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Four Case studies

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Four case studies

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in Academia

Four case studies

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of leadership dimensions of academic organisational processes. It consists of four case studies, each presenting a leadership challenge. These studies of specific situations offer great opportunities to investigate the variety of leading that the academy contains. There is focus, not so much on the task but on the process in which the challenges are positioned, how they are understood and approached, and what action ensues. The cases also inform on individual circumstances as well as group and organizational situations, and there is an additional focus on personal and organizational developmental processes.

Qualitative research methods have been used throughout the studies, for the purpose of reflection and understanding, rather than verifiable facts. The closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its almost infinite wealth of details provides the opportunity to develop nuanced view and theory of leadership in the academy. Thematic and narrative analyses, applied in these studies, give access to knowledge about sense-making and coping in the different leadership challenges. They also make it possible to sort out differences that matter in ideas and approaches to leadership embedded in the processes of these challenges.

The findings from the four cases studies of this thesis show that (1) reflections on art and architecture may be conducive for stimulating innovative inclusive ways of conducting leadership development, (2) there are four different "rooms of leadership" at the university, which are all based on varying institutional logics, (3) formal leaders interpret and act in line with a particular sequence of episodes when dealing with destructive research leaders in their organization, and (4) there is a variety of types of disharmony influencing creativity in a long lasting research environment, and these can be managed with different strategies.

Altogether, these studies show that the process dimensions of the four leadership challenges contain various notions and practices of leading that in situations of stress reach a state of tension or conflict with one another. These tensions are in the thesis understood as organisational paradoxes, or polarities, i.e. problems that cannot be solved but can be lived and led. The findings also suggest that a both/and approach, and the psychoanalytic concept of holding can be helpful in an understanding of leading towards constructive outcomes of these leadership challenges.

Key words: academic leadership, organisational paradoxes, holding, qualitative methods, distributed leadership, leadership development, toxic leadership

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Leadership Challenges

in Academia

Four case studies

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Cover: The image – the frieze "The Blessed before The Last Judgment" by Nicola Pisano on the pulpit in the Dome of Siena – shows the varying, even conflicting, passions and reactions of those who face the challenge of being blessed. Photo taken by Thomas Sewerin in the Royal Cast Collection in Copenhagen.

To Carlos, Rufus, and Willy

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Foreword, acknowledgements

"The Ring Lake Seminars" is where it started, my acquaintance with leading in the university. In 1991 I was invited to do my first course on leadership in academia. This was at a time when reflections on leadership dawned on the academy. We settled on an inn by the graceful Ring Lake and stayed there for five days every spring. The inn was set at a perfectly appropriate distance from everyday work at the university and yet close enough to go back and forth every day. A beautiful park sloped from outside the conference room down to the beach and a wooden jetty stretching out into the water. Participants were asked to bring to the seminar room a real, difficult and urgent challenge from their daily experience leading their parts of the university. These challenges became the stuff around which reflections, understanding and learning were woven. Since they all originated from a leadership environment we were able to pursue how the way leadership was perceived and acted on was sometimes part of the problem and we could creatively reexamine those assumptions. For me these Ring Lake Seminars were a formidable initiation into the world of living and leading at the university.

Actually the Ring Lake Seminars is an adumbration for the many courses, programmes and seminars I spent with teams, current and would-be leaders of more than one university during the years since. One exercise sticks out among the many. Beneath the branches of timeworn trees in the park there was a group task with a long rope. Participants were blind-folded and asked to form an intricate geometrical figure with all of the rope and using the whole group. The same thing happened every time. The magnetism of the task. As soon as the rope was in the hands of the group members, they all forgot basic questions such as "How do we organise ourselves to accomplish this task? Who do we listen to, who will guide us in this process? How do we communicate with each other?" Oblivious to process dimensions, seduced by the task, most groups chased the solution and toiled for too long with the long rope. In recalling this exercise I am reminded of the crucial relationship between task and process.

In the four case studies, and this introductory chapter, comprising this thesis we are made to know and understand how process dimensions are contributing to the effectuation of challenging leadership tasks. What we can see here, when going beyond and beneath appearances, is both a breadth and a depth of the sense of leading in academia.

I have had plenty of support in my own research process. Robert Holmberg, my co-supervisor, set me up and reactivated my enrolment, in its frail parchment condition from 1976, at the graduate school of the Psychology Department in Lund. We have written articles together and travelled to leadership conferences in Helsinki,

Copenhagen and Richmond where I have presented drafts to my papers. We have trained group coaches, hundreds of them, in the schools of the City of Lund, and in breaks we have had serious conversations about my efforts as a scholar. As well as sharing our favourite distractions, art, literature, and history. Thanks, Robert, for your unbroken encouragement, your profound understanding of the field of leadership studies, and your feedback.

My supervisor Eva Brodin picked me up and guided me through some disenchantment half way. We have worked and written together. You promised early in our acquaintance, Eva, that you would match my efforts, as if quoting Michele Obama with a twist, "I go high when you go high". I have learnt so much from you – to save all the detours into philosophy and fiction to "your future novel", to persevere, to learn and think seriously about method, to aim my attention at essentials. Thank you for your steadfastness. I owe the completion of this thesis to you.

Friends have spurred me on. Gunnar (Kenna) Andersson, your sociological direction was highly educating. Torsten Sjöberg, we have known each other since we were trainees in the early 1970s. You see through me, it has been very helpful. Lena Nylander, your expertise of psychiatry has contributed to a nuanced view of interpersonal difficulties at the workplace. Mats Benner, thanks for the inspiring collaboration with the first article and our joint sessions with the faculty. The regular meetings of veterans, Halvard Jensen, Lennart Rohlin, Göran Alsén, and Lasse Cederholm, a creative hotbed, the awe-inspiring number of combined years of consultancy notwithstanding. With you I have tested my ideas. Thank you for those discussions.

Cecilia Agrell, Christine Blomqvist, Birgitta Reisdal, Anders Lindberg, and Gunnar Jonnergård, my fellow workers, so many programmes and courses we have done together in various leadership environments. Unceasing conversation, thanks for your ideas, cheers, and sometimes consolation. Anders Malmström and Christine Räisänen, both *emeriti* now, you were instrumental in me starting this project off, so much appreciated. Nils Levin, you transcribed all my interviews, an exhausting job and hopefully also a learning opportunity, so very helpful for me. Richard Bolden, you gave me such thorough and helpful criticism and feedback at the half-time seminar, your voice has highly influenced the end result here.

My loving family is slightly bewildered at this late resurgence of student status of the pater familias. My family has grown during the project. I dedicate this thesis to the young boys, Carlos, Rufus, and Willy who when they grow up and start working, will benefit from grandfather's research findings, I hope. My wife Tullie, frank and sustaining, has now and then challenged my arguments with simply and crisply, "How

do you know that? How can you be sure?" And, I have had to go back to my analytic sequence. My grown-up children, Adam, Mira, and Måns have supported my efforts with mild curiosity. Thanks for being around, all of you, for providing that holding environment without which there would be much less me.

Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of leadership dimensions of academic organisational processes. It consists of four case studies, each presenting a leadership challenge. These studies of specific situations offer great opportunities to investigate the variety of leading that the academy contains. There is focus, not so much on the task but on the process in which the challenges are positioned, how they are understood and approached, and what action ensues. The cases also inform on individual circumstances as well as group and organizational situations, and there is an additional focus on personal and organizational developmental processes.

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The findings from the four cases studies of this thesis show that (1) reflections on art and architecture may be conducive for stimulating innovative inclusive ways of conducting leadership development, (2) there are four different "rooms of leadership" at the university, which are all based on varying institutional logics, (3) formal leaders interpret and act in line with a particular sequence of episodes when dealing with destructive research leaders in their organization, and (4) there is a variety of types of disharmony influencing creativity in a long lasting research environment, and these can be managed with different strategies.

Altogether, these studies show that the process dimensions of the four leadership challenges contain various notions and practices of leading that in situations of stress reach a state of tension or conflict with one another. These tensions are in the thesis understood as organisational paradoxes, or polarities, i.e. problems that cannot be solved but can be lived and led. The findings also suggest that a both/and approach, and the psychoanalytic concept of holding can be helpful in an understanding of leading towards constructive outcomes of these leadership challenges.

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Behövs det fler resonemang och teorier om ledarskap? Ett svar på den frågan är att huvudspåret i den talrika mängd av teorier och studier om ledarskap som kommit fram det senaste halvseklet till stor del är allmänt hållet. Därmed uppstår ett slags gap mellan teori och praktik. Fenomenet ledarskap lyfts ofta ut ur vardagserfarenheterna som de levs och praktiseras i organisationer. Det mister därför i relevans för dem som utövar ledning. Många teorier har också haft stort fokus på personen, chefen och ledaren. Det behövs tillföras kunskap om vad de som arbetar med ledning tänker, känner och gör i vardagspraktiken när de ställs inför komplexa och utmanande praktiska situationer och svårigheter. Dessutom behövs en syn på ledarskap som inte bara har chefen eller ledaren i brännpunkten utan som handlar om processer och sammanvävda interaktioner mellan människor i organisationer och som vidgar bilden av hur inflytande utövas på arbetsplatser.

Ledarskap är ett undflyende fenomen. Det har att göra med att ledarskap inte existerar fristående från sitt sammanhang, som till exempel en cykel eller en pall. Ledarskap är intimt förknippat med andra fenomen för sin existens. Ledarskap är en rörelse, ett förhållande som uppstår och utvecklas i interaktioner mellan människor i speciella sammanhang i en organisation. Det är svårt att föreställa sig ledarskap utan dessa sammanhang. Eftersom alla sammanhang skiljer sig åt, åtminstone lite grand, skulle man kunna säga att det behövs lika många teorier om ledarskap som det finns situationer där människor interagerar för att få någonting gjort. Den mening som de som är inblandade tillskriver ledandet i den speciella situationen påverkar i högsta grad hur ledarskap upplevs, uppfattas och tillämpas. Därför gör det inte någonting att teorierna är så många. Det är till och med en fördel.

I min avhandling är begreppet ledarskap en lins, ett förstoringsglas, som riktas mot fyra speciella och komplexa sammanhang. Det rör sig om fyra fallstudier, utforskning av fyra angelägna frågor eller ledarskapsutmaningar i universitetsmiljö. Frågorna har ställts av ledare och ledningsmiljöer som jag stött på i min praktik som konsult. Fokus i studierna är, inte i så hög grad på *saken* som frågorna berör, utan på *processen* i vilken frågorna ställs, hur de bearbetas och vilka handlingar som följer. De processdimensioner som jag är speciellt intresserad av att utforska är hur ledarskap uppfattas i dessa utmaningar, hur skilda uppfattningar om ledning och inflytande förhåller sig till varandra i dessa utmaningar, hur spänningarna mellan olika synsätt, vanor och handlingar kring ledarskap påverkar hur dessa frågor närmar sig en lösning.

Artikel 1: Syftet med den första studien är att undersöka och diskutera en intervention i ett problembaserat ledarutvecklingsprogram där en dialog med konst kom till användning. Programmet genomförs vid en fakultet på ett svenskt universitet. Den strategiska ledningsutmaningen, projektet, som deltagarna i programmet får brottas med handlar om att skapa ett förslag på en ny organisation samt utforma en process för att genomföra densamma. Avsikten är att belysa att organisationsförändringen kommer att ha en stor

inverkan på både individerna i fakulteten och på organisationen, samt att förhålla sig till detta. Vid ett av seminarierna, dagen efter ett studiebesök på ett universitetssjukhus i Amsterdam, får deltagarna en uppgift, där de med hjälp av konst i staden ska diskutera några grundteman i organisationsförändringen. Denna övning i programmet, liksom hela projektet, diskuteras av författarna, som menar att den här sortens intervention kan underlätta och bidra till att leda och hålla samman en stor organisationsförändring och en utmanande identitetsutveckling på fakulteten i en turbulent tid. Projektet som deltagarna får, ger dem rika möjligheter att reflektera över sig själva som potentiella nyckelpersoner i fakultetens ledningssystem, över kreativt teamarbete, över organisationen de arbetar i. Dessutom erbjuder den strategiska utmaningen möjligheter att förhålla sig till mångfalden och komplexiteten i olika vanor och tänkesätt kring ledarskap som under lång tid växt fram i denna akademiska miljö.

Artikel 2: Också den andra studien handlar om en ledningsutmaning som har med organisationsförändring att göra. Detta fall berör hela universitetet. Inom ramen för den teoretiska inriktningen "distribuerat ledarskap", som brukas framför allt för att studera skolmiljöer, tar den här studien upp förhållandet mellan olika ledarskapslogiker som förekommer på universitetet. Skillnader och spänningar mellan dessa logiker, som är olika sätt att förstå och utöva ledning, tillsammans med maktdynamik i ledningsprocesserna på universitetet, orsakar förvirring och osäkerhet inför en stor organisationsförändring. I detta skede utvecklas, med konsulthjälp, en, vad författarna kallar, "heuristisk modell" för akademiskt ledarskap. Modellen illustrerar fyra "ledningsrum" på universitetet, vart och ett unikt i sin uppsättning av språk, vanor, sätt att tänka och känna inför auktoritet och styrning av de olika verksamheterna på universitetet: ett för styrning av linjeorganisationen och administrationen, ett annat för företräda forskningen, ett tredje för att leda lärande och utbildningen, och slutligen ett ledningsrum för att förstå samverkan i tvärvetenskapliga miljöer inom universitetet och mellan universitet och omvärld. Syftet med studien är att undersöka ifall och hur spänningar och slitningar mellan olika ledningslogiker påverkar distribuerat ledarskap när genomgripande förändringar i universitetets organisation genomförs. Resultatet av studien visar att modellen med de fyra rummen har kunnat bidra till att nyfikenheten på, medvetenheten om och förståelse för dynamiken i ledningsprocesserna på universitetet har ökat.

Artikel 3: Den tredje fallstudien undersöker hur formella chefer, såsom prefekt och dekan, tänker, känner och agerar när de har en medarbetare på institutionen som är ledande inom sitt forskningsområde men som, med sitt handlande i relation till studenter och kollegor, orsakar stress och svårt destruktiva mönster i miljön. Studien visar ett gemensamt mönster hos cheferna som är beroende av hur de ser på sin kontext, sin organisation och roll, i en stegvis eskalering av tryck på chefen att agera och göra något åt konflikten. Studien visar på tre steg, eller episoder, från *lojalitet* med de inblandade där man försöker tillmötesgå olika krav utifrån en förståelse av sammanhanget som antyder att "vi är som en familj" här på institutionen och i forskarmiljön. I nästa episod uppstår en *etisk* konflikt, där chefen

uppfattar sig som fastlåst mellan två svåra alternativ – att vara solidarisk med en för institutionen framgångsrik resurs som mer än väl uppfyller strategiskt uppsatta produktionsmål för forskningen, eller att bringa reda i turbulensen och det känslomässigt svåra läget och försöka förflytta den man ser som orsaken till problemet. I den tredje episoden vänder sig chefen till *lagen*, dvs utifrån en förståelse av sammanhanget som en offentlig arbetsplats tar chefen med hjälp av HR funktionen på fakulteten initiativ som via en personalpolitisk åtgärd utreder och förflyttar personer i fråga. Också i denna studie finns en reflektion om skillnad och spänning mellan olika sätt att tolka och förstå ledarskap. Det förväntas, med andra ord, att chefen, den formella positionen i ledningssystemet, ska vara den som har kompetensen att åtgärda den här sortens speciella utmaningar. Detta tankesätt gör det svårt att träda ut ur sekvensen av episoder. En annan syn på sammanhanget och på ledarskap – utifrån en tanke om "akademiskt medborgarskap" – skulle kunna se på ansvarsförhållandena och dynamiken i interaktionen i vardagen som en uppgift som delas av många andra, förutom, chefen. Det skulle då kanske vara möjligt att gå bakåt i sekvensen av episoder, att samtala om, utforma och leva upp till umgängesregler som tidgt bryter destruktiva mönster i sin linda. Det skulle kanske då vara tänkbart att leva och arbeta tillsammans – även med en speciell person i sitt hägn.

Artikel 4: Den fjärde fallstudien undersöker vilka slags slitningar och disharmonier som uppstår och hanteras mellan personerna i en forskningsmiljö över tid. Det är ett nödvändigt, delikat och känslofyllt arbete att ständigt bygga på och vidmakthålla de mellanmänskliga relationerna som den kreativa kunskapsproduktionen är inbäddad i. När sådana miljöer studeras vetenskapligt läggs ofta tonvikten på positiva faktorer som gynnar klimatet och samarbetet. Den här studien har, utifrån tanken att konflikter och slitningar är lika sociala och länkar människor samman som de harmoniska relationerna där människor lever och samarbetar, ett annat fokus. Studien har genomförts i en speciell forskningsmiljö som varit framgångsrik och producerat kreativa och världsledande vetenskapliga resultat under sextio års tid, med åtminstone fyra generationers forskare involverade. I samspelet mellan forskarna under denna långa tid har studien kunnat identifiera ett antal tydliga och intressanta disharmonier som haft betydelse för gruppdynamiken och förändringar i miljön. Slitningar har uppstått mellan generationerna medan de yngre forskarna försöker frigöra sig från banden till de äldre för att bygga sin egen karriär, mellan jämnåriga kollegor då de kämpar om begränsade resurser och bevakar sina revir samt i förhållande till externa grupper inom samma forskningsfält. Några av dessa disharmonier får ibland destruktiva följder, man skils åt och pratar inte längre med varandra. Andra disharmonier medför konstruktiva resultat, på kort och framför allt på lång sikt. Den här studien visar också på strategier att hantera dessa disharmonier som gör det möjligt för individerna och grupperna i denna forskningsmiljö att gå in i och ur stormiga och harmoniska förhållande utan alltför mycket skada och stress. Den tillför därför forskningen om kreativa grupper en viktig ingrediens, den att kunna leva med och hantera disharmonier i samspelet kan vara lika viktigt som att eftersträva harmoni.

De fyra fallstudierna är alla självständigt utformade och genomförda. Med "kappan", det här inledande och sammanfattande kapitlet, tillförs ett resonemang om den stora mångfalden av synsätt och teorier om ledarskap som frågor och utmaningar ligger inbäddade i. I denna mångfald finns också motsägelsefullheter eftersom de olika ledarskapsidéerna utgår från olika ontologiska antaganden. Forskarna skiljer sig åt i uppfattningen om vad slags fenomen som ledarskap är. Denna åtskillnad visar sig på en skala mellan realism, eller essentialism, och social konstruktionism. Vid den förstnämnda polen förutsätts att fenomenet existerar som ett självständigt studieobjekt "där ute" i världen bland andra orsakssammanhang och att det kan studeras objektivt med en rigorös tillämpning av vetenskaplig metod. Vid den sistnämnda polen antas ledarskap vara ett fenomen som kontinuerligt konstrueras genom ömsesidig förståelse av dem som är inblandade i en inflytande-process. Vid den polen menar man att ledarskap kan studeras genom att tolka olika värdeladdade uppfattningar som används för att komma överens om ledning. Förutom denna myckenhet av skillnader i synsätt på ledarskap i akademin finns också tre skilda styrformer som i praktiken blandas och ställs emot varandra: organisationen som en byråkrati, som ett företagsinspirerat management system och som ett kollegialt arrangemang.

I vardagens ledningssituationer, till exempel på universitetet, blandas ofta dessa olika ledarskapsmodeller och styrsystem. Så länge det är lugnt och tillräckligt med resurser finns tillgängliga för att driva verksamheten kan de existera i en blandning. I några undersökningar talas det då om en *hybridisering* av olika modeller. Men när det uppstår frågor och utmaningar i organisationen blir skillnaderna tydliga och spänningarna ökar när utmaningarna ska lösas. Sammantaget kan en slutsats i dessa studier vara att det kan vara värt att sortera i denna hybridisering av ledarskapsföreställningar. Att gilla och förhålla sig till dem. Spänningarna mellan skillnaderna kan ses som organisatoriska *paradoxer*, eller polariteter. De ses då som problem som inte kan eller ska lösas, utan som ska levas och ledas. För hanteringen av dessa framförs i den här studien betydelsen av ett *både/och* perspektiv och begreppet *holding* som härstammar från psykoanalysen.

Min avhandling bidrar till forskningen om ledarskap i allmänhet och om ledning i akademin i synnerhet med praktiknära studier av utmanande frågeställningar som erfars genom ledandet i akademin. Fokus är på process, inte på sak. Studierna påvisar att i processen för att leda och lösa sådana frågeställningar framträder en mix av attityder om ledning och sätt att leda. De visar också att framgången i att lösa dessa utmaningar kan vara beroende av hur förhållandet och motsättningarna mellan de olika ledningsuppfattningarna förstås och förmås hållas som en del av ledandet.

Introduction

Background

The two decades surrounding the year 2000 were turbulent times for universities in Sweden, when they underwent momentous changes in response to environmental pressures and a rise of complexity in organizational life. During that time I had the privilege of working – as consultant, organizational psychologist and sometimes psychotherapist – intimately with a handful of Swedish universities. When conducting leadership training with present and future leaders, management team coaching and team development in a great variety of work environments in these universities, I was provided with an open window into the challenges of teams and leadership in academia. In addition to the public and explicit concerns of change and development in the social arena of these organizations I had the opportunity to reflect upon and respond to what was keeping leaders and team members awake at night.

This thesis presents the examinations and reflections of four different types of challenges drawn from my experience in these organizations. These challenges were practical concerns awaiting some kind of resourceful resolution. They stemmed from the lived experience in leadership environments and teamwork at the university. They were questions of weight and are here characterized as "leadership challenges". One such challenge was, "We need urgently to reorganise the whole medical faculty, but there are so many tough obstacles involved." Another involved, "The coordination between the different functions of the university is not functioning well, and needs radical improvement." Yet another of these challenges concerned, "We have to figure out what to do with a scientifically excellent and successful researcher who is destroying our environment with his vicious behaviour, and yet we cannot do without him." Finally, there was the question of, "In order to continue being a world-class research environment, we need to learn how to constructively deal with conflicts in our scientific environment. How do we deal with two researchers who cannot be in the same room? We need them both."

To answer these questions, I realised that my expertise and experience as a consultant was not sufficient. Nor did the literature provide enough satisfying answers. For that

particular reason, I chose to do research and to explore these challenges in depth in the form of case studies. The four cases are rich in reference to leading and leadership development. With them, I aspire to contribute to knowledge that describes and explains how different views and "knowledges" of leadership have an influence on how questions such as these become leadership challenges, or problems. By delving into these aspects of the cases, I want to add to, and to some extent challenge, the way theory and research approach leadership, as well as respond to the practical concerns of how to resolve these and similar issues.

Leadership

Selecting leadership as the topic of this thesis is a simple and instinctive choice, since I have lived and worked in leadership environments from the start of my professional path. The people I have met in such environments, from shop-floor supervisors to members of top management in multi-national corporations or state agencies, all share the position that they lead a portion of an organization, and, at the same time and in the same position, they are being led, they are in the hands of the next level of management. From both of these perspectives, I have recognized in them an eagerness to learn about leading and a fascination with the subject of leadership, a keenness to understand and to improve themselves in their processes of leading in the organizational context, the tasks and objectives they are involved in. From actual circumstances it is possible to glimpse what it is like when leadership is missing as well as moments when you do not have to think about the phenomenon itself – a leadership process, leading, just happens.

And there are so many ideas and theories to pick from. Along with my emerging practice from the middle of the 1970s the field of leadership studies rapidly expanded and became a booming business. There is now an overabundance of concepts and theories about leadership in research as well as approaches in leadership practices (Grint, 2005; Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Tourish, 2013; Ladkin, 2014; Carroll, Ford, & Taylor, 2015). Situational leadership, transformational and transactional leadership, trait-based leadership, charismatic leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, distributed leadership, shared leadership, complexity leadership theory – the list is long and the literature on leadership is mushrooming (Learmont & Morell, 2017).

Just looking back 40 years shows how theories have changed in focus and substance. One reason for this is the elusiveness, the slippery soap character of the concept itself. "Both in theory and practice, leadership dynamics are complex and elusive", says

Collinson (2014, p 39), and continues, "persistent ambiguities make leadership difficult to research as well as challenging to enact". On closer examination, the phenomenon of leadership seems to disappear, says Alvesson and Svenningsson (2003). An important reason for this is that the "social worlds of interest for leadership researchers do not easily lend themselves to neat categorization and ordering, and language use has its limitations in relation to the goal of fixing meaning through definitions (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, p 363)". Recent critical overviews (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Crevani, Ekman, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2015; Ladkin, 2014; Tourish, 2013) are questioning and radically challenging the basic philosophical – ontological and epistemological – assumptions underlying investigations and theory about leadership. These meta-texts are helpful and can serve as containers to hold and sort amongst the abundance of theories and means of performance in leadership environments.

One such ontological perspective, which has informed the argument of this thesis, suggests that leadership is an invisible, socially constructed phenomenon which is held in the cognitive and emotional world of those who experience it (Ladkin, 2014). From this perspective one may explain both the congested situation of leadership research as well as the evasiveness of the phenomenon: "Its enactment has as many different expressions as contexts from which it arises (Ladkin, 2014, p 34)." From a phenomenological position, Ladkin (2014) argues that it is a "moment" of social relations. In other words, leadership is like colour, weight, or size and it cannot exist independent from the things they are part of. Just as the celestial blue colour on the shirts of a certain football team is experienced as completely different from a similar colour on the kit of another team, leadership's complete identity is always contextual. "In fact", says Ladkin (2014, p 26), "there could be as many descriptions of leadership as there are situations in which it arises, because it will always be subtly different depending on the 'pieces' and 'wholes' from which it emerges". From this perspective, accordingly, the plethora of theories of leadership is not a problem, but a necessity.

In this thesis, the equivocal nature of the theoretical realm of leadership will meet, in my four cases, examples illustrating small chosen pieces of the empirical world. The questions of this study emanate from individuals in leadership positions who reflect and worry about issues and dilemmas in their particular contexts. By exploring these cases, we get a chance to observe what it is like to be involved in a leadership challenge. In examining and analysing the circumstances surrounding each of these leadership challenges I show that there are varying perspectives and attitudes to leadership in competition within them. These are differences that matter. By sorting these differences and arranging them so that they attentively expose a variance in assumptions about leadership and team dynamics, it may be possible to discover the complexity and

richness in these challenges. This process of unbundling contesting views on leadership in contextually situated inquiries may also add to, and challenge, the informative worth and applicability of general theories of leadership.

Academia

A second choice in the broader casing process (Ragin, 2005) for this thesis is studying leadership processes in, specifically, academia. A closer look at the four cases here reveals that such challenges can and do turn up in leadership contexts elsewhere, but these four come from a particular and similar sort of organizational environment. What characterizes the academic context as an organization?

The university is an agglomerate organisational entity: a state bureaucracy, a creative knowledge environment producing and distributing new knowledge derived from academic freedom, and an entrepreneurial business in competition with others globally. Its means of governance and leadership is an adaptation to the demands of this particularity (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). This highly differentiated environment makes it exciting to study, and the different research approaches to leadership of this environment is also highly differentiated (Bolden, Gosling, O'Brien, Peters, Ryan, & Haslam, 2012; Crevani et al., 2015).

Many societies in history and in the world have endowed academia with a certain privilege (Said, 2005). "As someone who has spent all his adult life working in, and for, the university", Said says, "it's certainly a lot more fun than working" (Said 2005, p 27). Given the situation that its academic freedom historically was guaranteed by the powers external to academia, the university has been a protected and almost utopian place and in its halls learning and knowledge development could safely take place, Said argues. He adds that it is still the main task of universities to uphold this divide between them and society:

> We must always view the academy as a place to voyage in, owning none of it, but at home everywhere in it. There can be no forbidden knowledge if the modern university is to maintain its place, its mission, its power to educate (Said, 2005, p 33).

The organizational life of universities has, however, since the 1990s been going through significant changes (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009). Universities now appear as stakeholder organizations as they have become an increasingly more integral component in how society is being transformed in a global world. There is a massive influx in the numbers of students as well as researchers and teachers as a contingent

workforce, and governments are demanding greater accountability for learning and research outcomes. Furthermore, there is an increasing competition between universities with ranking lists and corporate branding, marketization of both research and education, employers wanting more work-ready graduates, new methods of funding research, growing overhead costs for administrative and managerial purposes, new quality control procedures and methods of economic steering, with Key Performance Indicators and Balanced Score Cards (Stensaker, Välimaa, & Sarrico, 2012). All these changes are contrasted to the traditional values of the university, as if the classic contract within academia is shifting (Crevani et al., 2015). These are fundamental challenges for the university requiring both individuals and the organisational context to adapt and change.

These changes in the place and identity of the university in society, and the demands of organisational change have also greatly influenced the dynamics of academic leadership. What has evolved since the 1990s is a deeply polarised situation and discussion of academic leadership (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Jones & Harvey, 2017; Stensaker et al., 2012). The introduction of New Public Management borrowing its models of leadership and management from industry and commerce has highlighted diversity in, and clashes between, different leadership ideals. In Sweden, the higher education reform of 1993 was the first step. With this reform, "issues about leadership and management were put on the agenda by the Government and the National Agency for Higher Education, while the reform in many ways changed the attitudes toward academic leadership (Haake, 2004, p 229)." Since then, the competition between models of governance sometimes takes the form of one model attempting to dominate the other(s) (Rhodes & Wray-Bliss, 2013). Often collegiality and collegial leadership are acclaimed as being a preferable alternative and a bulwark against contemporary management practices. This is sometimes referred to as a contest between *academic leadership* and *academic management* (Bolden et al., 2012).

Sahlin argues that university autonomy on all levels is clearly bounded by the pressures of New Public Management and the Audit Society (Sahlin, 2012). This entails university leaders being subject to multiple and conflicting demands from processes or principles of governance and shouldering the responsibility for conducting a continuous dialogue of balancing in the clash of those principles. It is not as simple as if the new modes of governance replace the old, that one tradition or logic of leadership overthrows another. Rather, a new model of leadership and control tend to add to the others (Sahlin, 2012). Crevani et al. (2015) focus on leadership cultures and argue that organizational changes in the university are a discursive practice where the production of cultural notions of leadership takes place. When investigating transformations in university settings, they come to the conclusion that, during these changes, different

discourses about leadership are being invoked simultaneously. A marinade of cultures seems to be the case, those of managerialism, traditional professionalism and collegiality encounter each other and clash. In the ongoing social construction of truths, direction and ensuing space for action for organizational actors a *hybridization* of disparate notions and practices of leadership occurs. Sahlin and Eriksson-Zetterquist (2016) argue for the importance of maintaining islands of collegial practice amongst the other forms of control – managerialism, bureaucracy and leader-centred approaches. In a similar vein, Juntrasook (2014) has shown that the idea of leadership is regarded as meaningful and valuable in very different ways, depending on how it is practiced and from which position in the academic context.

One approach to leading adds to another. The academy thereby presents a special case that makes it possible to identify the differences between the various modes of governance and how they dynamically interact and confront each other. Furthermore, beneath the individual entities of management ideals, bureaucratic forms and collegial modes of leadership lie the beliefs and applications of many of the myriads of different theories and concepts of leadership. This takes place, according to Crevani et al. (2015), to the extent that organisational changes expose hybridised cultures of leadership and offer the possibility of studying these mixtures of leadership notions.

In this turmoil of contesting ideas and practices of leading in the academy there are some fundamental questions that still hover and endure (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016): What is the best way of governing an organization that has the purpose of generating and distributing new knowledge? How to lead an enterprise based on knowledge and on a constant critical scrutiny of this knowledge? How to govern an enterprise that is driven by creativity and the free activity of its actors? In other words, how to embrace Said's (2005) original demands and the new requirements of universities engaged with the challenges of society at large? In order to answer such questions – and they are probably not exclusive to the academy but general challenges for just about any organization, perhaps brought to light slightly more in the university by its insistence on academic freedom – there is a need for more research and knowledge on the particular circumstances in actual and experienced leadership situations.

The four case studies

I have chosen cases as the locus of studies for their provision of closeness to real-life situations and their almost infinite wealth of detail. They provide the opportunity to develop a nuanced view of a given context – in this thesis the context of the university – and they offer the researcher a learning process to develop the skills which are needed

to do good research (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Ragin (2005) argues that the particular, the unique and the complexity of the empirical world is limitless in its details. We make sense of all this complexity by narrowing it down with our ideas and theories. Cases play an important role in the mutually dependent relationship between ideas and empirical evidence, in that evidence is transformed into results with the help of ideas, and theoretical ideas make sense and can be developed by the links to empirical evidence (Ragin, 2005).

These four cases. Why are they important? Theoretically, these studies of specific situations offer great opportunities to explore the manifold face of leading that the academy contains. There is focus on individual circumstances as well as group and organizational situations, and there is an additional focus on personal and organizational developmental processes. Studying the literature pertaining to the questions in each of the studies, I noticed that there were some aspects and conclusions missing and I wanted to add whatever new findings and assessments that I could make out of my cases into the field of leadership in the academy.

Consultancy and research

If we assume that leadership and group processes are invisible phenomena that we can only indirectly make conclusions from, we are confronted by a series of questions about how to collect data and knowledge from this process. It becomes necessary to critically focus on the position from which the investigator approaches a leadership environment in order to study its processes – from within as a member of the group, from without as an observer, from a leader position, or from being a consultant to the group (Olsson, 1998). The group and its processes look different from the different vantage points, and from them different theories come to make sense. A process of *personal reflexivity* (Willig, 2013) will develop the awareness of how the investigator is part of the construction of meaning throughout the whole process from formulating the research questions to interviewing and analysing the data.

There is no escaping the fact that I have approached this research field via my background as a leadership consultant and developer. The knowledge, experience, skill, and operations of a consultant is closely coupled with that of a researcher, and yet there is a boundary between them, a fundamental difference. When consulting and coaching I do interviews and sit like a "fly on the wall" to gather information for the purpose of giving interpretative feedback and making interventions for the enhancement of learning and efficiency in the teams who have engaged the consultant. I search for a place that is close enough to understand and distant enough not to become involved

and part of the problem (Sewerin, 2009). There is an allegiance to the client, the customer, to deliver value for the money and time contracted in the assignment. There is an urge to solve the problem in practice and learn from the process. When researching, I am similarly involved in gathering data but now with a loyalty towards the scientific community. My aim is not primarily to make improvements on practice, but rather to understand it in a novel way in relation to already existing theory and research. Analysing and working with the data is often a solitary pursuit, with the exclusive company of books and journals containing theories and former research, and with both personal and epistemological reflections on choices and design of studies. This introverted position is occasionally interrupted by supporting and challenging conversations with supervisors, scrutiny at seminars and peer reviews.

I have, in the research process of producing these four articles, chosen to study situations that I have experience of, either from direct involvement as a consultant, or from conversations with leadership environments. The point in studying these cases is, first of all, that they are in a sense typical. They possess a generic value. Many people in leadership positions can relate to these and similar circumstances. Furthermore, these challenging situations offer the opportunity to discern dimensions or aspects where tensions between different leadership attitudes become salient, and thereby make it possible for me to pursue my object of study. The first two studies derive from my own interventions and the consultancy engagement that I have taken a crucial part in. In the last two studies I have not been directly involved. My consultancy place in the academy has granted cultural knowledge from which come understanding and evaluation of the voices and narratives present in these situations. This pre-understanding should perhaps not be considered as my bias, or lack of objectivity, but rather a part of the frame which makes this attempt at qualitative research possible (Willig, 2013). When the opportunity first came to contribute to a scholarly article about my practice field I decided to take part-time leave from the coaching business in favour of doing research. My motivation has been to now invest in the opportunity to stay longer with these questions than what a coaching assignment can offer. Ultimately, I want to contribute to the knowledge field around the four different challenges, based on my access to them. Furthermore, I want to inform the practice community, leadership in the academy, that there is so much knowledge to harvest from research into these and other complex situations that occur in the daily work of leading this kind of organization. And, that it is worthwhile to stay with and make an effort to explore the leadership dimensions in these and, just about, any challenge, before or during the execution of decisions in the matters.

Studying leadership in academia - aim and purpose of this thesis

This thesis is based on four case studies. They are presented in the chronological order in which they were written. Two have been published and two are presented here to be submitted later to academic journals. The order also reflects the learning process of the author of this work, going from the identity of a consultant operating in the practice field of academic leadership, to that of a budding scholar attempting to scientifically understand and offer "news that make a difference" (Bateson, 1980. p. 76) into this field of research.

Together, these articles aim at answering the call for more studies in everyday leadership practices (Crevani, 2010; Evans, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2011). Their starting points are fairly common or typical situations in which members of the organization are engaged in constructing notions of direction, alignment and commitment (Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O'Connor, & McGuire, 2008) in the face of changes and challenges that are taking place locally. It is evident that the substance of these four examples of leadership challenges have already been approached and thoroughly discussed in the literature and previous investigations, and yet there are white spots on the maps. My contribution strives to test assumptions already made in the current literature on the different subjects, grasping why these challenges seem to be difficult and how they can be understood differently and, in practice, even resolved in new ways.

The four case studies all address how to understand the circumstances of leading in the academy. They each have their own set of research questions, and they each have their distinct purposes:

- The purpose of the first study is to explore and argue for how a problem-based process of leadership development, with an intervention based on a "conversation" with art, can be facilitating in leading and holding together a process of organisational change and identity formation in a turbulent situation in the faculty of a university.

- The purpose of the second study is to acknowledge how organisational dynamics and contests between institutional logics – in the article called

leadership "rooms" – matter for the understanding of distributed leadership in the academy. And furthermore, how these contestant logics can be the subject of emotional and conceptual holding and containment.

- The purpose of the third study is to explore how the formal leader – the dean and department head, who is often neglected in other studies – thinks and acts when faced with destructive behaviour by a member of his organization. And, furthermore, how that kind of situation can be managed and maintained differently.

- The purpose of the fourth study is to investigate how the members of a long-lasting creative research environment not only cannot dodge disharmonious events in their interactions but are able to manage and emotionally hold these disharmonies as part of their lastingness. Disharmony is just as social as harmony. Interactively and emotionally holding and using these differences in social interplay for creative purposes is an example that can possibly signal a previously neglected part of leadership.

Overall purpose and research questions

Even though the four case studies are independently conceived and executed, they all aim at fulfilling the overall purpose of this thesis which is: *To explore the conditions for working with academic leadership challenges with respect to the social, structural and developmental processes involved. By this means, the further goal is to contribute to theory development in this problem field.*

The case studies capture these conditions in three sets of typical leadership challenges, such as organizational change, opposing leadership logics, and conflicts at work. Now, when they are incorporated into the same thesis, they offer a meta-perspective where connections to the broader picture of leadership differences and tensions in the academic organization can be made. Assuming that leadership is a social and relational process, where the specific context and social dynamics play an imperative role for its manifestation, the purpose of keeping the four studies together is further delimited to answer the following research questions:

- How are leadership challenges perceived and managed in academia?

- What are the social and structural tensions of academic leadership challenges?

- How can these tensions be understood and resolved in new ways?

Ways of understanding leadership

This thesis investigates four leadership challenges. The situations and questions they deal with are challenging on two planes. One refers to the difficult *task* at hand, the other refers to the *process*, the dimension of how matters of influence and authority, leadership in the particular tasks are enacted. It is implied here, as will be shown in the results of the four studies, that the second challenge affects the first, that sorting out how the dynamics of different representations of leadership present in the cases contributes to appreciating and eventually resolving the difficult and complex situations.

The question arises then, how shall we understand the idea of *leadership*? The discourse on the social construction of leadership accentuates, by asserting that social science is not simply about describing, but certainly also about constituting the world, that what we call things and people matters (Collinson, 2017; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Learmont & Morrell, 2017). The word itself is from the 19th century when *leader-* and *-ship* was put together, signifying the position of being in the front (www.dictionary.com). The word *management* makes sense in relationship to *organization,* where *manus* is the Latin word for hand and *organon*, the Greek word for tool. It has been argued that *management* and *leadership* were interchangeable terms (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). But, with the change of *Zeitgeist* from the 1970s and onward when, both in the literature and in practice, managers tended to be regarded as taskmasters and leaders as change masters, leadership increasingly replaced management as the routine way of referring to coordination in hierarchical groups within organizations and the dynamics between them (Learmont & Morrell, 2017).

Ladkin (2014) suggests that the questions by which we approach the subject are important and determine how we define the thing. She recommends the ontological question "What kind of phenomenon is leadership?" as informative of the question "What is leadership?" She argues, "Once we are clearer about its nature, we are better equipped to ponder what it might be" (Ladkin, 2014, p 4). From her contextual, process-oriented, social-constructivist perspective she also suggests that there could be as many definitions of leadership as there are situations in which it appears and emerges (Ladkin, 2014).

Recent critical overviews (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Crevani et al., 2015, Tourish, 2013) radically question the basic ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying investigations and theory about leadership. In this way an opportunity is being offered not only of seeing and understanding but of constructively performing the acts of leading and doing leadership development differently in the near future. Yet, such an ambition of an entirely new perception and practice of leadership is challenged by the everyday impact of traditional notions of leadership already secured in the minds of organizational actors and advanced by research into leadership, by leadership training activities and by the media and popular discourse.

Hybridization

The presence of many leadership attitudes and practices simultaneously in organisational contexts, or longitudinally over time has recently been addressed with terms like "hybrid configuration of leadership" (Bolden & Petrov, 2014), "hybrid leader" or "hybrid manager" (McGivern, Currie, Ferlie, Fitzgerald, & Waring, 2015). The implication here for research on leadership is that instead of focusing on particular leadership approaches in isolation, it is advisable to identify and map out the multiple hybrid forms of how leadership is accomplished in the complex organisational contexts where interactions between different forms of social influence is taking place (Bolden & Petrov, 2014). Crevani et al. (2015) argue that discourses of leadership are invoked and produced simultaneously with ongoing organizational change and development. The relation between traditional and emergent cultures and logics of leading is not a clear shift where one new set of beliefs succeeds the older. Instead there is a process of *discursive hybridization*, they argue (Crevani et al., 2015), where new and traditional discourses on leadership are confirmed, re-stated, and rejected.

Building on this idea and the assumption that the four studies of leadership challenges in this thesis have been carried out in a context of competing values and notions of leadership, it is reasonable to give an account of important discourses and notions of leadership that are manifest in the organisational contexts. Some of these are contested, while others are supported in the articles, but the reflecting process in the studies stands on the shoulders of much that has been done before. The critical leadership perspective, with an analysis of functionalist and interpretative approaches, will serve as a meta-perspective, a conceptual platform for sorting out differences in this brief review of ways of understanding leadership.

Functionalist, interpretative and critical leadership studies.

Drawing on Habermas' (1972) philosophy of cognitive interests, Alvesson and Spicer (2012) suggest that there are three sets of basic assumptions underpinning the study of leadership: functionalist, interpretive and critical. All of the leader-centred approaches that were developed during the 1970s and onward, and some of the later follower-centric and shared leadership theories, fit under the *functionalist* category. They all assume that leadership exists as an object that can be pinned down and studied by the correct analytical tools:

> Ontologically, they assume that leadership is something with an independent existence out there in the world and is located in a web of causal relationships. Epistemologically, they assume leadership can be known in a value-free way through what is claimed to be rigorous application of the scientific method. Politically, they aim to increase the efficiency of current modes of leadership (Alvesson & Spicer 2012, p. 371).

The instrumental knowledge interest driving the functionalist investigations makes these less likely to recognize that leadership can be perceived and appraised very differently and ambiguously in different situations (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Therefore, it has been concluded by recent researchers that an *interpretative* approach to leadership is to be preferred, one that takes into account how leaders and followers attach meaning to their actions and relations. The basic assumption in this perspective is that leadership is a socially constructed circumstance in organisations where actors see and understand a set of activities and relationships as leadership:

> Ontologically, leadership is thought to be constructed through ongoing processes of inter-subjective understanding. Epistemologically, leadership is a process that can only be accessed through examining these value-laden understandings and interpretations that actors use to understand leadership. Many interpretative studies seek to surface different understandings of leadership in the hope of supporting the creation of increased shared meaning (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p. 372).

This approach, according to Alvesson and Spicer (2012), is still not strong enough to counter the deeply rooted tendency, namely the underlining power structures and institutional conditions behind the urge to define and designate someone as a leader or a follower. To address those shortcomings, they refer to *critical* studies of leadership. These studies question whether leadership is good and necessary; they examine the patterns of power and domination associated with leadership in organizations, and they uncover the darker side of leadership. But, Alvesson and Spicer (2012) are cautious not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Leadership, they hold, can actually be a vital

aspect in facilitating resistance and maybe even in transforming situations of dominance. Critical leadership studies are needed to reveal bad and evil practices as well as to recognise some of the potential within the concept of leadership.

Hence, Alvesson and Spicer (2012) propose the notion of *critical performativity* by saving the emancipatory dimensions of criticism of leadership. According to Alvesson and Spicer (2012), critical performativity affirms the theoretical ambition of carefully arriving at understandings of leadership processes along with a pragmatic ambition to ask questions about what works, is feasible, and relevant, and what creates a better awareness of practices of social domination.

There are references to the distinctions made by Alvesson and Spicer (2012), for instance, in the second study here, where traditional notions of understanding academic leadership are challenged. But also, implicitly, in the third and fourth article there is a reliance on a critical perspective when analysing the plight of formal leaders when faced with questionable practices of research group leaders and when reflecting on the feasibility of managing disharmonies over several generations of research.

Polarities and paradoxes

What we can take away from the Alvesson and Spicer (2012) article is its usefulness in sorting and making distinction between the different ideas and attitudes to leadership present in my cases of leadership challenges. In all of the studies in this thesis, there are signs, not only of differences, but of tensions, of competition and trials between diverse models of leadership. What could be a productive way of approaching these tense dynamics?

One such approach could be the idea of *both/and*. This idea is suggested, in *polarity* theory (Johnson, 1996) where a polarity is specified as a problem to be lived and led as opposed to a problem to be solved; in *paradox* theory (Smith & Lewis, 2011), with the idea of "ambidextrous" leadership, or the fashioning of a "dynamic equilibrium"; and in *dialectic* research (Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2017), with a model that integrates dialectical and paradox perspectives and focuses on the expected distribution of power between the elements of contradictions. Another theoretical construct, in accommodating contesting leadership models, could be the psycho-analytical concept of "holding", not so often referred to in leadership research.

University leadership is permeated with contradictions and tensions that can be described in different ways. Johnson (1996) calls such antagonisms *polarities*. These are ongoing, chronic issues that are unavoidable and unsolvable. He asserts that attempting

to address them with traditional problem-solving skills only makes things worse. There is a significant competitive advantage for leaders, teams, or organizations that can distinguish between a "problem to solve" and a "polarity to manage" and are effective with both (Johnson, 1996). Smith and Lewis (2011) characterize these kinds of tensions as *organizational paradoxes* and explore how organizations can approach competing demands simultaneously. Such a paradox, within the context of organizational dynamics, is defined as "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time" (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 386). For instance, in the second case study here, which is concerned with the inter-relational dynamics of four highly different logics, or "rooms", of leading at the university, it is helpful to see them as having a paradoxical relationship. In other words, efforts to resolve the tension by letting one of the logics of leading dominate the others seem to perpetuate the situation.

As Smith and Lewis point out (2011, p. 382), the two "elements /in a paradox/ seem logical individually but inconsistent and even absurd when juxtaposed", and there need to be leadership initiatives "that embrace /these/ tensions simultaneously". Smith and Lewis (2011) recommend an integrative approach to paradoxes, a model they base on the metaphor of a *dynamic equilibrium*, or the notion of *ambidexterity*. The role of leadership in paradoxical challenges will need to be supportive of the opposing positions, "and harness the constant tension between them, enabling the system to not only survive but continuously improve" (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 386). The authors also observe that these kinds of paradoxical tensions in organizational systems remain latent in times of prosperity. Then, when stress from internal or environmental factors, "namely plurality, change and scarcity" (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 390), increases, people make cognitive efforts to accentuate the dualities and the latent tensions become salient. One forgets their interconnectedness and they need the attention of leadership.

Not only demands of certain tasks in organisations, but conceivably so also the hybrid elements of notions of influence and leading can sometimes be paradoxical. As, for instance, in the third article here, where the formal leader is emotionally strained when facing a "damned-if-you-do-and-damned-if-you-don't" kind of choice in relationship to a demanding colleague at work. Or, in the fourth case study, balancing dissent and competition in relationship to peaceful conditions in creative collaboration.

Drawing from the history of ideas in the development of leadership theory, there is a whole set of dichotomies that can offer themselves as examples of problems to be solved or polarities/paradoxes in actual challenging circumstances in organizations. Two examples:

1. Management versus leadership

Task is a good place to start. Influence and authority are not required all the time in a working day. Not all tasks need leading in an organization. Which questions arise where leadership is the answer? A starting point where leadership came to the fore as a container for the hope of different domains of the social, not the least for business organizations, was an article in *Harvard Business Review* in 1977 by organizational psychologist Abraham Zaleznik, called "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?" (Zaleznik, 2004). Zaleznik argued that a singular focus on administration, rationality, organizational structures, resources and control, omitted essential features of leadership, such as inspiration, vision, and human passion. The *manager* is a problem solver, wrote Zaleznik, and further:

> The manager asks, "What problems have to be solved, and what are the best way to achieve results so that people will continue to contribute to this organization?" From this perspective, leadership is simply a practical effort to direct affairs; and to fulfil his or her task, a manager requires that many people operate efficiently at different levels of status and responsibility. It takes neither genius nor heroism to be a manager, but rather persistence, tough-mindedness, hard work, intelligence, analytical ability, and perhaps most important, tolerance and goodwill. (Zaleznik, 2004, p. 3)

This is only half of the picture, was Zaleznik's argument. Management boils down to keeping things safe and on track, but to counteract stagnation, when there is a need for transformation and change, another quality of leading is required. Then it is a matter of entrepreneurship, inspirational emotional commitment and visions that will propel people towards a new reality. Such leadership is characteristic of *leaders* who think about goals,

> They are active instead of reactive, shaping ideas instead of responding to them. Leaders adopt a personal and active attitude towards goals. The influence a leader exerts in altering moods, evoking images and expectations, and in establishing specific desires and objectives determines the direction a business takes. The net result of this influence changes the way people think about what is desirable, possible, and necessary (Zaleznik, 2004, p. 5).

The difference between management and leadership is referred to in the first three case studies in this thesis. For instance, in the second article we hold that the leadership logic we call *managing the formal organization* is the place in the university that comes close to Zaleznik's definition of management. In the third case study we analyse the challenge of the experienced difficulty of a research leader in terms of formal leaders struggling with the dichotomy between a management or a leadership role.

2. Individualistic leader-centred versus shared and interactive leadership theories

Beginning in the late 1970s, leadership studies and practice took a turn toward individualism. While business leaders were presented as the driving forces and heroes of successful companies, most organizational studies assumed leadership to be the singular protagonist force that secured managerial principles and motivated action processes and visions to strive for. Different schools of leadership studies were built upon and ensued from this time on. Most influential were those that argued for the importance of personal *traits* of leaders*, skills* of leaders*, styles* of leaders*,* and *the situational leadership* approach (Northouse, 2007). The leader-centred bias of these theories is shared not only by much of the science of leadership but also with the whole practice field. A case in point, with intuitive appeal and consistency with popular notions in society of what leadership means, is that of the theory of *transactional* and *transformational leadership* (Burns, 1979). It was proposed (Tourish, 2013) that the transformational approach to leadership was not only applicable to benign advances of organizational purposes but also to destructive – Machiavellian, narcissistic, and psychopathic – tendencies in leaders (which are referred to in the third article of this thesis). To alleviate the inclination towards the dark and manipulative side of this ideal, the new concept of *authentic leadership* was suggested (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), where the emphasis is on building leaders' legitimacy by openness, honesty and an ethical foundation in their relationships with followers.

These are examples of theories and schools of leadership that share the basic tilt towards leader-centrism. Yet they offer profound and with rigorous research carefully pieced together insights into dimensions of leadership that make a difference in that they offer credibility in leaders' reflections on their everyday practice. They deliver practical advice to different leadership situations; they are intuitively appealing and easy to understand, and many of them have stood the test of time. Most people today finding themselves in leadership positions in organizations have attended leader development courses and programmes where they have been exposed to these conceptions of leadership.

With the turn of the last century, there was an incentive in leadership studies to divert focus from individual leaders to collective processes. *Post-heroic* (Eicher, 1997) leadership ideals emerged and with them a sequence of different conceptualizations, such as *distributed* leadership, *shared* leadership and *collective* leadership (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007). These theories challenged the taken-for-granted individualism of the mainstream approaches delineated above. They offered a new ontology of leadership in that they attempted to study leadership as interactions, rather than the competences and actions of individual leaders.

Thus, with the new theories, the term *leadership process* was introduced. Hosking (1988) argues that what gives rise to leadership phenomena is a special kind of activity in relationship to organizing and explains that:

> It is essential to focus on leadership processes: processes in which influential "acts of organizing" contribute to the structuring of interactions and relationships, activities and sentiments; processes in which definitions of social orders are negotiated, found acceptable, implemented and renegotiated; processes in which interdependencies are organized in ways which, to a greater or lesser degree, promote the values and interests of the social order. In sum, leadership can be seen as a certain kind of organizing activity. (Hosking, 1988, p 147)

In another version (Johnsen, 1998), leadership process refers to the collaborative behaviour of individual key actors in organizations, groups and management systems that in concert convey a sense or feeling in the organization that the enterprise is being led. Yet another example of this view of leadership is the DAC concept (Drath et al., 2008). Leadership is here defined as a conversational space where leaders and followers interact and shape Direction, Alignment and Commitment (DAC) in the organization. When, where and with whom this conversation takes place, leadership occurs. Drawing heavily on social psychological theories about group identity, social identity and their consequences for relations between groups (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011), this idea was later developed into the notion of *boundary spanning leadership* by Ernst and Chrobot-Mason (2010). This is a comprehensive idea and practice of how to identify and negotiate differences across boundaries horizontally and vertically in the organization. Two opposite strategies are suggested in order to reconcile differences in organizations. One is, paradoxically, differentiation. The authors label this leadership approach to negotiating boundaries between groups and differences *manage the boundaries*. The idea is that you need to differentiate, to create and strengthen boundaries for identity purposes. You need to know in what sense you are unique and different and what you want in order to connect, to form a relationship, to span boundaries between you. The other strategy is integration, which they call *forging a common ground*. This strategy works towards the importance of belonging.

The process-oriented idea of leading and the conception of DAC have greatly influenced the reflections on leadership in the four studies here. For instance, the notion of leadership as a conversational room in the second article has its origins here. Not all conversations in organizations are about leading, but when the conversation is engaged with DAC, you can say that the conversation comprises leadership – and that those engaged in that conversation are part of the leading. Also, the idea of boundary spanning lies at the heart of the studies here. For instance, as in the second case, the

strong antagonisms between different logics of leading at the university are analysed and reconciled by using the dual processes of differentiation and integration with multiple logics dynamics and the notion of aligned logics of leading. And also, in the third case of a destructive member of the research environment, I suggest empowering the relations of academic citizenship, finding a balance between differentiation, the pursuit of autonomy, and creating the ethical preconditions for a common ground.

The both-and principle

And is a small, yet highly significant conjunction. In places of great polarisation, it is difficult to refrain from taking sides, so hard to realize and act on the necessity of bridging differences, of holding them. There are so many voices, contrasting viewpoints and theoretical formulations. What if it were possible to hold the differences by unlocking them from a perspective of dominance, one on top of the other in an either-or logic, and rather lay them beside each other? Doing both does not simply mean to homogenising differences, but rather inviting a dialogue across them, creating an area in between the boundaries of each so that a broader inclusion can be accomplished.

The "both-and" notion is close to the philosophical idea of irony. An ironist, says Rorty (1989), is a person who has "radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered. And, these doubts cannot be dissolved by arguments phrased in her present vocabulary. And, she does not think that her own vocabulary is closer to reality than others." (Rorty, 1989, p 73) The opposite attitude is common sense. To be common-sensical is to take for granted that accounts formulated in a final vocabulary, mine or others, suffice to describe and judge the beliefs, actions, and lives of those who use other final vocabularies. Reading Rorty's (1989) philosophical ideas of irony, one is drawn to the image of different theories of the nature of humanity, society and reason as a tool shed where the relation between these conceptions is like the relation between a spade, a saw and a cordless screwdriver. There is no need for a synthesis, or for one theory to dominate others. One assembles what one needs to fix a problem. Between perspectives of university leadership dynamics, as in our cases, it is thus possible to appreciate and build on multiple perspectives and multiple truths and allow them to enter into our own consciousness – despite the ironic fact that these realities may contradict one another.

If a *hybrid* is assumed to be the composite of different breeds, varieties, or species – a new entity, as in mythological beasts like the griffin, the centaur or the chimera – then the notion of *both-and* is not a hybrid. *Both-and* implies a place or a situation where

differences in forms and ideas meet and engage with one another. Their identities and boundaries are still intact; they interact with interest and respect. They do not necessarily or even at all merge into one. The differences together hopefully offer a step forward with what is at stake. Out of the corner of our eye they present a glimpse of what it is like, in our case here, to be part of an academic leadership environment.

By this route – on which we have passed the meta-considerations of Alvesson and Spicer, the idea of polarities and paradoxes, the development, since the 1970's, of highly contested values and ideas about leadership, and the both-and principle – we have reached a place where we can see more distinctly the process dimensions of the leadership challenges presented in this thesis. Or, to use another metaphor, we have found a conceptual cauldron where the encounters and clashes between different norms and practices in leadership cultures and hybridized discourses (Crevani, et al., 2015) can be contained, held and be used for proactive and creative purposes.

Holding

The very notion of a challenge implies a threat, the facing of a perilous situation that requires great mental or physical effort to be accomplished. Challenges threaten the coherence, the holding together of what is in the hands of leaders and followers, of the leadership environment. From this perspective, it is possible to conceive of an additional dimension to the phenomenon of leadership: leading as a holding capacity of a social environment. Both the functionalist and the interpretive assumptions of leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2013) can be seen as sharing this basic idea of holding. Be it a conversation about the direction, alignment and commitment of a project, a narrative, an intention or a goal, distributed or shared circumstances, a reasonable structure of a hierarchy, or even a person at the top, leadership entails the holding qualities of an environment.

Holding is a term that is used in theory and practice of psychoanalysis (Bion, 1967; Langs, 1978; Modell, 1990; Winnicott, 1974) to describe the establishment and maintenance of a secure and safe therapeutic situation. The result is a holding environment that is created through the delineation of ground rules between patient and therapist. It has its symbolic equivalence in the parent-child relationship which includes the therapist's constancy and reliability, the therapist being there primarily to listen and for the patient's needs. This concept of holding has also been used in the analysis of group dynamics, and the idea that groups and organizations themselves can be used by their members to provide protection from anxiety and personal suffering (Bion, 1967; Hinshelwood, 1987; Kahn, 2001; Menzies, 1960). A holding

environment does not only provide the potential for soothing distress, but it has also been reported to yield risk-taking and excitement, and can serve as a potential for growth (Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019). With this in mind, it is conceivable that the holding capacity of, say, a management team, or a system of distributed leadership in a university has a positive effect on the well-being and lastingness of that organization (Kahn, 2001; Petriglieri, et al., 2019). Presumably also the opposite, where leadership is too occupied by itself and its own concerns – both its worries and its privileges – there will be important side-effects for the organizational environment.

In psychoanalytic treatment (Modell, 1990), there is often an occurrence of *multiple realities*, or levels of reality, coming to pass simultaneously, and a paradoxical relationship between these realities. Modell offers a paradigmatic example. A woman in psychoanalysis has had the experience of a loving father up until prepuberty, after which time he slipped into depression and became emotionally absent. During a psychoanalytic session, this patient says to her therapist, "I want you to love me." When examining this statement in detail it becomes evident that both the "I" and the "You" in the statement contain different realities. The "I" and "You" may refer to the persons in actuality, as they are on this particular day, two adults meeting as always in this particular room. On another level of reality, the "I" and "You" may refer to the context of psychoanalytic treatment, where the patient "I" may have fallen in love with the "You" of her doctor in the frame of the psychoanalytic setting. Finally and symbolically, the "I" may refer to what in psychoanalysis is called a transference reaction, which is the little girl in the woman patient who was rejected when young by her no longer loving father and now in adulthood in this particular context reunites with these feelings and transfers them into an expression of longing of another father-figure. The "I" is then the daughter and the "You" the father.

Not only are there multiple aspects of the self and the object ("I" and "You") and different levels of reality present in this case, but the situation in this consulting room also presents insoluble dilemmas. Gratification at any one of the levels of reality will lead to paradoxical frustration at another. If the woman experienced "true love" from the person who is her doctor, this would disrupt the working through of her childhood dilemma within the frame of psychoanalysis. If the analyst interpreted her wish to be loved by him as a childhood wish, she might feel rejected. And so forth. It is only the acknowledgement of the setting and frame of psychoanalysis that can distinguish these three separate levels of reality and senses of self and object, to contain and interpret the multifaceted relationship between patient and doctor. Modell stresses the importance of the psychoanalytic *setting* for the purpose and success of psychoanalytic treatment. Focus on the task at hand whilst meanwhile bestowing attention to the relationships

involved in the task is, according to the psychoanalytic theory of method the key to long-lasting progress (Modell, 1990). Finally, there is also an important element of play involved. The psychoanalytic situation contains the space in which illusions can flourish (Modell, 1990).

Grint's (2010) contemporary theory of leadership is likewise intimately concerned with the relationship between task and process, bestowing, like Modell, close attention to the relationships involved in the task. With a typology of *tame* and *wicked* problems (Rittell & Webber, 1973), and the addition of *critical* problems he distinguishes between three influence approaches to these problems. With a tame problem, there is a limited degree of uncertainty; they are like puzzles, and they often have an answer. Tame problems are associated with management. Wicked problems are much more complex. They cannot be removed from the environment, solved, and then the solution put back in. These problems have a great degree of uncertainty, they require mobilisation of a collective to be solved; they require leadership, more of an art than science, says Grint (2010). A critical problem is a crisis, which requires the commanding authoritarianism of an expert who has no uncertainty about what needs to be done. With the notion of "holding" we might have arrived at a fourth, or perhaps a subcategory of the second, approach to leading a specific task or situation.

It is common that leadership conceptions have a teleological, a proactive tendency. They elaborate on forwardness, on initiatives and influences with the purpose of leaving a certain state of affairs to head somewhere else. A focus on leadership challenges, on threats to the coherence, the boundary or the envelope of what holds the individual, group or organization together begs the question of what elements of leadership come prior to exiting the situation. With challenges come the mental and emotional experience of disorientation, bewilderment. It can be argued that this experience needs to be contained so that a renewal of thinking and action becomes possible. When there are horizontal tensions, when differences that matter are laid out side by side with the ensuing both cognitive and emotional turmoil, there is a need for a framing, vertical principle, not necessarily and immediately new structures, procedures or rules (management), nor the influence to transform thinking, values and emotions of followers (leadership), even though these initiatives of influence are valuable in making organizations function (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). First, there needs to be a mindful holding capacity that offers safety and ease in the face of the difficulty that enables reflection and dialogue which makes for either managerial or leadership influence later.

The idea of holding and the ability of the psychoanalytical setting to hold multiple realities, according to Modell, have considerably influenced the analysis in my case studies here. In the first case study, we discuss how an intervention that playfully used art in Amsterdam was influential in coaching a faculty management to implement

organizational change. The process of transformation was challenging, because it involved great tensions between multiple attitudes and practices of leadership in the different functions of the faculty – "multiple realities", so to speak.

The concept of *rooms* of leadership, which appears in the second case study of this thesis, is also based on this line of reasoning. It is inspired by the DAC idea (Drath, et al., 2008). But also the DAC idea has this onward going attitude. By adding the notion and practice of *holding* to this setting, a capacity is attached to the conversation that delays a premature response to ensure attention to and a thorough understanding and evaluation of the relevant circumstances. In addition, holding can enable what we propose as an aligned logic of leadership. The notion of rooms of leadership alludes, on the one hand, to different real physical rooms where special leadership conversations take place. On the other hand, the idea of "A room with a view" is an image, and as such a tentative definition of leadership with the qualities of DAC and holding (Sewerin, 2009). The image comes from E. M. Forster's novel with the same title (Forster, 1987). All-pervasive in Forster's fiction is his ambition to achieve clarity in the relations between different truths, to avoid a situation of "muddle" (Colmer, 1975). The exploration of the meaning and appearance of this kind of "Room with a view" is present in more than one of the case studies in this thesis.

Leadership development

From the short overview of the field of leadership studies above, it is safe to surmise that there is no simple and unitary definition of leadership. It has progressed and taken on multiple meanings and appearances over time. In parallel, leadership development and training has followed suit. Day and Harrison (2007) have devised a chart to show how changes in thinking about leadership encourage a different focus on leadership development. A most basic and least complex conception of leadership as a role-based authority, with an individualistic and top-down level of analysis, focuses on individual skills development in leadership training activities and programmes. A mid-level conceptualisation of leadership as a dyadic relationship between leader and followers, with a reciprocal top-down and bottom-up level of analysis, comprises a combination of individual skills development and relationship building in teams. The most advanced, complex and inclusive conceptualisation of leadership emphasizes leadership as a shared property of a social system, and will include personal development, relationship building, empowerment, collaboration and working across boundaries in the developmental processes and programmes.

Concomitant with leadership theory and with the notion of a blend, a hybridization of different discourses of leadership, conceptualisations of leadership development offer a multilevel approach. "Effective leadership development rests on the foundation of sound leader development", argue Day and Harrison (2007, p 364). It does not replace it but transcends it. Their ideal approach to leadership development is a combination of the three levels of designing and executing programmes, preferably seen and positioned as a way of doing business rather than as a succession of ad hoc programmes. This analysis rhymes well with the notion and practice of "Send problems to training!" as highlighted in the first and second article in this thesis.

The academic leadership project

With the pressures of deregulation and increasing complexity in the relationship between the university and the society at large, beginning in the 1990s, the whole notion of leadership discourse was transferred into the university world. Studies of leadership in the academy have followed this development and they also reflect the different schools and assumptions of leadership. Former vice chancellors' biographies (Bexell, 2011; Sundqvist, 2010), more practitioner-oriented literature (Bolman & Gallos, 2011, Fullan & Scott, 2009) as well as the majority of scholarly work emphasise the role of the leader as the key element for implementing change at the university, and stimulating creative research and educational excellence (Mårtensson, 2014; Roxå, 2014).

A chapter of the inquiry into university leadership tends to concentrate academic leadership to the formal management levels and processes (Haikola, 2000; Haake, 2004; Sundqvist, 2010; Bolman & Gallos, 2011). With this approach, it is evident that the policy makers, the board, vice chancellors, deans, department heads, and divisional directors, are the ones who lead the university while the rest of the university staff and employees are the considered as followers. A review of research into Swedish academic leadership (SFS, 2015) refers to literature showing how formal academic leadership becomes more effective where the institutions of higher education are autonomous in relationship to the state and external influence, where they themselves possess control over important basic resources. It is also pinpointed that these leaders' positions in the scientific discourse play an important role for their legitimacy internally throughout the university as well as for the success of the whole university. Thus, according to the investigation, in practice, formal academic leaders now tend to augment their positions with leadership groups or management teams. The role of these teams becomes increasingly to negotiate between the different systems of steering and control that

emanate from different bases – the market, the state or the profession. Vice-chancellors, deans, department heads, and their extended leadership environments are in a relationship of tension where leadership is dependent on the academic collective and where the collective can profit from leadership that makes superior priorities, adjustments or development of the field. The basic theme of studies in academic leadership investigates the different facets of this tension and explores how leadership and the collectivity in academia ideally work towards mutual advancement and support (SFS, 2015).

The Swedish sector of higher education underwent a process of deregulation as of 2011. New legislation framed Swedish universities as autonomous and transferred the regulative responsibilities from the governmental departments to the universities. A recent investigation (Ekman, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2018) made a closer analysis of the public government reports that were issued as part of the deregulation process during 2006-2011, and a subsequent evaluation that was made in 2015. The authors found many leadership discourses "laden with tensions", where the most important and strained dichotomy was between the *managerialist discourse* and the *leaderism discourse* (Ekman et al., 2018, p. 301). According to the authors, the former is shaped by the core values of New Public Management, while the latter embraces the notion of strong leaders, liberated and empowered individuals who on their own can recognize future challenges and decide how to manage them. Their conclusion is that not acknowledging the co-existence of contradictory discourses of leadership in the reports, and, therefore also, the lack of advice as to the means of handling this discord, gives rise to a discursive void:

> Deregulation has left us with a discursive empty space, a black box where we know the input and the intended outcomes, that is, flexible, high-quality, path-breaking and ever-changing universities. We know almost nothing, however, about the intended leadership practices – who will carry them out, what these leaders will say or do, and what can and should be said and done – except for one thing: there will be leadership (Ekman et al., 2018, p. 318).

Distributed leadership has been promoted as a less leader-centric, relational and more organizationally relevant and participative approach to studying and exercising leadership in the academy (Bolden, 2011; Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008; Jones, Harvey, Lefoe, & Ryland, 2014; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). The distributed leadership approach stresses a view of leadership which is built on collaboration of all those who work in the university who share responsibility for leading, for implementing decisions they have been contributing to. It includes managers in positions to lead with formal authority, experts with relevant knowledge,

and the academics and professionals in the organization that contribute to fulfilling the purpose and role of the university (Jones & Harvey 2018). It focuses on the practice and process of leading and incorporate "the more subtle, moral, emotional, and relational aspects of leadership"(Bolden & Gosling 2006). In the second case study here, distributed leadership is taken as a stepping stone for analysing the relations between different institutional logics of leading at the university. The study intends to show that previously neglected aspects of power, tensions and context add to the relevance of the concept of distributed leadership.

Method

Case study as methodology

The overall purpose of this thesis is to investigate the dynamics of leadership challenges in the specific context of academia. In particular, I am interested in how the unique context and situation form the experiences of academic leaders when they face varying leadership challenges in their work. For such a purpose, qualitative case studies are very useful (Willig, 2013). And, for such a purpose these four case studies were chosen.

Qualitative research methods aim at reflection and understanding, rather than verifiable facts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2010). The closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its almost infinite wealth of detail is very important for the researcher (Flyvbjerg, 2011). It provides the opportunity to develop a nuanced view of the phenomenon studied – in this thesis leadership in the academy. Examination of single events or cases creates local and contextualized knowledge, which in turn generates a unique understanding of the intertwinedness of different features, causal relationships and mechanisms with respect to the complexity of the situations where they take place. What can be learned from an individual case is based on the notion that "each singular person or event embraces a degree of universality, reflecting dimensions of the social structures and order of their time (Bazeley, 2013, p 411)". The case-oriented approach of qualitative studies focuses on the unique example and not on variables. As in the difference between the two statements: "The department head and dean had their understanding of their role as formal leaders severely shaken by trying to manage a conflict with one of their research leaders"; and, "36.8% of formal leaders in the academy experience yearly difficult conflicts with productive but toxic members of their staff." The case study enables us to explore the department head's and the dean's personal struggles, their difficulties in grasping the conditions of their organisational context and the opportunities of leading their challenge successfully. We can observe them more as "real persons" than otherwise lost in a variable-based statement of a fact about the relationship between leaders and workplace difficulties.

Ragin (2005) argues that, the empirical world is limitless in its detail, specificity, uniqueness and complexity. Just about every social category in organizations, for

instance, can be made problematic and as such become a subject of scientific study, and we make sense of all this complexity by limiting it with our ideas and theories. Empirical studies can be said to culminate in the formation of theoretical structures, descriptions leading to understanding when constraining ideas have been applied to infinite evidence. Says Ragin, "/…/ ideas and evidence are mutually dependent; we transform evidence into results with the aid of ideas, and we make sense of theoretical ideas and elaborate them by linking them to empirical evidence." (Ragin, 2005, p 218). In this relationship of interdependence, cases play a prominent role.

There is a difference between the object of study and the case, and it is important that the cases are selected to better understand the object of study (Willig, 2013). The object of study is the phenomenon of interest to the researcher – in my thesis the object of study is the dynamics of leadership challenges in the university. The case is the concrete manifestation of the object of study – in my studies the cases are examples of challenges to leadership, i.e. organisational change processes at the university, conflicts with troublesome members of the organization, and the dealing with disharmonies in a research environment.

Theory has two important roles in case study research. The first concerns "initial theory" which is supposed to direct the researcher's attention to what is investigated within the framework of the study. My choice of cases and my research questions related to them are theoretical in that that these choices point out certain concepts as relevant. The second role of theory is that the case study has implications for theory development; it forms a starting point for new theory or reflecting on existing theory (Willig 2013).

Reflexivity

When studying the dynamics of leadership challenges, differences in leadership views and enactments in special situations, it becomes necessary to critically focus on the place from which the investigator approaches the leadership environments in order to study its processes. Willig (2013) holds that qualitative research asserts that the researcher influences and shapes the research process both as a thinker and as a person: *epistemological reflexivity* and *personal reflexivity*. The question is how the researcher is implicated in the research process and in the findings. Reflexivity is not only acknowledging bias in the matter or the situation. It has even more to do with inviting reflections on how our own reactions to the research context and the data make possible the insights and understandings that emanate from them. It is important to include

reflexivity, the researcher's role in the framing and conduct of the research in a distinct, honest and informative way.

Epistemological reflexivity

The *ontological* premise of the case studies in this thesis is that leadership is understood as a social phenomenon which is shaped by social structures, influences of power and control, and social capital. As such, leadership is a dynamic phenomenon that varies from the one context to the next – it is not tied to a single individual leader. Accordingly, leadership in academia is in this thesis understood as a social constructive process continuously emerging from discourse and inter-subjective understanding among actors on the same and different levels in the university organization. Shared meanings allow the people at the university to work and live together. Such "shared meanings", says Ladkin (2010, p. 19), "are not objectively 'given' entities, they are created by human communities who engage with them. In this way, they are socially constructed."

Subsequently, the *epistemological* premise of these studies is that knowledge about sense-making and coping with challenges is accessed by examining how the participants narrate and interpret their experiences of leadership in contexts of predicaments. By this means, it is possible to sort out the challenges of leadership.

The studies in this thesis do not intend to generate generalizable knowledge, but rather to initiate a dialogue with the different scientific leadership discourses, and with university leadership environments about a critical and a manifold view on leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). The interest of knowledge here is not primarily to find causal relationships, but to discover and uncover dimensions in the dynamics of leading in the university in relation to problems and challenges experienced by those leadership environments.

Personal reflexivity

Looking at my situation as a researcher, I have, prior to doing research on leadership in organizational psychology, spent forty years in the consultancy profession mainly in leadership environments in many kinds of organizations. The upside of this background is access to interesting areas in which to conduct research, familiarity and knowledge of the culture, language and political conditions in, for instance, academic environments. The challenging part in my own reflective process, is that in my professional biography, although I have been occupied with improving and developing leadership qualities in academic environments, I also have a history of suspicion and rejection of the mainstream notions of leadership. I have, for a long time, argued for and practiced the way of "sending problems to training, not leaders" as well as designing

learning processes in organisations that involve and empower as many participants of relevance to leading the issue at hand as possible. This background has guided me in my research to investigate complex leadership challenges, and to explore the different facets of leading that are embedded in these challenges.

As a consultant, working within or in the vicinity of the university environments being investigated in the four articles comprising this dissertation, I have always had the opportunity to ponder how closely I should position myself in relationship to the situations where I meet my clients. I am aware of that there is a difference between the coaching consultant and the researcher. The way I have viewed consulting and the role of the coach is to actively design learning processes for clients, be they individuals, groups or organizations, and emotionally hold these processes while the clients make progress towards a desired state of being, collaborating, and working (Sewerin, 2009). I understand that a consultant and learning coach is, at least temporarily, a leadership position. For a brief time period I "hold in my hands" an assembly responsible for leading a process or part of an organization. My design of the learning process that I have been employed to conduct involves interventions in time and space that will influence their engagement with a particular issue. The debate or dialogue dealing with differences of engaging with this issue, and the emotions involved, are held by the framing of the learning process, or more specifically, by my temporary authority. The way in which I succeed in holding that process, I believe is significant for the success of the process. Pursuing the importance of the quality of holding in my case studies is yet another sensitive element in the analysis of my data in the investigations of my thesis. This element needs to be in reflexive focus for me as a researcher.

Data collection

The data of the first article consisted of the detailed recollections, notes and documented experience of my intervention in the LeKA programme in Amsterdam. The second article made use of data drawn from notes and reports of a series of focus groups the purpose of which was to fashion a leadership portfolio at the university, plus transcripts from semi-structured interviews with 10 faculty members. The interviews were conducted by two external resources. They were labelled "reflection sessions" and they were guided by open questions about the university organization, experiences of participating in leadership development programs, current challenges in the work situation, and how the participants perceived and used the heuristic model. The third article also made use of semi-structured interviews with the four participants. The core of the interview guide here contained reflections on the timing of events, the

experienced value and emotional conflicts, and how the participants perceived themselves during the conflict. Finally, the fourth article was based on data from 16 semi-structured interviews where the participants were asked to reflect on the life and work in this particular research environment and how they had been affected over time.

Selecting participants

The sampling of participants in these cases was done purposively, and not randomly. The participants were all involved, or had been involved, in the processes that were studied. Thus, they were considered to have information and particular experiences that were relevant to analyse these processes. They were selected, similar to the cases themselves, as opportunities to grant us access to particular perspectives on the phenomena under study (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2011). All of the case studies were conducted on small sample sizes of participants.

Study 2, 3, and 4 are based on interviews, where the sampling of participants was carried out as follows. In the second study, the participants of the initial focus groups were young researchers who had an interest in having their leadership experiences documented in a portfolio. Later, as the heuristic model developed, the participants in the focus groups were differentiated so they represented the four different rooms of leadership at the university. The next step in data collection was a series of ten interviews. The participants were chosen among faculty members who at the time had key leadership roles in the university and were involved in leadership development programmes. They were selected to represent gender differences, and to represent experiences from different levels and functions in the organization. The participants in the third study were four people, two of whom had formal leadership positions and two were HR specialists. The formal leaders were selected because they had recently experienced the kind of toxic challenge in the organizational unit they were responsible for and in this way had personal involvement with the matter I was studying. The HR specialists were selected because they could provide information on what it was like to provide professional assistance and coaching to the sensitive situations. In the fourth study, the interviewees all had the dual experience of first being a junior researcher in the face of a senior professor and supervisor, and later switching to the role of supervisor for the next generation of researchers. This was the rationale for selecting the 16 participants for data collection in this study.

The rationale behind the small sample sizes in the studies was the relatively time-consuming methods of analysis, the detailed analysis of transcripts required by the methods used. In retrospect, though, there are so many more voices to be heard for a full understanding of these contexts. In particular, for instance, in the third study, in which reports from more and other formal leaders with experience of toxicity in their

organizational units could help the reliability of the findings in that study. And, in the fourth study it would have been valuable to include in the analysis the experiences of researchers who actually left the environment.

Interview

Semi-structured interviewing is the most used method of data collection in qualitative research, partly because the interview data can be analysed with various methods (Willig 2013). The quality of data coming out of interviewing is highly dependent on the experience of the interviewer. My own position of being knowledgeable of the particular context and home base of the participants and forty years of practicing organizational psychology was helpful in making the interview subjects comfortable in providing me with "snapshots" of their attempts to make sense of their experiences. However, as the interviewer's task is to facilitate the participants in telling their stories, to "be with" the person and the phenomenon under study, from a social constructivist perspective, interviews are considered to be collaboratively produced narratives. It is a mutual product of researcher and informant – the true meaning of the term *inter-view* (Dahlberg, Dahlberg & Nyström 2011). This inter-relationship between the two involved in the interview is also a potential pitfall, in that it can produce ambivalence, in that it is something in-between a formal structured interview and an intimate conversation. In fact, the relationship is asymmetrical, and therefore this form of data collection requires well framed preconditions, sensitivity on the part of the interviewer and an ethical negotiation of the conversation and its results (Willig 2013).

Methods of analysis

A case study implies not only choosing a particular instance of a class of events to investigate. Ragin (2005) talks of a process of *casing,* and part of the casing process is limiting and deciding on the methodology. In the four articles a variety of analysis methods have been used.

The first article is not strictly an empirical paper, as is otherwise customary in psychological research. The process leading up to the article is an ongoing discussion between clinical practice and research about the complex situation in the medical faculty of this particular university. Then a description of the case from the consultant's point of view is presented. Next, the three authors share a conversation about the design and the effect of this programme from a macro perspective where the situation of the medical faculty is related to the developments in the organizational field, and a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective in which the style of intervention is linked

to the challenges of the organization at this point in time. The method of analysis, in other words, is a means of linking the case with an ongoing debate on organizational change and leadership development.

In the second article, the outcomes of focus groups and discussions among staff members at a university concerning their leadership experiences in 2000–2010 are presented. Then follows the analysis of 10 semi-structured interviews with members of faculty at the university, using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the fourth article the transcripts of the interviews were read *in extenso*, then all sections of disharmonies were identified for further analysis. These sections were coded and interpreted again using thematic analysis.

The meaning of the term *theme* in thematic analysis is not often discussed or defined in the literature on qualitative research methodology (Willig, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006) define a theme as what "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set." A theme consists of, and is much more than, a label on something that stands out in the data (Willig, 2013). It includes a reference to the presence of a pattern in the data. A theme refers to a "particular, recognisable configuration of meanings which co-occurs in a way that is meaningful and systematic rather than random and arbitrary" (Willig, 2013, p. 58). For example, two research participants, in the second study of my thesis, made the following comments in a semi-structured interview about leadership in the university organization:

> We discuss continuously /about the new research centres/ whether they should belong to the interdisciplinary centres instead of to the departments. People will live in the departments and do their science in the centres. What does this imply? We don't know yet. We must talk to really understand.

> We need the time and tools, pictures and words, that facilitate our understanding of what we are talking about. It's important that what leadership does, its interventions, reaches all the way into the capillaries, and that it is understood all the way out there. So that we become organizational grown-ups in this system.

We decided to capture the meaning of these interview responses by giving these comments the theme label "increased organisational understanding and engagement with multiple logics". The important point here is that the participants, based on these examples of reports, are struggling with coming to terms with and increasingly becoming curious and engaged with the conflicting logics of leadership in the organization in the middle of fundamental change processes. This theme then became

a building block to be used for a comprehensive, integrated understanding of the university leadership context from which the data was harvested.

The limitations of thematic analysis have already been hinted at. The themes are only meaningful if the researcher is clear about what they represent in relationship to the research questions and the epistemological direction of the study. Another pitfall with thematic analysis is a deductive one. If the researcher is already committed or driven by the existing literature on the object of study or a personal inclination and arrives at themes from this a priori position, confirmation of already arrived at truths will follow and new insight will not be allowed to emerge from the data.

Also in the third study, the data collection was conducted as semi-structured individual interviews with four respondents. The analysis of the informants' accounts was guided by *structural narrative analysis* (Bazeley, 2014), paying close attention to the sequence of events and how they were evaluated in the moving stories of our informants. The content matter of their narratives was coded in the margin of transcripts (Willig, 2013) and offered a few important clusters for further analysis of the most critical turning points across all data. From these clusters eventually emerged a sequence of typical episodes that was consistent in all the four narratives.

Narrative analysis is situated in a social constructionist perspective of knowledge formation. This kind of analysis aims to produce knowledge that conveys how people create meaningful stories out of their experiences. What is a narrative? Murray (2003, p.113) says that a "narrative is an organised interpretation of a sequence of events /which/ involves attributing agency to the characters in the narrative and inferring causal links between the events." The function of narratives in our lives, according to Willig (2013, p. 145), is to bring order, coherence and meaning to a world that is constantly changing. It is a way by which we try logically to organise our lived sequences into meaningful plots that can be told. The desire for doing this, says Bruner (1990), particularly is brought up when life seems disturbed and difficult, as in different sorts of crises and experienced chaos. It is as if constructing and telling a narrative is helpful in making sense of challenging times and rendering them meaningful, thereby offering a way of taking control over these events and keeping chaos at bay.

Narrative analysis examines, while paying close attention to the participant's story, how order and sense is imposed on the flow of events in a person's life. When focusing on the structure of a narrative you go beyond focus on the content of the narrative. You pay attention to the way people describe events and thereby reveal something of the person reporting the narrative, their assumptions, their cognitive schema and their purpose in telling the story. This analytical approach seemed the most reasonable when

working with the interview data from the formal leaders, their accounts of a particular and painful experience, in the third study of my thesis.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have shown up and been attended to in different stages of these case studies. First of all, by following Swedish regulations and general ethical guidelines for social science research projects (SFS, 2003: 460), all participants in our empirical studies were informed about the purpose of the studies, how the results would be distributed, and that all participation was voluntary and could be interrupted at any time. To protect the identities of the participants, all revealing information in the results, such as details in their stories, names, places, and affiliations, have been replaced by coded alternatives. For the same reason, all participants have been labelled as men in the results. Moreover, all participants were invited to comment on their own quotations before the results were distributed to others.

In the first case study it is my own recollections and documentation of an intervention I made as a coach in a leadership development programme at the medical faculty of a university that are the subject of discussion and reflection. We disclose the name of the programme – LeKA – with the consent of the board that was responsible for the implementation of these programmes. Furthermore, there are no references to statements by the participants of the programme in the study. In the second study, the data was collected in two steps. The first set of data was collected in a series of focus groups where the participants were selected to represent the four different "leadership rooms" in our conceptual model. This data had permission to be used in reports and seminars at the university for the development of the leadership portfolio and to conceptually facilitate organisational change process at the university. The second step was a series of semi-structured conversational interviews with ten participants, after informed consent about the purpose of the study. The interviews were not conducted by me in order to ensure a minimum of partiality in the relationship to and responses of the participants. Finally, the manuscript for the finished article was then made accessible to the participants in the interviews to ensure confidentiality and consent., before publication.

I am aware that the third article concerns a sensitive issue, calling for the protection of the identity of those involved. I have made sure to focus on the experiences and accounts of happenings that turn up in the narratives of the participants in the study and made an effort to concentrate my report and analysis on how they themselves perceive their situation and that of the antagonists they have been struggling with – the

relationship of which is the whole point with the study. I turn the spotlight on the dynamics of the leadership process in this particular challenge. I assume situations like the ones in the case study are fairly typical leadership challenges in universities. As a consultant, I have been involved with similar complications in different university settings, but in the cases of this study my only contacts were with the participants in the interviews. They were fully informed about the research process and gave their consent before the interviews. They were free to withdraw from participating. Furthermore, they have read the article in manuscript form and have given their consent to its publication.

The fourth case study involved more interviews than were presented in the article. Everybody in the study knew the purpose and procedure of the research and gave their consent to participating. When finally, the paper was finished, all of the interviewees from whom we had taken quotes were able to read, first their own quotes for approval, then check the whole manuscript, and then they gave their consent to publication.

Summary of articles

In this chapter the four case studies are summarised. The background and context surrounding each study, the purpose, research questions, and findings will be presented briefly. The four articles are independently conceived and executed. By presenting them in the chronological order in which they were written the reader is invited into the research process I have been involved in.

The first two studies contain the analysis of the content and consequences of consultancy interventions, where I was first engaged and worked with the case, then approached the same case as a researcher for the purpose of understanding and knowledge formation. In the last two studies, I visit the empirical field solely for the purpose of conducting research.

The first article was written while I was still working as a consultant. When engaged with leadership development at a medical faculty I was given the chance to try my hand at writing a scholarly article together with two colleagues, Robert Holmberg at the Department of Psychology and Mats Benner at the Research Policy Institute at Lund University. The article was published and here I contributed the empirical material and the three of us designed and wrote the paper together.

The second article I wrote together with my co-supervisor, Robert Holmberg. Again, I collected the empirical material. My co-author and I analysed the data, and we designed and wrote the paper together.

For the third article, I designed the study, conducted the interviews, and authored the article myself with productive coaching from my supervisor Eva Brodin and co-supervisor Robert Holmberg along the way.

For the fourth article I collected the data myself. I analysed data and wrote the article together with my supervisor Eva Brodin.

First article

This is a case study of a project-based leadership development programme with a group of younger research leaders in a medical faculty at a university. The three authors share a conversation about the design and the effect of this programme from a macro perspective where the situation of the medical faculty is related to studies in the field of organizational development. The particular leadership challenge here is the initiative and implementation of organizational change. From a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective the style of the intervention is linked to the challenges of the organization at this point in time. This case is an example of offering depth to the meaning of leadership. The study concerns young research leaders, not yet positioned in the hierarchy of the medical faculty, and presumably thereby not yet cemented in their views about future change. They were enrolled in a leadership development program (LeKA). In this programme a strategic leadership project was introduced, and art was used as an intervention in the learning group.

"Send problems to training!" The background of this study is a series of leadership development training programmes at this medical faculty to radically enhance the research group leaders' skills in leading creative processes. A problem-based approach was used, sketchily called "Don't send leaders to training, send problems!". This involved the dean offering one of the medical faculty's current, critical and complex leadership challenges as a case, a project task for a selected team of research group leaders to work on in a development programme format. The rationale for this *action-reflection-learning* process (Rohlin, 2012) was that, while working with this challenge owned by the management of the faculty, there would be ample learning opportunities to grasp the complexities of leading in the faculty, moments for the teams to be creative and practice the leading of creativity, as well as space for personal development for the participants. The idea was also that the participants were not required to "solve" the challenge, or even come up with recommendations, but they should learn as much about the case that they could give back highly qualified feedback to – and coach – the dean and his management team in order for them to solve the challenge in a way they would not have been able to do without the intervention of the team in the learning programme.

Consequently, the initial task was to design a programme that would develop all the research group leaders at the faculty into leaders highly skilled in leading creative

research processes. The programme was labelled "LeKA", a Swedish acronym for "Leadership in a Creative Academy", and also the Swedish word for "play". A series of eight LeKA programmes were eventually launched between 2000 and 2008 all of them including different strategic leadership challenges. In each programme, the number of participants was 15–20, making a total during the eight years of approximately 135 young research leaders participating in LeKA.

Amsterdam. The critical challenge in the LeKA programme that this article focuses on was the task of designing a process for choosing a new organisation of the medical faculty and the launching of a leadership process to achieve this. The particular intervention in this programme that we focus on was a team exercise, in one of the seminar modules, in Amsterdam. The group was visiting to benchmark the university hospital there. The architecture and the organization of this hospital had been highly successful in integrating research and clinical practice. The exercise took place after a day of interviews with the management of the hospital. It consisted of three visits to three different pieces of art and culture in the city – a painting by Rembrandt and one by van Gogh plus the urban dialogue between canals and warehouses in 17th century Amsterdam – that roughly corresponded to and tentatively could provide creative clues to grappling with three main themes that the leadership of the faculty were trying to resolve with their organizational change project: How to achieve more and better proximity between faculty leadership and staff in the organization? How to improve interaction and alignment across different groups within the field (experimental, laboratory and clinical research) and between representatives of different organizational ideals (small-scale patient research versus large-scale experimental studies)? How to negotiate the pressure from horizontal boundary crossing initiatives – financial, technological and great overwhelming cross-scientific projects – with the traditional and trustworthy line organisation, the "silos" of departments?

The idea of using art as an intervention in Amsterdam plus the choice of the three art objects to have a conversation with, was mine in my role as a coach in the programme. It was based on the idea that play has an important role in learning (McFadzean, 1999; Winnicott, 1974), and the notion of an affinity between art and the coaching process. Art should not be a copy of nature, as was noted by the artist Paul Klee, but "it should visualise that which without the artist never would have been perceived or discovered" (quoted in Sewerin, 2009, p. 22). Furthermore, this way of using art as a stimulus in a learning activity comes close to McFadzean's (1999) concept of a paradigm-breaking exercise, where participants are encouraged to use their imaginative and creative skills to challenge and reframe central elements of their identities and organizational principles.

Purpose and research questions. This case study may be seen as a report from a consultant's intervention, but instead of stopping at this, the article goes further and contextualizes this case by asking questions like: What is going on here? Why does it happen now? In what way is this typical and in what way is this unique? What may be the consequences of this kind of leadership development practice? Thus, the overall purpose of this case study was to present the case of the programme, its content and style, and raise some issues that have consequences for how HRM practices are understood in theory and practice. In relation to the overall purpose of this thesis, we are interested in how this particular challenge can be understood as a dynamic developmental process, involving social and structural tensions, and how these tensions can be understood and resolved in new ways.

Findings. Recent literature on HRM practices (Theriou & Chatzoglou, 2008; Watson, 2004) and their links to knowledge management and organizational learning recommends accomplishing studies that look more closely at actual HRM practices and outcomes in actual contexts, and offer more fine-grained modes of analyses of learning processes. The findings of this study suggest that the LeKA approach to leadership training contributed to shaping opportunities for identity work (Whetten, 2006) and sense making (Weick, 1995) for both the participants' personal roles in the organization and for how the medical faculty was, and ought to be, organized. The authors argue that the problem area to which the strategic leadership challenge belonged, and into which the group in the programme was invited, was an example of threats to organizational identity as well as a highly unsettling change at the time. In comparison with traditional HRM approaches to leadership development – viewed as a kind of regular maintenance of the system – it is suggested that the style of leadership development described in the article can be understood as a form of organizational autobiography, therapy or symbolic action that was labelled as a *post paradigmatic form* of HRM. This programme form in a sense cuts deeper and is related to the values and identities of the university organization.

The authors suggest that this version of HRM, the programme idea as well as the particular intervention with art in Amsterdam, resonated well with the turbulence of a contemporary medical science environment affected by fundamental changes in strategies, structures, and roles as well as with organizational and individual identities.

Leadership and management are interrelated concepts, but have a different emphasis, both in their execution and development. Management development refers to training to fulfil the requirements of a management position and role where specific competences and skills are often required in relation to proven solutions to known problems. Leadership development involves the cultivation of abilities to expand the collective and the organizational members capacity to engage in leadership roles and

processes (Day 2001; Grint 2010). The terms are not explicitly discussed in the article, but the title suggests that the article is an example of a multilevel approach to leadership development, referred to earlier (Day & Harrison, 2007). Three levels of designing and executing the programme are employed: the faculty management has a dual motive, to improve its methods and base of recruitment to new management positions, and the investigation into and the execution of a radical organisational change plan; research teams need to develop their skills in collaboration and relationship building; and, there is a need for personal development for research group leaders of their skills of leading creativity in teams.

Reflexivity. The focus of the study is to reflect on how and why the intervention in this particular programme seems to function for the purpose of resolving social and structural tensions in the dynamics of a leadership challenge and contributing to both personal and organizational change. I was the coach and consultant in the LeKA programme and I alone have gathered the empirical material, from which the analysis is based. My part in the study is an account of my consultancy contribution, while the other two authors, who did not participate in the process at all, bear the main responsibility for putting my account into a broader context. It is significant, though, that all three authors are positively partial to the model of management development that is analysed in the article. Another participant in the discussion, from another perspective on leadership and management development, might surely have come to other conclusions.

Second article

Sewerin, T. and Holmberg, R. (2017). Contextualizing distributed leadership in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development. 36.* 6, 1280-1294.

This study contributes to the research debate on leadership in higher education, especially with respect to the concept of distributed leadership. Leadership in higher education is an ambiguous and contested practice that depends on the coexistence of multiple institutional logics, and tensions between them. The article demonstrates, by connecting leadership notions and practice to organizational dynamic processes, how distributed leadership can be positioned in relation to different logics of university leadership.

Background. A similar series of problem-based leadership development programmes – as described in the first article – was launched in another university in Sweden during approximately the same time period as the LeKA programmes. Twelve such

programmes, in this context labelled YFOs, a Swedish acronym for "Young Researchers", intended for the next generation of leaders, were carried out during 2001–2011. The YFO programmes provided the opportunity both for the participants and for the university leadership who supplied strategic challenges to them to continuously develop ways of making sense of and conceptualizing the unique and distinctive features of university leadership.

This was a period of intense reflections and speculation about leadership in academia, closely related to working with practical strategic dilemmas presented by the leadership at this university. In a series of conversations among young scientists about a leadership portfolio for career advancement purposes, it was discovered that leadership discourse and practice are carried out differently in different spaces in the university. Out of this collaborative work – and encouraged by prior images of understanding leadership processes – an heuristic model was developed based on the notion and practice of leadership at the university as going on in four different "rooms":

- Managing the formal organization of the university
- Advancing your own independent field of science
- Teaching and forming new educational avenues
- Negotiating cross-scientific environments

The notion of "room" had been introduced at an early stage in the YFO programmes with a definition of leadership, referring to social constructionism, as a conversation that constructs reality and, when well-functioning, amount to "A room with a view" (Forster, 1987; Sewerin, 2009). There were also incidents, during the YFO programmes and other consultancy interventions where it became obvious that leaders brought behaviours, attitudes and habits developed in leadership contexts elsewhere in the university into meetings and agendas where these were obviously misplaced. The observation was made that the norms and procedures for leading are different in different contexts, different worlds, different physical rooms at the university. To prevent misunderstandings and valuable time being wasted it became worthwhile to stress which "leadership room" you are in, to keep the different rooms separate and to find ways of repeatedly reminding each other of this purpose.

The creation and elaboration of this heuristic model in leadership development inventions as a case study. This article is based on two sets of data. First, the outcomes of focus groups and discussions with a number of staff members from the four different "rooms", corresponding to the heuristic model, about leadership experiences in the years 2000–2010. Second, on interviews with ten members of the faculty of the university, all of whom participated in YFO-programmes. In the article, we reflect on

the effects of the heuristic model in the organization and how it was received and advanced in leadership development interventions at the university.

The bottom line of the model of four distinct and diverse leadership practices at the university implies that leadership is much more than the role of leaders and their management teams. By positioning the heuristic model in the discourse of distributed leadership, we open up for a more nuanced and broader approach to the phenomenon of leadership in higher education. In order to stress the organizational perspective of leadership, we related the four different leadership practices to different *institutional logics* (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012) of leadership prominent in the four key activities in this specific university: in the formal line organization, in the research domain, in education, and in the boundary spanning cross-scientific environments. The concept of "institutional logic", which we apply to the process of leadership, is defined as,

> the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organisations provide meaning to their daily activity, organise time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences. (Thornton, et al., 2012).

Furthermore, we show that the theory of *logic multiplicity,* referring to that organizations are typically characterised by a multitude of institutional logics (Besharov & Smith 2014), provides a way to analyse the previously neglected aspects of power, tensions, context, and the practical relevance of the concept of distributed leadership. Specifically so, in an environment of fairly constant change.

Research questions. In this article we pursue the questions: What are the institutional logics of leading in the university? What are the dynamics and tensions between them? What is the effect of collectively fashioning a heuristics model of leading at the university reflecting these dynamic interrelations? In relation to the overall purpose of this thesis, this study aims at shedding light on specifically the social and structural dimensions of challenges of leadership at the university, and on how the tensions within these dimensions can be understood and resolved in new ways.

Findings. A thematic analysis of the rich retrospective narratives of our reports show that the organizational conditions or contexts for leading are highly varied and characterised by different institutional logics. The heuristic model that was produced during the series of leadership development programmes was a fair representation of a sample of logics typical of the university, and the contest and dynamics between them. A more evolved and shared understanding of the leadership logics was accompanied by a reported increase in organizational understanding and leadership awareness, which

helped establish collaboration and sense making in the university. The heuristic model was helpful in a number of further ways. First, it captured dimensions of the organizational environment that were different from formal organizational diagrams and made immediate sense to the staff, and made these dimensions, in connection with complex leadership tasks, "talkable" in new ways. Secondly, by shifting focus from the duality, and deadlock, of "collegiality" versus "management" conflicts to a multiplicity of leadership logics followed opportunities to appreciate differences instead avoiding or fighting the issues.

Finally, we conclude that a developmental process in a technical university can be analysed not primarily in terms of increased leadership skills, but in terms of expanding the shared capacity for appreciating contested logic multiplicity and in taking some steps in the direction to more *aligned* forms of multiplicity. We discovered also, based on the language used to define authority in the different "rooms" and the reluctance in three of them to use the word "leader" or "leadership", that the idea and concept of leadership can perhaps only be used within the limited framework of the formal organization of the university and there rely on versions of corporate logics. This conclusion calls for rethinking strategies and approaches for developmental activities involving leading and being led in the future academy.

Reflexivity. The interviews of the ten participants are the means by which we put a distance between this research work and the part of the study where I, as a consultant, was intimately involved. They are not dependent on my role or contribution to the process. Yet, the whole case study can be regarded as an example of research emerging from a deep relationship with practice, which eventually was investigated by a series of interviews.

Third article

Sewerin T., (2019). *Formal leaders' changing scope of thinking and action when dealing with destructive research leaders in academia.*

To be submitted after presentation of this thesis.

This is a case study exploring how formal leaders deal with conflicts in university organizations that circle around a limited number of scientifically successful but interpersonally challenging research leaders in a Swedish university. This is another dynamic process of leadership within which there are social, structural, and developmental tensions that increase with stress, and I am interested in how these tensions can be understood and resolved in a novel and unsuspected way.

Background. This study was chosen for the purpose of creating variation and breadth in my overall research project, and to provide yet another example of dynamic tensions in difficulties and testing of leadership. The subject matter of this leadership challenge is not uncommon, however, neither in the everyday life at universities, nor in the literature. Research on demanding personality and destructive behaviour at the workplace is nearly always conducted at the individual level of analysis (Babiak & Hare, 2007; Boddy, 2011; Cheang & Appelbaum, 2015; Fennimore & Sementelli, 2016; Furnham, et al., 2013; Gudmundsson & Southey, 2011; Pech & Slade, 2007). In the field of leadership studies, traditional leader-centred theories have left us in the dark where the destructive sides of leadership are concerned (Crevani et al., 2010). Lately, the recognition that these difficult individuals do not operate in a vacuum – the organizational context may promote this type of behaviour as well as machinations from colleagues and co-workers – has been brought to focus by certain investigators (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Thoroughood, Sawyer, Padilla, & Lunsford, 2018). The reactions of formal leaders when confronted with these kinds of dynamics in their teams is still a theme that needs to be studied. How do they reflect and act, what deters them from taking action, what eventually and finally tips the scales to stand up to this challenge? Pragmatically, senior leadership of the university keenly await better understanding the dynamics of this kind of phenomenon and their own responses to it: to prevent it from emerging, to provide initiatives to contain these circumstances, to minimize risks for both people and the production of excellent science, and to prevent far-reaching consequences on both individual and organizational levels.

The case. Two formal leaders of a university, a dean and a department head, who had painful experience of the impact of these kind of conflicts in their organisations, were interviewed, as well as two HR specialists whose expertise was used in these conflict situations. The interviews focused on the timing and sequence of events, value conflicts and the emotional burden on those who were affected by the conflict. Special attention was also given to the formal leaders' perception of themselves, during the conflict, their role, responsibility, mandate, and how they used their support and resources.

Research questions. How do formal leaders in an academic environment understand the context and challenge of toxic situations that involve research leaders? How does their understanding of such situations develop over time? How do they act in accordance with their developed understanding of the situation? The overall purpose of this thesis is to explore the social, structural, and developmental dimensions of leadership challenges, and with the research questions in this study we look particularly at the reflective process of understanding of the formal leadership when faced with difficulties.

Findings. The narratives of my reports I interpreted as coming out of experiences of crisis and difficulty, and the effort of making sense of a challenging time. They were examined by a structural narrative analysis method that pays close attention to the story, how order and sense is imposed on the flow of events in this particular person's situation. The narratives revealed a clear sequence of events in the way that the formal leaders reflected upon their own leadership roles and how they reacted in these situations. This sequence contained three consecutive episodes from *loyalty*, to *ethics*, to *law*: In the first episode, the context within which the destructive behaviour occurred was perceived by the formal leader as a family-like situation. There was a frail sense of hope founded in *loyalty* towards his scientific "family", and friendly initiatives were made. In the next episode, after a series of disappointments, continuous conflict and increased pressure from students and colleagues in the environment, there was a shift in reflection, mood and emotional process of the formal leader. It was a shift from *loyalty* to an *ethical* dilemma. By the force of the same conduct that before seemed mendable in the eyes of the formal leader, whatever the antagonist now did was irreconcilable. This was a prolonged episode of deadlock. The formal leader delayed action since, in his uncertain mind, the research group leader produced an unendurable social climate while he was also an investment to be honoured with great resources and highly valued in relation to the strategic goals of the department. The final episode involved turning to higher authority and *law*. The situation turned into a legal matter for the organization. Formal leadership was emotionally exhausted and they based their understanding of the organizational context as a professional workplace, not a scientific family.

The article indicates how a critical analysis can offer rich opportunities to identify different paths to engage and work with the social and structural dynamics of these kind of challenges. Such a pragmatic path of a resolution of the dilemma is suggested in the concluding part of the article. This proposal involves a kind of reversal of the steps in the sequence of events reported by the formal leaders. It also involves transcending workplace conflicts and tension as solely a problem of formal leadership, and instead engaging in critical and ethical reflection of the wider context of stake-holders where these conflicts occur, like professors, colleagues and even PhD Students. This proposal is woven around the notion of *academic citizenship* (Bolden et al., 2013).

Fourth article

Sewerin, T. and Brodin, E. (2019). *Managing disharmonies during sixty years of creative teamwork in a singular university research environment.*

To be submitted after the presentation of this thesis.

Research in the field of creativity in research environments has typically concentrated on positive factors contributing to processes and outcomes of scientific collaborations (Hemlin, 2008; Hollingsworth, 2002; Hollingsworth & Hollingsworth, 2000). Therefore, the two authors decided to take another approach to the problem field focusing on the disharmonies – that is the accompanying negative emotions – of scientific collaboration. Music is not an uncommon metaphor for conveying the atmosphere of collaboration and teamwork. Words like *tone*, *accord* and *discord*, *dissonance*, *in concert* are used to capture the emotional and cognitive qualities of interplay in social situations. We argue that disharmony is no less social than harmony to define the evolving dynamics of working together. Hence, we propose an angle to collaboration that provides new significant insights for understanding how co-existing disharmonies may be turned into creative processes and outcomes by focusing on the following research questions below.

The case. This is a single case study of an actual research team at a Swedish university. The team started with a ground-breaking discovery in its field of science in the early 1960s. From this source has sprung a highly complex river delta of new science through the spanning of four generations of researchers held together in roughly the same environment at the university. When data was collected for this study, they had made 3–4 internationally outstanding and ground-breaking discoveries over the years. The data set consists of in-depth interviews with 16 key actors where four of them had retired. Otherwise, all informants were still active in the environment.

Research questions. What kind of disharmonies can be found in the same environment over time? How are these disharmonies managed and regulated in varying ways? And, how is the management of disharmonies related to different social processes and outcomes? These questions, as for those in the other three studies, are helpful in inciting the overall purpose of this thesis, the social, structural, and developmental dimensions of leadership challenges at the university.

Findings. We found a distinction between destructive and constructive disharmonies. The former led to serious rifts between those engaged, where motivation to collaborate and communicate ceased to exist. The latter were conflicts and strife that temporarily caused emotional strain but had a beneficial influence for the research environment in the long run. We also identified both vertical and horizontal disharmonies that could

be of both a destructive and constructive kind. The vertical disharmonies occurred between generations, the horizontal ones between peers of the same generation. Finally, there were over the years disharmonious influences in relationship to external adversaries, that acted in a constructive fashion on the boundaries of the environment, creating a *we* in reaction to the discordant moves of *them*.

In all, the dynamic patterns of disharmonies were played out around certain themes. First a series of vertical destructive disharmonies between generations of researchers, circling around feelings deriving from lack of recognition, the junior researchers ceasing to pay the debt of gratitude to their seniors, and perceived stagnation of leadership. There were also vertical constructive disharmonies, most notably when there were scientific disagreements between the generations of researchers, and when matters were temporarily hidden from senior colleagues. Horizontal destructive disharmonies that took place between peers were concerned with guarding territories from one another and hiding results from peers. Furthermore, there were horizontal constructive disharmonies when individuals needed and took initiative to form either external or internal collaboration for survival. Finally there were constructive disharmonies in relationship to external antagonists. They related to contesting who was being strongest in Sweden, to convincing the world of findings, and to remaining independent of the faculty.

We relate these different themes to literature on conflict, competition, and dissent and we are able to chart how disharmonies, along with harmonies, are a vital element in the intellectual and social relations of creative collaborations in research, and an important motor of both change and stability over time. We expect these findings to add to the literature about innovative and creative knowledge environments by articulating some of the discord and disharmony that is often neglected and even asked for in most of these investigations. Furthermore, we expect the findings of this study to be valuable knowledge, helpful for the attainment and maintenance of sustainable research environments which can be seen as a principal challenge for university leadership environments in many places.

Discussion

Aequam memento rebus in arduis servare mentem.[1]

The articles in this thesis are examples of how leadership in the university deal with organizational challenges and the tensions within them. The four case studies involve challenges of leading which all spring from experiences of persons in leading positions. These challenges can be interpreted from different theoretical perspectives. I have argued that the way leadership phenomena, or the process of leading, are interpreted is something that matters deeply in the research context as well as in the practical context.

Perceiving and working with leadership challenges

The first overarching research question of this thesis was, "How are leadership challenges perceived and managed in academia?" Eventful challenges are intellectually compelling to study, in that they stand out as different from the background of the common everyday practice of leading. The challenges in themselves require great effort to realize, understand, handle and solve because they contain fundamental differences and tensions. Ordinarily, those who work in the university experience problem-solving situations where there is an occurrence of assorted models of leadership, a hybridization (Crevani, et al., 2015). This is all right as long as the waters are calm and there are enough resources to deal with the issues, but, when stress occurs, tension mounts between differences, not the least in the dimensions of influence and authority (Smith & Lewis, 2011). The process elements take prominence and thereby the whole task takes on the quality of a challenge.

In the first case study, the strategic project that the management team of the faculty placed in the LeKA programme concerned the design of a developing process for choosing a radically new organisation of the medical faculty and how to launch and lead the implementation of this change. The situation of the faculty, which the LeKA

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[1] Remember to keep an even mind in adverse conditions (Horatio, *Odes II 3*, 1–2)

project was intended to address, was an order full of horizontal tensions. The most important were those between clinical work versus research in medicine, between experimental, laboratory versus clinical research, between small-scale patient research versus large-scale experimental studies, between financial, technological or cross-scientific projects versus the traditional line organisation, and between the different sites where hospitals and research were located. There was also vertical strain, mainly caused by the perceived gap between the management team and the great number of next level department managements. It can be assumed, following Crevani, et al., (2015), that within the boundaries of each of these organizational entities in strained relationships with one another were traditionally moulded dynamics and notions of influence and authority. It was the task of the management team to span all these boundaries (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010), to accommodate and constructively hold the differences (Modell, 1990; Petriglieri, et al. 2019; Winnicott, 1974). The LeKA group was expected to provide input that would prove helpful in this task.

We discuss in this study that in the challenge into which the LeKA group was invited, there were circumstances that involved threats to both organizational and individual identity. In this unsettling process, process dimensions in the form of different traditions or cultures (Crevani et al., 2015) of leadership embedded in the various quarters of the medical faculty were expected to be exposed. The purpose of the team exercise having a conversation with art in Amsterdam was to address this situation. The intervention aimed at creating an awareness of different views of leadership. Particularly, the Rembrandt picture with the accompanying question, "With what kind of glance, identity, responsibility will /future leadership at the medical faculty/ turn to and look at their organization? Which will be their role and task?" In the reflection exercise by the canals of Amsterdam there was also a suggestion to address horizontal versus vertical processes of leadership at the faculty. Finally, the management team of the faculty invited a team of young research leaders, with no formal leadership positions at the faculty, to reflect on a potential new structure of the organization, to coach the process to achieve this, and to be part of the implementation of the new. Thereby yet another, and process-oriented (Hosking, 1988; Johnsen, 1998), leadership notion was levered into the challenge.

In the second case study, breadth of leadership is the issue. The study of power and organizational dynamics related to distributed leadership in connection with a fundamental change process in a whole university draws attention to the actors' problems and frustrations when having a fragmented understanding of what leading means in their specific environments. In the study, we present how the participants' stepwise development of a heuristic model of leadership in academia as well as using the model while engaged with differentiation and integration (Ernst & Chrobot-

Mason, 2010) in the process of organizational change enhanced organizational understanding and leadership awareness in the distributed leadership context of the university.

Governance at the university is generally analysed in terms of three forms of control – bureaucracy, managerialism, and collegiality (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). By supplementing this model, which has a functionalist's leadership theory (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) tendency, our analysis aims at contributing to the discourse on distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011; Bolden et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2014; Spillane et al., 2004) with a dynamic, process and power dimension. We do this by introducing the heuristic model of four leadership "rooms" that to a great extent incorporates an interpretative variant of leadership theory (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) into the process.

The third case study examines in depth how formal leaders feel and react when scientifically successful research leaders with questionable behaviour threaten to break the tender social, collaborative, and creative environments in their organizations. Research on demanding personalities and destructive behaviours in organizational contexts are mostly conducted at the individual level of analysis, but in this study the approach to understanding the situation is chosen from a systemic and process-oriented perspective (Padilla, et al. 2007; Thoroughood, et al., 2016). The result of the study shows that here is an example where a critical leadership analysis reveals a situation and a process with contested logics or theories of leading – that between a leader-centred versus a shared conception of leading (Alvesson & Spicer 2012; Crevani et al., 2015). The article attempts to clarify and reframe these differences. Hereby provide an opening for studying this phenomenon of, what has been called, *toxic* workplaces (Padilla et al., 2007; Pelletier, et al., 2018), and informal leaders' questionable behaviour, with a less individualistic and leader-centric approach. The analysis of the situation shows how extremely difficult it seems to be to step out of the episodic chain of loyalty, ethics and law. This further indicates how difficult it is to reflect, to engage the system in a process where attention is paid to differences in the process of leading, and how the challenge could be, or could have been, approached with another mode of leading.

Finally, in the scope of the fourth case study breadth, what is differentiated is again in focus. In most of the literature of creative knowledge environments, i.e. research groups, positive and constructive elements are exhibited in the foreground (Hemlin, 2008; Hollingsworth, 2002; Hollingsworth & Hollingsworth, 2000). In our study of a research environment that has been highly successful for sixty years and four generations, we try to come closer to the life and work of this group by highlighting processes that occur concomitant to the harmonies in the group. Rather than focusing on the positive sides of creative team dynamics, we focus on their accompanying disharmonies. We identify a handful of distinct and interesting tensions that over time

have an impact on the development and change of the collaboration dynamics of the environment. Typically, disharmonies occur between generations, as junior researchers attempt to free themselves from senior supervisors to pursue their autonomous career, between peers as they struggle over scarce resources and guard their territories, and between groups involving external groups in the same scientific field. We also detect strategies of managing these disharmonies which imply that a process of leading is occurring that enables the individuals and groups in this particular research world to go in and out of tumultuous and harmonious circumstances without too much distress. Disharmonies appear to be just as social and interactive as harmonies. The dynamics between them can even offer an advantage and with an amount of regulation can even be managed to arrive at a long-lasting world-class collaboration.

Polarities and paradoxes in the leadership challenges

The second overall research question of this thesis was "What are the social and structural tensions of academic leadership challenges?" Different leadership notions are constructed in the leadership challenges. Tension arises between them, especially so at challenging moments. These kinds of tension can sometimes be understood in terms of polarities – problems to be lived and led, as opposed to problems to be solved – or organizational paradoxes (Johnson, 1996; Smith & Lewis, 2011).

The relationship between the four different institutional logics of leading, as analysed in the second case study, can be distinguished as paradoxical in that efforts to resolving the tension between them by letting one of them dominate the others seem to perpetuate the situation. In other words, they are examples of horizontal and, in periods of organisational stress, contradictory differences. Attempts at perceiving the tension between the different leadership logics in the heuristic model as a vertical discord, and a problem-to-be-solved, seem to be counter-productive. We suggest this is so because the notion of a *hierarchy* of influence, power and leadership, only resides within the logic of one of the "rooms" of leadership, i.e. "managing the formal organization". This might be one aspect in which the uniqueness of the academy in relationship to other forms of organizations can be accounted for. If all leadership were to be moved into the line management of the university – which, by the way, is recommended by those who say "Why doesn't the vice-chancellor make the decisions, everything in one hand?" – it would not work. It would not be a university any longer, as mentioned by one of the interviewees.

Paradoxes are characterized by underlying tensions, "elements that seem logical individually, but inconsistent and even absurd when juxtaposed" (Smith & Lewis,

2011). Probing deeper into the steps or episodes of the formal leaders' feelings and actions, the third study shows they are involved in a personal internal struggle of a choice among contradictory contexts. The one is perceived as a family context from which loyalty and friendly initiatives are required, another is regarded as similar to a business context where entrepreneurial initiatives are required. Finally, a third context is the professional work-place where a manager acting with the support of HR and higher authority is expected. These differently perceived contexts are paradoxical and this is why the standstill and the delayed action. Furthermore, pressures of expectations directed at the formal leaders come from different places in the organization. There are those who maintain that the problem is not so serious, while others hold that something consequential needs to been done, that the formal leaders and HR need to take action to resolve the issue. Accompanying the difficult task dimension of the matter there are different ideas of how to consider leadership in the matter, and the tension between these differences in ideas contributes to the deadlock in the case. Not only is it possible to think systemically on the task level of the challenge – i.e. what is difficult lies in the *relationship* between one person and many of the others – but also on the process level in which the contesting views of leadership lie. I argue in the article that perhaps it would be possible to broaden the mindset of leadership, authority, and moral responsibility for what transpires, and match the leader-centred approach with sharing the trouble of intervening when trespasses of decencies occur (Crevani et al., 2010).

Polarities, another name for paradoxes, are unsolvable problems (Johnson, 1996) and should be lived and led. The conclusion of the fourth study is that disharmonies, hitherto somewhat neglected in investigations of creativity in research environments, are just as social – and crucial for sustainable long-lasting creative teams – as harmonies in team dynamics. This rhymes well with Johnson's (1996, p. xviii) assertion,

> Because the two sides of a polarity are interdependent, you cannot choose one as the "solution" and neglect the other. The objective of Polarity Management perspective is to get the best of both opposites while avoiding the limits of each.

The perspective with which we have studied this research environment, pursuing harmonies and especially disharmonies in its process dynamics, offers an analysis of a social setting with two contradictory "realities" (Modell, 1990) present. The ambience is described by our reports both as a happy "candy store", and as a "snake-pit" full of strife. In the article, we allude to both "upsides" and "downsides" (the risk of cumulative, not ground-breaking research) of a harmonic research environment. However, we focus on disharmonies. By arriving of a sort of typology of disharmonies, the findings in this study show that there are upsides and downsides – constructive and destructive outcomes – to disharmonies too. The point is, that disharmonies should

not unquestionably be avoided, but included in the interpretation and evaluation of creative team dynamic processes. A setting can be developed where the multifaceted relationships and contending influence patterns between generations of researchers, as well as collaborators and rivals living and working at the same time, can be allowed, with an even mind, to coexist (Modell, 1990).

Resolving the tension through holding

The third overall research question of this thesis was "How can these tensions be understood and resolved in new ways?"

The use of art, in the first case study, intended to inspire in the participants the urge to play with the notion of leading – the parts and the whole, the pre-clinical and clinical, the clinic and the laboratory, etc – of the faculty. According to Martha Nussbaum (1990) there is a particular ethical ability she calls "perception". This is the ability to discern, acutely and responsively, the salient features of one's particular situation. This is at the core of Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom, *phronesis* (Flyvbjerg, 2011). It is as if the encounter with art extends the participants' experiences, making them reflect and feel about what might otherwise be too distant for feeling (Nussbaum, 1990). The idea of a developmental programme that entails a profound reflection and dialogue process can be understood as an incubator for both participants and the organisational system. The LeKA programme can be seen as offering a framed experience, *holding* both the participants and their client, a setting which can achieve what Modell's (1990) psychoanalytic room can accomplish: play with various realities and tensions between differences.

We see how an exchange with pieces of art can be seen as *holding* the reflection process of learning in groups. Furthermore, their experience of this holding can help them in coaching and holding the formal leadership of the faculty, when implementing complex change. In addition, this study positions the *both/and* notion as a resolution of the challenge when it proposes a combination of action *and* learning for leadership development, and when it introduces art in leadership as well as rational strategic concerns. A developmental initiative like the LeKA programme can be used to conceive of leadership development in contemporary complex organizations, like the university, in that it offers a distinct focus on both personal development *and* organizational task fulfilment, both individual *and* organizational identity work.

The LeKA programme model and the particular intervention within the programme can be perceived as an example of an advanced, complex and inclusive conceptualisation

of both leadership, seen as a shared property of a social system – i.e. the medical faculty of the university – and leadership development (Day & Harrison 2007). The programme incorporated the personal development of the participants, teambuilding while working on the project, empowerment of the future generation of managers in the organization, collaboration and coaching with the top management of the faculty, with working across boundaries while holding together the network of participants when taking part in implementing a new organization. Hence, this study supports the multi-level, identity-based approach to leadership development (Day & Harrison 2007). It furnishes that approach with a live example, and complements it with a special focus on leading creative teams and on organizational change.

We, the authors of the second study, suggest that the tensions between the four "rooms" of influence constitute the dynamics of the university leadership. With added pressure, they are actualized. There follow persistent efforts from one or the other to dominate them all, which causes impasses when faced with initiatives, standstill and the ever presence of either/or thinking. And yet, these four areas of activity, comprise the *raison d'être* of academia and need to be cognitively and emotionally embraced and held, as was said by one of the informants. Finding ways of understanding the basic conflicts between us-and-them in the different "rooms" of leadership as paradoxes seems to have unlocked these impasses, opened up opportunities to bridging power positions and took resolving the problems that cannot be solved to a whole new level. Instead of attempting to convince each other, leadership started asking, "How do we organize ourselves to accommodate for these antagonistic differences?" The ability of the different leadership areas of the university to de-dramatize anxiety, overcome fears and keep antagonisms at a reasonable level to enable them to pursue boundary spanning activities.

The sense and practice of a both/and attitude could be attained which in turn helped establish collaboration and sense making in the distribution of leadership at the university. As they perceived leadership in their academy as a distributed occurrence enmeshed in the dynamics of four different logics of leading, they could follow their own career itinerary from one room to another, see and feel the differences of leading between them. What can be understood with *alignment* of logics of leadership is nothing less than a "fifth room", an ambidextrous logic of leading (Smith & Lewis, 2011) that would respect, encompass, and *hold* all the others. Theoretically, it is comparable to laying the other four logics beside each other, acknowledging differences, and inviting a dialogue across them in order to accomplish a broader inclusion. The results of the study show that the heuristic model was a *holding* device. It offered an exercise where the participants became increasingly motivated to engage themselves

with leadership, with an awakened understanding of the organizational dynamics and an increased awareness of leadership.

This case study attempts to show that the contesting logics and power dynamics in a distributed leadership context cause confusion and bring radical doubt to the efforts of organizational development, a situation that the heuristic model of leadership eventually somewhat alleviates. Hence, designing and *holding* processes of change and development in the university organization where the multiple logics of leading are respected and used can be understood as warranting sustainable leadership processes. The result of our analysis shows that the value of the heuristic model, and the increased organizational understanding and leadership awareness that participants reported, can be accounted for by an intertwining of the two schools of thought, *distributed leadership* (Bolden, 2011; Bolden et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2014; Spillane et al., 2004) and *logic multiplicity* (Besharov & Smith, 2014). The developmental process of this particular university did not primarily produce increased leadership skills for those in leadership positions, but rather the increased shared capacity within the organization for appreciating differences in contesting logics of leading. Plus, some steps taken in the direction to more aligned forms of multiplicity as suggested in the literature on institutional logics (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Thornton, et al., 2012).

The third case study is an example of where the *holding* capacity of the leadership environment does not take place. An interpretive view framed in the concept of *academic citizenship* (Bolden, et al., 2013) is offered by my analysis as an environmental *holding* capacity. An ongoing conversation and daily practice of ethics and ground rules among the actors in this particular scientific environment could be said to hold the members in the department in their collaborative efforts and prevent the emergence of toxicity in relations. The problem is not necessarily resolved by sending formal leaders to more training, but by a conversational room that offers reflection, dialogue and norm setting by the key actors in the environment. I argue in the closing section of the article that perhaps, it would be possible to broaden the mindset of leadership, authority, and moral responsibility for what transpires, and share the trouble of intervening when the boundaries of decency are crossed. I conclude this case study with a both/and: "They can still be free to prosper *and* have a special character in their midst." An interpretation of the idea of *academic citizenship* (Bolden, et al., 2013; Macfarlane, 2007) could be to hold different truths together – to be aware of what it means to be, be with, or study, one of many brilliant scientists who are assembled at the same place, who more or less temporarily collaborate, clash, and love the same science. Not to become alike, or the same, but to appreciate, manage and respond to differences, not least when they are destructive.

In the fourth case, we found that the setting of a creative research environment was able to contain and *hold* the dynamics between the two "realities", harmonies and disharmonies, and thereby suggest a safeguarding of its longevity. We detected strategies of managing these disharmonies which imply that a process of leading is occurring that enables the individuals and groups in this particular research world to go in and out of tumultuous and harmonious circumstances without too much distress. Disharmonies appear to be just as social and interactive as harmonies. The dynamics between them can even offer an advantage and with an amount of regulation can even be contrived to arrive at a long-lasting world-class collaboration.

The analytical system of disharmonies that came out of this study adds to the understanding and research on creative knowledge environments in universities. Acknowledging and calmly being attentive to both harmonies and disharmonies in collective scientific pursuits, similar to the process dynamics of different and paradoxical realities in the psychoanalytic setting (Modell, 1990), could be another example of the professionalism and the success of holding as a leadership quality. We do not explicitly discuss leadership in this article, but by identifying and accentuating disharmonies as part of life and work, and the fact that it is conceivable to manage these disharmonies with focus on the task and relational processes in this particular research environment, then there is a shared *holding* capacity which has lasted for sixty years. Not a search for solutions when disharmonies show up, but engaging with purpose and loyalty of the task. Attention, in Bion's sense (French & Simpson, 2015), to the *raison d'être* of the group is a further function with a *holding* capacity. Our study can serve as an encouragement to also include disharmonious events in studies of creative teams and of leadership in such teams. As such, this case provides valuable knowledge for academic leadership when it is directed towards sustainable organizations, as well as pragmatically being able to instil in team leaders and team members hope and confidence that disharmony is just another way of interacting, not the end of the world (Mead, 1934; Simmel, 1904).

Differences that matter

The findings that are uncovered in the presented case studies here can be positioned in a discursive context that has been described as a *hybridization* (Crevani et al., 2015). It is as if these four studies open windows where we see not one mode of governance replacing the other, but different understandings and discourses of leadership, traditional and emergent, simultaneously being embedded and becoming adversarial in these challenges. These circumstances then offer the opportunity to examine,

differentiate and come to an integrative acceptance of how these differences can be met and understood. The four studies emphasize the importance of being attentive to the dimension of leadership, to dwell somewhat longer on the process dynamics of the problem at hand and not immediately call for more and better leaders. With their focus on challenging dimensions of everyday practice in university leadership environments, the result of these studies put together comes close to illuminating the "black box" and furnishing the "discursive void" reported by Ekman et al. (2018) in their analysis of tensions between different leadership logics in the governmental reports supporting deregulation in Swedish university legislation.

In examining and analysing the circumstances surrounding each of these leadership challenges we show that there are varying perspectives and attitudes of leadership in competition within them. These are differences that matter and by sorting these differences and arranging them so that they attentively expose assumptions about leadership and team dynamics, it may be possible to resolve, or to live with, work with and lead these challenges. There are assumptions about leadership with a functionalist partiality, with the intention and instrumental interest of control. There are other assumptions about leadership with an interpretive preference, with the aim or hope of understanding. The holding capacity of a critical position in relationship to both of these sets of assumptions could be considered a fundamental element of leadership, in practice as well as in theory.

The added value of the conception of *both/and*, and *holding* is that they accentuate, in the face of challenges to leadership, the need for an answer to why there is leadership. Challenging situations in organizations typically call for leadership. Therefore, they supply the favourable circumstances, for both investigators and practitioners, to reflect upon what kind of relations of authority would be most valuable. When there are several different viewpoints of leadership to consider, a reflective perspective will uncover the assumptions behind the alternative model and evaluate them. When pressure increases to choose either one or the other, with different consequences for one or the other, a critical leadership position (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) is well placed to balance, to think and work out ways to identify, manage and hold the differences, not necessarily choosing any of them at the expense of the others. The findings of these studies encourage reflection, in the face of challenges, about what kind of leadership and authority is preferred. If there is a lesson to be found in the work with these four case studies, then it is this: they stimulate an ongoing reflection about how to design and hold processes of tension, of differences that matter.

Conclusion and implications in practice

Flyvbjerg (2001) argues for making social science matter. He uses Aristotle's concept for context-dependent knowledge – *phronesis* – as an ideal for the study of human affairs where predictive theories and universals cannot be found. He holds that concrete, context-dependent knowledge is, therefore, more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals. And, case studies produce precisely context-dependent knowledge which will promote learning. The whole point of social studies is to enter into dialogue with individuals and society and to assist them, after they have assisted the researcher, in reflecting on their values and processes (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

The four case studies in this thesis are independently conceived and executed. Now, when folded together into the envelope of this thesis they offer a meta-perspective, where connections to the broader picture of leadership differences and tensions in the academic organization has been made. The knowledge generated by these studies covers important content matters in the dynamic social processes of organizations, particularly those matters that are related to influence and leading, and particularly in situations when existing conditions are challenged. The studies here indicate the importance of calling these matters to attention in order to resolve, or work and live with, intricate and many-faceted circumstances. One important reason why the process dynamics eludes attention in the midst of problem-solving and challenging situations is that this particular focus is dependent on the capacity to hold emotion without becoming upset by it (French & Simpson, 2015). The contribution of this thesis is a recognition of social, structural and developmental dimensions contained in the process dynamics of a series of leadership challenges, tensions between them, and a proposal of approaching them in a holding manner.

Figuratively, it is possible to see a parallel process. Like an academic teacher or a researcher who comes new into a leadership position in the university, and immediately becomes immersed in the conflicting dynamics of the differences of leadership practices there, these four studies find themselves in the highly diversified and conflicting scholarly discourse of leadership in general, and of academic leadership in particular. A challenge worthy of an exploration like this.

The step-by-step line of reasoning emerging from considering the four case studies together can be summarized:

1. The relationship between task and process is in focus in these leadership challenges. Instead of attempting a general definition of "academic leadership", I study leadership in relationship to its task and context.

2. It is in the process dimensions of situations that the question of leadership resides. If leadership is a certain kind of organizing activity (Hosking, 1988), this is where influence, authority, leading plays a role.

3. Ordinarily, those who work in the university experience problem-solving situations where there is available assorted models of leadership, a situation of discursive hybridization (Crevani, et al. 2015).

4. This is acceptable in times of relative calm waters, when there are enough resources to deal with the issues. But when stress occurs, tension mounts between the different models of leadership (Smith & Lewis, 2011). The task becomes a challenge.

5. This kind of tension can be understood in terms of polarities (Johnson, 1996) – problems to be solved or problems to be lived and lead – or organizational paradoxes (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

6. With this explanation, an analysis based on conceptions of both/and, holding and the psychoanalytic room of Modell (1990) becomes interesting and useful for interpreting pressing situations for leaders/leadership challenges. Different leadership notions are constructed in the leadership challenges. They can be identified and I refrain from talking in general terms of leadership, as well as I refrain from critically evaluating one or the other of them. In this thesis the diversity is endorsed, as well as the practice of attention and holding in interpreting what goes on.

Furthermore, on the practical side, with these case studies I hope to contribute to a new work mode in relationship to leadership challenges. In this thesis, leadership environments, in the face of challenging tasks, are advised to allot time and a space for reflecting and understanding differences in leadership approaches embedded in these challenges. Furthermore, these environments are urged to not reject, demean or critically set aside the differences in ideas and implementations of leadership in situations of change and challenges, but rather to identify, acknowledge, and treat them with respect. From there this process makes it possible to create a space that can hold the differences that matter, explore them and subsequently design and put in motion a process towards specific, novel and perhaps unique ways to resolve the issue.

Prospects for future research

There is a general, and important, value in investigating the everyday practice of academic leadership. Besides contributing to the scholarship of academic leadership, such studies can improve the conditions for creating productive and rewarding citizenship in academia. In such an enterprise, case studies and action research can contribute with context-sensitive and critical reflections on the number of reforms, change projects and discourses that continuously take place. It is both beneficial and profitable to find scholarly or professional means of reflecting on our own practice.

Pursuing the line of inquiry in the studies I present here, there is an abundance of possible leadership environments to study. Within academia, where horizontal and vertical tensions, for instance partisanship between disciplines, faculties, departments, and levels and "rooms" of influence, play out during the launching of organizational change projects. And, perhaps even more interestingly, differences in the seams between academia and surrounding stake holder organizations, where leadership ideals and practices presumably compete and need to be held and reconciled.

Even though the detection of possible gender differences were beyond the analytical scope of this thesis, such studies deserve further attention in future research on academic leadership in Sweden. For instance, by studying leadership challenges of holding contesting attitudes, logics and actions from a gender-sensitive perspective, there may be ways revealed to meet the urgency of studies, and change, in this field (Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2016).

In the area of conflicts and relational toxicity on the "shop-floor" of teaching and research in the university, there is so much more to be explored and learned as an extension of the small case study in this thesis. How does formal leadership think, feel, and act to prevent and resolve this kind of strife in their environments? How is the tension between intellectual brilliance and eccentric behaviours negotiated and contained ordinarily in their organisations, and how do they react when serious breaches occur? Similarly, more studies are in demand with regard to the potential of understanding, and even managing and using disharmonies in creative knowledge environments.

All this to enrich the research field of leadership studies, which in the end may develop leadership practice as well.

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Leadership Challenges in Academia

Eventful challenges are intellectually compelling to study, in that they stand out as different from the background of the common everyday practice of leading. Through four case studies, this doctoral thesis focuses on leadership challenges in academia. An analysis of the cases shows that the challenges contain various notions and practices of leading that reach a state of tension or conflict with one another in stressful situations. These tensions are here understood as organisational paradoxes, i.e. problems that cannot be solved but can be lived and led. The findings also suggest that a both/and approach, and the psychoanalytic concept of holding can be helpful in an understanding of leading towards constructive outcomes of these leadership challenges.

Thomas Sewerin has 45 years of experience working with teaching and consulting in the field of leadership, team and organizational development. In this doctoral thesis, he links the the learnings from his own business practice with the generous and plentiful world of knowledge and rigour that the university and research offer.