

Anglia Ruskin University

**Practical Implications
of post-heroic leadership theories.
A critical examination**

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Abstract

This paper seeks to address practical implications of post-heroic leadership theories. It argues that practices being shaped by post-heroic ideals are of great value. Firstly, because of its ability to cope with a complex fast-changing world. Secondly, because of achieving an effective form of leadership, if its true nature is taken into account. It will be shown that the theories being discussed complement each other, resulting in an extensive description of the leadership phenomenon. Albeit the actual research on post-heroic leadership is miniscule, referring to companies who have already embraced some of the post-heroic ideals will substantiate the viability and relevance of post-heroic approaches. Those companies are indicative of the significant impact post-heroic ideals might have on the way in which business is done. This paper concludes by deriving in detail practical implications from the theoretical underpinnings of the approaches. Regardless of the marked theoretical differences, four of the five theories share a wide common ground.

1. Introduction

Current trends in the field of leadership studies stress the importance of wider contextual forces. Leadership is understood to be socially embedded and constructed. More importantly, leadership is viewed as distributed amongst those who are engaged in leadership. In a nutshell, a relational, processual, collectivist and non-authoritarian view on leadership is advocated. As a consequence, they abandon the traditional assumption that leaders are the cause or determinant of leadership. This is still the central focus of mainstream research as will be outlined in the following chapter, which will also provide a brief overview of leadership studies, ranging from the trait and contingency approach over the situational approach to recently introduced theories.

The theories in the focus of this paper distinguish themselves significantly from the above listed approaches. Arguably, the most distinctive point is the negation of the leader-centric thinking. This might represent a critical turning point in the discipline of leadership studies. It could become the point with the most far-reaching ramifications – if taken seriously – since it puts to an end what has been pervasive in leadership research throughout the last century. Because of this, it is indispensable to take a look at the critique of traditional approaches to comprehend the emergence of post-heroic theories. Subsequently, chapter three will provide a possible explanation of why this individualist notion of leadership is so persistent.

Borrowing the notion of post-heroic leadership from Fletcher (2004) and Crevani (2010) this paper will offer a categorisation of leadership theories which takes into account the essential shift from leader-centric to social constructivist notions: Traditional models can be subsumed under the term of heroic leadership by virtue of its emphasis on leaders. Theories which are based on a dispersed and socially constructed assumption of leadership can be described as post-heroic. This categorisation does justice to the call for a paradigm shift which several scholars have demanded it within the discipline (Wood, 2005; Uhl-Bien, 2007; Obolensky, 2010; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2010). Furthermore, this differentiation is beneficial for promoting approaches which essentially advocate a distribution of leadership. Since they still represent a small niche in leadership research, a post-heroic guise might facilitate a space in which various theories could extend and fortify this particular understanding of leadership. Thus, it is more likely to achieve the targeted paradigm shift. Chapter six and seven will clarify in which way post-heroic theories can complement each other, and are able to give an account of the nature of leadership that is close to reality.

The main focus, however, is set on the critical examination of practical implications of post-heroic leadership. In doing so, five distinct theories will be taken into account, namely leadership from a process perspective, a philosophical approach to leadership, complex adaptive leadership, relational leadership, and shared leadership. It will be shown that respectively four theories share a common ground with regards to their practical implications. Of major importance are changes in the organisational structure, the distribution of responsibility, and fostering people's interactions. Interestingly, how distinct the underpinnings of approaches in question might be, the consequences they have on organisational life are similar. Complex adaptive leadership, however, assumes a special role, which is explained in the paradoxical character it possesses.

In order to corroborate the concepts being proposed by post-heroic theories, it will be referred to four companies who already have incorporated some of the post-heroic ideals. Amongst them is the Brazilian enterprise Semco that is probably the most progressive one in espousing a post-heroic way of leadership. These examples will show that even metaphysical theories such as leadership from a process perspective are of practical relevance.

Finally, a perennial issue of this paper will be the complex fast-changing world which highlights the call for a different kind of leadership. Essentially, there can be identified two driving forces behind the required paradigm shift. On the one hand, there is the attempt to capture leadership's true nature and on the other hand, there is the adaption to a complex world.

2. An overview of traditional leadership studies

The phenomenon of leadership has been in the focus of diverse scholars since antiquity. Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (400-320 BC), Plato's *Republic* (427/428-374 BC) or Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513-14) are arguably the most important texts of this time that attempt to elucidate leadership. The systematic social scientific study of leadership did not begin until the early 1930s. Over the years, a large body of knowledge has been accumulated leading to valuable insights, however, crucial questions remain still unanswered (Rost, 1991; House & Aditya, 1997). Amongst these, is even one of such importance, that is, what is leadership, so that it is hard to believe that there is still dissent about it. "There are as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (Bass, 2008, p.7). A perennial definition of leadership in contemporary research is one of a process of influence (Bryman, 1986; Rost, 1991; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Yukl, 2010).

Traditional studies usually coin leadership to an individual. As mentioned above, these approaches can be subsumed under the category of heroic leadership, since the leader is the focus of the studies. By means of distinctive traits, behaviours and styles, leaders distinguish themselves from their followers. Virtually omniscient and omnipotent, they are influencing the situation through orders, setting the direction, empowering, motivating, inducing visions etc. This summarises the thinking that still prevails in the plethora of leadership studies, which is in accordance with the underpinnings of Cartesian science. This kind of thinking assumes the existence of deterministic and cause-effect relationships. One 'thing' causes to other and both can be distinctively distinguished.

After alluding to classical leadership studies, it is also important to point out to two influential streams of modern studies. First, Thomas Carlyle a rector of Edinburgh University in 1866 shaped the image of the 'Great Men' in conjunction with leadership. Fascinated by eminent historical figures like Oliver Cromwell he bestowed masculine,

heroic and individualist notions upon the field in question (Grint, 2010). These very notions are still present today, which will become apparent in the course of referring to modern leadership studies in more detail.

Second, in the upsurge of the scientific revolution scientific management – also referred to as Taylorism – emerged, accompanied by Fordism. Concepts such as work fragmentation, de-skilling, machine-paced work and alienated labour became mundane workplace elements (Yukl, 2010). The workforce was treated like machinery, assumed to be merely interested in earning money. They were supervised by people who distinguished themselves by having greater scientific knowledge.

The Hawthorne experiments in the 1920s and 1930s refuted this perception of employees. The study showed that the experience of being measured alters the behaviour of those being measured. More importantly, productivity increased, because the people noticed that someone cared about them. It suffices it to say that this conclusion should have led to a further investigation of relationships between the people engaged in leadership, but this occurred much later as we will see in chapter 6.

2.1. The Trait Approach

Instead of relational theories, the trait approach dominated systematic research in the 1930s and 1940s. The most influential representatives of this field are Gibb (1947), Jenkins (1974) and Stogdill (1948). Amongst others they tried to find personal characteristics which differentiate leaders from nonleaders. Accordingly, if one is in possession of the necessary leadership skills one is capable of assuming the leader role, notwithstanding the situation or context. Although several studies identified traits which can be associated with leader effectiveness – some with correlations as high as .50 (House & Aditya, 1997) – the basic premises of the trait theory could not be substantiated empirically. Neither, were the scholars able to agree upon an universal set of traits. Even Stogdill (1948, p.64) had doubts about the current theory: “A person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits [...] the pattern of personal characteristics of the leader must bear some relevant relationships to the characteristics, activities, and goals of the followers.”

Nonetheless, the trait approach still pervades leadership research until now. Northouse (2007) argues that intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability are strong indicators of leadership. Moreover, a widely accepted categorisation of leadership

skills can be found in Yukl's (2010) book about *Leadership in Organizations*: Technical skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills. Gandhi and Roosevelt are a good example, in order to demonstrate that it is difficult to say with the trait approach what kind of traits are responsible for being a leader. Both are eminent historical figures and have been identified by Burns (1978) as successful leaders, yet their personalities were utterly different.

2.2. The Contingency Approach

Building on above mentioned Stogdill's critique, the contingency approach emerged, which considered not only the individual leader, but also the context in which leadership happens, believing that both determine the kind of leadership required. In order to guarantee effective leadership a leader's style has to match the circumstances (Northouse, 2007).

Major empirical contributions were made by the Ohio State group and the Michigan group who identified two broad classes of leader behaviours – task- and person-oriented behaviours. The first one focuses on how goals can be achieved within group or organisation, and the second one is concerned with building relationships with the subordinates, helping them to feel generally comfortable. Likert (1961) draws on these findings and enunciates four different management systems, ranging from strictly authoritative to participative. Blake and Mouton (1964) incorporated the concepts of the aforesaid studies and developed the Managerial Grid, proposing five leadership behaviours depending on the leader's concern for people or production. It is important to note that this model measures only the leader's values and feelings as opposed to the Ohio State framework which also included the follower's perception.

To the already existing dimensions, task- and relationship-oriented behaviours, added Fiedler (1967) in his contingency model a third one – the favourableness of the situation – which he defines as “the degree to which the situation enables the leader to exert influence over the group” (ibid., p.13). Overall, there are eight possible circumstances a leader might face. Most favourable are situations when leader-member relationships are good, the task is clearly structured, and the leader has a strong position power. Least favourable are situations when leader-member relationships are poor, the task is unstructured, and the leader has no position power.

Another contingency model that is worth mentioning is the one developed by Vroom and Yetten (1973). The theory describes seven decision-making methods, which range from autocratic to democratic decisions. In the process of a leader's decision making, the model takes following components into account, which influence the decision: situational variables impacting the leader, personal attributes of the leader, leader's behaviour, organisational effectiveness and situational variables effecting the organisation (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2001). The theory can best be described as a decision tree. Seven questions answered successively, are designed to help managers to make appropriate decisions.

Akin to the trait approach the contingency theories could hardly be verified empirically, and hence the theories did not far well overall (House & Aditya, 1997). Besides, research over the past few decades showed that there is no universal best style for leadership as the contingency approach suggests.

2.3. The Situational Approach

Contrary to the previous approach the situational analysis does not proclaim a best way of leading; it rather allows the leader to choose from a repertoire of styles. In order to give an idea of the situational approach, it will suffice to refer to two widely known theories.

The Path-Goal theory (House & Mitchell, 1974) attempts to reconcile the conflict between task- and person-oriented behaviour under the consideration of follower's expectation and satisfaction. Hence, leaders work effectively when they identify and supply what is required for the situation. In this spirit, the model propounds several ways for a leader to clarify the path and increase rewards, by means of which he is able to enhance the follower's motivation, and ultimately the organisational outcome.

The model that is mostly associated with the situational approach is the one by Hersey and Blanchard (2001). They postulate four leadership styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating, which are chosen depending on the situation defined by subordinates' maturity level. The latter helps the leader whether his leaderships style resonates well with the will and readiness of the followers. If the subordinates are confident and highly motivated, then a more delegating style is appropriate. A rather authoritarian or telling style is required, in the case of unwilling and insecure followers. As an aside note, this approach will become relevant again when referring to complex adaptive leadership.

Akin to the previous theories the current framework lacks also a sufficient empirical underpinning, resulting in missing evidence of the assumptions and propositions being made by the situational leadership model (House & Aditya, 1997). Furthermore, it is debatable whether certain kinds of situations or follower maturity levels can be simply put into categorisations. Many situations are unknown and impossible to judge from the outset. More importantly, it is difficult to make a right evaluation of the followers' overall maturity level from heterogeneous groups with different skills and attitudes. It would be rather imaginable to adapt one's leadership style according to each individual. Yet, this casts doubt on the viability, since the leader must be, firstly, an excellent judge of character, secondly an extraordinary actor – due to exerting different styles – and thirdly, outstandingly skilled in time-management, because of having to know all followers well and treating each of them differently.

2.4. Recently introduced theories

Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) and charismatic leadership (House, 1977; Conger & Kanungo 1987) are presumably some of the most utilised theories in contemporary leadership research. Bryman (1993) calls them the new leadership theories. They have several common characteristics. Firstly, they show how leaders are able to improve followers' accomplishments by means of inspiring, enhancing self-worth, espousing guiding values, and evoking shared visions. Secondly, they provide an explanation why charismatic or transformational leaders are capable of eliciting outstanding follower motivation, commitment, trust, dedication, loyalty and performance. Finally, they put a stress on symbolic and emotionally appealing leader behaviours: "Transformational leaders articulate a sense of vision and purpose to followers. They align the followers with the vision and empower followers to take responsibility for achieving portions of visions" (Bass, 2006, p.102).

However, these theories offer insufficient explanations of the process by which the leader affects the states of his followers. They show variations of the interpretation of leadership, yet they still perpetuate the industrial model's paradigm (Barker, 2001). They still attribute power to individual social actors, and it is they who cause events (Wood, 2005; Gemmill & Oakley, 1992). Moreover, there is little evidence that charismatic, or transformational leadership transforms, in fact, individuals or groups.

Also the situational aspect should be taken into account with regards to this kind of leadership. Studies by Waldman, Ramirez and House (1996) show that charismatic leadership is most effective under conditions of environmental uncertainty.

3. Critique of traditional leadership studies

Due to the common ground of above mentioned leadership studies – that is being leader-centric – all of them are deficient in the same respect, by disregarding wider contextual forces which also impact organisational performance and outcomes. Several scholars critiqued mainstream research by virtue of its limited view on the leadership phenomenon, questioning the underlying Cartesian science. As a consequence of assuming that leaders are the cause or source of leadership, one ignores the fact that it is a continuous social process. By looking at leadership as the sum of single entities or distinguishable units such as *leaders, followers, or managers*, one disregards its connections and interrelations (Hosking, 1988; Rost, 1991; House & Aditya, 1997; Barker, 2001; Fletcher 2004). Just mentioned distinct elements are solely the result of abstract thinking. Incapable of understanding the complex nature of processes such as leadership, one is prone to reify things (Wood, 2005). In so doing, the abstractions are mistaken for reality, which eventually leads to the fallible perception of the phenomenon. Whitehead (1985) calls this the *fallacy of misplaced concreteness*. Therefore, mainstream studies are rather prescriptive than descriptive (Gronn, 2002; Wood, 2005). Having said this, Bolden and Gosling (2006) show based on a review of competency frameworks¹ and an analysis of participant reports from a reflective leadership development programme that individualistic competency frameworks “highlight a serious lack of consideration of many aspects of the leadership role as identified by practising managers” (p.158). They conclude that leadership cannot be distilled into a number of constituent elements (ibid).

The attribution of superhuman abilities to a chosen few dates back to Plato’s (2007) *philosopher king* and is still very present in contemporary research, not only in trait approaches. Bearing in mind those proposed traits and abilities a leader should have one must be virtually god-like in order to be an effective and good leader (Grint, 2005). A leader’s role may be important within leadership processes, however, it is highly

¹Based on competency frameworks leadership is presented as a set of traits, qualities and behaviours possessed by the leader who encourages participation, development, and commitment of others within the organisation. This advocates a notion of leadership that is in agreement with traditional studies.

exaggerated in terms of their faculties and actual contribution (Fletcher, 2004; Wood & Ladkin 2008). Mintzberg gets to the heart of this oversimplification of leadership as he questioned Fortune's assertion that within four years, Lou Gerstner added more than \$40 billion to IBM's shareholder value. What, asked Mintzberg: *All by himself?* (Mintzberg, 2004, 22, original emphasis). Connecting the outcome of leadership mainly to appointed leaders might stem from scholars' predisposition of formulating generalisations. In doing so, simple causations are formulated at the expense of the fact that leadership practices and interactions embedded in a complex social web.

Another explanation is provided by Gemmill and Oakley (1992) who assert that the simple causation of leadership stems from reality's uncertainty and chaos. People attribute omniscience and omnipotence to the person at the top in order to focus the terror in one place. Precarious or even perilous in this respect is the consequence of such conduct; followers deskill themselves from their own critical thinking, visions, inspirations, and emotions (ibid). Hence, they act as if they are helpless, which will considerably impinge upon leadership.

Finally, McIntosh (1989) concludes that leaders who are seen as heroes, are only the tip of the iceberg. In effect, their individual achievement is enabled by a vast network of collaboration and support. Even more interesting is that the myth of superleaders seems to persist in spite of well-publicised 'leadership' failures of once successful leaders. Take for example the case of Gilbert Amelio, the former head of National Semiconductor, to run the ailing Apple Computer. After a year and a half of not being able to turn the company around, he was fired publicly by the Apple board. Likewise John Walter, who moved from printing giant R.R. Donnelly to A&T. Less than a year later, he found himself fired. So, if the outcome of leadership was alone in the hands of a single leader, would not be a leader, who was once successful, by virtue of his skills, abilities and knowledge, capable of repeating his success? The examples show that there must have been other forces or factors that were also responsible for the leadership's demise. The question is, why the virtual equation of leader and leadership is so resistant. Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich (1985) offer a possible explanation in what they call the *Romance of Leadership*.

4. The Romance of Leadership

As a result of avoiding uncertainty and preferring simple explanations, one rather tends to believe in a seemingly simple causal relations than to live with ambiguity:

“In the absence of direct, unambiguous information that would allow one rationally to infer the locus of causality, the romanticized conception of leadership permits us to be more comfortable in associating leaders – by ascribing to them control and responsibility – with events and outcomes to which they can be plausibly linked” (Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich, 1985, p.80).

Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that top leaders or visible executives are in control of and responsible for transformations. It is rather simple to attribute leadership outcomes to them, because they are somewhat related to them. However, it is obvious that in reality success depends on a variety of knowledge, skills and abilities which exceed one person (Conger, Spreitzer & Lawler III, 1999). Nevertheless, it is still widely believed that leaders are capable of influencing the events. Moreover, it is debatable whether one is capable of influencing the environment in which one is located. It is rather the case that circumstances being encountered shape or direct certain behaviour. For instance Lee Iacocca, one of the best examples of America’s heroic leaders, who is credited for resurrecting Chrysler in the 1980s, could only prevail as the company’s CEO, because of a change in America’s political landscape. A democratic government came into power that was sensitive enough to provide financial help to Chrysler without which it would not have survived (Iacocca, 1986). So, if Iacocca had not found himself in a political environment that was susceptible to helping out a private car company, he never would have acted the way he did, and, presumably, Chrysler would not have survived the crisis.

To conclude, Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich (1985) provided a possible explanation why leadership studies are so persistently imbued with the fallible perception that leaders are the cause or the source of leadership. Interestingly, individual attribution to leadership occurs, in particular, when performances are either very good or very bad (ibid).

5. Why a paradigm shift might be needed

Before discussing post-heroic models in detail, it is important to stress the exigency of a paradigm shift of leadership. Apart from the fact that traditional studies are liable to a fallible perception, whereby setting too much emphasis on the leader, today’s complex environment rather requires a different approach to leadership. Traditional theories propose a kind of leadership that is too static in order to cope with the challenges,

emanating from the complex environment that companies are facing. Thus, several scholars (Conger, Spreitzer & Lawler, 1999; Senge & Käufer, 2003; Manville & Ober 2003; Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007; Obolensky, 2010) have increasingly asked for a new conception of leadership in the last couple of years which is more attuned to complexity. Conger, Spreitzer and Lawler III (1999) highlight, in this regard, the paramount role of leadership in an organisation's successful adaption to a changing world.

At this point it may be worth elaborating on the main reasons why our world is so complex. One obvious reason is the globalisation which causes a strong competition between companies and individuals (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007), and it is responsible that people are confronted with an abundance of impressions and information. The bigger the world appears to one, the more difficult it gets to position oneself within world. There are countless choices between different philosophies, morals, or weltanschauungen. Every culture is distinguishable from the other on the basis of its basic assumptions, beliefs, rituals or habits. Because of proposing distinct ways of living, they can cause confusion to the individual, in which way he is supposed to live his life. This results then in a sort of Odyssean quest for a place in the world that fulfils oneself. In short, there are too many choices to ponder and too less time to take advantage of all the options available².

This image of being helpless can also be applied to decision-making processes within leadership. Regardless of a person's competencies or intellect, one is inherently incapable of making exclusively right decisions. Take for instance the previous example of the financial crisis. First, there are numerous repercussions to consider some obvious, some oblique. Secondly, the search for a panacea against the crisis is of no avail, because of what eventually culminated in the disaster had several roots. And finally, since there is no ultimate solution – only damage control – one has to find an unique way of how to cope with the ramifications. On a side note, this example shows also perfectly the interconnectedness of a globalised world. A problem that originated in the U.S. affected in the end severely people around the globe.

So, leadership should be more about enabling intellectual assets throughout the network rather than relying on the limited intelligence of a few brains at the top (Uhl-Bien, Marion &

² Obolensky (2010) plotted in his book 'Complex Adaptive Leadership' the rate of volatility against the level of knowledge in the period between 1900 and 1990. Interestingly, a similar curve evolves. In other words the more knowledge exists, the higher the uncertainty seems to be (see Appendix A).

McKelvey, 2007). This view is corroborated by the fact that our Western society has left the Industrial and entered the so called Knowledge Era, in which a broader set of competencies is required. Obolensky (2010) points out that most of the major changes over the last 4,000 years have been accomplished in the last century, that is a remarkable increase of the pace of change. This point gets clearer when looking at the development of the fields of human society. First of all, it can be noted that the basic technology of weapons stayed pretty much the same throughout thousands of years. The invention of the musket and the canon was the start of big changes, yet took time to become fully effective. The development of weapons of mass destruction in the 20th century can be viewed as a quantum leap. More relevant for the populace were the inventions in the field of communication. For instance, the basic technology of conveying messages did not change until the Morse code was invented in the middle of the 19th century. Today, everyone's life is influenced by the possibilities of the internet. One is accustomed to making video calls with people from other continents, and is used to having access and receiving constantly new information. The changes in transportation are astonishing, too. Again, the underlying concept of travelling remained the same for 95 per cent of the 4,000 years. Distance was covered best over land, and sea, solely the means of transportation ameliorated gradually. Hence, it is exceedingly outstanding that the time between the first man flying and the moon landing was achieved within just over 50 years – under 1 per cent of the time period considered (ibid).

To conclude, the world is far more complex, faster changing and uncertain than ever before. People have faster access to information and know what is going on around them, possibly better than their leaders (Obolensky, 2010). Yet, the plethora of leadership studies is still leader-centric, and most of the organisations are structured like pyramids with one person at the top. Akin to the past where there was only one pharaoh, king or emperor, there is only one CEO in most of the companies (ibid). And both have been attributed with exceptional skills, abilities, and knowledge. Having said this, the predominating leadership assumptions are in their essence thousands of years old, whereas the context in which leadership is embedded has dramatically changed. Thus, there is a strong discontinuity between our understanding of leadership and of the world we live in. This, finally, leads to the question whether this incongruity can be resolved by post-heroic theories, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

6. An introduction into selected post-heroic theories

Contrary to mainstream perspectives that advocate heroic individualist and authoritarian leadership norms, post-heroic leadership ideals suggest a relational, collectivist, and non-authoritarian nature (Käufer, 2004; Crevani, 2010). As the name already suggests the most salient point about these theories is that they abandon the focus on leaders, they rather regard them as constituents of leadership. In this way, post-heroic theories seem revolutionary, because of breaking with the traditional leadership conception. Yet, they also embrace some of the insights provided by mainstream research. Post-heroic leadership theories do not necessarily disapprove with the efficiency of transformational or authentic leadership they just propound a different conception of leadership, or to put it precisely they want to provoke a paradigm shift.

Despite some valuable findings of traditional leadership studies there has not been a marked development that would be consistent with other sciences. For almost a century it has been the basic assumption that the leader is the centre of leadership's universe and that the latter revolves around him³. However, in a Copernican manner some leadership scholars oppose the dominant perception and take a post-modern view on the discipline of leadership studies, which renders the belief of a simple causation obsolete. Instead, it is assumed that there are multiple interpretations, or differently put, that there is no such thing as one truth. The world is by nature interdependent and interrelated whereby numerous factors have to be taken into account, and not just one.

It is important to note that the underlying notion of leadership in post-heroic models is a distributed one. Gibb (1954) and Gronn (2002) did groundbreaking work in this regard. Gronn asserted that leadership does not consist of distinct identities such as followers and leaders; these roles are rather fluid and can change over time. Depending on the situation one can either be a leader or a follower. Thus, this diminishes the once proclaimed importance of appointed leaders, and highlights leadership as an effort of the collective. So, it is crucial to bear in mind when speaking of leaders or followers in conjunction with

³ In this regard Ricardo Semler (1999) likes to tell a story of a textile company. Its 200 employees work in a machine-filled factory set. The chief executive is performance-oriented, starting early, leaving late, and making all the important decisions in between. The factory is sub-divided into specialised areas of production each with its own boss. Each boss in turn has a group of foremen to watch the workers. Accountants and salespeople are on the mezzanine above the shop floor and report to their respective department heads. Everything is strictly hierarchical and pyramidal. What is so special about this ordinary company? It existed in 1633. And the moral of the story our advances in technology have far outstripped our advances in mentality.

post-heroic theories that these are not static roles, but ones that are constantly changing. As it can be seen later in the discussion, a distributed notion of leadership is consistent with the general perception of leadership as a social process or construction.

6.1. Leadership from a process perspective

Several scholars (Pettigrew, 1990, 1997, 2001; Chia, 1995; Dawson, 1997; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Wood 2005; Wood & Ladkin, 2008) propound a process ontology to leadership by drawing on process metaphysics. Process thinking has its origins in the work of the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus who famously postulated that all is flux (*'maxim Panta rei'*), which means that everything is in a constant state of motion. Brought to the fore was this *weltanschauung* by Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, William James and Gilles Deleuze. They argue that life and society cannot be divided into distinct parts – even though it is practical and handy – it rather must be conceived as an active process that is constantly shifting (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Ladkin, 2010). Each element can permeate and melt into each other (Wood, 2005, Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Succinctly put, reality is change in itself. As a consequence the widely believed ontology of being is replaced by one of becoming, that is to say, that processes are seen as the concrete reality of things (Griffin, 1986). “Form is only a snapshot view of transition” (Bergson, 1983, p.302). Hence, the taken-for-granted categories of leadership need to be explored and explained (Chia, 1995; Dawson, 1997). What once has been incontrovertibly presupposed as distinct entities must now be understood as unknown and unpredictable identities. In order to understand the genuine nature of leadership the already mentioned fallible perception⁴ (*fallacy of misplaced concreteness*) has to be overcome, so that a possible disclosure of all interrelations and interdependencies is able to occur.

Interrelatedness or interdependency is arguably the key point of ‘processual’ leadership. As alluded to earlier, our immediate perception seems to simplify actual complex identities into more practical entities. Bergson (1912) states that this is due to the logic of our intellect, which denotes the world as comprised of solid states. He argues, thus, that we have to change our mental habits to see that mobility is the only actual reality.

⁴ According to Gemmill and Oakley (1992) this fallible perception stems from mistaking abstractions of reality for reality itself. After mentally reifying processes, for instance leadership into a simple leader-follower dualism, one creates simple and concrete entities which are believed to be true, oblivious to the fact that they are mere abstractions. Accordingly, leadership is often viewed as the cause of or determined by a leader, or a cadre of leaders.

In order to understand the connection between the continuous flow of reality and interrelatedness, Pettigrew's (1997) metaphorical description of organisational life will be beneficial. He illustrates aforesaid life as a river basin where several streams are flowing into one another, each dependent on each other for the life force and shaping and being shaped by the diversity of the area. Following this metaphor the streams' identities can never be fully known, since their identity is contingent on the other streams, and the terrain that surrounds them. The fluid nature of constituents makes it impossible to ascertain a final or a complete identity. Similarly, leadership's constituents are interrelated and interdependent, and therefore constantly changing. Whitehead (1997) puts it more eloquently and denoted social processes as a "systematic complex of mutual relatedness." It can be shown that identities are co-constructed by taking a closer look at leader and follower identities. Since a leader is only able to assume a leader role vis-à-vis with his followers and vice versa, these identities are per se socially constructed. A leader "is always social first and only mistakenly claims the personal self as the origin of experience" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.97). Logically, leadership can only occur through the people who engage in it. Hence, individuals' expectations of themselves and each other will play a pivotal role, too. For instance, Meindl (1995) purports that leaders and followers are constructed in the minds of followers. They are not assumed to be under the control of a leader, but rather by forces that influence the social construction process. Thus, leadership is propounded to be a collective experience, something that emerges from social interactions embedded in a particular context.

Tsoukas and Chia (2002) refer to social interactions in order to illustrate that process philosophy's dictum – that everything is in a constant motion – is very true for organisational life. Through interactions human beings obtain new experiences which they try to make sense of and act coherently. Therefore, as long as interactions occur these sense-making processes are going to persevere. In this sense, change is inherent in human action and constantly happening. Yet, this does not mean that these changes are instantaneously noticeable, they often occur in micro-processes that are rather nondescript. Tsoukas and Chia corroborate this point by outlining that in an organisation many individual's initiatives, improvisations, and modifications go unrecognised, and hence may never become institutionalised. But, this should not lead to the assumption that minor changes are insignificant and can be ignored.

Finally, when speaking of interconnectedness, one has also to mention the temporal side of it, that is, historicity. Past events are integrated in the events of the present, and are impacting and shaping future events (Pettigrew, 1997; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Wood, 2005; Ladkin 2010). That again refers back to the process ontology of emergence and becoming. Realities are continuously co-constructed by virtue of their numerous relations, both spatial and temporal. What sort of consequences does this kind of understanding have? It results in the attempt to comprehend the relatedness of the becoming of things, and whereto their development might lead.

6.1.1. Leadership as an event

The idea to look at leadership in form of events grows out of the process perspective being discussed. For Whitehead (1985) events are the real things of which the world is made of. It may be worth noting, that this does not imply a finality in the sense of *already made*, it rather suggests a world *in the making* because of the basic assumption that everything is liable to constant change. Hence, the underpinnings of process metaphysics are represented in the occurrence of the event. The latter emerges as a consequence of intensified experiences; it does not simply occur like an organised occasion, nor has it a permanent identity (Wood & Ladkin, 2008). It, furthermore, highlights the state of becoming which is unpredictable and unknown at any time. It stresses the complexity of things with all their interrelations and interdependencies whose identities elude us. As an example of an event in conjunction with leadership Wood and Ladkin quote the leaderful moment. The leaderful moment stresses the variety of factors which contribute to leadership. Considering them as such will result in acknowledging the larger context. This can be illustrated with following example: Arguably, the place that is most commonly associated with leading is the boardroom. One might believe that all important decisions are made there, which in turn, are subsequently exercised by others. But, it is more complex than that. There are elements which contribute to the leaderful moment. The first point one easily neglects are the preparations, which made the meeting in the boardroom possible such as organising or delineating an agenda. Although there are no immediate relations between these practices and those in the boardroom, they are necessary for leadership's occurrence. Another oblique factor but, arguably, more influential is the context in which the meeting will take place. Hence, a meeting at a time similar to 2009 – when the whole world was dramatically affected by the financial crisis – is likely to be shaped by the precarious situation. Looking at the actual enactment of 'leadership' during the meeting one will discover that it can move around the table. Different members make

interventions or contributions which may seem more or less leaderful. In this spirit any individual is able to contribute and exercise a significant impact on the collectively produced leaderful moment, whether they hold a formal leader role or not (Ladkin, 2010).

6.2. A philosophical approach to leadership

As the title suggests this approach can be seen as an extension of the former. In order to elucidate this particular underpinning of leadership I shall base this section on Ladkin's (2010) book 'Rethinking leadership'. It also includes a chapter about process philosophy which is in accordance with the author's proposed notion of leadership. Ladkin refers to leadership as a collective process that emerges from a particular social and historical context, which can be understood more fully by applying philosophical ideas.

Crucial insights regarding the leadership phenomenon provides the philosophical discipline of phenomenology. First of all, the distinction between 'wholes', 'pieces', and 'moments' sheds more light on the nature of leadership. Additionally, it offers an explanation why there is still dissent on what leadership actually is (Rost, 1991; Barker, 2001). The aforesaid categories can easily be explained with the example of a table. A 'whole', for instance, refers to a table thought in its totality. A 'piece' is then a leg of a table, that is, a part of the 'whole'. To define a 'moment' is a little bit more complex. Its 'beingness' is dependent upon the things of which it is part. One can only think of a 'moment' within a certain setting, as well as a colour can only be imagined in relation to a particular shape. In these terms, leadership has been generally studied as a 'whole', disregarding its social constructivist character. Ladkin (2010), however, asserts that leadership has to be considered as a 'moment' that only exists by virtue of the people who engage in it, and which is always embedded in a local and historical context. This implies "that we can never arrive at the reality of leadership as separated from those particular contexts in which it arises" (ibid, p.26).

The differentiation of 'sides', 'aspects' and 'identity' illuminates the difficulties of analysing and grasping the leadership phenomenon. According to Ladkin this can be best explained by imagining a cube. When looking at it, it is only possible to see some of the six sides, not all of them. Despite the lack of seeing them, one knows that they exist – one 'co-intends' the other sides. Similarly, there are many different 'sides' to leadership. All possible constituents of leadership such as leaders, followers, or historical contexts can be seen as different 'sides' of leadership. All of them are vital for its occurrence.

'Aspects' can be described as vantage points from which something is perceived. Appearances of objects or subjects may differ depending on the angle through which one is seeing them. Being aware of this, film directors harness this effect by showing an intimidating character from a low-angle shot, or signalling superiority of someone by using an high-angle shot. Also leadership can be viewed from a variety of aspects. Leadership will seem significantly different to a CEO as opposed to a shop floor worker.

Returning to the cube for one last time 'identity' refers to the fact that the cube's identity is more than just the sum of its sides and aspects. The true identity includes also the mass, or the material from which it is made, and also takes into account factors that go beyond physical manifestations like the manufacturer, or the purpose it serves.

As a consequence, phenomenology recognises, thus, that as human beings we are not omnipotent and can never know everything about a given situation. As much as one can know about an entity's sides, aspects and its identity, one can never know the totality of something. "This is a key ontological assumption which underpins phenomenological investigations" (ibid, p.24).

As the example of the cube illustrated, in order to obtain a better understanding of leadership, it is necessary to consider points (or sides) that are not only overt, but that are absent, and which are essential to the phenomenon's identity as well. Meant by such arcane constituents are, for instance, expectations, trust, historical relationships, patterns and culture⁵. Each of these points are invisible (i.e. impossible to explicitly perceive), yet influence the experience of leadership to a certain degree. Ladkin calls these factors 'absences'.

The way in which absences influence leadership can be shown by referring to the reciprocity of leadership's interactions. Expectations, for instance, will always underpin leadership by virtue of the people who take up a particular role – may it be a leader or a follower – holding expectations of themselves and each other. Both will have certain images of these roles, or a feeling how they should behave vis à vis the others. I purport that it is impossible to ignore one's environment. People's conduct is always a reflection of the ambience, whether one accepts or rejects something. One's action begins with stimuli.

⁵ Several scholars pointed out to the significant impact of culture on leadership. Hofstede (1980) and his model of five cultural dimensions is arguably the most popular one, albeit highly contented. Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997), Schein (1985) and Hall (1990) provide also interesting approaches to analysing cultural differences. What they all have in common though is the conclusion that culture affects our assumptions, beliefs and values by which social phenomenon like leadership are influenced. The GLOBE studies (House et al, 2004), for instance, illustrated to what extent perceptions of leaders can vary dependent on the underlying culture.

As a consequence, people's conduct is co-constructed by merely dealing with other people or circumstances.

French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility will substantiate and enlighten this matter further. In short, it points out to the inextricable link of perceiving an being perceived: "As I perceive, I am also perceived" (ibid, p.61). The knowledge of being observed has an impact on one's behaviour.

What kind of implications does this have on leadership? Since, people should ideally work towards a shared goal in leadership processes, their roles are visible to each other. In the course of working together they will communicate, distribute tasks, and check on each other. Presumably, the ones who assume a leadership role will be even more visible to the ones who decide to follow. For example, a leader who is aware of others relating to him in a certain way will act consistently with the impressions he receives. Who is not familiar with the situation when leaders justify their doing by asserting that they felt that this was expected of them, or that they had to act in a certain way because that was what their followers needed at that time?

Taken together, it is not the case at all that solely the leader influences his followers as mainstream studies suggest. It rather can be stated that their roles are co-constructed through their interactions. So, phenomenology draws attention to the impact that 'leaders' and 'followers' have on each other. It shows also that their identities are interconnected, and, therefore, cannot be regarded as single entities, which resonates with the underpinning of process philosophy.

It is important to note that co-constructions occur not solely on the basis of human beings' interaction. Having made this point several times, thus far, it is paramount to take the context into account. Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' will be helpful in this regard (Ladkin, 2010). It basically extends the former mutual construction. Merleau-Ponty asserts that one's self is created through the perceptual interaction with the world. Hence, putting a stress on the environment's quality of shaping and influencing (Uhl-Bien, Marion & Mckelvey, 2007). It is important to note that this quality is not temporally limited, as the reference to historicity in the previous chapter has shown. For instance, if one grew up utterly sheltered from the potential challenges of the world, one would be easily overwhelmed by problems as soon as the protection no longer exists; whilst it is the other way round for someone whose life required inexorably courage and strength. In this sense, people's conduct is also determined by the environment by which they are surrounded.

To sum up, the notion of ‘flesh’ – which includes ‘reversibility’ – implies that leadership is not merely a juxtaposition of entities. The constituents are interconnected and constantly influencing each other. That invokes a dynamic of continuous change as process metaphysics already suggested.

6.3. Complex Adaptive Leadership

Obolensky (2010) takes the call for a paradigm shift in leadership seriously, and purports to have found it in ‘polyarchy’: “What relativity and quantum mechanics is to classical Newtonian physics, polyarchy is to classical leadership thinking” (ibid, p.51).

But before taking a closer look at what polyarchy exactly is, I would like to elaborate on the point on which Obolensky’s whole argumentation is predicated. It is the identification of the discontinuity between leadership and the context in which it is enacted. This was already mentioned under chapter five. But Obolensky does not only refer to the development from an industrial to a knowledge era, he stresses, in particular, the accomplishments of physics and mathematics within the last century. The basic findings of the respective sciences, he argues, must also have consequences to leadership studies. Whereas the latter fairly stagnated since its existence, the aforesaid sciences witnessed three major revolutions in the 20th century: Theory of relativity, quantum mechanics, chaos theory and complexity science. One of the most important lessons that can be learned of quantum mechanics is that “the underlying nature of things is chaotic, uncertain and hard to understand fully as it breaks classical thinking. It shows that seemingly absolute truths, laws and logic that work within one context do not necessarily work within another” (ibid, p.62). As a side note, that argument is in accordance with the former discussed approaches which also emphasised leadership’s elusive nature. But more importantly, quantum mechanics show that chaos is not to be abhorred, but embraced – since it is the underlying nature of reality.

To sum up, the guiding idea of incorporating chaos and uncertainty has roots in acknowledging the achievements of other sciences relevant to leadership studies, and in coming to terms with the complex environment of which leadership is part. The latter reason is insofar crucial as the law of requisite complexity states, that a system must possess complexity equal to that of its environment in order to function effectively (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007).

Having said this, Obolensky (2010) propounds that leadership should be seen as a complex adaptive system that is able to balance order and chaos. Polyarchy is, in this

respect, the appropriate underlying concept. Since order and chaos are able to co-exist regardless of being diametrically opposed, it is self-evident that polyarchy, which is also the synthesis of also contradictory concepts, that is, anarchy (chaos and complexity) and oligarchy (a small group of having control), can make a worthwhile contribution to leadership. Obolensky stresses this point various times with respect to complex adaptive leadership as it is the fusion of both traditional and revolutionary assumptions. It does not try to jettison traditional approaches; rather it asserts that they can paradoxically co-exist with the revolutionary ones.

This, moreover, hallmarks the discrepancy between complex adaptive leadership and the former approaches. Whereas the theories from a philosophical perspective advocate a whole new underpinning of leadership which renders traditional approaches more or less obsolete, complex adaptive leadership regards the old (oligarchic) system as a necessary and complementary component.

This property of the approach currently being discussed becomes apparent when Obolensky refers to Hersey and Blanchard's (2001) situational leadership. He draws on this model in order to elucidate how leadership based on polyarchy can work. In so doing, leadership is partly grounded in the traditional (oligarchic) assumption that leadership is done by leaders. It is them who shape mainly leadership by the behaviour (tell, sell, involve, devolve) they choose. Hence, it lies solely in the leader's responsibility to adjust the leadership style depending on how he interprets the situation. Grint (2000, p.3) gets to the heart of it when he states, that "the information to assess the situation is monopolized by the leaders".

The anarchic part is realised in the behaviour described as 'devolve' which embodies chaotic principles. But before looking into this particular behaviour, it is worthwhile to get an overview of the whole model. The interplay of these four leader behaviours can be explained through chaos theory (Obolensky, 2010). Imagine, for instance, a swinging pendulum whose circular motion slows down to a stop as a result of being attracted to a steady state. This particular point to which the pendulum is attracted is called a 'point attractor' in chaos theory. Similarly, leadership's dynamic comprising aforesaid four behaviours is plotted like a swinging pendulum. The more oligarchic, authoritative styles 'tell' and 'sell' would lie on the outside of the orbit, and the point attractor would be represented by 'devolve'. Over time the focus on 'tell' and 'sell' decreases as the understanding between leader and follower improves. 'Devolvement' is what should be

aimed for and where complex adaptive leadership is able to thrive. However, Obolensky concludes that in reality this style is ever only temporarily achieved. Thus, a paradoxical mix of anarchy and oligarchy occurs.

By means of 'devolving' the appointed leader steps back, and self-organisation occurs. This basically renders a formal leader unnecessary since the people involved assume all the functions usually a superior would do. The reason why devolvement is the goal of complex adaptive leadership is self-evident. First, it is the state that appears the most chaotic and uncertain, because of the leader's inaction. Second, it is, therefore, also the state that is most adaptable to a complex environment. Third, it provides the circumstances where self-organisation can really function and is able to thrive. Here, requisite and effective action flow naturally amongst those who participate in leadership without the need for action from appointed leaders. In this sense, leadership for the many emanates from the many – again an alleged paradox. Contrary to the other three leader behaviours, it is not something that is directed by a sole person.

In particular, two effects show how a chaotic system can be effective. First of all, there is the butterfly effect. Technically speaking, it is the same phenomenon as shown with the swinging pendulum, but it is called a 'strange attractor' due to its pattern that is difficult to recognise. The gist of the effect can be summarised as follows; small changes can yield large results.

Secondly, bifurcations – or what has become known as tipping points (Gladwell, 2001) – will help to explain how transitions occur within a leadership process. Traditionally, bifurcations were used to describe transitions of, for instance, water into ice. A good example of a bifurcation in another context is the 'Ah-Ha' moment. After reading a certain amount of different books dealing with a similar subject, one gets suddenly a valuable insight. What happened is a transition from random reading into deeper meaning. This can also be applied to interactions of people involved in leadership. If they are interconnected and in constant interaction, they might come up with some unexpected results.

To conclude, complex adaptive leadership is in itself paradox and unifies both a traditional and a new, chaotic assumption of leadership. Following quantum mechanics, Obolensky argues that such a contradictory concept can exist, and is adequate to our complex world.

6.4. Relational Leadership

When discussing relational leadership it is indispensable to mention the, arguably, most well known theory in this field. The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Schriesheim, Castro & Cogliser, 1999) acknowledges the existence of reciprocal relationships between leaders and followers. In doing so, the model differentiates between a closer 'inner group' and a more distant 'outer group' around the leader. Through mutual trust, respect and obligation followers move into the so called 'inner group' where they are willing to be more committed and to perform better. The leader in return behaves more openly towards the better performing inner group. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995, p.237) refer to this described transition as follows: "The career-oriented social exchange blossoms into a partnership." However, there is a risk that a rift will form between the outer group and the others.

To sum up, the effect of a relational component within leadership has been clearly outlined by the LMX theory. This was revolutionary in two ways. On the one hand something that evolves between those engaged in leadership had been identified to have a significant effect. On the other hand this effect showed to be reciprocal which broke with the traditional assumption that solely leaders actively influence events. But the theory has some serious weaknesses too. It still treats followers and leaders as distinct entities and, more importantly, it does not allow any statement to be made about the way in which these different kinds of relationships are established.

Thus, it will be interesting to know whether contributions by Hosking (1988, 2007), Hosking & Morley (1991) and Uhl-Bien (2006) will shed more light on relational leadership. This perspective on leadership markedly distinguishes itself from traditional leadership theories which perpetuate an entitive view (i.e. setting people apart from their contexts). It stresses the need for understanding leadership as a social process. Hosking and Morley (1991) argue that people who participate in leadership assume certain roles whilst interacting with others within a particular local-historical-cultural context. Hence, being a member of a certain organisation will mean different things to different actors depending on their relational networks, their tasks, and the range of contexts to which they contribute (ibid). Succinctly put, actors influence and are influenced by their contexts. This implies further that person and context are interrelated social constructions, created in ongoing processes (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Because of this, relational leadership focuses on the context of relationships through which relational realities can be identified. It is important to stress once more at this point that relationships are seen as reciprocal and equivocal, not in a

one-way causal relation between person and context. It is, in this sense, comparable to Ladkin's (2010) proposed notion of reversibility.

Taking a closer look at the so called "vehicles for the performance of leadership" (Hosking & Morley, 1991, p. 250), that is, networking, negotiating and enabling, will enlighten the notion of leadership predicated on a relational perspective.

Relationships are build and deepened within groups as a consequence of networking. This is particularly important in view of occasions, in which formal leaders are dependent on other people for information or specialised skills. Generally, people create explicit knowledge through networking and, more importantly, are confronted with tacit knowledge⁶. They, furthermore, achieve a better understanding of each other as a result of constant interaction.

Negotiating is possibly the most important point of the three, since it is fundamental for the emerging social order. Essentially, it is the process in which people discuss whether certain changes in their relationships are possible, or desired (ibid). Through dialogue participants are collectively engaged in sense-making, which has nothing to do with fixed notions and static ideals. Neither are strict hierarchies just imposed on the participants. Legitimacy is negotiated in relationships; a person's influence is accepted because they are defined as more experts (ibid). What counts as expertise is dependent on the context and the relational setting. Hence, power and leadership is distributed throughout the social field (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Finally, enabling indicates that leadership should not be about achieving solely the leader's goal, but rather about "helping others to help themselves with respect to their own relational setting" (Hosking & Morley, 1991, p. 258), or as Barker (2001, p.491) colloquially put it: "The individual may be inspired by the boss, but no one works hard to make someone else rich."

It may be worth noting that these components of leadership's performance all refer to relational activities. Hosking and Morley (1991) emphasise, thus, that relational processes are part of organisational life, that they matter, and that they are able to substitute traditional assumptions like imposing strict hierarchies.

To conclude, leadership is a social construction that emerges from the rich connections and interdependencies of organisations and their members (Uhl-Bien, 2006). It is by

⁶ As opposed to explicit knowledge tacit knowledge is hard to transfer to people. And the people who possess tacit knowledge are often unaware of the fact that they have it, or how it can be valuable to others.

nature a dynamic process in which social realities are continuously co-constructed. As a result, there are no static entities such as leaders or followers. It is believed that, over time, many make valued contributions to leadership, not just assigned leaders (Hosking & Morley, 1991).

6.5. Shared Leadership

Akin to complex adaptive leadership, shared leadership is seen as a necessity in view of the complex environment (Pearce & Conger, 2003, O'Toole, Galbraith & Lawler III, 2002; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007). Leadership has to be distributed in order to respond adequately to complexity one is facing today. It always has been highly debatable whether the omniscience and omnipotence with which leaders are attributed can be justified in reality, and, since leadership is confronted with an even faster changing world, it is virtually impossible for a single individual to possess the broad knowledge and set of competencies that are required to cope. If leadership is dispersed, however, the responsibility will be shouldered by the many who, in sum, provide a wide range of skills, abilities and knowledge. For example, is there often a gap of knowledge between managers on the top and employees at the bottom. The latter usually has direct contact with customers, whereas the former has not – or broadly speaking, some people are involved in processes in which others are not. Hence, people's knowledge is also reliant on the context in which they are acting. This is why the potential of text messaging was spotted by younger managers at Nokia, and not by senior executives. Also Martin (2005) and Pearce and Conger (2003) corroborate, in this regard, the importance of front-line workers, especially, in an environment with increased competition and high customer expectations.

After outlining the essential characteristics of shared leadership, I will now address the question how this kind of leadership can be established.

First of all, leadership must be conceptualised as occurring at all levels, signalling a significant shift away from heroic ideals towards collective achievement, shared responsibility, and teamwork (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003). Although appointed leaders might be still needed as figureheads, similar to the former discussed approaches, they are only regarded as a voice amongst many, contributing their faculties to the collective achievement.

This distributed notion of leadership leads to the fact that shared leadership emerges from social interactions. It occurs, as Hosking and Morley (1991) suggest, in and through relationships and networks of influence, which stresses the interdependent and multidirectional character of leadership. This assumption is corroborated by Fletcher & Käufer (2003, p.21) who point out that the “effectiveness of living systems of relationships does not depend on individual, heroic leaders but rather on leadership practices embedded in a system of interdependencies at different levels within the organization.” Logically, as a result of constant social interactions the same learning effect can be stated which has been mentioned in conjunction with relational leadership.

Pearce and Conger (2003, p.1) state that the leadership’s objective “is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both”. But they do not clarify how this shared interest in goals is accomplished, or on what it is predicated. They simply assume that people who belong to a group or organisation share a common ground and are, thus, reasonably interested in achieving the same goals. However, when looking at organisations or at management theories, one will find considerable evidence of the importance of being able to formulate visions in order to align people (Yukl, 2010). Charismatic leadership, for instance, is strongly associated with individuals who are able to convey visions to their followers (House, 1977).

Thus, it is a serious weakness that shared leadership fails to take this pivotal question of leadership into account. Other post-heroic theories, in contrast, stress the importance of interdependency whereby people automatically join forces by virtue of relying on each other.

Important to note is that shared leadership does not try to give an account of the genuine nature of leadership. It is in this regard a more epistemological theory than ontology. The four approaches prior to shared leadership draw on philosophical, physical or psychological ‘truths’ to get closer to how leadership is really constituted as a social phenomenon. From there on they argue how it should be examined. Shared leadership, on the contrary advocates this collective form of leadership as a consequence of the fast changing, complex world, and because of the benefits it offers.

At the end of this chapter, it is worthwhile to take a look at Pearce and Conger’s (2003, p. 1) definition of shared leadership to recapitulate the crucial points:

“Dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups [...] This influence often involves peer, or lateral, influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence. The key distinction between shared leadership and traditional models of leadership is that the influence process involves more than just downward influence on subordinates by an appointed or elected leader. Rather leadership is broadly distributed among a set of individuals instead of centralized in hands of a single individual who acts in the role of a superior.”

This summary takes not only the gist of shared leadership into account, it also shows clearly what this theory lacks. It is particularly striking, since the other theories have elaborated on it at length. Although it states that the complex environment requires a shared form of leadership, it does not explain to what extent the context is involved in the construction of leadership. This may be due to the epistemological character of the theory.

7. Practical implications of post-heroic theories

Since post-heroic theories share some basic assumptions, it can be inferred that they have some practical implications in common too. Hence, I will give an account of the shared ramifications which the theories being introduced would have on practice. Of course some theories have more in common than others. So is leadership from a process perspective virtually the same as Ladkin’s (2010) philosophical approach to leadership, because Ladkin incorporated the idea of leadership as an ‘event’. According to her the notion of event is akin to the phenomenological moment. Consequently, she draws on the underpinnings of process philosophy, and extends those with insights from phenomenology and hermeneutics. At the end, this adds up to a coherent theory contributing to a better understanding of the nature of leadership.

Complex adaptive leadership takes on a special role, by virtue of its paradoxical premise to espouse both traditional and post-heroical ideals. Thus, a lot of implications of post-heroic theories are only partly true regarding complex adaptive leadership. Solely two practical implications could be identified that are fully consistent with the other theories. Responsible for that is the marked difference between the paradoxical underpinning of this theory and the social constructivist notion of the others. This is the main reason for not including the implications of complex adaptive leadership in the assessment of the current chapter.

Relational leadership preponderantly sets the focus on inter-relationships, and how leadership is constructed by social realities relating to each other. Although contextual

aspects are mentioned having an impact on social phenomena, there is clearly an emphasis on people's interactions.

Shared leadership seems to build on the findings of relational leadership. Based on the assumption that social interactions are responsible for leadership's occurrence, a collective and distributed form of leadership is advocated. However, what is missing compared to other theories is the ontological view on leadership. The context is only used to, additionally, justify shared leadership, but not to explain its construction.

Certainly, the theories from a philosophical perspective provide the most satisfying answers with regards to ontological questions. But then again, the aforesaid theories might be difficult to implement in everyday situations as they do not literally enunciate how this particular notion of leadership can be translated into practice.

But before going into much detail of the respective theories, the shared practical implications will now be discussed. As alluded to earlier complex adaptive leadership will not be part of this discussion.

7.1. A general discussion of practical implications

It has been outlined that post-heroic theories advocate a distributed notion of leadership whereby roles such as leaders and followers are fluid. In effect, these roles dissipate, since everyone in a leadership process is potentially capable of assuming both of the roles. Because of this, shared leadership introduced the term of co-workers, and relational leadership uses the term participants. Thus, there is a significant distinction between traditional individualist models. Distributed leadership is the hallmark of post-heroic theories. It is the pivotal point for most of the practical implications and, therefore, it is a good point to begin with to illustrate some of the ramifications on organisational life.

7.1.1. Organisational structure

Structure is the means of organising within a company (Martin, 2005). It ensures that the necessary work can be done, and that tasks are distributed to the right people who have the required competencies. Therefore, it can be regarded as part of leadership. If structure is imposed on people – mainly by people at the top – it can cause alienation and lack of commitment (ibid). Post-heroic theories imply another way of structuring. As a result of taking into account everyone who participates in leadership, and acknowledging their contributions as equally important, there is no need for a high scalar chain. Leadership is viewed as a collective process, and not as something done solely by appointed leaders.

Having said this, many practices that are exclusively attributed to the latter, are done by the many. This fact would be reflected in the hierarchical structure of post-heroic leadership; it rather would be a flat one as opposed to the pyramidal structure that is still common place today. It may be worth noting at this point that Ackoff (1999) proposes a circular design for 21st century organisation, that is, a rather non-hierarchical company that tries to involve employees into management processes. Moreover, there are many examples where such non-hierarchical structures have been established in practice. The Danish hearing aid manufacturer Oticon, for instance, reduced its six layer hierarchy to three. The former top managers became project managers, offering expertise to project managers and staff (Kolind, 2006). Likewise, Semco who got rid of a strict hierarchy and re-organised in a circular system:

“[Semco’s] circles would free people from hierarchical tyranny; they could act as leaders when they wanted and command whatever respect their efforts and competence earned them. They could cease being leaders whenever they wanted, or whenever the organization decided they no longer merited it” (Semler, 1999, p.181/2).

Interesting about this quote is the distributed notion of leadership that Semler describes. He openly refers to people – not superior managers – who can act as leaders. Second, he alludes to the fluid nature of being a leader; one can start and cease acting as one. It can be inferred from this example that distributed leadership and flatter organisations are affiliated with each other.

Having pointed out to the consequences post-heroic theories would have on organisational structure, it is necessary to illuminate what kind of advantages this entails. First of all, a flat hierarchy is more susceptible to the perception of the customer need (Martin, 2005). It already has been indicated that employees who deal directly with customers might be better informed about their needs (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Martin, 2005). It would have a significant impact, if employees were able to act upon their knowledge of the product and the customer need. For example, would be the speed of response markedly increased due to fact that every employee is entitled to make leadership decisions. As a consequence, lengthy communication channels can be avoided. Pearce and Conger (2003, p.2) highlight the importance of a fast speed of response by asserting that it is “an organizational imperative given a faster-paced environment.”

In the case of authority-based hierarchies making significant decisions is part of the superior or manager's job. Involvement strategies such as consultation, participation or empowerment – which are usually used in hierarchical organisation to harness the knowledge and abilities of employees – will not be as effective as employees who are inherently capable of influencing events. Just imagine an empowering manager who has to know upfront who is going to make valuable contributions. Hence, this method is too limited, too static, and subjective. The measures in question still imply a present hierarchy. The privilege of having influence is solely granted by someone who possesses more authority. Of course, the privilege can be refrained or even taken away by the very same. Furthermore, employees do not have to focus excessively on the boss anymore:

“Continued employment, promotion and performance assessment are dependent on the views of superiors. Therefore, in practice, what the boss does not see does not exist. Inevitably this directs the attention of employees inwards and upwards, not in the direction of the customer (Martin, 2005, p.658)”

By relying too strongly on authority-based hierarchies the superior's perception counts more than what is really happening in and outside of the organisation. Since an employee's success is normally dependent on the superior's assessment, the employee attempts automatically, maybe just unconsciously, to please the superior.

But to make flattened organisations work can be a Sisyphean task. It is, understandably, harder for companies who have been strictly hierarchical for a long time. Kolind, former CEO of Oticon, and Semler, CEO of Semco, refer to critical problems of escaping the traditional assumptions which have become firmly anchored in the mind's of the employees. In order to abandon the old thinking, they continually confronted the employees with the new system in many views. They showed, for instance, paradigmatically that the other way of doing business is feasible.⁷ Yukl (2010, p.320) stated, in this regard, that for a successful implementation of change to occur “the leader should participate in activities related to the change.”

⁷ It was important to Kolind to act in accordance with the values he espoused. So, he refused obvious status symbols such as the luxurious company car or eating in the privileged executive dining room. He even incurred a large financial risk in order to invest millions of DKK in Oticon (LaBarre, 1994). At Semco status symbols haven been rendered superfluous as well. Semler even decided to eliminate the hierarchical level which he assumed; at the top of the company was no longer the founder's son an owner, but a team of roughly six people (Semler, 1999).

7.1.2. Decentralisation

It should have become clear by now that a dispersed notion of leadership goes in hand with a distribution of power across the organisation. This is insofar crucial as it is more likely that persons who are in control of others will fail in some way, because of the sheer impossibility of being knowledgeable and skilled across a wide range of functions as well as all subordinates taken together (Martin, 2005). But, if everyone is allowed to make leadership decisions, based on the assumption that they are inherently able to, the work place will become more challenging, which in turn will result in the personal development of the employees. Self-worth is also enhanced as a result of having direct influence on events and of being treated as an equal – and not as someone of second class compared to the executives. If people are able to find their own way and are not forced into anything, then this will open up the possibility for intrinsic motivation to occur in people. Theories like transformational or charismatic leadership build on this effect. Transformational leaders, for instance, aim at enhancing the self-worth of and empowering employees in order to augment performance, commitment and satisfaction of the followers (House, 1977; Bass, 2006).

In order to substantiate this line of argument, it is helpful look at again the already mentioned companies Semco and Oticon, and additionally at Johnsonville's. In the course of vouching for their own work – a sign of assuming leadership responsibility – workers at Semco became more conscious about the outcome of their labour, rendering quality control no longer necessary. In the spirit of distributed leadership they created autonomously diversified teams, including factory workers, engineers, office clerks, sales representatives and executives, in order to improve the company's products. One group came up with a new way to pre-weld the base on manufactured scales, saving 27\$ a unit. Another group was responsible for a sales increase of slicers up to several hundred a month, due to improving the product and the production process (Semler, 1999). This grade of autonomy and commitment would be hard to find in traditional companies, in which it is expected of employees to fulfil their functions corresponding to their contract. Furthermore, the clear separation of divisions and hierarchical levels would impede the emergence of cross-functional-hierarchical teams.

Also, Oticon's employees were able to work more efficiently in a distributed form of leadership.⁸ This is evidenced by their achievements of doubling the size of the company, multiplying by tenfold their profits within five years, and by introducing ten major product innovations in less than ten years (Rivard et al., 2004).

Employees from the American sausage producer Johnsonville's demonstrated exceptional performance too. They – not top managers – decided almost unanimously to take over a huge plant from a competitor regardless of the executive groups' concerns. Ralph Stayer (1990), head of the family business, trusted the employees in grasping and responding to the ramifications of the acquisition. Thus, he left the decision to them whether the company should take this significant strategic step or not. In addition, it was completely up to them how they would realise the company's expansion. As a result, the people at Johnsonville's were highly committed and, of course, they accepted the changes that came along with the acquisition. In the end, the overall quality of the products proliferated markedly despite working beyond their actual capacity. It was the executive's concern that the employees would be unable to cope with the additional work and stress. And this concern would have been justified at a workplace where people are incapable of empowering themselves. This proved not the case at Johnsonville's, where leadership was exercised by all employees throughout the entire process.

To sum up, these examples of different companies made clear what a distribution of leadership and power can cause. It shows perfectly that the result is more than the sum of its parts. The same people managed to do more and better by virtue of the particular setting. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) came to a similar conclusion when they stated that "the commanding approach is the least effective in most situations, according to our data" (p. 76). They explain this by pointing out to the negative emotional impact a commanding leader has on people. As a result of his behaviour, the leader erodes people's spirits and the pride and satisfaction they take in their work (ibid).

However, in order to introduce such a form of dispersed leadership, and warrant its practical viability, it has to be anchored in post-heroic values. Every CEO, that has been quoted, thus far, emphasises repeatedly how deeply they have trust in their employees. It

⁸ Oticon's distributed leadership is represented more or less by micro project organisations. Depending on the kind of project, they either take visibly the lead as a project manager, or choose to follow as part of the staff. It was a rule that everyone had to work on three projects simultaneously, so that everyone had to take over different roles.

is certain that the view, as McGregor formulated it in the Theory X⁹, would be to the detriment of post-heroic leadership. The latter can only work, if people share the assumption that everyone can make a valued contribution.

Besides, if for post-heroic leadership is to work, then it is vital that everyone has access to relevant information. This is in two ways important. First, withholding information signals an important source of power (Yukl, 2010). Grint (2005) illustrates how situations can be constructed by those with control over the information. The whole war against Iraq was justified on the thread of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which did not exist in the end. Only because the leading people of the U.S. convinced everyone else of the existence of these weapons, they shaped the context in which it was plausible to attack Iraq. Of course, they did not actually shape the context, but people believed it to be true – and that is what counts in the end. They were able to change people's perception because they purported that they had crucial information which the others had not. In order to prevent this misuse of being better informed, it must be a logical consequence that information has to be distributed too. Every employee must have access to the same information. This results also in enabling people to contribute more efficiently to the organisation if they have all the necessary data to make the right decisions. One cannot expect of employees to assume more responsibility if the essential information remains with the people at the top. According to Semler (1999) the spirit of partnership can only flourish with an abundance of information available to every employee. Hence, Semco even offered courses in which employees can learn how to read balance sheets in order to grasp the economic situation of the company.

Likewise, Oticon's employees have access to virtually all information, including the president's mail and agenda. As a result of sharing information no one can capitalise anymore on a pool of knowledge, which had been inaccessible, particularly, to the people at the lower hierarchical levels. If crucial information is available to everyone, people are potentially able to comprehend the decisions of the others. In pyramidal systems executives might justify their doings on information exclusively accessible to them. The hierarchical distance between them and followers makes this impossible. Keeping others at distance is according to Grint (2010a) critical for maintaining the mystique of leadership.

⁹McGregor's Theory X is made up by the assumption that people are lazy and uninterested in work. Moreover, it is diametrically opposed to Theory Y which indicates a positive view on people, that they like to work, are self-motivated, and accept and seek responsibility (Northouse, 2009).

But without the distance, it requires instead true skill and expertise that will gain the respect and the acceptance of others.

7.1.3. Collective responsibility

As another emergent of distributed leadership, responsibility will not solely reside in one single individual, but with the collective (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Since everyone is playing a part in leadership, being responsible for organisational objectives becomes part of everyone's role. (Bolden & Petrov, 2009). The example of Johnsonville's acquisition of an additional plant showed that employees assumed responsibility for the decisions they made. In other words they assumed collectively leadership responsibility. According to Stayer (1990) they worked seven days a week, hired and trained new people, and increased efficiency of work processes to make it work. It is questionable whether such a commitment would have occurred if the important decisions had been imposed on them. It is important to remind ourselves here, that decisions regarding acquisitions and how they can be put into action are usually being made by the top management.

First and foremost, collective responsibility prevents irresponsible followers from emerging who are likely to exist in heroic leadership. The first reason why followers reject responsibility stems from the attribution of omniscience and omnipotence to leaders. Due to the power that leaders have been given, they will be held accountable, in return, for possible failures. Hence, followers have a scapegoat to take all the blame for what is, in fact, also the failure of the followers (Heifetz, 1994). Grint (2010) provides a good illustration of the scapegoating phenomenon. This will shed more light on the interconnection between omnipotent leaders, scapegoating and denial of responsibility :

Leaders [...] have a Faustian pact with their followers, in which the leaders accumulate privileges of power or wealth or whatever is deemed appropriate at the expense of the followers – some of whom may be sacrificed for the collective good. In return the leaders legitimate and secure the goals of followers, but if and when the leaders fail then they must become the sacrificial victims themselves. This legitimates the exchange of power and privileges between leaders and led and divorces the followers from responsibility for collective failure.

A leader who accepts the omnipotence that is attributed to him, has to come to terms with the possibility of being scapegoated in the end. Examples of executives being scapegoated like Amelio who was unable to turn around Apple have been mentioned in chapter three. What should be seen as problematic are the consequences of sacrificing leaders in this manner; it produces followers who are able to legitimately reject

responsibility. They can easily reject the blame, since they have not been officially in charge. Thus, there is no control by followers over the people's action at the top. Moreover, the actual collective failure is oversimplified as an individual one. A recent example for this is the financial crisis in 2008. Partly responsible for the crisis were Banks that introduced products such as mortgage-backed and asset-backed securities. In hindsight the underpinning concept of the products was inherently flawed¹⁰, and it is questionable that every employee at any of the respective banks was not aware of this. It is probable that the supposedly profit driven and overconfident people in charge did not communicate the risks to all of the employees. Getting back to the issue of heroic leaders they might have believed in their omnipotence attributed to them and simply ignored the risks. They were very soon suffering from hubris. Unable to live up to this attribution, they were destined to fail, or as Grint (2005, p.43) succinctly put it: "Attributing god-like qualities to leaders does not result in god-like qualities." Even though this is a sole conjecture, it is noteworthy that even the Romans were conscious of the consequences of hubris (ibid). For example, when a successful general was awarded a *Triumph* because of winning a major battle, they were allowed to enter Rome pompously at the head of their armies, though the general in question had a slave standing behind him whispering continuously in their ear *Respice post te, hominem memento te* (Consider what comes afterwards, and remember that you are but a man). In short, the veneration of the successful general was tempered by the lowliest person reminding him of his limits.

The huge ramifications of the financial crisis notwithstanding, nothing essentially changed in the structure of financial institutions. After scapegoating a few persons who have been visible in public, everything went back to the old system. The collective which was also responsible for the crisis did not have to assume responsibility and went unpunished.

The culpability of the collective shows itself not only in scapegoating but also in destructive consent. Destructive consenters may know that their leader is wrong but do not act upon this assumption due to different kinds of reason, for example, because being afraid of getting fired. They consent to the destruction of their own leader, and probably to their own organisation too (ibid). Getting back to the example of the role banks played in the financial crisis, honest advice – constructive dissent – might have forestalled such dubious

¹⁰ Since the beginning there was a high risk that the debts which were the basis of the finance products in question could not be repaid. As, in fact, several mortgages could not be repaid one day, a knock-on effect on the whole industry broke loose. Mortgage- and asset-backed securities reported heavily losses and the situation was exacerbated by the fact that institutions and investors around the world had invested in the precarious U.S. market through these products.

finance products coming to the market. It may be interesting to refer to the Greek king Agamemnon, in this regard, who approaches Calchas, a Trojan, for advice. Calchas foresees the victory for the Greek under certain conditions.¹¹ Agamemnon turned towards a former enemy, because he could trust the words of his own people (Grint, 2010b).

As well as Agamemnon admitting his lack of omniscience, 'followers' have to realise that constructive dissent is a stringent necessity in order to disallow individuals with limited knowledge to take critical decisions.

In order to encourage people towards constructive dissent, Semco set up committees consisting of representatives from every part of the operation but management. Every group met on a regular basis with the plant's top management. It is important to note that members of the committee could not be fired during and one year after their incumbency. This measure took away the essential employee fear from the employees of getting fired because of a contradictory stance. Semler (1999, p.75) concludes that "these committees assumed uncountable managerial responsibilities and were vital to Semco's success."

Also worth mentioning, in this regard, is the English advertising agency St. Luke's where employees are expected to publicly evaluate their work. Criticism is part of everyday's business: "People tell you exactly what they think of you. It can be a very harsh experience. Individuals who are used to hiding behind power [...] have trouble getting used to it" (Coutu, 2000). But, it has to be clarified that these continuous assessments do not result in immediate firings of people who are criticised repeatedly, for people are rarely made redundant at St. Luke's (ibid). Criticism or feedback is rather viewed as an opportunity to learn.

To sum up, it has been outlined in this section that collective responsibility is able to prevent three crucial points of irresponsible follower behaviour. First, blaming someone else for everything (scapegoating). Second, leaving all important decisions to the leaders, while being unwilling, to take personal responsibility. And finally, accepting the leader's version of the truth (destructive consent). Collective responsibility is not only a vital property of post-heroic leadership, but an imperative for putting it into practice. If there are several people who do not feel comfortable with assuming responsibility, this might impinge on the whole system. However, Semco is the best example where the system is

¹¹ Agamemnon's victory entails severe costs: the sacrifice of his daughter, the task will take ten years, and no victory will ensue unless Achilles fights for the Greeks.

able to regulate itself in this regard. Either the people in question adapt to collective responsibility or they leave the system (Semler, 1999).

7.1.4. Fostering people's interactions

Post-heroic theories change the focus from a mere individual to a collective dynamic. Because of this, organisations should be less concerned with finding the best possible leader and more with facilitating the best possible space for collective or distributed leadership to emerge – or as Grint provocatively put it: “We should abandon Plato’s question: ‘Who should rule us?’ and focus instead on Popper’s question: How can we stop our ruler ruining us?” (Grint, 2005, p.40)

The pivotal question, therefore, is how to foster distributed leadership. Possible solutions are again provided by the examples from Semco and Oticon. Semler (1999), for instance, stresses the importance of small business units in which people are able to understand what is going on and can contribute accordingly. More importantly, through adequate downsizing it is possible to know one’s co-workers, and have continuous contact with them. This is inasmuch crucial as leadership corresponding to post-heroic theories emerges from the social relations between people. Hence, the better the framework for collective leadership the better the results. This is evidenced by Oticon whose reason to move into a new office was to augment people’s interaction. Thus, office walls were removed and so was the right to work at a specific desk. On a first-come, first served basis people could opt for any desk they want to sit at. As a result, one was constantly confronted with other people across the hierarchy and across functional areas. Instead of lifts the new office had a wide staircase where people coincidentally met and talked to each other. Employees also had the possibility to catch up with each other at the several newly installed tables throughout the office along with coffee machines. It already has been mentioned how successful Oticon was in particular with regards to creating knowledge. Facilitating a space in which employees could easily exchange information, and where they were encouraged to deal with each other, is strongly associated with why Oticon was as innovative as they were.

What can be inferred by this example is the importance of communication. Friedrich et al. (2009,p. 936) call it the “currency of collective leadership.” Through dialogue participants are collectively engaged in sense-making (Hosking & Morley, 1991). Collective sense-making is the basis for understanding themselves, each other and the context. This can be

illustrated briefly by the study of Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff (2007). Based on four qualitative case studies they conclude that “people construct roles together and find patterns of interaction over time” (p.62). Thus, people construct social order as a result of relating to each other. So, if they are open and willing to recognise what the other has to offer,¹² then they will be able to take into consideration his full potential. However, if people are hindered in some way in interacting with each other, one’s knowledge will go fairly unnoticed and, more importantly, will not add up to the knowledge of the others. How important constant interactions for the accumulation and creation of knowledge are can be substantiated by complexity science. The effect of bifurcations has already been mentioned, Therefore, it will suffice to say at this point, that random conversations that provide insights will cause eventually vital knowledge.

Finally, I would like to point out to general difficulties an implementation of post-heroic theories might encounter. It is paramount that beliefs and principles have to be considerably different from the traditional assumptions of leadership (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff 2010). This is mainly necessary due to three reasons. First, the individualist nature of competency frameworks and meritocratic performance mechanisms limit the possibility of distributed, collective and emergent leadership to occur (Bolden & Gosling, 2006; Fletcher, 2002). Second, post-heroic leadership rather relies on a feminine logic (Crevani et al., 2007; Fletcher, 2004) whereby it is hard to overcome the contemporary masculine connotation of leadership. The image of a single, powerful, hard working and masculine leader (Crevani et al., 2007) is still pervasive in society. Third, people might associate post-heroic leadership with lack of power than with a new, more adaptive exercise of power (Fletcher, 2002; 2004).

¹² Ladkin (2010) regards this openness as a prerequisite for meaning-making as a jointly negotiated activity.

Table 7.1. Similarities of post-heroic leadership studies

Practical Implications	Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat hierarchies. • Decentralisation: Distribution of power and leadership across hierarchies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔Development of people. Enhancement of their self-worth. Self-motivated employees. • Collective responsibility instead of residing in a sole leader. • Interactions should be fostered and intensified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔Open towards others including subordinates. • Better suited for a complex environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership from a process perspective. • A philosophical approach to leadership. • Relational leadership. • Shared leadership.

7.2. A (process) philosophical approach to leadership

Since the philosophical approach to leadership substantiates or extends the process perspective, it would not be helpful to analyse these theories separately. At a first glance, it is difficult to infer practical implications from this approach, since it is mainly concerned with the ontological aspect of leadership. So, if leadership is an ongoing, continually changing process, how can this be translated into practice? The most obvious reason would be to embrace the constant change. In order to accomplish this, one has to draw the attention to the perpetual becoming of things, and not how they abstractly appear as solid entities. Hence, people's identities have to be regarded as constantly changing as well, albeit the changes might be minuscule. This would have discernible ramifications on the roles people assume within leadership. Traditionally, everybody in an organisational setting is assigned to particular functions. If one is by qualification an accountant he is likely to exercise this job throughout his entire career. From a process perspective, however, the man in question would not be viewed as a sole accountant, because this would render his identity as fixed. The current theory rather requires to explore and explain the taken-for-granted categories (Chia, 1995; Dawson, 1997). Thus, people engaged in leadership should constantly question the manifested practices and prepare for change. St. Luke's is a good example where this is already being practised. Chairman and cofounder Andy Law explains how change is embraced within the company:

“St. Luke's is almost maniacal in its commitment to change. When we sign people on, we warn them in their contracts that their jobs, their job titles, their job descriptions — everything, in fact — will change. We ask them to commit themselves body and soul to change. We even ask

them to agree to do whatever job other people in the organization think they would do best. Since the founding of St. Luke's five years ago, about 25% of our people have shifted from the jobs they were hired for. One employee who was struggling in client service became a copywriter. Another client service employee is now a strategic planner. The office manager has become a client service representative" (Coutu, 2000)

The example of St. Luke's shows paradigmatically how a process ontology can be applied in practice. Andy Law explicitly pointed out that everything will change for people working in the company. This breaks markedly with traditional assumptions. Hence, nothing is taken for granted. Every position, contribution, or function is continuously re-evaluated and altered if necessary, or to put it in a process philosophical way, emergence and becoming are of fundamental importance for organising.

As a result of constant change individuals must know what to pay attention to. Moreover, they need to be trained to attend the emerging and already existing patterns. In this regard, Bergson (1946) notes that it is the artist's prowess to draw attention to unnoticed things. So, this could be the 'art'¹³ that appointed leaders could carry out, since they are often the persons with more experience and conceptual knowledge (Bass, 2008). As a result, the contributions of formal leaders would shift from trying to actively influencing the events to passively offering expertise. It is self-evident that this role should not be regarded as a given, when change is understood to be the concrete reality of things.

Another pivotal point that needs to be embraced by those who are engaged in leadership is that the process in itself is highly interconnected and unpredictable. Ladkin (2010) corroborated this property of leadership with some phenomenological insights. As a result all people involved have to take the whole context into account when exercising leadership. To be more precise, there has to be an awareness of influential factors such as expectations, the historical and local context, culture, and of course other people's action. Hence, Gadamer's notion of openness should be espoused by everyone in a leadership process. That means according to Ladkin that "one must be as 'open' as possible to the difference which the other is expressing" (ibid, 113). Being open includes to be aware of one's own biases. In practical terms Covey's (2004) so called empathetic listening should

¹³ It may be worth noting that several scholars (Grint, 2001; Ropo, Parviainen & Koivunen, 2002; Ladkin, 2008) have proposed to look to the arts in order to make sense of and develop leadership. Ciulla (2008, p. 393) postulates that "since leadership is about people, leadership studies should be grounded in the human sciences." For instance, Grint (2001) argues that effective leaders need to develop and learn from a range of arts.

become part of people’s interactions. In general, people attempt to convince the counterpart to understand their viewpoints, or to project their experiences onto other people’s behaviour, however, it should be more important to grasp the other’s beliefs and needs (ibid). The goal of empathetic listening is to put oneself into another person’s position, through which a comprehension of someone else’s thinking and acting is likely to occur. Thus, interactions with others will improve in terms of reacting on the basis of factual data, and not on assumptions, guesses and interpretations. This improvement will have significant repercussions, since interrelations are essential for leadership. If people are relating to each other in a better way, simultaneously leadership’s outcome will ameliorate.

Table 7.2.1. Leadership from a process perspective

Definition of leadership	Practical Implications	Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership does not consist of distinct entities such as followers and leaders. • Leadership is a social process whose true identity can never be known, or predicted. • Leadership’s constituents are interdependent and interrelated: ‘Systematic complex of relatedness.’ • Leadership is contingent upon the context. It emerges from the interactions of the agents, embedded in the situation. • Leadership can be regarded as an event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the interconnectedness. Embracing constant change. ➔Enabling change to occur • Individuals should be trained to attend to the emerging and existing patterns. • In a world of constant flux, individuals need to know what to pay attention to. • There can be no universal laws for behaving in certain situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pettigrew (1990, 1997, 2001) • Chia (1995) • Dawson (1997) • Tsoukas & Chia (2002) • Wood (2005) • Wood & Ladkin (2008)

Table 7.2.2. A philosophical approach to leadership

Definition of leadership	Practical Implications	Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership as a collective process that emerges from a particular social and historical context. • Leadership as a moment, inextricably linked to its context. • Leadership’s identity can never be fully known. • Leadership is influenced by present and absent factors. • Roles within leadership are co-constructed and interconnected. • The environment impacts leadership as well. • Leadership is comprised of interconnected, mutually dependent constituents. • Leadership as an ‘event’ is resonant with the notion of a ‘moment’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the interconnectedness. Embracing constant change. ➔Enabling change to occur • Individuals should be trained to attend to the emerging, and existing patterns. • In a world of constant flux, individuals need to know what to pay attention to. • There can be no universal laws for behaving in certain situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ladkin (2006, 2010)

7.3. Complex Adaptive Leadership

The most salient point about complex adaptive leadership is the paradoxical co-existence of two opposing assumptions, anarchy and oligarchy, or differently put, chaos and order. In order to grasp this concept correctly, it is helpful to look at the meaning of these terms within the context of leadership. Anarchy or chaos refers to the complexity that must be inherent in organisations so that they are in accordance with the complex environment. Yet, according to Obolensky (2010) in a world where oligarchic assumptions still prevail organisations cannot be plainly chaotic. In order to defuse the tensions between traditional thinking and emerging complexity, there must be some oligarchic systems in place, hence polyarchy¹⁴ as the underpinning of leadership. However, the goal of leadership is the alleged ‘chaotic’ self-organisation of people, or what the other theories described as a dispersed form of leadership. Taking this into account, complex adaptive leadership can be

¹⁴ How this dynamic interplay between the antagonisms can work is also predicated on complexity science as as been shown in section 6.3.

seen as a transitional model; it acknowledges traditional assumptions which are still pervasive in leadership and aims, at the same time, at a form of organising as the other post-heroic theories suggested it.

Unfortunately, it cannot be looked more into the connection between this theory and the others, this might be done in future research. Now, it will be turned to the practical implications of this rather transitional model towards post-heroic leadership. First of all, it is required of leaders to do both take decisively action and step back when it is needed. Thus, they have to find a way how to manage the paradox between assuming that people need control and guidance and knowing that they are capable of organising themselves. There is reasonable doubt whether this could be accomplished. Although the underpinning is markedly different, it resembles transformational¹⁵(or charismatic) leadership in this respect. Both models presuppose a leader who assesses the situation and decides accordingly whether he has to step back or not. And here might lie the biggest challenge of complex adaptive leadership. Even though appointed leaders are open to collective and complex notions of leadership, it is still them who decide what kind of leadership matches best the context. Hence, the proposed paradigm shift might not be profound enough to result in a radical change. However, the pivotal point in favour of complex adaptive leadership is clearly the endeavour towards a self-organisation, albeit it can only be transiently achieved according to Obolonsky.

Moreover, leaders have to concede that former assumptions are obsolete and that it is necessary to understand leadership in a different way due to the knowledge gained by physics and mathematics, and due to the complex environment. At this point, complex adaptive leadership differs from transformational leadership which lacks such a profound grounding.

By accepting the call for a different enactment of leadership, the appointed leader will gradually move from using oligarchic measures to facilitating polyarchy. In doing so, anarchic (chaotic) values will become part of the leader and his organisation. Probably, the organisation will become more anarchic or self-governmental the more the leader chooses

¹⁵ Bass (2002) states that it is at the heart of the paradigm of transformational leadership that leaders develop leadership in those below them. As a consequence, the more the subordinates evolve into leaders the less the leader has to intervene.

a devolving¹⁶ behaviour. Obolensky might differ on this argument because of his assertion that complex systems have to balance chaos and order, or in other words, have to be on the edge of chaos. If one side is more stressed than the other, then this will be to the detriment of the whole system. Thus, based on the assumption that distributed leadership can be viewed as anarchic, a consistent implementation of it would impinge on the entire leadership process.

Furthermore, as a result of embracing uncertainty and chaos, leading would be mainly about asking the right questions than having all the answers. By acknowledging the complexity of the surrounding environment, leaders have to accept that they cannot know all the answers. Therefore, it will be commonplace to enable others to come up with solutions whereby it will not be expected of leaders to make all the important decisions.

Finally, other implications that go along with the anarchic side, are difficult to predict by virtue of the paradox character of complex adaptive leadership. It is hard to say to what extent collective responsibility or distributed leadership will emerge. It has to be shown in future research whether this theory will fare well.

¹⁶ It has been outlined in section 6.3. that behaviours of leader range from tell and sell, over involve to devolve. Devolve demonstrates the state where self-organisation occurs.

Table 7.3. Complex Adaptive Leadership

Definition of leadership	Practical Implications	Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership studies have to take into account the groundbreaking findings of physics and mathematics. • Leadership has to be as complex as its environment – law of requisite complexity. • Polyarchy as the underpinning system of leadership. • Complex Adaptive Leadership is the fusion of traditional and revolutionary assumptions. • Hersey and Blanchard’s situational leadership model as a framework. • Effectiveness of chaotic systems indicated by the butterfly effect and bifurcations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership has to be complex. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Better suited for a complex environment. • Harness effects of chaotic systems. • Fusion of self-governmental and leader-centric leadership. • Facilitate space in which self-organisations can thrive. • Having appointed leaders who can do both step back and take action. • Partly collective responsibility instead of residing in a sole leader. • Partly distributed power and leadership across hierarchies. • Leading is mainly about asking the right questions than having all the answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey (2007) • Obolensky (2010)

7.4. Relational Leadership

Although relational leadership is an idiosyncratic theory, its practical implications are not very different from the other post-heroic theories. The hallmark is indisputably the stress on social construction. It runs like a red thread through the theory. Since social realities like leadership are constructed in interrelated ongoing processes embedded in a local-historical context, they are difficult to define. They can only be known in relation.¹⁷ So, has this ontological problem consequences for the people involved in leadership? Rigourously speaking, there can be applied no universal laws in practice by virtue of changing relations. How relevant the ongoing changes are for the people is another question. To illustrate this more clearly, it is beneficial to think of tasks with different levels of difficulty that have to be performed. Even if the task is recurrent and well known there will be

¹⁷ This is also true for leadership from a (process) philosophical perspective. Hence, the following example is also applicable to this approach.

ongoing changes and somethings might be overtly different from the last time the task was performed. When speaking of changes they do not have to be necessarily visible, they can be infinitesimal like small changes in the historical context. Consequently, the impact on the person in action is small as well. Due to previous knowledge it is likely that the person will cope with the task effortlessly. As an aside not, previous knowledge is a good example of how continuous change can manifest itself. Because, there cannot be identified an endpoint to knowledge; it is consistently evolving, and so is the person. This makes the difference of the situation in which someone is confronted with a recurrent task. If he has managed to do it several times before, he is likely to do it again, notwithstanding the changes that might have occurred.

This simplicity, however, will not be found in unknown and complex tasks. It might be worth noting, at this point, that the category of problems is dependent upon the person who is facing them, which is also indicative of a process of social construction. Getting back to the complex task which is usually hard to manage by virtue of its unknown interdependencies; one has first to understand the potential effects of a problem, before it can be resolved successfully. It is relatively easy to understand that no universal laws can be applied in this case. The complexity reveals itself to the actor by means of a subjective evaluation of the level of difficulty, and through the way in which the problem relates to the context. Thus, interrelations can be identified as a distinctive feature, also relevant to people in practice.

To sum up, the social constructivist character can be theoretically ascertained, but it is hard to discern it in practical cases. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) provide an explanation for that: Albeit there are ongoing changes, they do not have to be institutionalised. We acknowledge the ever changing character of things from an ontological perspective, but they do not have to manifest themselves.

Table. 7.4. Relational Leadership

Definition of leadership	Practical Implications	Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership as a social process. • Distributed notion of leadership. • Appointed leader's expertise is one functional speciality amongst many. • Persons and contexts are continuously co-constructed (social construction). • Leadership's constituents are interrelated and are mutually dependent. • Social processes are embedded in local-historical-cultural contexts • Through networking relationships are build and deepened, knowledge created, and understanding accomplished. • Social order emerges through negotiating. • People are enabled to work towards their own goals (enabling). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visions are emerging, not imposed. <li style="padding-left: 20px;">➔Self-interest is aligned with organisation's interests. • There can be no universal laws for behaving in certain situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosking (1988) • Hosking & Morley (1991) • Uhl-Bien (2006) • Hosking (2007)

7.5. Shared Leadership

Most of the practical implications have already been covered in section 7.1. When taking a glance at the table of shared leadership (see table 7.5.) one will notice that it is almost identical with the one devoted to the general implications (see table 7.1.). The reason for this lies in the epistemological character of shared leadership. The latter is basically the consequence of the other three post-heroic theories that have been included in the general implications. Apart from disagreeing with the heroic individualist paradigm that imbues mainstream theories, it is less concerned with illuminating the true nature of leadership and more focused on advocating a collective, co-operative and distributed form of leadership.

In the sources taken into account, there could be identified a perennial point that is crucial for the endorsement of shared leadership; it is more effective and the better alternative in view of a complex world (O'Toole, Galbraith & Lawler, 2002; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Fletcher & Käufer, 2003; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007). The basic statement is that such broad competence profiles which would be required in an increasingly complex world cannot be found in one single person. Because of this it would be a better alternative to share or distribute leadership.

From this can be derived that the effective organisational unit as Pearce and Conger suggest (2003) is the cross functional team. In section 7.1.2. of this paper it already has been given an example of cross functional teams and their extraordinary achievements. Semco's diversified teams which emerged naturally contributed essentially to the organisational success. The reason why they were able to improve products and production processes is grounded in the particular knowledge people had of products or processes. Because of dealing with certain processes on a day-to-day basis they were more knowledgeable than any high ranked executive could have been. Moreover, the advantage of diversified teams is that there are many people with specialised knowledge who can contribute according to their competencies. This, in the end, makes the major difference between shared and leader-centric leadership. Whereas the latter is limited to the prowess of one single individual, the former takes advantage of the competencies of several individuals and of the learning effects caused by their interactions. The benefits of having multiple leaders is evidenced by two recent studies (Hauschildt & Kirchmann, 2001; Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2006). The findings of Hauschildt and Kirchmann indicate that the distribution of different elements of leadership to several individuals is beneficial to the overall performance. Carmeli & Schaubroeck showed that information exchange, collaboration, and joint-decision making in top management teams are positively related to organisational outcomes.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that shared leadership might forestall immoral actions. (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007). As illustrated in section 7.1. collective responsibility thwarts the possibility of misuse of power. In effect, co-leaders are able to control each other and make jointly decisions. For immoral actions to occur, all people engaged in shared leadership have to have the urge to act immorally, which presumably only happens in criminal organisations.

Table 7.5. Shared Leadership

Definition of leadership	Practical Implications	Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership has to be distributed in order to respond adequately to complexity. • Leadership is shared by the many who, in sum, provide a wide range of skills, abilities and knowledge. • Leadership as a collective achievement, shared responsibility, and teamwork. • Appointed leader's expertise is only one functional speciality amongst many. • Social interactions as the basis of shared leadership's occurrence. • A more epistemological theory than ontological. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat hierarchies. • Distributed power and leadership across hierarchies. • Collective responsibility instead of residing in a sole leader. • Interactions should be fostered and intensified. • Better suited for a complex environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pearce & Conger (2003) • Fletcher & Käufer (2003) • Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff (2007)

8. Conclusion

This dissertation began with the assumption of traditional theories being liable to a fallible perception and their inadequacy in view of a complex fast-changing world. Hence, important influential factors are not take into consideration in order to obtain a full understanding of the leadership phenomenon. It is precisely because of the complexity of social processes why leadership is romanticised. Interdependent and interrelated constructions are inferred to simple causalities, because of feeling more comfortable by linking unequivocally causes to events and outcomes. In the end, the tendency to reify the leadership process is to the neglect of wider contextual forces. This, in turn, has considerable consequences on the enactment of leadership in practice.

It has been investigated in the course of this paper what kind of practical ramifications post-heroic leadership studies could have on organisations in practice. Five current post-heroic theories, that is, leadership from a process perspective, a philosophical approach to leadership, complex adaptive leadership, relational leadership, and shared leadership have been taken into account to demonstrate the practical relevance of these theories.

The results obtained from this assessment show that they can make valuable contributions beyond the ontological aspect. By acknowledging both the macro and micro aspects of leaderships – and not just focusing on few individuals – might result in a better comprehension of the process, which, in turn, could lead to a more effective form of organising. Friedrich et al. (2009, p.951) come to a similar conclusion: “Based on existing research there is reason to believe that collective leadership may be beneficial to long-term group and organizational outcomes such as growth, innovation, survival, adaptability, and organizational culture.”

However, in order to benefit from post-heroic theories, there have to be anticipated some difficulties, in particular, if it is applied in an environment imbued with traditional heroic leadership assumptions. Fletcher (2004) alludes, in this regard, that this form of leadership requires a different mental model of exercising power and achieving workplace success and effectiveness. Thus, those who are engaged in leadership have to internalise post-heroic ideals first, before acting upon them.

Moreover, the examination of practical implications of post-heroic studies showed that four of five theories share a wide common ground. This is inasmuch important as it highlights how relevant these theories are. They do not solely offer a theoretical, all-embracing understanding of leadership, but also an effective way of enacting leadership in practice. Given our fast changing environment, the latter will supposedly gain more significance in the course of time.

By advocating a distributed notion of leadership, the theories in question entail similar consequences for organisations. Most noticeable is the impact on the organisational structure. If leadership is dispersed – and hence power and responsibility – organisations will abandon the pyramidal structure and will have flatter hierarchies. In doing so, social order will emerge from the people, and will not be imposed on them.

Complex adaptive leadership, could be identified as a transitional model, since it is a mixture of heroic and post-heroic assumptions. But, it still needs to be proven whether the theory represents a good starting point for a development towards post-heroic leadership. On the one hand, the theory’s incorporation of traditional assumptions could be helpful for coping with above mentioned difficulties, and establishing post-heroic leadership. On the other side, still relying on individualist notions might prevent post-heroic leadership from

occurring in the end, since the 'old' values and beliefs are still inherent within the system. Obolensky's assertion that it is vital to perpetuate the balance of order and chaos so that the whole system works is debatable.

It is important to note that the examination of practical implications has its limits. Due to a considerable lack of research on post-heroic theories, only autobiographical notes could be used to substantiate the practical relevance. This indicates that it is important to do some research, particularly, in two ways. First, in order to corroborate empirically the ontological claims of post-heroic theories, it must be looked into the leadership processes to verify the social constructivist character. Second, post-heroic assumptions must be tested in practice. But, both will not be easy accomplished.

Because of the inter-relational, interdependent and constantly changing character of leadership, research has to be ideally done in an ethnographic manner. Such an in-depth inquiry has been also recommended by several scholars propounding post-heroic theories (Parry, 1998; Wood, 2005; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2010; Ladkin 2010; Watson, 2011). Watson argues that an ethnography might show how things actually work, as a result of being intensively involved in the organisation being analysed. Worth mentioning, in this regard, is the grounded theory which is consistent with the underlying concept of ethnographic research. Similar to the latter it emerges from and is grounded in the data, thus, the findings are inductively derived from the study. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Moreover, it also seeks to understand people's words and actions in context and develop explanations through interpretation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, it is understandable why grounded theory can be of additional value for post-heroic theories. Akin to philosophical and relational approaches, it advocates a dynamic and processual notion of leadership as opposed to a static and entitive one (Kempster & Parry, 2011).

To conclude, this dissertation has corroborated the call for a paradigm shift by referring to the practical relevance of post-heroic theories. However, the empirical substantiation is still too thin to result in far-reaching consequences for research and practice. But, bearing the effect of bifurcations in mind, it is likely that this kind of impact can be achieved, if more and more scholars look into post-heroic leadership.

9. References and Bibliography

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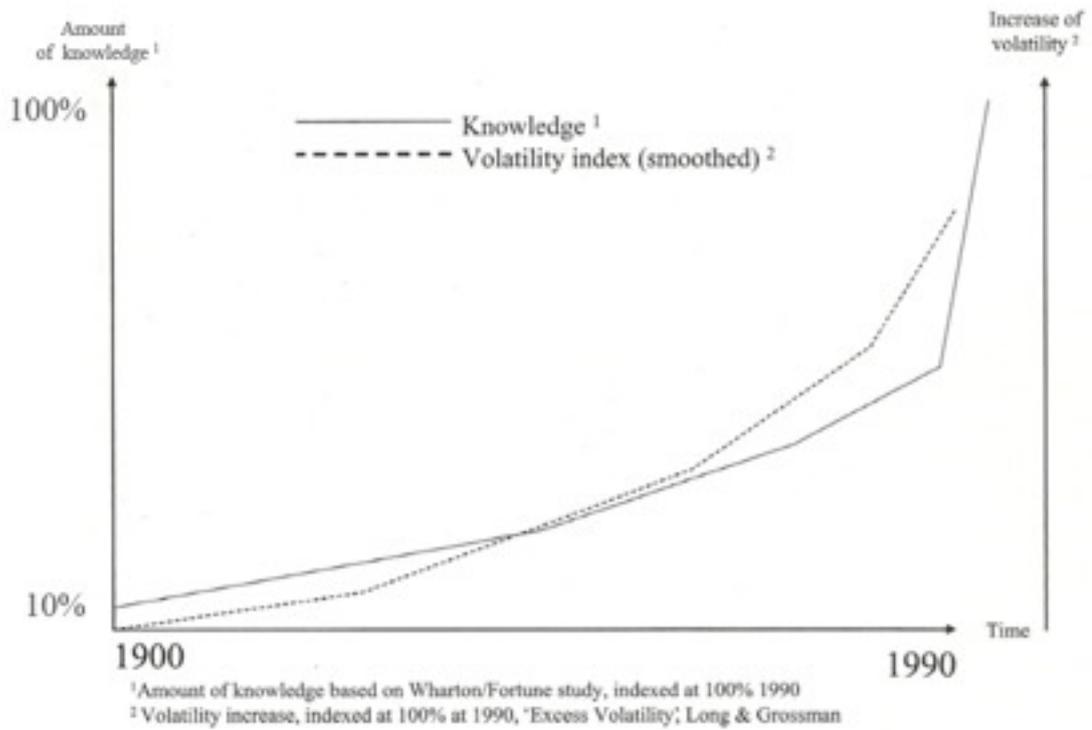
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10. Appendix A



(Adopted from Obolensky, N., 2010. Complex adaptive leadership: Embracing paradox and uncertainty, Farnham: Gower Publishing)