Leadership Virtues and Management Knowledge: Questioning the Unitary Command Perspective in Leadership Research

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1. Introduction: Shared leadership and modern management knowledge

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

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

as the single hero entrepreneur) through articulation and reflection (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2003).

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

Several of the most acknowledged studies on leadership has explicitly had this perspective, such as Carlson (1951) and Mintzberg (1973) who both followed the days of single CEO's in order to understand what leaders do and what leadership is all about. The same perspective can also be found in formal and informal regulations and practices in society in the notion that only a single person can be held accountable for a defined economic area of responsibility – a notion that have far-reaching consequences for who are seen as leaders and what is seen as leadership in the modern corporate world (Öman, 2005).

Although management research is thus often discussed in practical terms, i.e. in terms of finding the most suitable managerial ideals given certain tasks and environments, this discussion has also led to the construction of often hidden assumptions guiding much of the ongoing theory development. And insofar contemporary management research can be seen as an important influence to the ongoing construction of managerial ideals and practices in society, the question of what basic assumptions that guide this research should be more than only of theoretical interest. Our view of the leadership field is that the study of practicalities has led to the formulation of stable and non-disputable assumptions about leadership – such as the unitary command perspective. If ever questioned, these assumptions are vividly defended. If practitioners of leadership try to deviate from them, strong reactions are evoked. Basic assumptions in leadership research thus do not only serve as institutionalized, neutral, scientific facts defining the field, they have also developed into a set of virtues of leadership (Gustafsson, 1994). Thereby, leadership research does not only put forward a practical agenda of effective leadership, it also promotes a moral agenda of virtuous leadership.

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

In epistemological terms, leadership is regarded as ongoing construction processes where leaders, expectations on leaders, idea generation, decision making and arenas for leadership are continuously negotiated and re-formulated over time (Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Fletcher, 2004). A discussion towards future research agendas where the articulation and questioning of the moral and ideological foundations of leadership practices and leadership research are central to the development of sustainable leadership ideals concludes the chapter.

2. The moral foundations of leadership research and practice

An important point of departure for this chapter is that leadership research is not only about the scientific formulation of practical and normative knowledge on the handling of managerial situations. Even though most leadership research is explicitly or implicitly focussed on such knowledge, it is at the same time also shaping and re-shaping basic assumptions on the nature of leadership, both in theory and in practice. And when these assumptions are then used to distinguish good leadership from bad leadership, wasteful management from lean management, ego-tripped leaders from responsible leaders – then they also become the basis on which managerial virtues are built. In short, when a field develops strong and taken-for-granted assumptions on their subject of study, it also starts to formulate its internal virtues and thus a moral foundation of its own.

At the core of the moral foundation of leadership is the Western tradition of viewing work as a painful but inevitable must, but also as a virtue, a moral duty and as something that refines and educates those who indulge in it (Jackall, 1988; Gustafsson, 1994). This view draws upon protestant ethics, Puritanism, Marxism and several other streams of thought, and it becomes most apparent in the most advanced form of rational work – the modern organization. By means of specialization and coordination, modern organizations are supposed to contribute as much as possible to the common good, and the leaders who are entrusted with the difficult task of making this happen are required to live by certain normative virtues. Gustafsson (1994: 50) formulates these virtues in terms of thriftiness, diligence, sensibleness and responsibleness – virtues on which all management education are built. While this strong normative moral message often remains an underlying assumption in most management literature, its practical consequences – such as models

and techniques for planning and control or generalized knowledge on the need for unitary command and carefully calculated spans of control – can be found anywhere. The perspective of unitary command is in this respect a consequence of underlying managerial virtues – the leader shall be in control in order to take responsibility, and organize work according to what has historically been seen as rational and sensible. The organization's best comes first, no matter what humanitarian ideals that are violated (Nylén, 1995)

There is also a second source from which the perspective of unitary command claims its moral necessity – the idea about the leader as an omnipotent hero. In a Weberian sense, heroes should be regarded as a pre-modern archetype that were to be replaced by modern managers, selected on the basis of formal merits and suitability for the job. But the idea of heroes has lived on, not least in the world of political and corporate leaders (Fletcher, 2004). As Jackall (1988) puts it, the modern corporation actually combines modernist monocratic bureaucratic ideals and re-created medieval patrimony in its governance structures – resulting in a view of the leader as a lonely expert with an almost God-given authority, a hero with superior expertise. What differentiates the hero from the non-hero is not necessarily his acts, but rather the virtues by which he live – courage, vision, honesty, the duty to take responsibility for something larger than himself. And, more importantly – he is a single individual, a lonely man. If we loose ourselves from the assumption of singularity and individuality we will have no heroes – and, consequently, no leaders.

3. The institutionalization of the unitary command perspective

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

General management theory then expanded from its base in Scientific Management through inclusion of psychological and sociological theory and through new understandings of the environment in which managerial activities were performed, and so did leadership theory. Early explanations of leadership effectiveness were based on the notion that leaders possess certain psychological traits and personal characteristics that distinguish them from ordinary people. These theories are all individualistic in the sense that they

focused on the individual leader, the "Great Man" (Reicher et al, 2005), and they thereby supported the taken-for-granted assumption that leadership is a single-person task.

Later developments came to emphasise effective leadership as a question of leadership behaviour in relation to specific situations (Pearce and Conger, 2003). Moving focus from individual characteristics to what leaders actually did in different contexts and situations, new insights were gained that pointed at the importance of choosing the right leader for the situation at hand. Thereby, researchers could also distinguish between different leadership styles in terms of effectiveness. Often, these styles are described as composed by focus on task, focus on maintaining a good social climate in the group, and the focus on change and development.

During recent decades, there has been an increasing interest in viewing leadership as a social process, where leaders emerge from groups over time as they come to personify what it means to be a member of that group at that point of time (Pearce and Conger, 2003). As is often the case in management theory, this development is both based on theoretical advancements and on changed values and practices in organizations. A processual view of leadership is thus not only a consequence of a search for new and better conceptual and methodological tools for the understanding of leadership, but also of the new knowledge-intensive economy where neither people nor information can or should be controlled in the way they used to be. In this new brave world of "visionary", "idea-based" or "charismatic" leadership, the notion of individual leaders still seem to persist. The leader is now not only the one who leads and give orders, but also a symbol and source of inspiration. As Henry Mintzberg (1999) puts it, "we seem to be moving beyond leaders who merely lead; today heroes save. Soon heroes will only save; then gods will redeem".

New Leadership is one term that has been used to group these recent approaches to the study of leadership (Bryman, 1996). The leader is the manager of meaning, the one who defines organizational reality by means of articulating a vision for the organization. Bryman describes such approaches as having a tendency to be too focused on the study of top leaders, on heroic leaders and on individuals rather than groups.

These leaders are often depicted as heroes also in the mass media, even though some researchers have started to question the real impact of such leaders on organizations and on their success (Czarniawska, 2005). Writing about major corporations as Apple or American Express, which have been identified with their leaders, Henry Mintzberg (1999) uses these words:

> "Then consider this proposition: maybe really good management is boring. Maybe the press is the problem, alongside the so-called gurus, since they are the ones who personalize success and deify leaders (before they defile them). After all, corporations are large and complicated; it takes a lot of effort to find out what has

> really been going on. It is so much easier to assume that the great one did it all. Makes for better stories too." (Mintzberg, 1999)

Hatch et al. (2006) have studied interviews with influential CEOs published in the Harvard Business Review, which has a significant impact on the managerial culture, in order to analyse the role played by aesthetics in leadership. Looking at the kind of stories told by leaders they found out that the large majority were epic stories, stories where a heroic individual succeed in achieving a desirable goal despite all the obstacles along the way.

As well in the literature as in the organizational practice, it thus seems to be impossible to speak of leadership without speaking of leaders. If leadership functions really need to be performed by formal leaders seems to be an unexplored question. Accepting the need for leadership has meant to accept the need for one leader, which directly implies a differentiation between leaders and followers on a power dimension (Vanderslice, 1988). As Gronn (2002) points out, the main difficulty with the taken-for-granted dichotomies leader-follower and leadership-followership in organization theory is that "they *pre*scribe, rather than *de*scribe, a division of labor" (p 428).

Moreover, leadership is typically described as a good and desirable thing – we need leadership, as it becomes evident by juxtaposing the term leadership to the term seduction (Calás and Smircich, 1991). As the two researchers write, "to seduce is to lead wrongly, and it seems that to lead is to seduce rightly" (p 573).

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

Such a conception is also supported, at least in Sweden, by the legislation concerning different business areas. Even if, in most of the cases, these rules do not represent an absolute ban on two persons sharing, for example, a managerial position, it appears clear that one single person is to prefer. Clearly identifiable responsibilities, more uniform practices, a simple command structure are some of the arguments used in favour of the single-person post (Öman, 2005).

To sum up, the unitary command perspective lives on in good health, although it has never been scientifically proved that it is always the most effective form. Individual leaders are still used to personify companies and countries, and most new management books treat leadership as something that is exercised by single individuals. In the same vein, the theoretical language of the field seem to incorporate the new environment for leadership activities through re-using old concepts rather than inventing new ones, thereby

affirming the notion of heroic, individualist leadership. One prominent example of this is the recent stream of literature on "charismatic leadership" (Conger, 1999), where an old weberian concept for exceptional, radiant leaders is used to portray today's relational, democratic and trustful leadership styles. At the same time, in the practical world, we can see a development where leaders in all sectors are met with scepticism and contempt, and where young talents pursue other career forms than the managerial ladder.

4. Shared leadership – how and why?

Historically, the fact that leadership is shared is not something new. Rome, for example, had two consuls in ancient times and, during a period, also a triumvirate (Lambert-Olsson, 2004, Sally, 2002). The reason for these collective institutions was manly to avoid concentrating power in only one person's hands. In the same way, in some countries, as for example the USA, the legislative, executive and judiciary power are divided and assigned to different institutions. This is however not the main reason for sharing leadership in an organisation. It is anyway interesting to reflect on the fact that an idea (that of sharing leadership) that most of us almost spontaneously tend to reject has indeed already been applied in different historical contexts. In Table 1, the main arguments for shared leadership are summarised.

Two different personalities or competence areas completing each other are common for those forms of leadership that are not formally regulated but that are shared in practice. It can be the case of tight collaboration between a CEO and the chairman of the board or the CEO and the COO in a corporate or of a coach and his collaborator in a football team, as the Swedish couple Sven-Göran Eriksson and Tord Grip who managed the UK national football team for several years. Likewise, the cultural and media sectors are full of dual leadership models with one administrative and one professional leader (de Voogt, 2005, Lambert-Olsson, 2004). An "emotional leader" and a "task leader" has been an arrangement used in famous international corporations as Microsoft, HP, Boeing, Intel (O´Toole et al, 2003). Shared leadership is also described as a better alternative than a single leader when "the challenges a corporation faces are so complex that they require a set of skills too broad to be possessed by any one individual" (p 254) or when companies

Organizational perspective (shared leadership as a way of enhancing leadership effectiveness)	• Single-person leadership cannot reflect and handle today's environmental complexity – several different competences / skills / roles are required • Co-leaders can have a lager span of control together, they have more time for their co-workers and for reflecting on the strategy and the basic values for their unit • Shared leadership means that different organizational parts, interests and/or professions can be represented at the same time at managerial level. • By presenting leadership as a less challenging and stressful task, young ambitious employees can be retained. • Both stability and change can be represented by a dual leadership, thereby facilitating organizational change. • Less vulnerability in case of leader absence or resignation • Lower risk for sub-optimal solutions if the leadership of an organisation is truly shared by the management team	Holmberg and Söderlind (2004), Pearce and Conger (2003), Sally (2002), de Voogt (2005), Denis et al (2001), Yang and Shao (1996), Bradford and Cohen (1998).
Co-worker perspective (shared leadership as a way of enhancing the correspondence between employee values and actual organizational practices)	• The young generations are used to work in teams with some degree of shared leadership. When they rise to higher organisational levels, they are more likely to continue share leadership and to resist to traditional solo command. • Expectation for co-leadership created by the experience of living in modern (at least Western) family models, where both parents have the same participation in decision-making, reinforced by experiences of working in teams • Young employees expect more "democratic" leadership in modern organisations	Sally (2002), Bradford and Cohen (1998).
Individual perspective (shared leadership as a way of enhancing managers' lives)	• Solo leadership "consumes" people and there is a risk for high level of stress and anxiety. • Balance of work requirements and personal responsibilities/private life. • Better sense of security and stability in decision making and implementation • Enhanced possibility to learn having the co-leader as an example and as a feed-back giver • More fun	Holmberg and Söderlind (2004), Sally (2002), Fletcher (2004), Döös et al (2005)
Societal perspective (maintaining and increasing the legitimacy of leadership and management)	• When power is too concentrated, it may result in immoral and/or illegal actions taken by individual leaders struck by hubris. • Shared leadership increases the possibility of including minorities into managerial positions, thereby increasing the legitimacy of leadership.	Lambert-Olsson (2004)

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

are dealing with very complex technologies that make the communication between technical and non-technical persons difficult. If two co-leaders would work together under a period of time, they could develop a common language and understanding (Sally, 2002). Team work in projects and discourses of team members' empowerment seem also to set the premises for sharing leadership within groups. Some research (quantitative) have been done on particular types of teams, as product development or change management teams and the degree of shared leadership has been claimed to be related to team effectiveness (Pearce and Sims, 2002).

Despite these premises, there are not so many organisations that are explicitly implementing forms of shared leadership today. Recent surveys made in Sweden among managers showed that most of them were positive to introducing shared leadership and that about 40% of them already share leadership in some way (Holmberg and Söderlind, 2004, Döös et al. 2005). This seems to suggest that the interest for this new model is large, but up to now the number of formal co-leaders is still very limited and the new model has not had the big impact it was expected to have yet. One possible reason could be that the understanding of leadership as an individual trait and activity is very well rooted in our culture: every one of us has in his/her mind clear the images of famous leaders as Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr, but we tend to ignore the team of people on which they relied (O'Toole et al, 2003). Large corporations in the business world are also identified by the personality of their leaders, the focus is concentrated on them. Moreover, as the same authors also underline, people in Western cultures seem to need to identify one single individual to be responsible for the performance of a group. We are instinctively reluctant to accept that two persons can share this responsibility, in the same way as we can be sceptical on the capability of two or more persons to make quick and clear decisions together when necessary. Even those that have shared a leader position with another person seem to have a need to specify that in certain situations a single person leadership is probably more appropriate, as for example in the army or during the coaching of a football team (Lambert-Olsson, 2004). On the other hand, there are also co-leaders witnessing that the opposite can happen. Having the co-leaders seriously and deeply discussed visions for their group, basic understandings of their role and approach to their activity, decisions can be made quicker and are better grounded (Holmberg and Söderlind, 2004, Döös et al, 2003). Moreover, the fact that the decision is made together with another person can give more confidence to both leaders and allow them to shorten the time of reflection (they have already reflected and agreed on basics values and ideas). So, there are some positive experiences, even if the very majority of organisations have not tried any explicit form of shared leadership yet.

5. Theorizing shared leadership: Post-heroic ideals

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

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

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

Describing shared leadership in this way, we assign it many traits that are traditionally seen as feminine, that is traits that have been "socially ascribed"

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

Here we could find one possible explanation to why post-heroic leadership ideals are mostly invisible in companies. When leaders tell about their leadership, they still use the classical hero individual-focused narrative. If we consider that we construct our identity each time we have an interaction with another person and that a relevant part of our identity is our gender identity, we can see that also when working we are "doing gender". The fact that the working life has long been dominated by men suggests that "doing work" is linked to "doing masculinity". So, since practices related to post-heroic leadership are unconsciously associated with femininity and powerlessness, this new form of leadership violates gender and power assumptions about leadership. These gender and power related questions make the change to the new leadership model more difficult and delicate, since we are speaking of highly charged aspects.

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

6. Leadership as a collective construction – from emerging practice to research perspective

Our analysis of the existing literature on shared leadership portrayed above is that it can, roughly, be divided in two related streams; (1) one that focus on

the practicalities of why and how managerial duties and positions should be assigned to more than one person, and (2) one that assumes a basic perspective on all leadership as being collective construction processes with several people involved. Although these two traditions do not exclude each other, they imply quite different research agendas.

In the first tradition, which has been described above, we find several reasons why and how managerial tasks shall be divided splitted up on several individuals. Concepts like "post-heroic leadership" are used to discuss the inhumane workload of the modern manager and the need to enable him (and sometimes also her) to live a balanced life (Sally, 2002, Pearce and Manz, 2005). Modern decentralized ways of organizing – through high-performing teams rather than through bureaucratic command structures – are also used as arguments (Walker, 2001, Lambert, 2002, Pearce, 2004), and also the observation that an increasingly complex world requires top management competence profiles broader than what can possibly be expected to be found in one single person (O'Toole et al, 2003, Waldersee and Ealgerson, 2002, Pearce, 2004). By reference to established theories on group composition and role complementarity it is also usual to describe managerial tasks as requiring several different individual roles at one and the same time (Yang and Shao, 1996, Denis et al, 2001). Sometimes we also meet arguments linked to the general legitimacy of leadership, such as that organizational and societal change processes may be facilitated by having several different perspectives and/or interest groups represented in the managerial function at the same time (Denis et al, 2001, Sally, 2002, Ensley et al, 2003). In case this literature refer to actual empirical experiences, it is usually in the form of successful instances of shared leadership (usually from top management settings) and practical advice on how the co-working leaders shall distribute tasks, roles and informations amongst each other in order to make things work (O'Toole el al, 2003). Some authors still also maintain the continued need for traditional vertical unitary command in many situations; shared leadership is primarily suitable for tasks characterized by reciprocal interaction, creativity and complexity (i.e. advanced teamwork situations).

One problem of this perspective is that it views shared leadership as an exception to "usual" leadership, an exception to be practiced in extraordinary situations. Shared leadership is also defined out from the number of involved individuals, rather than out from the individuals' experiences on if the exercised leadership was actually shared or not – i.e. a focus on formal organizational arrangements rather than on practical everyday organizing. The alternative, as we see it, is to apply a basic perspective on leadership as something that individuals construct together in social interaction (Gronn, 2002, Smircich and Morgan, 1982). Gronn discuss this in terms of level of analysis, i.e. that the level of analysis should be the exercised leadership rather than the single individual leader. Accordingly, Vanderslice (1988) invites us to separate the concept of leadership from that of leaders. Meindl (1995) and Reicher et al (2005) claim that traditional leadership models

contribute to the institutionalization of a dualism of identity between leaders and followers in society – a dualism that may be challenged through studies of leadership identity construction. A dualism that also raises moral questions as if it is possible to explain how leaders transform other people's thinking, for example, and at the same time not to deny these people own ability to think. Or to celebrate charismatic leaders without encouraging tyranny.

Fletcher (2004) takes this line of reasoning one step further in her discussion of post-heroic leadership in terms of collective, interactive learning processes. She does think that such a theoretic development will run into difficulties, difficulties that may better be understood from a gender perspective. The traditional images of leadership are strongly masculinized, she says, and the femininization that is inherent in the post-heroic perspective will challenge several deeply rooted notions of leadership. Among these Fletcher find the taken-for-granted individualization of society (reinforcing unitary command as the only viable solution), and also the contemporary idea that problems of gender inequality are finally being solved (implying that any basic redefinition of leadership would be unnecessary since we have already found the most suitable forms) (cf Vecchio, 2002). A social constructionist research agenda where leadership, leader identities and masculinization/femininization as constantly constructed and re-constructed (cf Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006) should thus be central to advance both leadership theory and leadership practices in the direction of sustainable leadership.

The point of departure of this chapter is the moral foundation of leadership research and practice to view leadership in terms of unitary command. This perspective has here been questioned by means of the current research debate on shared leadership and post-heroic leadership ideals. Viewing leadership in terms of collective constructions would imply that leadership is created by many people in interaction and that not all responsibilities need to be placed on one single person. The consequences of that can be most important to many organizations. It will e.g. imply that different individual roles are seen as important to leadership, that the notion of role complementarity may become even more important in the composition of managerial teams, and that single individuals may be relieved of unrealistic and harmful workloads. In addition, this might also result in new views on how the daily operations of the company can be organized; if employees are recognized as responsible and accountable co-leaders rather than as un-trustworthy subordinates, they should be entrusted to make decisions not only on operative matters but also on governance matters. The principle of inverted delegation (i.e. that tasks are delegated upwards rather than downwards) is one possible outcome of this, and it also may become natural that the composition and role structure in a management team is a matter for the team's subordinated to decide upon. This is not to say that hierarchies shall not exist, but rather that hierarchies should be seen as systems of relations that is open for construction and re-construction by all of their members. That builds on the assumption that the

members are responsible people who view their organization as a common interest that must be maintained into the future. By this, modern leadership practices might become both less harmful to individuals and more legitimate in the eyes of its beholders – i.e. increasingly sustainable.

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

By advocating a sustainable leadership perspective, we argue that studies within the field of leadership need to take one step further towards the inclusion of axiological or ideological perspectives. Leadership activities are thus not only interesting as processes of social constructions, they are also interesting in the sense that they are important manifestations of hidden and/or taken-for-granted ideological and moral norms in society. Like several other fields within general management research, the leadership field maintains a mainstream perspective where the object of study is essentially a positive thing with desirable outcomes. If these desirable outcomes are indeed delivered, the processes preceding them are rarely questioned. When critical researchers and/or voices in society demands ethical perspectives or humanistic perspectives, or indulge in criticism of psychopathic leaders, greed and other modern phenomena (Jackall, 1988) they actually advocate a leadership research where not only the processes and outcomes of leadership should be studied, but also the hidden ideological and moral meanings on which modern leadership practices and theories are based. Post-heroic leadership is to us one such way towards leadership theorizing where the articulation and questioning of moral foundations is central to theory development.

In this chapter, we have focused our discussion on one central – but often hidden and taken-for-granted - aspect of leadership: the unitary command perspective. By discussing both the roots of unitary command and the recent challenges to this perspective in leadership literature, we have portrayed a development where both established leadership practices and leadership norms are questioned, both in terms of what they do to people in organizations and what they do to the general views of leadership in society. While questioning the forms and consequences of unitary command and also actively promoting the perspective that leadership is something people create together, it is not easy to discard all traditions in the field. Not least because companies operate in a society that expect single, powerful, hard-working, masculine leaders that deliver decisions and strategies and who can control

their organizations and be held accountable for everything that happens there. In that sense, questioning the unitary command perspective is one way of articulating and questioning the moral foundations of modern leadership knowledge, which we see as the necessary first steps towards the formulation of sustainable leadership ideals – in single organizations and in society as a whole.

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