COLLABORATIVE AGENCY IN LEADERSHIP.

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN A SOFTWARE STARTUP.

Key Concepts: Leadership, Leadership-as-Practice, Collaborative Agency, Ethnography

The purpose of the study is to examine collaborative agency in leadership. Unpredictability, complex nature of technological environment and increasing trend of project-driven professional work require high skills in self-management and collaboration, which challenge traditional understanding of hero-centric leadership. In self-organizing systems, leadership appears as social practices among the members rather than a transactional event between leader and follower. Ascending as a collaborative agentic process, different situational conditions shapes the final leadership outcomes of an organization. The question is, how does the leadership appear as a collaborative agency?

The study aims to respond to the need of leadership studies with more practical approach and furthermore, contribute to leadership development discussions in contemporary reactive organizations. Research questions are: *RQ1: How does the collaborative agency emerge through day-to-day leadership? RQ2: In which situations and conditions does the collaborative agency take place? RQ3: What are the constitutes of leadership in self-organizing system?* A local startup within ICT-field was selected as research context due to diverse business operations in technological environment, flexible organizational structure and project-driven nature of knowledge-based work.

The study was conducted as an organizational ethnography combining traditions of ethnographic and qualitative research. The observation data was collected by participating in the daily life of the organization including meetings, projects and work processes. The qualitative data was collected through open individual interviews and group discussions as part of participants' daily routines. Subsequently, the data collection was supplemented with project management documents and qualitative partner evaluations. The data was analyzed with qualitative content analysis utilizing narrative analysis.

The results of the study show that collaborative agency emerged through informal and unorganized leadership settings. Social practices of these settings consisted of conditions of crisis, routines and random encounters that all reflected different characters of collaborative agentic process: Crisis reframed practitioners' performance through problem-solving and organizational learning, in condition of routines a common good was considered above the individualistic needs, and random encounters maintained the culture of improvisation, self-organizing and free choice of rules. Furthermore, expertise, teams, projects and positions were identified as the constitutes of leadership in self-organizing system.

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tarkastella yhteistoimijuutta johtajuuden ilmentymänä. Teknologisen toimintaympäristön ennalta-arvaamattomuus ja kompleksisuus sekä nykypäivän lisääntynyt projektiluonteinen asiantuntijatyö vaativat kyvykkyyttä itsensä johtamisessa ja yhteistyössä, mikä haastaa perinteisiä yksilökeskeisiä johtajuuskäsityksiä. Itseohjautuvissa systeemeissä johtajuus ilmenee enemminkin sosiaalisena toimintana aktiivisten toimijoiden toimesta, kuin transaktionaalisena vaihtosuhteena johtajan ja johdettavan välillä. Johtajuus yhteisöllisenä toimijuutena muotoutuu tilannekohtaisissa olosuhteissa, jotka vaikuttavat lopulliseen johtajuuden esiintymiseen organisaatiossa. Kysymys kuuluu, miten johtajuus ilmenee yhteistoimijuutena?

Tutkimus pyrkii vastamaan käytännönläheisempään johtajuustutkimuksen lisäämiseen sekä reaktiivisten organisaatioiden johtajuuden kehittämiskeskusteluihin. Tutkimuskysymykset ovat: *1: Miten yhteistoimijuus esiintyy päivittäisessä johtajuudessa? 2: Missä tilanteissa ja olosuhteissa yhteistoimijuus nousee esille? 3: Mitkä tekijät rakentavat johtajuutta itseohjautuvassa systeemissä?* Havainnoin kohteena toimi ICT-alan startup -yritys, joka valikoitui tutkimuskohteeksi teknologiseen toimintaympäristöön sijoittuvien liiketoimintojensa, liikkuvan organisaatiorakenteensa ja projektiluontoisen asiantuntijatyönsä vuoksi.

Tutkimus toteutettiin kenttätutkimuksena yhdistäen etnografisen ja laadullisen tutkimuksen perinteitä. Havainnointiaineisto kerättiin osallistumalla tapausyrityksen arkeen, palavereihin ja projektityön prosesseihin. Aineistoa kerättiin lisäksi avoimilla yksilöhaastatteluilla ja ryhmäkeskusteluilla työnteon lomassa. Sittemmin aineistoa täydennettiin yrityksen projektijohtamisen dokumenteilla ja laadullisilla osakasarvioinneilla. Aineisto analysoitiin sisällönanalyysilla hyödyntäen narratiivianalyysia.

Tulokset osoittavat, että yhteistoimijuutta esiintyi epämuodollisissa ja suunnittelemattomissa johtajuusasetelmissa. Asetelmien sosiaaliset toiminnot koostuivat kriisitilanteista, rutiineista ja sattumanvaraisista kohtaamisista, jotka heijastivat yhteistoimijuuden eri ominaisuuksia: kriisitilanteet muokkasivat osallistujien tapaa toimia ongelmanratkaisukeskeisyyden ja organisaatio-oppimisen kautta, rutiineissa kaikkien yhteinen etu arvotettiin yksiön etua korkeammalle ja sattumanvaraiset kohtaamiset ylläpitivät improvisaation, itseohjautuvuuden ja säännöttömyyden kulttuuria. Johtajuuden rakennetekijöiksi muotoutuivat asiantuntijuus, tiimit, projektit ja positiot.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Leadership Traditions and Contemporary Discussion

Leadership is indisputably one of the most studied concepts in business and management research. In the organizational concept, roots can be found from the time of Taylorism when leadership was determinate as a high level of control and strict division of labour. (Procter 2005, 464; Weber 1964.) Over the decades, the leadership discussion was framed within hero-centric views with great man theories about leader's attributions to enhance maximum performance of production line (Blanchard 2010; Northouse 1997, 16).

Discussion got influences from human sciences such social sciences and psychology that started to emphasize the leader-followership relation and mechanisms between motivational action and goal-orientation. Employees' personal demands and needs was taken into consideration when effective leadership was concerned and how individuals can be motivated to act in a way that leads to wanted performance and achievements. Discussion about leadership activities such motivating and supervising brought new leadership approaches and different theories concerning the best fit with leadership style and different situations emerged (Alvesson, Blom & Svengsson 2017; Juuti 2013; Dosi, Nelson & Winter 2000.)

In the 21st century leader-followership determination has expanded to recognize the influence of dialogue and followers' active role in leadership sense-making. Instead of being influenced, followers construct and co-construct the leadership together with leaders and other followers. (Alvesson et al. 2017, 83; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera & McGregor 2010; Northouse 2016, 296.) The discussion around the leadership started to change from the superhero leader paradigms into more practical and relational understandings. Discussion about what kind of skills might good leader have and what kind of behaviour optimize followers' best performance, has moved to suggestions that leadership is dialogue exchange, a process that is created around a coffee table with colleagues, in seminars with the stakeholders and out of offices with customers (Storey 2004; Winter 2000).

Environments have increasingly been described as fast-changing and disruptive, demanding novel approaches to leadership that involve less planning and control and more flexibility,

learning and improvisation (Bettis & Hitt, 1995; Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998; Vera & Crossan, 2004b, 2005). Moreover, new forms of organization are evolving, and networked and cellular forms have been proposed (Lehtimäki 2017; Miles, Snow, Mathews, Miles & Coleman 1997). The forms of organizing in the organizations of this kinds conforms flexible type rather than control type (Procter 2005, 463) which has a huge influence on how leadership is determinate, studied and discussed. Questions such how does the leadership appear in flexible organizations, when and where does it take place, how do the complexity and collaborative communities change the understanding of transactional leadership and whom is associated as a leader when no undisputed hierarchy exists?

On the other hand, leadership has become a strategic part of the organizational development discussions: how could leadership be strategically pursued in the organizations of these kinds? Despite that leadership has a long history in the management research field, it is coincidental one of the most popular trends in contemporary discussion of competitive advantage of organizations. Reflexive leadership that fits with the culture of an organization, supports its people, maintain strong community sense and able organizational learning, create advantage that is extremely hard to imitate. We all have probably heard the story of Vincit, the Finnish software company, that created Leadership-as-a-Service (LaaS) model after recognizing a contradiction between their knowledge-based work, supervisory leadership models they were using and the hectic market environment within they were operating. (Vincit 2016.) They substituted middle managers with reactive leadership functions such digital learning platform and distributed decision-making that respond every employees' needs and expectations towards leadership. According to Crossan et. al (2008, 570), ability to interpret the environment and ability to build leadership system that thrives in that context is the major element of organizational survivor in long-term.

Even though there can be seen sort of consensus that leadership cannot be designed only on positions basis in contemporary dynamic organizations, lot of leadership studies are conducted by interviewing those who are positioned as managers or, in turn, leadership is studied from employees' perspective as a need to be led. According to Auvinen (2017), Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) and Ropo, Salovaara, Sauer and De Paoli (2015), traditional concern about leaders and followers do not fit with the changing environment in the knowledge era. Contemporary organizations are not structured from top to down or bottom up; they are constituted by the characters and elements of the system and its practices. It can be asked, are we truly able to

understand meaning-making processes of leadership in nowadays dynamic workplaces by interviewing individuals in different hierarchical positions or should we rather study generic functions of leadership by going there where organizing, networking and interacting take place.

Relational and practical leadership approaches have been proposed. In Ropo's et al.'s (2013; 2015) studies the focus of interest was to reveal relations between physical places and leadership since working spaces where people used to encounter each other has rapidly changed after digitalization and networked communities. They disclose that different material places such offices, meeting rooms, artefacts, and digital spaces include lot of sociocultural norms and rules how to behave and perceive things, and these social spaces strongly shape the individual's sense-making about leadership.

Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) and Raelin (2016a) argue for relational and practical understanding of leadership, based on accumulating changes in organizing systems. They bring new approach to leadership discussion by questioning if leaders exist in complex adaptive systems. According to Osborn and Hunt (2007, 322), in self-organizing systems structuration emerges through day-to-day practices where random group of people from all hierarchical levels of an organization co-work and collaborate to achieve desire results without a set of rules. This collaborative performing is abled through the system and executed by the agents (Will 2016). As Raelin (2016a) describes it, within this collaborative agency leadership assumingly becomes maintained.

The inspiration for the current study arises from the findings according to contemporary leadership discussion both in the research and organizational fields. Ropo's et al.'s (2015, 2) leadership conceive as a relational construction between people, materiality and the environment inspired to approach leadership as process that is constituted by different elements rather than a transactional event between individuals. Furthermore, Marion's and Uhl-Bien's (2002, 403) suggestion of different conditions of complexity situations justified to study leadership in the context it occurs and observe how the nature of those situations influence the appearing leadership. The second interest lies in startup ecosystem: it has been evaluated that only in Finland hundreds of new startups is born every year and majority are operating within ICT-industry by producing and developing new technologies and software, and it has argued that labour in these kinds of firms cannot be led because the uncertainty nature of technology environment and work processes of free choice of order (Dess & Picken 2012; Osborn et al.

2007). The question is, how should we define leadership in the concept of self-organizing system where ability to lead is not depending on individuals' skills nor behaviour but rather on changing situations, conceptual conditions and its social practices?

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine collaborative agency in leadership. This study utilizes Alvesson's et al.'s (2017) definition of reflexive leadership that is leader-free and not dependent on individuals' hierarchical positions. It acknowledges that leadership engage different parties who influences each other, but the roles and expectations toward others are situational and extremely hard to categorize into subject (leader) and object (follower). Reflexive approach to leadership concerns the influence of changing external environment into leadership sense-making (Alvesson et. al 2017, 90–91). Thus, the theoretical framework of the study is formulated based on the leadership-as-practice (LAP) approach that addresses the context and situations in leadership sense-making. Understanding leadership in this study builds on previous leadership studies that social constructionism and process character in leadership producing.

The current study does not deny the existence of leader-followership since the empirical setting of the study include managerial positions such CEO, executive managers, partners and project managers and on the other hand, employees. Positions always include power relations and role expectations to different profiles which in turn may have influences on the sense-making of leadership (Alvesson et al. 2017, 77). However, the interest of the study is to explore what agents can achieve together rather than how do they influence to each other and furthermore, what are the constitutes of leadership in an organization of this type.

Leadership is understood as transcendence of three leadership dimensions that are leadership of others, leadership of self and leadership of organization (Crossan, Vera & Nanjad 2008). According to Crossan et. al. (2008, 15), these dimensions are well established on their own but studying leadership at different levels as independent entities limit the capability of leadership research to respond the complexity nature of contemporary business units. Thus, the methodological choices of the study are made based on the contextual and the cross-functional nature of leadership.

In this study, the focus of interest is to explore how different forms of agency such autonomy and collaborative agency appear in social practices. The aim is to identify where does the leadership as collaboration agentic process takes place and which characters describe those situations best. Moreover, the aim is to find out how leadership is constituted and co-structured on everyday practices in the organization. Finally, the purpose is to find out, what are the elements that constitute the leadership in self-organizing system. Research questions are:

RQ1: How does the collaborative agency emerge through day-to-day leadership?

RQ2: In which situations and conditions does the collaborative agency take place?

RQ3: What are the constitutes of leadership in self-organizing system?

Defining the Empirical Setting of the Study

The case company is a local software startup which produces 3D simulations, software and high-tech business operations mainly for manufacturing industry. Organization consists of four departments which imitates the fusion process of the current startup. The personnel of the case company consist of 35 members including 11 partners (and co-founders). All partners act in sort of leader positions: some of them are heads of departments, some are responsible for technology and some of them act in supervisory roles. The executive board of the organization consists of partners. Organization has an administrative board as well, but its practices has left out from this study because the management level operations do not serve the purpose of the study.

In terms of leadership, the setting reveals three specific contextual interests: the uncertainty of external business environment, different modes of organizing work and organizational structure. First, Technological environment includes lot of unpredictable elements that are difficult to estimate e. g. collaboration with other IT companies, stakeholders' changing needs, demands of user interface and the proceed of software R&D. Secondly, work itself is both team and self-oriented and modes of organizing include autonomy, networked peer influencing, group work and pure management (see Alvesson et al. 2017, 94–103). Thirdly, the

organizational structure of the company is in-and-between formality and informality, and according to their own words, organization is constantly framing their structure from ideal flat organization to more stable and restrained forms.

The case company mirrors the typical startup organization in ICT field. Characters such highly knowledge-based work tasks, project-driven nature of work, quick and spread decision-making procedures, operations in constantly changing environments, describe well the ecosystem of startups within ICT field. Based on the findings above, deviance of the empirical setting is not extremely high since other same kinds of settings assumingly exists. Thus, the setting of the study can be identified as a normal and the setting can be generalized at some point. (Neyland 2008, 144.) However, every organization has their own way to communicate, interact and perceive things. In addition, the history of fusion and the current stage of formulating the organizational structure from startup ideology to more stabilized one makes the empirical setting of the current study interesting and research worth file.

1.3 Structure of the Paper

In Chapter 2, theoretical framework of the study is discussed. Discussion starts by introducing main theoretical changes in leadership understandings that are the movement from diagnostic to dialogue leadership. After that, different dimensions of leadership in organizational context is presented and the interest is to expand the discussion to leadership as practice approach. The key constructs such collaborative agency and self-organizing system are introduced and at the end of the chapter. Finally, the synthesis of leadership definition and the theoretical framework of the study is concluded.

Chapter 3 introduces the methodological choices of the study. Social constructionism is introduced as an epistemological basis for the study and after that, ethnography as a qualitative research approach is discussed. The aim is to introduce how the ethnographic study was designed, how the fieldwork was conducted and how the final research design was formulated on the field. Finally, data collection and analysis methods are presented.

In Chapter 4, the results of the empirical research are introduced. Chapter is built to response each research questions (see chapter 1.2) sequentially. First, chapter focuses to present four different leadership settings appeared on the field and furthermore, the nature of collaborative agentic leadership in each setting is discussed. Based on the previous findings, situationally

recognisable conditions where leadership as collaborative agency took place are introduced with the written scenes from the field. After that, leadership constitutes in self-organizing system are presented. Chapter strongly reflects to empirical data as a source of analysis and presented results.

The Chapter 5 discloses the main findings of the study and build a synthesis between theoretical discussion about leadership as practice framework and empirical findings according to collaborative agency in leadership. Furthermore, organizational implications of the study are considered, so are insights and recommendations for the future leadership study. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 From Diagnostic to Dialogue Understanding of Leadership

There are several ways to define leadership. As Northouse (1997, 2) demonstrate it, leadership has as many different definitions as there are people who have tried to define it. The oldest theories of leadership, the trait-based theories, suggest that leaders are born rather than created. The trait approach consists of different leadership traits that individual either have or do not have. According to Northouse (2016, 20), these theories were called "great man" theories because they were built upon traits that effective military and political leaders used to have. In addition, these traits were defined as personal character that people were born with it, so the only possibility to become a great leader was to have appropriative skills of intelligence, self-confidence, determination and integrity. (Northouse 2016, 21; Northouse 2012, 3, 17; Alvesson et al. 2017, 28).

Behavioural theories suggest that great leaders are excellent because of what they do, rather than who they are. The style approach emphasizes leaders' behaviours which can be either task orientated or relationship orientated. Leaders with strong task orientation style refers to activities that concerns productivity and enhance realization of expected results. Leader with a high interest towards schedules, control of delivery, dividing work roles and tasks clarify the nature of this style. (Northouse 1997, 41.) Relationship orientation concerns people and leader with this style aims to build trust and strong relations to subordinates by supporting them in their work and enable individuals' personal development (Northouse 2012, 52–57; Alvesson et al. 2017, 30).

The consensus about what kind of leader's traits are good ones and which are the bad ones, have been in a constant flux depending on the current global trends, and studies have not succeeded to evidence connections between traits and the outcomes from the perspective of organizational performance (Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O'Connor & McGuire 2008; Alvesson et al. 2017, 31; Northouse 2016, 31). In addition, both the trait and style approaches have been namely criticized for their "stiff" character and the lack of understanding to take situations into account. As Northouse (2016 2016, 31) points it out, one trait may work in one situation but not over time, nor even in other similar situations. Style approach involves

wide range of activities but none of those are tried to fit in the context where leadership takes place. Thus, studying only leader's personal traits isolate the leadership action from the context it occurs.

Contingency theories propose that certain situations require certain type of leadership. Situational leadership approach is a rejection to the critique that raised from hero-centric leadership theories. As the name implies, it approaches leadership in situations and different demands. (Alvesson et al. 2017, 33.) Leadership is considered to happen in changing situations by regarding the needs of environment. Environment consists of tangible (physical places and artefacts) and intangible (people's personality, motivation and expectations) elements that affect how the things might go and how leadership should be carried out in that particular situation within people involved in. (Northouse 1997, 53.) The main idea is that leader is matching the leadership style with followers' demands by diagnosing the situation from followers' perspective with questions such how comfortable do subordinate feel with the task given, is subordinate enough skilled to accomplish the given task and how much support might one need to overcome with the task. Based on the diagnosis leader is supposed to make the best decision concerning of how to lead.

As one may notice from the discussion above, all traditional views has dominantly identified follower as an object to be constructed by leader. Relation between follower and leader has been depicted as linear influence with direct consequence of leader's traits, styles and acts. Traditional leadership theories believe that with right transactional activities follower will work in given direction and maintain the enhanced performance. This mechanical foundation of the diagnostic leadership paradigm has been criticized a lot. No environment is enough transparent that these approaches assume (Alvesson et al. 2017, 80; Marion et al. 2002). Reality is much more complex and daily interactions in organizations not stabile enough to be illuminated by transactional exchange between individuals (Dess et al. 2012; Dosi, Nelson & Winter 2000). In addition, diagnostic leadership approaches do not discuss the effectiveness of leadership outcomes in the organizational concept (Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O'Connor & McGuire 2008), and holds the lack on contextuality and process (Raelin, Kempster, Youngs, Carroll & Jackson 2018).

Relational perspectives to leadership emphasize practical view where the focus of interest lies in interaction (Conger et. al. 2003, 27). In collectivistic leadership theories organizations are

observed as dynamic and complex entities emphasizing group phenomenon and distributed nature of leadership. These conceptualize leadership as relational process which occurs in collective activity embedded in the context in which it occurs. In addition, relational approach to leadership offers a group-level observation into subject, and one of the main interests is focusing its informal character.

Leadership as a co-creation process means that leadership cannot be framed as a simple, occasional, transactional event between individuals, that has a clear beginning and the clear ending; it is ongoing dialogue process that engage people, time, places, surroundings and relations in it and all these construct the final practice that we call *leadership* (Raelin 2016b; Storey 2004.) It addresses the dialogue and emphasizes followers' active role in the process. Instead of being influenced, followers construct and co-construct the leadership together with leaders and other followers. (Alvesson et al. 2017, 83.) The difference between leader-centric and process view of leadership is simplified in the figure 1:
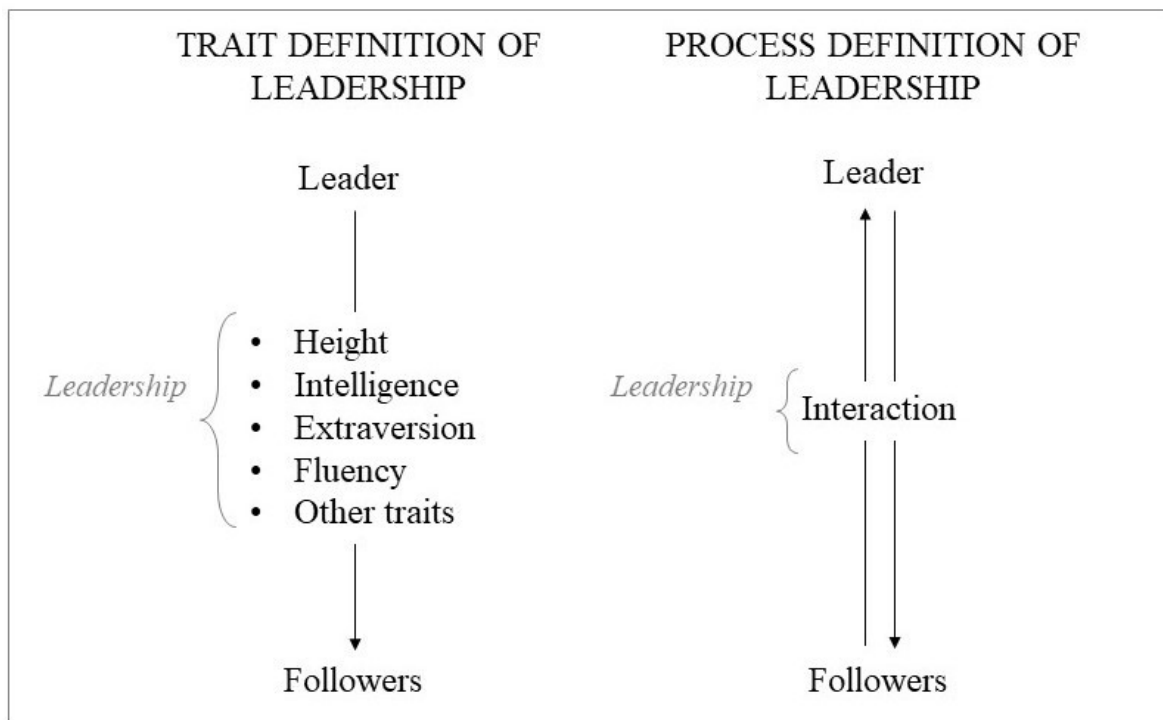

Figure 1. The Different Views of Leadership (Northouse 2016, 9)

Figure 1 distinguish the major differences between leader-centric view and process view. On the left side, the trait definition of leadership presents the linear influence between leader and follower that is constructed by leader's traits and skills. On the right side, the process definition of leadership presented the dialogue between leader and followers that is constructed in interaction. It highlights the interactivity in the leadership process, and as Northouse (2016, 8) describes, leadership *emerges* rather than is *assigned.* Process definition of leadership acknowledge that person assigned to a leadership position rarely become the real leader in a particular setting. Leader can be anyone engaged in that situation, but it requires that other members accept and support it. When leadership is not assigned by positions it becomes available to everyone and makes the leadership process visible also for those who are not directly engaged in the situation. (Northouse 2016, 9). According to Pearce et al. (2003), leadership becomes condensed in mutual interaction which takes places throughout the whole organization since interactions and networking happens all levels of the organization all the time (Conger et. al 2003, 23). These different leadership levels are discussed next.

2.2 Cross-functional Leadership

Crossan, Vera and Nanjad (2008) approach the leadership dimensions with a cross-level mixed model that emphasizes synthesis of three different levels of leadership. The nature of cross-level models emphasizes the importance of reflective leadership research that gives attention to space where these perceived limits surpasses each other. The main idea behind the model is that leadership occurs both independently in three different levels – self, others and organization – and together in different variations. The focus of interest is in the middle of the model where all leadership levels crosses producing the area of transcendence. All leadership dimensions construct the nature of leadership from different ankles, theory bases and research traditions.

Figure 2. Leadership within and among three levels (Crossan et. al 2008, 570).

Leadership of the organizational level starts form the argument clarified in contingency theories that the fit between strategy, organization and the environment is crucial for firm performance. This dimension of leadership identifies the nature of business environment and affiliate strategical choices of structure and organizing within the demands of the environment. (Crossan et al. 2008, 573.) In this dimension, leadership is defined as leaders' responsibility to lead the organization to the right direction. However, from the organizational learning perspective it acknowledges that nonhuman elements such structure, rules and norms are affected by its people from the inside, not only from the external environments, so the influence between internal and external environment is conversational. According to Crossan et al. (2008, 572), dimension discusses leadership at the very strategical level, still influencing on the organizational practices.

Leadership of others is the most well established and developed dimension of leadership, and it contributes the historical trend of leadership research. It has been examined through different theories connected to leader-follower relationship and top-down interaction between managers and employees. Usually this dimension is based on the idea of visible leaders and immediate followers; people at the top lead their co-workers and employees to act in certain ways in order to achieve settled goals. (Crossan et al. 2008, 574.) However, as discussed earlier in this study, leading others is not only transactional event between leader and follower but rather an

interactive process between group of people. This dimension approach leadership as a group-phenomenon including peer-influence and power relations among the members.

Leadership of self has been studied through the questions related to motivation and intrinsic passion, agency and autonomy. The discussion of self-leadership concerns a process in which individuals influence themselves to achieve self-motivation needed to perform (Bligh, Pearce & Kohles 2006, 297). Crossan et al. (2008, 576) relate this dimension to the leadership of organization: the current economy with its complexity and uncertainty requires skills in self-management and willingness to constantly develop personal strengths. While control type of organizing is decreasingly replaced by self-organizing systems (see chapter 2.3 later in this paper), the goal of developing oneself can be seen as a shared need of the whole organization. Self-organizing systems requires individuals and groups that are able and enable to lead themselves.

As Crossan et al. (2008) suggest, model is a call for more attention to the contextual aspects of leadership in the dynamic organizations; studying contemporary organizations should include the synthesis of different levels of leadership dimensions. New models of leadership recognize that in living systems of relationships effectiveness does not depends on heroic leaders but rather on leadership practices embedded in a system of interdependencies at different levels within the organization (Conger et. al. 2003, 22). Thus, the current study acknowledges that leadership occur in different variations of three different levels and it is more the transcendent era where reactive leadership takes place rather than in singular level.

2.2 Leadership-as-Practice

Leadership-as-practice (LAP) conceptualize leadership as occurring as a practice, rather than remain in the traits, behaviours and motives (Raelin 2017, 1–2.). It has been argued to represent the new movement of leadership in 21st century since it emphasizes essence of process and action and brings critical practice view into leadership sense-making. Leadership-as-practice consider leadership both from the practical and the relational perspectives and it believes that leadership is an ongoing process where leading self, others and organization occur. (Raelin 2011; Raelin 2017; Raelin 2018.)

The orientation towards practice aligns with debates in leadership studies problematizing the leader-follower ontological assumption. (Raelin et al. 2018, 373.) A practice perspective to

leadership recognizes that the work of leadership is distributed wide in an organization engaging employees from middle and lower levels or, like Carrol, Levy and Richmond (2008, 374) point it out, from "non-positions". This means that theory basis of LAP distinguishes those with status, power and hierarchy profiles. It acknowledges hierarchical paradigms but as the name implies, the starting point of this view is the constitution of leadership in different sites than in different positions. (Raelin 2011, 2017.) As Carroll (Raelin et al.'s 2018, 379) address it, the power lies in temporal, situated, relational and material processes that constitute practice – not interdependent individual.

Among the other relational and collective approaches dialogic patterns can also be recognized in LAP approach. It strongly accepts that the power behind leadership is less about what one person does and more about what group of people may achieve together. LAP among the other relational leadership approaches emphasizes the meaning of coordinative effort among different parties who choose to act and make decisions through their own rules (Raelin 2017, 6).

The main difference between LAP and other relational approaches is that LAP do not approve practice as itself an independent entity where people just "do" leadership; it beliefs that people cannot be taken ride of the situation or, in other words, people cannot be separated from the emerging practice. In this sense, people or action are not only embedded within leadership, but leadership practices would not exist without them. Carroll et al. (2008) has implied this distinction from two theoretical perspectives as follows:

Table 1. Distinction of Competency and Practice

Competency	Practice
Rooted in objectivism	Explicitly constructionist
Individual level of analysis	Inherently relational and collective
Quantifiable and measurable	Discourse, narrative and rhetoric
Unanchored in relationship and context	Situated and socially defined
Privileges reason	Privileges lived or day-to-day experience
Assumes intellect predominantly	Incorporates embodiment and emotion

Source: Carroll et al. 2008, 366

According to Carroll et al. (2008), leadership has mainly approached from competency thinking where the focus is on what leaders do while leading and how strongly do they perform in their job as a leader. Discussion of leadership activities such controlling, supervising and guiding are examples where leaders are seen as individuals who carry out specific performance in their job as a leader and their action presents measurable organizational goals such working efficiency or budgeting. In this sense, actions are considered as objective outcomes that any individual could achieve; success comes from by adopting same generic predestined behaviours and roles which maintain the distinction of context. (Carroll et al. 2008 365).

The fundamental belief of the leadership as practice approach is its underlying mechanism of appearing as practice, not *in* practice. Practice thinking emphasizes that reality is a construction of social actors, discourses and situations. As Carroll et al. (2008, 367) discuss, the logic of practice remark that majority of actions are most of the time taking place in unorganized random situations and are held within situational conditions and circumstances. Leadership cannot be released from the context it takes place like competency logic used to understand and thus, the logic of practice invites us to study leadership in everyday practices of practitioners.

In this sense-making, leadership is jointly accomplished process that occurs in particular situation or in different series of situations that are socially constructed in day-to-day practices rather than a deliberated pathway to results or objective intension of an independent individual. Leadership as practice is a concept that is centred upon the synthesis of structure-agency interaction that concerns on how power becomes manifested and used within contextual practices in this interaction rather than measuring its impact on people. Raelin (et al. 2018, 371) discloses the meaning of LAP as follows:

> *"...not as residing in the traits and behaviours of individuals (such as leaders and followers) but as an agency emanating from an emerging collection of practices... when social and material-discursive processes and activities begin to re-orient the flow of practice towards new meanings and directions, we say that leadership is taking place."*

2.2.1 Agency and Structure

The agency refers to human activity. When the definition of agency is concerned, it is necessary to understand the conscious subject behind the action; an agent who is capable to think, compare alternatives and calculate potential risks and the consequences of their actions. The agent is capable to acquire information and make decisions based on the findings. Agency is evident in an activity where the cognitive choices made by the individual become true. (Alkire 2008, 6; Bratman 2007, 3.)

Bourdieu (1997, 32) approaches the definition of agency from the cultural point of view. The idea of an agent starts with individual's ability to act according to their own rules on the basis of their choices, but the final result of the action will be shaped in relation to culture and the community where individual operates (Sen & Nussbaum 1993; Pettit 2009) The agency is usually discussed in terms of autonomy that refers to the the agent's freedom to operate in the way one wishes and individual's decisions to act according to their own rules. Individuals' agency is acknowledged by other people and it becomes transcended in the environment it takes place.

Because of the nature of contextuality, the realization of agency is influenced not only by individual capabilities to act as an agent in but also the conditions of environment, the structure and rules concerning about how to execute one's agency (Alkire 2002, 7; Pettit 2009, 73; Maslow 1998, 55-56). The agency comes into being in the context where the action occurs, providing frameworks in which individual make interpretations before pursuing action. Agency would not be considered to exist without recognizing the context where observable action takes place.

According to Bourdieu (1997, 35) and Raelin (2016a, 13), agency and structure are strongly constituting each other. Structure in this sense can be defined as institutional and sociocultural. By institutional structure Raelin (2016a, 7) means mission-oriented system within observable written structure. For example, societies are organized to ensure order and safety with institutional orientations, so are organizations structured with hierarchy and different power-related positions and procedures to enable organizational goals. Besides formal structure, organizations have sociocultural structure that is constituted by its people (Raelin 2016a, 78). As a socially produced setting, structure consists of norms, unwritten rules and cultural meaning-making processes according to what is appropriative behavior from people engaged

to the community. These rules according to how to behave are constituted by people and furthermore, engaged to the social action itself.

Raelin (2016a, 7) discloses that both institutional and sociocultural structures determinates appearing agency. Sen (Pettit 2009, 93) highlights construction of agency due the structure. Freedom to choose means often choosing between two or more options available, so the final choice is not a decisive choice but a choice which individual values higher than the second option. These decision-making processes are shaped by the institutional structure within individual operates (employee is not allowed to make decisions at the level of CEO) and by the sociocultural structure reflecting one's own behavior to others whether their action is seen as suitable and appropriative.

2.2.3 Collaborative Agency

According to Raelin (2016a, 9), autonomy is usually the starting point when agency itself is discussed but agency is not visible as itself but rather needs social practices to "come into daylight". Social practices are embedded in group-phenomenon where participants reflect their action to each other turning agency into collective existence. Both individual and collective states of agency can be seen as a same time but as Steen (2011) points it out, community and team-level practices limit the identity of individual emphasizing the power of collaboration.

The collaborative nature of agency means that dialogic exchange happens between those who are engaged and committed to practice. When relatively interdependent individuals pursue their agency collectively the action-outcome is dialogic. Raelin (2016a, 11) explain this by individuals' willingness to expand their individual autonomy into common good. People committed to collaboration have interest to listen others and restructure their own behavior and occasionally ready for change their thoughts into something totally new. This kind of learning and nonplanned outcomes happens in collaborative agentic process in social interaction. Furthermore, collaborative agency focuses revealing how different sociocultural parties (CEO and part-time working employee) act together and how they pursue their actions into outcomes that benefits both and the whole organization – not only themselves.

Fundamentally, intersubjectivity is the key for collaborative agency; the group level phenomenon requires two or more people to make it happen. As mentioned earlier, collaborative agency takes place in social practices that allows anyone to participate in

leadership making which makes practice as activation force of collaborative agency. (Raelin 2016a, 17.) As a social practice, it has two different characters. First, the outcome is usually open-ended because participants cannot know its result beforehand (Raelin 2016a, 12). All parties have presumptions how the things might go and different aims to participate to it but, in the end, no one knows how the interaction proceeds. In addition, the interaction consists of constant give-and-take discourses, interest to listen others and formulate ones' own ideas on the basis of others. If the outcome of their action could be pre-determined, the exchange would not be dialogic and moreover, would refer to followership like of action.

The other character of intersubjectivity is the influence of social action to the structure that shapes it. The participants engaged the practice acts as change agents in dialogic interaction through sharing their visions, giving opinions, interpreting given meanings and others' behavior in that practice (Raelin 2016a, 12). As mentioned earlier, collaborative agentic process holds open-ended outcomes, and since participants are shaping the action constantly while participating to it, the action itself is constructing and reframing the event itself. Thus, participants are regenerating the system through their discursive activities.

The definition of influence belongs traditionally to the determination of leadership discussion. As Raelin (2016a, 16) describes it, the sense-making about influence is different in collaborative agency than we have used to understand it in the concept of leader-followership. The influence is usually understood occurring between people and the interest lies in individual's influence on each other. In leader-followership logic, leader has an influence on his or her followers that maintains the leadership relation between different positions. However, in terms of collaborative agency, the influence is not linked to relationships but rather to action: outcomes of the collaborative agency influence the whole organization through learning and problem-solving activities and the agentic process itself influence the structure (see the chapter above). In addition, collaborative agency reflects managing situations in more experimental and improvisational way, disturbing status quo with creativity (Crossan et al. 2008, 573).

2.2.4 Sociomateriality

Another key aspect of leadership as practice approach is that leadership ties its people and artefacts in it (Raelin 2017, 12; Raelin 2011, 196). Leadership happens always in spaces and places by active agents and engagement of all these facilities can be seen equally important. Both social and material elements are emphasized in leadership sense-making and both are equally constructing the actual leadership processes.

According to Raelin (2018, 10), leadership-as-practice manifests that agency is transmitted in relation between materiality and the social world. As collaborative agency was discussed earlier in this chapter, the fundamental idea of leadership-as-practice is the social practices where leadership become condensed through action. Leadership as practice approach beliefs that reality is socially constructed by agents embedded in the context where leadership takes place and that contextuality makes the agents' participation sociocultural itself. By sociocultural we mean socially produced reality of the context such discourses, patterns to act, norms and values and expectations toward other participants. All this together create the unique social reality of the context which can be observed as sociocultural entity (Molin-Stozek 2019, 33; Ropo et al. 2015, 7).

In addition to sociocultural elements, materiality is also constructing the leadership. Sergi (2017, 110) suggest that instead of trying to identify *who* is leader we should turn our focus to wonder what leadership is *made of.* By this Sergi means that traditionally only people and individuals – singular or groups – are considered as fundamental part of leadership discussion for decades (see chapter 2.1 in this study) when different traits and skills have been seen as constructions of leadership. The discussion around the leadership constitutes has been linked to human beings ignoring other constructing elements that are part of the process as much as human beings. According to Sergi (2017, 111), focusing only people limit our understanding of contemporary action-based leadership phenomenon. In leadership as practice studies, contribution of materiality to action and to final leadership outcomes should also take into consideration when trying to understand leadership as practical and contextual process since materiality plays crucial role in it (Sergi 2017, 113).

2.3 New Constitutes of Power in Self-Organizing Systems

As disclosed many times in this study, leadership cannot be separated from its context. In this chapter, the characters of the context of self-organizing system are presented and the constitutes it brings to leadership sense-making are discussed. As its name implies, the self-organizing system is constructed on its self-organizing socio-cultural parties which has different task-oriented responsibilities that together make the system work (Ray, Clegg & Gordon 2004, 319). Responsibilities might not be written into stone and power relations might not exist as itself – these are formulated in time when needed and agents use their own informed decisions behind organizing themselves.

According to Kuusela & Kuittinen (2008, 13), by self-organizing system we usually reflect to organization which has not divided its labour in specific roles but rather teams or interdependent task-oriented parties that anyone could take part of. This logic of organizing distinguishes radically from the classic supervisory matrix organization that consists of recognizable layers of hierarchy and responsibilities. In these kinds of organizations each hierarchical layer holds lot of rules and norms according to what is appropriate and what is against the system (Weber 1964). In addition, hierarchy includes lot of power relations and determinate how people are allowed to and expected to behave.

The ideology of self-organizing system can be identified with Anglo-Saxon individualism. Ray et al. (2004, 319) explain it through the contrast between Western Countries individualistic society systems and Japan's group-orientated society. In Western Countries we desire liberal individualism, argue our decisions on market-rational thinking and explicit reasoning, and expect systems and formality to guide us. Japanese culture instead is dominated by implicit rules that justify obligations to the group instead of individualism. In terms of leadership, leader is the authority of followers that transform information to make members of the group behave in a coordinated way. The power is regenerating itself when members start to control each other and ensure that no one is breaking the code according to common rules (Ray et al. 2004, 320). In terms of leadership, leader's authority turns into "silence power" that consists of activities such coordinating and controlling.

Rules have a crucial role in leadership sense-making. Leadership patterns are established by rules and rules established by the actors (Ray et al. 2004, 321). But how the leadership is constructed if the system does not include any visible rules that insider could easily describe to

someone who is not part of the system? Or what if the system does not include the straight influence between leader and follower? The paradigm of hierarchy and power-related positions as leadership constitutes are challenged by the characters of self-organizing system. According to Ray et al. (2004, 322), basis of the self-organizing system is not built on power-related positions but rather on individuals' free set of rules, autonomy, space to execute one's agency and participants that are capable to organize themselves without waiting to someone to lead them. Even if there exist position-based leaders, those actions relate to behaviour of "managers of meaning" rather than influence mandators which means that leaders in this kind of organization might act as a cultural ambassador who synchronize leadership operations into its culture instead of pure manager who limit the agency by telling people what to do.

Asymmetrical power is one key definition of the leadership as practice approach (Raelin et al. 2018, 9) Leadership in self-organizing system engage different parties in it and power, that is usually related to those at the highest layer of hierarchy, is in this sense distributed among the members engaged to practice. In other words, leader is not responsible for using the power that used to belong to individual in that position – power can be defined to belong anyone from all of those engaged to the practice (Ray et al. 2004, 323).

But what defines who has the power or who has the right to use it? This is the fundamental question in self-organizing systems where clear definition concerning the power do not exist, or in other words, ascending as agentic process power-relations are not the main focus of appearing leadership. According to the nature of collaborative agency, agents self-organize themselves and value opinions and ideas of others sometimes above their own ones. However, in every leadership context there exist some factors, some elements that constitutes appearing leadership (Ray et al. 2004, 325; Raelin 2018, 12). In self-organizing systems, action-based improvisation, tacit knowledge and expertise are suggested to represent new kinds of leadership constitutes (Raelin 2016a, 20) but as Ray et al. (2004) reminds that constitutes of leadership are products of contextual sociomateriality, and the organizations that mirrors the self-organizing type more than traditional matrix organizing type, is impossible to be analysed objectively.

2.4 Synthesis of the Collaborative Agency and the Leadership-as-Practice Approach

In this study, leadership is understood as a co-creation process that is a) socially constructed in interaction (Alvesson et al. 2017), it is b) created by position-free individuals and groups in all hierarchical levels of the organization (Carroll et al. 2008; Drath et al. 2008), it c) occurs in series of situations in different organizational conditions in practice (Rael 2016a, 2016b, 2017) and finally, it is d) highly tighten within the context it occurs (Conger et al. 2003). The study utilizes the framework of leadership-as-practice that consists of three elements that are structure, collaborative agency and sociomateriality. The framework emphasizes the nature of process in leadership sense-making, so the following figure is presented as a continuum of those three elements.
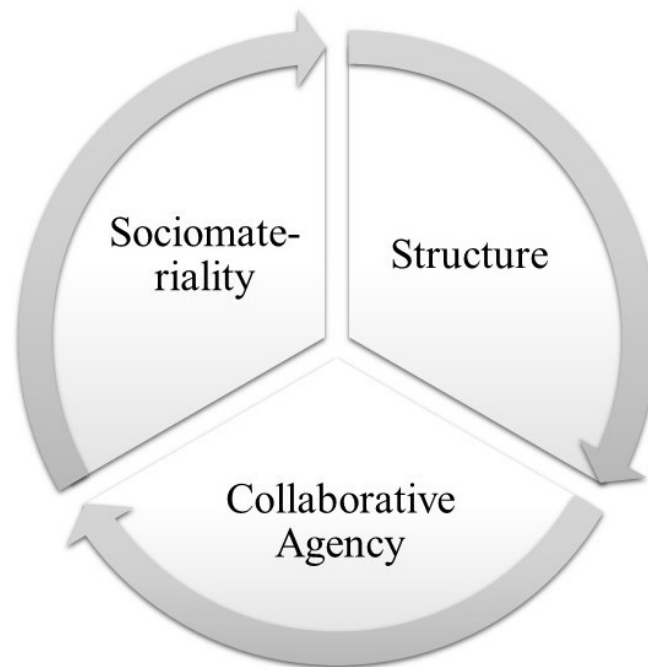
Figure 3. The Leadership-as-practice framework

The element of structure reflects to structure-agency interaction; institutional and sociocultural contexts affect to agency and agency influence on the structure that shapes it. Collaborative agency represents the social practice; the group of interdependent agents collaborate to achieve common good under certain characters of collaborative agentic processes. These characters are presented in the figure 4. The element of sociomateriality represent the social constructionism ideology of socially produced reality. In terms of leadership, leadership is constitution of sociomateriality that shapes the agents' leadership sense-making in the context.

Furthermore, the interest of the study lies in collaborative agency and its characters. The leadership theory base of the study is built on the logic of practice where leadership in the concept of collaborative agency occurs in action, that is reflected to the leadership-as-practice framework. The elements of the leadership-as-practice framework can be studied independently, but the influence of other elements cannot be ignored, and their constitution of the final leadership outcomes should be taken into consideration (Raelin 2016a). Thus, the influence of structure-agency interaction and sociomateriality are also discussed in this study and even identified from the empiric.

Community and team-level phenomenon	Allows anyone to participate	Willingness to limit one's own autonomy
Dialogic exchange	Willingness to change one's own opinions	Common good above one's own interests
Social practice	Open-ended outcomes	Influence on the structure
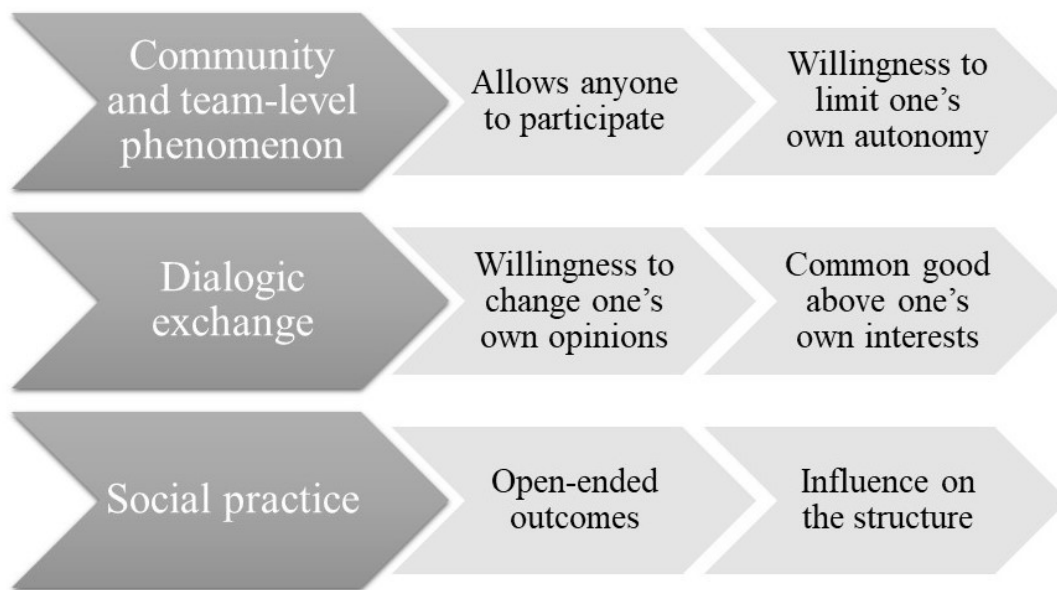
Figure 4. The collaborative agentic process

Leadership as collaborative agentic process is described in the figure 4. It has three main characters. As collaborative agentic process, leadership is a social practice that occur through dialogic exchange at the community and team-level. As a social practice, the outcome of the action is usually open-ended, and it influences on the structure that shapes it. Social practice can either maintain the structure or reframe it. However, this influence happens on dialogic exchange where different sociocultural parties are willingness to listen new opinion and suggestions, and they are ready to change their opinions or plans because of the common good. As a group-level phenomenon, leadership is something that anyone can take part of which also means that even though individual have ability to act according to their own rules, they need to limit their autonomy in a way that is appropriative from the group perspective.

Approaching leadership from the social practice perspective, the study contributes to the increasing need of practical oriented leadership studies in the management research field. In the leadership literature, there is enormous amount of studies that discuss leadership from the people-oriented approach such followership utilizing different competence theories. Relational and practical leadership understandings are needed in the time of knowledge era when new kinds of organization and furthermore, new ways of organizing are evolving (Saastamoinen 2008, 72).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Social Constructionism as an Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption of the study is based on the social constructionism which addresses that reality is socially produced through interaction. Social constructionism emphasizes that there exists no external reality that could be separated from the environment nor its actors. Individuals, groups and communities brings reality into being through different sets of practices and inter-actions. (Berger & Luckmann 1967; Holstein 2008.)

Interpretations and meaning-making processes are central for studies framed by social constructionism. Holstein (2008, 374–375) demonstrate this by differentiating "what" and "how" questions. Naturalistic orientation is typically asking what is going on within social reality and constructionistic orientation provoke questions about how these social realities are produced and maintained and finally, how something is socially brought into being. However, Holstein (2008, 375) reminds that constructive orientation needs also the interest of realistic view *what is going on* to be able to raise questions about what are the practices and conditions that shape constructions processes in the recognized context.

As a part of interpretivism research paradigm, social constructionism is also highly interested in language and shared meanings as instruments that shapes the social reality besides action and practices (Eriksson et al. 2016, 21). Although, these instruments through interactions create the existence of studied phenomenon and frame ankles for empiricism; research context does not present itself objectively to observer but is known through discourses, social practices, agency and human experience (Moulin-Stozek 2019).

The current study utilizes social constructionist way of conceiving leadership. The case company represents the social reality that is constructed by its people both from the inside and from the outside of the organization. Anything that is somehow related to leadership is produced through social interactions within its' participants at a particular time in particular place, and this constructing process of leadership cannot be separated from the organization it occurs. Thus, in order to understand leadership as and agentic process, one needs to go there where it takes place.

3.2 Designing Ethnographic Study

In ethnographic research, the interest lies in social and cultural aspects of the research context. Researcher is trying to gain in-depth knowledge by participating to the natural settings of the context. (Eriksson et. al 2016, 151; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995, 1–3; Neyland 2007, 67). According to Fetterman (1998, 3, 11), ethnographer is interested in understanding a cultural scene from the insider's perspective where the aim is to explore the world of research participants through the meanings that the members of that culture create and live with.

Ethnography has been described as a discovery-bases research process (Eriksson et. al 2016, 153). Ethnographers typically start their research with a general interest towards identified research problem which in this case was collaborative agency in leadership, and theoretical ideas are developed as the research process proceeds. When studied phenomenon is contextual and cultural, predestined strong expectations about how things appear in the field might limit getting the real insights from the subject (Eriksson et al. 2016, 153). Thus, I was constantly casing the research, especially on the first fieldwork week.

Fieldwork is ethnographer's key research activity and gaining access to the context is the most crucial step for any ethnography. Its determinates how the research participants respond to the study and how researcher can communicate with participants (O'Reilly 2009, 5–6; Neyland 2007, 69). According to Neyland (2007, 59), gaining access is not only the matter of getting access to buildings or country where the studied object is physically located, but it is also the matter of activities and events that are crucial for the study. In this case, access to the office of the case company was easy since it is located nearby me in the city of Kuopio, Northern Savonia. Case company gave me access to all kind of meetings from informal coffee and lunch breaks to formal meetings of executive board. I got access to members' offices and digital forums such WhatsApp. However, I was constantly asking myself whether or not I am where the leadership action is taking place, and where this action might be taking place. The case company offered me a working spot but I decided to rarely spend my time there. I was walking around the corridors, sitting in the lobby or coffee room and tried to follow people's natural routines at the office. I spent lot of time at employees' collective offices and sat hours daily by watching and listening their work. Reflecting physical spaces and places to the research problem was something that I constantly tried to keep in my mind during the fieldwork.

Sometimes researcher might be part of the group they are studying or are already familiar with the people whom are involved in the research. This makes it easier and faster to the researcher to get oneself into the context. (O'Reilly 2009, 7.) The case company was not familiar for me beforehand. I knew the CEO and head of one department after a university collaboration project last year. Rest of the case – the context, employees, nature of their work, procedures in projects, organizational culture, levels of bureaucracy, networks – started to familiarize after getting myself into the field.

I started my fieldwork on January 7th by introducing myself and the purpose of the study in the weekly Monday meeting. I decided to be an overt (Neyland 2007, 65; O'Reilly 2009, 9) and preferred to inform the participants that they will be observed on their daily doings and notes will be made for analysis. I got warm welcoming and right after first introducing session I found myself chatting with employees around the coffee break. Questions according to my study raised during the first week and casual lunch breaks with participants were crucial for trust building. I stayed on the field until the end of January and went back for a week in the middle of March.

Gaining social acceptance is crucial in ethnographic study. If troubles in earning trust appears, researcher might never get the real access to the context (Neyland 2007, 55–56; Eriksson et. al 2016;153). Importance of the social acceptance became visible for me as fieldwork progressed. I noticed that at the beginning of my research I did not get as detailed and specified descriptions when asking participants to describe their experiences about being a leader in the projects as compared to those conversations that I had with them after some time. I found two to four gate keepers from different departments of the organization who opened the access for me into their culture. Sometimes they invited me to hang out with them after office hours which turned out as a positive thing from the trust building point of view.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

Ethnographic research consists of set of methods such participating people's daily lives, watching what happens, asking questions and listening to what is said. All information and everything that are available and somehow connected to the studied object is worth to notice (Eriksson et. al 2016, 156; Fetterman 1998, 5). Using multiple sources of data, instead of one

e.g. interview, is making the interpretation and exploration richer and supports the researcher to gain the real access into the studied context (Eriksson et el. 2016, 134; Neyland 2008, 113).

Several information sources are applied in this study. The primary data of the study consists of field notes from participative observations and unformal interviews. Secondary data of the study consists of site documents such official project management instructions, virtual communication platform WhatsApp and qualitative survey that was collected a year ago. The data collection of the study is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Data Collection

Data	Number (pieces)	Duration (hours)	Collecting Time period	Documented form of the data (pages)
Weekly Monday Meetings (Whole organization)	4	4	Jan 2019	Field notes 4 pp.
Weekly Friday Meetings (Executive Board)	4	4	Jan 2019	Field notes 4 pp.
Lobby & Corridor Conversations	-	20	Jan 2019	Field notes 5 pp.
Office Conversations	-	6	Jan 2019	Field notes 3 pp.
Total Amount of Observations	**8 pieces**	**32 hours**	**Jan 2019**	**16 pages**
Interviews	7	5	Jan 2019	Notes
Partner Evaluations	11	-	June 2018	Survey
Project Management instructions (Official Document & Post it –wall)	2	-	-	Notes
Physical Facilities (Lobby & Office Decorations, Artefacts)	-	-	-	Notes
WhatsApp	-	-	Jan-March 2019	Text messages

Main data collection method was participative observation. It is suitable method when researcher aims to get involved into the culture or the context and try to understand it from the participants' point of view. Observation has three main elements that are watching what people do, listening what they say and asking clarifying questions for them (Galliham 2000, 45). The case company was not familiar for me beforehand, so I first observed with a lower profile and tried to get an idea what was happening. According to Galliham (2000, 46), "getting to know the phase of the study" takes a while and more participative observing comes later.

I participated in both formal and informal settings of the case company's daily life. Formal settings included 4 Friday meetings of executive board and 4 Monday meetings where the whole organization was present. I found informal settings such lobby conversations and lunch break the most fruitful events to be observed. At the beginning I observed everything: where did people encounter each other, what did they speak, how did they argue themselves, how did they communicate with their body language, and which symbols and idioms were used in conversations and the office decorating. Neyland (2007, 87) calls this strangeness, when everything is observed at the beginning to perceive the outlines of the organization. After a while on the field I started to observe systematically from different perspectives in different settings.

Another data collection method was two kinds of interviews. Almost all members of the organization were involved into this in some circumstances: at lunch break, at the office, during the lobby conversations or in settled one-on-one conversation. Interviews had two purposes and occurred in two different ways. First purpose was to understand the phase of the study and get familiar with the research context by asking clarifying questions and sharing information informally while observing participants' daily doings. A good example of this informal interviewing was the situation when I was sitting at the office shared among 4 members, following their working routines and chatting with them. Either I asked some clarified questions for them if I wanted to understand more deeply what they were doing, or some other people entered the room from the corridor and took randomly part of the conversations. This kind of unplanned interviews occurred daily and engaged individuals or group of people who were present at that particular moment.

The second purpose was to understand the participants' meaning-making processes and shared acknowledgements about leadership in their organization. I interviewed 7 members of the case

company, couple from each department, and sampling reflected participants' willingness to be interviewed. All interviews consisted of open-ended questions with informal structure and none of the interviews were recorded. Open-ended questions give participants space to openly share their experiences around the subject and talk freely, which was ideal method for this research approach. (Eriksson et al. 2016, 95; Qu & Demay 2011, 255.) I wanted to create as relaxed atmosphere as we had had during the office conversations and recording did not fit with the concept. Thus, idea of recording was soon left out. Interviews were held at participants' offices while they were working which was one way to ensure participants' comfortableness and one way for me to observe them in their natural settings.

I wrote field notes from both observations and interviews. All notes were written in Finnish and translated afterwards in English. I wrote field notes immediately during the stay in the field or as soon as possible after leaving the field site. I mostly used laptop in the situations where obvious typing was suitable, for example when sitting in the lobby or participating in official meetings. I used my phone as an instrument to make jottings in the situation when it was not appropriate to carry laptop or write proper notes, for example casual coffee break with sales manager (Neyland 2007, 87–88.) More complete notes were written afterwards. I used pseudonyms when writing field notes since the storyline was easier to follow with names instead of coding.

Data collection was expanded with site documents including the project management documents, partner evaluations and WhatsApp messages (see Table 1). Project management documents consisted of post it wall at the corridor and the written project management instructions. Partner evaluations was collected last summer in 2018 in which partners evaluated themselves, others and employees were asked to evaluate them. Respondents were asked to value partners with scale from "low level" to "excellent level" in 4 categorises that were professionality, productivity, ability to cooperate and strive for development. At the end of each evaluation, there was open space where respondents were asked to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the partner in given themes. Partner evaluations were 237 pages in total and my own notes from those were 16 pages. Furthermore, I was added to two general WhatsApp channels where all kind of information was shared among the whole organization. The amount of this digital data is difficult to estimate since it was generating itself during the research process.

Analysis

An inductive logic of the study starts from empirical materials and moves to theoretical propositions as research process develops. Analysis approach of the study is interpretative and qualitative content analysis is the main analysing method. Instead of theory testing, aim is to understand the leadership from the insider's perspective and interpretate the cultural meanings it holds. Observations and conversations expanded with interviews were two main forms of the data and furthermore, situations and texts the main objects to be analysed. Qualitative content analysis within interpretative approach, according to Eriksson et al. (2016, 82–87,119), is presented in the following figure:
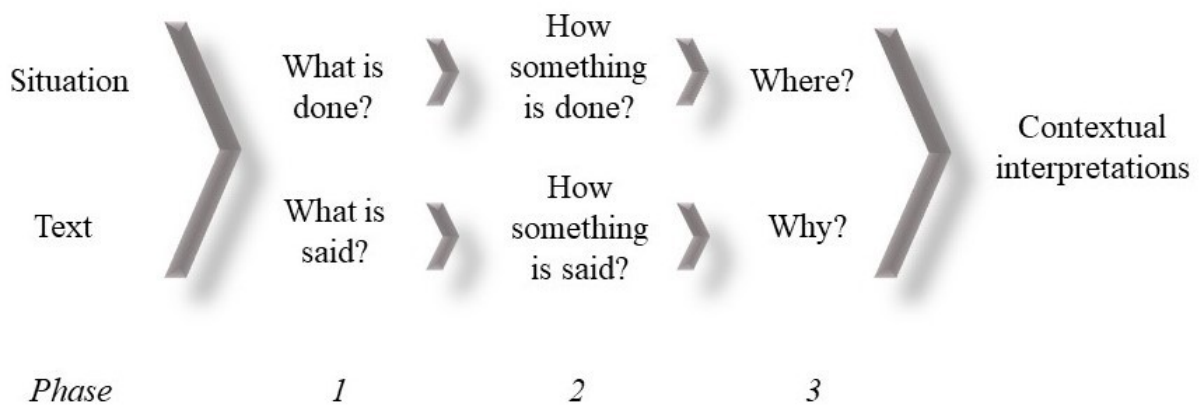
Figure 5. Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis involves many different levels of analysis and researcher is constantly formulating topics raised from the data, trying to build a coherent entity. According to Fetterman (1998, 3), this multilevel analysis is typical in ethnographic study because multiple data collection and different types of qualitative data. Eriksson et. al (2016, 159) suggest working back and forth with the data, starting with reading the field notes several times, categorizing them and identifying anything that could open the access to it.

I started the analysis process by reading all the field notes from each field setting in order to get the overview of the data. I started with one-on-one interviews and partner evaluations,

expecting to find answers on how do individuals define leadership, how do they talk or not talk about it, do they acknowledge the existence of leader roles and if they do, is it based on projects, work, positions, technology, customers or something else. I coded and categorized the content in different themes utilizing the first and second phases of content analysis process (figure 2).

Next, I continued with field notes made from observations. After some rounds of reading I found both similarities and differences between different field settings and formulated 4 main sites where leading self, others and organization occurred. These leadership sites are meetings, office conversations, lobby & corridor interactions and WhatsApp. Moreover, I started to analyse each site more carefully: which kinds of situations they consisted of, where they took place, how often they appeared, whom were involved in those situations and which characters described the site best. Systematically every site was either formal or informal, depending on whether they were organized events and planned to happen or whether they were more spontaneous activities and unorganized interactions. Leadership sites are presented in the following table:

Table 3. Leadership sites of the case company

Leadership site	Character
Friday and Monday meetings	Formal
WhatsApp	Formal
Office conversations	Informal
Lobby and corridor interactions	Informal

After getting familiar with leadership sites in general level, I get back to the identified definitions and constitutes of leadership at the first phase of analysis and tried to incubate relations between constitutes and leadership settings. The aim was to reflect how identified leadership definition and contrastive themes appeared in each leadership setting, how do they come visible through participants' daily performance and in which kinds of situations they especially appear? By utilizing second and third phases of the content analysis process (fig. 3) I characterized different conditions of the leadership situations. In addition, I used site documents to support to my final conclusions.

At this stage of analysis, leadership themes, given meanings to it, settings where these definitions appeared and also the situations and specific conditions were identified. I build contextual interpretations about leadership in this particular culture. At the final stage of analysis, the aim was to find out what were the constitutes of leadership in this specific context and furthermore in the context of self-organizing system.

The form of analysis is partly presented in narrative form. The aim of the ethnographic analysis is to give reader as rich insight as possible from the field, just as it showed for the researcher, and using narrative analysis in presenting results is widely used method in ethnography (Bold 2012, 26; Neyland 2008, 130). Hammersley et al. (1995, 239– 240) suggest that the heart of ethnography enterprise is the written rapport which ethnographer is creating from the field notes. As I argued in the introduction (see chapter 1.2), the empirical setting of the study cannot be described as an extra unique one comparing it to other software startups, so I will not describe the field site using all my senses when narrowing the rapport like Katila, Laine and Pakkari (2018) handled their analysis from Slush conference. As Neyland (2008, 130) and Eriksson et al. (2016, 160–161) remind, organizational settings are familiar for the most of us compared to ethnography in anthropology. Thus, I focus to narrow what happened, what I saw and heard without describing how did I feel in those situations. I share stories from the field from subjective perspective, and after each story I will analyse events and quotations positioning myself as more objective one to the field site. All names used in the empirical data are changed.

4 RESULTS

In this Chapter, the empirical findings of the study will be presented. First, I will describe how leadership appeared in the field, which kinds of leadership settings could be recognized and how leadership emerged as collaborative agentic process in those settings. Secondly, I will describe the situationally occurred conditions where collaborative agency took strongly place. Four different leadership settings were identified, and crisis, routines and random encounters were identified as three major conditions within collaborative agency emerged. Conditions used to repeat itself continuously at the daily of the organization and they are introduced one by one with the written scenes from the field. Finally, I clarify how the understanding of leadership was constructed on the field and which were the main constitutes of leadership.

4.1 The Leadership Settings

Four general leadership settings were identified. In the case company leadership took place in digital platforms, meetings, mutual interactions and working processes. Digital platforms and meetings were preorganized spaces where leadership occurred in relatively formal way. Both consisted of rules and norms concerning how the participants are supposed to behave, communicate and act. Mutual interactions and working process were not preorganized and leadership occurred in relatively informal way. Participants had expectations and hopes towards each other but no predestined rules or guidelines how to behave in those situations existed. The natures of formality and regularity of each leadership setting are presented in four-field model in figure 4.
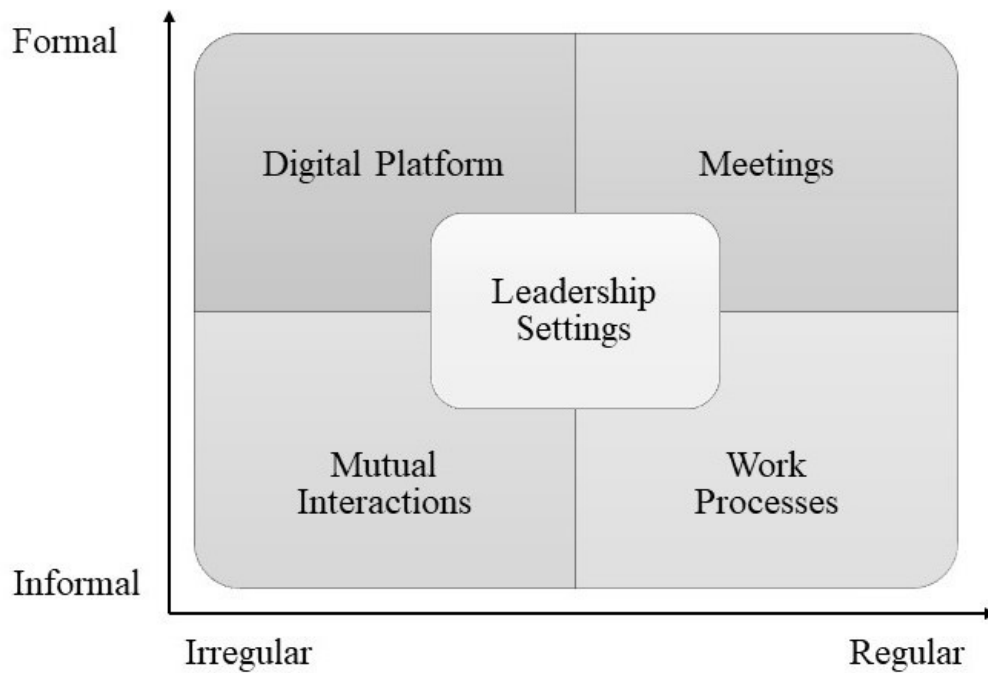
Figure 6. The Nature of Leadership Settings

Four-field model represents two major natures of recognized leadership settings. The nature of formality is presented in vertically and the nature of regularity is presented in horizontally. The amount of formality describes how casual or official the setting is. Mutual interactions were quite unofficial settings since random group of people get together in unorganized way in unorganized place. Digital platforms and meetings can instead be described with formality nature since the platform was created for the specific function such information sharing, news posting and dividing projects. In addition, formality describes how people encountered each other, how they interacted and which kinds of things were discussed in those settings. In formal settings more official things were discussed and norms led participants to behave in certain way. Mutual interactions and work processes were settings without of rules how to behave and conversations mirrored easy-going chats every now and then.

The nature of regularity reflects whether the setting is just a singular event or event that constantly used to repeat itself in specific time period. For example, work processes appeared daily on the same field sites with same procedures. Participants used to work at same places in front of their computers with their closest colleagues which in a way determined the work process of the organization as regular ones. In comparison, mutual interactions used to repeat

itself as well, but no one could have known when and where so the nature of that setting was irregular.

Regularity and formality shape the character of appeared leadership; occurred leadership was strongly depending on these two natures. In terms of collaborative agency, there is two main differences that distinguishes settings from each other. According to Raelin (2016a, 2017), collaborative agentic process takes place when the nature of action is free of rules and the result of action unintended or at least unknown. In addition, collaborative agency happens when people are interacting and unintentionally formulating their own agentic action into common good.

Both digital platform and meetings exist without people participating in those. Even though no one would have sent messages to WhatsApp, the channel still exists, and it was only a matter of time when people started to discuss there again. Even though no one would have participated on Friday meeting, there will be other meeting next Friday and another meeting the week after. In these formal kinds of leadership settings practices were organized beforehand and assumed to occur in those predestined places and spaces and, thus, these leadership settings cannot be described the social reality of collaborative agentic processes. Although, there existed lot of cooperation and shared leadership among the members in these settings, but all these situations took place in preorganized sites engaging people that were expected to participate, so formal leadership settings were more linked to ordinary teamwork than collaborative agentic action.

Mutual interactions and working processes required constant participating in order to become condensed. Interactions consisted of random group of people in unscheduled time and unorganized space. In other words, if no one encountered and communicated on the corridor or in the lobby, these events would not have occurred. Work processes were more systematically compared to mutual interactions but they were not tied into specific place – it happened where people used to work which usually happened at their offices but sometimes they took place on the corridor or lobby around the coffee break somehow in unplanned way. Interactions with character of random encounters and daily social practices are reality of collaborative agency (Raelin 2016a, 2017) mutual interactions and work processes could assumingly be named as collaborative agentic-like leadership processes.

4.2 The Leadership Conditions

4.2.1 Crisis

Crisis can be described as a situation that is consequence of unpredictable events. Situation is characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability; no one has planned the event beforehand and thus, no clear rules according how to overcome the problem exists. Crisis occur when something has gone wrong or something very unplanned stands out. In addition, the situation requires immediate response in order to evade or minimize harmful outcomes. This kind of condition occurred repeatedly on the field and can be described as normal evolving leadership. Scenes 1-3 describe different situation of crisis evolved on the field.

Scene 1.

I am sitting on the sofa in the empty lobby. It is early in the morning and there is silence at the office. Some people are already working at their offices. The doors are open so silent sounds are emanating to the lobby that is situated in the middle of two corridors where the offices are located. People walks every now and then from one corridor to another, speaks on the phone and raises hand for me to wish good morning. I am wearing headphones so I smile and wave my hand back. I notice that Rick runs through the corridor and enters one office where his colleagues are working. I take my headphones off and go to the corridor to see what is happening. I decide to stay at the corridor side of the room since I hear the tense with people's tongue.

Five people are trying to solve a problem that has occurred this morning. Apparently, Rick has received an email from the customer during the night and he is explaining the situation to his colleagues. He is telling strongly with his hand and other people in the room are listening carefully:

> Rick*: "...so we should proceed like this. John open the access for this user to Mike, and then you Mike will send it to the customer"*
>
> John: *"but how am I supposed to change the user all of a sudden?"*

Rick gives specific instruction to John how to do it using the professional language that I am not capable to follow. John is standing with his arm crossed staring to the floor. It looks he is trying to listen carefully what Rick wants to say. At the end of Rick's advices John says:

> John: *"...so basically I just double click the screen, right?"*

> Rick: *"Yes. The focus of the whole thing is that..."*

Rick continues explaining how the problem should be solved and John is listening. Mike is present but Morty and Jack are having background conversation according to some other task.

> Rick*:" ...and after that you release demo-user and then send it to me again."*

> John*:" I guess the client has used two different users at the same time?"*

> Rick*:" Maybe but the instructions must be as clear as possible, so the client will get their solution from this precise message. The problem must be solved by this e-mail which needs very detailed instructions. We have to think client's perspective here!"*

Mike and John leave the room and go back to their offices. They are continuing the discussion while walking and they are knocking head to each other. Only few minutes has past until Rick yells:

> Rick: *"Hey this has gone completely wrong. Could everybody come immediately back here!"*

> Mike*: "Is my presence really necessary?"*

> Rick: *"Yes, it is. Where is John!"*

> Mike: *"John!"*

Same group of five get together at Rick's office and they start to listen what Rick has to say. Rick suggests a new way to proceed because he had realized that the method he was suggesting first might not the best one.

Rick: *"I'll be taking care of it from now on. I will send the message to the client about the new password and if the problem will not solve after this, I'll take care of it. John, forget about that demo releasing advice earlier."*

People get back to their offices and discussion continues on the corridor.

Mike*: "this is a classic example of having too many chefs in the kitchen."*

Scene 2.

Arthur and Rick are having a conversation at the corridor. Jack stands from the other side of the corridor, crossed arms, and he is staring to the floor. Someone might think he is angry or pissed off but he seems to listen very carefully what Arthur and Rick are talking about.

Arthur: *"...but when the site is going to be open?"*

Rick: *"I'll do it immediately after someone has sent me a screenshot from it"*.

Arthur*: "Yeah sure but are we going to divide the scaling stuff somehow?"*

Rick: *"Well, this has been coded totally okay, but I'm not sure about the other part"*

Arthur*: "...hmm, okay. I guess I have enough information for now. I'll get you back to later"*

Arthur and Rick have seemingly solved the problem so far but suddenly Jack enters the conversations:

Jack *"Where is Nick? We need Nick"*

Arthur*: "Nick we need your confirmation to this!"*

Rick*: "...just do it for the desktop and that's it?"*

Jack: *"No, it's not going to work like that, I have questionnaire this whole thing from the very beginning..."*

Arthur: *"Once again a great example of the situation where designers are left out from the project like this"*

Jack: *"yeah I'm aware of it"*

Arthur: *"...and now we all have different understanding about the actual problem..."*

Jack: *"Yes I know".*

Arthur: *"...and the whole thing is such a mess".*

Jack: *"Let's take a look at the Nick's builder"*

Arthur: *"but the location of it needs to be changed."*

The group starts to walk together to the Nick's office and conversation continues while they are walking.

Jack: *"The most important thing now is that everyone who somehow are linked to this should be involved".*

Arthur: *"Well it's quite impossible now".*

Jack: *"No, no, not like present but aware of this shit. Rick, let's have a quick meeting in Nick's office, are you in?"*

Rick: *"Coming!"*

Scene 3.

Arthur: *"@James and @Raymond, let's close this one client deal, shall we? So, we know that they have a connecting problem within computer and our product. Can we do something about it, and is it necessary to pick up that lap top from them?*

James: *"The case is closed with the client"*

Arhur: *"How is it closed? as a project manager, I should not be the outsider here talking with three other people from this issue."*

James*: "I'll come back to you later"*

Arthur*: "I understand that sales is taking care of the client interface in these kinds of situations but seriously, this has been such a mess when two salespersons are making moves with different people… we've been standing on our heads almost half a year because of this client and I would like to know where we are at every stage of this process."*

James: *"…I do not know why they call me when they have a problem. But let me say, if client have a problem, then I have a problem and I will do everything I can to solve the problem"*

Arthur*: "yeah but it's already 4 people who have spent lot of working hours to solve this problem but none of them have spoken to each other. Don't you see a problem here?"*

Raymond: *"Vivian told me that she had spoken to James according this which is good thing…and when you said that sales is taking care of the client interface, well, it was this client's idea at the beginning"*

Arthur*: "I know, but the case was managed through two different ways from our side"*

Raymond*: "Unclear responsibilities… and procedures. Also, unclear responsibilities to the client interface as well."*

Arthur: *"okay I tried to fix this mess now. I talked to Vivian and everything should be clear now. The client called me now."*

Raymond: *"Yes they called me first and I told them to call you instead…but it was my fault in the first place…"*

Arthur*: "Well, it's not anyone's fault so don't blame yourself. Now we know how to act next time. At least we learn something, right?"*

4.2.2 Routines

Routines are consequence of controlled, scheduled and organized events. Situation is characterized by predictability and consists of leader and follower roles and different forms of organizing. Routines occur when usual daily event including nothing extremely unordinary or something that change the situation into crisis. Routines occurred repeatedly on the field and can be described as normal event in each field setting. Scenes 4 and 5 describe different situation of routines evolved on the field.

Scene 4.

After lunch in Chinese restaurant, Me and Robin come back to the office. When we enter the office, I notice that there is – once again – lot of going on at the corridors and the offices. People are having lunch at the lobby and the CEO is waiting one student group to arrive. Me and Robin are talking about the best lunch places around the corner while taking our outerwear off. We continue our chat and naturally I follow Robin's step to his office. Robin is sharing his office with two other guys, Bob and Ryan. We enter the room and I continue the same discussion we have had during the past 5 minutes but got interrupted by Robin. He has moved his attention to the current conversation:

> Bob*: "Are you absolutely sure there is nothing inside of it?"*

> Ryan*: "Yes because it's a target, not an object"*

> Bob: *"Ah you're right. But it still says that some object input is required…?"*

Robin goes to his computer, do some things and take part

> Robin*: "I'll come to help you right after I start this system updating, wait a second…"*

> Ryan*: "…But why it is not receiving the command that I'm sending to it?"*

> Bob*: "And the word you are using is not taken?"*

> Ryan: *"Oh crab it is taken, you're right."*

And the room is filled with laugh. Everyone is laughing for the situation and Ryan looks at me with a big smile on his face. He is laughing so much that I can hardly hear what he is going to say. Bob continues Ryan's speak by saying that usually these situations are always the best ones from the problem-solving point of view when we all get together and just talk about the obstacle someone has faced. Bob explains to me that problem is usually solved quickly when it is shared with colleagues. I asked if these situations happen often or rarely and all three guys speaks with one mouth while saying at the same time: "by sharing the situations with others, especially when the mistakes are so tiny, like now, that they are sometimes difficult to notice. But when you immediately ask advice from your co-worker it kinda solves itself". Ryan laughs still, and he is knocking his head to Bob. Robin puts his hand on Ryan's shoulder and says: "luckily we always got you back, Ryan" and people start laughing even lauder.

Scene 5.

I arrive to the case company's office couple minutes later than I used to. I ring the door bell and Arthur comes to open the door for me. He is speaking on the phone, so we just knock our heads to say hi. The lobby is filled with the sounds of chatter. People have already gathered to the lobby and everybody is sharing their weekend stories to each other. "Morning Laura! How was your weekend?" Ryan comes to me. I tell him shortly about my weekend and ask about his weekend. We do small talk while the rest of the people enter the lobby. People grab some coffee and take their seat. Regular Monday meeting is about to begin.

CEO wishes good morning for all and starts the meeting by asking, whose turn it was to lead the discussion today. One guy raises his hand and starts to lead the conversation immediately. He asks if designers could start, and one member of the department takes the lead. He describes shortly about upcoming week, what projects they have on the table at the moment and which tasks should be finished by the end of the week. CEO asks if unfinished projects are manageable in given time-period and if extra work force is needed.

Meeting continues and all four departments share their projects to other. The same guy who started to lead the conversations lead the discussion systematically. The code department is the last one and they share the story of possible new project that has come from the client. CEO yells important with an embracing style. It is easy to see how this affect to everyone present. Everybody seems to agree with the importance by knocking their heads and repeating each other's words "important indeed".

4.2.3 Random encounters

Random encounters can be described as the most informal social encounters that happens eventually. Situations of these kinds are consequence of unorganized meetings in the lobby or at the corridor where random group of people get together without planning it beforehand. Situation is characterized by unpredictability and consists of flexible roles of leaders and followers and different forms of organizing. Random encounters occurred repeatedly on the field and can be described as normal event in each field setting. Scene 6 describes one of the situations of random encounters evolved on the field.

Scene 6.

Me, Rick and John are having a lunch at the lobby area. Usually people get together to the lobby around 11 am for a lunch break but today we are the first ones here. Rick and I have homemade food with us, and John has ordered a takeaway pizza from the nearest pizzeria. We make fun of each other and the discussion is constantly focusing on John's pizza since Rick and I feel not that satisfied with our lunches anymore.

People are walking through the lobby and the corridors while we are eating and there is – once again – lot of going on. Raymond enters the lobby with an empty coffee cup with his hand. He came to us and start talking to Rick about one client project. Me and John continue our conversation about the pizza issue and Rick is trying to listen what Raymond has on his mind. They continue their conversation while Raymond goes to the kitchen to pick up some coffee. John yells to Raymond if there is any coffee left. Raymond respond to John and comes back to Rick. At the same time group of three people have gathered together at the other side of the lobby. One is speaking on the phone and others are standing in a circle with arms crossed. I cannot hear what they are talking about but assumingly some usual work stuff. Raymond apologizes for me that he interrupted my lunch break. I smile and respond that he is not interrupting me at all and I encourage them to continue the conversation.

Suddenly the CEO enters the office and yells "important" all out of a sudden. One people from that group on the other side of the lobby high fives with him. The CEO comes to us with a huge smile on his face:

> *"Hey Laura! How is it going? Dudes I need your opinions. I just came from the client and they might have an awesome idea about cooperation. What do you think if we…"*

Rick and Raymond have turned their focus to the CEO and the story he is sharing with us. He explains really intensively about the possible new project and his body language mirrors his excitement. Raymond seems to get excited about the story and he continues it in his own style suggesting a totally new perspective to it. Now Raymond and the CEO has turned their head to Rick and looks like they are waiting some kind of acceptance from Rick whether their random idea could work.

> *"All I think is that do we have enough resources. Idea sounds fun and I'm sure that employees in my department would like to try something like this... we actually talked about this kind of a game project last week with Nicholas and Vivian... wait a second"*

Raymond leaves his lunch, go back to his office and bring Vivian with him. Raymond is explaining the situation to her while they are entering the lobby. The CEO apologizes his tight schedule and leaves. The conversation continues and now the group of three on the background has came closer to us to listen what kind of a project might be waiting for them.

4.3 Constitutes of leadership

4.3.1 Expertise

One of the main features that constitute leadership in the case company was expertise. This can be characterized by the idiom "who has the knowledge, has the power". Individual within right professional skills and right knowledge according to singular work task used to take the lead. Performing as a leader oneself accepted his or her own professionality by communicating it with other members present. Usually other participants accepted and supported this "selection" of the leader. According to Raelin (2016a, 15), in knowledge era we rely professionals in general but in the own organization it is even easier to trust someone that we know and we have seen his or her expertise in practice. A good example from the field of the situation where individual's expertise guided the role dividing was the mutual conversation at the end of one

Monday meeting. The whole organization discussed about software development and the head of code department proposed:

> *"If someone believes that he or she has the right skills concerning the software trial, please participate to the meeting tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. We will test the UI at the showroom, and I need your expertise!"*

Expertise was constantly acknowledged by the CEO in different field settings. At the first Monday meeting there was a discussion concerning about the new webpage of the company. One member of the organization explained the issue that has evolved within the old webpage and he insists that the new webpage will not be based on the old platform. CEO starts laughing and admit that he did not understand a word what people just argued. Others tried to explain the problem with metaphors and narratives why the old platform was problematic, but the CEO accepted his lack of knowledge by saying:

> *"...you guys know what to do, just tell me when the decision is made."*

Expertise was also acknowledged by individuals. Besides the people in the organization used to rely on each other and acknowledged other's professionality, they also recognized their own professionality and seemed not to be afraid of bringing their expertise up when needed. As one member of the organization described his responsibilities and expertise work tasks during the interview:

> *"Well, in a way I do not have a boss, I guess. I am like the boss of my own professionality... I mean, my job in this company is something that no one else could do it, or maybe could, but I have kind of invented this product. I mean no, no one else could actually handle this."*

4.3.2 Teams

Teamwork can be characterized as a normal way of acting in the case company since the nature of their work happens most of the time in projects and furthermore in teams since every project needs a team. In addition, people are in a way divided in teams according to four different departments and every team share their office with their team members. The logic of offices and the nature of project-driven work itself maintain the discourse of teams. In addition, teamwork was seen through everyday interactions and especially in the conditions of routines.

The importance of teamwork and it constitute character of leadership can also be recognized through the partner evaluations:

"An excellent leader never leaves the team."

"He is always ready to praise and encourage others which builds a good team thinking. Such a team player!"

"I think that if one were more interested about to develop oneself as a leader, teams would work in more efficient way as well."

The first two quotes from the partner evaluations describe the overall idea of having great team players in "our team" and this is considered to be valuable. "An excellent leader never leaves the time " consists lot of expectations towards leaders – ability to work with one for the team attitude has evaluated as a skill that great leader should definitely have. The third quote implies that teamwork is linked to leader's responsibility or at least if the team is not working, a team leader should try to fix it. Once again, it implies the importance of teamwork for the members of the organization.

Team as a value holds the idea of shared leadership and the vision that "we all lead this firm with cooperative attitude together". This can be recognized through the canvas on the wall of the case company. Its headline describe the values of the organization and it has 12 statements. All employees have signed up their name on the bottom line of the canvas. The common theme is obvious – we all are in this boat together and supporting others is key for success. Statements such "I promise always to help my co-workers and ask help from them if I need it", "It is totally okay to fail. If something goes in unwanted way, I try not to feel shame but rather honest to myself and my co-workers" and "I'll do my own part to build community where all opinions are welcome" communicate the importance of strong work community and teamwork, and these values goes through almost all the statements disclosed in the canvas.

4.3.3 Projects

Leadership is strongly constructed by projects. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the nature of work of the case company is project-driven and participants daily life at the organization are linked to the different projects most of the time. Projects guide people in the organization and almost at every office there was post it walls according to ongoing projects, their different

tasks, people responsible for those tasks and so on. Lot of office conversations were linked to the notes on the wall. As one programmer described his daily work, he is part of the three projects, and he is deciding on which projects he is proceeding and when. When asking to describe his power according to the decision-making procedures related to the projects, he said:

"I decide which work tasks I overcome first. Then I of course need to contact other parties such the client and the delivering company but like, in our organization I guess that no one really knows what happens next in this project so my job is find as much as possible out of it. I mean, of course they do know, the project manager gave me this work but since that I have used lot of autonomy according to the project. And if I sometimes don't know how to proceed or overcome the task, I can always ask some help from my colleagues."

As a constitute of leadership, lot of autonomy is utilized since managing projects requires a group of self-organizing agents to execute them. Projects were also one of the main themes that arose from the partner evaluations. Participants defined project management as a one skill that good leader has as following quotes present:

"The way the projects are handled by him is amazing! He acts perfectly between the client, our project team and our company!"

"As a project manager he acts well in his role and he is talented seeing the big picture."

"...if tasks are not clearly presented and responsibilities divided, the focus of the project is missing easily and the chaos present in any second..."

4.3.4 Positions

Members of the case company acknowledge different hierarchical positions concerning partners and employees. Role expectations are strongly constructed by partnership. As mentioned earlier in this paper (see chapter 1), partners act either as a head of department, head of technology or in supervisory role. This was identified through the daily talk by participant within discourses of those who leads and those who follows. The following quotes from the partner evaluations argues this division:

"As a leader of his own department, one could take more active role…"

"As far as I know, leading is not his strongest skill and for my opinion he acts much better as a follower than as a leader. Leadership requires characters such ability to show the way to others, ability to plan and also stick with the plan and also willingness to help others - no matter what…"

"…he has started to act in a way that he is supposed to act as a leader."

"He acts like an employee even though as a leader one should act like a role model to others and show the way."

The wording "as a leader" and "acting like an employee" indicate the existence of role expectations towards different positions, especially towards leaders. Leaders are expected to act "in a way that is appropriative for leader" and this kind of discourse differentiate positions into leaders and followers. Discourse of positions is also maintained by Friday meeting procedures: partnership allows one to participate for the meeting.

Acknowledgment of leaders is also revealed through expectations people have towards leader's behaviour, skills and responsibilities. There can be recognize different visions concerning of traits that belongs to individual in leader's role. Discourse concerning about what kinds of skills should good leader have consisted of the following themes: ability to lead oneself and others, high skills in communication, and ability and passion to develop organization. These were mentioned almost in every partner evaluation.

"Self-orientation! Everyone should learn from him how to lead one's own work. The firm needs this kind of motivation indeed!"

"Develops constantly the whole organization and solves problems efficiently. I have always desired his ability to understand processes and workforce needed to carry those processes out."

"…not as good with projects but extremely sufficient with people. He is a great listener and communicates well through the whole organization."

"Creates the atmosphere where all opinions are welcome and valuable…easy to communicate with and feels more like equal co-worker than authoritative boss."

Managerial positions exist in the case company and thus, position basis leadership discourses exist as well: people use words such boss, leader, project leader constantly in their organizational talk. The company has a common vision of what kind of a leader is a good one and which are not, but nonetheless, who is actually associated as a leader depends not only hierarchical positions but also on other organizational elements. Expectations about who perform as a leader in varying situations is not automatically construct on individual-centric view; expertise, teamwork and projects were identified in daily practices and talk in the organization and these, beside positions, can be recognized as constitutes of leadership in the organization of this kind.

4.4 Summary of the Research Results

Four different leadership settings were identified. Digital platform WhatsApp was formal and irregular setting where the leadership of others and the organization took strongly place. Meetings were formal and regular setting where the leadership of organization took place. Mutual interactions were informal and irregular setting where the leadership of self, others and organization took place. Moreover, work processes were informal and regular setting where the leadership of self and others took place.

The main conditions where leadership emerged as a social practice were conditions of crisis, routines and random encounters. Typical crisis condition can be described with unpredictability, complexity and free set of rules according to overcome the challenging nature of the condition. Lot of problem-solving, arguing, stretching one's own ideas and counting on someone's expertise arise, and these practices are presented in scenes 1, 2 and 3.

The conditions of routine can be described with regularity, autonomy and teamwork. Lot of problem-solving, brainstorming and learning from others arose. In scene 4, team of programmers were handling their daily operations with willingness to listen, advice and help other co-workers in problematic situations. However, the tense of the condition is not that tight comparing problem-solving in routines to problems-solving in crisis. Routines usually took place in ordinary working process where the time nor clients were not pushing to participants to act immediately.

Typical condition of random encounters can be described by its irregularity and randomness with all meaning it holds; random group of people encountering each other in unplanned way in unorganized places. Scene 6 describes the situation where new business started to be formulated from the lunch discussion after random people took part of the conversation, bringing new ideas into someone's main thought. Lot of improvisation, brainstorming and cooperation arose. All in all, the condition can be described as an energetic social encounter.

The main constitutes of leadership were expertise, teams, projects and positions. By expertise, the individual's professionality and skills are acknowledged. In situations where clear leader could not be clarified, expertise guided the "selection of leader". Teams and projects can be defined as the fundamental part of the working process of the case company and, thus, constituted strongly appearing leadership. Furthermore, positions shape the constitution of leadership. All of the constitutes was maintained in due to discourses and wording in the members' daily talk, and also in the concept of the organizational structure.

5 CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

5.1 The Key Results

The main finding of the study is that leadership as a collaborative agency emerge through interactions in social practices of the context. As a social practice, leadership appears in different organizational settings within different conditions. The key in leadership making are the actors, agents, who makes the leadership happen in different phases of their collaborative agentic processes and they appear in action in different leadership settings of an organization.

Conditions of the social practices influenced strongly on which characters of the collaborative agentic process mostly emerged. Events of crisis describe unpredictable elements that had happened in the past and the nature of randomness influenced to the way people lead themselves and others. In addition, individual's own capabilities to take lead and want to be a leader in that specific situation was worth for notice. In addition, crisis included lot of improvisation: there did not exist any clear rules according how to behave in those situations but always someone took the lead. Usually the one who took the lead had the best knowledge at least from one factor; the client, the project, the team, finance or the schedule and this was acknowledged by other participants involved in that situation.

According to Raelin (2016a, 6), practice logic does rarely rely on theory concerning of right or wrong behaviours which leads to improvisation and intuition behind the action. This was evident on the day-to-day interactions in the case company. Moments of uncertainty was constantly shaping the interactions on the field which either led or forced practitioners to use lot of improvisation and creative problem-solving in their daily practices. Moreover, the conditions of random encounters maintained the culture of improvisation. From the perspective of collaborative agentic process, improvisation and problem-solving reflect the community level phenomenon, requires dialogic exchange among participants and emerge as social practice within influence on the structure that shapes it, and thus highlights all the functions of collaborative agentic process (figure 4).

When condition of routines is concerned, people used to behave in more routinized ways compared to the condition of crisis. The characters of this setting can be described by humble and teamwork. Routines included lot of co-working: people work together in their natural settings with colleagues and co-workers and solved problem within the team. If something was

under control, or some early stages of unpredictability started to arise, people came up to solution together. As Raelin (2016a, 2018) defines it, people committed to collaboration have interest to listen others and restructure their own behavior and occasionally ready for change their thoughts into something totally new. In technological business environment, participants of the software startup used to collaborate all the time when testing and prototyping their product. Work processes

Leadership was constructed by expertise, team, projects and positions that was shown through the different organizational settings, conditions and discourses. Associating someone as a leader was highly depending on the circumstances in that particular situation; in daily routines leadership was shared among the team; in the conditions of crisis the leadership was constructed by expertise and willingness to shake status quo; in random encounters leadership was constituted by all of the identified elements. According to Northouse (2016), traditionally leadership is used to identify through power relations and managerial positions, but in the system within self-organizing agents and project-driven nature of business operations, hierarchical profiles are not the case. However, members of the case company used constantly wording leaders, partners, followers and employees, and this division was also created in practical level such meetings and the logic of offices. Employees had expectations towards partners concerning about their responsibilities and status, so had partners to each other, so the discourse concerning positions maintained the idea of leaders and followers, but the practice level the leadership was constituted by different factors.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Time period of this study was 6 months spending one and half month in the field. It has been argued that ethnography requires time from 6 months to years in the field to get the real insider's perspective to the culture (Fetterm 1998, 8; Hammerson et. al 1995, 16). Eriksson et al. (2016, 152) reminds that in business-related ethnography issues often evolves in shorter period of time and can be informed by theories of cultural interpretation. After considering the cultural and contextual nature of the study and the aims of the research, I chose to conduct an ethnographic study; multiple data sources, intensive fieldwork and participating case company's daily life was crucial to achieve settled goals of the study.

Observation does not provide any insight about people's motivation to act in certain way and it has argued that ethnographer's presence always influences on the way things go. Even if

researcher is visible as possible on the field settings, observing affects somehow to participants' behaviour that has named as one of the main limitations of ethnographic studies (Gillham 2000, 54; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016, 100). As a researcher, I got a strategy to be as open as possible in the field. Participants were interested on the research process and were curious to know what kind of things I was observing. and they told me every week since the second day my fieldwork that they had forgotten that I was was observing them. My presence might have effect on people's behaviour but in the big picture I succeed well in earning participants' trust

During the fieldwork ethnographer is constantly managing the field relations and balancing between "being an insider" and "being an outsider". Neyland (2007, 70) emphasizes that no ethnographer should aim to be complete one of these, although, admitting this positioning is complex to manage. One needs to become a member of the group to get real insights of the context but having too close relations to participants is problematic when trying to observe them with the researcher's glasses on. O'Reilly (2009, 154) calls it "going native", the risk for losing the sense of objectivity. During the fieldwork, I was getting well along with the research group and sometimes I felt like being treated as a friend, which turned out as a positive influence of gaining trust. As a researcher, however, I felt that I was becoming part of the group quite easily and time to time I got myself out of the field to analyse critically my part of the context in order to avoid of becoming a native. Getting well along with the participants can be seen as a limitation from the following perspective: sometimes people came to the lobby to chat with me instead of focusing to do their routines and those things they might do in that specific area without my presence. I could not prevent the fact that some events did not take place in their natural space or did not happen at all because of my presence.

One limitation of the study was the language spoken by research participants. Professional IT language was an obstacle from the access point of view: high professionality in their knowledge-based work included lot of IT-wording that I did not have access to and sometimes I felt extremely difficult to get the big picture about what was happening while I was observing. It would have helped me as a researcher to discover the research context and the events I was involved, especially power and leadership relations behind the IT-language, if I had spoken the same language with research participants. However, participants did not used their professionality language during the unformal meetings and interviews, only in their natural office conversations when I was observing on the background, so the language did not turn out

as a barrier for the research advancement. In addition, I usually asked afterwards from people present if I did not understand some IT wording and people kindly clarified key terms for me.

Furthermore, one could argue that partner evaluations itself encourage members to divide people into leaders' and followers' roles. This influence was considered in analysis; findings from the partner evaluations was supported or questionnaire by findings from the field and the relevance of this precis data was constantly argued by empiricism. Leadership talk on the field was similar but it can be asked, however, if partner evaluations lead participants to answer in certain way.

5.3 Managerial Implications and Suggestions for the Future Research

This study has distinguished traditional hero-centric approaches and co-construction approaches and responded a call for processual and practice-based leadership studies (Alvesson & Spider 2014; Raelin et al. 2018; Carroll 2008). The study has tried to apply the early stages of the theoretical framework of leadership-as-practice into practice in highly contextual and cultural research design. The study is an example of utilizing LAP approach and the logic of practice in ethnographic research.

This study implicates the benefits of using a cross-level mixed model in leadership research in highly dynamic environment (Carrol et al. 2008, 578). In addition, this leadership understanding emphasizes the influence of changing external environment and what does it requires in terms of leadership. The study shows that multi-level leadership dimension is worth for apply to organizations of this kind. The study responds also to the need to study leadership-as-practice in creative industry, introduced by Brad Jackson in Raelin's et al.'s critical article (2018, 9). The empirical setting of the study and the case company can be clarified as

The study implicates the need of new leadership development parameter to beside of psychological measurements. (Raelin 2017). Studying leadership in real-life case such startup organization approves the richness of practical leadership approach. Instead of measuring the individuals' competences, leadership studies should focus more to reveal where does it takes place and how does it emerge through everyday social practices. In addition, advantages of observing leadership in its context gives wider and more truthful image of the phenomenon compared to the situation where participants describe afterwards what happened and how did they feel in that moment.

Managerial implications can also be identified. Empirical data revealed that in the concept of software startup, situation of crisis was the leadership conditions that emerged the most on the field. Even though random encounters and routines used to appear daily, the nature of crisis was interesting from the strategic leadership perspective. Appearance of crisis was relatively high compared to other problem-solving situations and moreover, the conditions of crisis usually evoke new ways of leading, co-working, communicating and behaving. It has been argued that leadership in the situations of crisis are the real measurement of the organizational business performance (Auvinen 2017; Blanchard 2010) and study implicates the relevance of indicating crisis situations from the strategic management point of view.

As the research is based on one case company, to validate the insights found in the study into more generalized knowledge requires question by applying a comparative research design to strengthen the generalizability of their findings. from organizations that operates within IT field and have same sort of structure of knowledge-based labour and project-driven business, could utilize the result of this study when identifying their own leadership practices. Study suggest different leadership setting of and the system of crisis and those thingst that should be taken into account in the future leadership studies in the same kind of context.

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