, causally oriented world-view to studying human relations, this kind of research paradigm lowers the expectations on predictability. Failing to capture regularities within the complexities of social and organizational structures does not mean that relationships do not exist (Barker 1997), but rather that we need to understand them within systems.

Third, instead of leaders creating leadership, the relation is reversed: leadership develops leaders. The relations and leadership can be built between people who are not in any formal leadership positions, rather than only by reference to leader figures.

Fourth, instead of control and predictability, other measures for creating leadership need to be established. In business organization the observable reality is often expressed in *quantitas*, yet it would add to understanding the environment when something novel or emerging can be esteemed as *qualitas* (see Ch. 4.2) too. Any new way of seeing things or talking about them can cultivate our search for the meaning of leadership. The way I see it, the core constructs are just the tip of the iceberg and I believe there is still plenty to search for.

Finally, the results of the study reinforce the need to be aware of embodied aspects of leadership: it is still people who confront each other in organizations. The study calls for taking the organization we work in the way they are: human. In this respect I cannot but agree with Hamel, who at the end of his book "The Future of Management"

writes: "For the first time since the dawning of the industrial age, the only way to build an organization that's fit for the future is to build one that's fit for human beings as well" (Hamel 2007: 255).

Practical tools for leadership development

As an active leadership consultant one of my interests has been to see what we can learn from this work for leadership development. Some of the implications have already been mentioned above, and most of the learning has surely taken place in my own understanding and how it has developed. The following discussion is intended as meta-learning for leadership developers (James and Ladkin 2008). I will here summarize some key messages from this work, after which a list of practical ideas for leadership development is introduced.

Learning did not always occur as participants expected, and the hindrances of leadership learning at SEBU arise from several sources. First, the existing culture (action orientation, knowing attitude, ready-made organization) does not fully support the new coaching approach. Second, the development of the new culture goes hand in hand with developing personal skills. Without mental and behavioural patterns or "tools", the participants can only create a culture that their capabilities allow. Third, if the benchmark or mental image for new leadership models is not developed enough, the actions remain on a lower level (Helin 1993).

Based on this study, here is a sample of the leadership elements that this research has acknowledged and that differ from the mainstream leadership research tradition:

- Leadership is a process, both in terms of learning, time and ontology.
- There is little need for external knowledge. Rather, leadership means a return to learners' own agendas and life experience.
- Sensitivity towards the way understanding happens around us and how others make sense of things.

- Incompleteness, embodiment and artistic are features that enhance the cultural awareness of a socially constructed leadership.

The design of a learning process needs to begin with an appreciation of *personal knowledge* and individual learning processes. As individualistic as that might sound, it always takes place in a social setting. In order to develop organizational leadership, an even more profound shift from adult learning to understanding the dynamics of social learning in groups. This means a kind of "deschooling": to operate through the pupil's life experience as opposed to a set curriculum (Collins Concise Dictionary). This attitude to learning connects with incompleteness and experiental learning by incorporating embodied knowing as an essential element of the curriculum. Process orientation means that we pay attention to learning adults, not adult learning.

For those whose profession is developing people and especially leaders these findings may question some of the presuppositions with which we work. In the form of questions the basic assumptions that can be challenged are:

- How much external knowledge is needed?
- How to support experiential learning?
- How to take embodiment into account?
- How to deal with the fact that we are dealing with incomplete beings that need unique learning chances?

Experiential learning is however no cure-all. "People don't automatically learn from experience. They can come away with nothing, the wrong lessons, or only some of what they might have learned", McCall (2004: 128) observes. Whereas the mainstream rationally directed leadership programs seem to report mainly positive learning results and this one, the more experiential one becomes a troubled one, maybe one should conclude that the traditional education is even more effective. Nevertheless, Schein (2009) offers some consolidation and back up:

> "In my career as a professor and sometimes consultant I often reflect on what is helpful and what is not, why some classes go well and others do not, why coaching and experiential learning are often more successful than formal lectures. When I am with organizational clients, why does it work better to focus on process rather than content, or how things are done rather than what is done?" (Schein 2009: 1)

All in all, other leadership researchers and educators argue in a similar vein (Barker 1997; James and Ladkin 2008; Kempster 2009; Taylor and Ladkin 2009). As must be clear at this stage, I share this view on coaching and experiential learning, and try to follow the process rather than content. The Blind-Bottle exercise is used to support the 'how things are done' instead of only lecturing on 'what' should be done.

Measuring the emergence of leadership is however not simple. The trouble is that even intended changes can lead to unintended outcomes (Balogun and Johnson 2005). As emphasised, quantitative methods do not always do justice to the richness of a phenomenon, and as that was one of the initial observations of this research, I will present some examples of the qualitative organization development. Derived from this work, I have listed here some practical qualitative tools for working toward socially constructed leadership models:

Narrative means: Leadership can be evaluated by methods that inform us in a more sensitive manner about *organizational* (social) leadership capabilities. How things get organized informally (Ekman 2001; van Maanen 1989), the way sensemaking leads events (Weick 1993, 1995), how intended strategies lead to unintended outcomes (Balogun and Johnson 2005), that realities are created by talking and are narrated in multiple ways (White and Epston 1990; Potter and Wetherell 1987), how withness-thinking (Shotter 2005) and embodied understanding serve as approaches for leaders to practice their seeing and perception (Gadamer 2004), and that reality could be a social construction (Berger and Luckmann 1967). The common denominator of this list is that they all, more or less, represent interpretative approaches to organization and human studies.

Dialogic 360^0 feedback: participants interview people in their environment and collect direct personal feedback (instead of indirect anonymous), which enables a dialogue within their own context right from the start. The advantage is that dialogue as a means for collecting feedback simultaneously represents an open way of talking with each other, thus supporting a dialogic culture, whereas anonymous 360-degree feedback that is collected via the Internet or e-mail supports a culture of separation and implies that direct contact over difficult issues is not preferred.

Create a leadership code: by utilizing thematic analysis of talk at work and The Fieldpath Method the organizational members can gather information and discover an organizational leadership code. Once acknowledged, a bold image of socially constructed leadership can be created. Once the gap between the code and the new image appears, a creative problem solving process (e.g. brainstorming) can produce dozens of possibilities for getting to the preferred *direction.*

Core constructs can be used as sensemaking devices in leadership and organization development. Organizations often rely on assumptions and beliefs they are not aware of and that have an intangible, imaginative character, but that nonetheless influence action.

The Fieldpath Method is a possibility to re-story an experience or narrative, and re-storying possesses a capability of deconstructing or transforming existing realities (Freedman and Combs 1995; Hosking 2004; White and Epston 1990).

The benefits of this model are that it does not illustrate leadership emergence as a step-by-step linear model, but as a gradual long-term movement.

8.2 Methodological contributions

As a result of this kind of research design I have set objectives on two levels for this research, on a theoretical and an empirical level. On

a theoretical level I am contributing to a new, emerging leadership theory. The new art of leadership research, as I call it here, relies on different epistemological and ontological assumptions than does the mainstream leadership research. To put it briefly at this stage, aesthetic *epistemology* draws its input from a felt experience. From an ontological perspective this research is based on the difference between *being ontology and becoming ontology*, relying on the latter. On an empirical level, the empirical materials guided the whole research, and the results would not have been possible without digging deeper into the details of daily talk and nitty-gritty.

The research has followed the image of a hermeneutic circle of understanding: materials guided the inquiry, theory has provided the perspective, which in turn has been informed and shaped by the empirical materials. During the research process this circular movement has taken place several times. The conclusions of the study are a result of this circularity, since the core constructs (Ch. 7) are basically a theoretical construct, but they came to exist only through the influence of empirical materials' analysis. The empirical observations gave the first impulse for that theoretical framework.

The qualitative measures can be developed further and utilized in organizational practices more frequently; with that I refer to qualitative tools such as story-telling in organization development, organizational or leadership narratives, designing customer service trainings around experiences and informal cases, allowing and cultivating participant observation as a means of learning – and so on. Only imagination sets limits to the uses of qualitative tools in an organizational context.

What does The Fieldpath Method enable? Duflo (2010) argues that "microeconomic estimation may be the key to understanding macroeconomics: it may be more promising to start from micro-funded and micro-estimated models, and to use these as building blocks for a macro model, which can then be calibrated to a real economy. The better we understand the micro-relationship, the more useful the macro model will be" (Duflo 2010: 15). In her view that kind of science presents the human being "in all its imperfections and complexities".

I think these statements apply to organization and leadership studies too: at the stage that the leadership research currently is, it may be more promising to try and understand the micro-level activities, and to use these as building blocks for macro models of organizing and leadership. To this end existing ethnographic studies might also contribute and offer materials. Leadership research – stemming from departments of economics and relying on natural science and mathematical grounds – is often operating vice versa, using economic macro models to predict, manage and organize human micro activities.

Where micro-level activities are concerned, both observing and reporting the observations in an adequate manner that keeps the things alive and in flight pose methodological challenges (Chia and Mackay 2007). Crevani et al. claim that "there is a clear need for a deeper empirical understanding of everyday leadership practices and interactions" (Crevani et al. 2010: 84). In this work I have linked empirical materials with process ontology. Additionally, a hermeneutic approach to phenomena, tradition and culture (historicity) have enabled the researcher to also include elements other than only the visible ones or text into the interpretation.

With the combination of vignettes and commentary I have tried to exercise something like thinking 'from the inside', that is, to advance phenomenologically so that the living thing remains as a valid source of knowledge (Ladkin 2010). I hope this work to some degree can function as a reply to the plea of Crevani et al. to deepen our understanding of everyday leadership practices

The general question that process-oriented studies are trying to answer is: How to make the movement visible in formats that are academically accepted as words on paper? This is an issue I pondered with my Finnish and international research colleagues, and we mainly concluded that, yes, creative reporting is possible, yet its acceptance might be limited, and that it is not worth trying to push these limits too far in an academic dissertation. The choice made, the vignettes, introduce the language of the participants and offer momentary glimpses

of reality, and enable to some degree an adequate and creative way of reporting the events.[1]

It is up to each and every future researcher to ask how far she/he is willing to go, test the limits, and to find her/his comfort level. On the one hand there are many possibilities ranging from videos to painting, story-telling, performing and using films, but on the other hand I have witnessed rather limited levels of acceptance on the part of the academic community. Innovative qualitative research still has a way to go. To encourage future researchers: a new project is already under way, and I will report it by creating a documentary film.

In methodological terms I would also like to highlight the importance of how we come into the circle of interpretation in the right way (Heidegger 1962), because our epistemological and ontological commitments predefine the object of the study to such a large extent. With more creative qualitative research tools I think we can capture some of the poetic elements of being that escape the deductive methods. If we count with the hermeneutic object giving the initial impulse for interpretation, then the interpreter experiences something that "extends beyond the merely human" (Figal 2009: 20); it is certainthat quantitative methods would have difficulties in capturing that kind of experience.

The circle of interpretation leads to philosophical hermeneutics, a method not widely employed in leadership studies. Qualitative research mainly prefers to talk about the interpretative stance into which different strands of thinking can be categorized. In addition this overhasty categorization also neglects the fruitful differences that exist between, say, phenomenology, hermeneutics and grounded theory. The methodological contributions in terms of hermeneutics have been: a) to employ hermeneutics in this depth, b) to use it as a tool for analysis of

1. I am happy with the vignettes, and I think the commentary provides space for very different views and approaches. But as the easy acceptance of vignettes shows, they are a moderate, middle-aged, middle-class solution, fine as such, but nothing too radical or fancy, and therefore fine for a dissertation. Real innovative ideas can be a bit more dangerous, as Rehn (2011) puts it – but maybe research would then become more art than science?

empirical materials, not only as side-marks or principles, and c) open up a path for leadership research to discuss its content topic with the hermeneutic vocabulary.

The Fieldpath Method introduces a means for researchers and leaders to engage and connect with their environment in a novel way. It offers a way to understand and thus to shape the organization, simultaneously opening up a new array of possible actions and behaviours. Action research projects that enable the organization's members to build up new relations and take responsibility for the future of their organization inevitably lead to new leadership constellations. This kind of project can be started to recapture the purpose of the organization and to better understand the environment in which it acts. As an option for anticipating the future it resembles the ideas of "Blue Ocean Strategy" (Kim and Mauborgne 2005).

The Fieldpath Method should also remind us about the responsibility to create organizations that are fit for humans instead of employing dehumanizing standards. The question that has haunted me since the beginning is: how to create more human and in that sense more 'natural' organizational change processes? I think that both The Fieldpath Method and the three core constructs challenge the current thinking on leadership. Also in that endeavour I am not alone. Orr (2006) writes that his earlier work has been regarded as "a challenge to the image of the rational organization and its prescriptions" and he was asked whether his work challenges our understanding of organizing:

"I hope so. I intend no disrespect to the community of organization studies, but the focus on the discourse of managers and rationalized schemas of the organization, at the expense of work and workers, practice and practitioners, and the communities created thereby, has contributed to the hegemony established over our social, cultural, economic, and political lives by corporations masquerading as those schemas. Re-grounding the discourse of corporations in understanding of the work practice and people therein will not change this on its own, but it seems unlikely that real change will occur if we do not do so. We will, at least, have a more nuanced understanding of the

subject and more resources with which to explain why ungrounded, rationalized, directive projects fail. The other parts of the story need to be told" (Orr 2006: 1818).

I also intend no disrespect to the community of leadership and leadership development studies, but in Orr's fashion wish to explain why even grounded and rationalized projects fail. This is in line with Barker's (1997: 355) observation that the socially constructed leadership approach denies many well-established social institutions, and that it does not provide support for *traditional* leadership education.

8.3 Limitations of the study

The present study is subject to the limitations generally connected with a hermeneutic study. I have mentioned on a few occasions above that I will return to certain limitations at the end. This is now the place to do that.

The first and foremost limitation to consider is the researcher influence. I have argued that another researcher might have collected different materials from the same setting, handled them differently, analysed with an own mind-set, developed categories, concepts and ideas into other directions than mine – and so on. Now, I will still argue that this is fine and that as qualitative researchers we should not be too worried about researcher bias (a term adopted from natural sciences vocabulary). This point has been discussed earlier on too, and at this stage of the study there is very little than can be done about it – the evidence has been laid out and it remains to the reader(s) to evaluate the validity of the findings and legitimation of the arguments. The central criteria that Heidegger (2007) mentioned about Husserl's reading on philosophical classics and Gadamer about Heidegger is the way in which these men introduced a reading that started to keep the classical text alive; Gadamer recalls the electrifying effect of Heidegger's new philosophical language – even ancient philosophy was connected

to the contemporary situation in a living manner (Grondin 1999). This kind of reading deals with the text as if it talks to us now and lets the text affect our thinking. For a long time the philosophical classics had been read like the Bible, as dogmas that should not be interpreted but learned.

The limitation that the researcher's subjective touch poses might in this respect also turn into positive reading, into the reader's own thinking that is provoked by what she/he has read. If that should happen, and the reader finds the insights valuable and trustworthy, the text has reached an agreeable level of maturity. The materials could naturally be analysed further, yet this is how far I have got with them. From that perspective there are as many methods and ways of analysing the materials as there are researchers in the field (Kunda 2006). I do not expect the reader to agree with all that is written. Disagreement, thinking in a different way, seeing different openings finding out corrections, inadequacies – if you as a reader can set yourself into a conversation and into a hermeneutic dialogue with the text, then writing this makes sense. The responsibility of sensemaking rests to a great extent on the reader's shoulders too. In this respect I hope parts of this text are kept alive, and that it thus becomes more of a hermeneutic object than an object:

> "As soon as something no longer appears in need of interpretation, and despite this becomes explicit instead of settling down as a matter of course, it turns from hermeneutic object to mere object" (Figal 2004: 30).

The influence of the researcher's concepts and language must also not be understated:

> "The meaning of that which we study must not be projected into it; it must be derived from the phenomenon itself. The identification of the organizational actors framework is a central part of this process." (Thachankary 1992: 220)

Existing frameworks have to be made explicit and transparent. The critical hermeneutics has been sensitive about the power-issue regarding fusion of horizons and the hermeneutic circle (Foucault 1980; Kögler 1999). The core constructs are a prime example of a fusion of horizons in two respects. On the one hand they were born through a hermeneutic conversation, on the other hand they represent the researcher's language imposed on the matter. But what is the heart of the matter here? The matter as such, the phenomenon that the core constructs describe would not have become available without them. This is the peculiar quality of qualitative research: sometimes the task can include making the invisible and the missing visible again. But in the end the core constructs are also limited by the imagination of the research and the method.

A way to construct research validity is to write, for instance, a transcript of materials as is customary in discourse analysis. The problem of offering a transcript of video-tapes has already been discussed, and anthropological or ethnographic observations are usually impossible to write down. In such cases the researcher keeps a research diary. I also produced three A4-notebooks full of field notes. These notes are themselves also subject to the limitations of qualitative data too.

I think the point about prejudices has already been handled in this work to a sufficient extent, so let us ask few critical questions concerning the core constructs, the main findings as it were Why are there three core constructs and not more or less? Are there only three elements missing? Again, the core constructs do not make any particular truth-claims. There might be more of these, but it seemed to me that three is enough to make the point and to create a legitimate story. One could still argue for more, but that remains the task of future research. On the other hand it does not make sense to create a long list of missing attributes, because that would remind us merely about the leader traits and qualities.

As a leadership study these materials represent many of the classical characteristics I have been preaching against: the materials are leader-centred and they present a collection of individuals in formal

positions, not informal leadership. This highlights a limitation: Why should we study individuals and at the same time argue for a social construction of leadership? The answer is pragmatic, but not very straightforward. On the one hand I know that there do exist organizations with shared leadership practices and where social construction of leadership could be better studied than through individual leaders. On the other hand, as an organization consultant my perception of the *status quo* is that in general leadership practices are far from these ideals. There are and there always will be leaders, great ones and not very great ones. This is not to be misunderstood: *Leadership can yet be well acted out from the position of a leader!* Leadership as a social construction does not exclude leaders.

However, in leadership research there has recently been a lot of discussion about a gap between academic research and management practices, as mentioned earlier in this work. By the close link to empirical materials I hope I have not drifted too far away from the real life of those who struggle with leadership nowadays. The research question is, after all, about how participants experience the learning path. My intention was to create a realistic story, not an idealized one, and to study the marginalized leadership story of ordinary people in an ordinary work situation. At the moment I do not see a need to add to the dominant success-based and heroic understanding of leadership.

The leaders who appear in the materials and through the analysis are not represented as heroic figures, but rather as ordinary people in the midst of daily work life. I studied them as human beings who try to relate to others in more fruitful ways, and that in these practices they may err and succeed – which is the way narrative therapy sees it: people connecting to the world and others in preferred ways (Freedman and Combs 1995).

Second, the research option I have employed here is not to pay attention solely to 'leaders' or 'followers', but to the relation between these two. Both relational constructionism (Dachler and Hosking 1995; Hosking 2007) and the integral approach to leadership (Küpers 2007; Küpers and Statler 2008) offer views on what that means.

Still the question 'how to observe relations' remains. As the means of material collection I used video-tapes, which allows my unit of analysis to be discussion and visible actions without the limitations of text alone. Video also shows whether there is congruence between what people say and action (the problem of translation, walk the talk). Most of the participants are middle managers, and as Kejonen (2006) observes, the middle management plays a key role in "translating" the messages to employees and upper management. Despite the leaders' role as translators, the main reason for facing the problem of translation is still the personal need of participants to develop themselves towards what they understand as leadership.

A commonplace for every author using empirical materials is to show in a coherent and credible manner how the theoretical conclusions were drawn. The sample sets some limitations, which is understandable: it must be asked how far the materials derived from SEBU can be used for generalizations. Now, if you have a talking pig, a single case can be powerful enough as an example (Siggelkow 2007): one exception can create new realities. But I do not have a talking pig, just ordinary people in a typical setting, as I have described. The materials for this study are collected in one branch (limitation), of one organization (limitation), by one researcher (limitation), with his limited background, experience and knowledge (limitation), analysed by one researcher (limitation). The analysis concentrates on videos (limitation) of two groups of 18 people in total (limitation) and the discourse was not fully transcribed (limitation). Acknowledging all these limitations, is there anything left to say? Do these results only count for SEBU, or can we draw any generalizations out of these kinds of materials?

I have not generally employed the term 'case study' for the present research, and some of the reasons were mentioned above, the most important of which is that this is a hermeneutic study. But because my empirical materials remind me of a sample, let us nonetheless discuss shortly the advantages and pitfalls of case studies. Siggelkow (2007) lists three important uses for case research: motivation, inspiration and illustration. A case study can motivate a research question, and that is

certainly the case here: the original research interest grew out of the observation of learning gaps. These showed that "A does not always lead to B", that is, despite best efforts many transformation attempts do not reach their goals. Why? What happens on the way? These were the motivating questions.

Second, a case study can function as an inspiration for new ideas, and it "can also sharpen existing theory by pointing to gaps and beginning to fill them" (Siggelkow 2007: 21). As much as the initial gaps were more a sign of my own ignorance rather than describing the status of research, the "core constructs" in Chapter 6 show that being inspired by a factual case can help us further refine existing concepts.

Third, in contrast to theoretical or conceptual studies, cases can be employed as illustrations that help the reader to imagine how it really is in real life. "By seeing a concrete example of every construct that is employed in a conceptual argument, the reader has a much easier time imagining how the conceptual argument might actually be applied to one or more empirical settings" (Siggelkow 2007: 22). Further, not only describing causal relations, but also the possibility to break causal relations has been one of the benefits of employing illustrative vignettes in the analysis.

In general the question is about the persuasion of case studies (Siggelkow 2007) and how we proceed from grounds to claims (Ketokivi and Mantere 2010). "Research involving case data", argues Siggelkow (2007: 22–23), "can usually get much closer to theoretical constructs and provide a much more persuasive argument about causal forces than broad empirical research can. One should use this advantage." I have used the materials for digging deeper into the issue, trying to understand the subjects and subject matter. This task is hermeneutic in a very profound sense: first trying to understand, yet recognizing that each such attempt is an interpretation, a fusion of horizons. I have tried to show that the modern work environment is maintained and constructed by certain kinds of talk, which maintains current routines and practices, and that challenging these routines and practices leads to different kinds of individual learning paths. My case

has not been a single case (talking pig); it has been learning, which as a human issue does not change. Nevertheless, the conditions in which it takes place vary a lot and affect the learning efforts, and that is why it is worth researching. SEBU is a case of "leadership learning in the context of an organizational change process" – a typical case nowadays in which huge amounts of time, money and human energy are invested, as was mentioned. Therefore it is desirable to make that kind of things happen as well as possible.

Siggelkow's provocative point – as he calls it – is that a research should enable a reader to see the world in a different way, so that an interested and knowable person reading the report would gain new insights from it. This is of course close to Gadamer's hermeneutic imperative: understanding only happens when we understand in a new way. A sole theoretical contribution "runs the danger of becoming entirely self-referential and out-of-touch with reality, of coming to be considered irrelevant" (Siggelkow 2007: 23). Deriving from the world of practical actions, leadership research and LD, I agree with that. My contribution is partly theoretical, but it is also a practical appeal to LD and HR professionals. In organizational management and leadership education there is a need to reconsider ethical standards of change and learning; this study argues for more professionalism in order to comply with human standards instead following the logics of technical-economic standards. That, as discussed, requires a sophistication of qualitative methods for organizational use.

Another point to discuss is the general dilemma of inductive reasoning in empirical research: how to get from grounds to claims, from empirical materials to conclusions (Ketokivi and Mantere 2010)? If we look at this research carefully, the whole research idea started in the field, and that is where the results will end up. This loop includes stages like research interest, material collection, several rounds of analysis, reading research literature and cultivating the researcher's mind, reporting, feedback and so on. Retrospectively this loop is called a hermeneutic circle and the stages are called research design. A further notable feature is that even if the initial research interest has

remained somewhat static, the research question and the focus have been in a constant movement. How do we relate to the possibility that the research question changes or "becomes" during the process?

I have two takes on that question. First, getting from grounds to claims means that we see the same situation in a different light, since we now have gained more knowledge, or, in hermeneutic terms, we now understand it better. What we thought of as leadership training has turned into an individual and social learning process, a challenging journey towards an enhanced image of leadership but that is nonetheless hard to handle skilfully. Training is now seen as a process-like continuation and multi-voiced happening. With our seeing differently, the reality has changed – what we observed has become a phenomenon instead of a research 'object'. Ketokivi and Manner (2010) following Toulmin (2003) illuminate the process of practical reasoning with the following diagram.

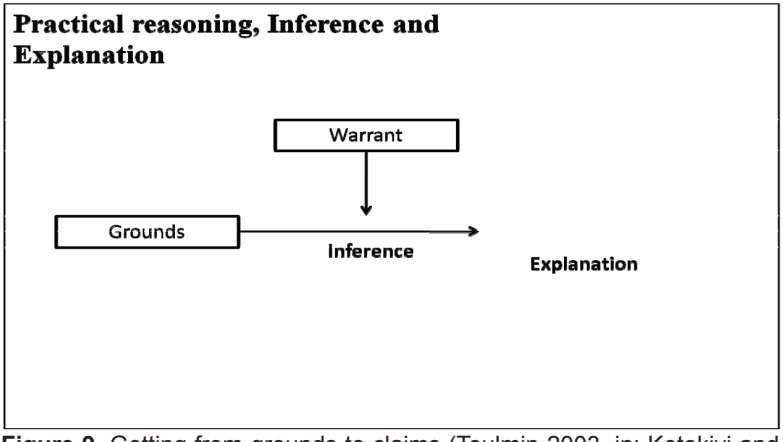

Figure 9. Getting from grounds to claims (Toulmin 2003, in: Ketokivi and Mantere 2010: 317

The above framework also draws a distinction between inference and explanation, which further explains the logic of argumentation in this study. Here, as the empirical materials set forth a question and claims provide answers to those, claims can be considered as an explanation: I

claim LD to be in a state where it does not pay attention to incompleteness. Incompleteness, as mentioned, is a missing link, an explanatory term. Inference links grounds with claims and provides the reasoning and justification that are here called *warrants*. The warrants for my argument are provided by the analysis of materials in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In Chapter 5 the SEBU Leadership Code becomes challenged within the change attempt of leadership training. Chapter 6 illustrated various cases of struggling with the challenge and the "paradox of participation" (O'Connor 1995). The warrants that I provide in Chapter 7, the core constructs, as partly imaginary missing elements, certainly challenge the normative thinking behind the above model, but I think the issue between aesthetic and mainstream methods has been handled enough above. These chapters show several cases of human unlinear and thus incomplete learning processes (but incomplete only when the dominant logic of linearity is regarded as complete). This illuminates the *possibility* of these instances, which is a not widely recognized fact of LD: that pure possibility effectively challenges and deconstructs many causal leadership models.

With core constructs I have obviously created something that does not exist as such in materials and which in that sense is a result of a fusion of horizons. This "fiction of facts" (Alvesson 2003b) relies on aesthetic, embodied knowledge through which I have a concrete connection to and understanding of the phenomenon of learning. Something is missing in these accounts, just as clearly as we ask ourselves "where is the owner" if a dog is running wild on the streets. 'Missing' is a question of horizon and perspective. Horizon is where one comes from and perspective where ones looks to, the future aspirations. These both are in a very profound manner embedded in the background and possibilities, in the *being* of the interpreter (or reader or researcher). Thus we must still ask: the core constructs are not visible in the materials, so where do they come from? They are an interpretation of the situation. They were not there when I started the research, so they are truly a finding.

There was an issue during the research process that made me change the outline of this work several times, and that was the extent to which I could make my own pre-concepts transparent. For a hermeneutically oriented research the case is clear: the aim is to give an account of one's own prejudices and understand oneself and the issue even more by this procedure. However, in practical terms the question was: if I say I am employing The Fieldpath Method, but yet rely on the heavy load of theoretical background, how can I not be aware of it? My solution was to try to find new ways of talking about the LD phenomena during the research process.

An illustration of researchers' prejudices upon which the interpretations are made provides additional answers to that. One of my starting points is that I have studied continental philosophy instead of Anglo-American analytical philosophy. My philosophical heritage has led me to a more qualitatively oriented approach. In economic studies the Burrell-Morgan (1979) and Deetz (1996) matrices offered a framework for organizing different approaches in social research. A third influence is a clash I have experienced between – to put it bluntly – shareholder value and quarterly capitalism (the demand that the next quarter's profits to be higher than the previous quarter's) on the one hand, and the good of people working in organizations on the other. As an organization consultant I have certainly started to ask myself and the organizations I work with what is enough, how much can we demand, why do we do certain things and for what purpose?

To avoid these prejudices slipping into the work too easily, the findings are backed up by many extracts and vignettes from the materials. This is a method for grounding the findings and making the reader more convinced about the reliability of the interpretations.

To conclude, let us consider validity. Validity, as Kvale (2004) sees it, is a social construction that has to do with the question of "what do we count as valid knowledge?" Kvale names three quality criteria: correspondence, coherence and pragmatic utility. The correspondence criterion asks how well the account matches with reality, the coherence criterion is concerned with the internal logic and unity

of the argumentation and the pragmatic utility criterion asks about the practical use of knowledge. I have already tested correspondence through practical work, the core constructs are recognized by leaders. The pragmatic utility criterion thus also becomes validated, and the practical try-outs indicate that utilizing the kind of language this work introduces (the arts metaphor) enables leadership practitioners to talk about their experiences in a new way. Coherence basically depends on the reader's own prejudiced criteria. For instance, in a post-modern fashion, narration in this work does not follow a chronological order but relies on kairological time and ante-narrative accounts. I hope I have been able to keep something of the original chaos still alive. This kind of 'knowledge' about leadership might not tell us the 'truth' about leadership, but it might help us be wiser about it.

8.4 Suggestions for further research

A general suggestion for further leadership research is relatively easy to make; first, more qualitative leadership studies and second, wider use of qualitative methods rather than interviews and surveys – these suggestions can be read in recent leadership accounts (Bryman 2004; Crevani et al. 2010; Glynn and Raffaelli 2010; Klenke 2010; Ladkin 2010; Yukl 2010). There is definitely a great potential for further empirical leadership research that employs process ontology, narrativeness and hermeneutics to empirical materials.

My initial research interest was on how people develop themselves in the context of an organizational change process. It seemed to me that the organizational change processes were largely unexplored and under-developed from the perspective of informal organization. I still hold that opinion, but now I see clearer what is needed from the research perspective. Research that goes and talks with people (not only interviews), lives the life of people in the organizations and pays attention to stories and how these stories evolve over time and thus

create realities – that kind of research is in short supply. For instance different forms of shared leadership, teams' self-management practices or exploring the creation of social systems from new perspectives (philosophy, social psychology, literature studies, pedagogy) represent research options that might reveal something new from the socially constructed leadership in making.

Yet it should be remembered that we have enough simplified models for leadership and change management. Barker (1997) remarked how simple seven-step solutions or ten-stage models are presented as being effective tools. The same easy-going attitude applies to change management, but the truth is often different:

"The truth is that organizational changes, in my experience, rarely, if ever, pan out entirely as planned, and yet we find it hard to relinquish the hope that they might. It helps to reduce our anxiety. The appeal of five-step change models (or eight-step or ten-step) lies partly in the usefulness of the structure they provide, but mainly in the comfortable illusion that this structure is all you need to change things successfully" (Gravells 2006: 284).

I think there is a great potential for research to find out how change from the perspective of participants takes place. I have found out for instance several gaps and loops of learning, weakness of will, discontinuation etc., but these constructs are largely meant as irritations for an unprepared mind. Changing oneself, let alone the world around is not easy – but sometimes more happens than we realize.

Since a great deal of research has already been done in change management and leadership, there must be something particularly intriguing or resistant in this black box. Or then it really is, as has been suggested here, that we have been using the false methodology for change management and for the research about these. In re-directing the research both phenomenology and hermeneutics as methods are capable of taking a greater role that they have done so far. Much of the stress with change stems from invalid presumptions. It is time to re-think change and learning in an organizational context.

Further, an aesthetic leadership approach offers new avenues for research in both defining research objects and research design/setting and methodology (Ladkin and Taylor 2010). To do so means to challenge the historical assumptions of leadership research. Therefore a surprisingly parallel research option would be a historical, hermeneutically informed research approach on 'genealogy of leadership' in a Foucauldian fashion: how has the phenomenon evolved and how has it been culturally reproduced? The leadership reviews do not take a direct stand on that, and I think there are plenty of materials where an analysis might reveal different power-relations than are explicated at the moment.

Further, the aspect of time for the leadership phenomenon (not as a historical but as an emergent phenomenon) is still underdeveloped. Without the historical and physical (embodied) context we become alienated from the historical consciousness, and that is most probably one of the weaknesses of behavioural, trait and dyadic theories. I see there an option of relating to myths and sagas. Through them we could observe how leadership occurs through time as a cultural quality (Ropo and Salovaara 2010; Salovaara 2011).

The definition of leadership was in this study expanded into the domain of culture. Culture is reflected not only in human relations but also in artefacts, organizational objects and spaces and places. If we follow this line of thinking we can see that leadership exists also without the physical presence of a human being. A place, a gas station say, self-service cafeteria or airport check-in, contributes to "leading" by its sole presence. Even if these require a human to take part in that game of leadership, the point is that we can observe leadership in spaces and places, and in organizational artefacts (Dale and Burrell 2008). The question then is: how do spaces and places perform leadership (Ropo and Salovaara 2010)? This is certainly an area where new leadership research could make a positive impact for organization studies.

The methodological approach also opens up further research options. The more developed our understanding about micro-level activities and their meaning are, the more fruitful large-scale models

on organizing we can build. The methodological approaches advanced here – phenomenology, hermeneutics, narratives – have a lot to offer for leadership research, especially when exploring the meaning of organizational phenomena. As the meaning of work and the purpose of organizations seem to be an important criterion for Generations X and Y, I think studies that explore these issues will have a relevance in the future too. I also suspect that this novel approach can already gain the support of financial institutions.

A very practical option for future leadership research is to get involved even deeper into the culture and life of work places. Micro-level studies can further the understanding of socially constructed leadership in the form of realistic stories. The more interested readers these find, the more cultural awareness about the leadership phenomenon rises. To encourage the researchers, this approach makes sense on a personal level too, as Orr says:

> "One of the joys of ethnographic research is working with people; the technicians were welcoming, for the most part, open about their work, happy, and proud of their skills. Watching them work to socialize Frankenstein's creations in the offices of their customers, to overcome the problems created by the corporate desire not to know what happened in the field, served also to show the creation of society, in which problems are addressed, not ignored, and in which people matter far more than profits or control. I am happy to have been able to tell their story and happy that it has reached such a wide audience (Orr 2006: 1818). "

For me too it has been a joy to work with people, and they were mostly welcoming, sharing with me some of the frustration, inconsistencies and pressures that we in the global business environment create. Sometimes there was just a tired laugh concerning some daily issues: "Hah, if the competitor makes that kind of work with one guy only, then – even if I don't think it is safe anymore – it seems that we shall make it too… I don't like the idea, I must say…". We are all on the

treadmill and the bitter laugh comes from understanding the irony in it: that it reminds us of a hamster wheel. Observing SEBU leaders cope reminded me sometimes of Don Quixote fighting against the windmills. But the challenges they tackled and the pride they took in living their work life show the essence of modern leadership work: to make the best out of given circumstances.

Examples of where the micro-approach can be used are many: developing resource planning (ERP), production techniques in modern manufacturing (lean, cells…), controlling, the marketing process, logistic chains, or, as here, organizational structures and leadership practices. Only the imagination sets limits to that list. Organizational studies with the above mentioned methods have not been employed on any notable scale yet. I also suspect that many existing ethnographic materials can be used for creating a view on (socially constructed) leadership. These materials can help us understand the social and power relations within a culture. With the help of more subsequent research and methodological pluralism (Glynn and Raffaelli 2010) the discussion could achieve a level where a *leadership culture would set the standards for daily operation, not vice versa*.

During this research journey I have both joined notions that take leadership as a term for granted and thus maintain it, and I have referred to the Alvesson and Sveningsson' (2003a) definition of leadership as a 'disappearing act'. My research has some similarities with theirs in both content and method (leaders' talk about leadership as materials, discourse and conversational analysis), but there are differences too. I join their notion about the need for critical studies of leadership that do not take it for granted, but remark simultaneously that their research approach is neither hermeneutic nor do they mention social constructionism. The practical consequence is that they do not give explicit value to continuity and historicity of the leadership phenomenon, whereas hermeneutics would find in the historicity and traditions a certain legitimation of it. In this respect also Berger and Luckman's (1967) terms habituation and institutionalization would practically imply accepting the existence of a phenomenon and not

calling it necessarily a disappearing act, as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003a) do.

A suggestion for future leadership research is to pay more attention to both the historical continuity of leadership and to study how it has been talked about and whether that phenomenon is referred to in other terms too. This would require a hermeneutic-conversational analysis – and it might be recalled that the materials do not need to consist solely of interviews, as also historical documents, pictures, films and radio broadcastings might produce an interesting alternative. This kind of – possibly Foucauldian, hermeneutic or deconstructive – archaeology or geneology to the phenomenon might also shed some light on the 'extra-ordinarizition of the mundane' and the 'disappearing act of leadership' (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a, 2003b). That kind of leadership research would anyway mark an encouraging exception in the canon of current (and past) leadership research, and even as an exception it can today be well accepted in the stream of phenomenological, hermeneutical, social constructionist or critical leadership studies.

Aesthetic epistemology and embodied hermeneutics present research practices that enable a more holistic approach to humans in organizations, in any position. Whilst yoga, meditation and other spiritual exercises start to find their way into work life, these methods certainly offer a good chance to study organizational actors and for instance their meditative practices.

Philosophy of leadership exists in its own right already too, but those discussions are more theory than practice-laden. Here I am using the philosophical terminology to show that practical life can well be discussed in philosophical terms. Merging everyday life and philosophy is a growing trend anyway (Hadot 1998, 2004; Nehamas 2000; Schmid 1998), and organizational research connecting with philosophy will most probably grow too.

To round up this creation of further research, I take a meta-view on leadership research. Deetz (1996) claims that the dimensions of the Burrell-Morgan (1979) matrix reproduce the perspective of mainstream tradition, which explains the success of that matrix: it provides a safe,

comfortable and familiar language for seeing other alternatives, but it is still embedded in the dominant perspective. He calls the subjective-objective problem "boring and misleading", and he would instead (in a hermeneutic and post-modern fashion) rather emphasize the role of the researcher as an acknowledged skilled collaborator (local) or as an expert observer (elite). Based upon these presumptions Deetz's grid provides four solutions for articulating research practices. Each discourse has its own way of seeing organization, change, people and events.

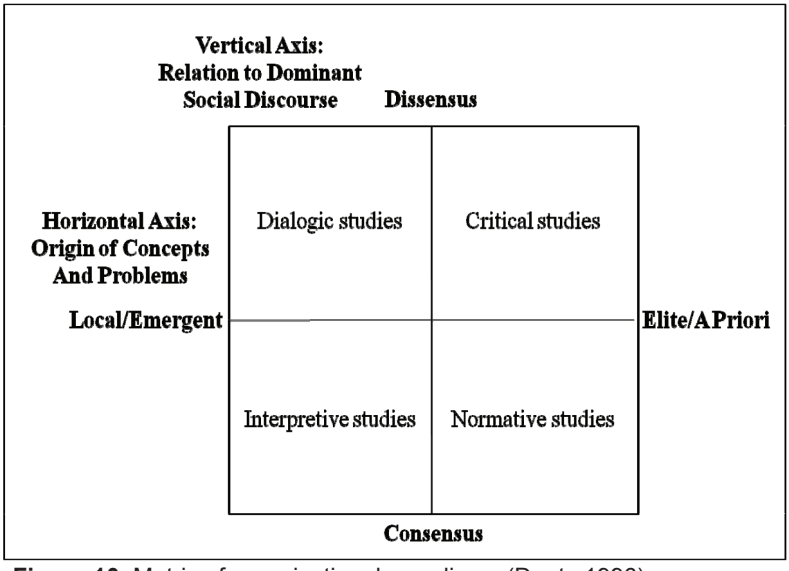

Figure 10. Matrix of organizational paradigms (Deetz 1996)

Dialogic studies legitimately interpret the representational world in different terms than do normative or interpretive ones. As mentioned above, most leadership studies follow the normative approach (Deetz 1996). I see an important option for leadership research to step out of the commensurability debate and instead start to create a consensus towards its subject of study, leadership, rather than to dwell on internal discussions. The workplaces and work practices are in a constant

movement and transformation, and a dialogic and critical approach could describe the practical work in novel ways.

Novel ways of leadership research might be needed indeed:

> "To mark the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the editors of Harvard Business Review compiled a list of the 10 most influential management ideas of the past 10 years. When asked why there were no ideas related to leadership on the list, the editor-at-large stated, "I guess what we have found again and again is that new leadership thinking doesn't emerge often. And I think it is possible for a decade to go by without a huge new set of ideas about leadership (Glynn and Raffaelli 2010: 396)."

Maybe we do not need a "huge new set of ideas" or new leadership grand narratives, because leadership research surely suffers under its misleading name that evokes images of leader-centricity. Before any consensus on leadership, we seriously need to question the term in itself. When we take leadership as a social construction seriously, I think there is a lot of room for leadership research that keeps the exciting and lively world of real people alive in its methods and theory, and is able to produce results that speak to people. Whether that research is then, after all, called leadership, co-operational, ethnographic, economic or organizational identity research does not matter that much. In saying this I join Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003a) who argue that "thinking about leadership needs to take seriously the possibility of the nonexistence of leadership as a distinct phenomenon with great relevance for understanding organizations and relations in workplaces(Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a: 359)." Instead of defending our current leadership sand castles, our task as researchers is to pay attention to the becoming of phenomena, to the ontology that we play with, and to explore these phenomena with a critical eye. In this respect not only the inherited names and concepts should direct our research, but an ability to listen and recreate.

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