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COMMUNICATIVE LEADERSHIP

(Re)Contextualizing a Swedish Concept in Theory and within Organizational Settings

Solange Hamrin

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The journey of my PhD has not been the straight line I planned 22 years ago, when I decided that I would be the first in my family to have this post-graduated degree. My mission became more important when I left Brazil and established myself in a country where language and culture were challenges to overcome. I am demonstrating with this thesis that immigrants, many times totally without support networks, can be treated fairly and become whatever they want in this country. The journey might not be sweet but we can achieve our objectives as long as we utilize the best thing this country has to offer, namely, education. I dedicate this thesis to all immigrants in this country, those who will have access to it and others who will never have the opportunity or interest to read it.

Bitter or sweet, the journey has come to an end and I am grateful to many people. First of all, my advisor Professor Dr. Catrin Johansson, who gave me the opportunity to participate in the project 'communicative leadership', and the Knowledge Foundation in Sweden, which financed the project, making the first two years of my doctoral studies possible. Thank you to the representatives and all the respondents in the companies involved in the project. My sincere thanks to Prof. Lars Nord, head of Demicom, and Prof. Ingela Wadbring for their advice, patience, and friendship, to Prof. Jesper Strömbäck for spending precious time reading my texts and sharing his knowledge and, most of all, for listening and demonstrating interest in my ideas, and my mentor Dr. Olof Wahlberg (Dept. of Business Administration at Mid Sweden University) for his time and willingness to help me.

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Sundsvall, 29 January 2016

Solange Barros de Alcântara Hamrin

SUMMARY

Department of Media and Communication Science, Mid Sweden University, SE-851 70 Sundsvall, Sweden. ISSN 1652-893X, Mid Sweden University Doctoral Thesis 235. ISBN 978-91-88025-47-0

The purpose of this thesis is to theorize about the concept of communicative leadership as well as explore the construction of the concept in three Swedish national and multinational organizations. 'Communicative leadership' is a concept often used in Swedish organizations and, in practice, refers to leaders' communication competence related to others, and specifically toward her or his employees. It generally assumes that communicative leaders are better communicators than other leaders. Organizations using the concept accordingly evaluate and develop leaders' communication competence. The thesis consists of five studies; one grounded in qualitative and quantitative literature on leadership and leadership communication and the other four using interviews with leaders and employees as datasets. The first article extends our understanding of communicative leadership with four communication behaviors to be applied toward developing leaders and defining communicative leadership with focus on leaders' communicative behavior towards others. The results from the other four articles further contribute to our understanding of communicative leadership and they were obtained applying a constructionist and discursive framework in order to analyze the connections of contexts to the discourses of communicative leadership and highlight the socially constructed nature of communicative leadership. The results emphasize that different contexts found locally have consequences for the relation between leaders and employees, constitutively affecting local discourses and context. In addition to defining and conceptualizing the notion, this thesis thus also clarifies the roles of leaders and employees in leadership practices, highlights how micro- and macro-contexts interplay and what elements interact with them, mutually influencing consequences for perceptions and constructions of leadership locally. Furthermore, the empirical studies demonstrate that communicative leadership discourses do not just reveal contexts and how they are constituted and perceived; leaders' and employees' discourses can also reveal which changes organizational members desire to implement.

SAMMANFATTNING

Department of Media and Communication Science, Mid Sweden University, SE-851 70 Sundsvall, Sweden. ISSN 1652-893X, Mid Sweden University Doctoral Thesis 235. ISBN 978-91-88025-47-0

Denna avhandlings syfte är såväl att teoretisera begreppet kommunikativt ledarskap som att utforska begreppets konstruktion och användning i tre svenska nationella och multinationella organisationer. 'Kommunikativt ledarskap' är ett begrepp som ofta används i svenska organisationer. Det syftar i praktiken på ledares kommunikationskompetens i förhållanden med andra, och specifikt mot medarbetare. Generellt förutsätter begreppet att kommunikativa ledare är bättre på att kommunicera än andra ledare. Organisationer som använder begreppet utvärderar och utvecklar ledarnas kommunikativa kompetens i enlighet därmed. Avhandlingen består av fem studier; en grundad på den kvalitativa och kvantitativa litteraturen om ledarskap och kommunikation och de andra fyra använder intervjuer med ledare och anställda som empiriskt material. Avhandlingens första artikel utvidgar vår förståelse av kommunikativt ledarskap med fyra kommunikationsbeteenden som kan användas för ledarutveckling och genom att definiera kommunikativt ledarskap med fokus på ledares kommunikativa beteende. Resultaten från de resterande fyra artiklarna bidrar till vår förståelse av kommunikativt ledarskap i praktiken. Här tillämpades ett konstruktionistiskt och diskursivt ramverk för att analysera ledares och medarbetares syn på och användning av kommunikativt ledarskap och belysa hur kommunikativt ledarskap är socialt konstruerat i de undersökta organisationerna. Resultaten betonar att olika lokalt existerande sammanhang har konsekvenser för relationen mellan ledare och anställda, en relation som konstitueras och formas i lokala diskurser och sammanhang. Förutom att definiera och teoretisera begreppet, förtydligar denna avhandling ledares och anställdas roller i ledarskapsutövningen, belyser hur mikro- och makro-sammanhang samspelar, och ömsesidigt påverkar konsekvenserna för uppfattningar och konstruktioner av ledarskap på det lokala planet. Dessutom demonstrerar de empiriska studierna att ledares och medarbetares diskurser om kommunikativt ledarskap inte bara avslöjar hur det inrättas och uppfattas i olika sammanhang; utan även kan avslöja vilka förändringar en organisations medlemmar önskar tillämpa.

INTRODUCTION

Communicative Leadership: (Re)contextualizing a Swedish concept in theory and within organizational settings

Article I

Conceptualizing communicative leadership: A framework for analyzing and developing leaders communication competence.

Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 19(2), 147-165 (2014).
(with Catrin Johansson, and Vernon D. Miller)

Article II

Communicative Leadership: Fostering Co-workers' Agency in Two Organizations

Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Forthcoming.
(with Catrin Johansson and Jody Jahn)

Article III

Recontextualizing Communicative Leadership: The interplay of discourses in a Swedish Multinational Organization (Hamrin)

International Journal of Strategic Communication, Forthcoming.

Article IV

Communicative Leadership and Context: Exploring Constructions of the Context in Discourses of Leadership Practices (Hamrin)

Submitted to Corporate Communications: An International Journal.

Article V

Communicative Leadership: Exploring Leaders' Discourse of Participation and Engagement (Hamrin)

Submitted to Observatorio (Obs*).

COMMUNICATIVE LEADERSHIP

(Re)Contextualizing a Swedish concept in theory and within organizational settings

This thesis consists of five studies exploring a concept often used in Swedish organizations: 'communicative leadership'. The concept was embraced by a number of Swedish organizations at the beginning of the new millennium and gradually became more popular in recent years thanks to the Swedish Association of Communication Professionals and other communication consulting firms. The concept was then disseminated to other large Swedish companies which then also succeeded in becoming more communicative through developing the concept in their leadership development programs (Nordblom & Hamrefors, 2007).

In practice, communicative leadership is about the way a leader communicates with her or his employees, generally assuming that communicative leaders are better communicators than other leaders. Thus, the concept is perceived as much more than a leadership development ideal. Organizations working with communicative leadership (the Volvo Group might be the best known example) have been continuously evaluating and developing their leaders' communication competence. The concept is intended to be a philosophy which leaders are trained to spread among the stakeholders, both internally and externally; it is believed to provide conditions for more transparency in order to discuss organizational visions. Several Swedish organizations are still developing evaluations and programs based on Volvo's communicative leadership index because they share the belief that communication is central to leadership, as the Volvo Group still does. Communicative leadership is part of the 'The Volvo Way'¹, the philosophical positioning and expected behavior of leaders and employees - what they are and stand for (C. Nordblom, personal communication, June 12, 2013²).

It is difficult to say whether the concept of communicative leadership existed before the beginning of the 1990s. The concept does not seem to be widely known outside northern European countries. Mentions of it in the literature show that the concept emerged in the late 1990s as a reaction to a more complex business environment characterized by rapid change (Högström, Bark, Bernstrup, Heide, & Skoog, 1999), and a movement towards a more value-based leadership (Eriksen, 1997). It evoked notions of "dialogue and feedback," "communication that satisfies different needs," and "co-ordination and synergy" (Högström et al., 1999, p. 8). Eriksen (1997),

¹The Volvo Group is a global corporation and 'the Volvo Way' is an umbrella term assembling their global views about the role of the organization and the various actors in it.

²Charles Nordblom was then the head of Strategic Internal Communication at the Volvo Group.

discussing communicative leadership in public institutions, suggested that one general characteristic of communicative leadership is that employees may experience greater openness and dialogue. On the other hand, very few references exist in books and articles before 2011 (when I started researching this thesis) and, of those, not one defined the concept, although organizations had been using it to embrace a number of interaction-based activities between leaders and employees and linked it with organizational results and change: dialogue, goal-setting and explanation of purposes, involvement in decision-making, creation of energy and commitment, performance evaluation and feedback, knowledge sharing, establishment of collaboration, and implementation of decisions (Nordblom & Hamrefors, 2007).

What the notion of communicative leadership evokes relates to characteristics of Nordic management, confirmed by the literature on cross-cultural management. Swedish leadership, for instance, has certain characteristics which distinguish it from several other styles, such as valuing team orientation, participation not just of leaders, but also of employees, and a dislike for leader self-interest (Holmberg & Åkerblom, 2007). Individuals are taken more seriously if they talk on behalf of the collective (Smith, Andersen, Ekelund, Graversen, & Ropo, 2003). Social discourses of democracy and participation influence interpersonal relations and, consequently, communication within Swedish organizations (Lämsä, 2010; Smith et al., 2003). However, these characteristics connecting the concept to Swedish socio-historical structures also complicate communicative leadership in light of the current dichotomous theoretical debate in leadership communication, which moves the essence of leadership from individual leaders to leadership as a process involving several actors (Barge & Fairhurst, 2008; Fairhurst, 2001, 2007). Communicative leadership, at first glance, appears to diverge from and/or ignore theoretical tendencies for post-heroic orientations in the field of leadership communication. The concept favors communication, which has been a secondary responsibility within management studies, noticed but not emphasized (Tourish & Jackson, 2008). However, the communicative leadership notion, as it was described previously within organizations, focused only on leaders' and not both leaders' and employees' communication competence, following a strong tradition on leadership studies. The field has favored the transmission view of communication (Axley, 1984) and the centrality of leaders during its development up to the 1970s. These factors might be related to social structures and have implications on what is seen in terms of distributed agency with in organizations in western countries. They have an extreme impact on how members see their role and of others involved in achieving results with in organizations, non-leaders (employees) are considered to have a passive role in leadership practices.

Studies adopting a leader-centric view have been consistently criticized (Grint, 2010; Tourish, 2013). The field of leadership and communication in the 1990s also started to work on enhancing the agency of employees. Yet, despite a strong post-modernist trend focusing both on language and on the individuals involved

in leadership practices, scholars have not agreed on a new, post-heroic, alternative approach. What is known about traditional leadership approaches and their focus on essentials (e.g., leader, followers, or context) is that these approaches by themselves cannot maintain a hold in today's globalized and intensely social world, so dependent on networks and the involvement of all actors (Child & McGrath, 2001; Fairhurst, 2008).

From a critical perspective, leadership is not merely about leaders and what is perceived as leadership, but rather a construction, a product of social interactions and influences (Ford, Harding, & Learmonth, 2008). Moreover, leadership is a game of meanings in which organizational members' agency interplays their influence through discourses in the course of daily interactions (Clifton, 2012; Fairhurst, 2007; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Alternative approaches in post-heroic views of leadership have to be able to shift the focus from leaders' attributes and behaviors (as promoted by psychological approaches - see Northouse, 2010, for a review) to the process of leadership involving different variables. The distribution of agency among leadership actors is vital to social constructionist discursive approaches. Such approaches claim that mutual agency among all organizational members is what makes leadership possible, since leadership is co-constructed in daily interactions and dependent on the context (Fairhurst, 2007; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). The power issue is strikingly important for discursive approaches. Discursive scholars have stated that discourse neither defines nor conceptualizes leadership, but constitutes it (Fairhurst, 2007). Leadership occurs locally in and through discourse and therefore cannot be determined beforehand. Interactions are the arenas where leadership comes into existence (Alvesson, 2011). Leadership presumes cooperation (Eriksen, 2001), is discursive and relational (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), contextual, dynamic, and distributed (Clifton, 2012; Fairhurst, 2007).

Despite the growing tendency for post-heroic discourses, a large gap still exists between the meta-discourses of leadership and the awareness of leaders' and non-leaders' roles in the workplace, where discourses and practices involving a heroic leader and passive non-leaders are still very prevalent (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Collinson & Collinson, 2009).

DISPOSITION

The introduction consists of six parts. In the first part, I explain the purpose of this dissertation and the research questions that guided it. In the second, I provide an overview of some of the main, or at least best-known, theories during the 20th century, including those from the 1980s onwards, which signaled a major change in the field. Part three presents the framework for the studies in this thesis, including theories and approaches related to a processual view of leadership and interactions with the context at different levels. The fourth part is about the methodology, research

design, and scientific starting point of the studies presented here. In the fifth, I present the conclusions of this thesis related to the general research questions, followed by a section presenting limitations and future research. Lastly, I provide a summary of the five studies constituting this thesis.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS THESIS

The purpose of this thesis is to theorize about the concept of communicative leadership as well as explore the construction of the concept in Swedish organizations. The theorization of the concept, as it is applied in Swedish organizations, draws from the existing research on leadership and communication. The thesis then explores, in a discursive and social constructionist fashion, leaders' and employees' perceptions and, to a certain extent, discursive constructions of communicative leadership in Swedish organizations. These perceptions and constructions are significant when attempting to elucidate the Swedish concept itself, and leaders' and non-leaders' positions and roles in leadership practices in organizations which claim to be developing leadership through communication. The following general research questions, grounded on the five studies (articles I, II, III, IV, and V), will be answered in order to achieve the purposes of this dissertation:

1. How can communicative leadership be theorized and defined?
2. How does communicative leadership explain the agency of leaders and employees?
3. How are discourses of communicative leadership related to organizational and social contexts?
4. How can contexts enable or constrain communicative leadership?
5. What are the contributions of a communicative leadership view/approach to leadership communication?

These questions have to be asked to establish the function and contribution of communicative leadership as a concept in the studied organizations that straight forwardly evokes communication - through dialogue and feedback - as its subject of study.

Before describing the discursive approaches employed to theoretically frame the studies included in this thesis, I will highlight some of the important theories and approaches which have contributed to the development of leadership research and discourses on leadership up to the present.

RESEARCH ON LEADERSHIP

Leadership history goes back to Aristotle, but to give perspective on the discourses of leadership presented in the studies for this thesis, I will summarize some of the central theories related to the psychological view of leadership developed during the 20th century.

Leadership has been investigated from several angles and its study attracts new generations of scholars (Parry & Bryman, 2006) and new readers. In some leadership journals, submissions continuously increase (Tourish, 2015). In the 20th century, researchers working on psychological perspectives of leadership were dedicated to strongly relating leadership to those entitled leaders who, according to psychologists, influenced individuals or a group of individuals with the aim of achieving goals and objectives. Following this line of thought, authority, power, hierarchy, and influence have been words tightly associated with leadership and central to several definitions (Dickson, Den Hartog, & Mitchelson 2003; Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010).

Most of the research since the 1930s has focused on leaders and the relation between leadership and effectiveness, a central theme for the improvement of performance through a greater understanding of leaders and their control over followers, tasks, and the context. Focusing on these elements, the literature of leadership initially concentrated on leaders' traits, skills, and behaviors (de Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010; Hackman & Johnson, 2013; House & Aditya, 1997; Northouse, 2010). Even though contingencies such as followers and contextual situations were taken into account in the 1950s, it was still the view that leaders, and leaders alone, had control over such issues as motivation, effectiveness, and production (Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010 for general reviews). The field was mostly quantitative and relied on questionnaires, commonly used in the classical view tuned to a management perspective (Bryman, Stephens, & Campo, 1996; Jablin & Putnam, 2001). Leadership had a strong management focus (Fairhurst, 2001; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014), seen only as an instrument for effectiveness and organizational performance.

There are different ways of categorizing the traditional/normative theories of leadership, but for the purpose of this thesis, I summarize only some of the most established ones: traits, styles or behaviors, situational approaches, leader-member exchange (LMX), and new leadership theories, some of which, transformational leadership (from the 1970s), for example, are still the focus of research today. Even the very criticized 'traits' approach, originating in the 1940s, has been the object of interest for generations of researchers, old and new (Parry & Bryman, 2006). The research field is extensive, and the theories which evolved over the years both shaped our current knowledge of leadership and were shaped by the existing knowledge when they were devised. This review, therefore, will start with the traits theory and its assumption that leaders are born with characteristics that distinguish them from non-leaders.

The traits approach is characterized by the assumption that leaders are born rather than made. Research on traits, however, had difficulty as certaining what attributes could be identified as permanent and differentiated leaders from non-leaders (Parry & Bryman, 2006). The traits theory, despite being very much alive even today, fails to predict behavior over time and across situations (House & Aditya, 1997). Moreover,

the approach was criticized with regards to inconsistent measurements which elucidated little. However, certain qualities such as high intelligence, determination, physical energy, and sociability were found to be consistent for leaders (House & Aditya, 1997).

Already in the 1940s, the perception of leadership was shifting from being something innate to something that could be developed over time; focus was now on behavior. The style approach emphasized leadership style and assumed that leaders were oriented to interpersonal relations, employees, and/or the tasks to be accomplished. Popular models in this approach categorized leaders' behavior as democratic, authoritarian, or laissez-faire. Each style was considered to have advantages and disadvantages over the other two in terms of effectiveness (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). These models, which employed interpersonal and task orientation principles, were criticized for being simplistic, reducing human nature to a set of categorized behaviors, and assuming that individuals fit into one of them and that leaders' styles affected others in predictable ways.

In the 1960s, context also started to be considered as having implications on effectiveness, and leaders had to adjust their styles to work more effectively in certain situations and with a certain type of follower. The contingency theories of leadership contributed to research by inserting situational factors in the effectiveness of leaders. For example, Fiedler's contingency theory formulated in 1967 posited that three factors control the amount of influence a leader has over followers—position power, task structure, and the leaders' interpersonal relationship with the members. These three factors are the result of a number of revisions on Fiedler's contingency model (Fiedler, 1967; Northouse, 2010). Central to Fiedler's approach was the measurement of the Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) to define a leader's leadership orientation to followers (relationship-oriented versus task-motivated). The approach has certain similarities to studies on style from the Ohio school, which used the typologies 'consideration' and 'initiating structure' (Parry & Bryman, 2006). Among the concerns about the validity of Fiedler's model, LPC caused controversy among scholars since certain researchers were unconvinced by the relationship between someone's LPC score and their leadership orientation.

Other models are also well known within the contingency perspective. The path-goal approach, developed by Robert House in 1971, for instance, had its roots in the expectancy theory of motivation (House, 1996). It proposed that leader behavior is contingent on employee motivation, satisfaction, and leader acceptance. Environmental contingencies (task-structure and team dynamics) were believed to influence leader effectiveness, motivating appropriate leadership behaviors. These behaviors were classified as directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. In the 1996 revision, House added that, in order to be effective, leaders have to engage in behaviors which complement employees' abilities so as to compensate for their deficiencies, which is essential to satisfaction and individual or work unit performance.

New leadership theories

The 1980s, and onwards, witnessed the rise of a new way of conceptualizing and examining leadership: New Leadership Theories appear to have similar themes. Transformational, Charismatic, and Visionary leadership, according to Parry and Bryman (2006), presented differences but signaled that the field was changing direction.

Transformational leadership, for instance, was explained in contrast to transactional leadership, the distinction being that transactional leaders motivate followers by offering material rewards in exchange for compliance, while transformational leaders have, among other qualities, charisma and a high sense of morals and ethics. Transformational leaders are usually characterized as visionaries, interactive, creative, and passionate about their jobs; thus role models for their subordinates (Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Northouse, 2010). Bass (1985) extended the theory of transformational leadership from its original focus on political leaders to the domain of organizational leadership, postulating that transformational leaders engage in practices of idealized influence, inspiration/charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Bass and Avolio (1990) stated that transformational leadership inspires employees to accomplish more than they expect. Their motivation transcends self-interest and they work for the good of the collective. These leader characteristics are associated to empowerment and development of employees' potential. Transformational leaders encourage employees to become independent by employing a variety of strategies (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Even though most of the material from these studies presented low variation among respondents, being limited to senior managers, they represented a drastic methodological shift since the three earlier stages in the history of leadership development had used quantitative methods (Parry & Bryman, 2006).

Leader-Member Exchange - quality of relationship in focus

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is the most prominent relation-based approach. Previous perspectives concentrated on leaders' actions towards employees, implicitly suggesting that leaders treated employees collectively and uniformly. LMX came to emphasize the vertical dyad relation (VDL) between leaders and employees, which evolves as members influence one another and negotiate their roles. The formation of in- and out-groups is central for this theory, and also the reason it was criticized. Leaders have high quality relationships and communication with employees in the in-groups, which are privileged. These individuals perform better than those in the out-groups. The distinction between employees causing inequality at the workplace can be considered a weakness of this theory (Anand, Hu, Liden, & Vidyanthi, 2011). In the second stage of LMX, the theory focused on the quality of these relationships and on the outcomes for the organization (House & Aditya, 1997).

The importance of the LMX theory, however, is that it emphasized that effectiveness is contingent on exchanges between leaders and members, and that communication

is important to leadership (Fairhurst, 2001). LMX conceptualized leadership as guided by reciprocity in leader-member interactions and asserted that the outcomes of this reciprocity are positive for members and organizational performance (House & Aditya, 1997). The quality of the communication in dyadic leader-member relations is characterized by trust, respect and commitment, loyalty, and mutual influence (House & Aditya, 1997; Northouse, 2010). Even though this theory brings attention to the importance of relationships, it has been criticized for limiting to the vertical dyad, leaving horizontal and networks relational processes aside. Further exploring the theory, the focus was redirected on the process of leadership making (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991), which emphasizes that leaders have to develop as many high-quality exchanges and work relationships as possible with all of their employees (within teams and group) as well as throughout the organization. The high-quality exchanges increase job satisfaction, performance, avoid the implications of out-groups existence and also affect positively leaders' carrier.

More recently, research on LMX has developed a quantitative instrument, the Leader-Members Conversational Quality (LMCQ) scale, all owing greater understanding of communication dynamics in these relationships (Jian, Shi, & Dalisay, 2014).

The rise of post-heroic leadership approaches

The field of leadership went through drastic changes in the late 1990s with a new paradigm and the emergence of post-heroic leadership theories (Parry & Bryman, 2006). Authentic and spiritual leadership, among others, appeared in this phase (Parry & Bryman, 2006). The following decade witnessed an increased number of studies using social constructionist approaches, social discourse analysis (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden, & Hu, 2013; Grant, Hardy, Oswick, & Putnam, 2004; Hardy, 2001; Tierney, 1996) and reflexivity (Barge, 2004; Fairhurst, 2007). This increase brought several benefits to organizational communication and specifically to studies on leadership, which saw an expansion of understanding on matters treated in previous decades in a much more simplistic way, including the relationship between communication and leadership, the importance of communication processes for organizing, and how people become motivated to high performance. These changes respond to a different perception with regard to collaboration and distributed agency among the parties involved in leadership processes.

The increasing number of studies in this new paradigm, tuned to the linguistic and the critical, removed the leader from the center spotlight and moved to ward more integrated approaches involving leader and employee participation and the interconnection of discourses with context(s) (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Fairhurst, 2007; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). New perspectives taking into account social constructionist perspectives and discourse have placed leadership actors and their interrelation into a context constituting leadership. Leadership is regarded less as

a 'power over' instrument of oppression and control, and more as an interplay of influences constituted and apparent through language and discourse (Clifton, 2012; Fairhurst, 2001; Putnam & Cooren, 2004; Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001), understood in this context as a pattern of texts across organizations (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001).

Studies focusing on discourses, then, suggested that leaders and non-leaders, consciously or unconsciously, influence each other and interact with various structures in social life. Individuals' discursive resources, if well managed, can be that enhancing agency (Clifton, 2012; Fairhurst, 2011). Leaders who are aware of their own communicative behaviors adapt their communication, thus also benefiting organizational performance (Johansson, Miller, & Hamrin, 2014).

In a recent review of the field of leadership and communication, Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014) claimed that there is much more to be investigated about the communicative aspects of leadership. They mentioned that leadership is a reflection of its time, while simultaneously predicting what lies ahead. Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014) stated that scholars have to be prepared to conduct cross-paradigm work. They do not have to reject post-positivist, traditional ideas, but rather add social constructivist methodologies to their approaches. It is further necessary to research the positive aspects of leadership, such as appreciation, spirituality, ethics, and courage, as well as to identify the dark sides of leadership and destructive organizational communication. The authors also suggested the study of dispersed or distributed leadership, an emerging facet of leadership. The concept of distributed leadership is related to democratic ideas (a contested idea in some contexts - see Jones, 2014). According to Bolden (2011), this concept also makes associations to reconstructions of "leader-follower identities, mobilizing collective engagement and challenging or reinforcing traditional forms of organization" (p.1).

Relating to issues pertinent to leadership communication, the studies presented in this thesis are also concerned with the democratic and positive aspects of leadership. Moreover, these studies are initially grounded on quantitative and qualitative studies to advance to a theoretical framework (Article I) to centralize communicative actions enabling leadership

In the following section, I will describe the key theoretical framework applied to explore the concept of communicative leadership. This framework was used throughout the studies, compounding this thesis with central thoughts guiding the exploration of the concept in a constructionist fashion, in inductive and iterative manners.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section details a body of literature pertaining to leadership and communication theories, with a view to explaining how this framework was used to explore the themes of the five studies constituting this thesis.

The theoretical framework for these studies aspires to be consistent with social constructionist and interpretive approaches. In the following sections, I will define

and elaborate on, in particular, the concepts of discourse and discursive leadership, and context and recontextualization.

Discourse and discursive leadership

Language, reality, and the daily use of language (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) are aspects incorporated and developed to a greater or lesser extent in the social sciences, triggering internal changes in the area of discourse analysis. The concept of discourse, however, is still open to interpretation (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998). It is related to linguistic and cognitive psychology, the Foucaultian position, and discourse as texts and speech in social practices (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). It is therefore relevant to settle from the start how discourse is used in the thesis. Here, it consists of texts, i.e., patterns of interactions, and is shaped by influences in the location where the actors producing it are situated (Grant et al., 2004). Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) explained that discourse could be analyzed at different levels, considering talk in action or the enduring system of ideas and thoughts. The former is known as micro-discourse/context (and is written with a lowercase 'd') and the latter as macro-discourse/context (or capital 'D' Discourse). Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) have also worked on a model that demonstrates the continuum from micro-to-macro have also worked on a approaches and their complexity. To these two levels of discourse and context, the authors added the relationship between discourse and meaning, in order to verify whether the discourse incorporates cultural and subjective meanings, or occurs in the dynamics of communication and with a high degree of autonomy. The studies presented in this thesis have considered the possibility of scaling up from micro-discourses, i.e., from the language people use during interviews to macro-instances (social and cultural structures).

The theoretical foundation here is the notion that language apprehends the structures in which human beings are embedded and interconnected. The social practices learned and negotiated cognitively are represented in the organizational members' everyday talk (Fairclough, 1992). Thus, discourse goes beyond language itself. It implies social/organizational actors' negotiation of meanings and contributes to the creation of social realities. From this perspective, it is fair to say that discourse is related to worldviews, norms, and rules from different structural levels (e.g., cultural, organization, social) which establish how individuals are supposed to act, or not, in specific contexts. Thus, discourse and the context/structures in which it is produced and consumed, appropriated, or shared are interdependent. Discourse might have different levels of relatedness to the social, cultural, and symbolic dimensions expressed; the analysis of micro-discourses can reveal these embedded structures and even local or socio-historical relations to give meaning to the manner in which the members involved in these discursive communities relate to and act toward one another.

Fairhurst and Grant (2010) discussed that social constructionist leadership approaches have two interrelated characteristics. These approaches posit the ability of

non-leaders (followers) to make sense of and evaluate organizational experiences and consequently, they consider leadership as a co-constructed reality, which suggests an integrative interactional process whereby both leaders and non-leaders are necessary to the existence of leadership. Social constructionism includes theories, approaches, and dimensions relevant to the study of leadership. I have chosen a theory that contrasts with those of leadership psychology, providing opportunities to study leadership in micro-discourses, i.e., locally, focusing entirely on respondents' interpretive repertoires, but also considering Discourse (in Foucault's terms) (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Fairhurst, 2007), implying that the analysis must move from the conversation level to the macro- (societal) structures. The discursive approach to leadership, as mentioned earlier, emphasizes that leadership is co-constructed through social interactions and is context-sensitive (Fairhurst, 2007).

The use of the concept of "discursive leadership" (Fairhurst, 2007, p. 3) began with a general dissatisfaction with the results, and lack of coherence in trait- and style-based psychological research (Kelly, 2008). Communication scholars prefer a discursive approach because it accounts for the role of meaning making in conversation, and addresses how communication constructs the contexts in which activities take place (Barge & Little, 2008). An early study highlighting the relationship between leaders' everyday talk and organizational outcomes found that leaders' conversations facilitated the accomplishment of both professional and personal goals (Barge, Downs, & Johnson, 1989). The discursive approach recognizes the relevance of the leadership role while also emphasizing leadership as a process grounded in the interactions between leaders and members, leading to collaboration (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Therefore, leadership is discursive and relational (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Leaders constantly have to relate to others and, for that, they have to engage in relational dialogues and daily conversations that increase possibilities for responsible leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011).

Considering the sensemaking and relational aspects, the discursive lens provides tools to examine the complexity and richness of leadership in detail because it moves closer to the human agents and allows for the understanding of their interplay (Fairhurst, 2007). Its focus on the role of meaning making in conversation, and in narratives and stories, addresses how communication contributes to constructing the context from which activities originate in organizations (Barge & Little, 2008). A sensemaking approach is inherent to a discursive approach to leadership because it provides ways to explain how leaders and members communicatively construct and develop shared meanings (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010) using individuals' retrospective development of meanings of events that guide further actions (Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). It involves the development of comprehension about the world through systematic processes that will lead to action.

In a social constructionist view, individuals have the possibility to experience and observe diverse realities in specific social contexts (Berger & Luckmann, 1991),

in contrast to a positivist view which assumes the existence of just one reality and, consequently, one truth. For this thesis, the discursive approach is essential because it allows the researcher to see the different angles of a concept that initially was highly positivist-oriented and emphasizing its potential to develop leaders as much as leadership. In the approach chosen, the organizational level can be seen as one context consisting of different discursive actions, situations, and a scenario for construction, but interrelated with actors and their experiences, as well as with macro-contexts. The whole system is responsible for the construction of leadership by the actors within it. Leadership is a social construction that occurs locally, and through the discourses of the actors involved in interactions (discursive communities) (Fairhurst, 2007). The ways in which meaning is created, sustained, and altered within organizations discloses the nature of leadership as a social process (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Leaders who are aware of how to manage, shape, and interpret situations, can thus guide members to a common interpretation of reality (Fairhurst, 2011). These interpretations depend on perceptions and understandings of the established world and the produced and appropriated knowledge in the form of already existent discourse (Hardy & Phillips, 2004) which then produces new discourses.

Culture. In this thesis, culture is considered to be dynamic and capable of shaping, and being shaped by, individuals in a constitutive process (Brannen, 2009). This approach is taken because seeing reality as a social construction implies accepting that individuals internalize impressions from different structures and what they externalize in activities/actions is a unique blend of different structures. In interactions with others, as part of a discursive community, individuals negotiate their own cultures (products of social and cognitive processes) and shape a collective culture at the workplace, the result of the influences they carry within themselves and which were negotiated collectively. Whether or not management believes in unique cultures, people's actions are still guided symbolically by culture. Therefore, the amount of attention paid to culture does not diminish its relevance to the organizational life (Alvesson, 2002).

Organizational culture is not the central theoretical framework of this thesis, but it has been noted that the subject is of evident importance in any study approaching leadership within organizations. As Alvesson (2002) explained, organizational culture is an umbrella concept which covers the symbols important for organizational members' interpretations. These symbols are evident in rituals, myths, stories, and legends, and also in how people interpret "events, ideas, and experiences that are influenced and shaped by the groups within which they live" (Frost 1985, as cited in Alvesson, 2002, p. 3). Alvesson also considered that lack of knowledge about the culture reflects management's lack of understanding about people. This idea is central here because culture is the outcome of the constellation of negotiations occurring every day within the organization. While language is merely an artifact to organizational culture, the studies conducted for this thesis

concentrate on the language itself and the potential of discourses constituting the reality of the organization (Fairhurst & Uhl-bien, 2012).

The use of the concept of national culture in the thesis needs to be justified since communicative leadership is referred to as a construct related to certain peculiarities of Swedish leadership. Without any intention to contest cross-cultural and management concepts, notions, and understanding of cultural essentialism, I acknowledge the contributions of theories such as national culture (Hofstede, 1980), the Globe studies, and a range of other qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in cross-cultural management, several of which employed the above mentioned framework, and use them to support certain characteristics of Swedish leadership such as more involvement of actors in leadership practices (Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence, & Sivesind, 2004), equality, consensus and cooperation (Grenness, 2011), team-orientation, coaching (Holmberg & Åkerblom, 2007), and consensus-driven decision-making (Isaksson, 2008). However, these characteristics have not guided the analysis of the material, which was inductive. Instead, they were used as background, contributing to the understanding of the context and macro-discourses of leadership in Sweden.

My use of discourse and context as key concepts thus follows the understanding established by Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) and also used by Gail Fairhurst to explain her usage of the concept in *Discursive leadership: In conversation with leadership psychology* (2007). Discursive leadership attempts to disclose how leadership occurs and what driving forces are instigating these constructions, studying discourse and context at the micro-level, in search of more critical issues such as contradictions, power, control, and agency. This framework is relevant for this thesis because of its constructionist characteristics, assuming the mutual agency of leaders and employees, flexibility, dynamicity, and the distributed nature of leadership.

(Re)Contextualization. Discourse and context are the central ideas of this compilation of articles, yet other elements are also associated with them. In Article III, for instance, the notion of recontextualization (see the following section) of meaning in different settings was used. This article is about the interplay of micro and macro-discourses and contexts in the discourses of leaders and employees in a Swedish multinational. The study investigated four offices in different countries. Gertsen and Zølner (2012) have also drawn on Brannen's concept of recontextualization to study the transfer of Danish corporate values to a subsidiary in India. To better understand recontextualization, they brought in the idea of social agency (in Bourdieu's terms) into play. Existing local knowledge of leadership as well as resources and individual strategies were considered to be relevant to the recontextualization of values. Söderberg (2015) focused on the travel of ideas from one sociocultural context to another in her study of the Carlsberg Group. Recontextualization was combined with the social agency of the actors who had the power of framing the strategic concept of winning behaviors -and sense giving and sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005) of employees. This

kind of research is still scarce in this field in relation to corporate values and preferred behaviors (d'Iribane, 2012; Söderberg, 2015).

In this thesis, the recontextualization of the meanings of communicative leadership contributes to our understanding of how cultural settings are also constructed with the added influence of diversity. Different structures are alternately dominant, but blended in its essence, giving form to different leaders' communication roles and functions as strategists, interpreters/translators, instructors/facilitators, and sensemakers. These different constructions reinforce the idea that leadership is not perceived and exercised the same way globally; instead, these contexts are playing out depending on the groups and individuals' orientation locally.

Contexts and leadership. Following this theme, other elements of discussion were added to and explained through the core theoretical framework of discourse and discursive leadership in Article IV. Since the investigation in this article aspired to come close to the elements in the context/structures influencing the employees' discourses, there was a need to somehow define what context or contextual elements participants suggested were impacting on/interacting with discourses of communicative leadership. An explanation was therefore needed of what these macro- and micro-contexts/structures mean in their accounts and which structures are predominant. Attempts to move the explanation up from micro- to macro-discourses/context (attempting to connect what is constructed during employees' conversations to more hegemonic discourses and social structures) are not encouraged by scholars because of methodological difficulties (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Cooren, Taylor, & Van Every, 2013). This caution is also justified because context is a difficult term to employ in research, considering the various interpretations and controversies about its meaning and usage within research paradigms or traditions (Blommaert, 2001; Pomerantz, 1998; Tracy, 1998). Tracy (1998) stated that the notion of context involves a "focal event and a surrounding field —that is, its context" (p. 3). Then, context is understood as what we need to know to understand the ensemble of patterns in texts; it can also be understood as the background and narrative which contribute to the understanding of a certain event.

As seen above, various approaches to the usage of context (or structure) exist and, as expected, discursive constructionism suggests alternatives to making context/social structure more coherent with discourse epistemology. Potter and Hepburn (2007) mentioned three ways to treat context and social structures in constructionist studies: as being the members' concern; as an ongoing accomplishment of different parties; and/or as formulations in the members' accounts.

In the first option, contextual particulars can be highlighted as relevant by the participants in the interaction (Schegloff, 1997). The terms, structures, and descriptions these actors decide to highlight are important for the production and interpretation of conduct during interactions. However, the researcher/analyst does not know whether participants highlighted those elements because of the interview/

observation situation or whether they are consequential to ongoing interactions (Potter & Hepburn, 2008).

The second alternative emphasizes how social structures are accomplished in the interaction. The actors are supposed to produce relevant structures actively and collaboratively. Institutional structures, according to this approach, make this interaction coherent (they are normative and inferential), but they cannot determine what goes on during the interaction (Potter & Hepburn, 2008).

The third alternative explores whether context is complementary, i.e., whether the social structures are constructed in and through talk and how those constructions are used (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). Here, constructions of social structure and of organizations are invoked, described, and reconstructed in the course of the participants' practices. In Article IV, in which approaches of how to treat context are central, the first and third alternatives were complementary.

Context, as used in this thesis and especially in Article IV, is what is constructed from what is relevant for participants, while at the same time, it is a social construction, discursively produced on the accounts of leadership and communication. The interpretation of micro- and macro-discourses/contexts (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000), however, brings clarity to the relation between context/social structures and discourses of communicative leadership and shows the nature of context when these levels are shown to be interconnected and creating different constellations, forming specific contexts to give coherence to discourses of communicative leadership. Thus, contexts, both micro- and macro-, are present and concatenated with discourses, while explaining meanings of communicative leadership within the organizational setting.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This section describes the data collection and analysis processes, followed by the scientific philosophy adopted in this work. But first a short description of my choices.

In order to accomplish the purpose of this thesis, it was necessary to conduct theoretical and qualitative empirical studies in Swedish organizations focusing on the concept communicative leadership, its perceptions and constructions according to leaders and employees, and how these are contextualized. Firstly, a sample from the literature of leadership and leadership communication was selected and analyzed for a conceptual study by which to define communicative leadership. Secondly, I selected data from three Swedish organizations for empirical study.

Scholars emphasized that a discursive approach to leadership does not dismiss the contributions of psychological approaches, but rather prioritizes social aspects of leadership (Chen, 2008; Fairhurst, 2008; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). Based on their advice, the first article presented in this thesis is a conceptual study, grounded in the qualitative and quantitative literature, which summarized leaders' communicative characteristics and conceptualized communicative

leadership. The other four studies employed a systematic coding process inspired by the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze leaders' and employees' accounts of communicative leadership collected through interviews. Thus, the studies composing this thesis situated the communication perspective and gave further insight into a concept that appears to invoke dialogue, feedback, and openness, and promises to enhance employee participation.

Exploring the perceptions and constructions of communicative leadership provided opportunities to examine how a leader-centric concept evolves, when empirically investigated and based on post-heroic perspective. Article III (Re)contextualizing Communicative Leadership), in addition to individual and focus group interviews, also used secondary data (annual reports 2010 and 2011) across countries to expand knowledge about the organization investigated in Article III. This material was used as background information in the aforementioned article.

Data collection within a project framework

The data used in this thesis were collected within a research project entitled "Communicative Leadership – Conceptualization, Analysis, and Development of Core Competence" at Mid Sweden University, implemented between 2011 and 2013. The project aimed to conceptualize and evaluate current methods, both theoretical and empirical, and develop new methods of measurement of communicative leadership within five Swedish national and multinational organizations, from which I have selected three for the studies in this thesis. Thus, a number of methodological decisions regarding the research design were taken in co-operation between researchers and the representatives of the participant organizations. The research team conducted over 300 individual and focus group interviews were conducted with leaders, employees, and HR and communication department representatives in five Swedish organizations.

Researchers and company representatives met twice a year (physical meetings) and had monthly telephone meetings to exchange reports about the progress of the project. These meetings allowed all the members to keep abreast of the researchers' progress with the interviews, the analysis of the data, and the steps ahead. As soon as a set of communicative behaviors was established and communicative leadership was conceptualized (Article I), some of the organizations decided to incorporate these results into their leadership programs. At the end of the project, they were provided with a written report about the state of communicative leadership in their organization, summarizing what communicative leadership meant to their leaders and employees. The material was collected subject to certain terms; an important one is related to the anonymity of interviewees and the organizations in future publications or public discussions of the studies produced within the project frame.

There were both advantages and disadvantages to working closely with the organizations. The researchers, for instance, had more access to the interviewees and to

the background. One disadvantage, which I believe I have remediated through being aware of it, was the risk of being influenced by the organization representatives' views during the interviews. Another problem concerned the selection of respondents, where we employed the maximum variation method (Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2013). We wanted to minimize the risk of selecting those that the organizations believed would provide a 'desired' perception of the organization while excluding those known to be dissatisfied, who might express contradictory views, if the organization had a hidden agenda with their choices. Our objective being to obtain a variety of views of leadership and communication, we decided to select leaders and non-leaders from all existing hierarchical levels in the organizations. The researchers involved in the project considered the assistance of the HR and/or communication department representatives in selecting interviewees to be fundamental since we had to consider our own and the interviewees' availability to talk to us in/from different locations in Sweden and other countries. When the selected person/position was not available, we had to interview another individual in a similar position. Thus, we interviewed managers in leadership positions and with staff responsibilities and non-leaders from different departments and divisions.

Conducting interviews. The raw data were in-depth individual interviews with leaders and focus group interviews (occasionally even individual interviews) with employees. The method was dependent on leaders' and employees' availability, forcing researchers to find creative solutions to conduct these interviews, resulting in variation in interview techniques. These variations were certainly most applied to article III due to geographical distance.

The article used a sample from four different countries: Sweden, India, France, and the United States. The plan was to employ in-depth qualitative interviews with leaders and focus group interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) with employees since the researchers were interested in the respondents' constructions of communicative leadership grounded on their experience and understanding of communication and leadership in their routines. In the United States, because employees could not be gathered in focus groups due to work schedule conflicts, interviews were conducted individually with these members by a doctoral student in the United States who also transcribed them. The interviews from France were conducted using a variety of technologies. Leaders were interviewed by telephone and employees through video-conference. The interviewer (an experienced researcher) spoke both English and French with the respondents to avoid misunderstandings. In all interviews, precautions were taken to avoid the negative impact of non-native language use on the results. For instance, researchers strove to speak clearly and to explain further in case of words or expressions new to the respondents (Winchatz, 2006).

The interviews in the Swedish headquarters were conducted face-to-face by a Swedish senior researcher and myself, whose native language is neither English

nor Swedish. Thus the same precautions were taken as in France. The presence of a foreign researcher has not been considered a problem in ethnographic or interview studies, especially in light of the fact that the quality of the data might be influenced by different vocabulary even between two native speakers from different regions in the same country (Winchatz, 2006).

Since different interviewers were needed, the project leader and myself had full overview of the vast number of interviews conducted, recorded, and transcribed in order to ensure the quality. I was directly involved with the data collection in three of the five organizations and in the analysis of all interviews in four of the organizations (necessary to write final reports). The massive amount of concentrated work with the data allowed me to select the cases I thought were sufficiently interesting for further investigation and to fulfill the aims of this thesis.

The interviews were semi-structured and the questions generally open with regard to communication and leadership views and positioning, the relationship among members, and the work environment. The researchers thus had the opportunity to be flexible and explore different parts of respondents' narratives related to their routines and their relationship to other members (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These questions were designed to trigger reflections and respondents explained how they made sense of their realities. The analysis in Article IV and also II, III, and V was based on leaders' and employees' understanding of what they do together (Fairhurst, 2009). The insights acquired through these interviews grounded our understanding of the context where it was generated (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2003), i.e., the organizations. We then sought a deeper understanding, acquiring more information about the background of these organizations through interviews with other representatives and organizational documents. This 'extra' knowledge contributed to making the interviews more like dialogues than inquiries (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The choice of the qualitative method contributed to a better understanding of respondents' perceptions and constructions of communicative leadership, communication positioning, and contextual facts influencing the local discourse of leadership. The method enhanced the possibilities of unfolding communicative leadership as a phenomenon. Even if interviews have several disadvantages, for example, difficulties in making sense of the massive amount of qualitative data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002) (in the following section, I further describe how the data was treated and reduced), these interviews provided a rich description of leaders' and employees' daily activities.

The main difficulty during interviews, since I aspired to follow social constructionism, was to avoid words that could force interviewees into patterns of established ideas and discourses about leadership and communication. For instance, we might discuss the use of the words 'manager' and 'leader'. The literature also discusses the interchangeability of these two words. A common distinction is that

'management' stands for the bureaucratic function and 'leadership' for the capacity to inspire and motivate individuals toward change (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Individuals entitled 'leaders/managers' and 'employees' did react (questioning, rejecting, critiquing, etc.) to the words, and both kinds of respondents predominantly used the word 'leader'. The answer to two standard questions can be used as example for how these two terms were used. It was asked to respondents. 1) "What do you think a good leader should be?" and 2) "What does it mean to be a communicative leader? How are you supposed to be then?" Respondents made sense of these questions using words as 'leader' and 'manager' as similar terms and examples, suggesting that they had similar perceptions for the constructs 'leader' and 'manager'. Leadership is a construct loaded with references to influence, control, exerting power over non-leaders, and the like. These connotations may have steered the interviewers' and interviewees' conversations.

Data analysis

Analyzing the interviews, it was natural to adopt an approach that would provide a systematic procedure using a standard to manage the initial amount of data without diminishing the creative thinking flowing from a frame of discourse analysis. The constant comparative method (CCM) was selected as it is pertinent for reducing the data in a systematic manner and allows the analyst to make the necessary theoretical connections with the material during the process.

I am aware of the controversy surrounding CCM, relating it to positivist and realistic studies (Tracy, 2013) since it gives an impression of rationalism because of pragmatic procedures. Although I also had the option to make a hermeneutic reading of these interviews, considering the parts to understand the whole and vice versa, I decided to see the parts in a structured way to shape the whole. Thus I decided to use CCM and go through coding and memo writing, but I also tried to go beyond the text using my knowledge of the organizations. The data in the studies part of the thesis (articles II, III, IV, and V) were analyzed using a methodology inspired by CCM to be fair to the original theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Tracy (2013) stated that most studies refer to a grounded theory, but do not employ it in its totality, concluding that it would be better to call it iterative analysis. The studies composing this thesis are in agreement with this statement. The analysis of the data set was highly inductive and focused on the emic approach to data analysis. However, the researchers did not return to the field to complete the data, as grounded theory and CCM advise. I was involved in data collection and analysis in three of five organizations. The data that emerged was exhaustively studied and the emphasis of each study was on what emerged (Charmaz, 2006).

CCM is well known for generating new theories. The theoretical departure points of this thesis are approaches which relate to social constructionism and allow the discursive exploration of language. CCM is more liberating (Charmaz,

2007) and provides instruments to structure this language in patterns. For this thesis, CCM made it possible to go through the narratives of experiences and understand how informants and respondents constructed their realities and the implications and entanglement of their perceptions to the context while the data was systematically and safely reduced.

The method allowed me to familiarize myself with what communication and leadership were for those respondents and to uncover particularities which could explain how both micro- and macro-context/discourses shape the constructs (Charmaz, 2006). This focus on contextual elements to clarify communicative leadership, without ambitions to highlight one particular reality, connects this grounded theory approach to constructionism. The first coding step of this method, for instance, revealed the authorship of the researcher/analyst role in the reconstructions of realities about to be presented as results and findings since the analyst was completely aware that the coding can be done in different ways. Since theoretical and conceptual coding are not strongly driven by standards, the researcher's/analyst's knowledge about the contexts which emerged from these interviews (in my case) was essential.

The data used were essentially interviews, which had implications for my choice of a constructionist and discursive analysis positioning. An approach grounded in action would have eliminated half of my explanations about my participation in the collection of the data as well as the wording of perceptions or co-constructions in four of the five studies, classifying my work as constructions of social reality, and not social constructions of reality (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). In the interviews conducted with non-leaders (I refer to them as 'employees'), I considered the co-construction of leadership through their discussions, as well as agreement or resistance to leaders' behaviors and attitudes toward them or to matters related to them.

The stories they could share with others in the group and the interviewer were about daily practices, the functioning of their department, or relations to the other departments, divisions, and organizations. The boundaries of the organization were quite distinct in these conversations (Cooren et al., 2013). Interviews conducted with both leaders and non-leaders disclosed a perception of their own role, how they perceive the other role in relation to themselves, and the agency which both have during daily interactions. These interview situations were arenas where organizational members could make sense of relationships and leadership practices that led to organizing in a past sense, but also reflecting on how they felt at that moment about those subjects (Putnam & Cooren, 2004). Since all the organizations involved in the project had had internal communication about their participation in such a project, there was no bewilderment about the term 'communicative leadership', respondents reacted as if they did know what this was about, even in those organizations which work actively with leadership and communication evaluation programs but calling it by another name/title.

Some interviews (specifically for Article III) were conducted via telephone. Compensation was done in different ways depending on the richness of the material. For some material, it was necessary to go back to the recordings of the interviews, read the organizations' documents such as policies, steering documents, and annual reports, and also scrutinize their websites. In addition to transcripts of interviews with organization representatives, to assist my understanding of the different views and thoughts within the organizations, I also used the transcripts of the kick-off meeting of the 2011 'communicative leadership' project, in which organization representatives presented their goals and visions and the reasons they were working on the project.

Social constructionism and organizational communication studies

According to the social constructionist view, organizations are constituted or co-constructed through the discourses of organizational members (Barge & Fairhurst, 2008). These discourses originate in everyday interactions constructing objective realities and subjective reality is so intimate that it is only accessible to each subject. That reality, however, is more tangible and manifests itself, for instance, through the language system. "Social constructionism is concerned with how the use of language and the structuring of conversations create meaning and subjectivity" (Barge & Fairhurst, 2008, p. 231). Therefore, social constructionism is adequate for organizational communication studies (see Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Fairhurst, 2007, 2011; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004) since researchers are concerned with interactions and discourse (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). Social constructionism contributes to the practical purpose of organizational communication with a methodology which can map actors through the communication processes they are involved in and through their discourses. Although social constructionism gives researchers the opportunity to use combined paradigms and methodologies without the need to substitute one for another, a qualitative method was selected to deepen the understanding of an existing concept and the contexts in which it was perceived or produced.

Social constructionism in this thesis

Scholars (among them Hacking, 1999, and Holstein & Gubrium, 2007) noted that today a large number of studies are considered to be constructionist. This thesis is not different in that it has been inspired by social constructionist foundations, and/or permeated by thoughts, notions, and ideas based on a social constructionist paradigm. In the studies presented here, I experimented with similar views regarding reality and objectivity (epistemological views) (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010) to explore the ontology of the concept of communicative leadership. The paradigm offered by social constructionism "recognizes the potential that communication holds for transformation and sustainable change" (Foster & Bochner, 2007, p. 86) within organizations. Even though communication has become a more evident subject in leadership studies, scholars are still attempt-

ing to clarify distinctions and when to use terms as such 'discourse' and 'communication' (see Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Jian et al., 2008 for this discussion).

I have used a qualitative and interpretive perspective, known in the field of organizational communication (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2007) to be suitable for the purpose of exploring and understanding an already existing concept in practice, such as communicative leadership. A qualitative approach should also be able to highlight the role of communication in leadership and, therefore, shed light on the contribution of the concept of communicative leadership to leadership studies. The points of departure of the studies presented in this dissertation, then, are the actors producing leadership, their perception of what they do together, whether or not they are aware of their role, and how these social constructions happen. The interpretive approach was chosen to help shed some light on this awareness about their communication and relationships.

The foundation of social constructionism is that people, through interaction, construct social life. Thus, it studies how these constructions occur, not the causal mechanisms for them to occur, as in other philosophical perspectives. The possibility of seeing the world through social constructionist lenses allows researchers to understand the particularities and uniqueness of each individual and situation (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Social constructionism is an alternative for researchers to avoid the positivist and post-positivist frames of references, such as in studies considering cultural dimensions to explain people's behavior and preferences, or even an opportunity to complete these views. These studies explain actors' behaviors from an existent and permanent truth, while in social constructionism, agents generate meaning in relation to their structural references and in interrelation to others. Human agents are socialized through interactions into a certain social structure; what is internalized through connections with the structure is also used for the formation of identity and, consequently, as a frame of reference to translate the world and others' externalized reality in everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Foster & Bochner, 2007).

Constructionism and interviews

Four of the five studies were designed methodologically using interviews as data collection instruments even though discursive constructionists are not unanimous on the subject (Nikander, 2007). The discussion is relevant, even though interviews are also considered to be interactions and negotiations of meanings in themselves since they both constitute and occur in a specific social context. Interviews, by themselves or in combination with other data, continue to enrich discourse analysis (Nikander, 2007).

Even considering these aspects, I had to manage basic methodological issues in the four studies presented here. One of them refers to the fact that I (the researcher) was not present during all the interviews to certify that the context of the interviews were

in conformity with constructionist recommendations on methodology (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007; Schegloff, 1997). During the interviews, researchers had certain themes to explore since some of the participant organizations were implementing and evaluating leadership programs with the intention of improving leader communication and opening their doors to researchers (for a project) together with other organizations. Participants knew that we were there to learn more about leadership and communication, and how leaders and employees relate to one another at different levels of the organization. The design consequently did not give the language-in-use the justice that an ethno-methodological observation (with interviews as supplement) would have provided (Patton, 2002). As described earlier, I have compensated by experiencing the context of these interviews through immersion in the transcripts, recordings, and cross-checking data from different sources with the information acquired through interviews (conducted by me and by other researchers). I also received assistance from some of the interviewers in this regard.

CONCLUSIONS

Definition and conceptualization of communicative leadership

Drawing from the established literature of leadership and leadership and communication, it was possible to redefine and conceptualize communicative leadership. The first conclusion of this thesis is that communicative leadership theoretically has a strong relationship to principles that facilitate leaders' and employees' relation and the creation of a work environment adequate for good communication. The studies showed that there are communication behaviors to be learned and improved once organizations decide to do so, and these are anchored in the literature. The challenge of conceptualizing and defining communicative leadership (theme of Article I) was facilitated by the qualitative and quantitative literature that described a number of behaviors considered to be communicative in essence, such as structuring, facilitating, relating, and representing. These behaviors are instruments for activities and the creation of meaning, applied across a range of organizational contexts, and are relevant at different levels: manager-employee and manager-manager interactions across teams, units, or groups. Communicative leadership, therefore, emphasizes the role of leaders engaging others in decision-making through dialogue and feedback, as well as leader openness and involvement.

Essence of communicative leadership

The studies for this thesis do not focus on power in leadership relations. Considering the first study, which was written in collaboration with two other authors, leaders are still the essence of communicative leadership, indicating a certain normativity of the concept. Yet communicative leaders are willing to communicate more openly and more engaged in encouraging others to participate. The conceptualization of communicative leadership therefore provided a platform where organizations,

normatively and as grounded in research, can have parameters to centrally develop leader communication and opportunities for involving employees in decision-making processes and consequently enhancing their agency, giving them access to the relevant conversations throughout the organization. Top management as well as communication and HR departments can implement these communicative behaviors through training, for instance, aiming to enhance employee agency and improve relationships among leadership members, benefiting organizational goals.

In the empirical material for this thesis, leaders and non-leaders alike were unable to totally 'reimagine' an inversion of roles, a situation where they could co-lead or where leadership might not exist at all (Fairhurst, 2007; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Hacking, 1999), although the data were collected in Swedish organizations (national and multinational) and most of the participants were Swedish. I mention 'Swedishness' because Sweden has laws and visions that strengthen non-leader participation and influence at the workplace (Tengblad & Andersson, 2014), when compared to different studies of American samples, for instance. Moreover, these data are from organizations where top management considers communication to be a priority, considering their own initiative of participating in a project to analyze the social construction of communicative leadership and sponsoring it with working hours of their leaders and employees. Despite this background and the great influence of post-heroic approaches over the last 30 years, the empirical studies in this thesis showed that the world is not much closer to leaderless leadership. Leadership is still undeniably sacred (Grint, 2010) and the concept of communicative leadership is not different in this regard.

Yet the leaders' and non-leaders' perceptions and constructions of communicative leadership revealed power positions in their relationship and could be used to clarify these actors' roles in leadership and also highlight the process for enhancing non-leaders' agency (Article II), and how communicative leadership is contextualized considering the influence and interplay of discourses and contexts (Article III). Another conclusion is that, theoretically, communicative leadership is about leaders who engage others in decision-making and therefore use dialogue and feedback as essential instruments of communication. However, empirically and through the lens of social constructionist foundational assumptions, 'communicative leadership' allows for other perspectives on leadership and communication discourse to be added to its theorization.

Although these empirical studies revealed that employees' share of participation and engagement is still decided by leaders, they also showed communication processes enhancing co-workers' agency. Agency was enhanced when autonomy was facilitated and when the sharing of responsibility and participation was mutual, involving both leaders and employees (Article II).

Communicative leadership and contexts

Discourses of communicative leadership are interrelated to organizational and social contexts and the studies presented in this thesis have pointed out some specificity of these contexts, explaining the interconnectedness of micro- and macro-discourses and contexts (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). It is important to note that I consider individuals to be able to change the contexts (Fairhurst, 2009) and the conditions for communicative leadership in them. Yet contexts also interact with individuals (Fairhurst, 2007). These connections between discourses and contexts were also explored using the cross-cultural idea of recontextualization of meanings (Brannen, 2004). These studies concluded that communicative leadership could be identified as an 'experienced' or 'idealized' reality dependent on the relationship of leaders and employees; more importantly, communicative leadership perceptions and constructions are the result of these actors' expectations of how they should communicatively act towards one another during daily practices. These expectations are crystalized in their experiences with each other. Therefore, the conditions for this relationship are essential to producing and changing discourses of leadership and the contexts where it is produced, enabling these actors to adapt to and fulfill one another's expectations and needs. Leader agency is guaranteed (in leadership as we know it), but non-leaders' need for agency appears to depend on what orientations to communication and leadership are anchored locally, determined by how, where, and why employees should be considered active agents and encouraged to participate (Article V).

To be effective together, both leaders and non-leaders have to believe that their collaboration works in a satisfactory manner for all. When leader orientation and commitment are not in synergy, an environment of discontentment emerges that might create discourses of communicative leadership as an ideal to be achieved, rather than the reality (Article IV). Empirically, leaders and non-leaders interacted with the contexts to shape 'optimal' communicative behaviors that were adequate to their collaboration and aiming for what they believed was effective in relation to their micro-context (Article III).

In Article III, it is suggested that communicative leaders are perceived to be discursively constructed using different descriptions in the offices of a multinational in four countries. Commitment to the global (headquarters') vision or to local employees and their situations was directly translated into these local perceptions of communicative leadership. This article also accepts the notion of culture as a negotiation of meaning to explain how organizational members contextualize what a communicative leader is on the basis of local needs, which means that these offices have a different definition of communicative leaders to the one headquarters intended.

Articles III and IV also suggest that communicative leadership is a result of different contexts interacting locally. Communicative leadership may be the answer to how the context has to be approached and/or altered to improve organizational

results because that would provide information about members' communication needs and expectations, which should be taken into consideration to be consistent with an integrated process.

Article V confirms how the local context could influence discourses of leadership by presenting two organizations with very dissimilar internal cultures and their leaders' understanding of employee engagement and participation, and their own role in it. Communicative leadership theoretically (Article I) focuses on leaders involving others in decision-making through dialogue and feedback. However, leaders' views are strikingly tied to top management involvement with leadership and communication. Communicative leadership, as shown in Article V, depends on how communication behaviors towards non-leaders are manifested. How leaders enhance non-leaders' agency is important because the 'how' impacts the work environment and the formation of cultures in different ways. Leaders can impose engagement and participation with the objective of influencing non-leaders or promoting engagement and participation, enhancing agency to foster a culture where leaders and non-leaders are reflexive parts of the organizational life.

Communicative leadership discourses were imbued in western/heroic perspectives of leadership and communication. As pointed out in the literature, micro- and macro-discourses/contexts are difficult to untangle, but what is discernable in the data used in Articles II, III, IV, and V is that a leader-centric discourse of leadership is dominant, influencing leaders and employees across organizations. To understand what discourses consist of, we have to differentiate the level of these contexts in order to then conclude they are not parallel social forms but interchangeable and that they often interplay with one another or one yields to another in relevance. The articles reveal varying levels of contexts. The social cultural context is recalled by discourses of leaders' willingness to communicate, and their vision for employee participation and engagement. The organizational context represented in discourses emphasizing immediate situations occurred within the organizational borders and with relevance to respondents' perceptions and constructions; and with a global/western discourse of leadership which still exists and appears to cross over organizations.

Purpose and contributions of communicative leadership

Even though we still need to explore and acquire deeper insights on power assumptions within communicative leadership, the theoretical framework appears to be rather straightforward, proposing communication processes as the primary element to improve relationships between leaders and employees. In addition, the communicative leadership framework proposes increasing awareness of how these actors relate to each other and the consequences of this relationship for the construction of leadership. Moreover, the analyses of communication behaviors and the processes found across organizations demonstrated in depth how leaders and

non-leaders perceive that communication improves their relationship with consequences for leadership locally.

This first study shows present communicative leadership as a contribution to leadership development and can be used, for instance, to develop training programs using these communication behaviors as a framework. The studies presented here, however, also indicate that communicative leadership is not an approach which competes with or should be seen as an alternative to other approaches or theories of leadership. The empirical studies focusing on perceptions and constructions of communicative leadership indicate that it can be developed, contextually, together with any other approach that considers leadership a relational process implying collaboration (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011) and in organizations willing to establish new values and views to leadership and communication (Article IV).

Limitations of these studies and future research

While the studies used a rich body of interview material and organizational documents to broaden understanding of these organizations' goals, visions, and values, they did not use research methods which would give access to discourse grounded in action. Ethnographic observations combined with current empirical material would have been invaluable, offering different angles for interpretation.

An analysis based on actors' actions would have major consequences for the analysis of the context (micro- and macro-structures), and might provide a clearer understanding of the level of embeddedness of leadership actors in different structures in certain contexts/situations. A supplementary method would also allow for a stronger analytic focus on power, a central issue for leadership. Analysis highlighting power relations from different perspectives would enrich the findings of this thesis.

Future research could thus involve methodologies such as observations, video recordings, and shadowing, to offer possibilities to gain further understanding of how communicative leadership training is implemented and also how the four communication behaviors (Article I) are enacted in daily interactions. These methods would also provide opportunities to acquire more knowledge about the negotiation of meanings constituting communicative leadership, making it possible to track enhancement or distribution of agency in action.

Empirically, the studies were limited to Swedish organizations. It would be possible in future research to expand this inquiry to other contexts, organizations in different businesses, and different countries. I can also see in Sweden and other countries the possibility for researchers to track the development and discourses of other actors in the society working to develop leadership and communication, such as researchers, consultants, and politicians. It would certainly be a challenge, but it would make a contribution to studies emphasizing local/global understanding and the local practice of leadership.

SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

Article I: Conceptualizing Communicative Leadership: A Framework for Analyzing and Developing Leaders' Communication Competence (Johansson, Miller, & Hamrin, 2014)

This article provides a theorization of how leaders' communication competence can be developed, providing a foundation for future research in leader communication development. Until recently, communication aspects were to a large extent overlooked and neglected in the leadership literature (Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson & Uhl-Bien, 2011). This article integrates findings from leaders' communication behavior and discourse studies, highlighting eight key principles of communicative leadership. Four communicative behaviors are explained in detail, expanding knowledge about leaders' communication competence. This conceptual paper defines a communicative leader as "one who engages employees in dialogue, actively shares and seeks feedback, practices participative decision making, and is perceived as open and involved" (p. 155). It also proposes that communication behavior is influenced by four prerequisites with regard to communication: awareness, acquaintance, attitude, and ability.

Article 2: Communicative Leadership: Fostering Co-workers' Agency in Two Organizations (Hamrin, Johansson, & Jahn)

This article provides an empirical study of the concept communicative leadership, adding theoretical insight about leadership as a relational and discursive process. It also presents three communication processes yielded by the data, which foster co-worker agency. The study analyzes leaders' and co-workers' understandings and experiences of how leadership relationships are socially constructed through daily communication and interactions that influence their work processes and agency. Specifically, it investigates how leaders and co-workers conceptualize 'communicative leadership' and perceive how communicative leadership influences work processes. The findings, based on interviews at two Swedish business organizations, one national and one multinational, revealed three interrelated communication processes that enhance co-workers' agency: facilitating autonomy (clarity and adapting information), sharing responsibility (openness and involvement in decision-making), and mutual participation (dialogue, involvement, and decision-making). The findings also suggest that organizations would benefit from making explicit their goals and expectations about communicative leadership. The concept of communicative leadership was related to broader Swedish cultural macro-discourses of democratic and equalitarian principles.

Article III: Recontextualizing Communicative Leadership: The Interplay of Discourses in a Swedish Multinational Organization (Hamrin)

This article presents different contextual situations in four different cultural set-

tings, altering the meaning of communicative leadership within a multinational organization. Analyzing the sensemaking of leaders' and employees' communication by employing a discursive lens (Fairhurst, 2007), the findings reveal that communicative leaders were recontextualized as strategists, interpreters/translators, instructors/facilitators, and sensemakers, depending on their communication behaviors and attitudes towards employees. Leaders' commitment and orientation to local or organizational (global) visions and values also played a role in the recontextualization of communicative leadership. Even though discourses of empowerment and enhanced employee agency are present in some of these offices, they are still mostly reiterating a leader-centric view. The interplay between local (local office) and global (headquarters in Sweden) discourses of leadership is necessary to form a suitable way to lead locally, helping members to work together. The data also indicate that context, and consequently macro- and micro-discourses, are blended in leaders and employees' accounts, shaping constructions of communicative leadership depending on contextual conditions.

Article IV: Communicative Leadership and Context: Exploring Constructions of the Context in Discourses of Leadership Practices (Hamrin)

The constructionist literature considers leadership to be context-sensitive. This study explores context and its significance to leadership discourses in the employees' accounts of communicative leadership, which illustrates the organization's leadership practices. In addition, the study seeks to clarify the relationship between constructions of relevant contexts for leadership discourses. The understanding of macro- and micro-contexts/structures (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) is used to explain the relation between talk and social context/structure in the way it is defined in this article. The findings are drawn from focus group interviews with 490 members in a Swedish national organization. Several types of perceptions and constructions emerged, explaining leadership practices and the highlighted contexts, giving meaning to communicative leadership. Local contextual elements are more evident, referring to discourses about leadership practices, while macro-contexts are demonstrated in participants' talk as an authoritarian leadership style (since they use a more transmissional communication view) which is related to dominant globalized discourses of leadership. These macro-discourses, implying leaders' control and power (here symbolized by discourses of authoritarian leadership), are infused in the micro- (local) context. Communicative leadership is an idealization of leadership that contests the environment while context refers to the 'real' and the 'experienced' environment. The study approaches leadership discourses and contexts as dynamic and multifaceted constructs because they are produced locally and interact with other (macro-) discourses. Furthermore, it reinforces the assumption that individuals are agents of change, controlling context through their discourses.

Article V: Communicative Leadership: Exploring Leaders' Discourse of Participation and Engagement (Hamrin)

The study takes into consideration the dichotomous discussion between heroic and post-heroic views of leadership and asks in which kind of structures (national and organizational) leaders' discourses in two Swedish national organizations are embedded. It also examines their orientation to communication and how they discursively position themselves in the process of engaging others. The definition of communicative leadership states that communicative leaders engage others in decision-making. This study suggests that how leaders behave communicatively towards employees is related to local leadership views, how top leaders position themselves in relation to these views, and how the whole organization will work with it. The organization has to have the intention of becoming communicative. In these organizations, leaders are still identifying themselves with leadership, i.e., they do not see leadership as an integrated system with participation of both kinds of actors, and the heroic view of leadership is still predominant.

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