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THE POLITICS OF SPACE: AN ARENDTIAN FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT^{*}

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The politics of space: An Arendtian framework for leadership development

ABSTRACT. Based on Hannah Arendt's distinctions between thinking, action and judgment this paper develops a framework for leadership development. Leadership and leadership development are approached from a political perspective, which implies emphasizing the collective, relational and material aspects of leadership. Leadership is defined as the collective actions in which unique subjects, who can think, act and judge for themselves, are engaged. Practices of thinking, action and judgment are seen as different dimensions of leadership development, which enables people to take part in politics. These dimensions help empower actors to lead themselves and to engage, interact, collaborate, communicate and to give space for others in collective action.

Keywords: Arendt, leadership, leadership development, thinking, action, judgment. JEL Codes: M19, Y80

Las políticas del espacio: un marco arendtiano para el desarrollo del liderazgo

RESUMEN. Este artículo expone un marco para el desarrollo del liderazgo, basado en las distinciones de Hannah Arendt entre pensamiento, acción y juicio. El liderazgo y el desarrollo del liderazgo son abordados desde una perspectiva política. Esto implica hacer énfasis en los aspectos colectivos, relacionales y materiales del liderazgo. El liderazgo es definido como las acciones colectivas en las que están comprometidos sujetos que pueden pensar, actuar y juzgar por sí mismos. Las prácticas de pensamiento, acción y juicio son vistas como diferentes dimensiones del desarrollo del liderazgo que les permiten a las personas tomar parte en la política. Estas dimensiones ayudan al empoderamiento de los actores para lidiar consigo mismos, y para comprometerse, colaborar, comunicar y dar espacio a los otros en acciones colectivas.

Palabras clave: Arendt, liderazgo, desarrollo del liderazgo, pensamiento, acción, juicio. Códigos JEL: M19, Y80

As políticas do espaço: um marco arendtiano para o desenvolvimento da liderança

RESUMO. Este artigo expõe um marco para o desenvolvimento da liderança, baseado nas distinções de Hannah Arendt entre pensamento, ação e juízo. A liderança e o desenvolvimento da liderança são abordados desde uma perspectiva política. Isto implica fazer ênfase nos aspectos coletivos, relacionais e materiais da liderança. A liderança é definida como as ações coletivas em que estão compromissados sujeitos que podem pensar, atuar e julgar por si mesmos. As práticas de pensamento, ação e juízo são vistas como diferentes dimensões do desenvolvimento da liderança que permitem às pessoas tomar parte na política. Estas dimensões ajudam ao empoderamento dos atores para lidar com si mesmos, e para se compromissar, colaborar, comunicar e dar espaço aos outros em ações coletivas.

Palavras chave: Arendt, liderança, desenvolvimento da liderança, pensamento, ação, juízo. Códigos JEL: M19, Y80

Introduction: Time and space in leadership development

This paper develops a framework for leadership development based on Hannah Arendt's distinctions between *thinking*, *action* and *judgment*. Leadership is approached from a political perspective, which emphasizes its collective, relational and material aspects. This approach has important implications for leadership development. Focus is moved away from the leader as a unique outstanding individual towards what people do together; towards collective action. Thus, in regard to time and space, the argument is that attention moves from what Ricoeur (1984) calls narrative time –the process through which chronological time becomes human– towards time as negotiated in a collective space. This notion of space challenges the conventional notion of time as occurring through narrative individual sensemaking. Instead time is seen as shaped by multiple, relational and political forces that run through organizational spaces and enact, distribute, and differentiate movements and relationships.

The paper's first part focuses on how leadership is perceived. I argue that the discourse on leadership is dominated by the perception of the leader as a *great man* (Spector, 2016). This perspective is exemplified through the work of a leadership commission in Denmark concerned with public leadership. It is argued that this focus on the great man overlooks the collective political conditions of action. This leads to the next section, where a political perspective on organizations is introduced. The term *politics of space* is used to show how organizations shape people. This part of the paper is developed through the writings of Foucault on power relations and his notion of the dispositive (Foucault, 1977, 1980, 2005). Attention is thus given to how the arrangement of space enacts people in organizations in such a way that their thinking, actions and judgments become produced by organizations instead of produced by themselves.

Leadership is defined as the opposite condition. It requires people who can think, act and judge for themselves, and take part in collective action. This perception of leadership is drawn from the writings of Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1961, 1998, 2003). Leadership is thus seen as the collective process whereby people act together. Leaders do not necessarily come from the top but can emerge from anywhere in an organization. According to Arendt, such movements become possible when people can appear before one another with their own voices, intentions and interests (Arendt, 1998, p. 198). Such movements rely on the idea that people are free to appear before one another, but also on the fact that people see themselves as answerable to one another and themselves. Freedom and action go together in Arendt's writings, and are in fact presented as the same thing



(Arendt, 1961). This implies that freedom can only be understood as something that occurs and/or is restrained by the interaction between people.

In the last part of the article, I discuss the implications for leadership development. Practices of thinking, action and judgment are seen as different dimensions of leadership development, which enable people to take part in politics. Together, thinking, action and judgment constitute a framework that addresses the different meanings of being a unique subject. Thinking, for Arendt, is concerned with the self, while action and judgment are seen as collective and political phenomena. Collective action, however, is central, which means that the other dimensions of leadership must be organized around this space and its collective conditions.

The next sections discuss what leadership is in three different steps. First, I discuss how current leadership discourses represent leadership. Second, the notion of the politics of space is introduced and discussed. As a part of this section, I construct an auto-ethnography of a working day of my own in order to illuminate how space and action are entangled, and condition and feed one another. Thirdly, I conceptualize leadership through Arendt's notions of collective action and the space of appearance. This is followed by a discussion of the three dimensions of leadership development that can be identified from Arendt's writings: thinking, action and judgment.

What is leadership? Contemporary Leadership discourse

The question of what leadership is has, according to Spector (2016), puzzled scholars of leadership since the 1840s. The answer tends to be organized around the idea of the great man. Historically, the leader was almost always depicted as a man, according to Spector. Leaders are furthermore represented as extraordinary individuals, who stand out from everybody else. Such representations of leadership are found on the book shelves of popular book retailers. *Alex Ferguson – Leading* (Ferguson & Moritz, 2016), *Winners and how they succeed* (Campbell, 2016), *Where have all the leaders gone?* (Iacocca, 2008) are contemporary examples, which produce these images of the great man; the super hero.

This image is also popular in the scholarly literature and in the politics of leadership. In Denmark, the image of the great man is embedded in thirteen statements, which have been formulated by an official leadership commission concerning the definition of "good public leadership". These statements emphasize the importance of having a focus on 1) value creation, 2) communication of vision, 3) presence and availability, 4)

collaboration and co-creation, 5) “real” leadership instead of relying on rules, 6) the importance of experimentation and risk-taking, 7) dialog and feedback across levels and boundaries, 8) personal leadership, 9) the importance of reflexivity in leadership, 10) inspiration and learning from other sectors, 11) the importance of internal leadership development through a leadership pipeline, 12) the professionalization of recruitment, and finally 13) that leaders, who cannot fulfil the leadership tasks need development, need displacement or should be fired (Ledelseskommissionen, 2017).

The establishment of the leadership commission and its recommendations are a symptom of how highly leadership is regarded. Good leadership has become the key to solving all our problems in the public sector. This focus is not new. In 2007 a similar initiative resulted in the nation-wide Master of Public Governance program (MPG). The program was a symptom of the move away from public management and administration towards public leadership and governance. Subjects like personal development, personal leadership and coaching, communication, and strategic human resource management were introduced into the curriculum. The 2018 recommendations involve even more focus on these personal aspects of being a public leader: The necessity of creating a personal leadership foundation, reflexivity, a sharpening of the leadership profile and identity, continuous leadership education as well as a stronger focus on leaders’ performance, are emphasized. There is nothing wrong with this per se. I also think leadership development is important. But there seems to be a strong perception that leadership is exercised by a person –a great man– in the recommendations from the leadership commission.

As noted before, this is consistent with the dominant leadership discourse in the scholarly literature. Leaders are, for example, often distinguished from managers. Leaders are seen as outstanding people, who lead and guide followers. They are very different from managers. The narrative of managers is that they are functionaries and good administrators. They are good at accounting and budgeting, planning, staffing and the measurement of performances (Kotter, 1990). Drucker (1974) once made a popular statement that managers *do things right*. They follow the rules, guidelines, procedures, and execute them to perfection. In contrast, *leaders do the right thing*. They lead organizations into the future. The importance of excellent managers and employees is also emphasized, but they are, however, characterized by two very different qualities: *compliance* and *followerhip*. Hill (2003, p. x) argues that leadership is about people, relations, dialogues, timing and so forth. Management is inferior to leadership and is strictly concerned with technical and economic administration.



This focus on the great man has a long history. He is the embodiment of what Foucault calls *pastoral power* (Foucault, 2000, p. 333; Bell & Taylor, 2003). This power is metaphorically embodied in the good “shepherd”, who takes care and watches over the “flock”. Leaders aim to ensure salvation. Each individual member must be prepared to sacrifice themselves for the life and salvation of the flock. Furthermore the leader cannot exercise their power without knowing the inside of peoples’ minds, without exploring their souls, without having them to reveal their innermost secrets. This great man image of leadership is off track in depicting the actual practices of leading, and therefore, it also fails in its recommendations for good leadership. The focus is all on the leader and the presumed universal characteristics and character traits that they exhibit in good leadership. This is problematic because this image misunderstands that good leadership is always particular to the temporal, spatial and material conditions of the organization.

The theme of this special issue, *The Times and Spaces of Leadership Development*, is very appropriate here. Time, space and materiality entail two conditions of leadership, which are incompatible with the great man image. All people are parts of the collective and hence plural world, which they have been born into (Arendt, 1961; 1998). Their existence and their identities rely on these collective and plural conditions, which were handed over to them. For leaders, managers and employees this world is the organization. This is a gathering place and assemblage of stakeholders, politicians, societal, material and economic conditions, employees and all the different and plural characteristics that are associated with these people and conditions. This world enacts people into being and takes them over before the world is taken over by people. This world also has to give a leadership identity to a person. What we call good leadership is thus first and foremost a historical, spatial and material product. It defies any universal and de-contextual characteristic.

The second implication follows from the first. Leadership is collective, relational and always relies on others. Arendt emphasizes this point strongly, and argues that without support from others one becomes impotent. Action is always collective (Arendt, 1998, pp. 184-185). As a consequence, good leadership is not performed by great individuals but by groups and collectives. “True” leading happens when people come together. It entails politics. Good leadership therefore has to come from the people, because people are the ones that make collective action possible. Good leadership comes about through an organization and mobilization of multiple political forces. The people who take such initiatives can come from anywhere. True leadership never entails that all others in the organization should stop thinking, acting and judging. Thus, a different conceptual-

ization of leadership and the conditions in which it takes place is needed before we can begin to think about leadership development.

What is leadership? The politics of space

Before understanding what leadership is, we need an understanding of the political conditions in which leadership has to take place. I refer to these conditions as a *politics of space*. Focus here is on how organizational spaces enact people into being. This politics is closely related to what Annemarie Mol (1999) calls ‘ontological politics’: a politics that is concerned with the ways “... in which problems are framed, bodies are shaped, and lives are pulled into one shape or another” (Mol, 2002, p. viii). This politics is concerned with how people in organizations are shaped and framed through collective interactions and engagements. The bundle of actions that make up the organization, and the bundle of people who are living it, are thus in reality an intricately coordinate, interrelated and more or less consistent or inconsistent crowd of multiple stories; *a body multiple* (Mol, 2002, p. viii).

Leadership is always contingent on these conditions. Good leadership relies on norms and traditions, material resources, other people, networks and alliances. Time, space and matter are furthermore not external conditions that leaders have to consider when they lead and when they are learning. Leaders are neither beyond time, space and matter, nor do they have any special divine position in them. Like other people, leaders are parts of collective practices. People are entangled with organizations and rely on them (Barad, 2007; Jørgensen & Strand, 2014; Strand, 2012). People embody organizations in their own specific ways according to their positions, relations and experience. This is true for the people in leadership and management positions as well as for all other people.

This perspective suggests that we cannot understand politics as being exercised from one place. Politics emerge and are exercised from a network of relationships. From a Foucauldian perspective, organizations work through performing an active body and identity politics on their members, which guides and leads them in different directions. There is not a clear center of power, however. In fact, the head is “cut off the king” (Foucault, 1980) in this understanding of power, which is instead seen as embedded and distributed among a network of relationships, institutions, spaces and technologies (Välikangas & Seeck, 2011).

In the early part of Foucauldian organizational studies, agency was discarded in the sense that people were seen as rather passive effects of discourse (e.g. Newton, 1998). In the application of the later writings of Foucault, the active agencies of people are instead recognized as important and necessary parts of organizational activities. These active agencies can take the form of *subjectification*, which is used to denote how one is objectified as a subject through the exercise of power/knowledge relations (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2009, p. 64). In my interpretation, subjectification involves the subtle reactions and responses to the ongoing interactions and engagements with people, their movements and facial expressions, artifacts, spaces, technologies, routines and systems. Subjectification shows how our actions are enacted and shaped through being part of the ongoing ritualized everyday life of organizations. Subjectification does not imply mere repetition. Subjectification denotes instead how a changing pattern of potentially many human and non-human others becomes inflicted in our lives and remakes these lives. Subjectification is thus an enactment of power relations.

Second, the active agencies of the subject can take the form of *subjectivation* (Foucault, 2005). This term denotes the practices of the work of the self on the self (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2009, p. 66). Subjectivation is furthermore distinguished in terms of whether it takes the form of an objectification of the self in a “true” discourse. These practices of subjectivation thus denote an active work of the self on the self in order to become obedient to the commands of an external authority in a way consistent with subjectification. The difference with subjectification is the active reflexive work that one performs on oneself in order to become an even better servant of power relations. Subjectivation can, however, also take another form; *a subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself* (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2009, p. 66). In this latter kind of subjectivation, one cares for the self through deep reflexive practices concerning finding one’s own truth, one’s own values and the moral codes that one wishes to live by in spite of the affective sensations, emotions and feelings that emerge through daily living and engagement in organizational space.

The term subjectivation thus comprises two very different kinds of reflexive practices. Foucault clearly endorsed the latter kind, while the first, according to him, implied active submission and the renunciation of the self (Foucault, 2005). The distinctions between subjectification and the two different kinds of subjectivation are important in organization studies. Through the notion of subjectivation, scholars have found an entry point in which the ethical forms of subjectivity can be identified and worked with as part of resistance and emancipation from power relations. This is important in relation to the

possibilities of becoming a unique political actor. The subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself is concretely manifested in practices of self-care, which resemble Arendt's notion of deep thinking (contemplation). This mode of thinking derives from the same source in both Foucault and Arendt's writing, namely Socrates. I return to this kind of thinking later in the article.

The dispositive

Instead, I now return to the notion of subjectification, which covers the ways in which one is produced as subject through the workings of power/knowledge. Foucault uses the dispositive (Foucault, 1980) in his later writings to capture the concrete work that power enacts for arranging and governing performances (Abildgaard, 2017; Raffnsøe et al., 2016). The dispositive is a complex prearrangement of action (Turner, 2014). The dispositive is a "living plan" and "arrangement" of action that works to guide actions in particular directions. It is a network of forces, which are embedded in people's movements and gestures, discourses and concepts, bodies of strategies, knowledge, techniques, measures, technologies, routines, systems, procedures, laws, guidelines and so on (Bager et al., 2016).

The work of the dispositive is thus a heterogeneous and dynamic body and identity politics that is living and breathing in every part of the organizations. These forces work as a heterogeneous and collective memory, and as a network that regulates the space of action. The dispositive is a flexible analytical tool for depicting how multiple and non-human others become implicated and work through us through our daily engagement in organizational activities, rites and rituals. We are thus being enacted by the organization from the moment we enter into and begin to move around in it. These enactments are not singular. We are enacted through meetings, engagements, spaces, the use of technologies, systems and so forth. These enactments govern what we do and what we can do.

I will illustrate the work of the dispositive to subjectify us through an example, which is a mapping of an everyday work day of my own. The focus is here on how meetings with other people, spaces and the use of artefacts enact me into being, as well as how I enact the spaces that I am part of –hence subjectification.

I arrive early in the morning at 8.00. I enter through the usual door that has just been opened for the public and will be open until 15.30 in the afternoon. I have an



access card if I need to get into the building outside of the regular opening hours. This day I do not need it. I walk down the hallway and say hello to the secretaries and my colleagues. Some are chatting and having fun. Some are formal and say good morning, and others smile and say hi. I unlock the door and enter my office to find my books and other learning materials. These are books that others have written and which I find inspirational when I construct the power point presentations and assignments for group work that I have prepared. I then walk down to the classroom. The classroom is quite traditional. White walls with the teacher's desk in the middle. On two sides there are power point projectors. The student's tables are arranged in long parallel lines. Both chairs and tables are easy to maintain and clean. The room and the tables are quite sterile. The tables are wired so that students can connect their computers with a power cord that runs under the surface of the table. This means that it is hard to move the tables. I would have loved to have a more colorful and flexible space, but the room is designed according to traditional teaching and learning discourses, according to rules made by the fire authorities, and to make it easy to maintain and be used by many different people. Authorities, traditions, and practicalities speak through the design of the teaching and learning space.

I walk into the room. I say hello to the students who are there. They nod back, and say hi and good morning. Tone is very informal in Denmark, so the students call me by my first name and not as Doctor or Professor, which I have sometimes experienced in foreign settings. I turn on the power point projector and walk to my table. The students also find their places without asking anyone. I notice how quickly students ritualize where they sit and with whom they sit. I know from experience that many students will not have read today's documents, even if they have had access to the learning materials in Moodle for some time. This is an important condition for enacting my teaching, even if it is against some of my principles. This condition means that sometimes the teaching becomes a lecture instead of a fruitful and engaged dialogue. Not all the students arrive for the teaching. Some of them are busy working and some of them prioritize differently. I like working with students. I like to talk to them and discuss the subject of the lectures. I especially like working with students when they are doing their projects. These projects are based on self-motivated and self-defined problems. The project is the space where the students can appear with their own voices, intentions and interests. It is a completely different setting from the classroom, which invites monologue. In the project we get to know the students in a very different way than in the classroom.

The teaching is connected to a course in human resource management (HRM), which is obligatory according to the study guide, and which has to be part of the exam after the courses have ended. I enjoy the HRM course because I can integrate my personal favorite topics: power, ethics and storytelling into HRM and the organizational learning discourse. The teaching starts at 8.15. Some years ago, the university decided that teaching slots were from 8.15-10.00 and so forth, at two-hour intervals. This means that teaching from 9.15-11.00, for example, costs four hours of rent for the classroom. Teaching schedules became fixed after that. They also have to be organized in good time before the teaching, because many programs have to share class and lecture rooms. Today I was lucky that the technology worked. Sometimes there have been problems with the overhead projectors. It has become more problematic to contact IT-support for help than it used to be. Originally, IT-support was part of the department and the people working there were my colleagues. Today everything has to go through a service desk with notifications of what kinds of service, how long it took and so forth. Now we buy services from IT-support. Today, however, the IT works. This is important because I use slides, movies and YouTube songs in my teaching.

I otherwise fall into my role as teacher, and the students perform their roles as students. This does not mean that the nature of the interaction is given in advance, but that it is governed by certain norms and traditions for how we interact with one another. In fact, there are many possibilities for enacting the spaces. Today I tell the students about storytelling in organizations and we use practical exercises of delving into people's stories. I talk about how strategic communication can be understood as antenarratives, and how it can be enacted through movies, artifacts, sounds and other media, rather than just through writing, and the importance of appealing to peoples' imaginations, and of inviting people into the enactment of how organizational stories are presented and discussed in relation to HRM. I also talk about how spaces lead stories, but also how we can become empowered as active agents in transforming this space. I struggle to find the "right" balance between lecturing, group work and dialogue with the students. I also struggle with finding how much I can challenge the students into engaging with these challenging concepts. Another teacher would have said and done something different. The teaching space is a space where I can personalize the organizational standards and I enjoy that.



After the teaching, I walk down hallways and enter my office. I have a few supervision meetings with other students, then I have a meeting with a colleague concerning an article we want to write. We make sure that the article is worth writing by checking that it is on the BFI list: the list of recognized and hence point-giving journals in Denmark. This is important for the institution and for living up to the organizational goal, which is an average of two BFI points per year. My colleague tells me about an interesting book she has been reading and that we might use. I add my considerations from inspiration from my recent work on Arendt and the space of appearance. I eat my lunch late so there are only a few people in the kitchen. In contrast to the secretaries the researchers and teachers do not go to the kitchen in a fixed schedule. The secretaries constitute a group in the kitchen. The researchers come and go on a much irregular basis and often sit by themselves.

After my late lunch I have a meeting with the new department head. It is important for me to give a good impression, and therefore, I have prepared my portfolio of activities, which I know is important for academic staff: research articles, PhD students that I have supervised, projects, external funding and networks and contacts. We have a good conversation. He is happy that the portfolio was organized in a way which meant he could quickly get an overview of my activities. We talk for one hour about possibilities and the future. I am very happy with the conversation. After an hour I leave because he has another appointment. I go down to my office. I am tired now, so I only respond to the emails, which are simple to answer. Some students ask for a quick reply and I have also received a quick reminder for a review that I am late with. I dare not open the email from the editor of the book that I have promised to write a chapter for. What do I use as an excuse this time for the delay? I decide go home despite my bad conscience.

I find my car in the parking lot. I turn on the ignition and drive home feeling that I did not quite succeed in what I wanted to accomplish.

This is an example of an auto-ethnography of one of my working days. It is an approach to research and writing that seeks to graph personal experience in order to understand cultural or organizational experience (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). This kind of storytelling can be used as a way of mapping personal experience, which is inflicted with cultural norms and standards as well as spaces, technologies and artifacts. In autoethnography, personal experiences become fused with organizational conditions.

Autoethnography discloses complex organizational living: how one is enacted by organizational conditions and how one may possibly enact them.

The auto-ethnography above is thus a story of how the spaces and interactions I enter into enact and condition who I am and what I can be. These people and spaces are symbolic guidelines for how I should perform my role as a Dane, professor, teacher, writer, colleague, employee, white male in the Department of Business and Management. These conditions are collective, material and discursive. Other people have had or have a say in regard to the study regulations, the design of the teaching space, technologies and support systems, the configuration of the BFI ranking system, the expectations of my performance as professor, professional conventions, available technologies and so forth. These conditions run through the engagements and relationships that I enter into. Thus, the collective historical, spatial and material conditions are subtle and cunning devices that organize my life, and lead and guide me in certain directions and towards certain actions. Any approach to leadership and to leadership development cannot escape such collective conditions, it must be born from it.

What is leadership? Action and the space of appearance

Arendt's notions of the action and space of appearances are fundamentals in the approach to leadership, and to the leadership development that I suggest. This means that leadership is about mobilizing and organizing the collective historical, spatial and material forces of organizational spaces, like the one described above. Leadership requires collective actions. According to Arendt, such actions become possible when people can appear before one another with their own voices, intentions and interests (Arendt, 1998, p. 198). Such spaces of appearance are where people can appear as unique subjects.

Arendt's notion of action thus implies for leadership that focus is redirected from the attributes of what single individuals do to what people do together—collective action. This point is emphasized again and again by Arendt. Action always takes place in between people. The doings and sayings of individuals become insignificant without support from others (Arendt, 1998, pp. 184-185). Furthermore, action is not just any saying and doing. It is for Arendt the epitome of *new beginnings*. It derives from the Greek word "archein", which means 'to begin' (Arendt, 1998, p. 177). Leadership is thus collective action that transforms the world.



We should be a little bit careful with the term ‘transformation’. What is signaled with the term “beginnings” is just as much the requirement that other people should be able to begin again as unique subjects. Leadership requires the collective action of people who can think, act and judge for themselves. They participate as beginners or as supporters of their own free will. The ethics of collective action are thus that it is performed by people who come together by a common cause, and therefore act together. Such actions are political and are thus a matter of negotiations, alliances, networks, compromises and struggles. One can be in an organization where one’s space for political action is severely restrained. Arendt calls such spaces a tyranny. It is management by fear. True leadership instead relies on power understood as a collective phenomenon. If one is referred to as “powerful” it is because they are able to generate support from people, who are “free”. Organizational spaces can be more or less inclusive or exclusive, but action and power are nonetheless always collective.

Leading is about doing things together with other people, who might be in different positions but none-the-less have access to a space where they can appear before each other. Such leadership requires freedom, because to act and to be free are the same, according to Arendt (Arendt, 1961, 2006). This notion of freedom should not be mistaken for absolute freedom. It is not freedom from the world, because we cannot escape this world, but is born into it (Butler, 2015; Todd, 2009). The differential world –the different people that inhabit this world, the forces of nature and other material circumstances– is the condition of life (Keladu, 2015; Maclachlan, 2006).

Principles of leadership development: thinking, action and judgment

Leadership development must be positioned in these conditions of being human and the answerability that this entails. Freedom and empowerment –having the ability to act– are important here. They entail unique human beings, who can think, act and judge for themselves. Leadership occurs through collective action, while leadership development in practice is often targeted towards individuals. This means that focus in leadership development must be on how people can be enabled as political actors, who have the right to participate (Townley, 1995) and have the space to make their own decisions, to choose between dilemmas, control their own life and have reasonable autonomy to manage their work tasks.

Leadership development can in principle be targeted towards any actor or group of actors in the organization. Leadership development must start from “below” –from the

collective, relational and material conditions of the spaces themselves. True leadership development is thus situated in the midst of power relations– the organizational space that enacts us into being and that we cannot escape; unless of course we choose to leave.

Autoethnography is a tool for understanding how one is constrained by power relations. Importantly it is also a tool for discovering what kinds of affordances are available in an organizational space. My autoethnography discloses a number of possibilities for acting and where I have a reasonable space of action. Extending such spaces of passion may serve as fruitful sites for leadership development. As an additional point, organizations may be spaces where one's agency is confined, but they are also spaces where agency can be multiplied. Finding, mobilizing and extending affordances in one's space are thus important for leadership development. As a final point, freedom and action is not only about one's own freedom and space action. This relies on others being free as well. We are not free if we are surrounded by enemies.

In short, the organizational space provides an infrastructure of becoming, which we need to design and possibly twist so that it serves peoples' purposes and passions instead of confining them. Concretely, this implies affording and extending the rooms for freedom, action and participation. Arendt's notions of thinking, action and judgment here form the building blocks as three interdependent and interrelated faculties, which are directed towards enabling a practice of freedom in organizations, understood as the capacity to act as unique subjects in organizations.

Thinking, for Arendt, is characterized as an inner dialogue one has with oneself; a so-called two-in-one conversation (Arendt, 2003, p. 98). She refers to this process as thinking-in-solitude to denote that such conversations either take place alone or sometimes with another self –a friend. It is a deep thinking process concerned with what one considers right or wrong. It is a meditation. The aim is described as the process by which one restrains oneself from doing particular things because having done them one would no longer be able to live with oneself. Thinking is for Arendt a precondition for becoming a unique subject because it is where one dissociates oneself and become different from the body politics of discourse, culture and society. Thinking is important for being unique and free (Arendt, 2003, p. 19), and for becoming an actor who is responsible and can judge themselves as well as others (Todd, 2009, pp. 142-143).

For Arendt thinking is important for clarifying the general principles and ethical codes of conduct that one wants to live by. Thinking is thus about abstract principles and takes



place separately from the sphere of politics and particular circumstances. Arendt discusses thinking with reference to Socrates, who was also Foucault's starting point, when he discussed the practices of caring for the self, that he found in ancient Greece. This Foucauldian ethics of freedom (Foucault, 1997) have become important in organization studies (Barratt, 2008; Ibarra-Colado et al., 2006; Painter-Morland et al., 2018; Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002). I will describe this ethics of freedom as an example of thinking.

Foucault's starting point is that knowledge and spirituality were considered two different and equally important faculties in ancient Greece. "Caring for the self" and "knowing yourself" were twinned and not separate (Foucault, 2005, pp. 2-3). This became different, for example with the Cartesian moment, where objective and impersonal knowledge took precedence (Foucault, 2005, pp. 14-18). Long before the invention of science, however, the Christian theme of self-renunciation and of the obligation towards the others – a morality of non-egoism – had changed the practices of caring for the self into a disciplinary technology of submission, as noted before (Foucault, 2005, p. 13). In the Greek practices of the self, spirituality was considered equal to knowledge. One had to take care of the self in order to govern oneself. Governing oneself was seen as a precondition for governing others. Knowledge was a toolbox, a set of methods, advices, concepts, tools, stories, and discourses, which had the status of a medicine, a friend's voice, a master's voice or a daily meditation, which one could use in times of crisis. Knowledge was not the voice of God and it was not an objective universal truth that one had to submit to.

A care of the self is thus a set of practices, which enables us to resist possible events and not be carried away by emotions. Caring for the self enables us to maintain control in times of crises and when the need is felt. We are not asked to turn ourselves into the self in order to discover its true nature, rather, it is the absorption of a truth; a personal internalization, but without giving up our values and beliefs. For that we need theoretical knowledge of the principles that govern the world and methods of appropriation. The methods of appropriation are described as deep practices of *listening*, *writing* and of *memorizing*.

These practices of caring for the self are not about confessing or examining oneself. It is about making sound decisions, finding one's own way in potentially difficult situations, making choices and finding solutions. In a difficult situation, this is accomplished by delving deep into one's values, which have been discovered, framed and nurtured through these practices of the self. It is an ethics where one establishes an *immanent* narrative continuity in one's life, where one is always *vigilant* concerning one's actions

and where one has established a two-in-one reflexive dialogue with oneself or a friend concerning one's practices (Gros, 2005, p. 530).

The practices of caring for the self that Foucault discovered in ancient Greece constitute an example of Arendt's notion of thinking. For Arendt, thinking is important for becoming a unique subject, but she also argues that thinking alone does not work in terms of making a transformation in the world. To make an impact people are compelled to engage themselves politically (Arendt, 2003, p. 105). This moves attention towards politics and action.

Action is as noted associated with appearing before others as a unique subject. It is associated with new beginnings –to take action. Actions are expressed in stories and other artful performances (Arendt, 1950). Arendt uses Machiavelli's notion of virtue, which corresponds to virtuosity, which flourishes in the practice of an art and the merit, which is embedded in executing such skills (Arendt, 1961, p. 197). She furthermore turns to the Greeks, who used comparison such as *flute-playing, dancing, singing, the practice of medicine, seafaring* and so forth whenever they wished to explain the specifics in political activity (Arendt, 1961, p. 197). These examples demonstrate the deep engagement and embeddedness of the self into the activities in which people are engaged.

This action relies on what she calls the space of appearance as noted above. This space is a collective space, which means that attention is moved from individual qualities to what people can do together. The autoethnography described above discloses this struggle between the spatial conditions for action and my own values and passions. Important questions are the identification of the spatial enablers as well as constraints for people's agencies. The autoethnography is an excellent starting point for such an exercise because it situates development right in the midst of where the action should occur. The tricky thing is that it is a collective space. The organization needs to be a space of appearance for many different people.

The space of collective action is a complex collective, relational, embodied, discursive and material space. These are the signposts of what one needs to work with as part of leadership development. I rely here on Butler's (2012, 2015) material and embodied reconceptualization of Arendt's notion of action, which means that focus is more on the relational and material conditions for action and not only on the speech act (see Jørgensen, 2017 for an elaboration).



- The space as *collective* draws attention to the fact that in order to do something the person has to act collectively with others. This requires collaboration, negotiations, alliances, networks and compromises.
- The space as *relational* draws attention to the idea that other people are important affordances for one's own possibilities of both action and meaning-making. This also draws attention to the affordances that other people provide (knowledge, qualities, comfort, safety, trust or discomfort, lack of sharing, fear and distrust for example).
- The space as *embodied* draws attention to what bodies do and express and how they move and are organized in relation to each other. Attention is drawn to facial gestures, expressions, movements and so forth. An important question is how much space there is for bodies in particular spaces. For example, bodies can know something unconsciously that cannot and should not be expressed in language. Feelings, intuitions, and emotions are just as important for leadership as rational decisions.
- The space as *discursive* draws attention to the possibilities for action that norms, conventions and standards provide. Discourse is the potential space for action, which governs what is considered legitimate or illegitimate. Space as discursive draws attention to the cultural norms for actions.
- The space as *material* draws attention to the material affordances for action. These include technologies, systems, economic resources, artifacts, architectural arrangements, time and so forth. Space as material draws attention to the things and amounts we need in order to act.

These affordances of the organizational spaces that were described in my mapping of my work day are important for my possibilities of constructing myself and what I might become. The teaching space is a *collective* space negotiated in the moment with the students but also conditioned and negotiated in advance with fire authorities, janitors, room classroom economic management and resources for teaching. It is *relational* in the sense that the students and my interactions with them depend on what kinds of resources we give each other for meaning-making and action. It is *embodied*, in the sense that we use bodily expressions to signal how we feel and think in our engagements with each other. It is *discursive* in the sense that the content and processes of teaching are

governed by particular discourses concerning what the content of the lesson should be and how it should be taught. Finally, the teaching space is *material* in that the technologies, tables, chairs, blackboards, whiteboards, books, computers, electricity plugs for the students' laptops, access to Moodle, Facebook and other electronic media and so forth are important affordances for action.

The research space can be described and analyzed using the same five dimensions. It is *collective* in depending on the resources that can be negotiated, and the networks, alliances and research communities that I am part of. It is *relational* in relying on what qualities colleagues and communities provide in terms of affordances for inspiration. Even if research practices are evaluated through written words, the expressions of *bodies and faces* in terms of appearances before others at seminars, conferences and so forth are probably much more important than one would think. For example, personal relations often rely on personal friendships and can rarely be achieved only through written or spoken words. The research *discourse* that people write themselves into and try to push, sets up norms, standards and conventions for what is legitimate knowledge and how it should be written and documented. Finally, *material arrangements*—the office space, access to libraries, to research money, time and so forth—are naturally also very important for the kinds of research that can be produced.

Leadership development needs to be directed towards such dimensions and the space they provide to be effective and meaningful. It does not make sense only to focus on the self, if it does not have any or little political relevance in the spaces of everyday life in organizations. These spaces are politically shaped and are themselves spaces of politics. There needs to be a more insistent focus on “spacing”, understood as a focus on peoples' possibilities of appearing as unique subjects.

Judgment constitutes the last part of the Arendtian framework for leadership development. While thinking is concerned with clarifying universals and action is about appearing before others and becoming political among other people, judgment is concerned with moral action. Judgment is described as the true arbiter between right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, true and untrue according to Arendt. Todd (2009, p. 145) makes the argument that judgment is about putting thinking into action. This interpretation is questionable because it becomes a matter of translating ethical standards into practice.

I argue instead that judgment has its “own life”. It is born from particular conditions. Leadership development that focuses on enabling judgment must therefore also use



different means than, for example, thinking and action. These means must take their starting point in the notion of “common sense”. Arendt argues, following Kant, that common sense is the mother of all judgment. This common sense is in turn born from participation in communities. Leadership development directed towards enabling judgment is therefore a matter of how one can organize participation, dialogue and communication among multiple voices.

Judgment is quite different from thinking, which is an instance of reason and knowledge (Arendt, 2003, p. 137). In comparison, judgment is affective, embodied and material. It involves *taste* and thus aesthetics, feelings and emotions—for example how I tell beautiful from ugly. These are instances where no fixed rules or standards are applicable. Thinking therefore falls short as grounds for moral action.

No one can define Beauty; and when I say that this particular tulip is beautiful, I don't mean, all tulips are beautiful, therefore this one is too, nor do I apply a concept of beauty valid for all objects. What Beauty, something general, is, I know because I see it and state it when confronted with it in particulars. (Arendt, 2003, p. 138)

It follows therefore that the instances in which we can clearly identify general rules and principles may also in fact be rather limited because they fail to take the nuances, particularities, and the specifics of situations into account. Thus, judgment has its own life and its own sphere and must be dealt with very differently.

In describing judgment as a matter of taste, Arendt draws on Kant. She also draws on Kant in relation to common sense. Arendt emphasizes that Kant did not refer to common sense as something that was common to all of us but instead was related to “that sense, which fits us into a community with others, makes us members of and enables us to communicate things given by our five private senses” (Arendt, 2003, p. 139). She argues that this is done with the help of the faculty of imagination—the ability to have an image of something that is not actually present (Arendt, 2003, p. 139). This is important because it is through our imagination that we can put ourselves into other peoples' places.

Arendt (2003, pp. 140-141) mentions the example of driving past a slum-dwelling. The immediate experience is the perception of the slum-dwelling as what is present. The imagination is the ability to imagine what it is like to live there. It is equally clear that imagining what it is like to live there can be nurtured by experiences of having lived in

similar places –for shorter or longer times– or by knowing somebody who is living or has been living in such places. Thus, the faculty of imagination is not independent of the quality of one’s life experiences. Common sense, such as that which has developed from participation, engagement and conversations with others in societies, communities and organizations, is important for imagination and hence for taking other people into account.

Common sense can have presented those who are absent, and makes us capable of thinking for somebody or even something else. Judgment can therefore also claim a certain general but not universal validity. This validity “will reach as far as the community of which my common sense makes me a member” (Arendt, 2003, p. 140). Arendt refers to Kant’s notion of enlarged mentality, which is what makes people capable of civilized intercourse. Thus, judgment is important. It can be translated as being able to put oneself in other peoples’ places. To imagine how other people think and feel, and to imagine what our present actions do to nature and the human and non-human others’ living conditions, is important.

Judgment matures through participation in communities and is nurtured from one’s life experience. In leadership development it is necessary to bear in mind that judgment is the ability to keep all those voices who are actually absent, present in our thinking. This absence-presence is an important principle. To become better in judgment through leadership development is to nurture this ability. This can be enabled through collective dialogical processes and communication, and communication structures. It is dangerous just to rely on one’s life experience. In problematic situations, it is important also to listen to those people who are ordinarily absent-present in our thinking. Collective dialogical processes are here the means through which one in reality becomes better at integrating multiple voices into ones decision-making processes. Our daily thinking and actions are otherwise shaped by work constellations, tasks, collaborative patterns, meetings and collaboration with particular people. In this way we tend to privilege and include some voices, while others are excluded.

Conclusions

Organization enables life and identities. These life forms and identities may be more or less constrained but they can also allow for multiple voices. Management and organization scholars and scholars of leadership and leadership development have often produced a great man image for giving advice on running organizations, solving prob-

lems and for ensuring salvation. They have never dared to set people free. This is what they have to do. The paper has identified three leadership development spaces aimed at enabling people to become political actors by focusing on three different faculties of what it means to be unique: thinking, action and judgment. These are separate faculties, which guide leadership development activities in particular directions. They are all important and necessary for collective action. None of them can stand alone. In the end, however, leadership is a collective processes, which is enabled by organizational spaces. Leadership development must therefore take its starting point in these spaces.

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