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Leadership Without Guarantee

The Significance of Leadership for Motivation in a Voluntary Temporary Organization

by

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Happy reading!

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Abstract

Title	Leading Without Guarantee <i>The Significance of Leadership for Motivation in a Voluntary Temporary Organization</i>
Course	BUSN49 - Degree Project in Managing People, Knowledge and Change
Authors	Sophie Linder & Amanda Nilsson
Supervisor	Stefan Sveningsson
Purpose	The purpose of this study is to explore leadership's significance in practice when it comes to creating and sustaining motivation, using Lundakarnevalen as its empirical case.
Methodology	The study is constructed from a social constructionist perspective with an abductive approach. 14 semi-structured interviews with managers and committee members of Lundakarnevalen were conducted in line with a qualitative research method.
Theoretical Framing	This study is situated within the context of voluntary and temporary organizations which are presented. Furthermore, the study draws on theories of motivation, with a focus on interactive motivation, alongside a wide range of leadership frameworks. These are complemented by critical perspectives on leader-centric assumptions, as well as identity theory including identity regulation and social identity theory.
Contributions	This study contributes to the literature on leadership in relation to motivation, by challenging the leader-centric assumption embedded in many leadership theories. It shows that motivation in interactive settings is not primarily produced by leaders, but is also shaped by factors such as tradition, collective identity, and organizational context. The study therefore calls for a shift in focus from what leaders do to how leadership is interpreted and shaped within its broader context.
Keywords	Voluntary organization, temporary organization, motivation, leadership, identity, interactive motivation.

List of Definitions

Participant	Anyone participating in the Lundakarneval.
Karnevalist	Anyone participating in the Lundakarneval at the lowest hierarchical level.
Sittning	Student banquet / dinner party.
Karnevelj	Lundakarnevalen's large sittning.
Nation	Student associations, includes student pubs and clubs.
Magaluf Promoter	Someone who promotes bars and clubs by soliciting guests while creating a good atmosphere by appearing happy, hyped, and excited.
Novice	A new student in Lund who participates in a welcoming-period.
Fadder	Someone who is responsible for the novices during the welcoming-period.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	6
List of Tables.....	6
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1 Background.....	7
1.2 Problematization.....	8
1.3 Purpose and Research Question.....	10
1.4 Disposition.....	10
2. Reviewing the Literature.....	12
2.1 Temporary Organizations.....	12
2.2 Voluntary Organizations.....	13
2.3 Motivation.....	14
2.3.1 Motivational Sources.....	14
2.3.2 Work Motivation in Voluntary Settings.....	15
2.4 Leadership.....	17
2.4.1 Leadership Approaches.....	17
2.4.2 A More Critical View.....	21
2.5 Identity.....	22
2.6 The Study's Positioning.....	24
3. Method.....	25
3.1 Research Approach.....	25
3.2 Choice of Study Objects.....	26
3.3 Collection of Empirical Data.....	27
3.4 The Analysis Process.....	28
3.5 Limitations and Threats to Validity.....	30
3.6 AI-usage.....	32
4. Empirical Findings.....	33
4.1 Motivational Drivers.....	33
4.1.1 History and Tradition.....	33
4.1.2 Being Part of a Community.....	37
4.1.3 Limited Access to Information.....	40
4.1.4 Meaningfulness.....	42
4.1.5 Summary of Motivational Drivers.....	45
4.2 How Do Leaders Sustain Motivation?.....	47
4.2.1 Leveraging History and Tradition.....	47
4.2.2 The Creation of the Community.....	49
4.2.3 Leveraging Limited Information.....	53

4.2.4 Making the Role Meaningful.....	56
4.2.5 Summary of Leadership's Role in Sustaining Motivation.....	60
4.3 Summary of Empirical Findings.....	61
5. Discussion.....	63
5.1 The Significance of Leadership for Motivation in Practice.....	63
5.1.1 History and Tradition.....	63
5.1.2 Being Part of a Community.....	65
5.1.3 Limited Access to Information.....	67
5.1.4 Meaningfulness.....	69
5.2 The Leader-Centric Assumption and Its Limits.....	71
6. Conclusion.....	77
6.1 Summary of Key Findings & Contributions of the Study.....	77
6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research.....	79
7. References.....	81
Appendix A.....	86
Appendix B.....	87

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1</i>	Lundakarnevalen's Organizational Chart
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List of Tables

<i>Table 1</i>	<i>Motivation: Sources and Tensions</i>
<i>Table 2</i>	<i>Leadership: Sustaining Motivation</i>
<i>Table 3</i>	<i>Motivational Drivers and the Significance of Leadership for Motivation</i>

1. Introduction

The first chapter introduces the study and establishes its relevance. It opens in section 1.1 with background information to provide the context of the study. Section 1.2 problematizes the existing literature, and identifies the study's research problem. Section 1.3 presents the study's purpose and research question. The chapter closes with a disposition outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background

Everyday, millions of people around the world choose to invest their time and effort into collective endeavors that offer no financial return: And yet, they keep showing up. According to the United Nations Volunteers (2025, p.42), approximately 2.1 billion people, that is about one third of the world's working-age population, engage in some form of volunteering over the course of a year. Voluntary work constitutes a fundamental pillar of modern society, and sustains everything from local sports clubs and humanitarian organizations to large scale cultural events. Behind this remarkable societal phenomenon lies the question of what motivates people to commit, and what keeps them engaged?

This question is not only about individuals and their inner drives. It is also about the people around them, and in particular those who lead. Smirchich (1982, p.257) suggests that leadership shapes the way we understand the nature of organized action and its possibilities. In any collective endeavor, leaders shape the experience of participation. They communicate what the work means, they recognize effort, and they create the conditions under which people feel that showing up is worthwhile. In voluntary settings, where participation is freely given and freely withdrawn, this becomes especially important. Motivation must in some meaningful sense be created, and leadership is one way in which that creation happens (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.9).

It is within this landscape that we situate our study of Lundakarnevalen. Every four years, thousands of students in Lund, Sweden organize one of the largest student events in the world. Rooted in a tradition stretching back to 1849, when students from Småland's nation paraded through the city streets dressed for a rural wedding, the carnival has grown from a small

spontaneous celebration into an organized spectacle spanning performances, films, parades, and games across an entire city (Lundakarnevalen, 2026). Remarkably, Lundakarnevalen is considered the second largest volunteer event in the world, surpassed only by the Olympic Games (Lundakarnevalen, 2026). The 2026 edition, taking place at the end of May, mobilized no fewer than 8,735 volunteers, all (except for the committee consisting of 10 people) working without pay, within a time-limited organization that ceases to exist once the carnival closes its gates. As such, the temporary engagement among participants spans from a year and a half among committee members, to three months among Karnevalists.

What makes Lundakarnevalen a particularly compelling case is not just its scale, but its temporary nature. In contrast to a permanent organization, the carnival's four-year cycle means that institutional memory is always at risk of being lost, and that each new generation of organizers must rebuild the motivational foundation from scratch. This poses yet another challenge to those leading and aiming to sustain motivation within the carnival. How leaders navigate this contextual landscape in order to motivate the participants is therefore yet to be discovered.

1.2 Problematicization

The practical significance of how motivation is created and sustained in voluntary organizations has resulted in a large body of literature on the subject (Pearce, 1993; Clary et al., 1996). This research has generated valuable insights into why people choose to volunteer, identifying a range of entry motives including altruism, social connection, alignment with organizational goals as well as more egoistic motives (Pearce, 1993; Clary et al., 1996; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Pfeiffer, 2016). While focus seems to be on reasons for joining, less research has been done on how motivation is sustained once volunteers are already involved (Pearce, 1993, p.62).

Leadership has been mentioned as one mechanism for sustaining motivation. Alvesson et al. (2017, p.9) argue that leadership operates through voluntary compliance, where people follow not out of obligation or fear, but because leaders provide a meaningful sense of purpose and direction that forms the basis for motivation in work tasks. Yet despite its apparent relevance, the role of leadership in motivating volunteers remains a surprisingly understudied area. As Dwyer et al. (2013, p.182) note, despite a large literature on the consequences of effective leadership on

employee outcomes, little research has examined how leadership influences volunteers' attitudes and behaviors. Where leadership in voluntary settings has been studied, charismatic, transformational and servant leadership have received the most attention, resulting in an increased focus on follower experience, intrinsic motivation, and value alignment (Pearce, 1993; Schneider & George, 2011; Chen et al., 2015). However, even this research has largely viewed motivation as the result of a specific leadership approach, while giving little attention to how volunteers themselves interpret and contribute to the leadership dynamic.

Additionally, the role of organizational context and conditions in shaping this relationship has been given little attention. Some of the largest volunteer events in the world, such as the Olympic Games, are temporary, with most volunteers only involved for the duration of the event (Green & Chalip, 2004). However, little attention has been paid to how this temporary nature affects motivation and the conditions for sustaining it. Most leadership theories are built on the assumption of fairly stable and continuous organizational environments, which means they partly neglect the important characteristics that distinguish temporary settings (Tyssen et al., 2013, p.52). Defined by a pre-defined limited period of interaction between members, they are characterized by discontinuous personal constellations, a lack of organizational routines, and authority structures that are more informal (Tyssen et al., 2013, p.52). Research on temporary organizations has concentrated mainly on settings where formal authority and material compensation remain available even if the organizational structure is time-limited, with focus falling on challenges tied to the absence of long-term institutional anchoring (Tyssen et al., 2013, p.52), rather than the absence of monetary incentives. In combination, a complex environment emerges.

When a voluntary and a temporary nature is combined, the motivational foundation becomes considerably more complex. Leaders in such settings cannot rely on financial reward, long-term career incentives, or established organizational routines to sustain engagement. Because volunteers can withdraw their service at will, motivation becomes crucial. Consequently, leadership may in fact play an even greater role in sustaining individuals' involvement than in conventional organizational contexts (Dwyer et al., 2013, p.182). Yet what remains unaddressed is how the contextual conditions under which leadership operates shape the very practices through which motivation is sustained.

The intersection in which Lundakarnevalen is situated; a voluntary, temporary organization that somehow succeeds in mobilizing nearly 9,000 unpaid participants makes it a practically relevant case, as well as theoretically underexplored. The significance of leadership for motivation in such a context is a question that existing research cannot adequately answer.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to explore what significance leadership has in creating and sustaining motivation in a voluntary, temporary organization. This study is empirically driven, proceeding from the understanding that motivation and leadership in such settings cannot be adequately captured through deductive or quantitative approaches. We therefore conduct a qualitative study, grounded in the case of Lundakarnevalen, to develop a contextually sensitive understanding of these dynamics. In doing so, we complement existing research, which has largely focused on entry motivation, stable organizational environments, and leadership styles in isolation, with insights from an organizational context that is both voluntary and temporary.

Our study aims to contribute on two levels. Theoretically, we seek to advance understanding of how motivation is created and sustained in relation to the organizational context, and how leadership practices are both conditioned by and responsive to the specific organizational environment in which they operate.

Practically, the study offers insights into how leaders can mobilize and engage participants in settings characterized by temporary structures and lack of formal incentives. Accordingly, the research proposal addresses the following research question:

What is the significance of leadership for motivation in a voluntary temporary organization?

1.4 Disposition

This study is divided into six chapters. **Chapter 1** has provided the background to the research topic and Lundakarnevalen, while outlining the research problem and the study's practical and theoretical relevance. **Chapter 2** reviews existing research on temporary and voluntary organizations, motivation, leadership, and identity to build the analytical foundation of the study.

Thereafter **Chapter 3** details the research approach as well as the methodological choices made in collecting and analyzing the empirical material, including reflections on trustworthiness and the use of AI throughout the process. **Chapter 4** presents the empirical findings, organized around how motivation and leadership are experienced within Lundakarnevalen. **Chapter 5** then brings these findings into dialogue with the literature, discussing what they reveal both within this specific context and on a broader theoretical level, leading to identification of challenges that cannot be explained by existing literature. Finally, **Chapter 6** combines the key insights, addresses the research question, reflects on the study's limitations and suggests future research.

2. Reviewing the Literature

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical foundation of this study to provide context and understanding for the reader. This will further be used as a point of reference for the discussion in Chapter 5. We begin by briefly introducing the context in which Lundakarnevalen operates; temporary and voluntary organizations, before examining theories of motivation both generally and in relation to voluntary settings. Leadership frameworks are then reviewed, moving from classic approaches toward more relational and critical perspectives. The concept of identity is introduced as a complementary lens for understanding how individuals relate to their work and the organization they are part of. Lastly, we present the study's positioning.

2.1 Temporary Organizations

Most organization theory assumes that organizations are, or should be permanent (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p.437). However, not all organizations are. *Temporary organizations*, as defined by Bakker (2010, p.468), is “a set of organizational actors working together on a complex task over a limited period of time”. Lundin & Söderholm (1995, p.438) suggests that the time limitation characterizing such organizations may be the most powerful way of creating urgency among its members. While the time limits in temporary organizations stimulates urgency, it may also lead to feelings of stress and insufficiency (Miles, 1964; Palisi 1970 both cited in Packendorff, 1995, p.327). Tyssen et al. (2013, p.53) further identify several challenges inherent to temporary organizations, including the difficulty of building trust and shared norms within a compressed timeframe, ambiguous authority structures, heterogeneous and frequently changing team compositions, and the demand for creativity and autonomous decision-making that comes with unique, uncertain tasks.

Temporary organizations are widely studied through the lens of project management, and much of the theoretical development in this area has emerged from the literature on projects (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995; Packendorff, 1995; Engwall, 2003; Grabher, 2004). Engwall (2003, p.790) challenges the tendency to treat projects as isolated from their history and surrounding context. He shows that project outcomes are often determined not only by what happens inside the

project, but by how well it fits within its organizational and institutional environment (Engwall, 2003, p.801). This refers to both external contingencies such as uncertainty, complexity, and resource availability, as well as institutional aspects of the environment, including the traditions, norms, and taken-for-granted procedures of the organization (Scott & Meyer, 1994; Galbraith, 1973; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Woodward, 1965 all cited in Engwall, 2003, p.790). Similarly, Grabher (2004, p.468) argues that projects should not be taken out of context, as doing so overlooks their history, social and spatial embeddedness, noting that projects are “*inextricably interwoven with an organizational and social context that provides key resources for expertise, reputations and legitimization*”. Understanding any temporary organization hence requires attention to the broader context in which it is embedded.

2.2 Voluntary Organizations

Voluntary organizations, often referred to as nonprofits or NGOs, encompass a wide range of entities, from social welfare institutions and self-help groups to advocacy associations and youth clubs (Pearce, 1993, pp.4, 16). Despite this diversity, a common denominator is their reliance on voluntary participation rather than formal employment relationships. Volunteers contribute their time freely in pursuit of collective or social goals, typically within organizational contexts characterized by limited resources, limited knowledge, and high levels of ambiguity (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008, p.68).

In contrast to traditional employment settings, volunteer work is distinguished by the absence of financial compensation (Pearce, 1993, pp.9-10). This, together with the common part-time or discretionary basis of the commitments, leads to a limited ability to enforce expectations regarding attendance or performance. Pfeiffer (2016, p.31) further suggests that the conditions of voluntary work creates a fragile and challenging management context, as volunteers cannot easily be directed through formal authority, bureaucratic procedures, or technical control mechanisms. Given these structural differences and the lack of extrinsic rewards, motivation has become a central and widely discussed aspect of voluntary work (Clary et al., 1996; Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Pearce, 1993).

2.3 Motivation

2.3.1 Motivational Sources

Motivation is a key concept in both management theory and the study of human behavior within organizations. It deals with how behavior is energized, steered, sustained, and capable of reaching the same outcome through different paths (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.69). Hallonsten and Sveningsson (2025, p.180) similarly frame motivation as the drive people have for engaging with and performing tasks. The most prominent consequence of motivation is the fact that it leads to action and production, making it a target among leaders and managers within organizations (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.69).

A common distinction within motivation literature is that between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation. As the word suggests, intrinsic motivation refers to engagement driven by an inherent interest, satisfaction, or enjoyment for the activity itself (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.71). Contrastingly, extrinsic motivation refers to activities performed with the aim of reaching a desired outcome beyond the activity itself (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.71). While they differ in where the drive to act originates, research demonstrates that there is a level of causality. Stemming from a combination of studies, Ryan and Deci (2000, p.70) argue that intrinsic motivation tends to be undermined by the use of extrinsic rewards as it shifts the perceived origin of one's behaviors. That is not to say that extrinsic motivation is inherently bad. On the contrary, under the right conditions, it can be progressively internalized until it comes to feel genuinely self-authored (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.71).

The *Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*, developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), is an influential framework for understanding these dynamics. It is functionalistic by nature, and while we do not adopt its causal assumptions in this study, it provides a useful lens for understanding how individuals relate to their work and what conditions tend to support their motivation. SDT stems from the assumption that we as humans have three needs that, when fulfilled, create a strong basis for self-motivation. They thereby argue that *competence*, *relatedness*, and *autonomy* are crucial in creating the optimal arena for growth, social development, and personal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.68). Competence refers to the individuals need to feel capable of

mastering challenges within their environment. Relatedness is the need to feel connected to others, to experience a sense of belonging. Lastly, autonomy refers to the need to experience one's actions as self-endorsed and voluntary. If an environment where these needs are fulfilled is successfully created, individuals will thrive and motivation increase. When prevented, however, motivation is likely to diminish.

2.3.2 Work Motivation in Voluntary Settings

Building on motivational research, Pinder defines *work motivation* as “*a set of forces, either weak or strong, to initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behavior*” (1984 cited in Pearce, 1993, p.61). Research on such work motivation traditionally focuses on performance and retention, comparable to what Hallonsten and Sveningsson (2025, p.170) refer to as *instrumental motivation* based on rewards and punishments. Such mechanisms, however, are largely absent in voluntary work settings. Unpaid workers may therefore experience an insufficient work justification, suggesting a need for development of highly positive attitudes toward the work itself in order to justify it (Pearce, 1993, p.91). Motivation stemming from individual needs, *inner*, or the interplay between people, *interactive* (Hallonsten & Sveningsson, 2025, p.170), may hence be more relevant in voluntary settings.

Interactive motivation, as described by Alvesson and Kärreman (2019, pp.303-307), regards the social and relational dimensions of work, suggesting that motivation arises from the ongoing interplay between the individual and their environment (2019, p.299). This form of motivation is primarily shaped by three factors: *norms*, *the rule of reciprocity*, and *identity*. Norms establish shared standards for behavior, and individuals are often motivated to align with these patterns in order to feel a sense of belonging and avoid social sanctions (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, p.303). The rule of reciprocity introduces a moral dimension. When an organization provides non-monetary benefits such as freedom or a supportive social climate, individuals often feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate through extra effort or loyalty (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, p.304). Identity acts as perhaps the most powerful of the three, as an individual's self-conception shapes what actions feel natural or appropriate in a given context (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, pp.304-305). Together, these factors were shown to be particularly evident in organizations with strong cultures, where shared values and social bonds sustain a collective sense of purpose and

commitment that goes beyond simple economic incentives (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, pp.321-322).

Drawing on previous studies, Pearce (1993, p.76) similarly identifies three primary incentives for volunteering; *altruism*, *social contact*, and *purposive motives*. The first, altruistic, incentive is about *volunteering to serve*, stemming from a desire to help others, contribute to a social good or fulfill a sense of civic or moral duty. Secondly, the social incentives are about *volunteering as a social act*, meaning that motivation stems from enjoyment of social interactions such as the sharing of common experiences, a sense of community (Pearce, 1993, pp.78-79). Lastly, the purposive motive entails *volunteering to further organizational goals*, where volunteers want to achieve the same objectives as the organization, and therefore get involved (Pearce, 1993, p.80).

Complementing this, Pfeiffer (2016, p.34) draws attention to *egoistic motives* as a further dimension of volunteer motivation, arguing that volunteering serves individual needs for self-actualization and self-esteem. She highlights how recognition plays a particularly important role in this regard. When volunteers feel seen and valued, gaining social approval, it fosters both emotional attachment to the organization and a sense of moral responsibility to perform well (Pfeiffer, 2016, p.34).

Another interesting insight is that motivation in organizations is not static but rather something that develops and shifts over time (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Pearce, 1993). Ryan and Deci (2000, p.71) describe *internalization* as a process that unfolds gradually, as external reasons for behavior are progressively taken in and *integrated* with the person's broader values and sense of self. This process is facilitated by social contexts that satisfy the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Pearce (1983 cited in Pearce 1993, p.77) offers a complementary perspective, noting that the motives people report for joining organizations often shift substantially once they are inside them. No matter the entry motives, social motives or the increased importance of making an impact in line with the organization's goals seem to take over as time passes. What initially attracts is not always what sustains.

2.4 Leadership

2.4.1 Leadership Approaches

A central challenge for managers in voluntary organizations is the limited scope of traditional managerial control. Because volunteers are unpaid and engaged by free will, managers lack the financial and coercive instruments available in paid work contexts. Volunteer-management scholars describe this through the “free will proposition”: the idea that people volunteer out of individual choice rather than external pressure (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002 cited in Pfeiffer, 2016, p.18). As a consequence, volunteers cannot simply be “commanded” and securing their continuous engagement and enthusiasm remains a persistent managerial problem (Pfeiffer, 2016, p.18).

Leadership can be understood as a relational and processual phenomenon. It is an asymmetrical relationship in which leaders attempt to define meaning and reality for others, who on a largely voluntary basis accept such influence (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.8). This includes not only driving change but also maintaining morale, shaping values, and influencing emotions in everyday organizational life (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.9). People follow because leadership offers guidance that feels meaningful, emotionally compelling, and morally convincing. It is this quality that connects leadership to motivation. By providing a sense of purpose that makes specific tasks feel worthwhile, leadership becomes a basis for sustained motivation rather than merely a mechanism for control (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.9).

One of the earliest approaches to leadership is the *trait approach*, which sought to identify the traits and skills that distinguish effective leaders from ineffective ones (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.28). Rooted in the “great man” view, it assumes that leadership qualities are relatively stable characteristics inherent to individuals, such as confidence and assertiveness (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.28). Although its relevance remains debated, the approach has strongly influenced later theories. A common critique, however, is that it pays limited attention to the conditions under which certain traits contribute to effective leadership (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.30).

Partly in response to these limitations, leadership research in the 1950s shifted focus toward leaders’ behaviors and styles in relation to subordinates (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.30). Known as

the *style approach*, it mainly distinguishes between task-oriented leadership, focused on performance and results, and relationship-oriented leadership, emphasizing well-being and recognition (Katz & Kahn, 1952 cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.30). A common critique is that this approach oversimplifies leadership by treating styles as stable despite their dependence on context and situation (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.32-33).

The *situational approach* emphasises that effective leadership depends on the context and situation. Two influential perspectives are the situational theory of leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982 cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.33) and contingency theory (Fiedler, 1967 cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.33). Situational leadership argues that appropriate leadership styles depend on subordinates' maturity, including their competence and confidence (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982 cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.33). Contingency theory, similar to the style approach, distinguishes between task- and relationship-oriented leadership, but focuses on how situational factors shape a leader's ability to exert influence (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.35). Together, these theories suggest that effective leaders adapt their style to the situation. However, the drawbacks are that it is difficult to switch, it can appear inconsistent and it assumes that it is only the leader who can decide what type of leadership is needed, thereby largely overlooking the perspective of the subordinates (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.36).

Since the 1980s, a shift occurred toward *symbolic* forms of leadership, addressing meaning, values, and identification rather than tasks and people alone (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.36). Symbolic leadership can be seen as an extension of the relationship-oriented style approach, appealing to emotions and morale to inspire identification with the organization, its vision, culture and loyalty to its leaders embodying this vision (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.37). An important aspect of symbolic leadership is hence the embodiment of the vision and leading by example (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.37).

Two common and widely studied forms of symbolic leadership are *charismatic* and *transformational* leadership. Charismatic leadership relies on strong rhetoric and symbolic communication, including metaphors, narratives, and cultural symbols to inspire emotional commitment and organizational identification (Bryman, cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.37). Pearce (1993, p.131) highlights the particular importance of charismatic leadership in volunteer-staffed organizations, where members are free from formal hierarchical commands and

therefore rely on the personal qualities of leaders for guidance and direction. It is not surprising that such leadership has been emphasized in volunteer literature as a compelling vision is especially important in these organizations, where shared belief in the organization's purpose is often a central reason for volunteering (Pearce 1993, p.80). In such contexts, effective charismatic leaders were found to combine a compelling personal vision for the organization's mission with technical expertise and a self-sacrificing "martyr" image (Pearce, 1993, p.134).

Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to transcend their own self-interest in pursuit of higher collective purposes (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.39). According to Bass (1985 cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.40), transformational leaders motivate people to do more than they initially intended, accomplished through three mechanisms: raising followers' awareness of the value of intended outcomes and how to reach them; encouraging subordinates to transcend their individual interests for the sake of the group or organization; and triggering inner motivation by enticing feelings of participation and self-actualization, moving upwards on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In doing so, self-confidence and people's belief in the possibility of reaching desired outcomes are also targeted, with the overall aim of motivating subordinates to "*go the extra mile in order to do an extraordinarily good job*" (Bass, 1985 cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.40). Transformational leaders seek to achieve voluntary commitment by shaping followers' thinking, emotions, and sense of identity, influencing how people perceive what is meaningful and worth striving for (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.41).

Transformational leadership has also been compared to *servant leadership* by Schneider and George (2011) to find the better explanation for volunteer commitment. Their study acts as an extension of Spears' (1998 cited in Schneider & George, 2011, p.63) argument that servant leadership outperforms transformational leadership specifically in non-profit contexts, where volunteers cannot be motivated by organizational imperatives alone. For the comparison, they draw a clear distinction between the two leadership styles. Where transformational leadership mobilizes followers through vision and inspiration, servant leadership redirects the relationship, placing service to followers as the first priority (2011, pp.61-63). Eva et al. (2019, p.113) also compare the two, suggesting that the psychological needs of followers are treated as the goal in servant leadership while being secondary in transformational. Although both types of leadership were expected to be applicable in a voluntary context, Schneider and George's findings, aligned

with that of Spears, concluded that servant leadership may be more suited, partially due to the consequentially increased empowerment (2011, p.74).

Moreover, Chen et al. (2015, pp.513-514) find that because servant leaders treat followers as capable, trustworthy partners rather than subordinates, followers internalize that belief in their own competence, resulting in higher self-efficacy than transformational leadership tends to produce. The servant leader's acceptance and willingness to invest in each follower communicates that they are already valued which simultaneously strengthens their sense of belonging to the group. Chen et al. (2015) thereby also conclude that servant leadership is more influential than transformational leadership. They also add that it produces these outcomes above and beyond the influence of transformational leadership, suggesting that the relational quality cannot be replicated by inspiration alone (2015, p.517).

A more recent attempt to systematize the varieties of leadership work is the *5P framework* proposed by Alvesson et al. (2017, p.109), which identifies five key work areas through which leaders seek to influence the meaning and reality of followers. Rather than presenting fixed leadership types, the framework highlights different priority work areas that leaders may draw upon, recognizing that most leaders engage in several of them to varying degrees and at different times depending on the situation (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.110).

The first type of leadership work, *prophesying*, centres on formulating and communicating a compelling vision or overarching cause that goes beyond the immediate task at hand. The vision is intended to provide followers with a sense of meaning, common purpose and identity, and ideally guides their actions and decision-making without the need for direct instruction (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.111). *Preaching* involves influencing the values and morals that guide everyday organizational life. Here the leader takes on a pastor-like role, emphasizing integrity, ethical standards and a sense of higher purpose in order to inspire trust, reciprocity and identification among followers (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.115). Third, *psychotherapeutic intervention* targets followers' emotional well-being and inner life. Drawing on the idea that employees who feel recognized and emotionally supported perform better, this form of leadership involves listening, sensing moods, alleviating stress and adding encouragement and meaning to work tasks (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.119). The fourth type, *party-hosting*, aims at

creating a positive social atmosphere and a sense of belonging in the workplace. Through informal interaction, humor, social events and acts of recognition, the leader seeks to raise spirits, foster commitment and build loyalty among followers (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.123). Finally, *pedagogical work* focuses on supporting learning and development, both at the individual and organizational level. The leader acts as a teacher or coach, helping followers understand their work, clarify expectations and develop new competencies, thereby contributing to long-term organizational renewal and adaptability (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.127).

2.4.2 A More Critical View

Despite the considerable theoretical progress reflected in these leadership traditions, there is a remaining tension regarding the placement of the individual leader at the center. Haslam et al. (2024) criticizes this tendency by emphasizing how empirical research challenges these assumptions, yet they are still being used rather than complemented. In their critique, they group the assumptions together into what they call *zombie leadership*, pointing toward ideas that are “*dead but still walking*” (Haslam et al., 2024, p.3).

Within zombie leadership, eight axioms are presented, among which several can be identified in the theories presented in this literature review (Haslam et al., 2024, pp.4-8). The first three all concern the individual leader, suggesting that leadership is only about leaders and that there are specific traits and behaviors that make leaders great. The notion that leaders possess specific qualities that set them apart, central to the traits theory, is challenged by evidence that perceived leadership greatness depends on the relationship between leader and follower and its social context rather than on fixed individual attributes. Similarly, the idea that effective leaders enact specific behaviors, which reinforces both the style and situational approaches, is complicated by the idea that what counts as appropriate behavior varies fundamentally across groups and contexts. Even transformational leadership, which moves beyond such behavioral guidelines toward vision and inspiration, is affected by this critique. By framing the leader as the source of meaning, identity, and motivation for followers, it risks reproducing the leader-centrism that limits earlier theories.

The remaining five axioms extend these claims by suggesting that there is universal consensus about what good leadership looks like, that leadership skills are transferable across any context,

that leadership is an elite and exclusive activity, that it is always beneficial to everyone, and that people are incapable of functioning without it. However, Haslam et al. (2024) argue that, in reality, perceived greatness reflects shared values of the followers rather than an objective truth. They further suggest that leadership is shaped by specific social and contextual factors, meaning there is no universal best practice.

As a result, leadership needs to be reoriented to understand it as a collective and relational process rather than an individual one, in which group members' contributions are recognized instead of attributed to the leader (Haslam et al., 2024, p.3).

2.5 Identity

In understanding and explaining everything and anything regarding organizations, Brown (2015, p.20) suggests a need for understanding people's identities. Albert and Whetten (1985 cited in Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, p.712) explain identity as "*the characteristics, the coherence, and the distinctiveness of a person, group, or organization*". In order to create such identities, individuals have to make sense of themselves through a process commonly known as *identity work*, referring to the ways individuals shape and maintain identities that align with their self-image (Snow & Anderson, 1987 cited in Brown, 2021, p.1206). At its core, identity work is driven by fundamental questions such as "who am I?" and "who do I want to become?", making it a key process in providing the sense of meaning that makes a life feel coherent and purposeful (Frankl, 1959 cited in Brown, 2021, p.1206).

Despite identity being about the individual, it is seldom constructed in isolation. Identity scholars have consistently emphasized that the self takes shape through dialogue and social interactions (Brown, 2021, pp.1214-1215). Hence, external forces such as organizational powers can be of influence in how individuals make sense of themselves. Accordingly, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) introduce the concept of *identity regulation*, which extends the notion of identity work to account for the ways in which organizations actively attempt to steer how employees understand themselves.

Deetz (1995 cited in Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.620) argues that modern management is increasingly concerned with directing workers' inner worlds rather than simply their outward

behavior. When employees come to strongly identify with the organization in this way, the range of decisions and choices they feel are open to them narrows, since their sense of who they are becomes bound up with organizational membership and its associated expectations (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985 cited in Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.3). Identity regulation, then, represents a particularly discreet but powerful form of organizational control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.622). Among the several modes of identity regulation, two are tied to social relations. One suggests that identity is shaped by group belonging and affiliation (2002, p.630). In other words, a person may come to define themselves through the social group they belong to. The other points to regulation through status based on where in the hierarchy you are positioned (2002, p.631).

Both social relational aspects of identity regulation are closely related to Tajfel and Turner's (2004, p.16) *Social Identity Theory*, which indicates that individuals derive part of their self concept from their membership in social groups. Despite it being a functionalist theory, it can be used as an interpretative lens to understand how belonging and group membership shape the meanings individuals attach to their participation, rather than to establish causal relationships. At the heart of the theory, Tajfel described social identity as an *"individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership"* (1972 cited in Hogg, 2016, p.6). Groups are formed through a process of social categorization, in which people mentally cluster themselves and others based on shared prototypical features; typical attitudes, behaviors, or characteristics that capture both the similarities within a group and the differences between groups (Hogg, 2016, p.6). This categorization process is not merely cognitive but a system of orientation for self-reference: By belonging to a group, individuals acquire a social identity that contributes to their broader sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 2004, p.16). People are therefore motivated to maintain and enhance the perceived value of the groups they belong to, since a positively evaluated group reflects well on the self (Tajfel & Turner, 2004, p.16). Central to this dynamic is the distinction between the in-group and relevant out-groups, as it is through this contrast the distinctiveness and value of one's social identity becomes meaningful (Hogg, 2016, p.6).

2.6 The Study's Positioning

To conclude, this study aims to deepen the understanding of leadership's significance for motivation based on a voluntary, temporary organization. By exploring the experiences of participants across two different hierarchical positions in Lundakarnevalen, we seek to examine how leadership practices interact with the motivational drivers that shape engagement and commitment in such a context. The theoretical contribution thus emerges from the interaction between empirical findings and existing literature. The literature review reveals a rich body of research on motivation, leadership, and identity in organizational settings. Yet, despite this width, a limitation can be identified as most leadership frameworks are built around the assumption that the leader is the central force and the origin of meaning, vision, and inspired action. Whether grounded in traits, styles, situational adaptation, or symbolic influence, these frameworks consistently model motivation as something that flows from leader to follower.

We argue that this leader-centric assumption inadequately accounts for organizational contexts in which motivation is primarily interactive, shaped by norms, reciprocity, identity, and the contextual conditions in which participants are embedded. While interactive motivation as a concept is present in the literature, its implications for how we understand leadership's role have not been sufficiently developed. This study therefore positions itself at the intersection of leadership theory and interactive motivation, using the case of Lundakarnevalen to examine what leadership can and cannot explain when motivation arises from conditions that precede and extend beyond any individual leader's influence.

3. Method

This Chapter presents the research process and explains the methodological choices made throughout the study. In 3.1, the overall approach is introduced, followed by 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 which account for how the empirical material was gathered and analyzed. Further, 3.5 reflects on potential limitations and discusses the criteria for qualitative research in order to ensure transparency and assess the study's quality. Lastly, 3.6 includes an AI statement for further transparency.

3.1 Research Approach

In contrast to natural phenomena, human behavior requires interpretation and understanding rather than simple explanations (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.49). The study is therefore grounded in a social constructivist ontological position, assuming that social reality is neither objective nor fixed but constructed through social interaction and shared meaning (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.53). This position is further supported by the interpretivist tradition where social reality is seen as subjective, emerging from individuals' interpretations and actions (Prasad, 2018, p.13). Epistemologically, the study therefore adopts an interpretivist stance, emphasizing the importance of understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.49).

As both ontology and epistemology calls for subjective, in-depth understanding of the complexities of human emotions, behaviors and thoughts, a qualitative approach was used. This allows for non-structured data collection through for example written or spoken text (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.395). It also allows for the interviewees to guide the study through a focus on what they deem important. Through the experiences and thoughts uncovered in the interviews, we capture how people construct and reconstruct meaning through social interactions. Symbolic interactionism as explained by Prasad (2018, p.19) highlights the importance of an individual's sense of self in their construction of reality. Hence, we treat interview accounts not merely as reports of facts, but as meaning-making performances through which participants articulate identity, purpose, and relationship. Theoretically, the research process consistently combines

theory with empirical data throughout the entire process, guiding the research with an abductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.46).

3.2 Choice of Study Objects

In order to gain a broad perspective on motivation and leadership in Lundakarnevalen despite the limited time frame, the study limited its scope to managers and committee members. This decision was made based on their time spent in the carnival, allowing for valuable insights into the actual works in practice. They have all been working with the carnival for about a year. Contrastingly, as the Karnevalists have just recently joined, their limited knowledge of the organization and limited insights on the operations would not contribute to the purpose of this study, and were therefore not chosen as study objects. Hence, a *non-probability sampling* method has been used as interviewees were deliberately handpicked based on their capacity to provide meaningful and relevant perspectives reflecting an approach of *purposive sampling* (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.406). To an extent, this restricts the generalizability of the study's results.

Furthermore, to gain a rich perspective, all chosen managers are from different sections, representing ten out of the 31 sections available. Also this was deliberate and an attempt to gain diverse perspectives from people with different areas of expertise and different managers. Our own involvement in the carnival gave us access to Lundakarnevalen's communication channels, allowing for easy access to many managers and committee members.

Figure 1 below presents an organizational chart of Lundakarnevalen's structure to help the reader understand the roles and relationships within the organization. The chart does not reflect the carnival's official structure, but rather a simplified version created for the purposes of this study.



Figure 1. Lundakarnevalen's Organizational Chart

3.3 Collection of Empirical Data

Over a three-week span, 14 interviews were conducted in informal settings to ensure comfortability among participants. To reduce potential obstacles such as language barriers, all interviews were conducted in Swedish, the participants' mother tongue. Consequently, all citations have been translated into English by us. Although translations were conducted as literally as possible to maintain the original content, the possibility of subtle shifts in meaning or interpretation cannot be entirely excluded. A prewritten interview guide was used to steer the conversations in the right direction while leaving space for follow-up questions and flexibility, giving the interviews a semi-structured nature (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.454). No interview objects received any preparatory questions or specific points of reference as to what the interviews would entail in order to gain their genuine reactions and answers to the questions. In general, the interviews lasted around 45 minutes with some being longer and others shorter. A full list of the lengths of the interviews can be found in Appendix A.

Pseudonyms are used for confidentiality to ensure anonymity, something the interviewees were made aware of. Accordingly, all names have been fictionalized to help the reader distinguish between the objects, while ensuring their privacy. Moreover, all interviews were conducted with consent to be recorded and were transcribed using Klang.AI. Each transcript was carefully checked to verify its accuracy. Transcripts were produced as it enables precise referencing,

supports systematic analysis, and allows researchers to revisit the recordings when necessary (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.465). Additionally, recording the interviews enabled us to concentrate fully on the dialogue itself, which helped generate more effective follow-up questions and richer qualitative material. After official hand in of this research paper all recordings and transcripts will be removed.

3.4 The Analysis Process

Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018, pp.185, 189) conceptualizes qualitative analysis as a creative craft rather than a manual, designed to solve three recurring problems: chaos, representation, and authority. Hence, we worked closely with the empirical material through *sorting*, *reducing*, and *arguing*.

The sorting process addresses the problem of chaos by bringing order to the otherwise disorganized findings (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.71). Consequently, we used an open coding process, which was later followed by a selective coding to identify expressive details and patterns. Following Gubrium and Holstein's (1997 cited in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.72) principle of analytic bracketing, our focus alternated between the substantive content and the constitutive processes of how social reality is performed or talked about. In line with the study's nature, the sorting process involved identifying subjective meanings that actors attach to their interactions. Accordingly, the process started with thorough read-throughs of the transcripts where comments were made and notable citations marked. At this point, many categories were created to explain the data while remaining open-minded, leading to broad initial observations. By reading through the material several times, a more selective coding process led us toward a narrower focus while still keeping a broad scope, resulting in color-coded data divided into seven categories acting as an umbrella for the previous categories: **leadership**, **motivation**, **uncertainty**, **culture**, **tradition**, **identity**, and **general information**. This division started out within the individual transcripts and was later gathered into a cohesive collection containing data from all interviewees, structured using the seven categories. However, as the sorting process persevered, the seven categories seemed overlapping, resulting in yet another round of sorting. Although the categories and color schemes were kept, quotations were moved. For example, a phrase marked

in **purple**, tied to motivation, could henceforth be placed under the **identity** category or **uncertainty** in **leadership** to illustrate clear overlaps in the material.

After thoroughly sorting through the data, it had to be reduced. Reduction responds to the problem of representation. Since it is impossible to reproduce the totality of the findings, analytical choices must be made about what to foreground (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.108). We applied categorical reduction by identifying and prioritizing themes most directly relevant to our research question. The basis for our reduction process was hence in the seven categories created in the sorting process. Within those categories, we used illustrative reduction to select specific quotes that most vividly and precisely captured the phenomenon in question. In doing so, **motivation** and **leadership** stood out, leading us to the first reduction of the material, *among* categories, into the final categories of what motivates participants and what leadership acts and intentions can be seen. Such categorical reduction seeks to exclude certain categories to make space for others (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.109). It was then time to reduce the material *within* these categories (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.107). As a first step, repetitive quotes and unrelated information was removed as it added no extra value to the study. Additionally, personal details or information that could identify individuals was removed to protect and ensure anonymity. Throughout the entire reduction process, themes and quotations pointing toward meaning making and how people view themselves in the creation of their own reality was of extra interest. Special attention was given to reflections regarding leadership intentions and actions, as well as how these were interpreted and received by subordinates. This reduction led us toward the final four themes of motivation, and in turn leadership, in this type of organization: history and tradition, community, access to information, and meaningfulness.

Lastly, the arguing phase tackles the problem of authority by moving beyond summarizing and reporting to theorizing by creating a conversation that aligns the empirical findings with previous academic research (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p.143). Through our continuous work with previous research in parallel with our empirical findings, the two have been combined to contribute to the existing body of literature. To represent the findings, a number of quotes were compiled as the center of Chapter 4 around which our arguments are made. In doing so, we argue for our interpretation of the data to then show how it related to existing research in Chapter 5.

3.5 Limitations and Threats to Validity

The biggest limitation of this study has been its constrained time frame. As such, it had to be limited to 14 interviews. Hence, a decision was made to keep to the top of the hierarchy to gain a richer perspective among those who have put in a lot of time and effort rather than gathering data scattered all over the organization. The word limit of this thesis further called for such measures, as more interview objects would have called for a more extensive study. Accordingly, as only 14 out of close to 9,000 participants act as the base upon which this study was conducted, these perspectives may not be representative of the entire population of Lundakarnevalen. Moreover, as interviews were conducted in Swedish and translated into English by us, a further limitation is that of things getting lost in translation. However, as explained earlier, the benefits of performing them in Swedish outweighed this downside.

To ensure this study's quality, Guba and Lincoln's criteria for qualitative research have been fulfilled. These tweak the criteria for quantitative research to be better suited for a qualitative approach by focusing on *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.380).

The four subcriteria of trustworthiness: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* have been used (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.380). As this thesis builds upon our interpretations of the participants' description of their realities, credibility has been achieved through *respondent validation* (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.381). Due to the social constructional positioning of this study, such validation becomes extra important, as reality is subjective. Interviewees were therefore able to confirm our interpretations of their citations, acting as an internal validation.

Secondly, as the study focuses on a small group and goes in depth rather than a small group with more width, the criterion of transferability becomes harder to achieve (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.382). Geertz (1973 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.382) therefore suggests that qualitative studies should include *thick descriptions* of the culture and its details.

Moreover, dependability involves ensuring transparency by clearly documenting the various stages and decisions made during the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.382). To address this criterion, this chapter explains and justifies the methodological choices related to the research question, the selection of interview participants, and the analytical procedure.

Furthermore, continuous feedback from our supervisor throughout the thesis process has contributed to strengthening the study's dependability.

Lastly, confirmability concerns conducting research in good faith and ensuring that personal values or theoretical preferences do not shape the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.383). To strengthen the study's confirmability and show that it has been conducted in good faith, we continuously asked ourselves what the data actually conveyed. Rather than adhering to a fixed theoretical perspective, the direction of the study evolved several times based on the empirical material. By recognizing when our interpretations were heading in the wrong direction, we were able to maintain a more open approach to the data, strengthening the study's overall credibility.

In addition to trustworthiness, the study is also evaluated through its authenticity. Bryman and Bell (2017, p.383) introduce five criteria, the first being the provision of a *fair picture*. The limitations of this study, as explained above, required us to focus on those at the top of the hierarchy. This led us to being able to conduct a more in-depth study of parts of the organization, reflecting a fair picture of the leadership perspective. We hence argue that this criterion is fulfilled for the purpose of this study. To give a *complete* picture, however, a bigger study would need to be conducted which includes those lower in the hierarchy. This could offer a complementary perspective to further represent the totality of the organization.

The remaining four criteria are those of *ontological*-, *pedagogical*-, *catalytic*- and *tactical authenticity* (Bryman & Bell, 2017, p.383). These seek to determine whether, and to what extent, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the interviewees reality and how others perceive that reality. By finding limitations and identifying issues that existing theory cannot fully explain, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of leadership and its effects on motivation. Accordingly, since the managers both lead and are led by the committee, the study also offers insight into how leadership acts are perceived, not only how they are exercised. Lastly, authenticity also relates to whether the participants' views are represented fairly. To achieve this, we conducted a thorough analysis of the material and aimed to present the participants' perspectives as accurately as possible.

3.6 AI-usage

As explained in the data collection process, Klang.AI has been used to transcribe all 14 interviews. Klang.AI is a transcription tool that does not share information with third parties and is therefore compliant with GDPR requirements regarding personal data privacy. All interview material was processed with careful consideration for participant confidentiality and privacy.

Furthermore, ChatGPT and Claude have been used to shorten paragraphs and improve the language. It was also used to suggest potentially relevant literature, which was always independently verified and critically assessed for relevance and credibility before inclusion. Lastly, Claude was occasionally used as a tool for us to receive feedback on certain sections.

All use of AI has been in line with the LUSEM AI policy. As such, no AI has been used to generate new content but solely to refine our already produced paragraphs. To uphold academic integrity, all AI-based tools were used only as supportive resources under our careful and critical supervision. Accordingly, it has not been used to analyze the empirical material. For transparency, examples of prompts used can be found in Appendix B.

4. Empirical Findings

In the following chapter, our empirical findings are presented. In section 4.1, the four central motivational drivers identified across the interviews are presented: History and tradition, Community, Limited access to information, and Meaningfulness. Each driver is followed by an account of how the same conditions that motivate can also produce tension or undermine engagement. Section 4.2 then examines how leaders actively work to sustain motivation across these four themes, alongside the challenges they encounter in doing so.

4.1 Motivational Drivers

4.1.1 History and Tradition

Lundakarnevalen's long-standing history and tradition is a central part of what makes it unique, and for many participants, a significant source of motivation. The sense of being part of something that stretches across generations, and of contributing to something that will outlast their own involvement emerges consistently across the interviews as a powerful driver of engagement. For many students, the connection to the carnival's history begins even before they get involved themselves:

And what's fun about the carnival is that it's such a long-standing tradition that many people have parents or even grandparents who were in the carnival. - Sofia

Sofia describes the tradition as something "fun", noting that many people have a personal connection to the carnival through their parents and grandparents prior participation. The tradition is hence often inherited and passed down through generations. As such, this type of motivation may exist before the actual involvement even begins. Hailey goes the extra mile to show the strong, deeply rooted history and tradition by comparing the carnival to a sacrament:

My God. The carnival is something that only happens every four years. So I usually say that it's like a sacrament, if you know what it is. So within Christianity, you get married, you get baptized [...] it's kind of the same thing for a Lund student. You have this novice thing, you're a fadder

most of the time, but then you also do a carnival. So you could say that it's something that has a very big impact. - Hailey

Here, Hailey suggests that student life is like a religion consisting of certain sacraments, where Lundakarnevalen is one of them. Sacraments typically refer to the outward, visible signs of inward beliefs and commonly mark life-changing events, emphasizing the extent of Hailey's statement. To participate in a Lundakarneval can hence be seen as taking part of a sacred ritual that is one of the defining markers of the Lund student life. This sense of significance is not limited to the carnival's place in student culture, but extends into how individuals experience their own involvement:

My biggest reward is to see and do carnival every day. And it sounds cliché, but it really is. This is, it's probably the greatest thing I'll do in my entire life. It may sound depressing to be done with it when you're twenty-five. But this is something completely unique in the whole world and I, to do carnival and see carnival happen and see others sort of discover their perspective and their relationship to the carnival. It gives me so much energy. - Jackson

Jackson's reflection takes the sense of significance to a deeply personal level. Framing the carnival as "the greatest thing I'll do in my entire life" shows that the carnival is not just meaningful in the moment, but something he anticipates looking back on as a peak experience. This suggests that for those most deeply involved, participation carries a weight that goes beyond the event itself. Thus, he likely wants to make it memorable in order to look back at it and feel a sense of pride. Moreover, this awareness of the carnival as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is something that resonates across the interviews, driving people to fully commit to making the most of it:

Well, it was probably mainly because I heard about the carnival and I felt like, oh my god, you have to do this, you only get a chance like this once in a lifetime. - Hannah

And really a feeling that the carnival too, I think it feels like something so very special to me. So it almost felt like a given to maximize it. To maximize that opportunity. You get a little bit of this [feeling], that it's every four years. I have to grind now. There are many people who only do one carnival. - Taylor

The once-in-a-lifetime framing of the carnival reveals how the carnival's rarity and uniqueness creates a sense of urgency to participate. Hannah's "you only get this chance once" and Taylor's "there are many people who only do one carnival", makes participation seem especially valuable and important. These ideas become reasons to invest fully in the experience, creating a self-imposed drive to seize the moment before it passes. This effect becomes even stronger when participation also offers the chance to create something entirely new within such a unique organization, as explained by Chloe:

And like, you know what? I was the one who did [section name] the first year. - Chloe

The carnival's strong traditions makes the creation of something new even more special, as you leave a historic mark. The statement furthermore suggests that such a creation gives the work meaning, turning you into someone who did something worth remembering. Accordingly, Chloe is positioning herself as significant within the carnival's history before this year's edition has even taken place. Sofia complements this idea by emphasizing anticipated remembrance:

The idea of creating something that people will remember probably motivates me quite a bit. So people will say something like: "Yeah, but do you remember [her section]? It was so fucking awesome." That motivates me too. - Sofia

Sofia talks about future recognition as a motivating factor, imagining how others will remember and speak positively about her contribution. By focusing on how the section will be remembered and validated by others, she expresses a willingness to invest the work needed to create something memorable and lasting. Furthermore, meaning is created through the idea of continuity, where the work is not only important in the present but also intended to shape future carnivals:

And that we're really creating a section the way we want it to be, that we will then pass on to future generations. - Chloe

Chloe frames her section as something that extends beyond the current carnival, positioning it as part of an ongoing tradition that will be carried forward. This suggests that the work gains meaning not only through present participation, but also through its potential to influence and be inherited by future participants.

Tensions of the History and Traditions

The strong emphasis on tradition does not only produce motivation, but can also shape expectations about participation and performance. Participation in Lundakarnevalen is, as previously mentioned, a tradition that is often passed down through generations. While the tradition has been framed as fun, participation can sometimes be less of a free choice than an inherited expectation, as Sofia illustrates:

And they've kind of gotten this from their parents. "Okay, you're studying in Lund during the carnival so you should be in the carnival." That's something I've been told. [...] Mom said I really need to be part of it. That this is the most fun thing you can do. - Sofia

The quote reveals how family legacies in Lund function as a form of motivational pressure. The phrasing that "you need to participate in the carnival" frames involvement as a duty. The expectation is simultaneously wrapped in positivity, as "the most fun thing you can do" which may trigger motivation to participate. Beyond family expectations, however, pressures also emerge from the wider reputation and history of specific sections within the carnival. Hence, what functions as a motivational source for some through making a mark on history may add pressure for other:

One of the reasons I didn't want to be [manager for her section] was because the last one was very highly praised. So, all the reviewers were just: "Oh my god, this one is so good." And the atmosphere was also great. And then you really feel pressured to do it. But also the fact that several famous comedy duos have met when they were in [her section] as well. [...] This is really a place where stars are born. - Sofia

The section's successful past creates a situation where the role initially is not neutral, but charged with strong expectations. Some predecessors have become greatly recognized and become "stars" after their engagements. Taking on the role as manager for this section is therefore more than a job, as it requires you to live up to an established standard. The role acts as a pressure as there is a strong idea of who the role needs you to be, and who you need to become. In not wanting to take on the managerial role initially, Sofia suggests a fear of not being enough and a pressure of becoming someone worth remembering. A similar tension between high expectations and the pressure they create can also be seen in Taylor's reflection on the carnival:

This only happens every four years and it has to be so special and we have to make the best carnival. [...] I kind of hope that people don't set too high expectations for it. - Taylor

Taylor's statement highlights how the carnival's rarity contributes to a strong expectation that it must be exceptional. The emphasis on it happening "every four years" reinforces the idea that this is a highly anticipated event, which in turn increases the pressure on those involved to deliver something outstanding. At the same time, her hope that people "don't set too high expectations" suggests an awareness of the burden these expectations create. This indicates a tension between wanting to meet the perceived standard of excellence and the fear that such expectations may become difficult to fulfill.

4.1.2 Being Part of a Community

An important aspect of Lundakarnevalen is the strong sense of community that surrounds it. When monetary means are lacking, friendships and social relationships act as a reward through which participants remain satisfied. Due to the carnival's long-standing tradition in Lund, participation is closely tied to belonging within the city's social life. Not taking part can hence be experienced as a form of non-belonging, as Mike explains:

It has somehow become a culture in Lund that if you're not participating [in the carnival], then you're a bit left out when it's the carnival spring. Then it feels like you're not really a part of what's going on. - Mike

His statement highlights how involvement in Lundakarnevalen functions as a marker of inclusion during the carnival period, where absence may lead to a feeling of being positioned outside the shared social experience. This perceived inclusion is further reinforced by how participation also produces and strengthens social bonds among those involved. Carter develops this idea by emphasizing how shared activity itself becomes the foundation for friendship and cohesion:

You become friends just by doing things together. [...] If you're even just friends, it doesn't matter what the hell you do, you'll still have fun. - Carter

Carter points out how shared work functions as a basis for social connection. He further highlights that this sense of togetherness is so strong that the specific activity itself becomes

secondary, as enjoyment is already secured through the relationships formed within the group. To understand the extent of these connections, Chloe explains it as a family:

And all these umbrellas that exist, like the entertainment family and so on. The fact that you use the word “entertainment family”, I think it shows a lot that these core values, that we are open, we have respect for each other, we help each other. Everything is just good vibes, even when it’s not good vibes. - Chloe

By comparing themselves to a family, Chloe emphasizes the depth of the relationships. It transforms the group from a collection of coworkers into an emotional community. Family implies loyalty and support, suggesting that relationships within the group extend beyond formal roles or responsibilities. The statement “everything is just good vibes, even when it’s not good vibes” reveals how maintaining this atmosphere of unity becomes socially important. The emotional bond of a family may help the group dynamic in staying positive even in harder times. Similarly, Carter also uses the family metaphors:

[I’m] kind of like a proud dad. - Carter

In describing himself as a proud dad, Carter suggests that he sees the Karnevalists as part of his family. He positions himself as emotionally invested in them and expresses pride through the development of the community around them. This language reinforces the idea that relationships within the group are emotionally meaningful rather than purely professional. These emotional connections and social relations are further developed by Chloe, who suggests that people enter Lundakarnevalen with an implicit understanding that social reward is the primary return on their investment:

But in Lund it’s more social and it’s fun to get involved. You don’t expect to get much more than social exchange, in, well, as payment kind of. [...] You get so damn much out of it, both socially but also networking. - Chloe

Chloe’s statement positions engagement in Lundakarnevalen as rooted in social rather than material or instrumental motivations. Participation is described as something undertaken for its own sake, where enjoyment and interaction constitute the primary form of “reward.” In this

sense, social exchange almost functions as a kind of informal currency within the context of the event. Savannah builds upon this argument:

I think it's really fun and that's enough of a reward. Then I get a lot of social stuff on top of that. [...] But it's also a reward in itself that you have the opportunity to do this. To be invited to things that you might not have been invited to otherwise. - Savannah

Like most participants, Savannah describes the fun and social nature as a reward. What is particularly interesting in her account is the added dimension of access, being invited to things she would not otherwise have been part of. This suggests that the social reward of participation is not only about enjoyment or togetherness, but also about feeling included in something exclusive, where involvement opens doors that would otherwise remain closed.

Tensions of Being Part of a Community

On the flip side, Savannah goes on to emphasize how the social belonging and fun aspect of the carnival makes people okay with doing tasks they otherwise would not:

I just think people are so crazy. They somehow think it's fun to do, maybe not fun in the moment, but everything else around it is so much fun that it makes up for it. I've done a lot of dirty work as a volunteer before, and you do it "just because". It's maybe not fun or "super fun" standing there washing dishes after a sitting, but you still do it because you've invested time into it and because everything else is just so much fun. - Savannah

Savannah describes how participation can involve what she calls "dirty work", but situates these tasks within a broader social experience. Even if they are not enjoyable in the moment, they are still carried out because "everything else around it is so much fun". In this way, the less appealing tasks become part of a shared experience, where contributing alongside others makes the involvement feel worthwhile. This sense of having fun is central in the carnival's culture, to the point where you are not only given the opportunity to have fun, but you are *expected* to have fun, maybe even excessively so:

I think it might be an unwritten rule that you have to have such a fucking great time all the time. I think that could be a problem. I've also been really stressed about stuff that has to do with that.

It's not fun all the time and people aren't going to feel good all the time. And just that there are a lot of people who talk about the risk of burning out and things like that. I think the invisible rule is that people are like, "you have to have fun all the time". - Taylor

And it [social activities] is maybe a bit too much sometime - Savannah

Taylor highlights how social and fun are deeply embedded into the culture while also showcasing the flip side of things. She describes how having fun has become an unwritten rule within the carnival; something you are expected to feel at all times. The fact that she calls it “invisible” suggests it is never explicitly stated, yet widely understood among participants. On one hand, the social and fun-oriented culture is clearly a big part of what motivates people to show up and stay involved. On the other hand, Taylor points out that it is simply not fun all the time, and that pretending otherwise comes at a cost. Her mention of stress and burnout risk suggests that the pressure to perform can become exhausting in itself, turning what should be a source of energy into a demand placed on participants. Echoing Taylor's point, Savannah acknowledges that it can be “a bit much”, pointing to the intensity of the social experience as something that occasionally shifts from energizing into overwhelming.

4.1.3 Limited Access to Information

One aspect that is significant for Lundakarnevalen as a temporary organization is the lack of information and passing of knowledge from one carnival to the next. Because the event only occurs every four years, knowledge on how and what should be done is largely lost between cycles. Information thereby becomes scarce, increasing its value. While this absence of information could reasonably be experienced as frustrating, several managers describe it in surprisingly positive terms:

I can almost find it a bit fun and challenging. - Hannah

But it really only affects my motivation positively. Then I have a problem to solve. - Zoe

Both Hannah and Zoe frame the uncertainty and lack of clear answers as something fun that increases their motivation. The absence of clarity does not create confusion so much as it creates a problem worth solving. For both, the lack of information appears to open up space for initiative

and ownership, suggesting that freedom to act without instruction can, for some, function as a motivational driver in itself. Mike shifts the perspective by pointing to how information is not equally absent for everyone, but rather unevenly distributed across the organization:

I think the idea behind it is precisely that it's volunteer engagement. It's supposed to be so flat that you can influence things and talk to anyone. But I would say that it becomes a kind of informal structure in terms of knowledge. [...] the higher up you are in the organizational tree, the more information you have access to. - Mike

Mike's observation suggests that access to information functions as a subtle marker of position. He notes that despite the intended flatness of the structure, those higher up in the organizational tree have access to more information, an informal hierarchy that runs parallel to the stated ideal. The volunteer context makes this particularly visible, as the distribution of knowledge becomes one of the more tangible ways in which organizational position is felt and expressed. The value of that privileged access is made concrete when Avery reflects on what she considers a reward in her role:

And just getting to be involved and have insight. Like, I got to know all of the artists first, when they were just on a whiteboard and hadn't even been contacted yet. It's also a bit of a little secret. Getting to know that, it's pretty fun. - Avery

As a committee member in Lundakarnevalen, Avery describes what it actually feels like to be positioned highest up within the information hierarchy. For her, being among the first to know which artists had been booked, before the information was public or contracts even signed, is framed as a little secret. The excitement seems to be about the position of knowing it early, ahead of others. Due to its scarce nature, information access hence functions as a source of engagement and reward in itself, and can be seen as a privilege that makes involvement feel meaningful.

Tensions of the Limited Access to Information

Just how much significance is attached to informational access becomes clear when Chloe recounts an experience of being left out of it:

Someone else found out really important information about our operations before we even did as managers. And that's really not fun, it's not motivating, it's a bit of a setback. - Chloe

Chloe approaches the same dynamic from the opposite direction, describing what happens when the informational hierarchy is disrupted. When someone outside the team learns critical information about their operations before the managers themselves, the experience is actively “demotivating” and a “setback”. Her account therefore mirrors Avery’s from the other side, where early access to information produces a sense of reward and belonging, and being bypassed produces the opposite. This suggests that it is not only the content of the information that matters and affects motivation, but also the order in which it reaches people. Hannah further illustrates how the limited information may at times be neither empowering nor motivation, but rather a bother:

I think many others who are involved in Lundakarnevalen are very bothered by the fact that there are no clear answers - Hannah

While limited information may lead to more autonomy or a feeling of exclusivity to some, the complete absence of answers may be demotivating to others. In expressing such a worry, Hannah suggests that more answers are wanted and that motivation may increase if they are provided. This illustrates how the same organizational condition can generate different motivational outcomes depending on how it is experienced and interpreted by participants. Motivation therefore does not arise from the organizational practice itself, but through the participant’s relationship to it.

4.1.4 Meaningfulness

Another significant source of motivation within the carnival lies in the roles people occupy and the responsibility attached to them. Across the interviews, a recurring theme emerges: feeling that your contribution matters and that your involvement makes a difference. The motivational power of being trusted with open-ended responsibility is also one that appears commonly:

I think that as a management team, we have had so much influence that it is very fun for that reason. So where it is not very specific, it means that we get the responsibility to do it and decide. And that is very fun. That freedom is really fun. - Mike

Mike emphasizes how the lack of clear boundaries on what and how to do things leaves room for more managerial responsibility and space to contribute to the organization to an even greater extent. Rather than describing unclarity as stressful or inefficient, he interprets it as opportunities for influence and creativity. In this sense, freedom and responsibility become closely connected as the increased responsibility makes the role meaningful and engaging. Similarly, Hannah further explains how partaking in planning leads to a greater attachment to the project itself:

It's still more fun to have been part of the planning. And it almost feels like your baby when it all takes shape. And I think that's really fun. - Hannah

Having been involved from the beginning, Hannah describes participation as deeply rewarding. She explains how long-term involvement creates an emotional attachment to the project, illustrated by her description of the section as her “baby.” As the project develops, the work becomes increasingly personal and meaningful, shifting from an organizational task to something she partly experiences as her own creation. The role therefore brings a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility. Taylor extends this argument by emphasizing how responsibility and accountability vary across hierarchical levels:

I want everyone to feel ownership over it. Of course I think I will have a little feeling. [...] I have been doing it for almost a year. Then you just think about the committee that was appointed a year before me. Then you really have to feel pride. - Taylor

But [I'd feel] so much pride and joy in having brought it all the way home. - Taylor

Taylor links the length of participation to a stronger sense of pride and ownership. She suggests that participants who have spent more time working on the carnival are more likely to experience their work as meaningful. Time investment thus appears to deepen the emotional connection to both the organization and its outcome. Higher positions also bring broader insight into the organization, which Sofia describes as motivating in her work:

Like at a management meeting last fall when the shop told us that we had now sent the first trash bin order. We just said: “Yes, how fun!” And everyone feels involved. So it also motivates me a lot to see other parts of the carnival that I might not have gotten to see if I was just in the middle management team. - Sofia

Sofia explains how managers become involved not only in their own work, but in the progress of the organization as a whole. Through continuous communication between sections and shared milestones, managers gain a broader understanding of the carnival. Even small tasks, such as ordering trash bins, become exciting because they symbolize collective progress. Motivation is therefore tied not only to individual tasks, but also to witnessing the advancement of the larger project. Sofia further suggests that higher positions may increase motivation by providing greater insight into the organization. The more participants see of the carnival, the more opportunities they have to develop pride, meaning, and a sense of involvement. A similar sense of pride, even without direct involvement, is also expressed by Savannah as a committee member:

Yeah, I'm still really freaking happy with Karneveljen, even though I wasn't very involved. - Savannah

Being highest up in the hierarchy, Savannah emphasizes a pride for an event she barely partook in arranging. Her hierarchical position and extensive involvement allows her to see, care about, and feel responsible for everything tied to Lundakarnevalen. Accordingly, she registers the work of others as her own successes, despite barely putting in any actual work. Her statement suggests that involvement does not necessarily depend on direct participation in every activity; it may be enough to be in close proximity to the project.

In other instances, when actually partaking in arranging things, Madison points out how that too increases her motivation:

Like when they are just like, "Oh, we did this and this turned out so well, and thanks for your help, and imagine that we've been able to do this," [...] I think that continues to keep me motivated. - Madison

Madison's statement suggests that motivation may emerge not only from ownership and responsibility, but also from recognition of one's contributions. Her quote shows how motivation is reinforced through shared acknowledgment of what has been achieved together. Being thanked and included in collective successes makes her feel valued and connected to the broader project. Meaningfulness therefore arises not only from the work itself, but from social interactions in which contributions are recognized and affirmed.

Tensions of Meaningfulness

Alongside the increased influence that comes with higher positions explained earlier, there is also a clear downside to it. Mike expresses such negatives when asked about his role as a manager:

There is a lot of responsibility, a lot more work. - Mike

Mike emphasizes how moving higher in the organizational hierarchy brings an increased workload and a stronger sense of responsibility. His statement suggests that involvement at this level is about being accountable for a broader set of tasks and outcomes, implying that higher positions come with both greater influence and greater demands. This heightened sense of responsibility is further developed in Taylor's reflection, where accountability also becomes emotionally internalized:

A greater responsibility over everything, that if it were to go badly I would put more blame on myself. - Taylor

While Taylor previously described managerial ownership as something generating pride, here she acknowledges it as an internalized pressure. The possibility of “blame” suggests that higher positions involve being personally responsible for the consequences of the outcome. Pride and burden hence become inseparable as they both stem from a feeling that the outcome is their own. The stronger the connection to Lundakarnevalen becomes, the harder it is to separate personal worth from organizational success or failure.

4.1.5 Summary of Motivational Drivers

The empirical material suggests that motivation in Lundakarnevalen is tied to four categories: history and tradition, community, limited access to information, and meaningfulness. A summary of each motivational driver can be found in Figure 2. What's even more interesting is the recurring pattern across all four that the very same factors that drive motivation may simultaneously act as sources of demotivation, depending on how they are experienced by the individual participant.

Motivation: Sources and Tensions		
	Drivers of Motivation	Tensions and Downsides
History and Tradition	Being part of a multigenerational tradition Once-in-a-lifetime framing creates urgency to commit fully Leaving a personal mark on the carnival's history Imagining future recognition and remembrance Creating something that will be passed on to future generations	Family legacy creates inherited pressure to participate Predecessor success raises the bar and triggers fear of falling short Rarity of the event intensifies expectations to deliver something exceptional
Community	Not participating risks social exclusion during the carnival Shared work builds friendship Creating deep bonds framed as family, not just colleagues Social exchange Access to exclusive social experiences	Pressure to have fun Social intensity risks burnout Volume of social activities can shift from energizing to overwhelming
Limited Access to Information	Lack of clear answers experienced as a fun challenge Absence of information opens space for initiative and ownership Privileged access to information signals status and belonging Being among the first to know feels like a reward in itself	Information is unevenly distributed: informal hierarchy mirrors formal one Being bypassed in the information flow is actively demotivating Lack of clear answers can create frustration
Meaningfulness	Open-ended responsibility creates freedom to influence and decide Long-term involvement creates emotional ownership: the project becomes "your baby" Witnessing other sections' progress reinforces sense of shared purpose Higher positions offer broader view, more opportunities for pride and meaning	Greater responsibility brings heavier workload Personal worth becomes tied to organizational success or failure, leading to potential blame Motivation and access to meaning increase with hierarchy: less visible at lower levels

Table 1. Motivation: Sources and Tensions

4.2 How Do Leaders Sustain Motivation?

4.2.1 Leveraging History and Tradition

The carnival's deep-rooted history and tradition gives leaders a resource to draw upon when motivating those beneath them. Madison draws on the carnival's long-standing tradition as a motivational resource in her leadership practice:

I usually remind my Karnevalists that what we do is bigger than just this year's carnival. We are part of a tradition that has lived on through generations, where people before us have put the same heart and soul into it. And in a few years, someone else will be standing here and carrying it on after us. I think it creates a sense of pride in being part of something that actually lives on. -

Madison

Madison frames participation as part of something that exists over time, both before and after the current carnival. By linking the present work to past and future generations, she emphasizes that what Karnevalist's do is part of a larger tradition. This creates a sense of pride based on belonging to something that continues beyond the individual event. Alongside this focus on continuity and tradition, leaders also emphasize the carnival's uniqueness in relation to other traditional student commitments:

I usually tell them that it's such a special thing, because of course there are nations and unions and blah blah blah. All the other non-profit commitments, but the carnival is like something special. - Savannah

By comparing the carnival to other student commitments that most students in Lund partake in, Savannah frames the carnival as "something special" and distinctive in relation to these alternatives. In doing so, she strengthens its perceived value and attractiveness, positioning it as a more meaningful and unique form of engagement compared to other voluntary student activities. This differentiation may contribute to making participation more appealing, as the carnival is not only presented as one option among many, but as a particularly significant and memorable experience. Building on this sense of the carnival as something special, Chloe highlights how its uniqueness is used as a motivational tool in recruitment:

It's really, really cool and that's been a bit of our selling point when we've recruited people. That like: "Don't you want to be part of creating something that in a hundred years could be completely amazing? And we're the ones who created it." I think that's just incredibly motivating. - Chloe

Chloe, leading a completely new section within the carnival, uses the creation of something new as a selling point to make people motivated to join her section. Because of the carnival's uniqueness and highly recognized status in Lund, being one of its creators carries historical weight. In her role as a leader, she therefore encourages engagement by framing participation as something that may be recognized far beyond the present, even "in a hundred years." The work is not simply what it is today but a contribution to something whose full significance has not yet been realized. In addition to such future-oriented meanings, motivation is also sustained through comparisons with previous carnivals, as Logan tries to emphasize the importance of making this year's edition better than the last one:

But I feel like it's going to be better than last time. It's going to flow better. Everything's going to be better. [...] I'm pretty competitive. I'm trying to spur my group on with that as well. We're going to do it damn well [...] People often get really into it if you're a group that thinks, shit, this is going to be so damn good. - Logan

Logan uses previous editions of the carnival as a way to sustain motivation through comparison and competition. His emphasis that "it's going to be better than last time" and that "everything's going to be better" frames participation as part of a continuous effort to improve upon earlier performances. Although there is no actual competition between the carnival cycles, Logan constructs one to spur his group on. He thereby reinforces a collective drive to exceed prior standards, where enthusiasm is generated through the shared expectation that this year's carnival should outperform the last.

Drawbacks and Challenges in Leveraging History and Tradition

However, this drive for improvement is not straightforward in practice. Carter and Zoe raise a more fundamental question about what it actually means to make the carnival better when so much of it is already decided by tradition:

A lot of the work is really based on the previous carnival, and I think that's completely reasonable, like. Why should you, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. But it's also something that has come up in more principled discussions. Should we just do the carnival again, or should we make a new carnival this year? - Carter

But also some things you might not even question just because it's tradition [...] Because I also know that since all the old active people in the carnival can express their opinions. So then I also think that since there is a bit of pressure. I think that if the committee had now tried to be like "the film might not be that popular; we should discard it", it would never have worked out anyway, because then they would have received a hate storm. So I also think it's a bit of a culture that older people just say "it's clear that you should do what we did because we think this is tradition, we think this is important". - Zoe

The carnival's strong tradition could be considered its greatest strength, but also an obstacle to overcome. Carter indicates that a decision has to be made regarding the extent to which the carnival is to differ from previous ones. While its legacy is part of what makes it so unique, every carnival is still its own individual event, suggesting a potential want for creating something new or better, at least partially. Accordingly, a lot of emphasis has been put on creating something new as a way of sustaining motivation, something that is partly hindered by its legacy. Zoe suggests that many elements of the carnival are never formally decided upon, but simply continue unquestioned, because they always have. Moreover, she implies that the committee technically *could* make changes, but that it would not be well received, opening up a major leadership challenge. The formal authority does not result in creative freedom. Despite being in charge, both the committee and the managers need to find a balance between making this year's carnival unique and into its own creation, while still staying within the frames created by these external pressures.

4.2.2 The Creation of the Community

A recurring theme in the empirical material is how Lundakarnevalen is not only organized around tasks, but also around the active creation of community. Leaders therefore emphasize creating togetherness and a sense of belonging among participants. Greyson highlights how this

emphasis on community becomes particularly important for those with limited insight into the work:

It may also be difficult when they don't have the same insight into the work. But then the focus is more on the social and community rather than ownership of the tasks, perhaps for those who are further down in the organization or newer. - Greyson

Greyson's reflection suggests that when ownership and understanding of tasks are limited, social belonging becomes a more central source of motivation. For those newer or lower in the organization, engagement is less about responsibility and more about being part of a group, indicating that a sense of community can compensate for a lack of deeper involvement in the work itself. Chloe also explains that she has the intention of creating a community and a sense of belonging to the section as well as what actions are needed to get there:

Uh, yeah, so when we recruited all the middle managers for the different middle management positions, we went to my summer house and had workshops and more leadership-related activities. [...] But we've also had sittning's, and we've had a bike party, and tomorrow is the Karnevelj, so we've organized something together with two other entertainment sections. That's also a big thing; all the entertainment groups collaborate a lot with us on events and in strengthening the sense of community between the entertainment sections as well. - Chloe

In practice, Chloe has been creating opportunities for teamspirit to arise. By arranging get-aways as well as social activities, she is actively giving the participants an arena in which a community can grow in order to create a sense of belonging. She also explains that they are not only working on building a strong community within their section, but also extending that community into other sections. She further suggests more actions to reach her intentions through keeping the energy up in the group:

I work a lot on the basis that if you don't feel like a Magaluf promoter, then you're doing something wrong. [...] Even if I might not think it's super fun to go to a sittning at [nation], because I don't really love [that nation], this is still the most fun thing I know tonight. Because excitement and hype are contagious. If I think this is absolutely the best thing ever, then you will too, maybe not to the same extent, but at least you won't be negative. - Chloe

Chloe takes responsibility for managing the mood of the group by leading through visible enthusiasm. By framing herself as a so-called Magaluf promoter, Chloe suggests that excitement is not simply something you feel, but something you actively perform, even when it does not fully match your own experience. Her reasoning is that this performed energy is contagious and helps shape how others approach the situation. Even when she is not particularly motivated, she takes responsibility for motivating others by putting her own feelings aside and prioritising the collective atmosphere.

Beyond such formal events and get-aways, Hailey suggests more everyday actions to reach the intended community-feel:

For me, I think what's important is just actually being present and making sure they feel like you're there. Like, if you run into them in the corridor, it's always like "hi" and "I want to talk to you" and stuff. And they can be like, "this feels a bit difficult" or "I'm really stressed" or something like that. And then always taking the time to talk to them. I think that creates a lot of motivation. - Hailey

For Hailey, being present and approachable in everyday interactions, not just at organized events, is what creates motivation. Taking the time to stop and talk when someone seems stressed or uncertain signals that they are seen and heard.

Drawbacks and Challenges in the Creation of the Community

This emphasis on being seen and heard is further illustrated by Carter, who describes the challenge of how participation often depends on passing an initial threshold of anonymity:

Once you've come and worked there even once, and maybe gotten the feeling that this is actually fun, then you're no longer anonymous, because you've probably met a lot of other people as well. Then I think it kind of starts to pick up momentum. But the biggest problem is really getting that first step in, that first occasion. And that's why you have kick-offs, bike parties, different kinds of social events, so that someone will click with someone else and that person will end up taking a job. - Carter

According to Carter, creating the first point of contact that draws the Karnevalists into the social life of Lundakarnevalen is crucial. His account reveals how managers face the challenge of getting people into the group, leading to their active work with the intention of making individuals socially visible by introducing them to others. Once participants are no longer anonymous, their involvement becomes tied to the group, which can make participation more appealing. Carter therefore explains how he organizes events as a way of getting people over that threshold. The intention here is to make people want to come back because they have so much fun. These acts can thus be understood as motivational activities, where social connection itself becomes a driver of continued participation. However, these efforts at creating fun activities to sustain motivation carry their own tensions as Avery points out:

What I do know is that sometimes people don't fully understand how we've been thinking. Like when we only invite the middle management group and above to certain activities and they get all the benefits. It's kind of become like "vice middle management can't do this, vice middle management can't do that". At the same time, if we were to include vice middle management, we would suddenly have to throw a party for 800 people. And we just don't have the capacity for that. - Avery

Avery, being in the committee, acknowledges that social activities are necessarily limited in who they can include. While extending invitations further down the hierarchy would mean events of unmanageable size, the result is that hierarchical lines become more pronounced. Access to social activities and benefits becomes unevenly distributed, creating distinctions between those who are included and those who are not. The quote suggests that efforts aimed at strengthening community and motivation may simultaneously generate feelings of exclusion and inequality among those left outside these spaces. The community building effort thus risks producing the opposite of its intended effect for those who find themselves excluded. Yet beyond the practical constraints of inclusion, the hierarchical lines that are drawn may also create a psychological distance that makes it harder for those lower in the hierarchy to simply approach, ask questions, or make themselves known:

It becomes administratively very difficult if everyone can go to the General and just ask any questions all the time. And I think people are very welcome to do that, but I don't think everyone dares to. It's this hierarchical level anyway, whether you want it or not, or say it or not. - Mike

Especially the middle management team kind of knows who we are. Like, they know who you are. So you also have to make sure you take the step yourself and dare to say hi. Because we might also come across as a bit intimidating. - Avery

Both Mike's and Avery's accounts reveal an awareness of the social distance that the hierarchy can produce. Because the committee is recognized and holds a certain status, they might become unapproachable, which risks undermining the community the organization largely depends on for motivation. Avery responds to this by placing the responsibility on herself and her peers to take initiative, thereby closing the social distance between the committee and those beneath them in the organization. Hence, she focuses on acting in a manner that makes people *feel* the social access and approachability, that everyone is doing it together, despite the formal structures.

4.2.3 Leveraging Limited Information

Receiving secret or privileged information is as previously mentioned something that makes people within Lundakarnevalen feel motivated and special. Consequently, giving that privilege to others is a way of sustaining that motivation, as Zoe points out:

Especially to our Karnevalists. We want to show them that they're quite special. So we tell them what they'll be doing: "You get [section specific information], which only 20 out of 9,000 people receive. So you get that special role of that. There aren't that many Karnevalists who receive Lundakarneval email addresses. But you will". So it's also simply about saying that this is really something only you get. - Zoe

Zoe explains how practical information required for the Karnevalists' roles is deliberately framed as something exclusive in order to make them feel special and meaningful within the carnival. Although the information is required in order to perform their roles, it is presented as something only a small group receives, such as section-specific details or access to a Lundakarneval email address. By highlighting that "only 20 out of 9,000" receive it, Zoe transforms a practical necessity into a form of recognition. Rather than simply enabling task completion, the communication emphasizes selection and belonging to an inner circle, where being one of the few who receives the information becomes meaningful in itself. At the same time, information is not only used to create motivation, but it's also carefully managed in order to prevent motivation

from decreasing. When asked about his leadership approaches in relation to sustaining motivation among participants, Carter touches upon this:

Less uncertainty and clearer boundaries is probably what they want. As far as possible, I try not to say anything unless it's set in stone. Because things keep changing all the time. I think motivation decreases if something feels stressful or demanding or just irritating. All those small annoyances. Even though you can gain motivation from something, it can also disappear. -

Carter

Carter describes how his leadership approach involves carefully considering what information should be shared and when, in order to sustain motivation among Karnevalists. By choosing not to communicate things until they are “set in stone”, he attempts to shield participants from unnecessary stress and irritation. Leadership therefore becomes both about informing others, as well as about protecting enthusiasm and maintaining a positive experience within the organization. Carter hence suggests that withholding uncertain information can sometimes help sustain engagement.

Drawbacks and Challenges in Leveraging Limited Information

When asked a similar question, Greyson points to the same want among Karnevalists while suggesting a different approach. Rather than withholding information like Carter, he presents the difficulty of trying to provide clarity without creating false expectations:

Yeah, I think [more clear information] is something a lot of people would appreciate. But it's difficult. If you promise clarity and then it doesn't turn out that way, I think that's almost worse than just being clear that things are uncertain. - Greyson

Greyson observes that while clearer information would be appreciated, promising clarity and then failing to deliver is worse than simply being honest that things are unclear to begin with. This emphasizes one of the most prominent challenges leaders within Lundakarnevalen face: that of its limited access to information. Greyson's reflection also suggests that motivation may be shaped not only by the amount of information participants receive, but by whether organizational communication feels trustworthy and realistic. Clear expectations may therefore matter more than complete certainty.

From Sofia's perspective as a manager, she also expresses a desire for clarity, but it rather comes from a place of affecting her well-being:

It affects my stress a lot I think. I have to be honest about that. [...] And I still have an expectation that we'll get information in time. The committee, for example, does work full-time with this, and I still hope they're aware that what they're being paid for is the information needed to actually carry out the carnival. - Sofia

Sofia experiences the lack of information as a source of stress. She maintains a clear expectation directed upward toward the committee, suggesting a desire for stronger leadership through clarity and guidance. In this sense, providing information signals direction and shapes how participants experience their work. The committee therefore holds a position that allows them to influence the managers well-being and stress levels. Savannah's account from within the committee adds an important perspective to Sofia's frustration. The scarcity of information is not a matter of it being held back, but of it not existing in the first place:

That's the difficult thing with the carnival, this knowledge gap [between carnivals]. Either you just remember what went really well, or what went really badly. But nothing in between really gets captured. My predecessors don't remember what they did during carnival days, so I have absolutely no idea what I'm supposed to do. [...] No, the handover hasn't been very good. We don't have that much information. - Savannah

Savannah describes the knowledge gap between carnivals as an inherent feature of the temporary nature of Lundakarnevalen, where predecessors only remember the extremes, and what falls in between is simply lost. The result is that she enters her role with no clear sense of what to do, left to navigate largely by guessing. This absence of information means that the challenge Sofia directs upward has no straightforward solution. Those expected to provide clarity are themselves operating without it. Thus, the committee has an intention to make managers feel trusted to navigate their roles themselves:

It's always quite tough not to know what you're doing. But the carnival also has a bit of an attitude that no one knows what they're doing. So I guess we just have to go for it. The committee has tried to be like "we've recruited you for a reason, because we trust you". But you don't always necessarily feel that, even if they've said it. - Madison

The committee's lack of information has led them to place an increased trust in the managers to navigate the uncertainty. Consequently, a "just go for it" attitude is created, with the intention of making the managers feel special and trusted, leading to a feeling of freedom and ownership of the situation. This reassurance, however, does not always translate into a felt sense of confidence. Rather, it sets the stage for what several managers describe as one of the more difficult aspects of their role, having to lead others through uncertainty they cannot resolve. Madison extends her argument by capturing the emotional weight of this:

But it's really. Uncertain things, when we have to communicate that to those we're responsible for. When things are unclear and I can't really provide any clarity at all, then I just feel like I'm being annoying. It's hard to be a good leader when you don't really know anything. - Madison

For Madison, the hardest part of leadership is not the absence of information itself, but having to face those she is responsible for when she has no clarity to offer. Her account connects leadership closely to the ability to provide guidance and direction for others. In the absence of information, she struggles to live up to what she feels leadership should involve, which creates a sense of inadequacy in relation to those depending on her for answers. At the same time, Madison's frustration is closely linked to that of Sofia and Savannah, suggesting it is presented as a broader organizational condition affecting both managers and committee members rather than an individual problem. Leadership within Lundakarnevalen frequently has to be exercised without stable knowledge or clear direction, meaning that those expected to guide others are often navigating the same uncertainty themselves.

4.2.4 Making the Role Meaningful

One consistent theme across the interviews is that creating meaning for others is an essential function of leadership. In the absence of financial compensation and given the scale of the organization, the question of why any individual Karnevalist should continue to invest their time and energy is one that managers must actively address through the conditions they create and the way they frame the work. Several interviewees therefore point to the importance of giving Karnevalists ownership of their own tasks, to make them feel that their work is meaningful:

A really important part is having a clear area of responsibility. Everyone needs to have something to do, and something meaningful to do. Otherwise, the Karnevalists lose motivation immediately. - Mike

But I also think that giving people things like “Can you run this task?” makes them feel needed, like they play an important role. Giving people ownership over processes is also a way of motivating them. - Avery

Mike and Avery both emphasize how motivation is closely tied to responsibility and ownership. Mike highlights that each Karnevalist needs “a clear area of responsibility” and “something meaningful to do”, suggesting that engagement depends on individuals being assigned tasks that feel significant. Avery complements this by illustrating how such meaningfulness can be created in practice through delegation. She explains how assigning tasks makes people feel needed and important, and by describing how people feel they “play an important role”, she shows how responsibility functions as a source of recognition and inclusion. Another way of making Karnevalists’ work meaningful is by involving them in decision-making to the extent possible. Chloe explains how this works in practice:

Something that me and my co-manager do a lot is that we turn questions back to them. [...] We’ve recruited you because we trust you to follow what we, or what [the section] wants. But of course, we’re there to help with questions, or if you want us to take over something. But if a question comes like: “Okay, what do you think?” then the first thing we do is ask: “Okay, but what do you think?” So it should really come from them. - Chloe

By turning questions back to the Karnevalists, Chloe includes them in decision-making and signals trust in their judgment. This communicates that their input is valuable and that answers do not reside solely with leadership, strengthening their sense of involvement and meaningfulness. By emphasizing that they were recruited based on trust, she further frames their participation as intentional and recognizes their competence. This positions Karnevalists not just as extra help, but as essential contributors. Sofia extends this practice by confirming that their ideas have been received and taken seriously:

And also just, when they come up with an idea, we're like: "Damn, that's a really smart idea, we'll bring it up and think about it." So they kind of get that confirmation that they're actually contributing with something. - Sofia

Sofia suggests that the confirmation of having contributed can be as motivating as the contribution itself. Being heard matters as much as being right. By describing ideas as "really smart", she does more than acknowledge that an idea has been received. She actively affirms their quality, reinforcing participants' sense of competence and importance. Such gestures signal that their judgment is trusted and that their role makes a difference. Similarly, Hailey ensures that people feel their work matters by recognizing their contributions:

Like if someone just writes: "We've done this", I can be like: "Oh my god!" [...] "Wow, you're so important". Or when I talk to them a little, I'm like: "Imagine you've managed to do all this". I think it's quite important. When you've done something good, you get to hear it. - Hailey

Hailey describes recognition as an important way of reinforcing meaning and motivation within the organization. By enthusiastically responding to updates, she actively highlights the value of people's contributions and makes their work visible. Her reactions, such as "wow, you're so important", function as affirmations of both their effort and significance. In doing so, Hailey suggests that motivation can be sustained through acknowledgement and appreciation. Jackson shares another example of how to acknowledge people while also encouraging others to do the same:

And also, more generally, it's really just about trying to, uh, how should I put it, encourage or inspire a sense of curiosity. To constantly have this attitude of "yeah, I've never met you before. I don't know exactly what you're working on, but this looks exciting". - Jackson

Here, Jackson tries to cultivate a sense of curiosity by embodying it himself. Accordingly, he describes an openness toward others and their projects, suggesting a focus on approaching them with interest and enthusiasm. This is significant in relation to his role as General of Lundakarnevalen. Because of this position, his attention and encouragement likely carry particular weight. When he expresses curiosity toward someone's work, that curiosity may become legitimizing or motivating for others. His role therefore allows him to reinforce a culture

where people feel that their contributions are seen as interesting and valuable. By remaining curious himself, Jackson encourages others to adopt a similar openness toward the carnival and the people within it.

Drawbacks and Challenges with Making the Role Meaningful

However, while managers work hard to create meaning for those beneath them, the material also reveals that meaningfulness is not always equally felt across the hierarchy. A tension emerges at the top of the organization, where the boundary between voluntary and paid work begins to blur:

Sometimes I think they might find us a bit smug because we're full-time paid, and this is the first committee that's been paid for two semesters. And that can rub people the wrong way, especially among our managers. A lot of them are doing a master's degree at the same time as they're doing this. And sometimes this becomes a full-time job for them as well. And I think people can think it's really unfair. Because sometimes it might not even look like we're doing anything, since they're doing the "dirty work." - Savannah

At the management level, we have a lot of respect for them because they put in so much time. But it's also like, they get paid, we don't. Yet they still expect a lot from us. So there's some kind of imbalance there, I guess. - Greyson

Savannah's and Greyson's accounts reveal a leadership challenge connected to perceived meaningfulness and appreciation within the hierarchy. While committee members are paid for their work, many managers invest similar amounts of time and energy without compensation, often while balancing studies alongside their carnival responsibilities. This creates a tension where unpaid participants may feel that they are doing the "dirty work", while those higher up receive compensation for work that may not even be visible to those lower in the hierarchy. The issue is not simply payment itself, but whether different roles are perceived as mattering equally within the organization. When some forms of work become more rewarded or recognized than others, feelings of imbalance and unfairness can emerge. Leadership must therefore not only create motivation, but also sustain it by managing perceptions of appreciation and equality across different levels of the organization.

4.2.5 Summary of Leadership's Role in Sustaining Motivation

Leaders in Lundakarnevalen sustain motivation through four key practices: leveraging history and tradition, creating community, leveraging limited information, and making roles meaningful. As summarized in Table 2, a recurring pattern is that the same leadership acts intended to motivate can simultaneously generate unintended challenges. As such, what is meant to motivate may rather sometimes work against sustaining the motivation.

Leadership: Sustaining Motivation		
	Sustaining Motivation	Challenges in Sustaining Motivation
Leveraging History and Tradition	Invoke intergenerational legacy to create pride Frame participation as bigger than the current event Compare to past editions to drive improvement Position carnival as uniquely meaningful vs. other commitments	Being limited in the tradition Finding the balance in creating something new vs tradition Tradition constrains as much as it motivates Limited formal power to challenge inherited expectations
The Creation of the Community	Arrange social events and get-aways to build belonging Perform visible enthusiasm to set a contagious group mood Be present and approachable in everyday interactions Actively introduce people to reduce anonymity Extend community across sections, not just within them	Social events can only reach parts of the hierarchy Exclusion from activities reinforces hierarchical divides Committee status creates psychological distance Getting people over the first threshold of participation is difficult
Potential Distribution of the Limited Information	Frame exclusive information as a privilege to signal belonging Withhold uncertain information to avoid stress and irritation Be honest about uncertainty rather than overpromising clarity Use trust and reassurance to compensate for lack of answers	Structural knowledge gap between carnivals: information simply doesn't exist Leaders must guide others through uncertainty they share themselves Lack of clarity creates stress throughout the hierarchy Reassurance of trust doesn't always translate into felt confidence
Making the Role Meaningful	Assign clear areas of responsibility so everyone has something meaningful to do Delegate tasks to create ownership and a sense of being needed Involve Karnevalists' in decisions by turning questions Affirm contributions actively Embody curiosity toward others' work to signal that contributions are valued	Paid committee vs. unpaid managers doing equal (or more) work creates feelings of unfairness Committee contributions are less visible, making recognition feel unequal across levels

Table 2. Leadership: Sustaining Motivation

4.3 Summary of Empirical Findings

Motivation within Lundakarnevalen emerges from a combination of cultural, social, and structural conditions that leaders actively work to cultivate, while simultaneously navigating the tensions these same conditions produce. Across the four themes, a number of motivational drivers have been identified: history and tradition, community, access to information, and the meaningfulness of one's role. In an attempt to sustain such motivation, leaders appear to take actions that can be tied to the same themes. As a result of this empirical analysis, we have evaluated these efforts and pointed out whether or not the leadership attempts align with the drivers and actually sustain participants' motivation in practice. In the evaluation process, special attention was paid to potential backfires of leadership efforts as well as any downsides that may remain despite the actions. The findings have been compiled in Table 3 and will act as a foundation for the discussion in Chapter 5.

In summary, the four themes reveal a consistent pattern, where the conditions that motivate participants and the challenges that leadership faces are two sides of the same coin. What drives engagement also creates pressure, and leadership in Lundakarnevalen consists largely of working within that tension. No matter leadership intentions, their efforts to motivate participants do not always succeed. Hence, leadership is significant for motivation in a voluntary temporary organization, but only to a certain degree as they cannot always control the outcome.

Motivational Drivers and Leadership's Role in Sustaining Motivation				
Theme	What motivates participants	How leaders sustain motivation	Alignment	Reasoning: Limits in leadership's ability to sustain motivation
History & Tradition	Work is part of something enduring	Invoke historical continuity to create pride	Medium / High	Leaders amplify tradition-based motivational drivers that participants already feel
	Participation feels significant and defining	Frame carnival as a unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity		However, when leaders use novelty as a motivational tool, tradition can work against them because of inherited expectations
	Investment in the idea of being remembered	Build collective ambition through comparison with past editions		

Motivational Drivers and Leadership's Role in Sustaining Motivation				
Community	Sense of belonging and friendship Access to exclusive social experiences	Arrange social events and get-aways Perform visible enthusiasm to set group mood Be present and approachable Actively introduce people to reduce anonymity	Medium	Leaders create community through social events, visible enthusiasm, and everyday approachability However, social activities cannot include everyone equally, risking feelings of exclusion rather than belonging The status of higher positions can make leaders seem intimidating and unapproachable, making it harder to build a sense of a unified group The expectation to always have fun can itself become a source of pressure and "too much"
Information Access	Status that comes with privileged access to information Freedom to solve challenges autonomously	Frame exclusive information as a mark of belonging Withhold uncertain information to protect others from stress and irritation Communicate trust when clarity is unavailable	Low	Leaders leverage information access by: (1) giving access to privileged information as a way to make participants feel special, and (2) giving participants autonomy to decide for themselves where there is uncertainty However, there are participants that experience uncertainty as a source of stress, wishing for clear answers The structural knowledge gap means leaders themselves are often without answers, limiting their ability to reduce uncertainty for others and risking undermining their credibility as leaders
Role & Meaning	Autonomy and emotional ownership over work Expanding organizational perspective the higher up you are Getting recognized	Delegate tasks to create ownership Include participants in decisions Actively recognize and affirm contributions	High	Leaders delegate and recognize participants efforts, largely reflecting what participants say makes their roles feel meaningful While there is a perceived imbalance regarding experienced meaningfulness in the hierarchy, much of the leadership activities that sustain motivation actively reduce this feeling However, a friction in perceived meaningfulness in the hierarchy still remains, suggesting a need for more recognition

Table 3. Motivational Drivers and Leadership's Role in Sustaining Motivation

* High alignment: Suggests that the leadership efforts to create and sustain motivation largely reflects the motivational drivers, without having consequences that directly undermines motivation

* Medium alignment: Suggests that leadership efforts to create and sustain motivation somewhat reflects the motivational drivers, but the challenges leaders face have some consequences that might undermine motivation

* Low alignment: Suggests that leadership efforts to create and sustain motivation either do not reflect the motivational drivers or have direct backlash that undermines motivation

5. Discussion

The following chapter discusses the empirical findings in relation to existing theory. Section 5.1 examines the four motivational themes and discusses how leadership both aligns with and falls short of participants' motivational drivers, as well as what existing frameworks can and cannot explain within each theme. Section 5.2 then moves to a broader theoretical level, identifying a conceptual limitation that cuts across all themes: the leader-centric assumption embedded in most leadership frameworks. Together, the two sections build toward an argument for reorienting how leadership theory understands the relationship between leaders and motivation in interactive organizational contexts.

5.1 The Significance of Leadership for Motivation in Practice

5.1.1 History and Tradition

One distinctive feature of Lundakarnevalen as a motivational environment is the weight of its history. Lundakarnevalen carries an unusually strong legacy as it means belonging to a tradition that stretches across generations, implying not only a current community but a past as well as a future one. This sense of historical belonging strengthens motivation by making participation feel connected to something larger and more enduring than the current edition of the carnival. Participants also express a desire to be seen, remembered, and valued, which reflects Pfeiffer's (2016) argument that social esteem can function as a motivational driver in its own right. By providing a collective identity, a reason for investment and the possibility of being remembered, the carnival's historical significance becomes a powerful motivational source.

To create pride and build collective ambition, leaders utilize the historical continuity and compare this year's edition to previous ones to emphasize the vision of what is to come. Through such prophesying, leadership works to formulate and communicate a compelling vision that goes beyond participants' day to day tasks (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.111). Hence, a strong alignment can be discovered between what motivates participants and what leaders do in practice, as the prophecies amplify the motivational drive participants already feel. Leaders also seek to raise

awareness among participants regarding the value of what they create and inspire a sense of purpose beyond the immediate, showing an element of transformational leadership (1985, cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.40).

Yet, the same tradition that makes participants feel significant may also create high expectations. Much of the motivation stems from the opportunity to create something new and leave a personal mark. At the same time, this autonomy is constrained by the carnival's traditions and the expectations of former participants. As a result, leaders who attempt to motivate through the encouragement to create something new seem to find themselves working against the norm to uphold what has been. This raises a tension between the leader's prophesying work that depends on a sense of forward direction, which is restrained by the backward-looking nature generated by the tradition.

What emerges from this is a form of motivational complexity that Alvesson and Willmott (2002) help illuminate. When participants internalize the carnival's standards and reputation as part of their own identity, the fear of not living up to those standards is not experienced as external pressure but as a threat to the self. The same identity-level investment that makes the work motivating and worthy of pride also makes the possibility of failure costly. Pride and fear of failure thus go hand in hand: the deeper the identification, the more both are felt. Both feelings intensify as involvement deepens and the personal stakes rise. The result is that motivation and fear become difficult to separate.

This reveals a limitation that is not sufficiently addressed. Existing leadership frameworks assume that leaders can shape the meaning of participation freely, provided they possess the right qualities or utilize the right strategies (Alvesson et al., 2017; Pearce, 1993). The case of Lundakarnevalen, however, highlights the importance of organizational context, where meaning is shaped not only through leadership actions but also through pre-existing structures, norms and expectations. History and tradition create expectations that participants have already internalized before any leader takes any action. The motivational force of tradition is therefore not something leaders create, but something they inherit and need to learn to navigate.

5.1.2 Being Part of a Community

The social dimension of participation in Lundakarnevalen is a remarkably strong motivational force. Belonging, friendship, and access to exclusive shared experiences were mentioned in the interviews as some of the primary reasons participants join and remain involved: all examples of social incentives (Pearce, 1993, pp.78-79). The strong community built within the carnival is reflected where participants describe the organization in familial terms and treat the social dimension in itself as a form of compensation.

Participation in Lundakarnevalen also appears to function as a marker of inclusion within student life in Lund. Mike describes how not taking part can create feelings of being “left out” and “not really a part of what is going on”. This suggests that participation is motivated by a desire to identify with and belong to the organization’s shared culture. Such dynamics reflect interactive motivation, where common values, ideals, morale, and group identity act as central motivational drivers (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2019, pp.303-307). From the perspective of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), the collective identity surrounding Lundakarnevalen appears to be reinforced through the distinction between participants (the in-group), and non-participants (the out-group). Belonging is thus not constructed solely through participation itself, but also through the implicit awareness of exclusion from an important part of student life. This indicates that motivation within Lundakarnevalen is partly sustained through relational dynamics, where participation becomes tied to inclusion, status and identification with the student community.

The weight of these connections can be understood through SDT’s concept of relatedness, which is defined as a basic psychological need that drives motivation when fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.68). Here, however, it is used as an interpretative lens to understand how feelings of belonging are produced and sustained in social practice. Relatedness is about genuinely feeling connected to others and valued in one’s relationships, as well as mattering to a group that matters to you. Savannah’s emphasis on the willingness to do “dirty work” because the broader social experience makes such tasks feel worthwhile captures this idea. The work itself may not be enjoyable, but its connection to a valued social experience makes it meaningful and worth enduring. Belonging is therefore not only a reason to join but a reason to stay.

Leaders try to reinforce belonging among participants through a set of activities that largely correspond to what Alvesson et al. (2017, p.123) call party-hosting: creating a positive social atmosphere through informal interaction, social events, visible enthusiasm, and acts of recognition. Managers arrange getaways and kick-offs, perform enthusiasm even when they do not feel it, make themselves approachable in everyday encounters, and actively introduce participants to one another in order to reduce anonymity. By creating the conditions for social bonds to form, leaders are simultaneously strengthening the relational foundation that makes involvement feel meaningful, and thereby feeding the need for relatedness that SDT identifies as central to sustained motivation. We therefore see a strong alignment between the motivational drivers of what participants want; to belong and be part of something, and what leaders do to create and sustain such motivation.

However, these practices have significant drawbacks. Because of the scale of the organization, social activities have a practical capacity and inclusion must therefore be selective. What is intended as a motivational effort simultaneously produces the distinctions it was meant to soften. Those invited feel included and valued, while those left out risk feeling that their belonging is bounded by their position in the hierarchy. In-groups and out-groups are thus not only formed between Lundakarnevalen and the outside world, but within the organization itself, potentially undermining the very sense of unity these efforts set out to create.

A further tension arises from the social atmosphere itself. The norm of always having fun can shift from a source of energy into a source of pressure. Leaders who perform visible enthusiasm even when they do not personally enjoy an activity demonstrate an awareness of how their behavior shapes the group's experience. In doing so, however, they also reinforce the expectation that participants should appear enthusiastic regardless of how they actually feel. This illustrates how interactive motivation, shaped by collectively maintained norms, can generate unintended consequences beyond the leader's control (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, p. 303). Thus, the party-hosting function, which at its best creates genuine collective spirit, risks becoming a demand participants feel compelled to meet. Because interactive motivation arises between the individual and the social context rather than being installed by a leader, even well-executed "social" leadership can produce outcomes that differ from those intended. Additionally, the carnival's temporary nature creates a situation where leaders have to create many opportunities

for relationships to form in a short period of time. This leads us into another backfire of the party-hosting, where the social activities that seek to increase belonging rather become “too much”, as explained by Savannah.

5.1.3 Limited Access to Information

A distinctive and perhaps counterintuitive motivational dynamic in Lundakarnevalen concerns information. Because the organization only entails active engagement for about a year every fourth year, institutional knowledge is largely lost between these cycles, making information scarce and consequently valuable. For some, the limited information may be seen as a challenge they are willing to tackle, acting as a motivational driver. For others, the limited access to information is experienced as “bothering” and stressful.

Limited access to information may itself become motivational by increasing the symbolic value of the information that actually *is* available. Information therefore functions not only as a practical resource, but also as a social resource tied to recognition, trust, and status within the organization. Avery’s description of knowing which artists had been booked before others, and experiencing it as being let in on “a little secret,” illustrates how access to information can create feelings of inclusion and importance rather than merely enabling work tasks. As Avery also occupies the highest position in the hierarchy, this dynamic can be understood through Alvesson and Willmott’s (2002) concept of identity regulation through status, where organizational positioning shapes how individuals understand their own value and significance. Privileged access to information thus functions as a form of recognition, marking membership in an inner circle and strengthening social identification with the organization (Tajfel & Turner, 2004, p.16). This also reflects the logic of interactive motivation, where identity and social norms shape what feels meaningful within a group (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, pp.304-305). Being among those who know becomes part of how participants understand their own role and standing within the organization and acts as a signal of who they are in relation to others. In a voluntary organization where no financial signal of value is available, such symbolic markers might take on heightened importance. The contrast between Avery’s experience and Chloe’s account of being bypassed, learning that important information about her own operations reached others before it reached her, illustrates how the same dynamic also operates in reverse. Being excluded from information

is experienced as a “setback” and could signal diminished significance within the organization, like an informal drop in the hierarchy.

Leaders within Lundakarnevalen use the scarcity of information in different ways to sustain motivation. Where information is unclear or undecided, leaders seem to go one of three ways. One approach adopted by the committee is to delegate responsibility and allow tasks to be solved autonomously when clear answers are unavailable. This is particularly evident in the relationship between managers and committee members, who are generally entrusted with greater responsibility than Karnevalists. In the relationship between managers and Karnevalists, however, two other approaches appear more prominent. Uncertain information may either be withheld to protect Karnevalists from stress and frustration, or uncertainty may be communicated openly in order to maintain trust and credibility. These correspond to a form of psychotherapeutic leadership work in the sense described by Alvesson et al. (2017, p.119) as leaders are managing followers’ emotional responses to uncertainty by reducing stress and adding meaning to situations that might otherwise feel overwhelming. However, in their attempt to focus on the Karnevalist’s well-being, leaders seem to forget about what might actually be needed, and how their actions will be received. When Karnevalists require more information, and leaders rather choose to withhold it, motivation may decrease despite the leader’s intentions.

Moreover, leaders also frame information as a mark of belonging to make recipients feel valued. Zoe explains how she intends to reach such an outcome by letting her Karnevalist’s know how exclusive the information they are receiving actually is, that “only 20 out of 9,000” get it. In a sense, this is a type of identity regulation that works through group affiliation. By positioning the Karnevalist as someone who belongs to a small, select group, the leader shapes how the recipient comes to understand themselves within the organization (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.630). The information itself is not necessarily what matters most, but rather what access to it signals about who you are and where you stand. These leadership practices may reinforce more egoistic motives for volunteering, where participants’ self-esteem is strengthened through the recognition associated with belonging to something exclusive and being considered important enough to be included (Pfeiffer, 2016, p.34).

However, the limited access of information simultaneously produces feelings of stress among participants, and challenges for leaders. One problem here is that the information leaders are asked to provide does not exist for the most part. This makes managers such as Sofia feel stressed. When the people expected to provide direction are facing the same uncertainty as those below them in the hierarchy, leadership's role of providing clarity becomes impossible to fulfil. Consequently, committee members delegate responsibility to managers in the absence of knowledge on how to proceed themselves. These managers are likely to feel unable to meet expectations of what they believe leadership should entail. This creates a sense of leadership inadequacy that has nothing to do with the individual leader's competence and everything to do with the structural conditions of the organization itself. Taken together, these leadership efforts hence showcase a low alignment with the motivational drivers.

Existing leadership theories cannot fully explain why these tensions still remain. Situational approaches (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.36) acknowledge that effective leadership varies by context, but treat the leader as an agent who always knows how to adjust their approach to fit the situation. Lundakarnevalen operates in a situation where the information needed to lead well is mostly absent. Madison's statement that "it's difficult being a good leader when you don't really know anything" suggests that even if she were to adapt her approach in every way the situational perspective recommends, the absence of information itself places a ceiling on what leadership can achieve.

5.1.4 Meaningfulness

The empirical material reveals a clear pattern of how access to meaning increases with hierarchical position. Those higher in the organization, such as managers and committee members, have broader visibility and more opportunities to experience pride in the collective project. Those lower down, the Karnevalists, are more dependent on community and social belonging as motivational sources as a result of the lacking sense of ownership and influence through which deeper meaning is generally generated. However, it is clear that participants who feel responsibility and that they are heard and recognized are more committed no matter the position.

This can be interpreted through SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.68), which identifies competence, relatedness, and autonomy as central psychological needs whose fulfillment sustains self-motivated engagement. Having responsibility and freedom to decide reflects autonomy; being trusted to handle such decisions reflects competence; and being recognized for that work reflects relatedness. All of these are identified as motivational forces within this theme, and leaders appear to address them all directly. By delegating tasks, however small, they help Karnevalists gain a sense of ownership in their work, signaling that participants are both trusted and capable. When leaders turn questions back to their Karnevalists instead of simply providing answers, as Chloe does, they take on a pedagogical role in the sense described by Alvesson et al. (2017, p.127). Rather than directing, they help participants understand their work and develop their own judgment, which in turn strengthens their sense of competence and ownership. Furthermore, actively recognizing contributions, both big and small, provides a social approval that creates both emotional attachment and a sense of moral responsibility (Pfeiffer, 2016, p.34). The alignment between what motivates participants and what leaders do is therefore high, as leadership practices around delegation, inclusion in decision-making, and recognition closely reflect what participants describe as making their roles feel meaningful.

When gaining more ownership and responsibility, it results in a deeper identification with the tasks and organization as a whole. This can be understood by identity regulation through status (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.631), where hierarchical position shapes how deeply one identifies with the organization and its outcomes. Taylor illustrates this by anticipating greater pride in bringing her vision to life, but equally more personal blame if things were to go wrong. The challenge that arises here is that managers feel like they put down equally as much work as committee members, without financial compensation. This connects to the rule of reciprocity in interactive motivation. When participants give and do much for an organization, they develop an expectation that their contribution will be fairly acknowledged in return (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, p.304). When the organizational structure signals otherwise, that sense of moral balance is disrupted, and even feelings of pride and ownership may not be enough to compensate. This is ultimately a structural feature of the organization rather than a failure of any individual leader. However, given the otherwise strong alignment between leadership practices and motivational drivers in this theme, leaders may be able to partially counteract this imbalance by giving even

more recognition to others, thereby making sure that the contributions of managers are seen, valued, and explicitly acknowledged, even where equal financial compensation is not possible.

5.2 The Leader-Centric Assumption and Its Limits

Across the four themes, a consistent pattern points to challenges that current leadership theories cannot fully account for. These stem from organizational conditions that shape motivation independently of what leaders do, because motivation at Lundakarnevalen operates primarily as an interactive phenomenon. Rather than flowing downward from leader to follower, it emerges through the interplay between individuals, the organization, and the historical and social context in which they operate, driven by norms, reciprocity, and identity (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2019, pp.299, 303-305). This challenges the assumption common to most traditional frameworks, whether focused on leader qualities, style, or situational adaptation, that all position the leader as a central force of motivation (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.9). Our study of Lundakarnevalen reveals that this view is too simple, and that it does not adequately explain what is going on in practice. Here, leadership attempts to motivate do not always translate into motivated participants. The same act of inviting one group to a social activity is experienced as inclusion for one group and exclusion for another. Similarly, the enthusiasm that helps create collective spirit can also generate implicit expectations about how participants ought to feel and behave. As a result, norms of constant positivity and enthusiasm may turn a leadership practice into a source of social pressure beyond the leader's intentions or control.

Symbolic leadership approaches, such as charismatic and transformational leadership, have been highlighted as particularly suitable for voluntary organizations. Pearce (1993, p.131) argues that because volunteers do not gain any financial compensation and are not bound to the organization by contract like they are in "regular" organizations, leadership depends on their personal qualities, relation to their followers and capacity to inspire those around them. Elements of both charismatic and transformational leadership can be found in the empirical material. For example, leaders invoke tradition to frame participation as meaningful beyond the immediate moment and as part of something larger and enduring. They thereby attempt to shift participants' focus from what they are doing to what it means, and encourage them to transcend their own self-interest in pursuit of a collective purpose. This is what Bass (1985, cited in Alvesson et al., 2017, p.40)

identifies as the main idea behind transformational leadership. The weight on narrative and symbolic framing of the carnival are also closely tied to the charismatic leader (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.37). These theories, however, assume that the leader is the creator of a vision that gives work meaning (Alvesson et al., 2017, p.37), and thereby the creator of motivation.

In Lundakarnevalen, however, the motivational driver of history and tradition does not originate from any individual leader. This driver pre-exists them, and is a reason participants join before they have any leader to look to. Tradition is instead carried by family legacies, the student culture of Lund, and an organizational identity that persists across four-year cycles despite the continuous turnover of participants and leaders alike. What leaders do then is reinforcing a motivational driver that already exists rather than generating it themselves. These practices however tend to backfire, as leaders cannot always control how their motivational efforts are interpreted by those who receive them. The same tradition that leaders invoke to inspire trust and urgency is also a source of inherited expectations and pressure to perform that participants must carry. Just like Haslam et al. (2024, p.7) argue, people talk about transformational leadership in the belief that the leader will always be a “source of goodness” for the groups they lead, yet the empirical material suggests otherwise. When leaders draw on tradition to motivate, they also make the weight of that tradition heavier, raising the stakes of participation in ways that can undermine the very motivation they set out to strengthen. The backfire, again, has little to do with leadership and more to do with the fact that the cultural resource that inspires, also constrains. Leaders do not always have the control over which of these effects dominates in the minds of those they are trying to reach, as meaning does not just flow from leader to follower as traditional leadership theories tend to assume.

Moreover, several studies on volunteer contexts have reached the same conclusion on servant leadership surpassing transformational and charismatic leadership, thereby being the most effective in voluntary contexts (Schneider & George, 2011; Eva et al., 2019). In such leadership, the follower’s psychological needs are the primary focus, something we also see in the empirical material. In Lundakarnevalen, leaders seem to take followers’ wants and needs into account, appealing to their motivational drivers by delegating, including them in decision-making and recognizing participants and their work. Despite being one of the most relational-oriented frameworks, servant leadership still retains the individualistic aspect that runs through most

leadership frameworks (Hasam et al., 2024). It still requires the leader to serve, and the actions are suggested to directly drive the outcome. In this case, that outcome should be increased motivation. However, participants in Lundakarnevalen seem to be active interpreters of the social context rather than passive recipients of leadership actions. For example, leaders try to engage participants by creating social events, but this results in some feeling overwhelmed and pressured by the norm to have “fun” at all times. The motivational significance of any leadership act is therefore never determined by the act alone, but by how it lands within a broader relational and structural context that the leader neither fully controls nor always sees. Then, even the most skilled or empathetic servant leader may find that their efforts to motivate do not actually produce motivation among participants. This also questions the assumption suggested by Haslam et al. (2024, p.7) of leadership always benefitting everyone, as differing interpretations may result in increased motivation for some but increased pressures or decreased motivation for others.

Furthermore, within servant leadership, the functionalistic self-determination theory is commonly used to understand how to fulfill follower needs (Eva et al., 2019, p.125). Through this perspective, servant leaders could be argued to deliberately empower followers to satisfy their need for autonomy, which would directly translate into increased motivation. At Lundakarnevalen, autonomy does indeed appear to function as a motivational driver, as managers describe the freedom to solve problems independently as energizing and meaningful. However, this autonomy is not simply the product of deliberate leadership choice. Because the organization operates on a four-year cycle and consists of roughly 9,000 participants, leaders frequently find themselves without the knowledge of what needs to be done or how to do it, and are therefore structurally compelled to delegate rather than direct. The motivational outcome may look the same, but its origin is fundamentally different. This does not mean leadership is irrelevant, but it does mean that motivation attributed to a leader’s empowerment may in fact be a structural condition that would have existed regardless of what any individual leader chose to do. This connects to what Haslam et al. (2024, p.8) identify as the assumption that people cannot cope or function without leadership. At Lundakarnevalen, much of what sustains motivation, such as the weight of tradition, the sense of historical belonging and the structural autonomy produced by the organization’s temporary nature, exists independently of any leader.

This leads us into the broader conceptual problem of existing leadership theory that focuses primarily on the leader and models the leader-follower relationship as one in which leaders act and followers respond. Haslam et al. (2024, p.3) explain how part of the definition of leadership is *“a group process and ultimately about the activities of collectives not just individuals”*. Nevertheless, as frameworks consistently position the individual leaders as the locus of meaning, this understanding is constantly undermined. This critique is supported by the empirical findings at Lundakarnevalen. What leaders do evidently matters, but its effect depends on how followers interpret it within the broader organizational context. In some cases, leadership efforts to motivate can even produce the opposite effect.

This study ultimately calls for a shift in how leadership theory treats the interactive and co-constructed character of motivation as a central concern. This would require a new perspective where focus is on how motivation arises from interactions, how leadership acts are interpreted, and how they are transformed by the social and cultural conditions surrounding them. Existing theory portrays leadership according to a pool-ball logic where the leader initiates action and the followers move in the intended direction. The linear logic and clear causality in such a view positions motivation as a direct result of a leadership action. However, the study of Lundakarnevalen demonstrates that such an image does not hold when the motivation is primarily interactive. Contrastingly, leadership here is more accurately captured by the dynamics of a soccer team where no individual player can determine the outcome of a game. What happens on the field is rather a result of the interplay between the players and the conditions surrounding it. Throughout the game, players stay in constant motion, ready to adjust to what others are doing, similar to how norms and identity in interactive motivation shape interpretations. Leaders can communicate visions and game-plans, but the outcome will not automatically be the product of such instructions. The willingness to be part of the team at all reflects the social identity dimension of interactive motivation. Players show up because they identify with their team and its members. They put in the work at practice every day not simply because they are told to, but because the team's effort creates a sense of obligation to reciprocate, reflecting the rule of reciprocity in interactive motivation. And it is not just the leader who produces this commitment. The club's history, the expectations of the fans, and the shared standards of the group all shape how players experience and respond to their role. These contextual forces exist independently of what any coach decides to do.

This metaphor is not to say that leadership plays no role in motivation. A team captain or coach can draw on the club's history and the weight of fan expectations to inspire collective ambition. They can strengthen belonging and cohesion through team-building, and sustain commitment by recognizing individual effort and celebrating shared wins. However, just as invoking the club's history can inspire, it can equally raise the stakes of every match, turning pride into pressure. The same team-building that creates belonging can produce exclusion for those on the periphery, and recognition that lifts one player may remind another of their lower status. Leadership-acts with the best of intentions can thus produce unpredictable outcomes. Hence, the soccer metaphor captures something important about leadership in Lundakarnevalen that the pool metaphor cannot. It illustrates how leaders participate in the conditions that make motivation possible rather than solely produce motivation as a direct cause of their actions.

This relational and interactive quality of motivation is not captured by existing frameworks because these are built around the question of "what should the leader do?". What this study suggests is that the more fundamental question is "how is leadership received, interpreted, and shaped by the conditions surrounding it?".

The conditions and context in which leadership is practiced vary across organizations, yet their effects on leadership's ability to motivate have seldom been sufficiently accounted for in existing theory. In the case of Lundakarnevalen, the organizational context presented a set of challenges that existing leadership frameworks are not well equipped to handle. While the specific combination of conditions found here, namely a temporary structure, a strong cultural legacy, and the absence of financial compensation, may be particular to this organization, the broader issue is not. Leadership theory has generally underestimated the extent to which organizational context shapes what leadership can and cannot achieve, and it is this reality that the study of Lundakarnevalen illustrates. Leaders should therefore not expect a predictable translation between their actions and follower motivation. Instead, they should be attentive to the context and conditions, and work with those conditions rather than assume they can be overridden by sufficiently skilled leadership acts. This means recognizing that the same act may land differently depending on where the recipient stands in the organizational hierarchy, what expectations they carry from outside the organization, and what other signals the broader context is sending simultaneously. Leadership in interactive motivational environments is therefore never

a solo performance. It is always, whether the leader intends it or not, a collaborative and context-dependent process.

6. Conclusion

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of this study. Section 6.1 summarizes our key findings from the empirical material, and further demonstrates our contributions in relation to existing literature. Finally, section 6.2 outlines the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings & Contributions of the Study

This study set out to examine the significance of leadership for motivation in a voluntary, temporary organization, using Lundakarnevalen as its basis for the empirical material. As such, it sought to answer the research question:

What is the significance of leadership for motivation in a voluntary temporary organization?

In short, the findings reveal that leadership does matter, but its significance is more limited, more conditional, and more unpredictable than most existing frameworks suggest.

Four motivational themes were identified across the empirical material: history and tradition, community, access to information, and meaningfulness. Within each theme, leadership practices were found to align with participants' motivational drivers to varying degrees. Among other things, leaders appear to invoke collective memory and tradition to inspire pride and spark ambition, create belonging through social activities and visible enthusiasm, leverage the scarcity of information through delegation and selective disclosure, and strengthen meaningfulness through recognition, inclusion in decision-making, and delegation of responsibility. These practices partly reflect elements of transformational, servant, and charismatic leadership, and in several cases correspond well to what participants describe as motivating. Hence, existing literature could explain parts of what was found.

However, a consistent pattern across all four themes points to a fundamental limitation. Motivation at Lundakarnevalen operates primarily as an interactive phenomenon, shaped by norms, reciprocity, identity, as well as organizational context, rather than flowing directly from

leader to follower. The same leadership act that motivates some participants can alienate or pressure others. The tradition that leaders invoke to inspire pride simultaneously raises the personal stakes of participation in ways leaders cannot control. Social activities intended to strengthen belonging can make the hierarchical lines more visible, and create a norm of forced positivity. Information shared to signal trust can inadvertently signal exclusion to those who receive it later than others. And autonomy experienced as empowering by managers often arises from the organization's own structural knowledge gaps rather than purely being a result of leadership acts. Consequently, the practice of leadership and its outcomes are not as linear as leadership theories tend to suggest, and the significance of leadership has hence been somewhat over-emphasized.

This points to a broader conceptual contribution of the study as the leader-centric assumption embedded in most leadership frameworks does not hold in interactive motivational environments. Existing theories, whether focused on leader qualities, style, situational adaptation, or symbolic approaches, consistently model motivation as something leaders produce through their actions. The reality of Lundakarnevalen challenges this assumption. Much of what sustains motivation here, including the weight of tradition, the pull of collective identity, and the autonomy generated by the organization's temporary structure, exists independently of any individual leader. The study therefore calls for a reorientation in leadership theory away from the question of what leaders should do toward the question of how leadership is received, interpreted, and shaped by the conditions surrounding it.

We conducted a qualitative study based on a symbolic interactionism tradition in order to capture the leaders' interpretations of their own realities. As Lundakarnevalen is quite a unique case seeing to its complex context, we do not claim generalizability, but rather aim to contribute with practical and theoretical insights. While most leadership theory places a great emphasis on the leader and its abilities, we contribute to a more critical view by showing how the limitations of leadership play out in practice.

Accordingly, the key findings of this study are as follows:

- Not all motivation can be attributed to the leader. Contexts such as social and historical may act as a motivation force in itself. Leaders may then invoke these factors to sustain motivation, but it may not always translate into the intended outcome.
- Leadership acts and intentions may backfire when it comes to sustaining motivation. What motivates some may be demotivating for others. Consequently, there is no recipe for how a leader should be or do to create or sustain motivation.
- Leadership may hence create and sustain motivation, but it is not always a direct result of the leadership act itself.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the empirical material is drawn from a single organization, Lundakarnevalen, which combines a distinctive set of features through its temporary structure, strong cultural legacy, student context, and the absence of financial compensation. While these features make it a particularly illuminating case for studying interactive motivation, they also limit the generalizability of the findings. The specific dynamics observed here may not transfer directly to other voluntary or temporary organizations with different histories, cultures, or other contexts.

Second, the study relies on qualitative interviews with a limited number of participants, selected to represent two different hierarchical positions within the organization. While this enabled depth in the analysis, it does not allow for claims about the frequency of specific motivational experiences across the full population of roughly 9,000 participants. Perspectives from Karnevalists in particular remain underrepresented relative to their numerical weight in the organization.

Future research could address these limitations in several ways. For example, comparative studies across multiple voluntary or temporary organizations would help determine which findings are specific to Lundakarnevalen and which point to broader patterns in interactive motivational environments.

Secondly, it would be of interest to conduct a similar study among those lower in the hierarchy of such a context specific organization to understand whether the findings would differ in relation to the study object's hierarchical position.

Finally, future research might lead to the development of a more explicit framework for understanding leadership and interactive motivation, moving beyond leader-centric models to account for the role of organizational context, cultural legacy, and collective identity as motivational forces.

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Appendix A

Interview Overview	
Interview Object	Duration
Mike	51.41
Madison	53.31
Savannah	37.51
Jackson	43.48
Avery	57.37
Hailey	56.10
Carter	37.21
Logan	31.49
Greyson	33.41
Hannah	47.44
Sofia	41.16
Chloe	49.05
Taylor	45.30
Zoe	56.52

Appendix B

Prompts used with ChatGPT and Claude:

- Can you give us feedback for this paragraph?
- Can you give us suggestions on how we could make this paragraph shorter? Are there any unnecessary words that could be cut?
- Can you give suggestions for academic papers with many citations about “X”?
- Is the language here clear and academic? What can be improved?
- Can you help us reformulate this sentence to improve the language?
- Is this grammatically correct?
- Can the logic of this paragraph be restructured to flow better and be easier to read?
- Does the point here come across easily?