A qualitative study of systemic leadership training in a Danish municipality

"Leaders' experiences of participating in leadership training based on a systemic approach"

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ABSTRACT

DeRue (2011) finds that the literature on leadership emphasizes dominant discourses in which the personality characteristics, ability and leadership behaviour of the individual leader are central because these are important influences on employees. Ancone & Backman (2008) and Heifetz (1994) find the same trend in their review of leadership research between 2003 and 2008. For example, 84% of leadership research focuses on the leader as an individual with formal authority. However, researchers have recognized that leadership is about managing complexity and social dynamics that are context dependent.

This thesis explores how participants in a systemic leadership programme experience their learning process. The following research questions were investigated: (1) *How do leaders in systemic leadership programmes construct new meaning for leadership?* and (2) *How do systemic leadership programmes affect the co-creation of leadership practice, and how do they affect participants' personal discourses about their leadership?* Data were collected through sixteen qualitative in-depth interviews with twelve participants and five days of fieldwork observations of leadership training. A discourse psychology analysis led to the identification of three main discourses: (1) *The discourse of embodied leadership training*, (2) *The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges*, and (3) *The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership.* The research suggests that systemic approaches will humanize leadership, as people will experience and be part of continuous development, both individually and as part of something greater than themselves. A systemic approach to leadership is more flexible and dynamic than other contextual frameworks. This systemic approach to leadership training utilized actual everyday contexts that guide practice for how leaders and co-workers' function at work. The findings of this study show that this systemic approach acts as a "bridge builder" between the dominant individualistic discourses and a more complex contextual approach.

1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership programmes over several decades have tended to focus on the characteristics, behaviour and competencies of the individual leader, with an individualistic and instrumental focus. Ancona and Backman (2008) and Heifetz (1994) find that 84% of the research on leadership between 2003 and 2008 emphasized the individual and the behaviour of the leader. My experience as a consultant from the management field supports this finding. In the research literature, I observe that dominant discourses of good leadership often attribute leadership qualities to the individual. At the same time, the literature on leadership and leader development recognizes the increasing complexity of our time and the task of leading (James and Collins, 2008; Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2007; Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012; Hosking, 2007; Ladkin, 2010; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Recently, there has been a greater focus on systemic leadership programmes, but the significance and experiences of systemic leadership programmes have not been the subjects of research (Flood, 2010; Collier & Esteban, 2000). There are relatively few systemic leadership programmes, and these have remained largely unexamined. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative exploration of how participants in a systemic leadership training programme experience their learning process.

1.1 Research purpose and aims

This thesis explores how participants in a systemic leadership programme experience their learning processes. The aim of the study was to explore whether and how systemic leadership training contributes to a (co-creative) different conceptualization and practice of leadership in the actual contexts of the leader. Another aim of this study was to contribute to the ongoing development of the systemic training of leaders and future systemic leadership programmes. Gender is not a topic in this thesis. I have therefore used both the word *her* and *his* throughout the text.

1.2 Research questions

Based on the aims of this study, I address the following research questions in this thesis:

(1) How do leaders in a systemic leadership programme construct new meaning for leadership?
(2) How does the systemic leadership programme affect the co-creation of leadership practice? How does the systemic leadership programme affect the participants' personal discourses about their leadership?

1.3 Research context

Systemic approaches to leadership are less common in Norway than in other countries; therefore, it was difficult to find relevant systemic consultancy programmes. After conversations with my research supervisor, we decided to look for a consultancy programme in Denmark that offered systemic leadership training. When I contacted the consultancy firm, I was told that it was scheduled to conduct systemic leadership training in a large municipality in Denmark, and the consultants were interested in my planned research. Following a discussion with the municipality, we agreed that I would carry out the research. Formal documents were drawn up with a project title, project description, information about the confidentiality of the data (Appendix 1), a suggested interview guide (Appendix 2) and my plan for conducting interviews and fieldwork observations. I also conducted a general meeting with the top managers and all the leaders who were to complete the training. In this meeting, I presented my goals for the research, my interests, my experience with leadership training and my interest in systemic approaches to leadership training and leadership. In addition, I informed the group about the Tavistock and Portman and East London University doctorate programme and the relevant formal documents.

The "masterclass" course was designed, developed and conducted by a Danish consultancy firm in cooperation with the top management of the municipality. All the consultants had different roles in conducting the masterclass, but the founder and consultant leader were the most prominent consultants conducting the leadership training and at the municipal test centre. The consultancy firm was a small firm consisting of five employees during the period

of the study. It consisted of the founder of the firm, the consultant leader, a professional music consultant and two other consultants. The central consultants had extensive knowledge of systemic approaches. The founder of the consultancy firm has written several books about systemic leadership (Olsen & Larsen, 2012).

The consultancy firm and top management decided that the programme would be called a masterclass. The programme, however, had no formal connection to academia, and the participants earned no credits; the name was simply chosen for a tailor-made systemic intervention programme. The term "masterclass" signalled a practical leadership training course with a starting point in the actual contexts of the leaders. The leader programme was conducted in a traditional plenary hall at a hotel. The test centre was a building owned by the municipality that was used for training using actual cases and scenarios. The test centre for the masterclass was a training laboratory that the participants and the organization used as a training arena. At the first gathering of the masterclass, I wondered what thoughts the founder and leader of the consultancy firm had about a systemic approach to leadership training and the foundation of the consultancy firm in relation to systemic theory and practice. He answered this question in written form (directly translated):

> *"Based on 'systemic ideas', we have been gifted with an advanced dialogical perspective, which made it possible for us to understand the power of language and the importance of communication from a receiver perspective, context and position. With these concepts and ideas in our baggage, we have had the pleasure of working with meaning and meaning coordination as the primary point of access to change organizations and identity. This access is under pressure in Denmark, where many changes are taking place at the same time and at great speed. And the gap between experiences and expectations is very large. It has simply become difficult to keep up. Language is lagging. Establishing new meanings takes too long a time. And coordination is pressured by the many new forms of working. That's why we change the order: 'Action before attitude'. In action before attitude, we focus on training and practising and then reflecting on practice, which again influences attitude. You don't need to have understood the change to agree, create meaning, etc. We ask you to do this in a qualifying protected environment, namely, virtual simulation. In that form of skills training or prototype testing, we introduce linearity in the form of instructions,*

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precise descriptions of how one is to do this. You need to do this because you need to do this. Only afterwards, in the qualifying of experiences, do we open the attitude and meaning toolbox again". (30.10.2014)

The programme is concerned with how leadership is primarily an interactional practice between leaders and their followers. The leader of the consultancy firm believed that leaders learn more from their own experiences and practice through reflexive practical learning than through other learning methods.

The research context is a leadership training organization (Danish consultancy firm) as part of a contract with a large municipality in Denmark. The municipal organization delivers services related to elder care, disabilities, and psychiatry and employs approximately 3,500 employees. The leader group of the organization, containing 25 leaders, completed a leader programme with a theoretical standpoint based on a systemic approach. The leadership training was conducted to move from a "top-down" leadership style to an organizational style in which the leaders, with their employees, co-constructed leadership and increased cooperation between the professions.

Masterclass -programme, main frames

There was a certain flexibility in the course, but the following programme shows the main frames of the leadership training:

22nd Oct. 2014	Camp I – Entré – the sound of leadership in the new organization
29th-30th Oct. 2014	Case team meeting about the leadership case
25th-29th Nov. 2014	Camp II – Simulation of leadership in the new organization
4th Dec. 2014	Camp III – Transformative access to leadership
20th-21st Jan. 2015	Camp IV – Individual and organizational robustness
Jan./Feb. 2015	Personal development – individual coaching
26th-27th Feb. 2015	Camp V – the manager task versus the leader task
April/May 2015	Personal development – individual coaching
26th March 2015	Camp V1 – Leadership across the organization
8th-9th April 2015	Case team meeting

24th April 2015	Camp VII – Effect directing in the organization – work with Key Performance Indicators (KPI) goals
22nd May	Case Camp – Learning about leadership in the new organization and "examination" of the presentation of the casework

1.4   *The organization*

The municipal organization that was undertaking leadership training provided services related to elder care, disabilities and psychiatry. There are approximately 3,500 employees distributed over many professions, such as social and health assistants, care assistants, nurses, ergo-therapists, kitchen assistants, jurists, teachers, caseworkers, consultants and secretaries. The organization within which I conducted the study had five leader levels.

Leader level 1 was the administrative director for the organization. Leader level 2 was six leaders who managed their own regions in the municipality. Leader level 3 was rehabilitation leaders. Leader level 4 was leaders of the care centres and care groups. Leader level 5 had proxies for Leader level 4. Leaders at levels 1, 2 and 3 were all members of the leadership group of the organization, which consisted of 25 leaders. It was this leader group that undertook the masterclass leadership training. The leader group was responsible for the budgeting, operation and administration of the organization. The leader group had a strategic responsibility to conduct necessary change processes and ensure goal attainment in the organization.

The leaders in the leader group were responsible for delivering the following five services to the citizens of the municipality:

(1) Services for physical functional disability, for example, training centres and ambulatory team groups

(2) Services for illness development, ambulatory groups, care homes and day centres

(3) Services for acquired brain injury, for example, neuro-pedagogical services and residential services.

(4) Services for congenital brain damage, for example, residential support, temporary and permanent residential services and day centres.

(5) Services for psychological illness, for example, residential support, temporary and permanent residential services and ambulatory groups.

The organization had developed a new ethos for the elderly, those with disabilities and those needing psychiatric services, expressed as follows: "To be an adult concerns doing things oneself, making decisions for oneself and feeling independent. We therefore support adult people in living an independent and autonomous life." A clear goal of the new ethos was for the citizens receiving municipal services to receive coaching and supervision in order to master their own lives to a greater extent and thus to live independently and autonomously. One of the main reasons the municipality arranged the leadership training was to prepare the leader group for the new leadership requirements demanded by a change and reorganization process. The main reason for this was that the public sector in Denmark was and is under pressure. Vicki Møberg Torp (2016, p. 10) writes in her PhD dissertation,

> *"Public management is under development among other reasons because of changes in the socio-economic and demographic structures and because the demands and expectations of citizens for individualized welfare efforts are increasing".*

This quotation points out a shift that is both cultural and political, with citizens demanding individually tailored services from the organization to a greater extent than before. This shift has influenced how the organization changed its services from separate services to more cross-disciplinary efforts through the five new services/courses. This again influenced leadership in the organization in the direction of co-creative leadership and co-creative activities.

1.5   *Expressed goals of top management in the masterclass*

The philosophy of the leadership training was to deliver a systemic programme that was practice based and clearly founded on contextually relevant training situations. The top

management informed all the leaders who were to participate in the leadership training through the following letter:

Masterclass

- **Intense training, leadership power and merit at the master level**

"To 'transform through leadership' and 'manage in an inter-disciplinary way' are demanding leadership disciplines. 'When these ambitions are to be followed and developed in the midst of a multiplicity of simultaneous movements, the task becomes even more demanding. It is with this goal that the 'masterclass' is to be conducted. A merit-giving course that is offered to leaders who are not merely entering new management positions in the administration but who are expected in all regards to be role models and to initiate transformative movements as well as lead interdisciplinary work. The masterclass is an intense and varied course in which tests, training, leadership power and expertise are provided. With the WILL-CAN-SHALL model as the working model, ambition and learning principles look like this.

"It is obvious that if leadership expertise basically matches the changes the administration is going through, then this programme would not be necessary. An ambitious 'set up a plan' and rehabilitation culture must be reflected in an equally ambitious masterclass. At the same time, the programme builds on the premise that much expertise is already present, that many relevant and dynamic leadership practices are underway and that the programme, if it is to be successful, must build on these valuable experiences.

"With directly designated points in top management and at the same time to avoid abstract reflections and generalizations about 'the next thing', the whole programme is built around concrete leadership tasks that become the object for tests (simulations), training, and realization of achievements for the leader group. Finally, the final part of the course points to professional specialization and work with personal learning goals in preparation for the examination in the masterclass.

"In summary, as soon as you register in the masterclass, you must take a position towards the required effort, and you will commit to all the days and the examination. The participants should be aware that they are regarded as 'first followers' who will set new standards for leadership in the organization. The masterclass will be entertaining, wide-reaching and effective. But none of this comes by itself. Registration is via the leader of the reference group".

Overview of the benefits of the masterclass:

"In the span of leadership power, development of dynamic expertise and sustainable rehabilitating administration work will be done via training domains, simulation, exemplary learning principles, reading and examination on the following:

"Strong communication – focus on team spirit and ethics in relations. Precision in communication and interdisciplinary leadership.

"Personal and professional robustness – which points to powerful achievements – to community and development of both leadership identity and professional identity.

"Realization – which unfolds an understanding of the paradox of planning, sets a focus on the core (task achievement) of objectives in the goals of the citizens and challenges maximally by removing the 'middle track', back to the vision, on the long track and the daily here-and-now leadership.

"The goal is for you to become competent in the following areas:

- *To practice dialogical leadership*
- *To carry the banner for the ideology in the NEW municipality*
- *To tolerate extremely short-term work*
- *To communicate that the long-term goal is unavoidable*
- *To establish radical openness about individual functions*
- *To establish space for broad leadership*

"This occurs in a connection between actual experiences, casework and tests as well as the associated concepts in the masterclass".

- End of letter –

1.6   Reflections on the phrase "leadership training"

In a discussion of the relevant theory connected to the research questions of the study, it may be useful first to reflect generally on the concept of leader development. Day (2011) points out that leader training is often described in the literature as directed towards the individual leader, with the individual (the individual leader) positioned at the centre in the development of knowledge and skills to become the best leader. Here, the central focus is on self-insight, personality, leader identity and leadership competencies in the individual leader (Day, 2011). Leadership training takes a more holistic perspective and expresses the view that leadership training occurs in interaction with the organization and its environments. From this perspective, leadership training is viewed as arising from social dynamics, in which leaders influence and are influenced by their employees (Day, 2011). Within these conceptual frames, the masterclass programme was conducted more in the direction of leadership training because top management wanted leadership to become better distributed and maintained through shared cooperative learning for leaders and their employees. As Susan Long (2016) points out, systemic leadership concerns all roles in an organization working together.

1.7   Guide for the reader of the thesis

This study is organized into 5 chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction and describes the background of my research interest, the goal of the research, and the research questions. In chapter 2, I conduct a critical review of the literature on systemic theory and on other research on leadership and leadership training relevant to systemic approaches. Chapter 3 describes the methodological considerations: the design of the study, choice of the method of analysis, recruitment of participants, data collection, ethical issues and limitations of the study. Chapter

4 presents the findings of the discourse psychology analysis. Chapter 5 presents the discussion and implications of the study for leadership and leadership training, personal learning from this study, questions for further research and concluding comments.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis explores how participants in a systemic leadership programme experience their learning process. The research questions were as follows: (1) *How do leaders in systemic leadership programmes construct new meaning for leadership?* and (2) *How do systemic leadership programmes affect the co-creation of leadership practice – and how do they affect the participants' personal discourses about their leadership?*

In this chapter, I start by providing a brief presentation of the literature search strategy. Then, I present an overview of the literature and research on leadership. Thereafter, I present the literature on discourses of leadership and leadership training. I also present contextual questions related to leadership in light of the contextual frameworks within which the masterclass was conducted. Thereafter, I explore the literature on systemic theory and theories of social constructionism and move to theories of relational leadership. I then summarize the literature on complex theories of leadership before moving on to my own self-reflexivity in relation to the literature search. I further address the literature about theories of embodied leadership, theories of hierarchy and power in leadership, and theories of leadership and learning and conclude the literature review by presenting the relevant research. Finally, I provide an argument for why the research questions of this study are relevant in terms of the aims of the study. I then conclude the literature review by arguing that future studies on leadership should be developed to create a deeper and more thorough understanding of leadership as a complex, socially constructed phenomenon that arises in different contexts, as organizations live their own lives in different environments governed by different cultural, political and local conditions.

2.1   Reflections on the literature

As I began my review of the literature, I realized that there are many who claim to have the answers and solutions to what good leadership is (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007). This issue concerns academia, particularly business schools, and not least the branch of which I am part, which with some daring can be called that of the professional leadership consultant. The same sources claim that business schools in particular have the

solution for the next generation of leaders but have failed to achieve this goal because they do not emphasize the everyday contexts of leaders and what the leader brings with her into her leadership in the form of experiences based on socio-cultural conditions. Central to this criticism is the concept that knowledge about human relationships is important when leaders address interpersonal relations in complex organizations (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007).

Leader training programmes and leadership training to a great extent take their perspectives from the positivistic paradigm. As Avolio observes, *"The quantitative strategies for studying leadership have dominated the literature over the past 100 years"* (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 442). This was also my experience when I searched the literature. I realized that much of the research concluded with the need for more qualitative research on leadership and leader training. This is supported by Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson & Uhl-Bien (2011), who claim that there is a need for qualitative research that addresses leaders' actual contexts and that social interaction and leader practice therefore ought to be objects for research.

2.2   Search strategy

I used the Tavistock library, sources suggested by my supervisors, and sources suggested by acknowledged researchers on leadership. I also searched recognized journals (i.e., Journal of Applied Psychology and Leadership and Organization Development Journal) and further within the reference lists of identified articles. Through the course of the study, I gradually focused the search in accordance with the increase in my knowledge of the research.

Through the literature search, which was an adaptive learning process for me as a researcher, I used the following terms in the electronic search: systemic leadership, complexity theory, system psychodynamic theory and relational management connected to systemic interventions in leadership. This study attempts to challenge the individualistic, rational and normative discourses that have tended to dominate leadership training and leadership. The literature review and the research I refer to come from acknowledged institutions and research milieus. It would be naïve not to believe that these sources to some extent reflect how leaders generally think about leadership. Petriglieri & Petriglieri (2015) find that recent reviews of

leadership research, such as Alvesson and Spicer (2011), DeRue and Myers (2014), Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) and Maybey (2013), all support the conclusion that individual and instrumental discourse prevails over leadership. As this project takes social constructionism and systemic approaches as its points of departure, it does not aim to discuss which theories about leadership are best. Instead, I am concerned with relational and co-creative leadership processes in which the leader(s) and employees co-create reality at the same time that the contextual frameworks within which the leaders work is maintained. This differs from knowledge based on a positivistic perspective about leadership/leader training, which includes a more instrumental and positivistic standpoint, such as that of the personality and personal characteristics of the leader. However, in the study, I am also concerned with not polarizing the positivistic and postmodern approaches. Thus, I am curious about whether and how systemic approaches can be fruitful for leadership practice and leadership training.

2.3 *Theoretical framework for leadership*

The masterclass programme was conducted as leadership training rather than leader training, which focuses on the leader as an individual and individual leader skill. The masterclass programme took a more holistic approach in which leadership was developed through social interaction, and leaders along with their employees cooperatively constructed the need for leadership in the organization. In light of this, leader training is a consequence of social dynamics that are also driven by contextual and cultural frameworks. Leadership training has clear connections to systemic interventions in which leadership is developed through social and relational interactions between leaders and their employees (Flood, 2010; Day 2011).

DeRue (2011) finds that the leadership literature emphasizes dominant discourses in which the personality characteristics, abilities and leader behaviour of the individual leader are central because these are important influences on employees. Ancona and Backman (2008) and Heifetz (1994) find the same trend in their review of leadership research between 2003 and 2008. For example, 84% of leadership research focuses on the leader as an individual with formal authority. Glynn and Raffaelli (2010) code all the leadership studies published in three elite journals, (1) *Administrative Science Quarterly*, (2) *Academy of Management*

Journal and (3) *Organization Science*, since their inception. In general, the coding shows that 83.89% of these leadership studies focused on the leader, while 49.34% focused on how the leader influenced groups of employees and the goal attainment of the organization. Furthermore, the coding shows that only 9.87% were about the values and meaning construction of the leader. Theories about the construction of meaning in leadership appeared in just 11.18% of the studies. The relational and social constructional aspects of leadership training are therefore under-researched and under-theorized areas. This is confirmed in the research on leadership training in organizations, which found that *"82% of the studies showed that the focus was on the qualities of the individual leader, which were considered as capable of turning a whole organization around alone"* (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015, p. 631).

Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015) state that the strong positivistic trends in the literature and research are concerned much with how leadership can be reduced to several skills that the leader must have, which they feel dehumanizes leadership. My interpretation is that the way leaders are currently trained does not equip them to manage complex dynamic organizations in which social interaction is itself complex. My criticism of such a "heroic approach" is that it can lead to the lack of abilities to address the complexity and uncertainty that are often dominant in organizations. Alvesson and Spicer (2011, p. 9) point out that the *"heroic approach in research and literature can be dangerous because it can lead to generalization of leadership. This makes it so that we begin to see everything as leadership"*. In light of the enormous amount of literature on leadership, it is difficult for "buyers" of leader training to navigate and search for which styles are likely to be of the most practical use in their own organizations.

Researchers such as Bennis and O'Toole (2005), Ghoshal (2005), and Khurana (2007) are critical of how the literature and research on leadership treat the leader as an isolated individual, disconnected from her or his everyday contexts. Such studies also find that research must take into account the socio-cultural contexts in which leadership is performed. When these contexts are not included, many 'blind spots' arise within the literature and in the research because much of the research does not capture the actual daily challenges that leaders confront (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). Day (2010) writes about leader development and points out that there is a fundamental difference between leader development and leadership development. He claims that leader development is about

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developing the leader, whereas leadership development is more about developing social structures and learning processes (Day, 2000). He views these two perspectives as different, but in the practice field, they are discussed as though they are the same (Day, 2010). Day (2010) points out that the development of individual leader skills does not guarantee better leadership, but he emphasizes that leader development involves a balance between leader training and leadership training; both perspectives are important for creating better leaders. As Day (2010, p. 38) points out, leader training is concerned mainly with individual competence and skills, such as "*self-management capabilities (e.g. self-awareness, balancing conflicting demands, ability to learn, and leadership values), social capabilities (e.g. the ability to build and maintain relationships, building effective work groups, communication skills, and the ability to develop others)*". The masterclass programme was concerned with developing social structures and shared learning processes through social dynamics in which participants' everyday contexts were the guide. Because the masterclass was conducted as leadership development, less attention was paid to individual leader skills. Day (2010) points out that the combination of a focus on the individual (leader training) and the development of leadership is a more holistic approach.

In a similar vein, both James and Collins (2008) and DeRue (2011) refer to how the literature on leadership and leader training generally emphasizes dominant discourses that focus more on the personality, skills, and leader behaviour of the individual leader than on developing social structures and shared learning processes through social dynamics. At the same time, James and Collins (2008) say that the current research and literature show new trends of leadership being considered contextual and relational across systems, through which new constructions of leadership arise. As I understand James and Collins (2008), leadership is a construction and a consequence of social dynamics in human systems. Leadership arises mainly in the practical work of leaders along with their employees. In light of this, leadership is a consequence of social interaction that arises in specific contexts.

The perspective of James and Collins (2008) and DeRue (2011) breaks with the strong individualistic discourses in the literature about how leader qualities are constructed as "head activity" that is divorced from the actual everyday contexts of the leader. As Gjerde (2018) notes in research on leadership, researchers can end up in situations in which they produce leadership connections only "on paper", disconnected from leaders' real practice and

contexts. Gjerde (2018) refers to Alvesson (2017), who calls for more in-depth studies using different qualitative methods and analyses that draw on the contexts of leaders. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2013) claim that such a research design will contribute to a better understanding of how leadership arises in social dynamics and the complexity of local contexts that determine how leadership appears.

2.3.1 The SHALL-WILL-CAN model

The SHALL-WILL-CAN model was the central theory and method used by the consultants in the masterclass programme (Olsen & Larsen, 2012). This model was defined in terms of three central themes within the practice of leadership. The first, (1) *SHALL*, was defined as follows: What are your important tasks and duties? Which requirements are necessary to realize? As a leader, what requirements must you not ignore under any circumstances? The second, (2) *WILL,* was defined as follows: Your will – do you experience responsiveness? Do you have permission? Your willingness – what are you particularly proud of? How does your vulnerability reveal itself –when something is crucial for you? The third, (3) *CAN,* is defined as follows: describe the relationship between your WILL and SHALL. Is there a shared context and meaning in the connections between them? There should be a difference between having the right expertise and experiencing yourself as competent in concrete situations: where, when and in which situations do you find that you do and do not experience yourself as competent?

The SHALL-CAN-WILL model was used as the central theory and model of leadership throughout the entire masterclass programme (Olsen & Larsen, 2012). The consultants described it as a practice model in which WILL and CAN describe a communication-theoretical and linguistic-philosophical foundation. Thus, WILL and CAN can be connected to the notion that it is the receiver who determines the message, and there can be differences between the intention and effect of the message. WILL and CAN illustrate the individual leader's habitual leadership patterns. Expertise and experience signal what the individual leader WILL and CAN do in her or his everyday leadership. WILL and CAN were used in the masterclass to raise individual leaders' awareness of what influenced their personal leadership. WILL and CAN are not always resulting of professional expertise as leaders but may be directed instead by personality preferences. For example, the individual leader can

avoid or put off having difficult conversations because his or her leadership is directed too much by what the leader is comfortable with in terms of WILL and what he or she believes he or she CAN. The consultancy firm developed this model to include SHALL, which represents the "management" or directional aspect connected to the formal role and authority of the leader. The consultants in the masterclass found this model to be of practical use and a fruitful analytic tool in their leadership. On the basis of the three legs, "SHALL", "CAN" and "WILL", the consultants described the aim of the model as contributing insight into communication, leadership and direction. Personal narratives about oneself as a leader increased the levels of reflection individually and in the leader group. The SHALL-WILL-CAN model was also used at the test centre in which the participants practised using actual cases, both as preparation for the training and during the training. The consultants pointed out that "WILL" and "CAN" speak to how leaders communicate their messages. Through SHALL, the consultants emphasized, identities can be changed, as well as how leaders then communicate their messages. On this basis, too great a focus on "WILL" and "CAN" in leadership can trigger individualistic leadership, leading to less focus on co-creative activities because the former is governed by personal values and what the individual leader feels she can master.

The SHALL-WILL-CAN model was both an analytic model for the participants' own leadership and a practice-based tool. Instead of understanding different situations in terms of others' characteristics (resistance to change, power struggles, ambivalence, stress), the model can contribute to how different situations can be understood as communication processes. This is in accordance with Luhmann's (1995) three-part understanding of communication as information, communication and understanding.

Olsen and Larsen (2012) connect the SHALL-WILL-CAN model to theories of communication that involve the work of Maturana, Bateson, Gergen and others and second-order cybernetics, in which the leader views him- or herself as part of a system. SHALL, which greatly concerns the formal requirements of the leader – authority, conducting leader meetings and steering conversations to ensure goals – received great attention in the masterclass, which led to leaders becoming even more results-oriented for the sake of wholeness and the goals of the organization. This resulted in the participants becoming more attentive to the goals of the organization rather than merely focusing on their own work tasks

or their own department. This was especially useful because they were intended to work in a more interdisciplinary way with the citizens of the municipality (Olsen & Larsen, 2012).

2.3.2 Relational leadership

Relational leadership is a younger branch of the literature, and there is still a lack of clarity about what it means in practice (Brower et al., 2000; Drath, 2001; Hoskin, in press); Murell, 1997; Uhl-Bien, 2003, 2005; Murrell, 1997). A shared characteristic appears to be the understanding that leaders and their employees co-construct leadership instead of searching for explanations in "grand theories" of leadership, which enables leaders and employees to take development into their own hands. This contrasts with a more traditional view of leadership and team relations that to a great extent considers the leader an individual with knowledge of how both she and her employees think, feel and act.

Uhl-Bien (2006) claims that there is increasing acknowledgement of the discourse of relational leadership, which she states is less well known both in research on the field of leadership and the field itself, as well as its practical consequences for leadership. At the same time, she refers to how relational leadership takes the perspective that knowledge and leadership are socially constructed in the everyday contexts of the leader by individuals in relationships. A relational perspective on leadership acknowledges the presence of reciprocal dependence in an organization, where both leaders and employees are continuously under development through shared social constructions. From a systems-theoretical perspective, leadership is defined not as leadership processes located "within" the leader but rather as leadership processes with feedback loops (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). Belonging is constructed as a continuous process of meaning creation in leadership at the same time that this shared belonging and meaning creation are also limited by socio-cultural conditions and contexts (Dachler & Hoskin, 1995). In light of relational leadership, I find it useful to include theories of followership.

2.3.3 Followership

Fairhurst and Grant (2010) describe followership as a relational interplay in which leadership is created through the presence of leaders and followers (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Shamir, 2012). In light of this, a role-based approach to exploring

followership (followers) with a focus on the behaviour of individuals or groups belongs to the instrumental or individual discourse, while a constructionist approach explores followership as a social process in which co-creative leadership is central (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe & Carsten, 2014). Constructionist approaches view followership and leadership as reciprocally co-constructed in social and relational interactions between people (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Shamir, 2007). In the view of constructionist approaches, leadership can arise only through actual negotiations between leaders and their followers, with identities, resistance and negotiations taking place in specific real contexts (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012; Shamir, 2012). In light of this, followership can be seen in terms of "following behaviours" that include both leaders and followers in continual negotiation (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Followership is connected not to a specific role but rather to behaviour. From this perspective, Fairhurst and Hamlett (2003) and Larsson and Lundholm (2013) point out that it is possible to recognize that leaders do not always lead but distribute leadership to their followers, which again means that leaders are engaged in "followership behaviour" vis-à-vis their followers. These different views of role-based approaches and constructionist approaches to followership are much of the reason for confusion in the discussion of followership and why it is difficult to understand what followership is. The negative connotations of the words "follower" and "following" come from the role-based, leader-centric (individualistic) view that has traditionally dominated leadership research (Hoption et al., 2012).

Despite the existence of a large amount of research on leadership, Yukl (2012) refers to the fact that very little attention has been paid to followership (Baker, 2007; Bligh, 2011; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Kelley, 2008; Sy, 2010). Researchers claim that when followership is included in research on leadership, followers are portrayed as receivers of leadership. The study of followership as a central component of the leader process is to a great extent missing from the leadership literature (Baker, 2007; Bligh, 2011; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Kelley, 2008; Sy, 2010). Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien claim that the lack of followership in studies of leadership is the result of confusion and misunderstanding because researchers have not fully understood leadership as a process that should be co-created in social and relational interactions between leaders and their followers (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012). Therefore, leadership can occur only if there are followers, and

without followership, there is no leadership. This means that followership is a necessary component of leader processes and thereby also an important component of leadership research (Baker, 2007; Bligh, 2011; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Kelley, 2008; Sy, 2010). Thus, the consultants and top management in this study facilitated leadership to arise through social and relational interactions in which followership was a critical factor for the change process and goal attainment in the organization.

Studies of followership involve exploring followers and following in leadership processes. Leadership processes are defined in terms of a dynamic system that involves leaders and followers who cooperate and interact in a shared context (Hollander, 1992a; Lord et al., 1999; Padilla et al., 2007; Shamir, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012).

2.3.4   Discursive approaches to leadership

A discursive approach to leadership training includes how leaders and their employees construct meaning together in an organization and in the everyday contexts within which they work (Kelly, 2008). This literature refers to how discourses are resources in terms of "language in action" that both leaders and their employees use to make claims and arguments for their own views. The literature that deals with discursive approaches to leadership focuses on the language in use, an interactional process that includes the actual everyday contexts of the leader (Fairhurst, 2007). Thus, discursive approaches focus more on how leadership arises through social processes in which established and varied discourses are negotiated in the everyday contexts of the leader (Fairhurst, 2007).

Fairhurst (2011) defines discourse at a general level and refers to how it can be divided into two broad categories, the lowercase "d" discourse and the uppercase "D" discourse. The lowercase "d" discourse refers to the study of text and language in social practice and social interplay. The uppercase "D" discourse refers to historical and cultural conditions such as the power aspect and how people are bearers of dominant, strong discourses. These perspectives are supported by Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003ab), Barge (2004), Collinson (2005), Cooren, (2007), Cunliffe (2001), Fairhurst (2007), Grint (2000, 2005), Gronn (2002), Hosking (1988), Kelly (2008), Taylor and Robichaud (2007), Tourish and Vatcha (2005), and Vine et al. (2008), who all point out the importance of including this lowercase "d" discourse and

uppercase "D" discourse in the literature on leadership. The studies above are reactions to leadership psychology, which is based on quantitative research that Fairhurst (2011, p. 495) describes as an *"overriding concern for leaders' or followers' inner motors"*.

Fairhurst (2011) points out that an inductive discourse analysis and a discursive approach to leadership move beyond language and communication and include social and cultural contexts that represent internalized resources (objects) that people draw upon in their practice of leadership (Foucault, 1972, 1995). Examples are "grand theories", such as those commercialized in the market by executive business schools and the consultant branch of the literature. As Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015) point out, executive schools that educate leaders have a need to produce clear "concepts" that are easily sold and easily bought; these are strong discourses that are also difficult to challenge culturally. An example of a strong discourse maintained both by leaders and by buyers of such services is the belief that 'grand theories can enable leaders to perform effective interventions more or less alone' (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). "Grand theories" include the traits of the leader, the leader's behavioural style, a contingency approach, transformational leadership, and post-heroic leadership (House & Aditya, 1997; Parry & Bryman, 2006). At the same time, Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson and Uhl-Bien (2011) refer to a desire for more research and for a focus on a direction in which leadership is relational, leaders to a great extent work with co-construction and shared meaning creation, and the real contexts and employees are included in these efforts. From these perspectives, systemic interventions offer a different language and approach to leadership than that of "grand theories". Capra and Luisi (2016) claim that the classical "grand theories" are so deeply based in our language and thinking that leaders more or less unconsciously create formal and rigid structures of "top-down" leadership in which language is strongly bound up in hierarchical control (Capra & Luisi, 2016).

Such "grand theories" are developed mostly in studies based on Western culture. Thus, these theories tend to avoid confronting questions of culture, race and ethnicity. The practical consequences of these questions in leadership and/or leadership training have rarely been discussed. However, to understand the concept of leadership, it is necessary for the literature to include social contexts in which leadership is understood as influenced by and connected to differences such as those related to ethnicity, race and culture (Krause, 2012).

2.3.5   Contextual considerations in leadership

As shown by Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson and Uhl-Bien (2011), few researchers have included contextual factors in research on leadership. Furthermore, these authors' findings show that where context is discussed, comments tend to be theoretical and speculative (Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson & Uhl-Bien, 2011). In the literature, context is often spoken of in terms of stress and crisis in leadership (Robert & Bradley (1988). Leadership meets unpredictability and crisis, for example, in connection to charismatic leader styles that enable leaders to facilitate leadership of stress and crises in an organization (Bryman, 1992). It appears that leaders do not completely understand or reflect on what contexts can mean for the practice of leadership in interaction with their employees. Robert and Bradley (1988) and Arnulf (2018) illustrate the importance of the insight that a leader cannot copy his or her leader style or previous success from one context to another, an issue that is little discussed in the literature and that has been little researched. As I understand these perspectives, leaders are shaped both consciously and unconsciously by the contexts in which they live and work. Contextual perspectives within leadership include the organization and the influence of competitive conditions, technology, and cultural and political conditions that are specific and local (Robert and Bradley, 1988; Arnulf, 2018). Therefore, it can be difficult for leaders to copy the previous successes of other leaders working in other contexts. This conclusion is in accordance with what Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson and Uhl-Bien (2011) point out in their criticism that the literature on contextual issues within leadership is mostly theoretical and perspectival.

Robert and Bradley (1988) recommend that context be made visible as inner and outer contexts. Outer contexts include historical, cultural, economic and political guidelines. Inner contexts include the culture of the organization, structures such as hierarchies, power, and the manner of being of the people involved. Robert and Bradley (1988) argue that this approach increases awareness of the need to move deeper into contextual frameworks, whether outer or inner. This concept is in accordance with Stacy and Mowles's (2016) finding that change processes succeed better when leaders facilitate co-creative activities in their real contexts. A central thought in systemic interventions and social constructionist approaches to leadership is that context creates a frame for communication and understanding (Stacy & Mowles, 2016).

Arnulf (2018) argues that leadership is about creating security between the present and the future and that leaders must construct leadership with their employees to a greater extent than they have in the past. Thus, leadership is about solving specific problems connected to specific contexts in which leaders and employees together create meaning, knowledge, and understanding. In Bateson's (1972) definition, context is a psychological frame of understanding. According to Bateson, shared meaning is constructed within different contexts, situations and human experiences. Thus, specific contexts, for example, that of a leader meeting, will help people to create shared understanding. Arnulf (2018) points out that leadership involves creating security between the present and the past. In this way, a context will create a meaning-bearing frame for leaders and employees in which they construct shared meaning together in specific and concrete contexts that often involve solving problems and meeting new challenges. Context offers a meaning-bearing frame to establish a shared understanding of new problems and challenges that arise in the everyday contexts of leaders (Bateson, 1972). Separating contexts from one another and knowing the current context or connection is central for the learning of leaders who have a relation to one another (Bateson, 1972).

As Alvesson and Spicer mention, there are differences between the Scandinavian countries, among others, in Sweden's more relational and consensus-based approach to leadership. In Sweden, for historical reasons, it is acceptable and indeed necessary to be able to achieve fruitful leadership because it has a long tradition of regulating the work conditions between the active parties in work life (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Furthermore, Alvesson and Spicer show that this is in contrast to Denmark's culture and history of leadership, as Danish leadership is more direct and authoritarian. For example, it is easier to fire people in Denmark. In contrast, work conditions are more regulated in Sweden and Norway (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

2.4   Learning processes

In this section, I present the literature on different perspectives on learning processes that are considered relevant in leadership training.

2.4.1 Systemic interventions and learning processes

Susan Long (2016) refers to how systemic processes concern the connections between roles in an organization in which each role influences other roles. She points out that roles in an organization refer not only to formal positions but also to how those who occupy them are part of dynamic and complex daily activity (Long, 2016). Furthermore, she notes how the roles that are played, whether in professional or private life, lie at the crux of four domains of experience: *"(1) The experience of being a person (psychological); (2) the experience of being in a system (e.g., organizations, institutions); (3) the experience of being in a context (social, economic, political, global); and (4) the experience of connectedness with a source"* (Long, 2016, p. 3). In light of these perspectives, the participants in the masterclass were influenced by these domains of experience. Long's (2016) conceptual views of the domains of experience reflect how the participants in the masterclass had to have some knowledge of how a leader is influenced by an array of connected factors and how the participants influenced their surroundings. An example is that the participants found themselves in a vulnerable situation of a purely personal nature, which influenced how they played their leader role in interaction with their co-workers.

Long (2016) claims that leaders act on behalf of larger systems, both municipal and national, and from an "outside-in" perspective, the system will demand priority in the thinking of the participants, which generates both unconscious and conscious processes (Long, 2016). Long's (2016) conceptual framework for systemic perspectives and learning is in accordance with how the masterclass was conducted. Long (2004, p. 105) identifies central questions such as *"How might we access experience and learn from it?"* The important factor here is the conditions that gave the participants in the masterclass access to individual and collective experiences that could create new learning processes. As she claims, this process involves both inner psychological impulses and outer social pressures that both enable and limit learning processes (Long, 2004). Stapley (2004) claims that learning from experience is a foundational issue for those concerned with systemic perspectives. Stapley (2004) points out that it can be helpful to attempt to define and explain what is meant by learning from experience. A useful start is the idea that learning from experience is something other than learning through more cognitive approaches. Miller (1976) refers to James (1890), who argues that there is a divide between "knowing knowledge" and "knowing about knowledge"

that can be a useful approach to explaining what is meant by experiential learning. "Knowing about knowledge" can be an explanation of superficial knowledge that involves an intellectual or cognitive approach. This knowledge is communicated through language or different symbols that can be understood in the same way (Stapley, 1996). From another perspective, "knowing knowledge" learning begins with individual experiences acquired by the individual in interaction with, for example, his or her leader colleagues or co-workers (Miller, 1976). This is different from the linguistic and cognitive approach to learning. Knowledge about human behaviour cannot be communicated as a foreign, objective unit, and it cannot be learned from a textbook on, for example, leadership. Such knowledge must be experienced, both bodily and cognitively, in its natural surroundings (Miller, 1976). As Long (2004) remarks, learning often concerns being surprised by one's own experiences in social interaction. Thus, learning is an active process and is influenced by inner psychological impulses and social pressures that limit it.

2.5 *Interventions in leadership*

This section describes different interventions from the review of the literature on leadership training.

2.5.1 Leadership interventions described in the systemic literature

Systems theory arose as a critique of reductionism, in which the goal is to generate knowledge and understanding by breaking units down to isolated parts and thereafter studying the individual elements on the basis of cause and effect (Flood, 2010). Flood (2010) further points out that systemic thinking and systemic interventions in leadership concern understanding how human systems in organizations collaborate with one another, and the conditions of cultural and contextual frames also influence cooperation and leadership in an organization. Systemic theory has its roots in general system theory developed by the biologist von Bertalanffy (1968) and the economist Boulding (1956). The central concept is that human systems have a strong self-regulating tendency to move towards a state of order and stability or adaptive homogeneity. The authors refer to how human systems can do so only if they have open boundaries (systems) that make it possible to cooperate with other human systems (von

Bertalanffy, 1968; Boulding, 1956). As Long (2016) notes, the idea of systemic thinking is that roles are connected in an organization, which is in accordance with von Bertalanffy (1968) and Boulding (1956).

As Collier and Esteban (2000) point out, hierarchical organizational forms and bureaucratic control systems can be experienced as barriers to a more flexible and adaptive organization to meet the new requirements of our time. They refer to how complex adaptive systems are more self-organizing than hierarchical organizations (Collier & Esteban, 2000). This perspective shows that leadership is not isolated in individual leaders but is a continuing and dynamic collective learning process with co-creative activities. Collier and Esteban (2000) describe systemic leadership as analogous to "lightning" that moves over the organizational landscape and touches different people's energy at different times. Systemic leadership is based on three conceptual frames:

- (1) *Influence and intention.* Systemic leadership is relational and therefore is also a political choice and process based on dependence, reciprocal influence, and continuous negotiations and co-construction of leadership (Barker, 1997). Therefore, collective cooperation is central to realizing shared ambitions. However, the risk of systemic interventions is that people have different values and different worldviews, and reciprocal cooperation involves "constructive conflict" (Kets de Vries, 1996).
- *Openness and communication*. Systemic leadership is concerned with dialogue and open communication, and the authors point out that dialogue must not be merely open and rational but also reflective, and leaders and co-workers must tolerate being challenged for their own convictions and preconceptions (Collier & Esteban, 2000). They point out that it can be difficult to practice deep openness, which can reveal vulnerability and resistance towards, for example, difficult change processes. At the same time, they refer to how systemic leadership involves acknowledgement and inclusion and that through self-organized processes, people recognize when they are heard and seen. Thus, people learn through collective learning processes instead of private success and hidden mistakes (Collier & Esteban, 2000).
- *Autonomy and responsibility.* Collier and Esteban (2000) point out that even though autonomy as a value must be viewed in connection with the needs of the collective, the individual has personal responsibility, for example, to commit him- or herself to

concrete projects or tasks that arise within systemic leadership. Thus, individuals have their own personal values and convictions and thus the power to make judgements themselves, but they also have the moral duty to respect, trust and make an attempt to understand their colleagues in the current leadership. As I understand these three perspectives, systemic leadership is about moving away from hierarchical organizational forms and bureaucratic control systems to a system in which leaders emphasize co-creative activities, shared meaning and shared learning processes and in which different human systems both influence and are influenced. These perspectives are also supported by Gergen (1985), who is clear that dialogue and co-creative learning processes are central to systemic approaches and social constructionism.

Within systemic and social constructionist approaches, reflexivity is a central theme, especially because systemic interventions include dialogue and co-creative learning processes. The leader's ability to create reflexivity is important in terms of experience, for example, in the ways in which the experiences of the leaders in the masterclass contributed to goal attainment. As Gjerde (2018) points out, reflexivity is a concept taken from postmodern theoreticians that concerns seeing connections between thoughts and the structural conditions that arise in a specific context. This concept is associated with power structures and resources, etc., that Sinclair (2007) claims both make possible and limit the actions of people. For example, a reflexive attitude in leadership means taking a step back and reflecting on both thoughts and attitudes such as leader behaviour in an organization. My experience is that critical reflection on leader development is often excluded from both practice and the literature on leadership, especially with regard to how hierarchical power influences leader development in general. This is also my experience in considering systemic approaches. The literature that promotes critical thinking includes, among others, studies by Foucault (1977) and the social theorist Bourdieu (1999), whose studies of leadership focus a critical gaze on leadership research and are known for challenging established truths and dominant societal discourses.

These perspectives are recognizable in my own practice as a leadership consultant; for example, in terms of social constructionism, I have found that abstract ideas and theories are not grounded in the real lives of people. For example, many theories lack a footing within the notion of individual differences, which can make it difficult to speak about leader behaviour

grounded in personality. This is in agreement with Burr (2015), who directs a critical gaze towards social constructionism and calls for social constructionism that includes human psychology. Burr (2015) is critical of a social constructionism that does not include individual differences, as phenomena such as subjectivity, embodied experience, self-esteem, personal desires and values to a great extent influence learning and development (Burr, 2015). Alvesson and Spicer (2011) direct a critical gaze towards knowledge about leadership in general. They claim that the literature on leadership contains many abstract categories that often have a weak connection to the real lives of leaders (real contexts) and that this situation influences our understanding of how leadership arises in daily life.

Rost (1991, p. 124) points out that "systemic leadership is about working for the community's best and building fellowship". This is in accordance with a systemic-theoretical perspective: "In a systemic-theoretical perspective, leadership is not placed in the leader, but the leader is part of leadership processes at different levels" (Rønning, 2012 p. 77). Thus, it will be difficult for leaders to achieve shared meaning creation and co-creation when contextual frameworks are not included in leadership and leadership training.

Systemic leadership views leadership as beginning with the identification of the leadership needs at the organizational level, where the system is part of larger contexts in which "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Miller & Rice, 1967). A "system" refers to a set of activities that have boundaries that divide them from other systems in the environment; this approach enables observation of different systems and enables cooperation and the generation of new constructions of knowledge across systems (Miller & Rice, 1967). New opinions can arise about patterns, behaviour and knowledge within and across different systems (Long, 2016). The perspectives of Miller and Rice (1967) are recognizable in my own work as a management consultant. At the same time, I find that systemic practice can be demanding, as there are often strict lines within an organization, such as reporting routines, that make collaboration difficult.

Systemic approaches to leadership focus on development through viewing aspects of larger contexts as more than merely parts of a system. This is in accordance with how the masterclass facilitated new leadership discourses, from individualistic leadership to an approach that to a greater extent consisted of co-construction with employees. Flood (2010)

claims that systemic approaches construct meaning in natural systems. That is, systemic approaches lay a foundation for how human experiences and constructions will be influenced and will influence phenomena in the human system. Systemic approaches can be especially powerful because leaders and employees together construct meaning in their natural systems. Flood (2010) claims that this will resonate strongly with the experiences of humans who live their own lives in a "systemic world". The participants in the masterclass programme encountered systemic interventions. The main reason was that top management wanted to change the leadership approach in the organization from a "top-down" style, in which isolated professions in the organization worked for municipal citizens, to a style in which leadership is used to produce holistic and interdisciplinary work with citizens. Rost (1991, p. 124) points out that *"systemic leadership is about working for the community's best and building fellowship".* This is in accordance with a systemic-theoretical perspective: *"In a systemic-theoretical perspective, leadership is not placed in the leader, but the leader is part of leadership processes at different levels"* (Rønning, 2012 p. 77). Thus, it will be difficult to achieve shared meaning creation and co-creation in leadership when contextual frameworks are not included in leadership and leadership training.

Oliver (2004), referring to Bateson (1972), writes, "At the heart of a systemic orientation to practice is an interest in patterns of connection (Bateson, 1972) and, by implication, patterns of disconnection" (p. 127). Von Foerster describes cybernetics as the starting point in the concepts of "first-order cybernetics", where the one observing stands outside the observed system, and a "second-order cybernetics", where the one observing is included in the total arc of what is observed (Von Foerster, 1981; Hoffmann, 1987). In recent times, a criticism of "first-order thinking" has developed that Stacy and Mowles (2016) describe as "hard system thinking'' (p. 205). They point out that this criticism has developed into 'second-order thinking'. The transfer to second-order cybernetics occurred with the first contributions of Bateson (1972) and the Milano School (Selvini-Palazzoli, Cecchin & Prata, 1978), von Foerster (1981), von Glasersfeld (1984), and Maturana & Varela (1987). For the participants in the masterclass, a second-order cybernetics had the effect of enabling a leader to view herself as part of the observing system. The leader encounters her organization through her personal and theoretical lenses in the same way that her colleagues do. Therefore, the

challenge is for the leader to explore how she uses her concepts, terms and experiences in interaction with her colleagues in the organization or in the system (Haslebo & Nielsen 2011).

David Campbell was a renowned consultant and clinical psychologist at the Tavistock Clinic who conducted organizational work. He was a pioneer in connecting systemic thinking to organizations and leadership. Campbell (2000) refers to how systemic ideas are a way to increase awareness of our relational ties, both professional and personal. He suggests that systemic ideas provide leaders and practitioners with useful tools that make it easier to understand how people are connected (Campbell, 2000). For the leader, second-order cybernetics have the consequence that the leader will view himself as part of the system. The leader encounters his organization through his personal and theoretical lenses in the same way that his colleagues do (Campbell, 2000). Campbell draws on his experiences working with organizations that he views as systems. When consultants and leaders work to effect a "second-order" change, the leader does not take her assessments to a team but instead views herself as part of the system and creates shared meaning with the employees (Campbell, 2000).

Lynn Hoffman's (1993) perspectives have challenged and changed the practical focus within systemic thinking. This constitutes a shift from a hierarchical to a cooperative style that she describes as a radical step. This is in accordance with how the participants in the masterclass encountered a change from "top-down" leadership to a cooperative focus. Hoffman (1993, p. 4) points out, *"The shift from a hierarchical to a collaborative style ...is a radical step. It calls into question the top-down structuring of this quasi-medical field called mental health and flies in the face of centuries of traditional western practice. To challenge these elements is to challenge the whole citadel"*. In our time, there is greater acknowledgement that leaders must manage complexity and that they should include the conceptual frames used, for example, in leader training (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). This acknowledgement is based on the notion that an organization is influenced by all who participate in it. Especially within the areas of organizational learning and change, a systemic perspective on leader capacities is invaluable (Morland, 2008).

2.5.2 Adaptive leadership as intervention

Adaptive leadership is defined by Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009, p.14) as the "*practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive*". Adaptive leadership is about tackling uncertainty, complexity and new challenges that are difficult to predict in change processes. They point out that adaptive leadership lays the foundation of the organization for dynamic networks and environments in which uncertainty dominates to ensure greater goal attainment. They further note that adaptive leadership navigates in four dimensions: (1) business environments; (2) an empathic and relational approach; (3) learning processes through continual reflection at the levels of the individual and the system; and (4) creation of win-win solutions (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). They also remark that no universal checklists for adaptive leadership exist. Adaptive leadership is about daring to experiment and to try and fail during the change process. The four dimensions described above can be a guide for implementing adaptive leadership (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009).

Northouse (2015) mentions that theories of adaptive leadership also have clear connections to social constructionism in that adaptive leadership does not focus on how leadership concerns individual leader characteristics but rather is a complex interaction that arises between leaders and their followers in different contexts. Thus, the process perspective in which approaches to leadership are viewed as practice is important to adaptive leadership and social constructionism, where leadership arises in the practices of the leader and consists of solving specific problems. Adaptive leadership focuses on how knowledge is produced in co-creative activities (Northouse, 2015). This is in agreement with social constructionism, in which knowledge is produced in relational collaborative activities (Gergen, 2015). Heifetz et al. (2009) refer to how adaptive leadership has clear links to human evolution and DNA. Adaptive behaviour can be traced back in human history to DNA from past generations influencing survival abilities in the present. Successful human adaptive behaviour has three characteristics: (1) evolutionarily, over time people retain the DNA that is important for survival; (2) throughout evolution, DNA is changed by evolution, and what does not serve the current needs of the species is reorganized; and (3) evolution changes DNA, which gives the (human) species the opportunity to find new ways to live in more challenging environments. In light of this, they point out that successful adaptations and adaptability make it possible for living systems to retain what is best from the past and take it with them into the future

(Heifetz et al.2009). Thus, adaptive leadership is mobilizing people to identify knowledge that is essential and to preserve it to identify how leaders and employees can use previous wisdom and knowledge in the best possible way (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). However, to adopt adaptive leadership, it is necessary to have an experimental mindset and learn to improvise.

Learning can be painful. Human innovation within an organization can lead, for example, to leaders and employees feeling incompetent or irrelevant. It is human nature to dislike being "reorganized". Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) point out that leaders must be able to analyse and recognize these defence mechanisms in a change process, both at the level of the individual and at the systemic level. These perspectives are in accordance with Uhl-Bien (2006), who refer to the broad acknowledgement in the literature that leadership must address increasing complexity and that there is a movement from command-and-control leadership, exercised through authority, to a more adaptive and distributed form of leadership, in which leaders and employees together construct solutions, thereby increasing the collective learning process in an organization.

Adaptive leadership has clear connections to systemic theory and systemic interventions in leadership (Long, 2016; Campbell, 2000; Gergen, 2015). Adaptive leadership is a leader practice that facilitates managing concrete change processes and complexity, learning from the past, and taking the best into the future (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). Adaptive leadership refers to how it can be difficult for an individual leader to follow all the changes and complexity that arise in human systems and dynamics, both internal and in society in general. Leaders must apply new strategies and learning processes to resolve the challenges that will eventually arise (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). The same authors point out that a common trap or mistake is focusing on adaptive leadership in confronting technical problems or issues. They refer to how technical problems can be both complex and critical in an organization and draw an analogy to a heart operation, which is performed by experts with great authority within their fields, but the client may nonetheless ignore their advice and refuse to change his or her behaviour afterwards (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). They further point out that adaptive changes can occur only through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties.

Another aspect of adaptive leadership that Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) point to is the distinction between authority and leadership; they claim that adaptive leadership is sharply separate from the formal role and authority of the leader, although the leader may well have a high position with great authority. As I understand this concept, authority pacifies people or creates "obedient" and non-loyal co-workers in a concrete reorganization process. At the same time, my experience is that when leaders are not experienced as authoritative, they can create uncertainty in their surroundings because the "authority concept" is so thoroughly established in our culture and habitual thinking that both leaders and employees more or less unconsciously accept it. It is easy to blame the leader when things go wrong; however, I claim that this is unconscious behaviour in leaders and employees because of too little reflexivity around power and authority in general.

Authority does not necessarily have anything to do with leadership, as leadership is a riskier activity that concerns challenging people without causing them to lose their foothold and without allowing the changes to become too threatening. Authority, power and influence are important tools, but, as others have said, they do not define leadership (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). Adaptive leadership cannot satisfy the authoritative expectations of the leader; rather, it concerns challenging the traditional expectations inherent in the language around the concept of "authority". Adaptive leadership concerns challenging people in an organization without pushing or going too far and causing anxiety and unnecessary resistance (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009). Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky refer to how the leader's authority, when adaptive leadership is practised, can become a "revolving door". The leader can be hit in the face by it because authority is so deeply established in both leadership culture and language. As I understand this, the leader must use her authority to distribute leadership, authority and power across the organization to navigate tough change processes. Adaptive leadership also has clear connections to systemic interventions. As Morland (2008) and Flood (2010) point out, systemic interventions in leadership can be powerful approaches, especially because this theory emphasizes leaders and employees constructing meaning together in their natural systems. Adaptive leadership, as I understand it, is a functional and practically oriented leadership that includes cultural and contextual premises and takes on real practical challenges that arise in demanding change processes. Adaptive leadership also has clear connections to how the masterclass was conducted. The masterclass programme was an

experiment and an adaptive learning process in which all the participants had a significant space to construct new learning processes and establish co-creative leadership to ensure goal attainment.

At the same time, I find that paradoxes can emerge between systemic approaches and theories of adaptive leadership. Theories of systemic approaches are concerned with contextual factors and shared meaning creation. Northouse (2015) is critical of adaptive leadership because it involves difficult processes and demands "soft" knowledge to the same extent that it challenges other forms of leadership. Northouse (2015) directs a critical gaze towards the literature on adaptive leadership. He notes that little empirical research has been done to test the claims of adaptive leadership, though these theories have existed for some time. He claims that these theories are based mostly on ideas and preconditions rather than research (Northouse, 2015). He further claims that theories of adaptive leadership are broad and abstract, and he refers specifically to how adaptive leadership is closely connected to followership and leader behaviour that focuses on giving employees more responsibility and work but often lacks conceptual clarity (Northouse, 2015). Another criticism is that adaptive leadership does not embrace moral dimensions. For example, theories of adaptive leadership claim that people grow through change, but the theory of adaptive leadership is not clear about specific concrete values, such as personal and professional growth. In practice, I recognize paradoxes in that when leaders delegate or distribute more power to employees, this is often a "revolving door", and the leader is often blamed, especially by top management, when things go wrong. I claim that leaders are often unconscious of themes of power in general and that this unconsciousness is inherent in the language and the culture. It takes more than a seminar to change these habits.

2.6 *Perspectives on leadership training*

This section reviews the literature relating to system-psychodynamic and social constructionist approaches and constructivism as relevant perspectives for leadership training.

2.6.1 System-psychodynamic perspectives on leadership training

System-psychodynamic perspectives were developed by and had their roots in the Group Relation Training conferences at the Tavistock Institute in London over a period of 60 years (Brunner, Nutkevitch & Sher, 2006; Miller, 1993). System-psychodynamic theory is often referred to as the study of unconscious patterns of relational interplay in organizations (Adams & Diamond, 1999). Central to system-psychodynamic theory is how unconscious processes influence leadership, power, and authority and the relational interplay in an organization. Furthermore, the theory considers how unconscious processes influence, among other things, conflicts and boundaries in an organization and how leader and employee cooperation has a starting point in unconscious processes (Colman & Bexton, 1975; Colman & Geller, 1985; Cytrynbaum & Noumair, 2004). System-psychodynamic perspectives focus on an understanding of deeper and more hidden behaviour in human systems. The primary focus is to raise the awareness of participants in order to understand the deeper and hidden organizational behaviour that arises in social interplay (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Miller & Rice, 1976).

Bell and Huffington (2008) refer to three principles that describe system-psychodynamic approaches to leadership with three conceptual frames for thinking and research. (1) They refer to psychodynamic perspectives that focus on unconscious and conscious processes and point out that these perspectives are important for reflections on individual behaviour and development in general to grasp the underlying behaviour in an organization. (2) The second principle they refer to, following Bion (1961), is group dynamics and group relations, in which people influence and are influenced. (3) The third principle is systemic thinking that includes system approaches with reference to Miller and Rice (1967) and Obholzer and Roberts (1994). Systemic perspectives have been developed by practitioners within family therapy, such as Campbell, Draper and Huffington (1991), building on the ideas of Bateson (Bateson, 1972).

These overlapping conceptual approaches refer to frameworks that Bell and Huffington (2008) describe as systemic-psychodynamic approaches, often also referred to as the "Tavistock approach". They point out that in our time, leaders encounter greater complexity, and as a consequence, organizations must adopt more flexible and adaptive leadership. They

refer to Kouzes and Posner and Pearsce and Conger (2005), who call this change distributed leadership. Distributed leadership arises at all levels of the organization, breaking with command-and-control and vertical leadership. These perspectives are in accordance with how the consultants and top management designed the leader masterclass programme, in which the participants themselves had the opportunity to construct the new requirements of leadership to meet the challenges of the concrete change process. A more individual-oriented approach would have de-authorized the opportunity for the leaders to negotiate and construct their own leadership in relation to the new leadership requirements and resulted in less collective learning among the participants. As Huffington, Armstrong, Halton, Hoyle and Pooley (2004) point out, "command-and-control" leadership can lead to a human system that generates new defence mechanisms and resistance to changes. Therefore, it is associated with the danger of losing some control over how leaders take up their leader roles.

Central within the development of the systemic-psychodynamic approach was a movement from a "psychology of one" to a greater acknowledgement of two-person psychology. Obholzer (1996) refers to the concept of "containing" as particularly important for leaders in an organization. This is a term that Bion (1957) describes as having a psychological function in terms of how leaders must contain, carry and receive psychological states, for example, from an employee. Bion connects "containment" to mother-infant interaction, in which the mother uses her skills to regulate the needs of the child, such as hunger, stress and contact. When the child is not itself aware of its needs, the mother's ability to regulate them is crucial for development (Bion, 1975). In this way, the mother is a container. Obholzer (1996) refers to this as a central theory for leaders in order to understand that an organization contains concerns about the ability of the leader to regulate internal states in her co-workers in a process in which the co-workers themselves develop the ability to reflect and think about their own inner states (Obholzer, 1996). He remarks that if a leader is not capable of containing a situation, for example, with a co-worker in conflict, the leader may blame the co-worker as an individual, and the situation may worsen because the co-worker is not always aware of her own reaction patterns in interactions with others. Following Bion (1962), this can be explained by considering that the co-worker is not able to understand his or her own reaction patterns but is instead dependent on (the mother's) the leader's ability to make these reactions

understandable (Bion, 1962). Bion's (1962) perspectives illustrate "unconscious" processes in people and the need to be mirrored and regulated in social interaction.

Obholzer's (1996) framework suggests that the leader's capacity to recognize and contain feelings and the need for self-regulation in social interplay is the most important quality and skill of a leader. He refers to this as contributing to security and creativity in an organization, where the leader *"therefore needs to have the capacity to recognize that others, perhaps many others, are 'better' than him or her, and to continue to create the climate for such quality to flourish"* (Obholzer, 1996, p. 55). In light of the work of Obholzer (1996), regulating both one's own and others' emotions and feelings is a central leader skill in the creation of secure co-workers. Bell and Huffington (2008) point out that leaders who are in touch with themselves emotionally and cognitively will recognize 'anxieties' in an organization to a greater extent than leaders who are not. They suggest that when leaders know their own emotions and feelings, they will be able to respond to the emotions and feelings of others in an organization.

My experience as a management consultant is that "soft" knowledge is important to create security and lucrative activity, as people are more likely to seek security and grow in secure environments. My experience is that leaders who dare to be warm and empathic in encounters with their employees achieve more. I find that this is in accordance with the perspective of Bell and Huffington (2008). "Soft" knowledge stands in stark contrast to the dominant discourses and literature, which take mainly cognitive and instrumental approaches. Such theories are limited to individual leaders owing to the power and authority that are associated with a formal leader role (Morland, 2012). At the same time, Morland (2012) refers to how several researchers find value in organizations as complex systems and thereby acknowledge systemic thinking and approaches to research and to how leadership training to a great extent includes the leader's role in real, everyday contexts. In particular, the literature on systemic leadership offers important perspectives concerning change processes and learning processes (Morland, 2012). Collier and Esteban (2000) argue that it is impossible for an individualistic leader to bear the knowledge of employees and then influence them and make wise decisions. They argue that conventional leadership practised with hierarchical power and control, especially where unpredictability and shifting contexts are dominant, will fail. I support the perspective of Collier and Esteban (2000) in that it is currently difficult for the individual

leader to lead through traditional hierarchical power because workplaces are increasingly dynamic and complex and demand greater cooperation, and conceptual frameworks determine leadership more than was the case in previous eras.

2.6.2 Social constructionist and constructivist perspectives on leadership training

Social constructionism comes from different traditions and has its roots in sociology, particularly George Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism, in which people construct identities through interaction and social interplay. Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann (1966) have often been cited in the literature on social constructionism. They point out that through social processes, public interchanges will be perceived as "true" and converted to 'objective facts' in a public debate, for example, a debate in the public space about what leader qualities are best or the best research within leadership generally (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Social constructionist perspectives on leadership training represent a shift from individual characteristics and "top-down" leadership. People construct meaning together, and knowledge production occurs in social interaction (Gergen, Gergen & Ness, 2017).

Fruggeri (1998) claims that systemic approaches to a great extent have been influenced by both social constructionists and constructivists. A constructivist perspective on leadership training focuses on the individual experiences, values and opinions of leaders, more precisely, *"(1) their individual systems of representation; (2) the meaning they attribute to behavior and events according to their representational systems; and (3) the type of responses that they intend to have from others"* (Fruggeri, 1998, p.4). Central contributors to constructivist perspectives are Von Foerster (1981), von Glaserfeld (1984), and Maturana and Varela (1980), who have all contributed to systemic theory by including cognitive processes in which individuals construct their own images of the reality of the world.

Fruggeri (1998) suggests that constructivist and constructionist perspectives are normally described as two poles within systemic theory and practice, which contributes to polarization, even though she views these two perspectives as interwoven and part of a complex picture (Fruggeri, 1998, p. 6). Therefore, the participants in the masterclass were *"co-authors of a co-ordination of action and meaning which gives shape to a social interaction through which individual processes are generated"*. These perspectives are in agreement with Petriglieri and

Petriglieri (2015), who stress the importance of the personal life of the leader and what she or he brings to the leader role in terms of personal experiences: questions such as *"Who am I for myself?"* and *"Who am I for others?"* (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2015 p. 1). In my fieldwork observations, I noticed that the consultants emphasized the collective, and co-creative activities took precedence in relation to the individual. At the same time, I observed that the consultants did not facilitate deeper reflections of a more personal nature. Including the perspectives of, for example, Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015) about the personal will create a stronger fit between the individual and the collective.

2.7   *Complexity theory*

Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007) suggest that complexity theories of leadership support a paradigm shift in the literature on leadership towards the direction in which leadership is a dynamic, adaptive and complex activity that integrates different interests and contexts. As described by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007, p. 298):

> *"Leadership models of the last century have been the product of a top-down, bureaucratic paradigm. These models are eminently effective for an economy premised on physical production but are not well suited for a more knowledge-oriented economy".*

They suggest that the literature on complexity theory and systemic thinking provides more fruitful and adaptive ways to understand leadership. Studies of systemic thinking and complexity theories of leadership have many similarities but also some differences. The similarities are closely connected to leadership as relational and contextual. Both perspectives criticize the strong discourse that takes for granted that leadership means developing something within the leader. As Rønning (2013) describes, at the same time, the literature on both systemic thinking and complexity theories of leadership shows that leadership is more concerned with developing a practice between leaders and employees in specific everyday contexts.

Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007) point out that the contextual frameworks of complexity theory include three leadership roles: *(1) adaptive leadership, (2) administrative leadership, and (3) enabling leadership.* These three roles reflect a dynamic relationship between the bureaucratic, administrative function of the organization and the emergent informal dynamics of complex adaptive systems (CASs). Complexity theory of leadership has several central premises. First, complexity theory shows that leader contexts are currently dynamic and constitute a living system that is not necessarily stable and predictable. Leaders work in a market that is continuously changing, both politically and culturally. Second, complexity theory distinguishes between management and leadership, where leadership is a more dynamic adaptive process in which the leader and the employees continually develop processes together. This is what Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) call adaptive leadership. The third premise refers to the practical differences between leadership and management. Management is constituted through a classical hierarchical perspective in which hierarchical power is prominent, while leadership is based on a more relational and systemic approach. The work of Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) shows that a great deal of research is currently based on outdated theories that are not sufficiently adaptive to the new demands of leadership. They conclude by referring to Rost (1991), who points out that studies of leadership are often about the content of good leadership. Rost (1991) argues that there is a need for new knowledge and understanding of what leadership is in a post-industrial school of leadership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) attempt to show that organizations and leadership concern dynamic complex interactivity in which uncertainty dominates more than stability in organizations.

Complexity theory research is primarily connected to organizations and leadership in the present. Arnulf (2018) points out that this is important research for our time. At the same time, he is critical of much of the research on leadership, as it is almost impossible to predict the future (Arnulf, 2018). In particular, the language of models and theories already contains references to preconditions for the future that can alienate more than create meaning for leaders who, for example, participate in leadership training (Arnulf, 2018). He further suggests that much of the research that is intended to define good leadership is conducted by a small minority of the world's population, namely, *"people who best can be described as 'WEIRD': white, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic"* (Arnulf, 2018, p. 91).

Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) point out that practising leadership based on complexity theories changes the dialogue in leadership. This represents a change from command-and-control to more adaptive leadership, which makes it possible for leaders and employees to construct their work together. This is in accordance with Campbell's (2000) thoughts about and experiences with systemic leadership: *"Systemic thinking is a way to make sense of the relatedness of everything around us"* (Campbell, 2000, p. 7). Complexity theory focuses on the local context in which leaders and co-workers construct understanding through social interaction, which expands the learning environment in an organization. This is how the masterclass was generally conducted. As Arnulf (2018) also points out, leadership is always concerned with the local context. He further claims that complexity theory and systemic theory provide "*a sort of insight into why the concept of "leadership" tore itself away from "steering" and 'power"* (Arnulf, 2018, p. 114).

Tourish (2019) claims that there is a risk that complexity theories may be perceived as a "buzzword", making leadership language abstract and difficult to understand from a practical standpoint. However, Tourish (2019) indicates that there is an increased recognition that the literature on complexity theories is relevant to leadership.

2.8   *Embodied leadership in practice*

In this study, the literature and theories of embodiment are relevant because a considerable portion of the leadership training in the masterclass used physical exercises and music to create bodily experiences and reflections during the training so that the participants could learn more about themselves as leaders. Even though I claim that the use of embodiment can contribute to a leader learning more about herself, especially in terms of her own emotions and feelings, I recognize that leaders can view this concept as somewhat "remote" and unnatural in relation to leadership and learning. The participants in the masterclass had to engage in music and physical movements as professional musicians choreographed and connected different leader contexts in the masterclass. Skårderud (2016) comments that in the Norwegian language, there is no good translation for the English word "embodiment". He writes that a Norwegian translation of "embodiment" would be "kroppsliggjøring" (literally,

"body-doing/making"), and he points out that this does not perhaps sound as correct but is much better than the word "body". Even though embodiment also belongs to the individualistic approach, there is greater acknowledgement in the systemic approach that body and mind are connected. Shotter (2008) claims that embodied experiences, bodily emotions and feelings influence cooperation between people and that this concept has greater recognition in the current systemic literature. After examining the history of social constructionism, Shotter changed his focus in 2008 from that of his 1993 book *Conversational realities*, in which he focused primarily on the rhetoric of language use, to ideas about relational embodiment. Shotter (2008) illustrates this by referring to how the traditional way of speaking about social constructionism excludes the spontaneous and expressive responses of our lived bodies, which can be the "background glue" that holds us together and to other people; we are not just individualistic but also relational. As Shotter (2008) points out, the focus on bodily experiences prepares the participants for future collaborations in which interaction is more humane and respectful through increased understanding of their own and others' reaction patterns in social interaction.

Sinclair (2005) points out that leadership is primarily a bodily and physical activity. In addition, Ladkin (2012) points out that from the end of the 1990s to the present, there has been a shift within the literature on leadership from cognitive approaches to leadership to acknowledgement of the emotional (Bono & Ilies, 2006), the affective (Naidoo, Kohari, Lord & DuBois, 2010) and the aesthetic (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer, 2007; Ladkin, 2008). These perspectives show that the newer literature acknowledges a shift from behavioural processes via cognitive processes to bodily processes in leadership (Ladkin, 2012). Score (2012) claims that relational and emotional processes are necessary to understand change processes. He points out that relational and emotional processes that are often implicit and unconscious are important in the development of leadership, not just explicit cognitive linguistic processes, which dominate the leadership literature. The conclusions of the literature mentioned above refer to how "the body" should generally be examined in leadership and leadership training.

Skårderud (2012) refers to "embodiment" as *body-conscious practices* that concern the understanding of being a human being in encounters with others. He points out that awareness of body-conscious practices will increase human awareness and understanding of how the body influences leader behaviour and the interaction between, for example, leaders and

employees. This will again influence how leaders and employees speak about the theme "embodiment" (Skårderud, 2012). At the same time, my experience is that "embodiment" quickly appears strange and slightly scary can easily be waved away with a joke. This is in accordance with Sinclair's (2005) arguments when she illustrates several taboo areas and reasons that "the body" is not addressed in leadership and leadership training. Sinclair poses critical questions about why the body has been ignored. She claims that much of the reason is that leaders are presented in the literature as "above other men" (Sinclair, 2005). She presents an example from an Australian context: "There are body-saturated rituals in which executives invite big clients to attend tennis and football matches. Here they sit in air-conditioned and elevated corporate "boxes" drinking champagne while watching "lower" bodies slug it out" (Sinclair, 2005, p. 289).

Both consultants and leaders recruited into organizations are assessed according to their physical appearance, and masculinity is generally associated with effectiveness (Sinclair, 2005). From such a perspective, it is difficult for individual leaders to emphasize the importance of bodily experiences in daily leadership. This can quickly lead to leaders and employees not feeling secure enough to be open to physical experiences. Skårderud (2012) also asks where the body goes in the therapy room. This says much, as professional therapists should be well trained in dialogue and be able to create security for bodily experiences in the therapy room. It does not make it any easier for leaders to bring the body into leadership.

Trondalen (2016) suggests that in relation to music, a relational shift has occurred. She describes the "relational turn", a shift to a two-person (dialogical model) for human development in which a relational perspective includes different traditions within a paradigm instead of a specific single theory of human development. Trondalen (2016, p. 7) points out that "during the 1970s and 1980s the empirical evidence for development made a quantum leap, thanks to research on the infant's ability to engage in reciprocity and contact". In this period, new technology was used in detailed observations and analysis at the micro-level (Stern, 1971; Trevarthen, 1980). This enabled them researchers to observe the interaction of, for example, mother and child and discover that the child was an active part of the social interaction (Beebe, Knoblauch, Rustin, & Sorter, 2005). It was apparent that "the infant was clearly an active co-creator of its personal and the other's intrapersonal and interpersonal worlds" (Trondalen, 2016, p. 8). In light of this, human development is understandable as a

dialogical construction process in which bodily experiences are described as central. The focus on bodily experiences prepares leaders for future cooperation in which interactions become more humane through increased understanding of their own relational patterns of social interaction.

2.9   Hierarchy and power in leadership

Theory about hierarchy and power is connected to the actions of people and to the behaviour of individuals as a result of, for example, state directives (Engelstad, 2005). Max Weber is known for his perspectives on this phenomenon. The central point of Weber's sociology is the actions of the individual. Furthermore, he points out that if one is to understand the cultural and historical conditions of a society, it is necessary to explore the behaviour of individuals and how they act. Weber points out that people have available power through the resources that are continuously present (Weber, 1922). Another theoretician is the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He directs attention to cultural conditions and language and claims that by directing attention to language, one can uncover power that lies "invisible" in language (Bourdieu, 1979). As I understand this, it relates to, for example, the dominant language on leadership that is taken for granted in society. As Bourdieu (1979) points out, when certain classes exercise power over others, this can lead to people silently accepting the dominant language without the use of symbolic power. I recognize this pattern in the leadership branch in which I work. I have often felt that I quietly accept and pass on dominant societal discourses, such as the use of psychological profiles, in leadership training.

Alvesson and Spicer (2011) point out that Danish leadership is quite direct, and authoritarian compared with what is typical in Norway and Sweden, for example. This stands in sharp contrast to social constructionist and systemic thinking. Campbell (2012) writes that a person can strive for others to view the world as he or she does, but that person may be challenged too much regarding his or her own viewpoint. This can contribute to uncertainty and vulnerability in interactions with others. Therefore, there is always a risk that both subtle and open power struggles will influence relations (Selvini Palazzoli, Cecchin & Prata, 1978). Through their formal roles, leaders can say something different than a co-worker, as the

leader has power and authority. Nevertheless, Jeffrey Pfeffer (2010) points out that it is not enough to do a good job; rather, one must be able to understand the "power game" of influence and social power. As Lai observes, social power is "*the opportunity to influence what others think, feel and do, on the job or otherwise*" (Lai, 2014 p. 13). In light of this, power is based in the hierarchy so that leaders can influence their employees in order to achieve their own results (Lai, 2014).

Gordan (2007) claims that the mainstream literature on leadership and leadership training concerns power as an unproblematic theme. He claims that this leads to questions around power being dealt with through purely superficial reflections in the literature (Gordan, 2007). He says that in a critical gaze towards power in leadership, this mainstream literature should be challenged because it neglects how historical and cultural factors can shape a leader's practice of power (Gordon, 2007). Lai refers to the French postmodernist Foucault (1977, 1982), who maintains that *"power is everywhere"* and *"occurs everywhere", "that is to say, the diffuse and undefinable that is present in all situations and relations"* (Lai, 2014, p. 16). Foucault's work (1977, 1982) has also become known for the idea that power is not necessarily connected to individuals or to the organization of the leader but occurs in social interaction because people are bearers of socio-cultural traditions in the form of dominant and guiding discourses in society (Foucault, 1977, 1982). Nilsson (2008) refers to Foucault and to "biopower"; Foucault connects disciplinary power to biopower, which consists of an array of administrative techniques, and to institutions that have the goal of "*analyzing, controlling, regulating and defining our lives*" (Nilsson, 2009, p. 114). Nilsson refers to how biopower concerns human bodies, with people's bodies being bearers of delivered regulations and thereby a starting point for biological processes at the individual level, such as *"conception, birth, death, healing states, longevity, etc."* (Nilsson, 2009, p. 114).

Miller and Stiver (1997), inspired by Foucault (1973), describe power as "power over" and "power with". From a leader perspective, "power over" relates to how a leader in an organization can force his employees to perform work tasks. "Power with" from a leader perspective is related to how leaders and employees can together administer power and share power in a cooperative work climate (Miller & Stiver, 1997). This is in keeping with Dunlap, Goldman and Kreisberg, who all direct a critical gaze towards the link between leadership and power. They develop similar models of "power through" and "power with" instead of "power

over". They suggest that "power through" and "power with" should be understood as a more democratic form of leadership in which leaders and employees cooperate in solving problems (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Kreisberg, 1992). At the same time, Gordon (2011) refers to how these perspectives try to address leadership and power from new perspectives that contain a more democratic work environment through, for example, "power with" and "power through". Gordon (2011) points out that hierarchical power will be present as a consequence of historical and cultural conditions. Gordon (2011) further claims that if there is no further research on relational power, one cannot be certain that "power with" and "power through" will have a fruitful effect on leadership and leadership training (Gordon, 2011). Another perspective on the lack of interest in researching power and leadership would lead to traditional hierarchical power between leadership and employees becoming normalized and accepted as leader behaviour, which would contribute to leaders constituting themselves through hierarchical power (Gordon, 2011). In my view, this belongs to first-order cybernetics. I agree with Gordon (2011), who says that the literature that deals with power and leadership refers to a vertical power in which the leader is privileged over other people. This stands in sharp contrast to systemic leadership training. At the same time, it is relevant to illustrate theories of power structures in relation to Danish leadership, which can involve quite authoritarian and direct leadership styles (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Jenkins, 2016).

2.10 Summary of the literature

It appears that it is more important for academics to write about theories, and that there is a demand for this type of scholarship, than to research leadership that includes leaders' real everyday contexts. Whether this is related to the demand for productivity through recognized journals or academia is mere speculation, but it is clear that academia defines theories narrowly and that the actual contexts of the leader in daily leadership work are lacking. This has the effect of a lack of practical relevance in relation to the daily actions of the leader in the literature and theory. Theories of leadership and the concept of "leadership" are abstract concepts that have been placed above what actually happens when leaders "lead" and change is instigated – the daily actions of the leader.

Central to this criticism is that much of the literature considers leadership something that can be measured (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). This criticism is in accordance with Alvesson and Sveningsson (2013), who call for in-depth studies and qualitative research on the context of the leader. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2013) suggest that such a research design will contribute to a better understanding of how leadership arises. As Wood and Petriglieri (2005) point out, "*approaching leadership as a reified object means researchers are blinded by the dynamic processes of actually doing leadership*" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012, p. 371). They claim that the consequence is that the literature does not include studies of how local meaning is constructed in leadership by different actors, such as leaders and employees. At the same time, Alvesson and Spicer (2012) point out that there is a need to explore how leaders and employees themselves construct meaning in leadership. The literature needs to shift to a view of leadership as socially constructed and to include actors in leadership (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). This will require more emphasis on qualitative approaches such as ethnographic field studies, in-depth interviews and linguistic analyses that are sensitive to the exploration of the multiple aspects of leadership (Bryman, 2004; Fairhurst, 2007). This is in accordance with the literature on leadership that has a starting point in social constructionism (Fairhurst, 2008; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010 & Uhl-Bien, 2006).

The literature described in this study shows that there is a need to research and develop more knowledge about the implications of actual everyday contexts (both personal and professional) for how leadership is practised. Leadership and leadership training to a great extent are situated within the positivistic paradigm. As Avolio et al. (2009) observe, *"The quantitative strategies for studying leadership have dominated the literature over the past 100 years"* (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 442). At the same time, this literature review shows that there is a need for more studies with a standpoint in the qualitative paradigm. This is supported by Bryman, Collinson and Grint (2011). They point out that the lack of inclusion of the everyday contexts of leaders in qualitative research and studies is a general weakness of the literature on leadership. As Taylor and Ford (2017) point out, this criticism is about creating a deeper understanding, as leadership concerns complex social processes that are always integrated into the different contexts of leaders. Another perspective of which I am aware is that of cultural differences within Scandinavia regarding questions of leadership and leader training in general. As Alvesson and Spicer (2011) point out, Danish leaders can be authoritarian and

direct in their style of leadership. For example, firing people is easier in Denmark, as it has a grounding in the law. In contrast, work conditions are more regulated in Sweden and Norway (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). This can limit the value of co-construction in, for example, leader training, but can also be an opportunity. Danish culture also favours the ideal of equality, which can be an interesting paradox in itself.

2.11   *Learning from and reflections about the literature review*

These perspectives have given me new knowledge and the opportunity to reflect on how strongly the directives created by dominant discourses generally affect the field of leadership and leadership training. The literature contains several strong references that place leader characteristics "inside" the leader, disconnected from actual contexts. I relate this to a cultural "blind spot". These strong cultural directives lead to certain aspects being taken for granted and make resistance and challenge difficult, especially as leaders are educated and trained on a positivistic basis. This is in accordance with my experiences as a leadership consultant and is an important reason for generally wanting to explore and develop more knowledge within systemic approaches to leadership, which are more inclusive of the actual contexts of leaders. Through the literature review, I have reflected on how systemic perspectives can be relevant approaches to leadership. In retrospect, I have learned much through taking an ethnographic view of the cultural and contextual issues, which often have a strong practice-related influence on leaders. The leaders in the masterclass are "bearers" of state and municipal discourses, both political and economic, and of citizens' needs for individually based services. This requires organizations to move away from providing individualistic and "top-down" services towards collaborative and inter-disciplinary services.

It is tempting to separate (polarize) systemic practice from other forms of practice, such as the instrumental discourse or the individual. In my view and experience with the literature, such separation would be wrong. Leaders are responsible through their formal leader roles, for example, in relation to budgeting, planning and strategizing, and this calls for an individual focus. I find this focus to be part of the systemic approaches that include both a "first-order cybernetics" (linearity) and a "second-order cybernetics" that focuses on a co-construction

approach in which the leader is a part of a self-regulating system. A systemic approach, therefore, seems more adaptive than a traditional "command-and-control" approach.

The literature and research on leadership have contributed to my change of views about theories of leadership. At the same time, this review has made me humbler, reflexive, practice-oriented and critical. As Arnulf (2018) points out, theories should make it easier to be practical. Even though I have devoted much time to the literature and research on leadership, it is still difficult to be precise in terms of definitions. Long (2016) refers to how the idea of systemic thinking within leadership means that roles are connected in an organization in which leaders influence and are influenced by their surroundings. The literature search has also contributed to my personal reflection on whether my research questions can be answered fully. As my study is rooted in social constructionism and the systemic approach, it does not have the goal of identifying theories of leadership as objective truth. Instead, I am concerned with the relational processes between leaders and co-workers who co-create shared meaning within their everyday contexts and how, in the context of a Danish municipality and its services, these processes contribute to leadership theory and practice.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the aim of this research, the research questions, the epistemological and ontological stance, the research design, the data collection, descriptions of the chosen methods of data analysis, steps in the data analysis, reflexivity, research ethics and reliability and validity.

3.1 *Research aims*

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how participants in a systemic leadership programme experience their learning process. I have been concerned with descriptions of practice that have meaning in the daily experience of the participants in this study, how the participants developed co-creative leadership through co-creative activities, and how they constructed their learning processes in encounters with systemic leader training. Another central goal for the study was to contribute to improving future systemic leadership programmes.

3.1.1 Research questions

Based on the purposes and objectives of this study, I address the following research questions:

1. How do leaders in a systemic leadership programme construct new meaning for leadership?
2. How does the systemic leadership programme affect the co-creation of leadership practice? How does the systemic leadership programme affect the participants' personal discourses about their leadership?

3.2 *Ontological and epistemological stance of this study*

This study is positioned within a social constructionist, constructivist and systemic epistemology. From this position, discourse psychology was chosen as the methodology for

this study (Potter, 2010). In the continuum, ontology, epistemology, and different epistemological positions will be addressed.

3.2.1   Ontology and epistemology

Ontological concerns refer to what we believe is the "real" world and what we think the "there" is, for example, of clinical problems (Dallos & Vetere, 2005). An example of an ontological orientation is the view of problems as neurological faults in people; in this view, they are considered real, biochemical events and activities (Dallos & Vetere, 2005). Being a leader is manifold and complex. The complexity can hardly be safeguarded based on epistemological singularism.

It is important to address the rationale of our beliefs. This is named epistemology. Epistemology concerns knowledge as "how we know what we know" or how we "think about how we think" (Willig, 2008). This approach gives researchers and practitioners an important opportunity to reflect on their work (Willig, 2008). Thus, it is an invitation to position ourselves as researchers and practitioners by thinking about and reflecting on practice and theories in ways that are consistent with our choices of the starting point, methods, design and methodological framework of our research (Willig, 2008). Therefore, this influences how researchers and practitioners view how knowledge is created and has consequences for how they practice and how they understand their practice (Willig, 2008).

3.2.2   Epistemological positions for this research

With a starting point in social constructionist epistemology, knowledge is viewed as being constructed in social interplay with people, environments, and contextual, cultural and historical frames (McNamee, 2004). Knowledge is not "out there" to be "discovered" but rather is constructed between people in the language used within socio-historical-cultural contexts. Burr (2015) argues that social constructionist approaches are critical of what is perceived as objective knowledge, as this is often presented in modernist foundational attitudes. Furthermore, Burr (2015) points out that a social constructionist will argue that knowledge is always determined by cultural and historical contexts. However, Karterud (2017) claims that knowledge of personal characteristics also needs to be included as relevant knowledge. This could be knowledge of patterns of actions, thoughts and feelings that can be

said to be stable across contextual situations. These ideas are closely connected to constructivism (Maturana & Varela, 1980). Social constructionism and constructivism share their focus on meaning-making processes (McNamee, 2004). However, constructivism has an extended focus on other significant aspects of life, such as the internal cognitive processes of individuals (Lorås, 2016). Even if constructivist ideas can be argued to be based on a linear understanding, I argue that research (and leadership training) is improved by recognizing that both individualistic characteristics and shared meaning-making processes are adhered to as complementary processes. I argue that including several bases of knowledge (such as social constructivism and constructivism) is a practical example of "being" systemic, as systemic ideas acknowledge a multifaceted understanding (Lorås & Sundelin, 2018).

3.3   *Research design*

I now present the design of this research. First, I explain qualitative research, which is the chosen method for this research. Then, I present discourse psychology and a flowchart of the sampling process, and thereafter, I present the recruitment strategies.

3.3.1   Qualitative Research

This is a qualitative research project. I chose a qualitative approach because it serves the goal of developing knowledge of how participants in a systemic leadership programme experience their learning process. Qualitative research tends to concentrate on meaning or how people create meaning in social interaction (Willig, 2013). Willig (2013) argues that qualitative researchers have the main goal of understanding "how it is" to experience special conditions (for example, living with chronic illness or being unemployed), for example, how people cope with specific life situations (e.g., how leaders balance their private lives and relations with colleagues and their professional management roles). She claims that qualitative research has more to do with human experience than with the identification of cause-and-effect relationships (Willig (2013). This is in accordance with Yin (2016), who considers that qualitative research includes "(1) *Studies of meaning in people's lives (Participants) in actual life situations,* (2) *Qualitative research represents and brings forth views and perspectives of the study participants,* (3) *Qualitative research includes the actual contextual conditions in*

the study, (4) *Qualitative research provides insight into existing and new concepts that can explain social behaviour, thinking and social interaction in the study, and* (5) *Qualitative research recognizes several relevant sources of information that can inform the study, such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews"* (Yin, 2016, p. 9).

3.3.2 Discourse psychology – the chosen qualitative research methodology

Discourse psychology directs attention towards action in the use of language and is especially suited for exploring communication processes in different social contexts (Øfsti, 2010; Potter, 2012), for example, in organizations (Jørgensen & Philips, 2010). The focus of the discourse psychology analysis (DA) in this research project is how participants in the masterclass take advantage of and use discursive resources and the effects in social interplay (Potter, 2012; Willig 2008; Øfsti, 2010). Øfsti (2008) points out that DA draws its theoretical perspectives primarily from theories of discourse, such as Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and from perspectives that arise from discourse psychology, such as those developed by Edwards and Potter (1992),Burman & Parker (1993), Gill (1996) and Wetherell (2001).

Discourse psychology is concerned with, among other things, psychological phenomena such as memory and identity (Willig, 2013). Discourse psychology is also in accordance with criticism of cognitivism and directs attention towards discursive actions instead of cognitive processes (Potter, 2012). The analytical focus of the discourse psychology in this study is on how participants in the masterclass use resources and justify their language and behaviour in their leadership. The language used about, for example, management discloses constructions of knowledge in terms of the moral and existential aspects of life and in turn has practical implications for the participants in the masterclass. Øfsti (2008) also points out that discourse psychology can be used to explore psychological phenomena as discourses and that identity and belief arise as a consequence of what people *do* instead of what people *are*. Furthermore, she points out that discourse psychology analysis is focused on how people use the *discursive resources and strategies available to them, as well as the effects* of these resources in opposition to a more cognitive approach in which people's thoughts, feelings and actions are described as inner schemas (Øfsti, 2008).

Within discourse analysis, it is important to ask, "What does this discourse do?" Discourse analysis can therefore be described as a mode of reading text as an action orientation (What does the text do?) instead of merely reading for meaning (what does the text say?) (Willig, 2013). As discourse analysis demands that I as the researcher orient myself towards the text as a form of social action, this analysis will also involve a dynamic element where I as the researcher moving backward and forward in the text and use fieldwork observations as a contextual framework of understanding for the analytical work (Willig, 2013). I have read and tried to increase my knowledge through performing discourse analysis, and I have read and increased my knowledge through the literature and theories about discourse and discourse analysis. This is not a particular method but rather a continually dynamic way to work through a discourse analysis (Potter, 2012).

3.4   *Description of the chosen method of data analysis*

In this section, I present the chosen method, discourse psychology analysis (DA). I chose discourse psychology analysis because I wanted to explore how the participants construct new meanings of leadership and how they experience their learning process. I also present relevant theoretical principles of DA.

3.4.1   Discourse psychology analysis

The focus of discourse psychology analysis (DA) in this research project is how the participants in the masterclass take advantage of and use discursive resources and the effects in social interplay (Potter, 2012; Willig 2008; Øfsti, 2010).

Potter and Hepburn (2003) point out that discourse analysis is primarily a practice that must be learned through the work of analysis and that by starting with the research questions, the researcher can too quickly fixate on the study research questions, which can result in the exclusion of important data from the collected material. This reflects a change from traditional research in social science, in which a question such as "How does X influence Y?" becomes the question "How is X done?" (Potter & Hepburn, 2003), or "How does evidence-

based research about leadership influence the leader development field?" becomes "What do leaders do with evidence-based research about management?"

Potter and Wiggins (2007) point out that discourses are constructed and constructive. Discourses are constructed because they consist of linguistic building blocks, categories and repertoires, which are used when people present their version of the world. Discourses are also constructive in light of how people's versions of the world are built up as stable through language and the stable actions that language leads to (Potter & Wiggins, 2007). One example is leadership as an instrumental approach to management and manager training, with concepts and methods filling the space between the consultants and participants in leadership training. Examples of a more instrumental approach to leadership training are the "fashionable terms" used by the leader development industry and business schools that train leaders. In this, there lies the power to define what is important within leadership at any given time. Such discourses can be difficult for different agents to withstand.

3.4.2 Discourse analysis as action-oriented

Austin (1962) claims that some sentences or utterances are important not because they describe things but because of what they do. Potter and Wetherell (1987) give the following examples from Austin. For example, the sentence "I declare war on the Philippines" cannot be a description of a view of the world, but the language has a practical immediate consequence. This is called *"language as performative or action-oriented"* (Burr, 2015, p. 67). Another example from my data that shows that *"language as performative or action-oriented"* is the use of the municipal test centre, where the participants received instructions for training on different leader cases; thus, the language of both the consultants and top managers had clear requirements for action.

Therefore, discourses direct attention to language as a social practice and to the actions that lie in the text. In the research project, for example, in the interviews with the participants, I was concerned with the contradictions between what they spoke about and my field observations, such as their bodily experiences in the leadership training. Another example is that the participants reflected on how the masterclass was very top-down driven and that much power lay behind the new requirements of leadership. This was discussed to a lesser

extent in the course of the masterclass. By definition, leaders can say something other than what a co-worker can say because a leader has more power and authority in her working role with regard to making decisions about resources, use of municipal services and conditions of employment. In the analysis, I was concerned with the subject positions that the participants constituted for themselves. This is closely connected with positioning theory.

3.4.3 Positioning theory

According to Davies and Harré (1990), positioning theory concerns people's use of language in social interaction to negotiate or justify their own positions for themselves and others. Burr (1995, p. 141) explains this in the following way: Discourses provide us with conceptual repertoires with which we can represent ourselves and others. They provide us with ways of describing a person. Each discourse provides a limited number of "slots" for people. These are the subject positions that are available for people to occupy when they draw on this discourse. Every discourse has within it a number of subject positions. The participants in the masterclass came from a more instrumental and rational leadership approach in which they were used to taking the position of the "objective observer", understood as rationalistic causality. Historically, the participants took a position outside the system to control or at least attempt to influence the organization and its people. Through fieldwork observations and interviews of the participants, it became apparent that the leaders historically were used to producing tasks for and assigning them to their followers. Stacy (2016) points out that in the present day, it is important to take paradoxes in leadership seriously, such as predictability and unpredictability and relational power that both makes possible and limits individuals who influence groups and groups that influence the individual. Stacy (2016) points out that these paradoxes are closely connected and cannot be separated. I find it relevant to describe positional theory in this study because top management introduced new relational structures that enabled participants in the masterclass to take on new positions in an organization with complex responsive processes. This is also in accordance with systemic approaches to management that are concerned with including contexts and co-constructing leadership in an organization (Campbell, 2010).

Wetherell and Edley (1999) claim that subject positions are attained through individual negotiations in which people also show shifting identities when they defend their utterances.

Burr (2015) explains that our identity is constructed from the different discourses available to us and on which we draw in our communication with other people. Furthermore, our identity is woven together with subtle threads such as age, class, income, gender, and sexuality, and all these components make up our identities (Burr, 2015). Many different subject positions are actualized and vary in different contextual situations in which they are defended and resisted by other individuals (Davies & Harré, 1999).

Davies and Harré (1990) note that positioning can be understood as a reciprocal process of constitution in which people are offered different positions and thereby have different subjective ways of taking positions in social interaction. These perspectives and the understanding of positioning are in accordance with social constructionist theory and are found, among other places, in Danish studies such as Søndergaard (1996), Staunæs (2004), Højgård and Søndergaard (2003), and Krøjer (2003). Foucault (1982) refers to power and subjectivity and points out that people become subjects of the dominant social discourses and become subservient to power. Foucault points out that there is a cultural connection between the forces of society that through different institutions, in language and in worldview make claims for their positions. Society produces concepts that are internalized over time and become implicit in the language to create meaning; dominant discourses, therefore, are part of forming our views and attitudes as well as the positions we take throughout our lives (Foucault, 1982). According to Foucault (1982), power processes are found in broad social and cultural structures such as the medical discourse and "diagnosis" and syndrome discourses. Such discourses emerge as strong discourses within the pharmaceutical industry. Foucault (1982) further refers to how, in order to act in relation to the practice of power that is a social reality, people must act in the space of opportunity to take their subjective positions.

3.4.4 Experiences with reading text as performative and action-oriented

The purpose of discourse analysis is (among other things) to investigate and explore constructions around communication and social interaction (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Burck, 2005). Central to this is the analysis of how discourse is constructed, how these practices become part of a world view and how discourse creates the world (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Burck, 2005). The above example in which a participant says, *It is an extremely top-steered process*, represents a discourse that is performative and action-oriented. An explicit

construction from top management is that new requirements of leadership are not negotiable but are absolute requirements, which again gives clear directions for leader behaviour. Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Jørgensen and Phillips (2010) claim that because text and speech are action-oriented within the context of the masterclass, it is probable that participants will use discourses as resources but that this use will vary in social contexts and situations. One must not expect a participant in the masterclass to be consistent as a leader. Examples of different utterances and narratives in my interviews of the participants in the masterclass are presented in the chapter on findings.

As a researcher, I have spent time learning to read and view language as something more than mere text and meaning as well as what it signals in terms of the desired action orientation in the participants in the masterclass. Through supervision and reading articles about discourse analysis, I became more aware and began to see larger connections between observational fieldwork and discourse analysis. An example from the interviews is the participants themselves describing how, through the masterclass, they went from "silo" leadership to an approach based to a great extent on co-creative leadership, in which leaders co-construct leadership in the organization. My fieldwork observations also indicated how the consultants in the masterclass facilitated this co-creation. This made it possible for me to find connections between different constructions and observations.

Barge and Fairhurst (2008) point out that it can be fruitful to analyse discourses by thinking about them in terms of small-"d" discourses and big-"D" discourses. He argues that by a small-"d" discourse, he means analysing text and speech in social interaction connected to local cultural contexts in which people negotiate different achievements. A small-"d" discourse is a medium for social interaction in which the language in use is central for discourse analysis and for me as the researcher (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In contrast, the concept of the big-"D" discourse refers more to macro-systems and establishes power and knowledge relations that constitute people's behaviours (Foucault, 1972, 1980).

3.5   Data collection through semi-structured interviews and fieldwork observations

To generate data, I used two qualitative approaches, namely, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldwork observations. The data collection was conducted over 12 months, which was the same period in which the masterclass was conducted. The masterclass began on 23 September 2014 and concluded with an "examination" on 22 May 2015.

3.5.1   Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of my wish to conduct flexible interviews to follow up on the important themes that had emerged. The interviews were therefore closely linked to a systemic conversation (Burck, 2005). This contributed to a flexibility that to a great extent captured the interests and experiences of the participants in relation to the different questions. At the same time, it gave space for taking up themes that could be relevant to the research questions of the study.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe semi-structured interviews as a conversation with a structure and a goal, where the structure is connected to the role assignment of the participant and interviewer. The semi-structured interview has a structure that focuses on specific themes and provides space for more thorough exploration of topics during the conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In carrying out semi-structured interviews, it is important to reflect on the meaning and experience of the interview for both the researcher and participants and to be aware that the language used does not necessarily directly reflect thoughts and feelings from the lifeworld of the participants (Willig 2008). Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out that when the researcher completes a qualitative interview and subsequently uses discourse analysis, it is important for the interviewer to be an active participant and to be observant of the variations and contradictions in the answers (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Throughout the interviews and the analysis, I explored how the participants used language to set up specific activities and behaviours in interaction with me as interviewer. I was also concerned with how the participants represented Danish culture and the contextual frameworks within which they worked. Thus, I was attentive to variations, contradictions and patterns in the answers. I tried to maintain a friendly and respectful dialogue while attempting to stimulate and challenge the participants at different times in the interview, precisely with the aim of being attentive to

contradictions and inconsistencies. This raises ethical questions, as the two parties are not equal. The participants in the masterclass knew that I had worked for a long time in leadership training, which could mean that I was perceived as normative and desiring correct answers about what good management is. Therefore, it was necessary to reflect on the interviews and try to create security within each one, not least by reminding the participants about confidentiality (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The semi-structured interviews were formed and assessed in relation to the research questions and discussed with the participants' supervisors. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) point out that in a qualitative research interview, knowledge is produced socially, that is, through an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. This way of thinking about and producing knowledge is an important concept within systemic theory and practice, as is, for example, the not-knowing position (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Øfsti, 2008). The order of the questions could therefore vary, as I wanted to capture the atmosphere and what arose spontaneously in the interviews. I also attempted to follow the direction and energy of the research participants. Sometimes, I posed questions in English, as both I and the participants wanted to expand individual themes with more words. I perceived this as a possible barrier, as Danish and Norwegian words can have different cultural meanings. At the same time, I found that this enriched the interview because we stopped and reflected together on the actual themes of the interview. I used a semi-structured interview template (Appendix 2) for all the interviews. However, I changed the template during all three rounds of interviews based on my ethnographic field observations and themes from earlier interviews. The interviews therefore had much in common with a systemic conversation (Burck, 2005; Lorås, 2016). For example, I found that in the course of the interview process, I became more secure and braver in "being present" with the participants. This had clear similarities to my work as both a systemic therapist and consultant. If the participants shared information that was apparently peripheral to the topic of the interview but was still viewed as relevant, I chose to "go outside" the interview guide for a brief period.

3.5.2 Conduction of the semi-structured interviews

I interviewed six participants at leader levels 2 and 3 approximately one month after the start of the masterclass. Thereafter, I interviewed four of the same participants five months later

(two of the participants were on long-term sick leave). Then, I interviewed six participants at leader level 4, as they were participants in the masterclass at the municipal test centre. The final interviews were conducted approximately one month after the completion of the masterclass. The rationale for interviewing participants at leader level 4 was that this leader level was part of the training at the municipal test centre where I conducted my fieldwork observations and, in this regard, could shed light on the consequences of leadership in the organization. Another important rationale for interviewing participants at level 4 was that they had an operational function in the different districts and therefore were closest to the employees who delivered services to the citizens of the municipality. Each interview lasted for approximately 90 minutes. The interviews were completed at the offices of the respective participants, and during the first interview, we set the date for the second interview.

3.5.3   Data collection through ethnographic fieldwork

Ethnographic fieldwork observations were chosen because they provide access to the contexts of the research participants. Fangen (2004) points out that ethnographic fieldwork observations allow the researcher to move closer to the reality of the participants and to obtain personal knowledge of them. This enabled me to be more sensitive to the less obvious aspects of the research.

Ethnographic fieldwork observations enable the researcher to gain direct access to the culture being studied. Participant observation is the method for data collection through participating in the lives of the participants to observe their situations and how they behave in them (Fangen, 2004). According to Silverman (1985), all research that involves observation of events and actions in natural situations and acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between theory and the empirical world can be called ethnography. The ethnographic fieldwork observations supplemented the qualitative interviews and contributed to a more nuanced picture of the masterclass (Timmermans & Tavory, 2007; Lorås, 2016).

The ethnographic fieldwork observations involved observations of the participants in the plenary hall and in the municipal test centre (see 1.3 Research context). Fieldwork observations can contribute important knowledge; for example, they can add nuances to the questions in the follow-up interviews with the participants (Barge & Fairhurst, 2008). I

therefore began to conduct fieldwork observations with the participants that were followed by interviews with the same participants. The fieldwork observation notes gave me greater insight into the contextual frameworks in which the masterclass was conducted and how both macro- and micro-discourses influenced the leadership training and the participants. The fieldwork observations also enabled me to understand the theoretical standpoints of the leaders and the leadership practices that were dominant both before and during the masterclass. A combination of participant observation and interviews enabled me to more reflectively analyse meaning and action and to see how dominant discourses invite, maintain and limit the frameworks of the masterclass (Barge & Fairhurst, 2008). This was important, as the goal of the research project was a qualitative exploration of how the participants in a systemic intervention in leadership training experience their learning process. The fieldwork observations for the study consisted of participant observation in a total of five days of fieldwork: two days of fieldwork at the first leader gathering in the masterclass, two days of fieldwork at the test centre at the mid-point of the masterclass, and one day of fieldwork on the final day for the participants in the masterclass during which the case teams presented what they had learned and how this had influenced leadership in the organization.

In the fieldwork observations, I chose case studies. This meant focusing on specific aspects of the training. For example, in the municipal test centre, I chose to focus on a team that trained in conducting a leadership meeting. A case study in participant observation can be used when the goal is to understand phenomena and practices that one knows little about (Yin, 2016). The case study can be a fruitful approach in fieldwork observations when the researcher has little control over how meaning and learning develop through a setting such as the masterclass, especially when the focus is on cooperation between people, in this case, systemic interventions and learning processes (Yin, 2016). As Fangen (2004, p. 187) points out, *"case studies are appropriate when one wishes to capture the perspectives of the actors or clarify theories and concepts".* To define and limit the focus of my research, I chose cases in both the plenary hall and the test centre that might provide relevant information for the research questions.

Yin (2016) refers to Ellis and Bochner (2000), who recommend that journal notes from fieldwork observations include real narratives of the participants, either individuals or a specific team. They point out that these notes should be descriptive and free of academic

jargon and abstract theory. I was therefore conscious of describing what I saw and heard rather than presenting interpretations. Nevertheless, inspired by Yin (2016), who claims that it is important to be flexible, I allowed myself a certain artistic freedom in creating images and thought maps, using colours, etc. to later remember some of the thoughts and reflections that arose in my fieldwork observations. I experienced this practice as fruitful in terms of converting my thoughts and descriptions to follow-up interview questions and later fieldwork observations in the masterclass.

3.5.4   Data recording and transcriptions

All 16 interviews were recorded on a Sony digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. I decided that the best way to ensure the quality of the transcriptions was to use a professional Danish transcriber. This gave me more time to read and re-read the transcriptions. A benefit of someone else transcribing was that I had a certain distance from and holistic perspective on the text. Next, all the interviews were analysed using discourse psychology-analytic approaches (Potter, 2012). The transcription system used in the interview extracts was a simpler version of the model used by (Potter, 1997):

"T" indicated me as the interviewer.

"P" indicated the participant in the interview.

(…) was used to show when small portions of text were deleted because they did not contribute to the meaning

Laughter was indicated by ("laughter")

Overlapping was indicated by ("overlap")

Pauses were indicated by ("pause")

I transcribed the ethnographic fieldwork observations notes myself, going through the fieldwork written observations and fieldnotes used in both contextual frameworks of the study and describing and showing examples from the masterclass leadership training. Some Danish words in the text have been translated into English. This is because some Danish words can have a different cultural meaning than the Norwegian or English versions. For example, the Danish words "tynd suppe", which can be translated to the English "thin soup", were used to

describe several of the participants' opinion that the theoretical foundation of the masterclass, as represented by the consultancy firm, especially at the start of the leadership training, were not based on sufficiently "heavy" theories, tools or methods. Additionally, my use of the phrase "tynd is" (which is translated to the English "we are at sea"), is based on several participants' descriptions of feeling insecure and vulnerable. These expressions – "we're at sea" – from some participants also signalled that the consultants "pushed" them too far in the training, which can again mean that the participants became confused through the use of embodied experiences in the masterclass – an issue that I illustrate and discuss in the results and discussion chapters.

3.5.5   Research Process flowchart

The process of data collection and analysis was a combination of ethnographic fieldwork observations and interviews. The process was as follows:

1. Recruitment of the consultancy firm.
2. Recruitment of the participants.
3. Information meeting with all participants and top management about the doctoral project.
4. Two-day fieldwork observations at the start of the masterclass.
5. Development of a semi-structured interview schedule following the initial collection of ethnographic data.
6. Completion of the first interview round – six interviews (transcription directly following the interviews).
7. Two-day fieldwork observations of leadership training in the municipal test centre.
8. Completion of interview round 2 with four members of the original interview round 1 group – four interviews.
9. One-day fieldwork observation during which the masterclass completed the examination.
10. Completion of the last interview with six new participants from level 4 who participated at the test centre with the participants in the masterclass.

3.5.6 Recruitment of the consultancy firm and participants

The choice of sampling strategy was one of the first methodological challenges in this research project. I knew early in the process that I wanted to interview participants, especially in the health sector, who were to complete leadership training using systemic approaches. One of the main reasons for the choice of the consultancy firm and the specific organization was that they were to conduct leadership training based on a concrete change process.

In Norway, systemic approaches to leadership training are less common than in other countries, and it is difficult to find the appropriate consultancy firms. After conversations with one of my supervisors, we therefore decided to look for a consultancy firm in Denmark that had experience with systemic leadership training. After a further conversation with my supervisor, I decided on a particular consultancy firm in Denmark. I had not known about the company before, but after closer examination, it became clear that its approach was systemic and social constructionist. With this starting point, I contacted the owner of the consultancy firm, and we had an introductory informal conversation about my research project. In this conversation, the owner informed me that the company was scheduled to conduct a leadership training course for a large municipality in Denmark that was facing a change and reorganization process. After further discussions with my supervisor, I decided that this was a useful framework through which to explore and illustrate the research questions. The reason I chose this research context was that the reorganization demanded change from the municipal participants and employees in which structures needed to be shifted from silo leadership to one in which leaders and employees co-constructed leadership to a greater extent. The move was to be from separate (professional work) directed at the municipality's citizens to team and cross-disciplinary efforts in relation to the five courses/services delivered by the organization. This organizational change demanded a significant change in leadership. Early in the process, the chief of the consultancy firm that conducted the masterclass noted that the firm's foundation for the leadership training was systemic and relational approaches and that this had been agreed upon with the top management that had ordered the leadership training.

Twenty-five leaders participated in the systemic leadership programme. I recruited a strategic sample that consisted of 12 of the 25 participants in a general meeting in which all the participants in the masterclass were present. All received an informational letter about the

study (Appendix 1) in which all the formal documents were distributed at the same time. The formal documents included the project description, information about the confidentiality of the data, a disclaimer regarding voluntary participation and an explanation of the opportunity to withdraw at any time during the research process as well as suggestions for an interview guide (Appendix 2). Malterud (2011) points out that selected participants must have the qualities, qualifications and experiences that make it possible for them to illustrate and answer the research questions. All the recruited participants were experienced leaders who found themselves in a process of professional change and adaptation and were therefore suitable for my research aims.

The leadership training programme was tailored to the Elderly and Disabled Office in a large Danish municipality. The Elderly and Disabled Office had five leader levels. Leader level 1 was the administrative director of the organization, and leader level 2 was composed of six leaders who had their own regions in the municipality. Leader level 3 was composed of the rehabilitation leaders. Leader level 4 was composed of leaders of care centres and care groups. Leader level 5 was composed of proxies for leader level 4. Leaders at levels 1, 2 and 3 were all members of the organizational leader group, which consisted of 25 leaders. It was this leader group that completed the masterclass leadership training.

The strategic sample consisted of 12 leaders at leader levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. Leaders at levels 1, 2 and 3 were members of the leader group in the organization and were participants in the whole masterclass. Leaders at level 4 participated only in the test centre, as they were not members of the leader group and had operational functions in different districts within the municipality.

3.5.7 Details of the participants

A total of twelve experienced managers participated in my study. Their professional backgrounds varied within the health care professions: they were nurses, care assistants, psychiatric nurses, and social workers as well as leaders with business qualifications from the private sector. All the participants had between 10 and 30 years of experience as leaders from the different health professions. There were six men and six women. All the participants were

members of the leader group in the organization. I have chosen not to describe them in detail to ensure confidentiality. The ages of the participants ranged from 38 to 60 years.

1. Nora, a nurse, 40 years old: 10 years of experience in the health sector
2. Pål, a nurse, 43 years old: 12 years of experience in the health sector
3. Kari, a psychiatric nurse, 45 years old: 15 years of experience in the health sector
4. Hans, a social worker, 50 years old: 17 years of experience in the health sector
5. Ingunn, a manager, 55 years old: 20 years of experience in the health sector
6. Kåre, a psychiatric nurse, 48 years old: 20 years of experience in the health sector
7. Marit, a nurse, 60 years old: 30 years of experience in the health sector
8. Petter, educated in business, 40 years old: 5 years of experience in the health sector
9. Nora, a care assistant, 45 years old: 15 years of experience in the health sector
10. Roar, a psychiatric nurse, 53 years old: 20 years of experience in the health sector
11. Marianne, a nurse, 47 years old: 15 years of experience in the health sector
12. Hans, a care assistant, 38 years old: 12 years of experience in the health sector

In presenting the results of the study, none of the quotations are connected directly to specific informants on grounds of anonymity. They are therefore referred to as *participants*.

3.6   Steps in the data analysis

In this section, I present how I conducted the data analysis, step by step. Discourse psychology analysis was chosen as the analytic tool for both the interviews and fieldwork observation notes.

3.6.1   Step 1: Selection of extracts from the transcripts

My main goal was to explore which discourses and discursive practices the participants used as resources in their management and how they constructed meaning as participants in the masterclass.

The selection of extracts was guided by the research questions. Examples of what triggered my curiosity include comments from the participants such as calling the leadership training

"thin soup", especially at the start of the training. These comments were a result of many participants drawing upon "instrumental/positivistic" discourse about leadership, a discourse that concerns developing something in the leader based on "ready-made concepts that describe what a good leader is" more than it concerns developing leadership practice in social interaction (Rønning, 2013). The extracts from the transcriptions demonstrate how the discourse analysis directed attention to the actions in the language terms.

In the early process of analysis, I read and re-read the transcripts, as actual discourses can often be recognized by reading texts closely and using an inductive approach (Burck, 2005). This process made me aware of how knowledge about management was socially, culturally and historically constructed within the context of the masterclass. To identify the discourses, I used an inductive approach in which I first looked for codes with connections and then looked at the results of that scrutiny. This is in accordance with Burck (2005), who recommends the selection of text fragments that have potential meaning for the purpose and the research questions as the first step in a discourse analysis.

Step 2: Identified codes from the extracts

When the selection and decision-making process regarding the extracts was completed, I used a format with three main components that guided me through the analysis. The three main components are in agreement with Burck (2005), Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Jørgensen and Phillips (2010) and are as follows: (1) The researcher explores the text in relation to how the participants use language to construct their ideas, information and world views; (2) The researcher looks for variations and inconsistencies in participants' opinions related to their constructions and assumptions; and (3) The researcher attempts to make visible the implications and consequences of particular subject positions to explore what the discourse does or achieves both explicitly and implicitly. I tried to make the analysis dynamic and through this to demonstrate how the discourses were produced, constructed, stabilized or destabilized through the analysis and the available discourses that the masterclass facilitated (see figs 1, 2 & 3).

Step 3: Search for competing contra-discourses

Throughout an exploration of the interview transcripts and fieldwork observations notes, I searched for competing contra-discourses that were introduced by the consultancy firm and new discourses introduced by the municipality top leadership. Throughout the exploration process, I became aware of what I considered to be an individualistic discourse about leadership that changed during the course. This later led to a shared co-construction of how the leadership should be conducted, to what extent it should be "instrumental", etc. This process facilitated a shift from the "individualistic" discourse to a discourse of leadership characterized by shared social interaction, meaning systemic and social constructionist perspectives, which represented a strong contra-discourse.

I attempted to be inclusive when I searched for the discourses that the participants drew upon – which macro-discourses and contextual frameworks functioned as constitutive for the municipality and therefore for the masterclass. Burck (2005) points out that an important step in discourse analysis is the selection of "fragments" of the text that have meaning for the research question. This is exemplified in figs 1, 2, and 3 (see below). Thus, I used the research questions actively when I read and re-read the transcriptions and attempted to be curious rather than conclusive. I found this approach to be fruitful when I began to code the transcriptions. During coding, I placed text fragments into categories that were still open for other themes. The period of coding extended over one year. During this period, I observed more connections in the transcripts and fieldwork observation notes and used the theoretical principles that discourses are action-oriented and arise in concrete, situationally determined contexts (Burck, 2005; Potter, 2005; Potter, 2003b; Potter & Edwards, 2001; Potter & Wiggins, 2007).

In the introductory coding of the data analysis, I attempted to include discourse psychology within social constructionism, which reflects theories about people as whole persons with bodies. Burr (2015) points out that social constructionist research that does not address, for example, individual differences in the subject such as desire, personal choice, the body and self-concept will be inadequate. I have attempted to include these reflections in my study.

Step 4: Presenting an overview of dominant discourses

Figs 1, 2 and 3 provide an overview of the transcriptions that led to three main discourses: (1) The discourse of embodied leadership training, (2) The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges, and (3) The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership. The illustration below shows the initial process that led to the core discourses:

Fig 1. Discourse number 1: The discourse of embodied leadership training

1. Selection of extracts from the transcripts	2. Identification of codes from the extracts	3. Search for competing contra-discourses	4. Dominant discourses
I: What do you think about music and dance in leader training? What do you think, and what does it contribute to? C: Yes, well I think it was good. I mean…also it's a way…some place or other. We enter of course a group like that. Some know each other, and some don't know each other. Some have a bit more status than others etc. And it's just like as though there we go into an area where we're all a bit unfamiliar, so it's like	Some participants had higher status than others. Meeting in an informal place and participating in dance and music is unfamiliar but helpful for balancing. the uneven hierarchy of power.	Code no. 239: Music and dance helped co-create the relation between the participants despite their different status levels.	The discourse of embodied leadership training.

… it's such an informal place to meet in some way or another.			

Fig 2. Discourse number 2: The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges

1. Selection of extracts from the transcripts	2. Identification of codes from the extracts	3. Search for competing contra-discourses	4. Dominant discourses
I: What do you notice in this reorganization? What is that is different going forward in relation to leadership? A: Well, it's different that I'm much closer to it. I: You're closer to it? Why are you closer to it? A: Well, it's partly, of course, part of my job, my functional description,	The notion of collaboration influenced the leader in his creation of new relations.	Code no. 60: From individualistic leadership to collaboration and a co-constructed relation.	The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges.

and I think I can't do leadership if they don't follow my lead.			

Fig 3. Discourse number 3: The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership

1. Selection of extracts from the transcripts	2. Identification of codes from the extracts	3. Search for competing contra-discourses	4. Dominant discourses
I: But you have talked about power. Z: No, we haven't dealt with that…also, now I'm sitting and thinking … I don't think so … that we have … no, we haven't talked about the concept of power. … We've of course talked a lot about this with experience and expectation. How we use our experience without it limiting us in relation to … to going on to the next and that sort of thing.	The concept of power has not been discussed explicitly, but the topic of experience and limitations is considered a synonym of power.	Code no. 106: Power was not explicitly discussed.	The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership.

3.6.2 Example from the fieldwork observation that led to the merging of the discourse of embodied leadership training

On one occasion, a professional musician conducted an exercise involving all the participants in a plenary hall. This was a group exercise in which each participant had the task of directing the rest of the leader group. The exercise was to lead the group through a song as a musical piece was played. They were to sing according to the cues given by the "conductor", who indicated when the notes were low or high with her or his body and conductor's baton. Below is an extract from my observational fieldnotes that describe the exercise (23.10.2014):

> *"All the leaders had to conduct (as in an orchestra) the other participants in the role of a choir. The choir was asked to follow the rhythm and tone of the conductor, who was also directed by a professional musician. When the participant above was to conduct, she was to get all the leaders to sing by following her directions. It looked like the leader wasn't comfortable and that this was an unknown situation for her. I observed that the conductor seemed surprised when she got an immediate response from the group she was conducting, especially when she led them to sing more loudly or more softly, and quite quickly, the cooperation in the group increased. It seemed as though through the interaction between the conductor and the professional musician, security was created in the exercise, and she allowed herself to be led by the musicians. When I observed the entire group of leaders in the room, it seemed that everyone took the exercise seriously and connected this to leadership and to how to create motivated followers in one's own leadership."*

I observed from their facial expressions that this exercise seemed to cost the participants a great deal: some reddened, and some became very quiet. Some of the conductors sang very loudly as they conducted, and some became almost invisible as conductors. At the same time, they were surprised at the immediate response they received from "the choir". I saw clearly that most of the participants had emotional reactions when they performed the exercise. When they finished their conducting exercise, they signalled both verbally and bodily that it was a relief to be finished with it.

I observed that the response they received from the "choir" surprised the leaders, as the response was almost immediate, and they experienced fast cooperation. At the same time, I observed that the participants who followed the instructor (the professional musician) literally received a quicker and more unified response from the "choir". This exercise was an example of how fast the "choir" members entered their expected roles and performed well when they were conducted (by their leader colleagues). They received few though clear instructions from

the participant performing the exercise. The instructions were then followed by clear bodily expressions from the participants who conducted the "choir". I noted that when one of the top leaders had to perform this exercise and struggled to complete it, some participants commented that it was good to see that top leaders are also just people. I found there and then in the plenary hall that this task of having to try out new things together was disarming, creating a sense of "we're together in this". I also observed that some of the participants spoke about leadership being more than words and language alone. I interpreted these comments as indicating that this experience had surprised the participants regarding how they could ensure fellowship in their leadership and that learning about leadership is about cooperating with colleagues to ensure goal attainment. I also noticed that communication in the plenary hall following the exercise was easier, as the atmosphere was lighter.

3.7   *Reflexivity*

Davies (2008) points out that generally in research, there is an assumption that we explore or research something "outside" ourselves that we are not aware of. The knowledge we seek cannot be attained exclusively through introspection, which is a method of observing our own thoughts and feelings (Davies, 2008). At the same time, she points out that it is necessary to have contact with what we research and not to isolate ourselves fully. I continually strove for balance throughout the research, reflecting on the findings and how I might have influenced both my fieldnotes and my interviews with the participants, and not least how I wrote up the findings. I clearly remember an incident that made an impression on me when I underwent supervision at the Tavistock Clinic with other students. An experienced supervisor asked one of the students the following question: When you are close to your participants' language, what direction does this give you in relation to theories? This question made an impression, which again led me to become more aware of my own "discourses" and the language of the participants.

Willig claims that in particular, two types of reflexivity must be ensured. The first is personal reflexivity, which concerns how my own values, life experiences, interests and social identity influences and influenced the research project. The second is epistemological reflexivity,

which refers to how the research questions in this study are defined and the limitations of the research in relation to the findings. Willig (2008) points out that epistemological reflexivity also concerns how the research design and choice of analytic method will enable the researcher to construct the data and the findings.

In retrospect, I see that I took a position of considering the systemic approach better than the "individualistic" and "instrumental" approaches that are dominant in the consultancy field. It was only during the work of analysis that I became more aware of my own values and my discursive constructions about what approaches are important to leadership training in general. Even though I trust my research idea, this was an important discovery for me. I became more aware of my own thoughts and the positions I took during this study. In this connection, I took the initiative to be interviewed by a fellow student about my reflexivity and the positions I took during the study. This interview was filmed and gave me the opportunity to reflect both on my choice of research questions and on how my experiences as a leadership consultant and family therapist had influenced the research. The interview clearly contributed to increasing my reflexivity regarding my own discursive constructions. In addition, my supervisors continually challenged me about my reflexivity during the study, which contributed to my being able to consider different positions and feeling free to take a holistic view.

As I documented in chapter two, most everyday leadership development programmes have a clear individualistic focus with a basis in the positivistic paradigm. Even though there have been some studies on relational leadership, they have not yet informed leadership development programmes (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Furthermore, it is well documented that it is desirable to conduct more research on leadership training that addresses the leader's daily social interactions and in which real contextual frames influence leadership. In light of this need, I completed a qualitative study in which I used observational fieldwork and interviews. In many ways, this study represents a "forgotten" voice in research on leadership training programmes, as Collins & Hutton (2004) point out. I highlight the "forgotten voice" as an important personal value because it represents the direct voices of the participants in their leadership practice.

Arnulf writes that *"knowledge about language provides insight into why there will always be a gap between theory and practice"* (Arnulf, 2018, p. 76). He points out that the answer is that our language is built on the opportunity to distinguish between things – both things that are very different and things that are very similar but, nonetheless, somewhat different. Through discourse analysis and fieldwork observations, I moved into the area where language and everyday psychology intersect. Arnulf (2018) further claims that language can provide a picture of reality, as it functions as relation builder, and that it can also have a dubious ability to "programme" the brains of, for example, the masterclass participants. I have acknowledged this issue throughout my study, becoming more aware of my own language. Many of my colleagues in Norway wondered what I was doing, as the systemic and family therapeutic aspects can be both abstract and difficult. However, throughout the study, I found myself increasingly able to speak more practically about systemic leadership training.

3.7.1 Researcher reflexivity

Even though all the participants accepted and approved of my doctoral project in a general meeting, they probably had no choice in practical terms. It would have been difficult for anyone to refuse to participate. This knowledge led me to be aware of my role throughout the entire research project. I attempted to create security in my ethnographic fieldwork observations and in the interviews with the participants. In addition, I clearly explained that no information would be given to the top leadership or the consultancy firm that could be traced back to the participants. How the participants viewed me and assessed my role is difficult for me to judge. At the same time, many participants in the interviews told me that they found the interviews exciting and that the interviews gave them the opportunity to reflect on their leader role in greater depth. Informed consent is a complex topic that primarily concerns ethics, and I was careful throughout the study to treat people with fundamental respect.

3.7.2 Reflexivity in Danish culture and the Danish context

Empirically, my data and fieldwork observations do not stand alone. Thus, I attempted to be aware of my cultural assumptions. I tried to be conscious that this study represents "Danish leaders" and "Danishness". "Danishness" refers to what people do in their everyday lives in

Denmark. Jenkins (2016) refers to Sandemose (1972), who writes about the Jante Law, which is a description of a conformist society that suppresses and dominates individuals. The idea of the Jante Law is strong in Danish culture, as Sandemose notes in his novel (1972, first published in 1933). An individual must not "stand out", which means "we should all be the same and in the same boat" (Sandemose, 1972). This law is associated with strict rules for behaviour in social interaction in which the ideal of equality is strong. The Jante Law as I perceive it is also recognizable in Norwegian culture. It is almost as though Norwegians believe that it is a Norwegian phenomenon and was invented in Norway. Thus, the Jante Law was an important theme to reflect on in terms of the data collection where the leaders constructed their arguments in interviews with me, in the fieldwork observations and in the analysis.

Jenkins (2016) points out that the Danish narrative *"we're all the same and all in the same boat"* (Østergård, 1992a, 1992b, p. 51-83) has its origins in three foundational sub-themes. The first is rooted in linguistic and cultural homogeneity. The second has to do with relatively small differences in Denmark between the rich and the average citizen. The third is an undertone based on being a Nordic culture. Jenkins (2016) argues that the sum of these three sub -themes arguably results in a "Danishness" that appears in behaviour in everyday life. However, he also argues that it is not the case that "we are all the same and in the same boat". In Denmark, there are great cultural differences in class and status. Through the interviews and fieldwork observations, I received the impression that it could be difficult to proclaim one's opinions publicly in the presence of top management and leader colleagues. The Jante Law in many ways dominated the reflexivity throughout the masterclass, although I was not able to put my finger on the reason. The Jante Law thus became a dominant discourse – everyone is the same – that contributed to leaders subordinating themselves regarding individual differences such as different personalities.

3.7.3 Reflexivity and ethnographic research

Reflexivity refers to concerns about the subjectivity and objectivity of the researcher. Davies (2008) points out that it is difficult to distinguish between the researcher's subjectivity and objectivity in relation to research. However, awareness and reflexivity can reduce the researcher's own influence on the results of, for example, fieldwork observations. As Davies

claims, *"Reflexivity, broadly defined, means a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference"* (Davies, 2008 p. 4). This knowledge contributed to my decision in the course of the research process to become more aware of the contextual frameworks in which my research was conducted and how my own personal history could influence the research results. One of my "blind spots" early in the research was that I did not reflected on how the hierarchy of the leaders influenced the leadership training in the masterclass in both the municipal test centre and the plenary hall. Early in the research, I noticed that I was more concerned with the leadership training in isolation. As Davies writes, ethnographic fieldwork observations increase awareness, not only of the personal history of the researcher but also of the broader socio-cultural conditions, of which the masterclass was part (Davies, 2008). I also problematized this issue in discussion with my supervisors, which increased my reflexivity as a researcher. The interplay between ethnographic fieldwork and participants contributes to the construction of a background for a study that supplements the generation of theories and conclusions in the research (Davies, 2008). Davies further points out that this insight into fieldwork observations enables researchers to use their own subjectivity and experiences and to connect them to the research process.

Even though I was taking notes and chatting with the participants to socialize, I attempted to minimize my role. Such efforts are closely connected to the idea of relational reflexivity, which refers to paying attention to the relationships between the researcher and the participants. Fangen (2004) points out that research subjects can feel a sense of artificiality if a researcher tries to copy them in an area in which they know they are different from the researcher. She notes that fieldwork observations open the possibility for the researcher to acquire knowledge through first-hand observations of how the participants engage in social interactions at the individual level and at the group level. In other words, I became closer to the reality of the participants and obtained personal knowledge of them (Fangen, 2004).

3.8   *Informed consent and research ethics*

The research project was conducted with assurances of confidentiality, and security was maintained in the treatment of personal data. University of East London`s (UEL) Code of

Good Practice in research is adhered to and the research project is approved (Appendix 3). To protect the anonymity of the volunteers who were interviewed, all the names and potential identifying data were anonymized. This was done to secure anonymity and so that personal narratives could not be connected to any of the participants who were interviewed. Gender was not a topic of this research and was therefore also anonymized. However, gender discourses are always at play. Thus, by anonymizing gender, I lose demographic data and gender information that necessarily have an effect on the doctoral project; I try to illustrate this issue in the theories and discussion. Personal identifying data were deleted after the project was completed, both on the researcher's PC and on the audio tapes. Two of the participants were on long-term sick leave during interview round 2. As I already had a considerable amount of data (16 interviews and five days of fieldwork observations), I viewed the existing material as sufficient.

3.9   Validity and Reliability

Willig (2013) argues that data that emerge from qualitative research need to be as close to "naturalistic" as possible. At the same time, the researcher must be open in the initial work of analysis and not establish the coding too early, as this risks the exclusion of important data. She considers this a question of validity. I was therefore transparent throughout the entire process of analysis. I show original text (extracts) in section 3.6.1, step 4 , where I show the reader how I identified the discourses during the analysis process: step 1: Selection of extracts from the transcripts, step 2: Identification of codes from the extracts, step 3: Search for competing contra-discourses and step 4: Presenting an overview of dominant discourses. During the entire process of analysis, I discussed extracts and emerging discourses with my supervisors. Their feedback helped me become aware of my own biases and pre-understandings.

Reliability in this study concerns whether the participants and participants would have answered significantly differently in an interview with another researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is probable that another interviewer would have obtained different answers based on the data. It is obvious that it would have been difficult, though not

impossible, for another person to produce a copy of my qualitative research findings. Although one potential criticism of qualitative research is that it is difficult to standardize, it also has an inherent quality that the researcher can use his or her own subjective perspective and therefore discover new perspectives. In relation to this, Øfsti (2008) argues that qualitative research should be seen as an attempt to achieve a more complex understanding of social interaction that includes multiple viewpoints instead of defining the results of the study as objective and true. That I was the instrument for this study means that I influenced the findings with my personality and attitude. However, this would not have changed the language and the discourses in use in the masterclass programme. From this perspective, I feel that my findings can be said to have validity and reliability in terms of answering the research questions, even though they cannot be quantified. Gwet (2014) writes about the importance of inter-rater reliability, which refers to the extent to which different observers who observe or experience the same phenomenon reach the same conclusions. In this study, the analysis shows that many of the participants who completed the masterclass reached the same conclusions but in different words.

3.10 Summary

In retrospect, the fieldwork provided a descriptive background that enabled me to include macro-discourses and the everyday discourses on which the participants drew as well as the available discourses facilitated by the masterclass. Semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldwork provided rich and varied data and were well suited to discourse analysis as a method because I became "intimate" with the language of the participants and could "raise" their voices. Both data sets were analysed using discourse psychology analysis. The analysis led to the identification of three main discourses: (1) *The discourse of embodied leadership training;* (2) *The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges;* and (3) *The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership.*

4 FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND FIELDWORK OBSERVATIONS

This thesis explores how participants in a systemic leadership programme experience their learning process. The research questions were as follows: (1) *How do leaders in systemic leadership programmes construct new meaning for leadership?* and (2) *How do systemic leadership programmes affect the co-creation of leadership practice – and how do they affect the participants' personal discourses about their leadership?* Data were collected through sixteen qualitative in-depth interviews with twelve participants and five days of fieldwork observations of the leadership training.

Relevant excerpts from the interviews ("in vivo" codes) are presented throughout this chapter to illustrate the findings. However, none of the quotations are directly connected to the names presented above. This is to protect the anonymity of the participants. Notes from the fieldwork observations are included as part of the data, as they contributed to the participants' descriptions in the interviews. A discourse psychology analysis led to the identification of three main discourses: (1) *The discourse of embodied leadership training;* (2) *The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges;* and (3) *The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership,* as illustrated in the figure below:

Fig 4. Overview of the identified discourses

Discourse 1: The discourse of embodied leadership training	**Discourse 2:** The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges	**Discourse 3:** The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership
Sub-discourse: Not feeling alone as a leader	Sub-discourse: The use of self in leadership	Sub-discourse: Test centre, the context for action-oriented and co-creative learning

4.1 Introduction to the discourse of embodied leadership

In this section, I provide an account of how bodily experiences led to the identification of a "discourse of embodied leadership". The discourse of embodied leadership is concerned with the personal bodily feelings of the leader and his or her relations with leader colleagues and his or her surroundings. Significant aspects of leadership training utilize bodily exercises and music to create embodied experiences and reflections. The leaders had to engage with music and bodily movement choreographed by professional musicians and connected to different leadership contexts in the masterclass. In reviewing the history of social constructionism in 2008, Shotter changes his focus from his 1993 book *Conversational realities*, in which he focuses primarily on language, to ideas about embodiment. Shotter (2008) illustrates this point by referring to how the traditional way of speaking about social constructionism excludes the spontaneous and expressive responses of our lived bodies, which can be the "background glue" that holds us together and to other people. As Shotter (2008) points out, the focus on bodily experiences prepares the participants for a future collaboration in which interaction is more humane and respectful through increased understanding of one's own and others' reaction patterns in social interaction.

4.1.1 The discourse of embodied leadership training

The "discourse of embodied leadership training" shows that leadership is concerned with how learning occurs through bodily practices and the embodiment of language and practice. Bodily experiences refer to the participants performing different exercises with their bodies, such as moving and singing following instructions from a professional musician, along with their colleagues in the masterclass. I start by illustrating this with reference to my fieldwork and participant observations. Thereafter, I present extracts and analysis from the semi-structured interviews.

The following is an example of an exercise that all the leaders in the masterclass had to complete. The participants were taking part in the first plenary hall gathering in the masterclass. The context of this exercise was that all the participants in the masterclass were gathered in a large plenary hall, where one of the consultants, who was also a professional musician, instructed them in an exercise through music and song. The participants in the

plenary hall were divided into small groups of six to eight. This exercise was performed at the first plenary hall gathering of the masterclass, but such exercises in various forms were used throughout the duration of the masterclass.

In my observations of the group, I wanted to explore how bodily experiences influenced their interaction, as this exercise was connected to leadership. I also wanted to explore how the use of bodily experiences with one's leader colleagues influenced the individual and the group. Afterwards, directly following the exercise, I also became interested in how the participants responded to their own emotions and feelings. These questions developed throughout the exercise and during my later reading and processing of my fieldnotes. Following is an excerpt from my fieldwork observation notes about the exercise, in which I followed one group (23.10.2014):

> *"The musicians/consultants directed the exercise, and all the participants were divided into groups of about eight people each. Each group was placed in a ring facing one another without physical contact, and there was a mixture of male and female leaders. Listening to the music and background singing, they were to follow the rhythm and move four steps to the right and four steps to the left without touching each other or saying anything. After this, they were to do the same exercise in a ring, looking out from the circle and with their arms around each other."*

I noticed some laughter and several smiles during the observations but also that some participants' facial expressions remained completely serious. At the start of the exercise, there was some uncertainty about where they were to stand and how they were to move. After some practice and repeating the exercise several times, the exercise became easier, and the participants became more focused on the group and on the collective behaviour. They moved from having focus on themselves to focusing more on the task (the exercise). The participants were clearly unaccustomed to sharing their bodily experiences with one another. Even though there was a positive atmosphere and laughter in the group, I observed that sharing their bodily experiences was challenging for the participants, as they had to put their arms around one another and look at each other to co-construct the exercise. Even though I could see that they became frustrated in the process, the participants managed quite quickly to cooperate following clear instructions from the musician. In my observation, I noticed that the consultants did not facilitate reflection on the group experience of performing the exercise. It almost seemed as though such reflection was taboo, especially in the sense of showing

emotions and feelings, and that the participants lacked the language for it there and then. They were clearly more used to using language (the cognitive) without the body being a part of the learning processes related to leadership.

Directly after the exercise, I attempted to gather some reflections from the group, and my fieldwork observation notes show that one participant spoke and reflected as follows:

> "*We were a little frustrated, and we couldn't get hold of the exercise – weird feeling. Afterwards, we found 'connections' between ourselves that made the exercise go better, and I became acquainted with my own identity. When we see one another, there's a difference, when our group turned outwards, opened to other senses in this exercise. When we turn outwards, one becomes someone different, when the group doesn't count – what then? I felt alone; someone else has to be feeling this now.*" (23.10.2014).

Even though the participants in this group were frustrated and struggled at the beginning of the exercise, the fieldnotes show that the use of bodily experiences contributed to connecting them both cognitively and bodily. They quickly made contact with their bodies and attempted to cooperate with the other participants. The participants were concerned about "connections", the space between them in the exercise, and this concern showed that they had also begun to see that leadership is partly about the space between people that can create uncertainty in leadership. As one of the participants said following the exercise, *"when we see one another, it's different, when the group was turned outwards, opened to other senses in this exercise".* It is important to be connected with one's leader colleagues, and this reminded the participants in the group that the masterclass programme was meant to contribute to co-creative leadership in which co-creative activities are central to ensuring goal attainment. When the group had to turn outwards and could not have eye contact, there was a shift in perception among the participants. The shift showed a contrast between a leadership that is more oriented towards silo thinking and one that is about being closer to one's leader colleagues and co-workers, where leadership can be a function of social dynamics.

The participants in the exercise spoke about how bodily experiences opened other and new senses, such as their own emotions and feelings. In terms of learning, they sensed and were surprised by their own emotions, which led to their becoming more attentive to the relational climate around their own leadership. The participants spoke about how bodily experiences increased their capacity to understand more of their own reaction patterns and thereby enabled

them to become braver and more sensitive to their reactions to their leader colleagues rather than such exercises being a barrier or maintaining a level of anxiety about revealing themselves in the masterclass programme. In addition, the use of bodily experiences with their colleagues created a form of reciprocal dependence in reaching goals, especially when the leaders spoke about how in turning "outwards, one becomes someone else, when the group doesn't matter – what then? I felt alone; now someone else must be feeling this".

My observations in this exercise also showed that the consultants in the masterclass facilitated a system-psychodynamic approach to address different solutions through which emotions and feelings were connected to the practice of leadership in the organization. Bodily experiences became a way to overcome resistance, both consciously and unconsciously. These experiences increased the leaders' awareness of the challenges they would meet, such as succeeding in interdisciplinary efforts aimed at the citizens of the municipality that would demand a completely different social dynamic. The discourse of embodiment, a creative activity for working with security and achieving a team spirit, contributed to a high degree of internal interactive cooperation and teamwork in the leader group. This was helpful in achieving co-creative leadership in the organization by beginning in a small way and expanding the exercises as the process continued.

The discourse of embodied leadership training was also identified as a main discourse throughout the semi-structured interviews. The following extracts from one of the participants illustrate a pattern in the answers of the participants when I asked about the use of music and movement:

> *P: Even the concept in relation to the music…and the experience…well, it was super-good….*
>
> *T: Say a bit about why it was super-good….*
>
> *P: Well, I think that…some of the exercises we were supposed to do were done with music…and there I think…that some…just because there was music, that there were some there who had an easier time to…to get through those exercises….It created an atmosphere that I think actually, just at the time, where we had the need for, music does something or other with most people, something around feelings…yes…*
>
> *T: Was it…what do you think…*

P: It was super-good…yes…I was also in some situations, and I think actually it was the music that made it, where I sort of got very moved…but it was good enough in the situation….

T: It was good enough….

P: I can perhaps think back and… well, it may well be that it wouldn't have happened if there wasn't music…yes…

T: It's exciting….

P: But it's strange when you ask me…it was really a "show" "fun" way of putting it together in…yes…I've never tried.

The participant spoke about how the use of the exercise had to do with feelings. The exercises affected the atmosphere "here and now". She experienced the atmosphere "bodily" through her own feelings, representing significant differences for different participants. What the participant thinks about, or what the exercise reminds her of, may reside both in the present and in the future but also in historical triggers that it is difficult to know about. The participant spoke about the others but was probably speaking more about herself when she connected this to feelings and emotions. The participant talked about her relationship with music and bodily movements and the effect of connecting people, arguing that she is not certain that the same effect would have been achieved without the use of music and movement. The participant refers to the need for transformation, "that we needed this now". This way of training leadership in terms of "embodiment" challenges dominant discourses based on more instrumental and individualistic leadership. It is clear from the participants' talk about the use of music and movement that this break with their own experiences of participating in leadership training and their expectations about learning and what it takes to become a better leader. The participants were surprised by their experiences with the bodily exercises, and this gave them new ideas about their own leadership practice, moving from "head activity" to greater attention to relational interactions in their leadership.

When I asked another participant what she thought about the use of music and dancing (embodiment), she had the following explanations that represented the opinions of many of the participants:

T: What do you think about the music and dancing in the leadership training? What do you think; what does it contribute to?

P: Yes, well, I think that was nice. I mean … also it's a way of course … one place or another. We gather of course in a group like this. Some know one another, and others don't know one another. Some have a little more status than others, etc. And it's like then we enter into an area that we're all a little unfamiliar with, so that's like … it becomes like an informal place to meet in some way or other.

T: What did it do, then?

P: What I did?

T: What did the informal meeting do to you?

P: Now, what did the informal meeting do? Well, I think that it made it so that we could better open up. We were equally new to this. We had a more informal meeting with one another. A platform to communicate openly with one another because we were equally uncertain, and it could just as easily be that one there now was or that one there who normally is usually the leader in this house had to be one who felt like the most uncertain one, and one of those there who was new felt a little bit more uncertain. I think it made it so that …

The participant's descriptions of the use of music and the bodily exercise suggested that this was a good experience, a format that fit the leadership training and an experience that contributed to relationally building a common platform. The participant begins with the use of the "I" form before quickly shifting to the "we" form, even though we must assume that the participant is speaking just as much about herself as about others. It may also be the case that the participant's use of "we" is a way of expressing her identity as part of the health service and care of the elderly. The cultural context in which the masterclass was conducted was not generally discussed to any significant extent during the course of the masterclass; therefore, I assume that the participant was unaware of or implied her personal observations of her own experience.

The participant spoke about how bodily exercises and music contributed to us ("we") becoming better acquainted with one another in a different way than previously. The participant pointed out that this was experienced as more informal, which enabled the participants to feel slightly uncomfortable outside their comfort zone with those who had greater status, such as their superiors. When I asked more directly about what embodiment actually did, she answered with an uncertain statement: *"Well, I think that it made it so that we could better open up"*. It is as though the use of embodiment was an "opening up" for the participants, and the experience the participant noticed, both mentally and in her body, made

her own experiences more open and transparent in encounters with her colleagues. The participant spoke about how the embodiment in the use of song and dance created frames for the activities in the masterclass and that this context simultaneously created security. This security activated feelings and a form of acceptance for revealing who they were as people to each other. It appears that the participant found that the use of embodied experiences contributed to her ability to listen to her own body and that this led to new thoughts. The conversation, however, also demonstrated tension and ambivalence in the participants. Embodiment is about bodily experiences, and the data show that many speak about how this affects their emotions, feelings and thoughts. The ambivalence the participants speak about is a "double-edged sword" through which the masterclass more or less forces people to open up to one another.

The quotation that follows illustrates this ambivalence, as the participant says, among other things, that 'we were a little on thin ice, all of us':

> *T: Do you think that music and the format were useful for you in the leadership training?*
>
> *P: Yes, I don't know … also, well, a little more than just a presentation, perhaps just a bit about who one is and what one has worked with previously in some small groups and a bit of moving around, and then I think actually… that the introduction with the music, that was quite nice … there were many … because there we were all a little on thin ice, all of us, and that was really nice … to do it in that way.*

The participant said that encountering embodiment enabled her to gain immediate access to something related to who she is and who the others are, that she became better acquainted with herself and others through being part of small groups that had to do group exercises in the form of movement and music. At the same time, the participant shows ambivalence in her expressions, saying that being pulled out onto thin ice is not necessarily positive. Being on thin ice might also break with what Danes seem to strive towards, for everyone to be together, as in "we are all the same". In Denmark, there is a feeling that one must not distinguish oneself as an individual (Jenkins, 2016). At the same time, the experience and expressions of the participants suggested that they were on thin ice together, which connected them in the leadership training and provided a sense of security.

The use of bodily experiences through a "Danish" world view may also have made the leaders more vulnerable in this way, creating a form of anxiety. Being on thin ice can refer to a certain boldness that can lead colleagues to change their perceptions about one another. Through "embodiment", the participants enter a situation in which they must show more of themselves and reveal more of their "true" selves in the moment. The participants clearly showed ambivalence in encounters with embodied leadership training, particularly through exercises; certain participants showed conflicting feelings and behaviour that were reflected in several interviews and in the fieldwork. In the observational fieldwork, I noticed that many leaders blushed and became silent, while others laughed, and I interpreted these reactions as signs of discomfort with revealing themselves in this way. In other words, the ambivalence of "we are all the same", at the same level, breaks if we have to do something difficult. "I" will be exposed and perhaps fail in others' eyes, but if we all do this, it will be more acceptable. Embodiment that positions me in front of colleagues can lead to anxiety, which again remains implicit and can create resistance in me. Embodiment contributes to the body trying to do/become what others want, and especially what the consultants who choreographed this exercise want. As the researcher, I felt that it was difficult for the participants to refuse to participate in the singing and dancing exercises. This contributed to the ambivalence remaining implicit and unexpressed by many of them, and it therefore contributed to their directing attention to their colleagues' states of being rather than to their own needs.

This ambivalence was visible throughout the whole course of the masterclass, and the following quotations illustrate this:

> T: *What do you think about dance and music in the leadership training?*
>
> P: *Yes, it was (laughs), I think actually, it was really good.*
>
> T: *Really good. You'll have to say more about that.*
>
> P: *It was. I would say that when I got there, I thought, no, no. It had just been massive that day, I mean really a great deal of work, so, argh, I can't stand that (laughs). I thought, oh, no, some exercise or other we've tried or something. I had all my prejudiced negative images up, but it worked really well.*
>
> T: *How do you notice that it's good for you?*

P: It supports... it supports really well. If it hadn't been used so professionally, it would've been awfully disturbing; then I would've remained in my... in my negative mode or preconceived mode there. But it supported the work we created at that time, and of course I think that's… It was of course a really good symbol of how one reinforces and limits when one wants to do something with people. It might be the particular. It can be the whole. It can be anything at all. It can be the awareness of getting things to work together, I think. It gave something to the bodily and the intellectual interplay.

T: Was it good; was it meaningful?

P: It was good. Yes, it did that, and it played together because the music and the dance are of course both intellectual and physical at the same time in that we sat and worked with something else. It was super-good.

The participant showed her ambivalence by expressing that the encounter with embodiment was good, but when I asked her to say more about it, she answered that she encountered all of her "prejudices" or biases and remarked again that it was good. In this response was a thought that if the exercise had not been done so professionally, she would have found it threatening and become defensive in encounters with embodiment. Here, the participant gave an answer that represented the reactions of many of the other participants during the training. She said that embodiment supported leadership training, especially when it is done professionally. In this regard, the participant is reflecting that for her, embodiment as a teaching approach had a good effect on this leadership training connected to the goals expressed by top management.

The participant said that the approach supported the change and reorganization process the municipality was implementing and that embodiment "connects this". It seems as though the participant was implicitly speaking about how embodiment can be used where words are not sufficient and that top management so far had not put words to what was needed in the social interplay on which they were dependent. The use of both their bodies and music provided a resonant expression that was meaningful for the participants. It seems that the use of embodiment increased the participants' awareness of this interplay and that this created a safer space for the individual and the group. It also appears as though the participants increased their self-awareness through listening to the body, a form of empathy for oneself, especially as this participant emphasized that it contributed intellectually and physically, which probably created greater awareness for the leader in relation to her surroundings. The ambivalence the participant showed may also be connected to "Danishness", as it is not

culturally usual or normal to display in a bodily manner and challenge zones of intimacy to the extent the masterclass organizers chose to do.

Before I discuss the next extracts, I provide an illustration from my fieldwork observational notes of an exercise connected to the participants' bodily experiences in the masterclass. The context of my observations was an exercise in the plenary hall during the first leader gathering of the masterclass programme in which all the participants directed the exercise. The consultant (a musician) provided instructions for an exercise in which each of the participants was to conduct a choir. All the participants not conducting were instructed to be a choir that was to respond to their leader colleague, who was the conductor. The top managers also participated in this exercise. An extract from my fieldnotes shows the content of my participant observation (23.10.2014):

> *"All the leaders had to conduct a choir (as in an orchestra) while the rest of the participants played the roles of members of the choir. The choir was asked to follow the conductor's rhythm, which was orchestrated by a professional musician. When the participant above was to conduct, she was to get all the leaders to sing by following her directions. I saw that the leader was not comfortable and that this was an unknown situation for her. I observed that the conductor was surprised when she got an immediate response from the group she was conducting, especially when she led them to sing more loudly or more softly, and quite quickly, the cooperation in the group increased. It seemed as though the interaction between the conductor and the professional musicians created security in the exercise and that she allowed herself to be led by the musicians. When I observed everyone in the room, it seemed that everyone took the exercise seriously and connected this to leadership and to how to create motivated followers in one's own leadership."*

Through my fieldnotes, I became concerned with following the one who was conducting but also with how the choir responded to the conductor. I noticed that I also became tense and very curious during this exercise. At the same time, the exercise provided much information, as I had the opportunity to observe the whole group together, and all were to take turns as conductor. One thought that struck me during the exercise and afterward as I read and worked with my fieldnotes was that this was a creative way to enable team spirit, a sort of "levelling" in which all were made equal and had the same point of departure despite their differing personalities ("we are all just as good or just as bad at this, but practice works"). Through the observation, I saw that those who conducted were surprised by how quickly they received a response from the choir, and I believed this was because all the participants were focused on

the middle space between the leader (the conductor) and the choir. Thus, they had both cognitive and bodily contact in the exercises. It would have been different if one had merely spoken about this exercise and then actually performed it. What also struck me as I read and reflected on this exercise was that leadership is context-driven, and new contextual directions, such as entering new situations in which all the leaders in the masterclass were to organize different professions for cooperation in the team towards municipal citizens, can lead to anxiety and uncertainty in leadership. Such an exercise can strengthen the individual leader to become slightly braver in social interaction, especially because professional actors have the tendency to be quite individualistic and thereby underestimate the collective in an organization. I observed that after a time, cooperation and performance had a high degree of quality. It was good for all the participants that top managers were among those who struggled the most, and this contributed to making the exercise less formal. When the leaders attended to the practical aspects of leader behaviour, all of them needed to practice, and this was probably a mantra for the consultants in the masterclass.

The abovementioned exercise served as an example of how fast the "choir" played its expected role and performed at a high level even when it received few but clear instructions from the leader. The instructions were followed by clear bodily expressions from the leader. In the following quotation, the participant talked about how the use of his body as leader provided something different than merely speaking about or applying words about leadership:

> P: I think some of those musical things, it got one to think, now, well, okay, sometimes it just takes courage to stand up and conduct right. I mean … yes, so you can get many to follow if you're the one standing there; also, it gave that kind of personal experience of, well, what is it I with something other than my speech can get going, this about saying, well, one of the things of course also come from top management, that's, of course, that's about how we're role models, right? I mean, yes, and of course we're very into putting things into speech form for our co-workers, and this with the music and those things, well, it was one such different way to say, well, it can perhaps be done in other ways than just by putting words to it.…
>
> T: So it was a positive experience …?
>
> P: It was a positive experience, yes.…
>
> T: How did it influence the groups? Also, how was the cooperation, and what happened with the mood when it …?

P: Well, I think that they did it in such a generally really good way; also, one had a good experience together and had a good time together.

The participant talked about how embodiment provides a theoretical perspective, but the participant also said that normally, training can be slightly too theoretical and that this training with singing and dancing offered something different. Furthermore, the participant emphasized that song and dance, and especially conducting, allowed a route into an experience of what it is like to be top management, who were also in this position.

The participant suggested that standing to conduct before her leader colleagues did more than one's own "speech". Through conducting and using the body, her leader colleagues follow her leadership and directions. A question that arose for me was whether there was an implicit thought or feeling that "words" do not necessarily create good leadership or the necessary behavioural changes. I asked whether the participant above connected this to the fact that the musicians guided her securely and professionally, which she may connect to her own leadership. Leadership using more than "words" helped the leader contribute support and challenge her followers so that they could meet their own developmental needs and become better motivated to follow her. In this, there is probably a thought that her co-workers would experience approximately the same contextual framework of understanding. The participant connected her experience of the use of bodily experiences to the needs of top management for leaders to be role models. Through embodiment, the participants became better acquainted with themselves and their leader colleagues. This made the leader group aware that the change and reorganization process would not become successful merely by speaking about what is required; rather, top management needed to facilitate new discursive practices.

4.1.2   Sub-discourse: Not feeling alone as a leader

Another discourse that became clear when the participants encountered embodiment was the experience and importance of being "in the same boat" and becoming acquainted with their leader colleagues at the same level. This created security in relation to the new requirements of leadership. This clearly shows that the use of embodiment in leadership training leads to the participants speaking about becoming stronger together. Embodiment made the participants listen with their whole selves and in social interplay with their top management colleagues, especially in encounters that involved their own bodily awareness and as a

consequence of embodiment. This emergent discourse concerns not feeling alone as a leader. These experiences break with the dominant discourses within the field of leadership training, in which traditional leadership courses are structured around an individualistic focus on the leader. In this approach, the leader often becomes isolated from his or her daily contexts, which makes leadership a lonely journey. In addition, individualistic leadership will always have a certain element of competition among individual leaders, which is implicit in this form of leadership; for example, participants in the masterclass were responsible for attaining goals in their respective departments. This is in accordance with Rønning's (2013) claim that dominates both research and leader training in modern practice.

The participants spoke about how being "in the same boat" with colleagues with the same position made them more secure as leaders within the reorganization process; they were currently completing. They spoke about a change in leadership from individual to contextual and collective leadership and a shift from individualistic leadership and the feeling of loneliness to relational leadership. In this lay the implicit knowledge of the participants that they compared their own leadership before participation in the masterclass and that the masterclass enabled them to obtain implicit knowledge about how leader support at the same level creates a form of felt security. This clearly relates to how leaders have internalized social and cultural discourses about individual leadership and thereby reproduced these discourses in their own leadership practice.

When I asked one of the participants about the greatest value of participation in the masterclass, he answered:

> P: I think that the greatest value of the masterclass so far has been that we all, all the new leaders, both new and old leaders, have been brought together, and we are developing something ... some knowledge of one another and some synergy in simply standing there all together like from top management and after that. The top manager is actually also alone sometimes. She's not there all the time. But by bringing us together and then saying we have a shared task here, in such a way that we develop together. That's I think actually the greatest value.
>
> T: That's the greatest value ...?
>
> P: Yes, I think so. I think actually it is because it gives knowledge across the whole leader group. It's of course not all of us who know one another. There are also new leaders. There are people out from or who haven't been employed with us so long, and

there one can say, there we also get knowledge of one another that we can use in the working context.

In the quotation above, the participant opened with the "I" form when he said that the greatest value of the masterclass was that everyone, both old and new, was brought together to develop something. This provided some synergies in that the administrative director participated in leadership training. The participant spoke about how the masterclass facilitated the active participation of all participants in working together to secure new leadership requirements. At the same time, the participant spoke on behalf of his colleagues' thoughts, opinions and beliefs in that he used the "we" form in many of his statements. One must assume that there were as many perceptions as there were members in the leader group. At the same time, this quotation showed an answer pattern common to many of the participants and thereby had validity in the perceptions of many regarding the use of embodiment; however, this knowledge remained mostly implicit. An interesting expression from the participant was "we *have a shared task here"*. This showed that he drew on ideas that challenged the discourse of individualism and positioned himself in the discourse of cooperation facilitated by the masterclass. It appeared that this changed the participant's identity in the direction of relational leadership, a subject position towards which he was positive and thus one towards which he also implicitly had the opportunity to position his employees in the same available relational discourse. When I asked another participant about her encounter with embodiment, the participant answered as follows:

> *T: Yes, music and dance, that's creative. Are you part of that, or...?*
>
> *P: No, I did that many years ago. But in this way here, I think that's good too, that in relation to opening up and to get other access to the use of ourselves and that it's good to get to know one another and to know about this way.*

When I asked the participant about how she experienced the meeting with music and movement, it seemed that she regarded this as "old news": *I did this many years ago* (old-fashioned, from a different era, not as uncertain for her as for others) but excused herself by saying that when the masterclass organizers did it their way, it was a good experience. At the same time, the participant said that this was an innovative approach to leadership training and a playful experiment. The use of embodiment challenged discourses about learning and how she as a leader could change existing leadership practices. The participant said that she gained

access to some new perspectives and new ideas and that this was something she did not do in her daily leadership. The participant also said that the use of embodiment was a good way for the leader group to become better acquainted.

A consequence for the participants of the use of embodiment that breaks with established approaches to leadership training is that the ambivalence of the participants can increase. This is especially true if top management shows that ambivalence and negative feelings are in fact taboo in the organization. This can lead to the participants in the masterclass returning to habitual and recognizable patterns, such as individualistic and instrumental leadership, which contrast with the new discursive leadership practices facilitated by the masterclass. It is thus important for top management to be present and to facilitate meaning and connection in the masterclass. Many participants emphasized in their statements that this had been done. A pattern in the responses was that the participants wished to be part of the leader group.

When I asked a participant about his greatest personal wish for the leadership training, he answered:

> *T: Now you're a participant in the leadership training in the masterclass. What is your personal wish for the leadership training?*
>
> *P: Yes, well, first, I want to become part of the big leadership group, and I want to get to know the other leaders so that I can cooperate with them in daily work. Uh … I also want to have the same, that I obtain that knowledge, so I can be like … the way top management has decided, that I have because they believe it will make me able to become a better leader in the municipality. Uh… well, then, I think, then I also have the wish to, to learn something new.*
>
> *T: Where do you notice, where have you noticed that you learn this?*
>
> *P: Uh… I have … well, I've noticed that I get to know someone … I get a relationship with the other leaders because I began … I almost didn't know any of the other leaders at all, so I think I have a foundation to go out and cooperate with the other leaders also across geography, so I've got that out of it. I've also got an understanding about what it is they're talking about when they say action before attitude, what they mean by that. I know that well now, what that's about.*

The participant wanted to be part of the previously mentioned leader group. The participant said that being part of the leader group was a relational connection with his leader colleagues and that he wished to be acquainted with the others. The participant confirmed that through

the use of bodily experiences with his leader colleagues, a form of relational connection with his colleagues was constructed that did not necessarily occur through customary interactions such as traditional meetings and conversations. The use of embodiment in addition to the linguistic experience triggered the emotions of the participant. The participant's security in this quotation seemed connected to his expression that it was important to be a member of the leader group and to feel that "we do this together". This was connected to the requirements set by top management for cooperation in leadership. Nevertheless, the participant showed ambivalence in terms of uncertainty about the requirements that top management had set. Top management represented an authority that involved a certain superiority that fractured the participant's need to belong to the group: as *top management has decided that I must have because they believe it will make me capable of becoming a better leader in the Danish municipality. Uh… well I think that, then I also have the desire to, learn something new, because …*At the same time, this participant showed that participation was not merely a duty and a requirement but also a form of encouragement and stimulation for his own wishes to learn more about leadership. When I asked the participant what he had learned as part of the leader group, he spoke about how he had gained a relationship to the others in the masterclass and thereby a better foundation for cooperation. He then pointed out that he now knew the difference between action and attitude, learning of a different kind than he had expected. The participant associated this with embodiment, with having to use his whole self in the different exercises in the leadership training. In this way, he said that he had become better acquainted with himself by getting to know others, although this was a relational experience that originated primarily in the experience that exercises and practising leadership provided more learning than theories about leadership.

Ambivalence was articulated in the interviews and in the fieldwork observations, but it was not addressed explicitly in the group. The balance between using embodiment and being able to reflect on it in the relevant leadership contexts remained mostly implicit. My research interviews provided a context for reflecting on the use of embodiment and its meanings. From my observational fieldwork, I saw that the training did not include reflecting on the embodied experiences. The lack of reflection meant that the leader group lost the possibility of addressing future complexity and the implications for learning and leadership. I claim that all the leaders missed out on important reflections on their own experiences in encountering

"embodiment". Sharing these experiences with their leader colleagues would normalize the thoughts and feelings they had in encountering embodiment. Because these were completely new exercises for them, the leaders had many conflicting thoughts when they had to reveal themselves in this way. A risk in not reflecting is that they could lose the effect and their learning.

It appears that the consultancy company and top management had not problematized the implicit power that lay in almost forcing everyone to perform the bodily exercises. The ambivalence in the encounters with embodiment can be both motivating and conflict creating, which can lead to the transferral of leadership in the direction of instrumental and individualistic leadership, based on contradiction rather than congruence.

4.1.3   Summary of the discourse: The discourse of embodied leadership training

Embodied leadership had a starting point in the use of music and bodily movement. This approach was adopted in the masterclass as part of the new leader requirements. Through embodiment and the descriptions of the leaders, the members of the leader group quickly became acquainted with one another, which created greater security and a form of "levelling". This levelling enabled the leaders to become acquainted with their own and others' feelings and emotions. This helped the leaders to become more attentive to the importance of relations. The use of embodied experiences contributed to new learning processes, which contributed to the participants beginning to view leadership in terms of collective, cooperative patterns. The use of embodied experiences in the masterclass helped the participants move from a fixed understanding of what good leadership consists of to a curious and wondering approach about what good leadership *can* be. However, learning through embodiment processes can be unpleasant, as it touches upon aspects such as identity and deeper defence mechanisms.

4.2   Introduction to the discourse of relational leadership and its challenges

The identification of the complexities of relational leadership and its difficulties mostly concerns the emotional experience of the masterclass. The emotional experiences helped the

leaders connect to one another. However, the leaders did not have the opportunity to reflect much on their emotions and feelings.

4.2.1 Discourse no. 2: Relational leadership and its challenges

The findings show that leaning towards new relational contexts in leadership created a form of "levelling", meaning that many of the participants felt connected to their leader colleagues and their superiors in a completely new way. They had previously found that they were disconnected from their leader colleagues and their superiors to a much greater extent than they had experienced in the masterclass. Top managers facilitated a different leadership culture in the training, in which they challenged their own existing leadership in the organization. Their previous leadership experiences were mostly based on individualistic and instrumental leadership discourses. However, turning from an individualistic to a relational style of leadership invites people to present themselves in a more personal manner. This could be considered both positive and challenging, as being more personal involves being vulnerable.

One participant created meaning and understanding regarding being positioned in a relational leadership in which new structural contexts govern leadership as follows:

> *T: What is it you notice about this reorganization? What is it that's different going forward in relation to leadership?*
>
> *P: Well it's different that I'm much closer.*
>
> *T: You're closer? Why are you closer?*
>
> *P: Well, it's, of course, partly part of my job, my functional description, and I think that I can't just do leadership if they don't see if it works out there with the users it's supposed to work for. Instead of, for example, calling co-workers in here as leaders, I'm out there locally visiting them. See, sense what type of workplace is this. What type of co-workers do I meet out there? Now they know who I am; in the beginning, it's really meaningful when a neutral person comes along, how one is greeted. Are they welcoming, is there indifference, or what is it that's happening, and what is it we want to feel? I don't care much for those workplaces where it's written, we're friendly, we're helpful. We don't need to write that. People should just experience that of course.*
>
> *T: Yes, we should notice it?*

> *P: Yes immediately. I mean, I've had hefty discussions with my leader colleagues about that before and since. They've sat and interpreted all those values, where I think that has no meaning. It has to be lived.*

This participant suggested that she had an experience and noticed people in a different way, through being positioned in new relational contexts and that she was much closer to her co-workers. The participant showed that encounters with training in leadership had emphasized for her that such training must be primarily experience based and that she learned best by living it, as she pointed out with "*It has to be lived*". Training that was experiential had led to a leadership process that was experiential – lived, not theorized. It was clear that the leader was placed close to her employees and to top management because the masterclass had facilitated a new leadership practice that had meaning for her. When the leader talked about being relationally closer to her employees, she argued that through being relationally close, she achieved more effective and better leadership. Even though the participant believed that being closer was closely connected to the formal functional meaning and the job of leader itself, it appeared that the new relational and structural contexts had opened new potential spaces for her to establish ways of practising leadership that were more predictable for all concerned. The new structural contexts consisted of the leader being more involved in her team, especially in the direction of cross-disciplinary competence.

When I asked the participant why she was more closely involved, she answered, "*Well, it's of course partly part of my job, my function description, and I think that I can't just do leadership if they don't see if it works out there with the users it's supposed to work for.*" Here, it appeared that the leader considered that processes identical to those between leaders and employees take place between employees and elderly citizens in the municipality. When changes in the relational contexts brought her closer to the employees, this would also change the relation between the employees and the citizens in that they would become closer and thereby ensure goal attainment. The meaning construction and experiences of the leaders in the encounter with the new relational and structural contexts provided more effective leadership that would contribute to placing the employees and the citizens in new positions. The participant spoke about how leadership must be lived and that it was not something written on paper to be interpreted in all directions with colleagues. Thus, leadership is something that occurs in relational interaction through shared creation of meaning. These statements were connected to newly available discourses for the leader and a feeling of new

arenas of action and a position from which to act. The participant also spoke about how leadership cannot be conducted "in here" and implicitly criticized those "inside" for not understanding the reality "out there", as the following comment from participant A illustrated: *Instead of, for example, calling co-workers in here as leader, I'm out there locally visiting them.*

Before I refer to the next extract from an interview with a participant, I provide an illustration from my fieldwork in which the chief consultant held a presentation for all the participants in the masterclass. The context for this presentation was the first leader gathering in the large plenary hall, where the participants sat at coffee tables in small groups and listened. The chief consultant spoke about time and experience in relation to learning in which the main issue was the separation between the experience of the leader and the fact that expectations of expertise are increasing in the present day because of the constant changes that arise in society. The chief consultant referred to Koselleck (2007) in one of her lectures to all the participants. See my fieldwork observations notes on this topic below:

> *"My idea is that the difference between experiences and expectations is becoming steadily greater in the current times; or rather, more precisely, expectations are beginning to be torn constantly away from all other previous experience". The chief consultant talks above about how vulnerability about learning has arisen because there are fewer and fewer overlaps between experience and future expectations and connected this to movement and manoeuvring skills and that they should train at the test centre with the focus on action before attitude. How concepts develop over time and the divide between experience and expectations have become greater in our time. How to create meaning if the whole time there is something else, how we can train movement and skill in manoeuvring. How to view experiences, what movements are there in leadership that the collective notices. All the small leadership actions do something with the whole picture. If fellowship stops and you are alone as a leader, how can you as leader ensure fellowship?"* (26.11.2014)

When I read my fieldwork observation notes and made my own constructions of what the consultant leader was talking about, I became aware that leadership has many paradoxes. In our time, these paradoxes are related to creating certainty from uncertainty, and human vulnerability arises in the space between the present and the future. When the chief consultant spoke about experience in general from a philosophical perspective, questions arose, such as how can we notice experiences, and which movements in leadership will the collective (the employees) notice? This concerns how the masterclass facilitated gaining access to the

experiences of the participants, as learning processes are central in systemic interventions. As people, we are whole persons, and how we feel, and our personal and work contexts also play a role.

I understand the use of mental images and language by the leader as an expression of the vulnerability that can arise in leadership between the present and the future. This is because the divide between one's own experiences as leader and current expectations is widening. In this space between the present and the future, uncertainty and vulnerability arise in human interaction. Tempo in changes and reorganizations can lead to a leader not managing to connect followers with his or her leadership. The chief consultant reminded all the leaders of the importance of followership and a greater presence in leadership (followership and co-creating leadership) as well as the importance of all leaders having the opportunity to qualify their own experiences by standing in the vulnerable space between their own experiences and the requirements for new leadership that concerned moving all leaders from silo leadership to ensuring followership through social construction. The chief consultant set forth the conditions for training in this space of possibility in which the participants would try leadership in the form of viewing experiences with the aim of closing the space between the different professions in the organization, which is completely in accordance with systemic interventions and social constructionism.

In the following extract, I asked the participant about his experiences with participation in bilateral meetings with his superior, which this participant had not previously undergone. The bilateral conversations were one-to-one conversations in which the participant conversed with his leader approximately once a month:

> T: Bilateral conversations mean that you have conversations with your leader there?
>
> P: Yes
>
> T: How often do you do that?
>
> P: Once a month following the plan, and it's very new for us, of course, where we haven't had... for me, I've had to have a conversation with my leader once a year besides the general meeting….
>
> T: So that's a big change

P: Yes, it's a very big change.

T: What has it done for you?

P: Well, I think, of course, it's good enough because before that, there were some of my colleagues who, uh, had a great deal to do with their leaders, but it was always if there was silliness, right, I mean where we can say here, there is as well. There is more sparring when we can develop the present together instead of it getting to be just some silliness.

The descriptions of the participant showed that top management had facilitated closer and relational leadership through conducting bilateral meetings with leaders every month. The participant said that he now had a conversation every month with his superior and that this was very new; he referred to this previously occurring once a year. When I asked what having monthly conversations with his superior did for him as a leader, he answered in the "I" form. To justify his own arguments, he referred to his leadership colleagues' experiences to justify his own arguments regarding the need for monthly conversations. This could also be associated with Danish cultural ideas, which contain a strong emphasis on the culture of equality as important in social interaction as well as in language. The leader spoke here about how leadership colleagues had previously spent much time on relationships outside their formal job roles, much "silliness", much confusion and lack of seriousness that were not appropriate at work. It appeared that the leader in encounters with the masterclass had been able to clarify his leader role through becoming positioned in new relational contexts. The leader spoke about how bilateral conversations with his superior had brought him much closer to his own leadership, and he experienced this as meaningful. Because of the bilateral conversations, the leader had possibly become better acquainted with himself as well by becoming closer to his environment.

The leader in the extract above represented the comments of many participants when he emphasized that relationally, he was much closer to his colleagues and his own leadership. It appeared that the leader was speaking about how his own development was connected to his experience, that he was much closer to his own role as leader. The participant also showed far more consciousness that his own development was created primarily from outside and through encounters with meaningful others, for example, his superior, and that leadership had to be more relational and contextual. The masterclass facilitated new discursive practices, and the leader answered, "*There is more sparring when we can develop the present together*

instead of it getting to be just some silliness." This showed that the leader positioned himself towards relational and contextual leadership and was motivated by new discourses in which he emphasized that "we can develop this together". This differed from the individualistic leadership on which he drew before participation in the masterclass.

4.2.2 Sub-discourse: The use of self in leadership connected to embodiment

What leaders "bring" that can be traced back to them as a private person and the interaction between them as a private person and their formal leadership role is of great importance. The data show the implications for an individual's own explanations and meaning creation about leadership and learning. This approach openly challenges individualistic and hierarchical discourse in terms of importance for being a good leader. It also challenges the idea that thoughts and theories are most important for becoming a good leader, which was also a dominant discourse with the participants and one that the masterclass destabilized.

When I asked one of the participants about how she balanced the personal and the professional, she answered as follows:

> *P: I also have a life besides this. And I have it like, if I didn't have a life besides this, then I would be a bad leader. I think I use a lot of myself as a person. I'm not emotional as such in my work, but I'm…I don't think I'm afraid of showing what I feel. It's not like I sit and weep. It's definitely not that, but I show a lot of myself and I lead a lot with my own person.*

> *T: So you think that in a way, that being open about the personal and the professional is a balance. You do?*

> *P: I think I do. I think one has a hard job being a leader today in an organization that, in any case you have a hard time being a leader today if you don't use your personal self. It's such a part of leadership, but I don't have any problem with that either, but I think one should be authentic, both as a co-worker and as a leader, and we should be authentic towards one another but also towards the citizens, also be open and honest. And I try to be very open and very honest in my leadership and don't play any… there*

are, of course, sometimes I have to play a particular role, and then I do that, but in the everyday, then I think I don't play any role. Then, I'm who I am.

The leader explained her own balance between the personal and the professional as having a life outside work and that this is important for being a good leader and superior. The descriptions of the leader showed that she balanced her life by being aware of the separation between the professional and the private. She said that she used herself as a person and could be personal in her leadership but not emotional. At the same time, she argued that she could show feelings and emotions, probably driven by recognizable contextual frameworks from her own life regarding what is within and outside her comfort zone. It appears that being able to show one's own personal self may be associated with one's own leadership behaviour.

When I asked the leader a follow-up question, *"So you think that in a way, that being open about the personal and the professional is a balance?"*, the leader answered that she did. At the same time, she uses "one" in her own explanations and generalized her statements by saying that it is important to use one's own person in leadership. It appeared that connecting oneself to a collective in which everybody is equal created a measure of security. "One" can also reflect the individualistic discourse. Whether she emphasized the middle space in which personal history influences the professional leader role is difficult to say, but when she used expressions such as being "authentic" towards one another, she was implicitly speaking about this middle space in leadership, in which people have an opportunity to be who they are there and then and for better or worse. The leader also connected her arguments for being authentic to her employees and to the citizens of the municipality and therefore placed a normative condition on social interaction in that people should be open, honest and authentic. The leader's constructions could also be connected to participation in the masterclass, which facilitated new relational and structural contexts. This influenced the leader's meaning construction of her own leadership and identity, making the leadership position her own and not just "playing a role".

Before I discuss the next extract (interview-transcript) from a participant, I provide an illustration from my fieldwork observation notes from the "examination day" (22.05.2015):

On the "examination day", all the leader teams presented their learning processes and what they had to say about their participation in the leader programme. This session was conducted in a plenary hall with a stage; the participants were first served appetizers, and there was a good atmosphere in the room. At the same time, I noticed a certain tension and nervousness. One of the participants approached me and said that the group had constructed a new language about leadership through all the gatherings in the masterclass. The participant was clear that being sent individually to a typical leader course would not have had the same results; this was something the participants needed to do together, as they had done in the masterclass programme (22.05.2015). The leader of the consultancy firm opened the session by saying that the course should be celebrated. It seemed as though the consultants were proud of what they had contributed and that they were surprised by themselves. Before each leader team presented its learning processes, a professor from a well-known university in Denmark was introduced. He was to sit in a panel with the leader of the consultancy firm and give feedback for each presentation. The leader of the consultancy firm addressed the participants during the opening remarks and spoke about how the "examination day" was not an evaluation but that everyone was there to learn from the masterclass and from one another.

The fieldwork observation notes show that the participants became more aware that head and body are connected in leadership, and of the relation to followership in leadership, with special weight on transitions (the psychological phenomenon). I heard the following comments during the course (22.05.2015):

> "We have had much progress and thank top management for the masterclass programme. Through WILL-CAN-SHALL, we have been on a journey. We are all new in this expanded leader group. A significant change is the interdisciplinary team. In 2014, we didn't know one another. How can we support our interdisciplinary team? What is an interdisciplinary team? We need to move ourselves in the 'head' and connect experiences in our bodies and muscles that remember, so we remember this with song and reality checks. It isn't the changes that are stressful, but it is the transitions (the psychological phenomenon), not the changes themselves."

My observations of this group indicated that the participants had changed their way of constructing their learning processes. The group members said that they had made much

progress, and through the WILL-CAN-SHALL model, they had become more aware of this, especially where there was something they should change and reorganize in their leadership. Interdisciplinary efforts and teamwork to support the citizens of the municipality were completely new structural contexts in the organization. Based on my fieldnotes and observation of this group, and with the interviews of the participants in mind, I claim that systemic interventions changed the way the participants constructed leadership in the organization, as they pointed out: they needed to change the focus from only the mind and connect experiences in their bodies and muscles as well. These experiences came from bodily experiences, and the participants connected them to the perspective that it is not changes that are stressful but rather transitions (the psychological phenomenon). The participants became more aware of the space between or the uncertainty that dominates between the past and the present with regard to goal attainment. The fieldwork observation notes show that the participants in the masterclass had been on a journey of discovery: "Who am I, for myself and others?" This is in accordance with systemic interventions and social constructionism. At the same time, I did not find more critical reflections from the group. There are many paradoxes, such as predictability and unpredictability, relational power and powerlessness, in which individuals influence the team and the team influences the individual. In light of this, the participants had many experiences around the paradoxes, but I found through my observations that such challenges were shut out. At the same time, I must recognize the possibility that paradoxes were a theme that was discussed outside my research context.

When I asked one of the participants about how she balanced personal and work contexts, she responded as follows:

> T: What is the personal for you at work? What would it mean if you were to ask for permission to work with your personal qualities in your leadership?
>
> P: It might be, for example, if there is a leader who, when she encounters criticism, becomes very personally affected by that. Then, I could choose to work with that. Yes. But it can easily be the case that it's her and me there who have a conversation about that or a course about that, but it could also easily be that I would find a solution where it was someone other than me.
>
> T: Okay, so you would have checked it with some others; then, if you found you had a co-worker who is hurt or is down in the dumps …

P: Yes. I mean, of course, I think, I mean if, as a start, then I always look to see if there is something there that's related to the job one is doing, if you understand.…

T: I'm not black-and-white in my way of thinking. It's exciting to listen to you.

P: I mean, I think, I must respect, if one comes along and says you know what I am … What can it be … my husband has left me, or my child is very ill or something or other. I'm just bound to relate to that because it influences work in some way or other, but also it's always … I'm not to go in and begin to discuss family relations with the co-workers. That's my boundary. Yes, there's something that's in relation to work.

T: Is that your personal boundary, do you think, or is it a work boundary?

P: I think it's the work boundary, yes, because I can of course … I think if it was one of my co-workers who came and began to tell about something, that had so … I mean, then I would have it so that I would ask if I could listen to it and perhaps also come with some suggestions. If it was something that was recurring, then I would ask if she had another place, someone she could talk to about this here, and I think that's my limit. I might perhaps at another time have to fire them because there are difficulties; then, I also have to watch myself, where is my boundary.

T: Has this been a theme for the consultancy firm, a typical discussion topic you have now in the courses?

P: No, I don't think so. Not that I've experienced.

The leader referred to an example of a person in an encounter receiving criticism at work and becoming strongly personally affected by this criticism. She emphasized that she perhaps would engage in dialogue with the employee to investigate the situation more thoroughly. It may seem implicit that she drew on the discourse that there is a division between the private life and work; later, I will discuss whether this is protection against engaging emotions at work. I wondered how the masterclass and top management have problematized how they should work with the intersection of a leader's personal history and the formal leader role within the context of the masterclass. Questions such as what the leaders bring with them into this middle space of behaviour, feelings and emotions and how these influence difficult leader situations appeared to be repeated as questions in the participant's own understanding. When I asked the leader whether this had been treated in the masterclass, the leader answered, *"No, I don't think so. Not that I've experienced."*

As described in the following quotation, when the participant received an offer of personal coaching, she chose team coaching with her employees instead. The participant gave the following explanation for her choice:

> P: Of course, not everyone there is on board with such a process ... it's of course a great space to do it in ... we at the top have had to ... I don't know if you know this ... I... we've been offered individual supervision in connection with the masterclass... and we chose then to ... that I was the responsible in those two areas ... we chose to get supervision together, us three ... when we're to work with the area, then we had a consultant from the consultancy firm ... and we've had about three sessions, I think. ...
>
> T: How was that ...?
>
> P: It's been good. ... It was of course about how we as responsible leaders best cooperate and coordinate. ... There it's been more personal because there's been a little room one has sat in ... but when one sits as well in those big contexts in which top management is also sitting and where we're sitting and where the consultancy firm is sitting as well ... I mean, I don't know how much value there is in those reflections, well ... there are some there who never say anything ... there are perhaps some who never say what they most want to say, right? ...

The extract above illustrates the reaction the participant had when she received the offer of personal coaching as part of the masterclass course. This extract points out the masterclass destabilized the strong discourse of individualistic and instrumental leadership and facilitated new relational contexts in which the leaders said that they had moved much closer to their environments.

In the extract above, the leader argued that not all were on board with such a process and that her leadership provided many possibilities of ways to lead. She said that she had received the offer of individual coaching, after which she said that "we, three co-workers, chose to receive supervision with the consultant from the consultancy firm as coach". Implicitly, this appeared as though the leader was seeking security through pointing out that this was something they were doing together. The experience she had had through both embodiment and new relational and structural contexts may have been guiding her choice. Even though she used the "we" form in the decision about having shared coaching, this also showed that the leader herself was the one determining this to achieve security for her own leadership and relational coordination in her own district for which she was leader and had responsibility.

The leader was also critical of the value of the reflections over the participants' own leadership in the plenary hall sessions of the masterclass in terms of whether it was close enough to her own work context or whether all were sufficiently secure and comfortable to expose their thoughts and reflections in the masterclass group or in the larger group gatherings. The findings show that the participants became better acquainted with themselves in encounters with their surroundings and their own emotional register and more body-oriented awareness. This was a result of the relational interaction they experienced in the masterclass. The findings show that the participants placed great weight on "we", similarities, and uniqueness and that they sought consensus in their meaning creation. When I challenged the leaders in the interviews on their experiences with the new relational knowledge, they opened with "I" and then argued for and emphasized "we".

The findings also show that the participants became better acquainted with themselves and that they changed their leader identity in the direction of supportive presence with their leader colleagues and their employees. This was a result of the masterclass facilitating new relational and contextual frameworks for the participants. Through this, leaders became more aware of the relationships between them and those for whom they were leaders. It also appeared that they realized the division between the private, personal and professional and that they could be personal but not private in their leadership to ensure a "neutral" space for action in leadership. The data show ambivalence in how they created identity and meaning in leadership, and that identity was created primarily through a focus on "the others" – their leader colleagues and co-workers. Some of this can influence the self-care and maintenance of the leader: "In terms of needs, my colleagues and co-workers have me as a leader, and how can I help them by being their leader?" The data show that the identities of the leaders developed through the others' gaze and the expectations and needs of others for their leaders. This challenged the dominant individualistic and instrumental discourses that have a strong basis in hierarchy.

4.2.3 Summary of the discourse: Relational leadership and its challenges

The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges related to the participants in the masterclass being challenged on discourses of individualistic leadership. The masterclass destabilized their origin discourses and facilitated a new discourse in which the participants

had to relate to new relational and structural contexts that concerned the positioning of the leaders at the intersection between their personal histories and their leadership role. The participants increased their awareness regarding followership and found that their praxis as leaders became flexible and adaptive as a result of the systemic interventions in the leadership programme.

4.3   Introduction to the discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership

Top management wanted the leaders in the leader group to have more room to practice leadership with the aim of ensuring the goals of the municipality. The main goal of the top leadership in conducting the masterclass was change in the socio-economic and demographic structures in which citizens' demands for and expectations of individual welfare services had increased. This led to new demands for the direction and leadership of the Danish Welfare Service. The "hierarchy and power" findings also show that the masterclass facilitated different ways of experimenting by taking and giving power in relational leadership.

Discourse no. 3: Power and hierarchy in leadership

Before I discuss the extracts from the interviews that concern the *discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership,* I refer to my fieldnotes and an observation from when top management held a presentation about its expectations of the participants. I use the term top management to anonymize these observations. The context for this presentation was that top management at the first leader gathering of the masterclass had presented and spoken about expectations for participation and with regard to the new requirements for the leaders. The participants sat at coffee tables in the large plenary hall and listened to the presentations.

I wanted to learn more about the ideas of top management regarding why the masterclass was being conducted, as I had had some thoughts beforehand about how systemic interventions starkly contrasted with a more instrumental and individualistic approach to leadership in the organization. The descriptions of top management confirmed that the masterclass was a top-down process with a clear agenda, with special focus on shared learning, shared meaning creation and co-creative leadership, as this quotation from top management recorded in my

fieldwork observation notes indicates. A member of top management spoke about these perspectives and expectations as follows:

> *"We believe that we as leaders create reality through what we say, about our notions, it is important to formulate this cognitively and keep pressure on the organization governmentally. We're busy defining the way forward; we create concepts through our language as leaders. What should we put behind us? Are there any sentences and mental images in the masterclass, then this is about learning in fellowship, helping one another through this leader programme, so that we learn from one another? We in top management offer you a space that you must take hold of. You must not stand alone with this. If we are a group (expanded leader group) and individuals in the group, then this leadership training is top-steered; this is a new era and new context for us. We already see a difference from individual leadership in which we have performed vertical leadership. Now, we will train a more horizontal leadership, in which your team is to work interdisciplinarily towards the citizens. A horizontal leadership is new for us, and it is important that each is aware of this and helps one another. It's this strategy that will provide leader freedom, if you want to be the best leader, focus on less, help the citizens to be adult people; that is, coach the citizens. What's happening here in the masterclass is so important to formulate a clear leadership and makes it easier for level four to connect with their own leadership."*
> (23.10.2014)

From an "outside-in" perspective, such as the one Susan Long (2016) describes, the idea of systemic processes in an organization is that roles are connected. If we take an "outside-in" perspective, the system requires priority in our thinking in terms of both unconscious and conscious processes. This is what I observed when top management held its presentation. My observation and fieldnotes show that the masterclass was designed to contribute to the coordination of leader activities around specific goals to ensure goal attainment. As Visholm (2004) points out, conceptions are an important part of our actions as leaders, and our notions as leaders can also create a foundation for leader actions. In light of this, top management attempted to frame several mental images of what it expected of the participants in the masterclass. My fieldnotes and observations show that top management emphasized the collective learning process in which co-creative activities and shared social constructions contributed to ensuring collaboration and goal attainment within the contextual frames of the organization.

Arguments such as maintaining pressure on the organization governmentally signalled that top management wished to create a movement away from silo behaviour in leadership to facilitate the participants in the masterclass coordinating their actions around central goals so

that the organization would be successful in the change process. In other words, top management used a different language about leadership in the organization that broke with the individualistic discourse that had historically dominated leadership in the organization. My observations show that top managers created clear conditions of interdisciplinary effort towards citizens. The consequences of these conditions were new operations in the organization, which meant that the leaders in the masterclass had to relate to new contextual frameworks in their leadership, moving from the silo approach to a more shared and distributed leadership that demanded "followership". I interpret these descriptions from top management as indicating that the masterclass was to contribute to a closer connection between roles in the organization to ensure goal attainment. In particular, including level four was important so that those employees could view the interdisciplinary efforts as a whole and commit to the new operations in the organization.

The masterclass was an important context for being aware of leaders' ability to see connections in how the new welfare services could be connected to leadership in the municipality. For the top manager, it was central that the leadership training facilitated management processes and that the demand for new leadership was understood primarily in terms of practice and social interaction. The top manager pointed out that if the leaders could not manage these changes, the result would be disharmony in how they operated.

In this lies an implicit thought from top management that hierarchy and power do not always overlap; this issue can be traced back to the dominant individualistic and instrumental discourses that govern leadership, about which the top manager was concerned. Individual leaders continuing in "the old way" was assumed to reflect silo thinking, or unholistic thinking. This language from the top manager was connected to her experiences and thoughts about the limitations she perceived if the leaders continued the "old leadership" approach. Regarding the reason for the leadership training, she commented that it was an invitation to develop something new and that the municipality wanted to offer leadership training that, to a great extent, would ensure goal attainment. 'An invitation to be part of something, then, you'll get that with us.' It appeared that the top manager's arguments were also about giving 'power to the people'. Whether this was a real choice for the leaders or a veiled hierarchical directive from above is discussed later in the thesis. An important question about the 'power and hierarchy' finding is whether participation was truly voluntary. One hypothesis is that the

participants in the masterclass did not have a real choice to refuse to participate. Refusal would probably have led to removal to another role in the organization, as suggested by this quotation from one of the participants: *In reality, it's a very big invitation to, will you ... not do you want to be part of the new but now that we want the new, we want to give something as well. You can get that here.*

In the extract below, the same top manager pointed out the importance of management and leadership and that the leaders must do both, as this is an important part of leadership training:

> *The other side of it. This is about leadership, as management is also leadership, something about being able to lead. At the same time, how could these two things, how can one apply both aspects to achieve the best possible for the individual, also the co-workers, but at the same time be aware of how it is that I can both lead and develop what there is a need for?*

The top manager spoke about the difference between management and leadership. Management is often spoken of in terms of the formal leader role in which power and authority are associated with a particular role. Leadership is described with reference to and compared with the development of social processes, everyday leadership, and interaction with employees (Day, 2000). The top manager talked about how the participants in the masterclass had practiced management based on the formal role, the power and authority of the leader but that leadership concerns daily social interaction with employees. Thus, the top leaders wanted the participants in the masterclass to move closer to leadership. She appeared to mean that the practice of the management role would be a hindrance for the reorganization process they were performing, as the management role draws on leadership practices that have their discursive basis in individualistic and traditional hierarchical power. It appeared that the top manager was speaking more about leadership when she said that leaders must apply both, as the leadership facilitated in the masterclass was more concerned with integrating the conventional way they practiced leadership with contextual relations between the leaders and the employees. This development occurred in social interaction. The top leaders challenged themselves and the existing leadership, which historically was rooted in traditional "top-down" management and had more of a control dimension, to argue for a shift from management to leadership. The latter includes more social interaction and power for those who perform the work. By allowing all the leaders in the expanded leader group to construct

the new requirements of leadership, the top leader assessed a greater likelihood of success in the change process through moving power lower in the hierarchy.

Below is an example of how one of the participants spoke and created meaning about the leadership training being governed from the top:

> *"It is an extremely top-steered process. There's a fixed frame...but within the frame there, they have a great many possibilities, if you look at them and I think in reality, that the frame and filling it as leader...it's the consultancy firms, what's that course called... really good at...giving you the opportunity to see, what, how can I use that frame, how is it actually that I can use my leader-related...potential,... how can I myself be challenged in it, uh... and I think that's incredibly important when we're so top-steered...."*

The participant confirmed that the leadership training was extremely top-governed and steered using very fixed frames, both in leadership and in how they completed the change process in the organization. Implicitly, it seemed that the leadership of the municipality had facilitated clear conditions and clear contextual frames for leadership training in which top leadership was concerned with wholeness and context and that these should provide the leadership power in the organization. When the participant emphasized that within the frames, there were many possibilities, she created a meaning and context for herself. The participant's argument could also have been a result of the systemic approach of the masterclass consultants to leadership training and the connection of the training to concrete leadership challenges. In other words, the participant found that she had a larger part in and greater ownership of the change process along with her leader colleagues.

It seems that the participant's understanding and meaning making came about through a focus on external contexts more than her own job contexts. My hypothesis is that the participant had emotionally positive experiences of participation in the masterclass, where the collective was in focus with the consequence that the 'power' aspect of the hierarchy was not problematized by the participant in terms of daily operations. These thoughts may seem somewhat naïve in relation to the hierarchical power, which in any case would be strongly present in a top-governed leadership training process, that she herself held. At the same time, the participant might have been aware of her own power base in leadership and demanded this power in her daily leadership, therefore viewing the masterclass as an opportunity to improve her leadership in the way she emphasized as follows: *The consultancy firm is really good*

at…giving you the opportunity to see, what, how can I use that frame, how is it actually that I can use my leader-related…potential? It is interesting that the participant used "leader-related", which is also suggestive of leadership rather than management.

I provide an illustration from my fieldwork observations notes at the final gathering of the masterclass for a concluding presentation in which the topic was the learning processes of the participants and what they said they had learned and wanted to focus on in their leadership. I discuss this illustration from my observations in this section concerning the discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership because the participants made it clear that the masterclass had been governed from the top and had laid down clear conditions for moving from silo individualistic leadership to facilitation of leadership through systemic interventions in which the new requirements called for increased collaboration and co-creative leadership.

The context of this fieldwork observation was my participation at the final leader gathering of the masterclass and the final "examination", in which all the participants were to present their learning processes from the masterclass. My observation is from one of the teams that presented its learning processes. The "examination" was conducted over the course of one day and in a plenary hall with a stage, with all the participants sitting with their teams at coffee tables. In addition, there was a panel that gave feedback to the teams. The panel members were an external professor, the chief consultant and the owner of the consultancy firm. The team I observed had distributed the roles so that all the members spoke about their learning processes but also what the team had learned and focused on in the masterclass programme. The other leader colleagues from the masterclass sat with their teams at coffee tables. There was an informal atmosphere, and the leaders of the consultancy firm emphasized that this day concerned learning and qualifying what they had experienced in the masterclass. All the other consultants and top management of the organization were also present. I provide an illustration from my fieldnotes that I made during and after the team had presented its learning processes regarding what the participants spoke about in their presentation (22.05.2015):

> *"Within the team, we've discussed what interdisciplinary means and how we're going to do this in terms of the citizens. We've worked from within and outwards by concretizing our own leadership. We've used 'witnessing' and emphasized all narratives in our case team. We've practised open reflection, practised governing*

conversations and emphasized action before attitude. Thereafter, we've problematized cooperation between levels three and four, where level three have been sparring partners and that this has been a 'gift' for how leadership has developed. We've reflected on differences in small and larger teams, fellowship; here we had something new that we've developed together, clear framing conditions and expectations and clarifications. In discussions, it became clear which people were in the leader group and the thinking that lay in the group. We've become better at dialogue without interruption. Governing conversations were very good for us. There were many reflections in the room. We had different views about who was sparing within the group. The governing conversations kept us on track – they can move the whole organization's (identity). The WILL-CAN-SHALL model has been a determining factor for how we reflect on our leadership." (22.05.2015).

Through my fieldwork observations, I became concerned with how systemic interventions had influenced how the participants spoke about leadership in the organization and the practical implications for leadership. The participants were clear about coming from a more traditional leadership: top-down and driven by silo thinking. This way of thinking and the behaviour I observed changed significantly throughout the leader programme, as indicated both in interviews of the participants and in my fieldwork. Therefore, I was excited to see how participants in the team I observed constructed meaning about their own learning processes and encounters with systemic interventions. The participants spoke about how they had had the opportunity to construct their own leadership at the same time that there were clear directives from top management for how the group itself had to ensure team and interdisciplinary efforts aimed at the citizens. In this work, they had been concerned with dialogue and the practical implications of leadership. The observations showed that the masterclass, through systemic approaches, had facilitated greater connection than before among the leader roles in the organization. The way the masterclass was conducted demanded clarity in the thinking of the participants and required the consultants and top management to facilitate new discursive practices for leadership, such as co-creative activities and co-creative leadership.

The team presentation showed that there were clear frameworks. Governing conversations ensured that interdisciplinary efforts would be aimed at the citizens, whereas previously, the services had been separate. In light of this, the presentation showed that the participants had had the opportunity to construct leadership in which knowledge and learning were produced through language in social interactions; leaders in their teams had practised open dialogue, and the narratives of each team member had had a place. The participants' descriptions

showed that the masterclass had facilitated levels two and three in inviting level four into decisions about how the team would construct future leadership. As the participants expressed this in their presentation, "*where level three have been sparring partners and that this has been a "gift" for how leadership has developed*". This provides clear proof of a radical change in leadership in the organization through systemic interventions moving away from face-to-face, one-to-one leadership – which is a way to integrate experiences into social systems and governing contexts. This again increased the focus on followership in leadership.

In the extract below, the leader confirmed that the masterclass was a top-governed leadership training programme with clear conditions in relation to the reorganization process faced by the organization and supported the idea that it had to be top-steered. The participant expressed ideas about relational power and possibilities for dialogue.

When I asked the participant if she had been able to be herself, the participant answered as follows:

> *T: How do you find the top-steered process; do you find that you have been allowed to be yourself?*
>
> *P: Yes! (laughs) I think of course that it's been extremely top-steered, and I would say, I think as well, now that it's time for one to turn this organization around so much as one has done, then one can't avoid that there are some things that should be top-steered. So I don't strictly speaking have much difficulty with it, so long a time that it's been; what I think has been difficult in that period, that's when one has expressed from top management down that one really wants to have dialogue, and then I don't experience dialogue. That I think is difficult because it makes it just suddenly untrustworthy for me, and that's where, where it gets really difficult for me to be in and where I can become a bit unsatisfied. ...*
>
> *T: Yes, but how do you experience it ...?*
>
> *P: I experience it in that we can have a top management who stands there and says that she would so like to have dialogue, but then it's not what that is. ...*

The participant said that she did not have difficulties with the masterclass being top-governed but had difficulties with top managers saying they wanted dialogue but then not listening – i.e., the participant became disappointed and unhappy when the top leaders did not demonstrate relational leadership lower in the hierarchy. The participant found this to be a breach of trust and argued that she had lost some respect for her superiors. Furthermore, she

said that it was difficult to stand in the leader role when she was not heard, and she could become dissatisfied. The leader said that she was dissatisfied and disappointed when she encountered the opposite of dialogue in meetings with several top managers, when the participant herself invited dialogue but experienced being met not with dialogue but rather with traditionally hierarchical power. The descriptions of the participant suggested that she did not experience being heard and seen as a person with feelings and emotions in contact with top leadership.

These descriptions may mean that encountering hierarchy and power came as a surprise to the participant. The leadership training, with systemic approaches and embodiment, demanded that the participant use her body in many relational exercises in social interaction, and these approaches received strong acknowledgement from all the participants in the masterclass. At the same time, hierarchical power quickly enters dialogues and the everyday from leadership at the very top. The participant's expressions in the above extract point out precisely that the good feeling created by embodiment can quickly be countered with relational demands from the hierarchy. The top leadership invited a more relational leadership that included feelings and emotions, and the participant experienced something different in the hierarchy. There may also have been an expectation from top management that the participants in the masterclass demand power and administer the power associated with the formal leader role independent of top management.

The extract below concerns six leaders I interviewed after the masterclass leadership training was completed. This is a participant at level four who reported to those who conducted the masterclass. The participant had also had leadership training in the municipality's test centre with the leader group that I followed in this research project. When I asked whether the training was top-governed, the participant answered as follows:

> P: Yes, it's top-steered…yes, it is….
>
> T: How… say a bit about that … how is it …?
>
> P: It's an unbelievably top-steered system we have, I have to say that … but we have… I have it so that, we have … I have a fantastically good leader, and we have a great deal of freedom with responsibility. … It's a big organizational change that makes it so that there's top-steering, but… it's now and then I think too much, but that … yes, I think it's a bit too much, but we don't notice it much down here so much, I think. …

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T: I get so curious about what everybody says, it's a top-steered process ... at the same time, they say that we have a lot of space. ...

P: Yes, we have. ... Well, I mean it's, it's that we get to know ... it's like this, and this is the way we're going to go.... If we then, for example, say some things that we perhaps feel could have been a little more appropriate in the running ... one doesn't listen too much to that ... but when this masterclass here, the last masterclass I would say, ... also there was some of that, that this masterclass did for me so well, it was our top management, and they actually got suddenly extremely close, which they haven't been. ...

T: Oh, so you noticed that ... here...?

P: Yes, I did ... top management we never notice, but she's also a director, that's something else, right. ... But it got suddenly very close by, that they found out that we actually had colleagues who were about to break down because of this work pressure that we've been through ... and even though they say that word, but we know it full well, but suddenly to get to know from 30 people that this here, we can't keep up with it, these are completely unreasonable conditions you're putting on us...and that the leader was actually moved by this...he was....

T: So great ...

P: Yes, I think so, I think so....

When I asked the participant whether the masterclass was top-governed, she emphasized that the leadership training (both the training and the organization) was top-steered, with the implication that the municipal management is top-steered through hierarchical power. The leader spoke about how they needed this top-steering and that it would in turn lead to a more effective reorganization for the municipality. At the same time, the participant explained the causality by saying that she had a fantastic leader who protected her from this top-steering, of which the participant said there could easily be too much. The leader compared the training with the leadership before the masterclass. Before the masterclass, the leader found that top management was absent and not much engaged in how it actually was to be part of leadership and out in the field with the users in the municipality: *if we then, for example, say some things that we perhaps feel could have been a little more appropriate in the running ... one doesn't listen too much to that.* The participant said that this changed through the masterclass, where top management was present and listened and made greater understanding visible, especially when the leaders were able to speak about the challenges they faced in relation to users in the municipality. When I asked the participant what this did for her, she apparently became more

emotional and talked about how top management and her leader suddenly had become closer in their leadership than earlier.

It is also possible, however, that top managers recognized that they must move more power to the leaders at all levels in the hope that this would lead to all leader levels experiencing connection and wholeness and that they perceived the meaning of the new requirements for leadership. The participant justified her comments by referring to "the other" colleagues to create meaning for herself, for example, *that they found out that we actually had colleagues who were about to break down because of this work pressure that we've been through.* The participant said that when this theme was discussed in a plenary hall session with 30 leaders at level four, top management and her leader were actually moved. It appeared that there was an implicit acknowledgement and understanding that many experienced pressures at work, causing some to break down. She spoke about how this made the participants feel heard and seen by their top managers, and it gave her a great deal. The participant clearly felt that top management had facilitated feedback processes in which the participants were heard and seen, and she confirmed that this was a good experience and an experience of being acknowledged. As this interview was conducted directly afterward, we must assume that the leader had reflected on this experience and been moved by it.

At the same time, the descriptions above show that this situation contained both "closeness and control". The leader experienced feeling closer to top management; at the same time, this should be considered a paradox, as there is a "control function" in the leader's description. Both this leader and top management have authority (based on their roles), and their relation to the employee must be considered a complementary relationship. Thus, "closeness and control" could contribute to an increased control of top management through greater presence.

The top manager spoke about the importance of the municipal leaders and employees understanding that they are in a change process and are to deliver new welfare services to the citizens of the municipality. New welfare services demand new leadership and raise questions about how leaders can become more attentive to these new demands. The top manager made new conditions and connected the leadership training to a time perspective that again said something about the contextual relations within which the municipality operated, such as

Danish socio-economic and demographic structures that again influenced the new demands of leadership.

4.3.1 Sub-discourse: Test centre, the context for action-oriented and co-creative learning

The test centre provided the opportunity for leaders at levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 to train in relevant contexts from their daily work in which interaction with their "everyday" challenges was staged. A general goal of the training activities was to work in teams, with interdisciplinary efforts aimed at citizens instead of delivering separate services through different professions.

The test centre was a large building with large rooms. The largest rooms were divided into several cells (meeting rooms) with moveable dividing walls. The test centre was used as a training arena in which all the participants in the masterclass were to practice the new requirements, which were represented in a large "cultural" shift from individualistic leadership to a shared construction of leadership.

Through my fieldwork observations, it was easy to see that there were somewhat fixed frames for what was practised, as the form, content and structure were decided in advance (Appendix 4). This represents a paradox. On the one hand, there were some pre-defined guidelines for the content and structure (Appendix 5). On the other hand, the participants had great opportunities to construct their own identity as leaders by working on the tasks. Thus, the consultants and top management facilitated the participants in undertaking development themselves to ensure greater ownership through practising and learning from their experiences in interaction with their leader colleagues. All the participants in the masterclass were present in the test centre, where each leader team trained using the same leader cases. In addition, leaders at level 4 was invited to participate, as they were also part of each leader team. Level 4 was described as an important leader level, as it is closest to the employees who work with the citizens of the municipality.

As an observer in the test centre, I wished to explore how the participants in the leader team experienced their learning processes and how they constructed meaning in the co-creative activities in encounters with systemic interventions. Furthermore, the paradoxes that arose during the simulation were of interest. My fieldnotes were developed during and right after

these two days in the test centre, and they are extracted from an observation in which I followed a leader team as it trained on the real cases.

The fieldnotes are from observations of this leader team. Taken during and immediately after the simulation, they show how the team members spoke and reflected:

> *"This is very new for us, and I as leader of the team have a great need to check out where I have my leaders. Several leaders in the team spoke initially about how top management had opened a new direction for us and that this was an acknowledgement from top management that this is also new for them. The leaders in the team spoke about how we will collectively achieve this, but we're worried that it's going too fast. Will we get everyone with us; will it be too complex? Can we manage to go from delivery of separate services to working in teams with interdisciplinary services? We have to live with uncertainty and stand together on this. The leaders lift up the WILL-CAN-SHALL model and reflect around this leader model that the consultants introduced in the masterclass. We in the team have to be honest around this model. We are very practical, all of us; therefore, we do a lot of the same things and need a forum to reflect on this, whether we're dragging the old leader behaviours into the new. We're at leader levels three and four in this group. Expectations and interaction between leader levels three and four become very important going forward to ensure followership and ensure goal attainment. We have to be conscious of what we have to put away, old leader behaviour; we have to stop doing this. We should be more open and should invite each other into the space. We should use one another at this level so that we become more secure and support one another (we're going in front and showing the way). Our language can be a little loose and imprecise when we're always having to think about context and our frames and holding on (focus). The masterclass is very involving, and this gives us the opportunity to train on communication, and this we have to do as well with our colleagues."* (27.11.2014)

The fieldnotes and my observation show that the systemic interventions had the effect that the participants focused on co-creative leadership, in which learning occurs through social interaction, as roles are closely connected in the organization. The fieldnotes also show that everyone in the team spoke about followership in their own leadership, especially at levels three and four. In light of this, if the participants experienced co-creative leadership as an important practice, it was very likely that they would transfer these leader behaviours to their everyday contexts. Based on my observation, I had some thoughts about how learning processes within the frameworks of the organization yielded fruitful results, and through the test centre, the participants had the opportunity to learn co-creative learning processes from their own and others' experiences.

Even though the participants in the team spoke about how they received acknowledgement from top management, they were also concerned with the many paradoxes and uncertainty in encountering systemic interventions in the test centre. The participants said that they were very practically oriented and were worried that the change process was going too fast in relation to the complexity of introducing interdisciplinary efforts aimed at citizens.

In the extract below, I present some of the participants' thoughts regarding how they compared the activities being conducted in the test centre with previous learning experiences:

> *P: Well, the consultants of the masterclass emphasize the necessity of training in leader skills. All skills should always be tried out. The training activities in the test centre are therefore much more action-oriented than any course I have attended earlier."*
>
> *T: Is there something that is especially important for you to focus on in the action-oriented leadership training?*
>
> *P: Well, I think that it's important to try out the skills because there's a big difference between talking about it and doing it. Being action oriented. I'm also the type who would rather talk myself warm, then act. (laughs)*
>
> *T: Talk yourself warm, yes.*
>
> *P: Yes, learn by being action-oriented, by practising interaction with others. So, if I only sit alone and read a book, then I don't get nearly as much out of it as if I'm in dialogue with someone about it. ... I have a lot of use for trying it out. That's the way I learn the best.*

It seemed that the participants' experiences of the action-oriented training processes increased their awareness and potential as leaders. As described by the participant, "*I have a lot of use for trying it out. That's the way I learn best.*" Trying it out provided relevant learning for the participant in secure conditions. The leader implicitly addressed other thoughts about herself as a leader and developed greater insight into herself by trying out and practising on real cases, especially when she was able to reflect on the exercises with colleagues. Here, the participant has changed her thoughts about learning leadership through experimenting, practising, playing and acting within secure frameworks.

The following extract shows how a participant created an understanding of the term "action before attitude", which was an important value for the masterclass in leadership training.

"Action before attitude" refers to the individual leader first trying out important leader actions defined by the masterclass/top management, which then gave the leader the opportunity to reflect on what was good and poor management. When I asked this participant about his understanding of "action before attitude", he responded as follows:

> P: I also understand what it is they talk about when they say action before attitude, what do they mean by that. I know that well now, what it's about.
>
> T: Can you say something about that?
>
> P: Yes, I think, that's also I think, actually, it's an exciting way to view the world, and I can also see that there's something ... I think actually, it's a practice I've made use of before; I've just not thought that one could have a concept that's called action before attitude (laughs), and I can see that I can also use it in relation to practice, when I'm to supervise my leaders, not to remain too much in that there, now we'll discuss to death what it is we can and want and all that. But also, to say okay, now we'll try it a bit.

The extract shows that the participant was surprised by the learning effects of the training and experienced this as exciting way to "view the world". However, it seemed that the participant drew his reflections from traditional discourses about leadership training (talk before action). It appeared that the participants were surprised that action-oriented learning was the best way to train in leadership skills. Being action-oriented gave them new self-insight and new thoughts about leadership. The masterclass had destabilized and facilitated a new discursive practice based on action orientation and co-creation as the most relevant aspect of leadership training.

In the following transcription, I asked another participant about her greatest learning experience in the test centre:

> P: I mean, I think that the test centre is unique in doing...I've never experienced...other contexts in which one could do that. ... I've not experienced that one has been able to sit and practice on citizens. ... We had real citizens present ... it was citizens we knew before....
>
> T: You actually had citizens...real citizens...
>
> P: Yes, we did in uh ... uh... the two first tests, I think it was. ... There we had real citizens in, and then we also had some that played citizens and played citizen ... figures, but we had as well real citizens in... also some of our own citizens with disabilities. ...

T: How do you think the citizens experienced being part of your exercises?

P: I think it varied a great deal … yes, I think some of the citizens thought it was awfully exciting…some thought… now we're going to…try to see if we can get some of what we normally can't have of allowances … even though we're just playing and that, but what the value, the learning value and the experiential value was…that uh…there, I think that it's really good to do it in that way because… one is when one is sitting and, sitting and talking in such a room here…it's completely different when one suddenly is to be real if I suddenly were to begin to do it.…I know I should do…it's to come out of my mouth, and that in a correct way…that's when you get an experience, and that's what you find out what you know and what you don't know…and what you need to become better at.…

The participant emphasized that the way the test centre structured its activities opened ways to new and helpful contextual training. In particular, the inclusions of the municipality citizens made the training experience unique. This provided improved learning compared to most more theoretical approaches or reflections isolated from the voices of real citizens. Implicitly, it appears that this learning experience created a framework or mental model for a new understanding of how to meet citizens. The leader's encounters with real citizens contributed to meaning creation through active co-creation with the citizens. Even though I did not observe the exercises with the citizens, the descriptions of the leaders showed that the test centre exercises were greatly influential. Through trying out leader actions, the participants became better acquainted with themselves, what they had mastered and/or not mastered and what skills they needed to exercise further.

However, the participants' positive learning experiences represented a paradox. Historically, the municipality had delivered services and acted as experts in relation to its citizens. In other words, the municipality had largely decided on behalf of the citizens what kind of services they should receive. However, the action-oriented learning activities that were conducted in the test centre were based on collaborative processes instead of exercising "power over" (deciding on behalf of) the citizens. By inviting citizens into a co-constructing and collaborative process, the leaders gained an experience of entering a new "room of possibility" in which citizens became more responsible for their own health and psychological needs. This reflected a general change in political and economic conditions, which again would have an impact on how the organizations encountered their own citizens.

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The test centre facilitated the leaders through practice in concrete leadership situations (actions) to implicitly change the traditional way of exercising power. The participants claimed that being action-oriented and trying out leadership skills in practice was a fruitful way to ensure goal attainment rather than merely reflecting on what good leadership is.

4.3.2 Summary of the Discourse: Power and hierarchy in leadership

These findings show that top management and the masterclass changed the way the leaders practised power. Power was distributed to everyone, which meant that the individual participant included his or her leader team from the municipality in the test centre exercises, where the focus was on how they could co-create meaning. The findings show that learning was primarily an action-oriented process connected to contextually relevant cases, with "real" citizens participating in the exercises. The position of the masterclass within social constructionism and systemic approaches invited leaders to become relationally oriented in their leadership.

Stacey (2016) refers to several central paradoxes that appear repetitively and arise in the practice of the leader that I see as important reflections in relation to hierarchical power and authority. As I read Stacey (2016), command-and-control leader behaviour will be too rigid and inflexible for the current times, when organizations are more dynamic and complex.

The first paradox (1) concerns how power and authority in leadership influence the dynamics and flexibility of leadership. The second paradox (2) concerns how the balance between predictability and unpredictability is connected in an organization and how this demands greater dynamism and flexibility in leadership. The third (3) paradox refers to relational power, with power and authority both empowering and limiting people. The fourth paradox (4) concerns individuals and groups, with the individual influencing the group and the group influencing the individual. Stacey suggests that organizations need to take experience more seriously. Learning from experience demands that leaders step back and think through how leaders and organizations facilitate learning by experience, which is in accordance with Kolb's (1994) learning circle. These perspectives provide insight into how leadership that demands flexibility arises in social interaction and is constituted by social dynamics in which leadership should be adaptive precisely to capture the paradoxes to which Stacey (2016)

refers. This is a paradox in itself, as in my experience, change and reorganization processes, for example, usually move decision-making processes higher in the hierarchy, which can contribute to leaders lower in the organization experiencing less flexibility and reduced power and authority.

5   DISCUSSION

This thesis explores how participants in a systemic leadership programme experienced their learning process. The research questions were as follows: (1) *How do leaders in systemic leadership programmes construct new meaning for leadership*, and (2) *How do systemic leadership programmes affect the co-creation of leadership practice – and how do they affect the participants' personal discourses about their leadership?* Data were collected through sixteen qualitative in-depth interviews with twelve participants and five days of fieldwork observations of the leadership training. A discourse psychology analysis led to the identification of three main discourses: (1) *The discourse of embodied leadership training;* (2) *The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges;* and (3) *The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership.*

This discussion is based on four topics: (1) The discourse of embodied leadership training; (2) The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges; (3) The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership; and (4) The test centre, the context for co-creating and shared meaning creation in leadership.

5.1   *The discourse of embodied leadership training*

What was new and surprising to me was the radical change in the leaders' attitudes towards embodiment. At first, they were highly sceptical of the lack of formal leadership theories in the lectures and felt that involving musical and physical practices was of dubious value. However, this changed as they experienced how these practices made them learn in unexpected ways. Some of the most vocal protesters were surprised and delighted when they experienced the connection between body, emotion and cognition. They realized how these insights could be used in everyday leadership.

With their colleagues in the leader group, the participants had to engage in music and bodily movement choreographed by professional musicians, and they had to connect this to different training cases throughout the entire course. The finding of embodiment can be perceived as a contradiction in the systemic framework, as embodiment has an individualistic focus and is

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encountered as an extremely personal experience. The notion of individualistic processes is closely connected to the ideas of constructivism (Maturana & Varela, 1987/88). At the same time, embodiment is a creative exercise and a means to strengthen teamwork among the participants and in the leader group. Shotter's theories (2008) refer to consciousness around bodily experiences in social interaction having received increased recognition within systemic approaches. Shotter (2008) illustrates this by referring to how the traditional way of speaking within, for example, social constructionism to a great extent has excluded spontaneous and expressive bodily reactions in social interaction, which he claims function as a kind of "background glue" that binds and holds people together. Furthermore, Shotter points out that awareness of and focus on embodiment prepare people for future collaboration in which cooperation is more human and respectful (Shotter, 2008). Through embodiment, the participants in the masterclass understood more of their own reaction patterns in social interaction as well as those of others. My research shows that the bodily experiences were important for the participants to increase their awareness of their own practice as leaders and their patterns of reactions. The findings show that when the participants used embodiment in systemic interventions in which top management and the leaders "constructed" the way and the direction *together* in co-creative activities, the team collaboration in the leader group increased.

The constructions of the participants showed that embodied experiences in leadership training provided deeper learning. Expressions such as "muscles remember" had meaning for the participants. This supports the claims of Sinclear (2005), who says that leadership is primarily a bodily and physical activity. Sinclear (2005) views the literature on leadership critically and argues that leadership has generally been construed as a "brain activity" without a basis in the body. The consultants who developed the masterclass facilitated processes in which leaders were given the opportunity to be aware of their bodily experiences, emotions and feelings in relation to themselves and to their colleagues. As Sinclear (2005) points out, bodily awareness can further contribute to leaders becoming more aware of their moods in their everyday contexts. Several leaders told me that they became more aware of the mood of their employees and of their emotional state in their natural working environment. This promoted the leaders' ability to register their own feelings and show compassion for others around them (Sinclear, 2005). Many of the participants in the masterclass said that they were surprised by

their own experiences in encounters with embodiment. Embodied experiences contributed to their becoming better able to notice and listen to their bodies in relational interaction, which helped them to become more skilled at addressing group dynamics and the emotional currents in the organization. They became more sensitive and sensed more deeply what was happening around them in terms of human dynamics. This is in accordance with the theories of Bell and Huffington (2008) about system psychodynamic approaches that concern conscious and unconscious patterns of relational interaction in an organization. Central to system psychodynamics theory is the notion that unconscious processes influence the experience of being part of a relational system (Bell & Huffington, 2008). The findings of *the discourse of embodied leadership* training show clear connections to system psychodynamic approaches. The use of embodied experiences led to more behaviour being performed in the organization (new thoughts, feelings and actions) after being released in the masterclass programme. Bell and Huffington (2008) refer to three principles that describe system psychodynamic perspectives on leadership. Their first principle is that psychodynamic perspectives focus on conscious and unconscious processes, and these perspectives are important for understanding and reflecting on the behaviour of individuals as well as for understanding the underlying behaviour in an organization. The second principle, referring to Bion (1961), concerns group dynamics and group relationships in which people influence and are influenced. The third principle concerns systemic thinking that includes open systems, and the authors refer to Miller and Rice (1967) and Obholzer and Roberts (1994), as systemic perspectives have been developed by practitioners within family therapy such as Bateson (1972) and Campbell, Draper and Huffington (1991).

These overlapping conceptual approaches described by Bell and Huffington (2008) as system psychodynamic approaches were recognizable to the participants of the masterclass. They spoke about how the use of bodily experiences was a creative way to establish a team feeling. They said that they had become more attentive to the emotional currents in the organization. This appeared to come as a surprise to the participants and was a result of bodily experiences in the leadership training that contributed greater flexibility as the participants became acquainted with their emotions and feelings, individually and in interplay with their leader colleagues. They referred to how contemporary leaders encounter greater complexity in which they must adopt more flexible and adaptive leader behaviours to meet different needs, such as

those of customers and service users, for example, the citizens of the municipality. Contemporary decision-making is a dynamic process that includes clients to a greater extent than previously (Bell & Huffington, 2008).

The use of embodied experiences gave the participants deeper insight that increased both the individual and collective consciousness. Skårderud (2012) refers to how body-conscious processes increase awareness and how bodily experiences can influence relational interaction, for example, the interaction between a leader and an employee. This accords with Bathurst and Chan (2013), who point out that the use of embodiment in leadership can contribute to leaders responding more openly than in traditional hierarchical leadership supported by more formal power and authority structures. The use of embodied experiences will therefore change the way leaders exercise power in encounters with people to a more human approach. I recognize this from both the fieldwork observation and the interviews with the participants. The participants opened up to seeing their own reaction patterns in new ways. In light of this, they also became more aware of the reaction patterns of others. In contrast, if leaders suppress their own emotions and feelings, they will prevent the emotions and feelings of others from receiving the necessary recognition they deserve.

The findings of the discourse of embodied leadership training suggest that bodily experiences can change leader practice from instrumental leadership to relational leadership, in which co-creating and shared meaning construction can become alternative discourses to ensure goal attainment. The use and effect of embodiment within systemic interventions contributed to the participants describing this as a relational shift in the organization – a shift they described as a movement from a silo leadership approach to one that included co-creative activities to a greater extent, both internally in the leader group and with the employees. Through the use of embodiment, the consultants facilitated a collaborative and stimulating atmosphere that the participants described as a source of fruitful learning processes. The participants spoke about this as something they currently needed in relation to the concrete change process they were going through.

In conversations with the consultants in the masterclass, I constantly wondered about the absence of leadership theory. Early in the leadership training and in the first interview round, the participants spoke about how they found the masterclass slightly abstract and a "thin

soup", confirming that they had expected more theory, methods and tools; a more cognitive approach; and perhaps an approach to leadership as a "brain activity". These comments changed significantly during the course. However, the consultants argued that through the leadership training, they facilitated a practical and pragmatic approach in which leaders had the opportunity to "construct" leadership. This also concerned the use of bodily experiences, through which the participants were able to experience the effect of embodiment. Kolb (1994) especially focuses on individuals' preferred learning styles. Kolb points out that individuals have different adaptive ways of approaching learning. He defines learning styles as "*possibility-processing structures. Our individuality creates our choices and their consequences. We program ourselves through the self-interpretations and (in the sense of Piaget) schematics we develop throughout our lives*" (Kolb, 1994, p. 419).

Throughout the masterclass programme, the participants changed their thoughts and language regarding their learning processes. Throughout the leadership programme, they talked warmly about the usefulness of bodily experiences and their discovery that embodiment was a creative intervention for improving teamwork. The participants found the use of bodily experiences to be fruitful and completely new, and they connected it to the co-creation of leadership. This is in agreement with Shotter (2008), who claims that the use of bodily experiences contributes to leaders presenting themselves as more responsive and inviting their leader colleagues and employees to engage in reciprocal relations (Shotter, 2008). At the same time, the use of bodily experiences shows ambivalence between collectivism and individualism. In light of the participants being Danish leaders, embodiment created tension because one of the foundational narratives in Danish culture is about "being the same" (Østergård, 1992). Within the egalitarian Danish cultural norms of 'sameness", the idea that everyone is considered of equal value to society was physically manifested in the embodiment practices when top management performed the same tasks as everyone else. Something that makes the "individual" stand out as an individual break with this ideology of egalitarianism. The fairy tale of the Ugly Duckling supports these notions (Jenkins, 2016). I claim that this created a tension that was not explicitly thematized or discussed in the leadership training and that could be a potential shadow over the whole course of the masterclass. This is especially relevant in that Danish leadership can be considered quite direct and authoritarian in encounters with hierarchy (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

Based on systemic ideas, knowledge and learning are considered to be produced in social interaction (Bateson, 1972; Gergen, 2015; Lorås, 2016). As Laszio (2013) points out, a movement from systemic thinking to systemic "being" with the use of embodiment can create new realities and new ways to experience learning. Embodiment as part of the systemic intervention and thinking for the participants was an entrance into seeing connections in the leader group, and as Laszio (2013) suggests, emotions and feelings strengthen the connections to which embodiment contributes. Therefore, it is more difficult to return to the old leadership patterns. Many of the participants' descriptions showed that focus on embodiment contributed to increased security within the leader group and was a good and informal way of quickly becoming acquainted with one another. The experiences of the participants, who had an emotional connection, show that they were emotionally touched. Being emotionally touched creates deeper changes, especially for those who had conflict-filled thoughts and feelings in the encounter with embodiment. This conflict remained mostly an implicit experience, as the participants did not have the opportunity there and then to reflect on this with their colleagues. Maturana (1988) refers to two fundamental ways of listening to how people explain different phenomena. One is a "path of objectivity – without – parenthesis". The central point is that we live as though there are objective truths. This contributes to the lack of connection between individuals and their surroundings. An observer will explicitly or implicitly assume that "existence" takes place independent of whether or not the individual is aware of or knows about different phenomena in existence in the world. Maturana (1988) claims that such a perspective can lead to contradictions and a strained form of communication. The second way of listening is the "path of objectivity – in – parenthesis". The central point is that the individual is connected to the world and acknowledges that objective truths do not exist. This leads to the observer acknowledging the person as a biological being with cognitive thoughts. Maturana claims that this perspective leads to the individual being concerned with dialogue around a "fit" rather than objective truths (Maturana, 1988).The leadership training facilitated alternative discourses in which the development of leadership concerned developing a social practice between leaders and their employees and moving away from the individualistic discourse (Stacy & Mowles, 2016). These perspectives supersede the individual. As Ladkin (2012) suggests, the use of embodied approaches in leadership training makes visible the limits of an ontological and positivistic approach to leadership training, one that focuses on the individual in a way that is usually disconnected from context and the complexity of the

relational. The latter perspective illustrates that the participants experienced a significant difference in how the masterclass facilitated the leadership training.

The participants were influenced by outer stimuli (for example, professional musicians) but also by their own inner experiences in encounters with embodiment. Sletvold (2005) points out that feelings arise when we become aware of ourselves. Sletvold (2005) further claims that our emotional bodily states are changed by impressions from our surroundings, 'the feeling of what happens'. A practical consequence of embodiment is that it increases the awareness of leaders both emotionally and cognitively. The participants began to speak about how leadership "had to be lived" – it is not a paper exercise. These comments show that the participants had acquired new ideas about leadership and learning through their bodily experiences and had begun to construct leadership as a social practice arising from leaders' actual everyday contexts. This is in accordance with what Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015, p 1.) claim is an important question for leaders: *"Who am I, for myself and for others?"* Both of these perspectives will help leaders to discover their identity as leaders.

As Maturana and Varela (1987/88) point out, all our communication occurs through our own minds, our nervous systems and our perceptions in interaction with other people. In light of this, we create meaning via inner pictures, thoughts and feelings and through feedback from our surroundings; this becomes a circular process. Maturana (2002) points out that this is a creative ontology. What leaders see and experience is an expression of their inner meaning structures. Leaders are biological creations, and this influences their understanding and meaning construction through social interaction (Maturana & Varela, 1987/88). In light of Maturana and Varela's arguments, there is always some element of the individual, but some aspects are understandable only through context and feedback.

I have previously claimed that being too focused on the individual in leadership training and leadership can lead to "blind spots". For example, a "blind spot" could be not including relational and contextual aspects in training and leadership. At the same time, I claim that the masterclass had several blind spots in not including constructivism so that the participants could see their experiences reflected in those of their colleagues. Maturana and Varela (1987/88) claim that conversations should facilitate a foundation for the coordination of actions in which openness and respect for individual constructions should lead to shared

accepted actions. This belongs to "second-order change" (Maturana & Varela, 1987). A potential consequence of including constructivism in the learning processes is that it could create a "fit" between individuals and their contexts. In my fieldwork observation, I registered that the participants did not have the opportunity to reflect fully on the emotions and feelings of others in the use of embodiment. A possible reason was the change process itself, and the approach of the consultants was pragmatic: their focus was on the organizational change from "care" to "business". By including reflection at all levels, the participants could have constructed a deeper understanding of themselves and others, including their service users.

By using bodily experiences, the consultants were prepared to increase the participants' capacity for social interaction, which was demonstrated in different exercises, such as one in which each of the participants conducted the others in a group. The use of bodily experiences is subjective and reflecting on these experiences with their colleagues would have generated explicit collective knowledge, especially as the new requirements of leadership concerned the relational: how leader teams could become more relationally robust together. Therefore, I wonder why the individual participants did not have the opportunity to reflect on and mirror their own emotions with their leader colleagues, since this would have strengthened their relational coordination and contributed to collective security. At the same time, the findings show a positive benefit in the inclusion of bodily experiences in the leadership training. The consultants motivated the participants to become more aware of their inner experiences, feelings and reactions, which probably contributed to reflections on their own leader identity. Sinclear (2005) points out that this contributes to leaders to a greater extent registering, feeling and showing compassion for others and that this knowledge is obtained primarily through bodily experiences. The development of leaders can therefore be understood as a dialogical construction process in which feelings are primary. Meaning and wholeness are constituted through an active co-creative process with leader colleagues through intersubjective sharing and interaction (Stern, 1995).

Much of the relational learning in the use of bodily experiences remained implicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge involves two types of process representations, "implicit generalized knowledge" and "implicit relational knowledge" (Lyons-Ruth, 1998). An example of the first is learning to ride a bicycle: once one has cracked the code, it becomes more or less automatic. Examples of the second type, "implicit relational knowledge", represent a more

important perspective in light of bodily experiences in the masterclass, as they implicate the emotions and feelings of the leader. Implicit relational knowledge is more closely related to feelings and increased awareness that goes deeper than language. Examples are feelings and memories that arise in connection with musical experiences shared among people. As Trondalen (2016) points out, *"This has to do with how to do things with others"* (p. 39). A high point about which the participants spoke was the use of embodiment in the conductor exercise – they were surprised by how well it went. They were guided by professional musicians and had an immediate response from the audience. The participants particularly noticed that the musicians helped the untrained leaders to become good conductors. They found the exercise very professional, and it had a role-model effect on them. It opened their eyes to the idea that to behave very professionally, warmly and invitingly led to good results. This was something they could take home for their own leadership.

Skårderud (2016, p.112) writes, *"Today, many academics and clinicians try to put people together again"*. Even though he is talking about therapeutic practice, this is a reminder that the literature on leadership, which is positioned largely in the cognitive and individualistic, can unite and integrate knowledge and awareness of leaders' emotional and subjective experiences. Several of the participants in this study spoke about being touched emotionally and through feelings. The participants connected these emotional experiences to how they needed this currently and together. This fruitful way of being connected to one another in the leader group differed from the usual form of a meeting, which would not have had the same relational effect.

This contributed to the leaders becoming more attentive to the importance of relational coordination to ensure the achievement of results in a complex organization such as a health and care authority. Through the course of the leadership training, the participants spoke about how leadership is a practice between leader and employee, which is in agreement with social constructionism. As Ness (2011) points out, systemic approaches and social constructionist ideas break with the modernistic thought in a social world that people view learning in terms of objective facts about the production of knowledge. Ness (2011) refers to how social constructionism offers an alternative discursive way of thinking, namely, that knowledge is constructed through language and in social co-creation (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988;

Gergen 1982, 1985, 1994, 2009a, 2009b; Hoffman, 1990, Shotter, 1993). The participants showed that they had the opportunity to influence and construct new leadership together.

Ladkin (2012) points out that a transition has occurred in the literature on leadership from cognitive approaches to recognition of emotional (Bono & llies 2006), affective (Naidoo, Kohari, Lord & DuBois, 2010) and aesthetic (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007; Ladkin, 2008) aspects. These perspectives also show that the literature acknowledges a shift from behavioural processes to cognitive processes and bodily processes in leadership (Ladkin, 2012). This is in accordance with the findings of this research.

5.2   The discourse of relational leadership and its challenges

The findings of the discourse of relational leadership and its challenges concern a shift from "top-down leadership" to systemic interventions in the organization. The findings also show that top management and the consultants facilitated a more dynamic and adaptive leadership in the organization to address greater complexity and used dynamics to ensure goal attainment through interdisciplinary efforts directed towards the citizens of the municipality.

In the traditional mainstream literature, leadership is primarily about the cognitive abilities, feelings and actions of the individual leader. In many of these theories, the leader's knowledge, skills, and abilities form a static set of internal, individual characteristics that define the quality and efficiency of her leadership. Even though there is also a focus on relationships in these theories, there is little mention of the meaning of context and of the complexities that shifting contexts add to everyday leadership. As Cunliffe, (2001); Gergen et al., (2001); and Katz et al., 2000) point out, relational leadership with a starting point in social constructionism focuses on how leaders and employees create meaning intersubjectively in concrete everyday contexts. However, in the masterclass programme, top management and the consultants facilitated an alternative discursive practice that broke with the discourse of the individual. This facilitated the development of a co-creative, contextual and relational leadership.

The initiative for the development of the masterclass programme was the fact that top management felt trapped in existing leadership practices that had been entrenched for decades. Top management wanted to move towards a relational and contextual approach to leadership, and the municipality was the first in Denmark to choose this alternative leadership programme. This represents a shift in which leadership was not placed "inside" the leader but was constructed with leader colleagues and employees. Uhl-Bien (2006) claims that the discourse of relational leadership is not well known in the literature and in the management field. The practical consequences of relational leadership are therefore largely unknown (Uhl-Bien, 2006). She claims that in relational leadership, leadership is the result of relational and constructionist processes rather than being constructed by or within individuals (Uhl-Bien, 2006). I recognized this perspective (leadership is a consequence of social constructions) in the expressions of the participants, and it determined how the masterclass was conducted. The findings of *the discourse of relational leadership and its challenges* point to how relational leadership is concerned not only with the skills and success of the individual leader but also with the leader and his or her leaders learning these in a natural context. This is in accordance with how the masterclass was conducted. Leadership as a consequence of relations and social constructions also has clear connections with well-known theories of followership (Hollander, 1992a; Lord et al., 1999; Padilla et al., 2007; Shamir, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). In these theories, leadership processes are defined as dynamic systems, similar to those that involved the participants in the masterclass, with followers collaborating and interacting in a shared context (Hollander, 1992a; Lord et al., 1999; Padilla et al., 2007; Shamir, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). The findings of the discourse of relational leadership and its challenges show that top management and the consultants facilitated a leadership in which the participants had greater ownership through followership and maintained a closer leadership to ensure goal attainment. This is in accordance with Arnulf (2018), who points out that leaders are in many ways guaranteed to create security and predictability between the present and the future in leadership. Through the leadership training, many of the participants said they had become much closer to their superiors and their employees. Expressions such as "I'm much closer" and "People will experience leadership" appear repeatedly in the descriptions of the participants. These descriptions emerged through their own experiences in encounters in which the consultants positioned the participants in newly available discourses of learning, such as co-creating and shared meaning construction in leadership. Descriptions from the

participants show precisely that they experienced this as meaningful because the leadership training captured leaders' actual everyday contexts, which I claim is in accordance with systemic interventions; as Long (2016) points out, the idea of systemic thinking is that roles are connected in an organization.

This is supported by Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015), who claim that leadership training should equip leaders to reflect on who they are as people and what they bring with them, both the personal and the professional, in encounters with employees. This will help leaders to become more aware of their own identity and leader identity (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015). Several participants spoke about how it was challenging to be relational in an upwards direction in the hierarchy; they especially found that showing their own vulnerability was less accepted at higher hierarchical levels. This is in accordance with Alvesson and Spicer (2011), who claim that Danish leadership has a culture of being quite direct and authoritarian. I think that this (cultural shadow side) affected the masterclass course through, among other things, the Jante Law. As Jenkins (2016) points out, it is difficult for leaders, for example, to express to their own needs because tension between the individual and the collective is inherent to Danish culture (as expressed in the Jante Law). Following the Jante Law, "I do not have the right to present my own needs for security, visibility, recognition and the emotions that live in me". Accordingly, the participants did not receive much training in regulating their own needs, which in itself is an advanced exercise (Jenkins, 2016). Several of the participants said that it was difficult to show vulnerability upwards in the hierarchy. Several participants sought leader support and emotional support from their leader colleagues at the same level and sometimes lower in the organization.

Owing to its responsibility, top management had a different logic and discourses about leadership than the leaders at a lower level, such as issues related to power structures and governing structures. This created some frictions. Yalom (2011) refers to the complexity in the therapy room and problematizes how complicated "caring and empathy" can be in human interaction. I refer to Yalom (2011) because relational leadership is associated with the personal in both leaders and employees. The participants spoke about a session in the masterclass in which top management was present and facilitated the participants in airing their frustrations. It emerged that many leaders and employees were tired and on the verge of burn-out because of work pressure. The fact that top management listened and acknowledged

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the comments made a strong impression on the participants. Being acknowledged by top management moved many of them, which illustrates the importance of emotional support from top management. In turn, the participants said that this made an impression on the top managers, who were empathic and listened. I suggest that there was a certain anxiety in both top management and the participants about these processes. Top management was worried about whether the course would achieve the goals it had set, while the participants worried about whether they would achieve the goals of the course.

Game (2016), West (2016), and Thomas (2016) refer to how knowledge about attachment in leadership is related to important skills for creating healthy and lucrative companies. They point out that how leaders (top leaders) show caring in leadership can be catching. If leaders also experience top-down caring, this creates innovative and creative environments, while an experience of negative attachment to a leader creates anxiety and uncertainty. The findings show that it was difficult for the participants in the masterclass to experience caring from the main leadership in the daily operation of the organization.

One of my hypotheses regarding why the relational can be challenging for leaders in an organization is the lack of secure contexts to problematize relational leadership. Bateson connected this to the concept of feedback and context. Bateson's thoughts about context are that our actions are understood and interpreted in real contexts (Bateson, 1972; Jensen, 2008). Accordingly, without a shared context, it would be difficult for the participants and top management to create a shared understanding and meaning regarding, for example, how relational leadership influences the creation of meaning. The case of the masterclass training shows that the participants moved from instrumental leadership to the relational leadership required by the new structural contexts. This increased the closeness in the leadership group. Inherent in this was what I call an implicit "control" function that involved ensuring clear traceability regarding what lay between the present and the future. Because all the participants spoke about how the masterclass was top-steered, this function was related to addressing the complexity and uncertainty in the new relational contexts of the new leader requirements.

The participants faced many unknowns and new dilemmas that arose in the new form of leadership. This leadership was to change from traditional "top-down" management to systemic interventions that were intended to help leaders and employees to see the entirety of

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the organization through a more adaptive and flexible leadership practice. Top management expected this change to be conducted in the course of the masterclass programme, which challenged the established way of leading. There was an implicit anxiety in the organization throughout the masterclass programme about the change being too demanding and having too little time to be successful with the reorganization. As Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky (2009) show, adaptive leadership is about addressing uncertainty, complexity and new challenges that are difficult to predict in change processes. They claim that adaptive leadership is primarily a practice and not a theory in which tough change processes demand a more adaptive approach, and leaders and employees cannot predict with certainty the results of following it (Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow & Marty Linsky, 2009). These perspectives have clear connections to systemic interventions and how the masterclass was conducted and also to the more relational and closer leadership facilitated by top management and the consultants. A tougher leadership also demands that the participants receive training in regulating and managing social dynamics. In light of this, I find Obholzer's (1996) perspectives on "containing" a relevant theory with reference to relational leadership.

Obholzer (1996) refers to "containing" as an important ability for leaders. The findings show a tension in the organization in creating embodiment and relational leadership because this created the expectation for top leadership to show this behaviour downwards in the hierarchy. Creating secure contexts in which the participants could regulate themselves with their colleagues would increase their relational competence and make this practice non-threatening. Obholzer (1996) points out that the capacity of the leader to recognize the feelings and needs of co-workers for self-regulation is an extremely important leadership quality and skill. This is why I am critical of the lack of reflection on emotions and feelings in the masterclass programme. My hypothesis is that reflection does not "fit" the ideology of a neoliberal "business" programme, even in a "care" setting.

The concept or theme of relational leadership is a much newer approach, and it is surprisingly little problematized as theory and concept (Brower et al., 2000; Drath, 2001; Murell, 1977; Uhl-Bien, 2003; Uhl-bien, 2005). For this reason, there is still much uncertainty about the practical implications of relational leadership: how relational leadership is done in an organization and how this can be learned in leadership training generally. As Hollander

(1978), Lord et al. (1999), and Uhl-Bien et al. (2000) point out, the newer discourses on relational leadership are concerned with different issues, namely, human social constructions in which reciprocal dependence in the organization is central.

A central acknowledgement in systemic and social-constructionist approaches is that context is of paramount importance when talking about communication and relations. One foundation of good systemic intervention lies in the co-creation of common narratives about context and objectives (Hollander, 1978; Lord et al. 1999; and Uhl-Bien et al. 2000). Using systemic theory and practice reduces the need to find descriptions and explanations of good leadership or even to base leadership programmes on traditional theories of leadership. The findings of this study show that leadership is a process involving social interaction and the co-creation of meaning, resulting in common constructs of how to resolve real-life work objectives. This underlines the almost unlimited need for adaptability since all contexts vary within cultures and organizations and over time.

5.3 *The discourse of power and hierarchy in leadership*

The aspects of power and hierarchy were implicit throughout the programme. My interviews and fieldwork observations showed that this subject was never explicitly mentioned. When I asked why the power aspect was not explicitly discussed in the masterclass, the usual answer was that it was inherent in the leader role. I suggest that this derives from the Danish leadership culture, which can be direct and authoritarian. However, the power of the embodiment exercises made everyone seem alike, which is another Danish cultural ideal. The power of this egalitarian ideal obfuscated the power hierarchies during these exercises, which was probably conducive to the observed effect of shared meaning.

Authority in relation to leadership is described as the formal right to make decisions oneself or to follow powers of attorney from others, thereby also accepting responsibility for realizing these decisions (Obholzer, 1994; Visholm, 2004). In other words, there is always someone who decides and someone who obeys. At the same time, Obholzer (1994) and Visholm (2004) suggest that personal authority is required for leadership to function in practice (Obholzer, 1994; Visholm, 2004). These perspectives are recognizable and represent how top

management exercised its power. The masterclass programme emphasized the necessity of allowing the participants to learn the ability to demand authority, especially with the aim of influencing the collective or group dynamics in the organization when needed. Obholzer (1994) and Visholm (2004) point out that those who are able to exercise their authority as leaders will be perceived as more autonomous, while those who do not do so become dependent on others and the system in which they work. This represents a paradox. On the one hand, top management encouraged the participants to demand authority. On the other hand, the course was experienced as very top-steered with clear boundaries. The participants nevertheless claimed that they had a great deal of space in which to construct their new leader role themselves. This is a clear sign that top management had departed from traditional "top-down" management to a more democratic and humane way of managing.

Foucault (1977) points out that power is everywhere. Power is not necessarily connected to individual people or institutions but can arise in relationships and social interplay. This is because people are bearers of socio-cultural traditions, as in dominant discourses in the literature on leadership (Foucault 1977, 1982). Nilsson refers to Foucault (1977) and the idea of "biopower". Biopower involves people being carriers of the regulations of society and of life (Nilsson, 2009). In light of biopower, the participants in the masterclass were steered and controlled by their environments, for example, through political and socio-cultural conditions. An example is that the participants had to relate to the new relational and contextual frameworks in which they were to narrow the space between the different professions in the organization to deliver holistic interdisciplinary services to the citizens. In addition, all the participants in the masterclass were to arrange more co-creative activities within their respective departments.

Descriptions from the participants show a historical leadership rooted in traditional hierarchical power in which the practical consequences of leadership were "power over" (for example, citizens). Now, top management wished to make greater efforts to achieve a more "relational leadership" in which leaders and their employees "constructed" the way and the direction forward with their employees in co-creative activities. This is in line with Arnulf (2018), who points out that leadership is about reducing uncertainty between the present and the future, and the everyday contexts of leaders' steer leadership. Leadership is primarily a social practice. This is echoed by Gergen (2015), who points out that "*Relational leaders will*

be more concerned with facilitating the relational process than with setting up structures" (Gergen, 2015, p. 200). This is precisely what top management and the consultants facilitated in the leadership training. They facilitated one another and produced the opportunity to respond to the new requirements of leadership within the leader group in a new context.

I have long worked with leadership training in both private and public organizations and have never experienced top management investing to such a great extent in a leader group, especially how the leaders trained, the basis in actual leader cases, and top managers themselves participating in several of the activities. I found this to be a courageous move by top management. In retrospect, these practices were very similar to how operative forces in the military train using scenarios that they will encounter in the field, with the leader group at all levels having the opportunity to construct leadership that they themselves define as important. Inherent in this is a clear control function of top leadership, which the leaders confirmed and constructed as the leadership training being very top-steered. The findings show that top management changed its way of exercising power. It went from traditional 'top-down' governance to a leadership that to a great extent included leadership processes, including co-creative activities. This is in accordance with the movement from "power over" to "power with" described by Miller and Stiver (1997).

The findings show that the masterclass steered towards "power with" in the leadership training – the "power over" adhered because it came from the wider Danish political-economic context, with a diminishing welfare state and ambivalence about the Danish idea of "lighed" (sameness). The participants began to see the value of leadership that was not about individual characteristics and "top-down" steering and everyday contexts and social processes influencing leadership in the organization. Descriptions from the participants show that they acknowledged systemic approaches and a relational perspective on leadership. The participants said that the masterclass facilitated a new arena of possibility in which they could "step back" and construct a more fruitful leadership over which they could take greater ownership.

5.4 The test centre, the context for co-creating and shared meaning creation in leadership

The consultants of the masterclass placed great emphasis on the concept of "action before attitude", which they connected to pragmatism and on theories of leadership being derived primarily from practice (Beck, Kaspersen & Paulsen, 2014; Dewey, 1916). In light of this, the pragmatist Dewey (1916) points out that people are biologically adaptive and actively adapt to new surroundings. He points out that people do not merely relate to their outer surroundings but adopt available knowledge by being present in society and cultures. The consultants in the masterclass placed great emphasis on how they facilitated the participants to try different practices within the remit of systemic intervention. In general, the use of the test centre revealed fruitful learning for the leaders about themselves as leaders, especially in providing feedback there and then on actual cases. There were detailed instructions for how all the cases were to be performed in the training (Appendix 5).

The findings show that training and practising on real leader cases provided new learning and deeper learning, especially in terms of how the participants worked to co-create and share meaning construction in their contexts. When I asked the participants how they experienced the approach of the masterclass, many said that the difference lay in being able to try and train in the new leader requirements. The participants found this to be a new form of learning with a shared construction of learning best in social interaction in actual contexts. In other words, the clear contextual condition that the top leadership facilitated had meaning for the participants. The findings also show that training in actual cases that were recognizable to the leaders had greater value for the participants than academic theories of leadership. This shows that leaders do not practice in accordance with academic theory. Encounters at the test centre challenged the leaders' own constructions about what was fruitful for becoming a better leader. They expected a more cognitive approach. Through the systemic interventions, the experiences of the participants were taken seriously. The test centre contributed to the serious legitimization of the experiences in that participants were able to try different leader actions, such as conducting and training for team meetings with their employees. This also contributed to the participants making more in-depth and realistic decisions, for example, by using the WILL-CAN-SHALL model. Systemic interventions in the test centre changed vertical power to "power with", which surprised the participants in this study. The participants were given

space to influence the human systems to ensure goal attainment. As Olsen and Larsen (2012) point out, the listening of leaders can be pre-directed towards particular frequencies and categories. All the participants spoke about the test centre as a unique experience in which they had the opportunity to practice and reflect on their own leadership. I claim that this reduced the anxiety of both the top managers and the participants. With a more theoretical approach and personified leadership, there would have been a greater risk of the leaders burning out in the change process and reducing the possibility of attaining the goals. It is important to be successful individually as a leader, but when things go wrong, a leader's identity as the one who "has done the wrong thing" follows with the result of the individual feeling that he/she has failed. This responsibility lies with the individual. However, based on a systemic understanding, failure is a shared responsibility.

Training in the test centre contributed to security between experiences and expectations. This is the core of "action before attitude", and the consultants claimed that "the old" language that the leaders drew upon would make it difficult to achieve such radical changes as those they had to make. The content of the masterclass programme was therefore modelled as closely as possible on the organization's relevant objectives by copying the real-life context in the test centre both physically and mentally. This was an important factor for the observed learning effects. Learning is more effective when it takes place within a context that closely resembles real situations. This is a major challenge for most organizations because they seldom have the resources or the ingenuity to create a test centre so closely resembling the vast complexities that the participants encounter at work every day. The use of the test centre showed that the organization seriously legitimized the experiences of the participants by providing access to their own real experiences. The teste centre in the masterclass suggests clear connections with the conceptual insights on learning of Long (2004/2016). Long points out that the idea of systemic processes is that roles are connected in an organization, and learning occurs most easily within the frameworks of an organization (2016). Furthermore, Long (2016) points out that learning processes are concerned not only with formal roles but also with how complexity and social dynamics influence how leaders take up their leader roles. She suggests that the roles leaders take up, either professional or private, lie in the tensions between four domains of experience: (1) *The experience of being a person (psychological); (*2) *the experience of being in a system (e.g., organisations, institutions);* (3) *the experience of being in a context*

(social, economic, political, global); (4) *and the experience of connectedness with the source"* (Long, 2016, p. 3). These four conceptual domains of experience are recognizable in how the masterclass influenced the learning processes of the participants, as the test centre contributed to how the organization took the experiences of participants seriously.

Through trials (action), the participants had access to new discursive practices in the opportunities to try different leader actions and thereafter reflect together with their leader colleagues. The use of the test centre and the descriptions of the participants show that training in real leader situations increases traceability when the context is complex. The test centre created secure surroundings for trying (action) leadership, in which the leaders together had the opportunity to reflect on their own leadership and the leader colleagues reflected together. I found this to be in accordance with Stacy and Mowles (2016), who point out that "second-order systemic thinking" generates a richer picture of leadership involving social interaction and including the actual contexts of the leader.

The exercises performed in the test centre showed that the participants did not emphasize themselves in academic theory and that it was considered extremely important that leaders are able to practice and thereby have experiences before they reflect on taking up a leader role. I also noticed myself that I was most amazed at the absence of theories of leadership during my fieldwork in the masterclass. In a meeting with the consultants from the masterclass, I asked why they had not chosen to include more classical theories such as those I have previously mentioned. They answered that they had a pragmatic philosophy of learning in leadership training and referred to philosopher John Dewey, who considers that a person's experiences have to do with the connection between trying out and the consequences that create a connection that can create a shared meaning for the participants in the masterclass (Olsen & Larsen, 2012). They claim further that this experience influences how the leaders together can reconstruct understanding, knowledge and experiences and that this experience is created in social interaction. The use of the test centre did not personify leadership, but the focus was on how the participants, through co-creating and co-creative activities, constructed leadership through a systemic gaze. I suggest that this reduced anxiety among the individual leaders because it moved the focus away from several characteristics "inside the leader" and gave more power to all involved. The use of the test centre shows that systemic interventions contributed to greater co-creation in leadership. The test centre was a framework in which to

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identify and analyse the complex space between leaders and their employees as well as the complex gaps or spaces of opportunity for co-creation in general. Agreeing with Arnulf (2018), I suggest that traditional leadership training and old models do not serve the new "reality". In present-day society, there is greater uncertainty and less stability in organizations, which makes systemic approaches with their greater flexibility more adaptive in ensuring the connection between the present and the future.

5.5 *Limitations of the study*

In the study, I have used discourse analysis and observational fieldwork. In light of this, it is important to emphasize that my findings and discussions also contain my subjective interpretations and that these both consciously and unconsciously probably influenced the research. However, this is a characteristic of qualitative research.

I conducted 16 interviews with experienced leaders and five days of fieldwork observations over a period of 12 months. This study could therefore be considered to be based on the experience of a relatively small number of practitioners and a limited contextual frame. As Garsten and Nyquist point out, especially in research that includes cultural conditions (for example, the Danish culture that this research is based on), one needs to ask, *"Has the researcher been able to go far enough and deep enough, for example, for it to be considered strong ethnography?"* (Gartsen & Nyquist, 2013, p. 91). Expanding the contextual frames in which I followed the leaders in their daily practice would have enabled me to investigate the nuances of the analysis and to provide a deeper and broader foundation for the data and the analysis. However, such expansion was not possible within the framework of this study. The fieldwork observation contributed to my own reflections about the contextual frameworks of which the participants were part. Much of the criticism of mainstream research about leadership is directs towards the tendency in the literature to exclude the actual contexts of the leader. However, the observations that were made strengthen this research project.

5.6   *Concluding comments*

Gjerde (2018) refers to critical studies of leadership that have pointed out how theories place the responsibility and honour of leadership on the leader alone and that over a longer time, this has become taken for granted. These perspectives have dangerous consequences for leadership because leadership in context is more concerned with finding the balance in social interaction and in relational practice. Gjerde refers to Sinclear (2007), who points out that the focus on the leader as a sort of "hero" contributes to leaders being in the spotlight and their superiors following this pattern, especially in the sense of ascending in rank in an organization and becoming self-centred.

The masterclass broke with the dominant discourses in which the theory of leadership to a great extent is concerned with several characteristics "inside" the leader. Thus, the masterclass facilitated a relational coordination and co-creation of leadership in the organization. In light of this, the masterclass was conducted within a "second-order cybernetics" in which the actual contexts of leaders became the object of the leadership training programme (masterclass). The masterclass facilitated alternative discourses in which leadership was constructed as using both the head and bodily experiences in leadership training. The response of the participants shows that they experienced this approach as fruitful and useful in relation to their real challenges as leaders. If the leadership training had been conducted from an ontological position that focused on the individual leader, often removed from her or his real contexts, this would have resulted in several more blind spots and limitations in their learning processes. The study shows that the participants had time to become secure and that learning occurred through the process (the course of the masterclass), of which the collaborations and a co-created leadership were goals. A more traditional approach with more theoretically based "plenary hall lectures" would have contributed to the leaders becoming less attentive to the connection between context and the need for leadership training.

However, the descriptions of the participants show that the systemic approach led to some blind spots in the leadership training, especially when the systemic met the vertical hierarchy. In retrospect, this intersected with my own blind spots. When I completed the analysis, literature search and discussion, questions about the implications of systemic leadership

training in encounters with hierarchical power arose. As Andersen, Højbjerg and La Cour (2019) point out in their analysis of systemic theory, systemic approaches avoid problematizing a vertical ontology (Andersen, Højbjerg & La Cour, 2019). They claim that systems theory through its epistemological position is "a fundamental opponent" of vertical thinking. They further point out that systems exist through the actual operations that continually arise in organizations where the operations have distinct differences. As they point out, *"You see what you see, but you do not see the very gaze and the distinction by which you see; the distinction thus sets a blind spot on the observation"* (Andersen, Højbjerg & La Cour, 2019, p. 352). This is precisely what I feel led to several blind spots in the leadership training, as the relational and the collective took precedence over the hierarchy, while the latter represented a vertical control function in the leadership training.

This revealed a tension between social constructionist and constructivist approaches and the participants' cultural orientation. The leaders' historical and cultural orientation had a strong basis in hierarchy, an instrumental leadership that can be quite direct and authoritarian (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). In addition, the Danish culture favours sameness ("lighed"), which can lead to difficulties and anxiety in addressing differences. The use of embodiment in particular shows this. On the one hand, the use of embodiment contributed to a feeling of "sameness" in the leader group. On the other hand, embodiment contributed to increased individualization; i.e., the experience was mediated through individual bodies. The findings show that the cultural need for "sameness" was favoured, and I suggest that this reduced the learning of each individual. I referred earlier to Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2015, p. 1), who point out several central questions that should be included in leadership training and leadership, such as *"Who am I, for myself and for others?"* Including these reflections, especially after different embodiment exercises, would have increased both individual and collective learning about leadership.

"Similarity" (closely related to the Jante Law) took precedence. It was therefore difficult for consultants and participants to reflect on differences in personality and how they affected the emotions and feelings of the participants. As several of the participants mentioned, it was difficult to obtain emotional support from their superiors. This tension is also rooted in the neoliberal concept of progress that arose in the early 1980s. Cottam (2018) claims that neoliberal principles contributed to establishing frameworks on the welfare debate in the

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direction of a more "businesslike" mode, which is now called new public management. These perspectives also spread over national boundaries in Scandinavia, but the general perception of goal-steering, numerical goals and control became a political theory (Cottam, 2018). In my view, the masterclass never addressed or resolved the tension between "business discourses" and "care discourses".

The starting point for the change process in the organization was that the municipality should meet citizens in a new way. Previously, it was the "experts" who showed what the citizens needed, which they claimed was disempowering and contributed to the citizens losing the potential to control their own lives. The change process was intended to enable those closest to the citizens to coach them so that they could take greater responsibility for mastering their situation and managing it themselves. This took place in the context of neoliberal political changes in which the focus is increasingly on economic "costs" as well as "client choice". For me, it is interesting that the masterclass used systemic approaches and social constructionism to underpin the "individualization" of the citizens who receive services from the organization.

The study shows that systemic approaches are able to facilitate co-constructed leadership in complex organizations and in complex human interaction. At the same time, I recall Burr's (2015) criticism of social constructionism for not addressing differences in subjective experiences. Bodily experiences, self-confidence, self-concept and personal change processes clearly affect how leaders receive and fare in leadership training. The consultants and top leadership deserve great acknowledgement for their courage, as they broke with the dominant "command-and-control" discourse to build strong internal relations in the leader group. In the course of the masterclass, it was clear that learning occurred through practice and process. The participants were encouraged to try and reflect on their actual case teams with their leader colleagues. This is in accordance with Campbell's point: *"Systemic thinking is a way to make sense of the relatedness of everything around us"* (Campbell, 2000, p. 7).

5.7   *Implications for leadership and leadership training*

In general, it appears that traditional leadership theories based on dominant discourses have little practical relevance for the everyday practice of leaders and leadership training.

Furthermore, leadership training should be based on real-life challenges that are presented in secure conditions to provide the best possibilities for learning. Throughout this research, the importance of connecting mental and bodily experiences became evident. By being aware of the abovementioned connections, the participants became aware of their own emotions and how they could regulate themselves in relational interaction with others. By being regulated, they could facilitate nuanced and improved communication with relevant others. They considered a systemic approach to leadership training a more adaptive way (than the traditional individualistic discourse) to address complexity and social dynamics. The systemic approach therefore seemed to provide the leaders with helpful tools for working within complex situations.

5.8 Questions for future research

In completing this study, several interesting questions arose. In particular, it would have been interesting to conduct new interviews with all the participants and their employees one year after the masterclass programme. It could also have been interesting to include fieldwork observations of the participants in order to study whether a second-order change of their practice truly occurred. It would also be interesting to interview those receiving services (the municipality citizens) regarding how they experienced the change (if there was any change) from services that historically were based on the concept "power over" to services based on the concept "power with". This could enrich the study in a deeper way in the sense of including a broader context.

5.9 Personal learning from the research

This study was a perfect match for me as a leadership consultant and practitioner. It helped me to experience my own relevance for the field of leadership. The study in many ways contributed to new and insightful learning. In particular, developing knowledge and receiving supervision to explore different epistemological perspectives and positions gave me exciting new learning, which was also a demanding process. As a leadership consultant, I previously

had my professional roots in a positivistic paradigm. Only after I trained as a family therapist in 2008–2012 and through this study did I observe a change towards being less "predetermined" before meetings with clients and customers. Thus, it has become increasingly apparent to me that leadership is a construction that arises in social co-creation.

Through this study, I became more aware of the discourses that I live by. I was challenged by my supervisors at all times to consider the epistemological position that I took at different phases in the study. In completing this research, I learned much about myself and how I construct knowledge in interaction with others, especially the participants. It was important for me to attempt to bring the voices of the participants forward as transparently as possible. When I met the participants, I was concerned about how the interviews would be perceived. I noticed that I was inspired by the participants. Their stories also determined how the interviews unfolded. Even if the interview guide was a framework for me, I received much information by following the narratives of the participants; "being where the participants are" received much attention in these interviews. This contributed to the development of the interview guide for later interviews. Several of the participants spoke about how the interview was a good experience, as it gave them time to reflect on their participation in the masterclass, and I believe that this was owing to my choice of a dialogical form that occasionally went outside the interview guide. The fieldwork observation taught me a great deal, for example, about how the contextual frameworks influenced the leadership training. The fieldwork observations also enabled me to develop a greater knowledge of how the leaders responded within the leader group. The observations also informed the development of later interviews. In retrospect, I learned much and reflected on my own position within the systemic paradigm. Through this study, I received increased knowledge of systemic theory and complexity theory. This has contributed to new and deeper learning about how co-creative activities are performed in systemic leadership training.

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APPENDIX 1 REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN SYSTEMIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Information to Participants and Forms of Consent and Undertaking:

"Leaders' experiences of participation in a manager development training course based on a systemic approach"

For participations.

<u>University of East London</u>

Tavistoc Clinic, London

University Research Ethics Committee

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Fieulleteau, Ethics Integrity Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43

University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD

(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk)

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Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

"Leaders' experiences of participation in a manager development training course based on a systemic approach"

Project Description

This inquiry concerns participation in a semi-structured interview in which the aim is to explore the learning affects you feel your manager has received by participating in manager training based on systemic theory and practice. The central goal is to contribute to greater understanding of how managers understand their learning processes by participating in manager training in which systemic theory and practice is the main foundation. Another aim is to examine how their participation influences the daily practice of management, and what consequences this has for this practice. In order to illustrate experiences, we wish to conduct an interview with you at the end of the manager training your manager will undertake at Villavenire AS. If you accept, the interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. The interviews will be conducted between September 2014 and February 2015. The project leader for the study is Terje Hofsmarken, the main supervisor is Dr. Charlotte Burck and the secondary supervisor is Dr. Ottar Ness. Terje Hofsmarken is responsible for conducting the interviews.

Confidentiality of the Data

All data will be treated confidentially and in a responsible manner in relation to the Law on Personal Information and in accordance with the guidelines set by the Data Inspectorate. This means that the researchers will have to abide by rules of confidentiality with regard to all personal information collected. The data will be anonymized and destroyed when the research project is concluded, at the latest 31.12.2017. It is intended to publish portions of the research project in national and international professional journals and in presentations at professional conferences. The information stored about you will only be used as described under "Background and purpose". All identifying personal details will be anonymized.

It is only the undersigned who has access to the information and who can identify you. It will not be possible to identify you in the results of the studies when these are published.

As an informant, you have the right to access to the results of the study. If you wish to participate, we ask you to sign the statement of consent and post it using the reply envelope. When we have received this, you will be contacted by the project leader.

Location

The research study will be conducted in Odense Municipality, Denmark. The interviews will be conducted at your workplace. If you want to have the interview being taken elsewhere, please note the researcher where.

Remuneration

No payment will be done for participating in this study.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study and are free to withdraw at any time during tests. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. It is voluntary to participate in the study. You can withdraw your consent to participation in the study at any time and without providing a reason. If you wish to participate, please sign the statement of consent on the last page. If you later wish to withdraw or have questions about the study, or want more information about the research project you can contact Terje Hofsmarken, phone: +47 91354625 or e-mail: th@mestringskonsulentene.no.

Suggested interview guide

Questions/topics we want to focus upon in the semi-structured interviews and in the research project:

- How can co-workers who have had managers who have participated in a manager training program with a systemic perspective describe and understand their managers' learning processes?
- How can co-workers describe how the training has influenced their managers' identities?
- How can they have changed their managerial practice in the course of the training?
- How does the co-worker describe the consequences of the training for their daily management?

- What are the implications of this study with regard to future training in management?

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in an Experimental Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Title of the research project:

"Leaders' experiences of participation in a manager development training course based on a systemic approach"

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what it being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the experimental programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)
…………………………………………………………………….

Participant's Signature
………………………………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

TERJE HOFSMARKEN……………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………….

APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research project: "Develop knowledge about how managers participating in a manager development program based on systemic theory and practice understand their learning processes"

The purpose of this thesis explores how participants in a systemic leadership programme experience their learning process. The aim of the study was to explore whether and how a systemic leadership training contributes to a (co-creative) different conceptualization and practice of leadership in the actual contexts of the leader.

Have you participated in manager training previously? What type? When?

1. What expectations do you have for your participation in this course?
   What information have you received about manager training?
   a. Hva gjorde at du valgte å delta? What made you want to participate? Did you have thoughts about not participating?
   b. If yes, what? / If no, why?
   c. What do you think your manager/management thinks is the goal of this manager-training course?
   d. What do you know about those who are consultants – what information do you have about the type of approach to manager training that they take? What do you think about this?
2. Thoughts about participation in management training
   e. What do you think your goal is in participating in management training?
   f. What do you wish to understand about management through the manager-training course?
   g. What do you want to focus on in your manager role as part of this training?
   h. What do you want your coworkers to notice as a result of your participation in the training?
   2. Thoughs about management
      a. What do you think management is about for you?
      b. What is everyday management about for you?

3. Your experience so far
    a. What do you think about your experiences so far in the training?
    b. What are useful knowledge and practices you have encountered in the training?
    c. What are the less useful knowledge and practices you have encountered in the training?
4. Thoughts about yourself as a manager
    a. What is your identity as a manager?

5. What do you believe your employees, leader and co-managers think about you as a manager? Is there anything else you would like to speak about in this interview?

APPENDIX 3 ETHICAL DECISION, UK

6 August 2014

Dear Terje,

Project Title:	"Managers' experiences of participation in manager development training based on a systematic approach".
Researcher(s):	Terje Hofsmarken
Principal Investigator:	Dr Charlotte Burck

I am writing to confirm the outcome of your application to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was considered at the meeting on **Wednesday 23rd July 2014**.

The decision made by members of the Committee is **Approved**. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Your study has received ethical approval from the date of this letter.

Please be aware that the Committee has concerns about your safety, as you are conducting your research in a region where there has been recent conflict. The Director of Studies should maintain oversight of the research and your safety.

Should any significant adverse events or considerable changes occur in connection with this research project that may consequently alter relevant ethical considerations, this must be reported immediately to UREC. Subsequent to such changes an Ethical Amendment Form should be completed and submitted to UREC.

Approved Research Site

I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

Research Site	Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator
Odense Municipality, Denmark	Dr Charlotte Burck

Approved Documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	Version	Date
UREC Application Form	2.0	6 August 2014
Managers Participant Information Sheet	2.0	6 August 2014
Employees Participant Information Sheet	2.0	6 August 2014
Consent Form	2.0	6 August 2014
Interview topic guide	1.0	6 August 2014
Denmark Data Services letter	1.0	23 May 2014
Permission letter Odense Municipality	1.0	6 August 2014
Permission letter Villa Venire	1.0	6 August 2014

Approval is given on the understanding that the UEL Code of Good Practice in Research is adhered to.

Please ensure you retain this letter for future reference, as you may be asked to provide proof of ethical approval.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Fieulleteau
Ethics Integrity Manager
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
Email: **researchethics@uel.ac.uk**

APPENDIX 4 LOGBOOK FOR MEETING 1 - SIMULATOR HALL

Kl. 10.30-12.30 Level 2 and 3. Responsible for Simulator.	**The theme of your first meeting is: A GOOD MEETING WITH ONE ANOTHER** You meet with your leaders. You have 45 minutes together. Remember that you are to set aside 10 minutes for an effectivity check. There is one person responsible for the simulator participating in the meeting and you also have your boss partner at your meeting. You work from your logbook from yesterday. Time out with KDP-feedback, if your simulator leader or your boss partner finds it necessary and at a minimum of every 10 minutes. The one responsible for the simulator runs the shared effectivity check last, that is to say the last 15 minutes where you all speak about the meeting together. What have we learned now? Here are some examples of themes: • Similarities and differences in the respective leader functions • Visions/images of New leadership • Lead upwards, this is how we want to do it • Good work culture is passed on • Things we should stop doing
Kl. 10.30-12.30 Level 2 and 3.	The theme of your first meeting is: THE GOOD MEETING WITH ONE ANOTHER You participate in two meetings with two different groups of level 4 leaders who you do not expect to know. You have 30 minutes together. Remember that you are to set aside 10 minutes for an effectivity check.

You are the leader at one of the meetings and your leader partner is the leader at the second meeting.

You work from your logbook from yesterday.

Time out with KDP feedback, if your boss partner finds it necessary, and at a minimum of every 10 minutes.

Your boss partner runs the shared effectivity check last, that is to say the last 15 minutes in which all speak together about the meeting.

What have we learned now?

Here are some examples of the themes:

- Similarities and differences in the respective leader functions
- Visions/images of New leadership
- Lead upwards, this is how we want to do it
- Good work culture is passed on
- Things we should stop doing

APPENDIX 5 PROGRAM OVERVIEW MASTERCLASS 2014 – 2015

Date	Management story	Benefit/aim
22th Oct. 16.30 – 24th Oct. 12.00 Residence	CAMP I - Entry- THE SOUND OF MANAGEMENT IN THE NEW ÆHF • Action before attitude • Interaction between experience and expectation • NEW ÆHF reality • Management in the New ÆHF • The course of the ÆHF Masterclass	Establish attitudes and atmosphere Interplay between expectations and experiences as optics for change. The participant establishes a communal and an individual basis for participation. Have more words and stories around what management in the New ÆHF is. Have an eye on oneself, one's experiences – but in light of the reality of the New ÆHF.
29th – 30th Oct. 4 hours of working meetings in teams – of which 11/2 hours of coaching.	Caseteam MEETS ABOUT A MANAGEMENT CASE • Dogmas in the case: interplay between experience and expectation, action before attitude, less is more management • Coaching for cooperation (internal and external) and on development of managerial power	The demand for cooperation in the Caseteam is clarified and criteria for managerial power are formed. The dual acknowledgement - challenge (the relation and the task) is put into play.
25th – 28th Nov.	CAMP II – SIMULATION OF MANAGEMENT IN THE NEW	The manager's ability to maneuver skillfulness during change is strengthened: communication, standing calmly in the face of

09:00 – 15:00 every day		criticism, guidance conversations about the communal news, establishing grasp, communicating vision
	• Specific Management training in the simulation hall • ” ÆHF – Ready for change”. • The ABC and X of communication • Being calm when criticism is at close hand	The focus is on creation of results, managerial power and meaning creation for managerial groups. Strengthen feedback and partner culture in the boss group
4th December Phønix 8:30 – 15:00	CAMP III – TRANSFORMATIVE ACCESS TO MANAGEMENT • Observations, qualifying and Feedforward – the further course • Transformative access to welfare change	Theory I: Transformative guidance. Guest. Klaus Majgaard Inspiration to management from 3 different guiding perspectives: simple guidance, transformative guidance and reflexive guidance
20th- 21st January 2015 Residence	CAMP IV – INDIVIDUAL & ORGANIZATIONAL ROBUSTNESS • What I WANT & what I MUST – enjoyment and management hand in hand. • The dilemma hunt in the New ÆHF • Management of changes in a narrative perspective • The story of me as a boss • Caseteam work – where are we now?	” The break” is an integral part of effective learning. Space is provided here for reflection as well as development of strong personal stories. The story about me as a boss is strengthened Understanding and application of narrative access to management: plot, story, expansion

		Develop robustness between what you want as a boss and what you are to do
January/February 1 hour per participant	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT - Individual coaching - Working with effectiveness – personal and professional robustness.	The aim is to strengthen personal stories about satisfaction and managerial power in the midst of the transformations. Set the focus on personal management for one self and for others in general = ready for change.
26th – 27th February Residence	CAMP V – BOSS ROLE'S NATIONAL CARD IN THE ÆHF - The boss role vs. the manager role? - Sender professionality in the other - Leading managers who are to manage others - The paradox of quality - I was also good as a boss here … - Satisfaction and management hand in hand.	Friendly days in all the chaos. Space is provided here for reflection as well as development of oneself as boss. Strengthen the communication of acknowledging managerial strategy: developing and discovering Strengthen feedback and partner culture in the boss group Develop a picture of the boss role's national card Finding the marker for one's own management
April/May 1 hour per participant.	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT - Individual coaching - Working with effectiveness – personal	The aim is to strengthen the personal stories about satisfaction and managerial power in the midst of the transformations.

	and professional robustness.	Set the focus on personal management for one self and others in general=Ready for change.
26th March Phønix 08.30 – 15.30	CAMP VI – MANAGEMENT ACROSS THE ÆHF - Management across – leading across professions, departments and organizations - Management across the i ÆHF over the next 3-5 months? - The return course in the ÆHF – what makes the boss secure? - ÆHF masterclass: rearview and overview!	Theory II: management across by Annemette Digmann Boundary-breaking management as inspiration for what management across can involve Producing concrete images of what management across the ÆHF is like now Work with management of central decisions and interventions in the ÆHF just now The participants get refreshed and qualified concerning what we have worked with at the ÆHF Masterclass
8th – 9th April 4 hours of working meetings in teams – of which 11/2 hours of coaching	Caseteam MEETING: - Coaching on organizational dilemmas and presentation of expanded boss group	Qualification of the experience from the case-teams is focused on the ability to give feedback and binding task responsibility. Training of maneuverability and maneuvering responsibility.
24th April	CAMP VII – EFFECT STEERING IN THE ÆHF	THEORY III: effect-steering

Phønix 08.30 – 15:00	• Working with effects and indications in the ÆHF	
22th May 2015 08:30 – 15:00	Case CAMP – LEARNING ABOUT MANAGEMENT IN THE NEW ÆHF • Presentation of case work • 1 hour per Caseteam – half an hour presentation, half an hour discussion. • Certificate with bubbles.	