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DENMARK

## GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT REVISITED

### EXPLORING 3 ROLES – DISCOVERING 7 DUALITIES

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*Publication date:*  
2016

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Nielsen, R. K., & Nielsen, J. B. (2016). *GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT REVISITED: EXPLORING 3 ROLES – DISCOVERING 7 DUALITIES*. Dansk industri.  
<http://publikationer.di.dk/dikataloger/627/>

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# GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT REVISITED:

## EXPLORING 3 ROLES – DISCOVERING 7 DUALITIES

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with

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JANUARY 2016

Published by Confederation of Danish Industry, Industriens Fond, CBS  
Printet by Kailow Graphic A/S  
Edited by Rikke Kristine Nielsen  
978-87-7144-072-0  
200.03.16

## FOREWORD

Globalization is much more than just a buzzword – it is a megatrend impacting the lives of individuals and nations as well as businesses. It holds huge potential for growth and development as well as pitfalls. Successful Danish companies are increasingly active on the global scene and historical export figures paint a clear picture of the importance of international engagement and trade for the Danish economy as a whole. Since 2000 the value of the Danish export has increased about 30 percent.

This development is the result of a myriad of decisions and activities conducted by leaders in Danish companies both domestically and abroad; i.e., the ability to engage and lead in a global world is a prerequisite for many Danish companies in order to survive and progress. Thus, the competencies and skills of Danish leaders are a key factor to consider when looking for opportunities to improve competitiveness and value creation of Danish companies and eventually the national economy.

Acknowledging the importance and challenges of leadership performance in a global context, the project "Global Leadership Competencies for the Future" was launched 2011 with the overall purpose of strengthening the leadership competencies and thus business performance of Danish companies. The project was formed as a collaboration between the Confederation of Danish Industry and Copenhagen Business School and sponsored by The Danish Industry Foundation (Industriens Fond). Global Leadership Academy; a network consisting of practitioners and academics with a specific interest and experiences within global leadership was formed during the early days of the project and the academy members have met on a regular basis to identify and conduct relevant project activities. A central characteristic of all project activities is that they have been focusing on specific experiences and challenges facing Danish companies and managers working on the global scene; i.e., company representatives have been deeply involved in establishing the knowledge generated throughout the project.

This report builds on previous project findings zooming in on two themes, which have been running as a red thread through many of the earlier activities; *"What do global leaders actually do and how do they acquire the competencies and skills necessary to be successful?"* 37 internationally experienced Danish leaders have reflected on these important questions and the author of the report, who is a close associate to the Global Leadership Academy, has analysed these reflections and uncovered patterns and characteristics which cast new light on how Danish leaders work in a global context, and how they developed their professional competencies.

The experiences and views of Danish HR-professionals involved in global leadership development have also been included in this study and the report reveals interesting findings of the contrast between the perspectives of HR-professionals versus leaders practicing global leadership. Based on these different views new ideas about how to support development of global leadership competencies have emerged and as a result, this report offers an important contribution to the dialogue about how to strengthen and realize the potential of Danish companies in the global market.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Practicing leadership in multinational corporations competing in global markets is often portrayed as calling for a particular type of leadership competences and behaviours, typically called "Global leadership" framed in opposition to and distinct from local, general management. There is, however, little agreement on what global leadership actually is as well as (inconclusive or at least) highly diverse evidence concerning who the global leaders are and little knowledge of what global leaders do in practice (that is their behaviours). Against this backdrop this study explores what global leaders see as the key activities and behaviours they need to perform when holding a global job role, and how to acquire and sustain the necessary competences.

**In effect, this study seeks to uncover how the people practicing global leadership in different types of global job roles perceive of their own leadership practice and the behaviours performed as part of this practice, as well as their view on the learning needs and nature of their learning experiences.**

This is explored from two different vantage points:

- **A managerial view:**  
Global managers' perceptions of global leadership activities, behaviours, and vehicles for competency development (interviews with 37 Danish global managers representing 25 Danish multinational corporations (MNCs))
- **A HR-professional/global leadership training specialist view:**  
A supplementary view on global leadership per se and reflections on leadership development implications of global managers' point of view as seen from a global HR-professional and training specialist point of view (20 global HR professionals and global training specialists representing 13 MNCs and 5 consultancy companies)

### **A DIFFERENTIATION PERSPECTIVE ON GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**

This study posits that the term "global leadership" is a quite imprecise notion which for all practical purposes needs to be differentiated based on the diversity of actual behavioural requirements of different types of global job roles performed under different circumstances. Therefore, this study qualitatively revisits global leadership in terms of three different categories of global leadership practice:

1. Global managers placed *in Denmark* with a *global role*
2. Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *local role*
3. Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *global role*

**Groups of global leaders included in the study**

Outside Denmark	Danish manager placed outside Denmark with local jobrole (expat or permanently)	Danish manager placed outside Denmark with global job role (expat or permanently)
<b>Primary geographical location of workplace</b>		
In Denmark	Danish manager placed in Denmark with local job role	Danish manager placed in Denmark with global job role
	Local	Global
	<b>Primary scope of job role</b>	

From the analysis, the following key characteristics emerged:

**1: The global matrix navigator and knowledge disseminator**

Key characteristics of *global managers placed in Denmark with a global role* include: Placed in Danish headquarter (HQ) (or subsidiary), global-local mixing ratio of this group is 80 percent global-20 percent local, development and implementation of group-wide concepts, strategy implementation, knowledge transfer, demonstrating local business case and value proposition of group perspective to subsidiaries/internal customers, solicit feedback from subsidiaries, upwards representation of subsidiaries, on-boarding of inpatriates, reintegration of expats, outsourcing/flagging out of tasks, virtual and distance management, "management through KPI", dotted-line and matrix relationships, policing and motivating for group compliance and "one-big-group"-feeling.

**2: The expat classic local champion and (first) "man on the ground"**

Key characteristics of *global managers placed outside Denmark with a local role* include: Typically single subsidiary manager; global-local mixing ratio of 20 percent global-80 percent local; traditional expatriate identity, focus on language skills, acculturative stress and loneliness, establishment of new operations, balancing entrepreneurial spirit with corporate compliance, local recruitment (of successors), on-boarding of other expats, liaison with corporate, information hub between corporate HQ-subsidiary, and local HQ-local branches, strategy execution, transfer of corporate values and core competences, practical implementation of CSR/code of conduct.

### **3: The "glocal" in-betweeners**

Key characteristics of *global managers placed outside Denmark with a global role* include: Group-wide/corporate responsibility and/or regional responsibility of considerable geographic breadth, global-local mixing ratio of this group is 60 percent global-40 percent local. "Little corporate" local figure head, mediation between HQ and subsidiaries, pragmatist and realist "art of the possible"-mindset, boundary-spanning, bridge building, corporate citizens without being "HQ's (wo-)man", typically large span of control and responsibility for huge geographies, prone to performing a variety of different managerial roles simultaneously, "management by orbit"/non-stop travelling, "leap of faith" to trust local management necessary, due diligence and post-merger management processes, worries of repatriation and deterioration of competences.

### **LEARNING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP BY DOING**

When looking at how global managers come to learn how to handle the activities associated with a global leadership role, global managers point to previous global jobs as their primary source of competence and when asked where that experience typically comes from the answer is; learning by doing. Trust and faith from the closest managers in their ability to take on a global role paired with traditional Danish freedom with responsibility, room for educational failing (within limits) and a certain amount of sense of adventure is global managers' answer to how they have learned. Learning from role models internally in the company and from participation in networks – both inside and outside the employing corporation, including social media – are pointed out as relevant sources of global competence development. It is characteristic that many global managers have not received any leadership training, generally or aimed specifically at global working. To the extent that global managers in this study have participated in global corporate training programs, these programs do not seem to have made an impression or had an impact on global leadership behaviours as far as managers' report.

### **GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN CONTEXT: INTERNAL CONTINGENCIES**

Research on global leadership calls for further exploration of the degree to which global leadership practice is influenced by contextual internal and external factors in general. In addition to revisiting global leadership differentiated into three different types of global role, this study also offers insights into the nature of internal contextual factors that Danish managers, performing a global leadership role either in- or outside of Denmark employed in Danish MNCs, perceive of as important. Emerging inductively from interviews, global managers find that the practical performance of their leadership role is impacted significantly by internal contingencies, contextual factors, presented as seven dualities:



**1. Development path: Growth vs. decline/recession scenario**

E.g., is the company and/or specific market in a situation of growth and ample resources or is the situation characterized by closures, cutbacks and rationalization?

**2. Internationalization mode: Acquisitive vs. organic growth**

E.g., is the company and/or specific market growing organically by establishing foreign daughter companies/subsidiaries, growing acquisitively by mergers and acquisitions – or a mix, possibly including joint ventures?

**3. Degree of core competence transferability: Localization vs. standardization**

E.g., to what degree is it profitable to transfer home country core competences relatively unaltered to foreign operations generally or with regard to a specific market or function (standardization)? To what degree is it necessary with a high degree of customization to cater to local specificities (localization)?

**4. Internationalization rationale: By force vs. by choice**

E.g., is the company generally or specifically with regard to a particular market proactively engaged in internationalizing – or rather reactively following suit due to customer demands for global presence or forced by low or negative growth rates in domestic markets?

**5. Global maturity: Established vs. entrepreneurial**

E.g., is the company globally mature and experienced or relatively new to doing business globally? Is the global manager assigned to establish a new venture or take over a "going concern"?

**6. Top management mindset: Ethnocentric vs. global governance style**

E.g., is the top management internationally experienced, perhaps with an expatriate background, understanding the nature of global leadership? Alternatively, are they more ethnocentrically or domestically minded and find it difficult to understand the work of global leaders and may have unrealistic expectations?

**7. Company/market size: Small vs. large(r)**

E.g., is the company so big and influential in foreign markets that it is likely to be a deal-maker rather than deal-taker? In addition, what level of corporate support is offered to global managers?

Given the qualitative nature of the research design, the reported perceptions are tied to the leadership context of the individual manager. These contingencies (and potentially other and additional external contingencies) constitute further differentiation around a common base of global leadership in that the different groups of global leadership practice is diversified by the context in which a global leadership role is performed.

## **REVISITING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

These contextual factors influence an already differentiated picture of three different categories of global leadership, making the picture of global leadership behaviours, activities and development needs highly individualized and contextual. This in turn begs the questions if it makes sense to work with generalized corporate global leadership development programs as vehicles for actual training for holding a global role. In order to support the everyday practice of global managers, a more individualized approach of mentoring, coaching and assisted networking "on the go" seems timely.

Indeed, realizing that overall corporate training programs are well-suited for socialization to corporate values (which global leaders participating in this project tend to take little guidance from with regard to their leadership practice) but not suited for customized global leadership learning, may pave the way for attention to flexible, individualized and just-in-time development arrangements of assisted reflection and learning for global leaders.

In sum, this study not only revisits global leadership practice from a managerial perspective but also revisits and calls for a revision of the traditional HR-approach to global leadership development.

# CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>10</b>
1.1 Research interest and research question .....	11
1.2 Global leadership – so f***ing special?! .....	12
1.3 Global leadership – special, but how? .....	13
1.4 Global leadership – a special branch, but too generic .....	14
1.5 Global leadership role diversity: Customization around a common base .....	15
<b>2. Research design and data sources</b> .....	<b>18</b>
2.1 Empirical basis: Data sources and collection .....	20
2.2 Participant overview – global managers .....	21
2.3 HR-professionals/global development specialists .....	23
2.4 Focus areas & limitations .....	24
<b>3. Global leadership practice: Activities and behaviours</b> .....	<b>26</b>
3.1 category 1: The global matrix navigator and knowledge disseminator .....	26
3.2 category 2: The expat classic local champion and (first) man on the ground ...	28
3.3 category 3: The "glocal" in-betweeners .....	29
3.4 Global role practitioners: Intergroup communalities and overlaps .....	31
3.5 Global leadership roles in context: 7 dualities .....	32
3.6 Seven dualities ... and beyond .....	41
<b>4. Global leadership learning (by doing)</b> .....	<b>42</b>
4.1 Dotted-line more difficult than firm-line global leadership .....	43
4.2 Country-of-origin: Liability or advantage? .....	44
4.3 Starting with the beginning .....	48
4.4 Change of the (old) guard is coming .....	50
4.5 Generation next? .....	52
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>53</b>
5.1 A managerial view on global leadership practice .....	53
5.2 A global HR/training specialist view on global leadership practice .....	58
5.3 Hints at organizing principles for future competence development efforts .....	58

<b>6. Discussion &amp; perspectives</b> .....	<b>60</b>
6.1 Global leadership development – “one size fits all” vs. differentiation. ....	60
6.2 Lack of global training – labelling, content, and lack of room for reflection. ....	61
6.3 Customization around a global leadership base: Individualization. ....	62
6.4 Cultural (self-)awareness – culture and beyond .....	63
6.5 Matrix management. ....	64
6.6 Management vs. leadership. ....	65
6.7 Dualities and leadership training. ....	65
<b>List of references and supplementary readings</b> .....	<b>70</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Global Leadership Academy study</b> .....	<b>72</b>
<b>Appendix 2: About the authors</b> .....	<b>76</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Internationalizing and globalizing corporations experience the liability of foreignness when moving into new markets and in effect suffer a globalization penalty vis-à-vis local competition in different markets. At the same time, they are pushed to consider the potential non-transferability of domestic competitive advantages and business models when moving into new territory. Moreover, they may have to make adjustments to cater to different customer preferences and other local specificities in a variety of markets simultaneously.

International and global collaboration is more complex than local collaboration and consequently, corporations need to be better at collaborating in order to receive the same effect compared to domestic operations alone. This is due to the fact that culturally and strategically employees and managers at all hierarchical levels understand each other less while language barriers may at the same time place a strain on communication and collaboration. Transaction costs rise as corporations move from high-context collaboration, with low psychic and physical distance in a domestic setting or between relatively similar groupings where many things are shared and taken for granted and thus need not be explicated, to a low-context communication setting where little or no common ground can be taken for granted (Nielsen, 2014).

Practicing leadership under such circumstances is often portrayed as calling for a particular type of leadership competences and behaviours, typically called global leadership framed in opposition to and as being distinct from local, general management.

In a 2010 Danish Confederation of Industry study, member companies testified that handling global cooperation and ensuing increased complexity was one of their main challenges (Confederation of Danish Industry, 2010). In a similar vein, a 2013 Danish Association of Managers and Executives survey on the particular challenges experienced by members working as managers/executives with employees in more than one country and managers/executives working abroad, pointed to foreign work cultures, legal framework, leadership style, communication (incl. command of foreign languages) and distance management as factors deemed very challenging or somewhat challenging by respondents (Laursen & Jensen, 2013, p. 5).

Global leadership competences are central for pursuing global business opportunities and a scarce resource in high demand and Danish-based internationally operating corporations offer a variety of leadership development training to their leaders to equip them to work in a globalized setting. There is, however, little agreement on what global leadership actually requires: the evidence is inconclusive or a least highly diverse with regard to who the global leaders are and there is little research into what global leaders do in practice, that is

research into their behaviours. And so, we are dealing with a group of talent in high demand, supposedly in possession of show-stopper competences for global competitiveness and business performance, that a considerable amount of resources are spent on developing, of which we in reality know relatively little.

## 1.1 RESEARCH INTEREST AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This study takes as its point of departure the suppositions that:

- The term global leadership is a quite imprecise notion, which for all practical purposes needs to be differentiated based on the diversity of actual behavioural requirements of different types of global job roles performed under different circumstances.
- Consequently there is a potential mismatch between the learning needs of globally working leaders and the way in which corporations attempt to facilitate such learning through different leadership training activities.

In effect, this study seeks to uncover how the people practicing global leadership in different types of global job roles perceive of their own leadership practice and the behaviours performed as part of this practice as well as their view on the learning needs and nature of their learning experiences. The central research question guiding this exploration is:

**Based on their own practice of global working and leading, what do global leaders see as the key activities and behaviours they need to perform in a global job role? What is their view of the means through which they acquire and sustain the necessary competences?**

The objective of exploring this question is:

1. to offer valuable insight for designers of global leadership training programs
2. to assist in recruitment and talent management efforts
3. to inform performance assessment
4. to facilitate strategy implementation with regard to global leadership
5. to inspire managers interested in preparing for a global career or in improving in their current global role.

### 1.1.1 Structure of the report

Given the conceptual confusion and diversity of global leadership mentioned above, the exploration takes its point of departure in a clarification of the term global leadership in the remainder of the present Chapter 1, leading to a differentiation of global leadership as performed in three different types of practice and contexts. Based on these three different settings of performing and practicing a global job role, this study investigates the nature of the challenges experienced in practice by these groups of managers, as well as the leadership behaviours and competences needed to address challenges and opportunities, and

managers' view on their learning needs. This is described in more detail in the following Chapter 2, where the concrete research design as well as sources of data collection are presented as a backdrop for the analysis of global leadership practice and learning needs. Following in Chapters 3 and 4 is the analysis of the global leadership behaviours associated with the three groups of managers. Chapter 3 reports on job role requirements and associated behaviours as seen by the global managers participating in the study. Chapter 4 goes on to further customize the three different global leadership roles in presenting a number of contextual factors internally in the corporations managers work for that respondents report as significantly impacting the actual practice of performing one of the three leadership roles. Chapter 5 sums up conclusions of the global leadership role requirements, behaviours and learning needs. In the last Chapter 6, the managerial perspective central to the report gives way to the voice of HR-professionals and global leadership specialists reflecting on the practical implications of the results of the study for Danish multinational corporations' development of global leadership competence and capability.

## 1.2 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP – SO F\*\*\*ING SPECIAL?!

So, global leadership is challenging – but what is it really? Is it leadership simply exercised in a different context or is it a different kind of leadership involving a new set of skills? It has been a central – if not *the* central – area of exploration of the work conducted by the Global Leadership Academy to investigate if and how global leadership is different from "domestic" leadership ([globalleadership-academy.dk](http://globalleadership-academy.dk)). From a research point of view it is actually not an established fact that global leadership is distinct from domestic leadership.

Neither researchers nor the participating global managers of this study are in agreement on whether or not global leadership is in fact something special and different from local leadership. Most respondents of this study err on the side of "*Well, it is in many ways the same, but ...*" followed by the sharing of their insights on a host of particular issues and problems. Instead of further hair-splitting in a conceptual boundary-drawing conflict of whether global leadership is simply general leadership 2.0 in a globalized world or in fact so different that it merits being a separate concept, this study sides with the general conception of the respondents of this study (and the experienced practitioner challenges reported in the previous paragraph) and takes as its point of departure that global leadership is a particular branch of leadership.

However, this does not mean that the term "global" in global leadership negates or do away with general leadership, as we know it. Scandinavian management/leadership researcher Johnsen underlines that generally the individual leader's leadership behaviour can be seen as a combination of goal-setting behaviour, problem-solving behaviour and language-creating/communicative behaviour (Johnsen, 1978). Globality does not alter the fact that these tasks are part and parcel of the leader's job description. The need for situational leadership, lean leadership, performance management, leadership of teams etc. still exists. But globality can be regarded as a special context that influences, for example, how a

manager practices language-creating/communicative behaviour, lead upward or lead teams (Valentiner, 2011). Consequently, what characterizes global leadership is the fact that the leadership role must be performed in a specific environment and under special conditions (Nielsen, 2014). This study proceeds with taking the side of the research that informs us that global leadership is *"a process of influencing the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours of a global community to work together synergistically toward a common vision and common goals."* (Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland, 2006, p. 204).

In effect, global leaders are *"individuals who effect significant positive change in organisations by building communities through the development of trust and the arrangement of organisational structures and processes in a context involving multiple cross-boundary stakeholders, multiple sources of external cross-boundary authority, and multiple cultures under conditions of temporal, geographical and cultural complexity"*. (Mendenhall, 2013, p. 2).

### 1.3 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP – SPECIAL, BUT HOW?

So, global leaders work with "global communities" and in a context of a plethora of cross-boundary stakeholders and authorities, multiple cultures and complexity in terms of cultural, geographical and time zone complexity with a view to business performance. Several aspects of this framing requires our attention:

First and foremost, the term "global" in global leadership goes beyond leadership taking place at foreign (i.e. non-domestic) destinations: *"The context of leading globally is complex and fraught with disorienting challenges. The term "global" encompasses more than simple geographic reach in terms of business operations. It also includes the notion of cultural reach in terms of people and intellectual reach in the development of a global mindset."* (Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland, p. 197).

Secondly, in addition to geographic reach the need for intercultural competence is a characteristic of global leadership as is having a global mindset. Being globally minded is not only a question of being culturally adept. Pucik's (2006) introduces a dual perspective of global mindset as consisting of a cultural and a strategic dimension. The cultural dimension focuses on psychological (individual) sensitivity of working in a diverse and ambiguous environment, i.e. *"... a set of attributes and skills that contribute to effective leadership in a global corporation"* (p. 86) such as personal traits, including tolerance of uncertainty, the ability to accept and work with cultural diversity, a cosmopolitan outlook and ability to handle a high degree of cognitive complexity. The strategic perspective focuses on the global managers' appreciation of the strategic challenges facing the company, defined by Murtha, Lenway, & Bagozzi (1998) as *"... a set of attitudes that predispose individuals to balance competing business, country, and functional priorities which emerge in international management processes, rather than to advocate any of these dimensions at the expense of the others"* (p. 87).



In effect, *"a manager with a global mindset understands the need for global integration and local responsiveness and works to optimize this duality. The global mindset includes an appreciation for diversity as well as homogeneity and openness to learning from everywhere."* (Pucik, 2006, p. 88). So being globally minded goes beyond being a proponent of standardization and corporate-wide integration; it also contains an appreciation for being local and striking the right "glocal" balance depending on the circumstances.

Thirdly, the term "global" gives the impression of something one stumbles across, when one travels abroad. That is, however, far from always the case. The boundaries that determine where "abroad" and "global" begins, may run right through the sales department and be crossed the moment the company receives an email from a Polish supplier. Thus, the international dimension moves directly onto home territory, while the domestic aspect moves abroad. In relation to locality of the global managers, leadership researcher Vladimir Pucik points out that *"some global managers may be expatriates; many, if not most, have been expatriates at some point in their career, but probably only few expatriates are global managers."* (Pucik, 1998, p. 41). Pucik continues on location: *"At the same time, local managers in lead countries may not be expatriates, but they will need a global mindset."* (Pucik, 2006, p. 88). This means that managers working in a global function in HQ may be working more global roles than for instance an expatriated country manager, primarily being responsible for local operations only occasionally being drawn into boundary-crossing activity; i.e., global leaders are not only expatriate leaders working in a foreign country.

#### **1.4 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP – A SPECIAL BRANCH, BUT TOO GENERIC**

So, global leadership is special and characterized by geographic reach, (higher degree of) complexity and a need for intercultural competence and a global mindset, enabling the global leader to strike a prudent balance between local and global. At the same time it is also a central tenet that global leadership is a quite imprecise description for all purposes, both theoretical and practical: *"The caveat remains, however, that efforts to understand development will be hamstrung by the lack of consensus on the definition and parameters of global leadership and global mindset."* (Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland, p. 219).

Is global leadership special in the same way for all global managers? For example, there are numerous ways in which leadership may be impacted by complexity and geographic reach. E.g., a regional manager, covering a region such as Asia-Pacific-Americas, deals with a different situation than does a HQ global strategy execution specialists for whom strategy implementation through dotted-line matrix relationships is as significant a part of the job as is the leadership of firm-line directed reports in his/her virtual team. Do they share the same "global leader" job profile? The same training need? The same performance goals? Intercultural competence may be generally needed but does a Danish expat, working as country manager of a production site in Laos, need it in the same way as a corporate supply chain manager in charge of a global, group-wide process implemented through a dispersed team of local supply chain managers

in 15 countries? Their job roles both fit the description of being "global leaders" practicing global leadership, yet their leadership practice is quite different.

In a similar vein, one might adhere to the point of view that global mindset is about striking a balance between local and global with a view to the greater good of the entire corporation. Only, what does that actually imply for the individual global management job – finding the "glocal" optimum may entail a different mix of local and global in different leadership roles under different circumstances. For instance, how global should our Laos site manager be in comparison to how local our corporate supply chain manager should be when defining KPIs? In addition, what do potential differences of global mindset needs then mean when recruiting leaders for different types of global leadership jobs? For strategy formulation? For leadership training?

Further, the type of multi-stakeholder and -authority challenges reported in research definitions of global leadership (c.f. p. 13) may play out very differently for a regional manager in the EMEA, tied to both local country managers in the countries of the region as well as Danish HQ, and for the local country manager of United Arab Emirates (UAE) dealing not only with UAE country head office direct reports but also local branches spread all over the UAE mixed with local distributors and agents in the emirates.

As should be clear from these real-life examples drawn from the global managers interviewed for this study, global leadership might be special and different from domestic leadership, but as a term it only makes sense at a very general, aggregate level. When you close in on the particularities of global leadership and try to draw conclusions regarding the actual practice of global managers and the jobs they do and the role they perform, the term loses much of its explanatory force and usability.

### **1.5 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ROLE DIVERSITY: CUSTOMIZATION AROUND A COMMON BASE**

Unsurprisingly, both members of the Global Leadership Academy as well as researchers (e.g. Osland, Bird, Mendenhall & Osland) call for a more differentiated approach to global leadership: "... *the diversity of roles that fall under the broad category of global leadership argues for substantial customization around that common base.*" (Ghemawat, 2012). This study seeks to propose and explore such a customization around a common base of global leadership by revisiting and investigating global leadership by exploring the practices of three different types of global leadership practitioners performing and working globally in Danish multinational corporations in or outside Denmark. Against the backdrop of the general conceptualizations of global leadership presented previously, a global manager/leader is a person who performs a role where the everyday practice of managing and leading regularly or constantly involves dealing with colleagues and co-workers placed in other geographical locations and/or who have a different nationality and where job role requirements are global.

The study’s data collection target groups of managers with global job roles can be illustrated in the matrix below, where dark blue quadrants represent groups that are included in the study:

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Groups of (global) leaders**

<b>Primary geographical location of workplace</b>  Outside Denmark	Danish manager placed outside Denmark with local jobrole (expat or permanently)	Danish manager placed outside Denmark with global job role (expat or permanently)
	Danish manager placed in Denmark with local job role	Danish manager placed in Denmark with global job role
In Denmark	Local	Global

**Primary scope of job role**

Importantly, the groups of global managers are categorized based on the primary scope of job role as well as primary geographical location. Being true to the description of balancing global and local as a central tenet of global leadership, the study also distinguishes between primary orientations (mix of local and global) in their management practice. This is done to emphasize that a global job role also contains elements of local management and vice versa. In the same way, conducting a global role outside Denmark placed in e.g. Singapore may require the person to spend a considerable amount of time on-the-fly including visits to HQ in Denmark.

Respondents in the group of leaders conducting a global role from a position in Denmark (bottom right hand quadrant) often have responsibility for a global business process involving virtual team leadership, group-wide corporate program implementation or project management (e.g. strategy execution, out- or insourcing). Their role is global in the sense of all-encompassing, all-inclusive management as their reach and tasks have to do with the entire corporation both domestically and internationally/globally. Typical job titles could be "Group IT Hosting manager", "Regional Sales Manager", Technical Director, "Vice President" and "Director Global Key Accounts".

Typically a local role conducted outside Denmark (upper left hand quadrant) consists of subsidiary leadership in a foreign market for an open-ended period of time or for a limited period of time such as for instance is the case of Danish HQ-leaders sent out to establish and lead new subsidiaries with the intent of developing/identifying locally hired leaders after the initial start-up phase. Local in this sense refers to the fact that their managerial role predominantly involves

interaction with the local, foreign environment in for instance Mexico. Also, shared leadership in foreign joint ventures is part of this group.

A global role conducted outside Denmark (upper right hand quadrant) could be leader with regional responsibility, e.g. Asia-Pacific, but could also be leader of centres of excellence, for instance for an IT-application used throughout the organization or other back office functions, shared service centres or global functions (e.g. offshoring of R&D). This leadership role is predominantly global as it deals with a large number of locations and business and heavy liaison with corporate HQ in Denmark.

Danish managers placed in Denmark performing a local job role are not included in the study (bottom left hand quadrant).

The analysis of the central research question takes its point of departure in these three different groups of global managers performing in different types of global job role and is presented in Chapter 3. However, first the following chapter introduces the concrete research design and sources of data collection which forms the backbone of the analysis.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA SOURCES

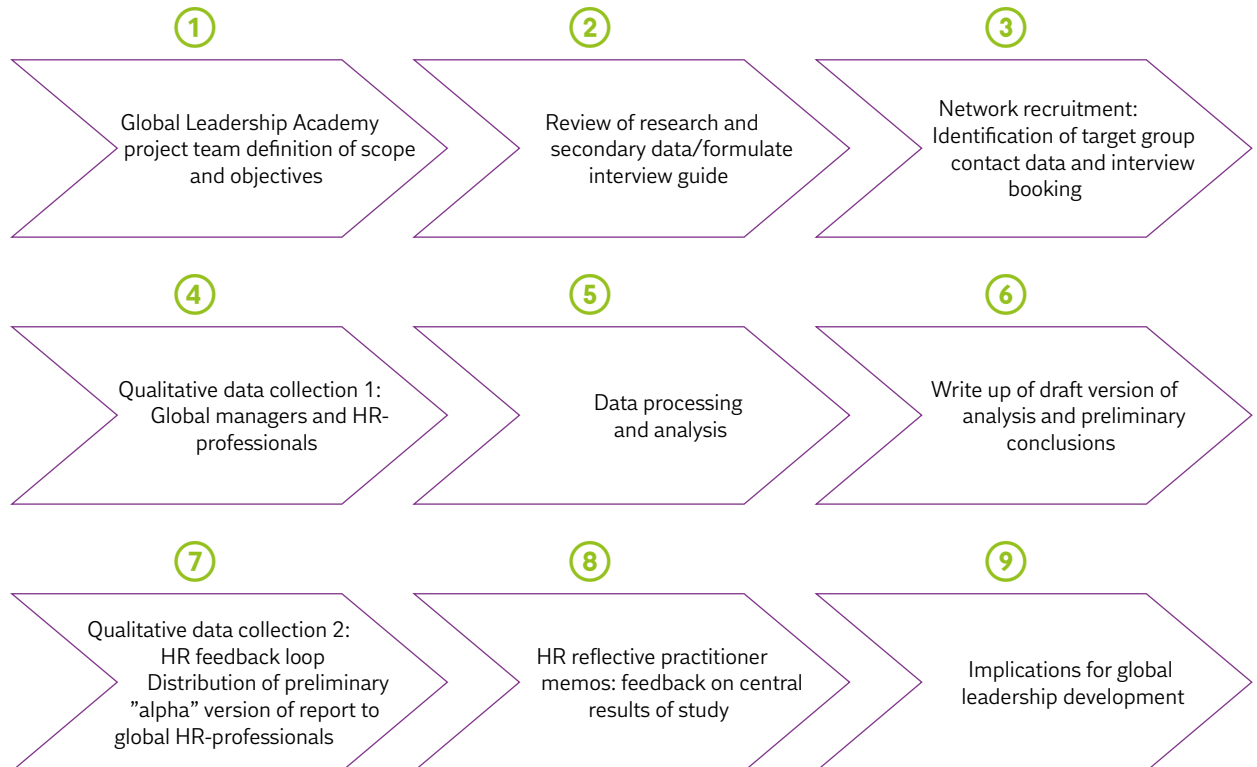
The central research question of this study deals with the exploration of global managers' perception of key activities and behaviours needed to perform in a global leadership role (carried out in or outside Denmark, combining locally oriented task and globally oriented task in different mixing ratios) as well as their viewpoints of the competences needed to engage in such behaviours and activities and how these can be acquired.

The research design aims at exploring the central research question from two different vantage points:

- **A managerial view:**  
Global managers' perceptions of global leadership activities, behaviours and vehicles for competency development.
- **A HR-professional/global leadership training specialist view:**  
A supplementary view on global leadership per se and reflections on leadership development implications of global managers' point of view as seen from a global HR-professionals and training specialist point of departure.

The capture of these two points of view on global leadership has progressed as illustrated in the below figure:

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Research design phases**



The study has used qualitative data collection techniques of interviews (global managers and HR-professionals/training specialists) and written feedback memos (authored by global HR-professionals). Interviews have been conducted in vivo, over the phone or Skype/equivalent technology and have been recorded on tape.

Both interviews and written memos have been subject to the following processing:

1. Separate, individual analysis of both the primary author and research assistant in turn forming the basis of ...
2. ... dialogues on the content and meaning of collected data in the research team, laying the ground for the analysis, the central tenets of which have also been the subject of...
3. ... discussions in the Global Leadership Academy team at three different points in time.

## 2.1 EMPIRICAL BASIS: DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION

In the spirit of the Global Leadership Academy dedicated to establishing network between practitioners of global leadership as well as between researchers and practitioners of global management, network recruitment has been central to the data collection process. A considerable amount of time and effort has been devoted to the identification and recruitment of participants for interviews.

In addition to activating and engaging practitioners directly in the production of knowledge, a central point has also been to get access to a more diverse group of respondents than typical studies on global leadership avail themselves of. Often, research on global management is based on classes of international MBA-students placed in foreign countries participating in e-surveys in effect equating "global manager" with "manager working outside HQ/home country." Based on the arguments in Chapter 1, such an approach effectively leaves out global leaders working globally in their home country as well as fails to recognize the potential differences in the local-global mixing ratio of performing a global leadership role.

Moreover, managers working globally in companies that in international comparison are small, such as is the case with many Danish multinational corporations, but nevertheless characterized by global leadership task requirements, are not included in most studies – perhaps also because relevant respondents self-deselect from participating? For example, global leaders included in this study seem to have a somewhat troubled view on the notion of global leadership as a label of their own leadership practice, although their job role may fit the textbook description perfectly. This is due to the fact that they see global leadership as being performed in very large corporations with a vast geographic spread. When explained by the authors that global leadership in the context of this study focuses on the job role performed, the three groups of managers make sense for global managers. It is believed that the network recruitment approach used in this study goes a long way towards including groups of global leadership practitioners having previously been excluded from and silenced in extant research.

The recruitment for interviews of global managers has been confined to Danish companies headquartered in Denmark and to global managers with 5 or more direct reports (in or outside Denmark). Also, the research team and Global Leadership Academy Team including CBS representatives have used their professional and personal network to search for individuals matching the selection criteria. In addition, "cold canvas" contacts have been used where network contacts have not been sufficient. This is particularly the case with regard to the group of managers that hold jobs outside of Denmark, where we are grateful to DABGO, Danes Abroad Business Group Online, a social network of Danes working internationally. Moreover, the authors are thankful for the assistance of the Danish Confederation of Industry network of global HR practitioners as well as the Network of Corporate Academy which have both been helpful in connecting the research team with relevant research participants.

## 2.2 PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW – GLOBAL MANAGERS

A total of 37 global managers with personnel responsibilities employed in Danish-headquartered multinational corporations, together representing the three different groups of global leadership practice presented in Chapter 1, have been interviewed. Managers are affiliated with a particular group of leadership practice based on the nature of their current leadership job even if some managers have experience from more than one or all three types of global leadership roles. In addition to the above companies, a small group of 5 Danish managers working global roles in non-Danish MNCs are included in the study as a contrasting perspective highlighting potentially central features of global leadership practice in Danish MNCs.

Interviews with global managers in Danish based MNCs are represented as follows:

- **Category 1:** Global managers placed *in Denmark* with a *global* role:  
17 managers
- **Category 2:** Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *local* role:  
10 managers
- **Category 3:** Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *global* role:  
10 managers

At a glance, it would seem that Category 1-interviews with global managers placed in Denmark performing a global role are overrepresented in the study. The higher number of interviews conducted within this group can be seen as one of the unintended side-effects of network recruitment: The research team has reached out to managers not exactly knowing how many people would report back – as it turned out, Danish-based managers were easier to get in contact with than managers placed outside Denmark. In addition, some managers originally recruited under the assumptions that they were working outside Denmark, were in fact based in HQ although frequently travelling. In the analysis of the interviews, however, all information pertaining to a particular role, including information based on previous job experiences of the managers regardless of present job role, is included. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the global managers placed in Denmark with a global role have previous experience from one of the two other global leadership job role groups included in the study, in this way levelling out the empirical foundation of each of the three groups.



The 37 global managers included in the study represent 25 Danish MNCs (i.e. some corporations are represented with more than one participant) as listed in the below table:

**TABLE 1:**  
**Corporations represented by interviewed managers and/or HR-specialists in the study**

Corporation	No. of employees	Established year	Number of countries where corp. is represented	Internationalization began in year	Industry
<b>Global managers from:</b>					
Lundbeck	6,100	1915	57	1960s	Pharmaceuticals
Bang & Olufsen	2,000	1925	(4)	2004	Consumer electronics
Viking Life Systems	2,000	1960	43	1960	Lifesaving equipment
Wisecor	30	2007	9		Pest control
Novo Nordisk	39,000	1923	75	1958	Pharmaceuticals
Arla Foods	19,600	2000 (1950)	13	2000	Dairy
Chr. Hansen	2,500	1874	30	1916	Bioscience
Danfoss	24,000	1933	139	1949	Mechanical and electronic components
Dyrup	1,000	1928	70	1947	Paints and coatings
FLSmidth	15,000	1882	50+	1887	Cement and minerals
Vola	150	1954			Sanitary fittings
Rambøll	13,000	1945	35	2003	Consulting engineers
Novenco	200	1993	4		Ventilation systems
Bjarke Ingels Group	350	2001	2	2010	Architect
Danske Bank	19,000	1871	15	1983	Banking
Paustian	100	1964	3	2007	Furniture and design
DEIF	553	1933	15	1980	Energy solutions
Lactosan/Sanovo Ingredients	600	1942	8	1964	Egg and cheese ingredients for industrial manufacturing
Eksportrådet, USA	35	2000	1	2000	Export advancement
Damco	11,000	1905	100+	1905	Shipping
Mascot	2,300	1982	3	2008	Workwear
ISS	510,000	1901	75+	1946	Facility service
Bestseller	61,900	1975	45		Fashion
Bodum	600	1944	20	1978	Applied design
Leo Pharma	4,800	1908	61	1914	Pharmaceuticals

In the cases where one corporation has two or three participants, interviewed managers represents different categories of global leaders, e.g. global leaders placed in Denmark with global responsibility and global leaders placed outside Denmark with local responsibility.

Leaders working outside Denmark represent both Europe (Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, the Czech Republic), BRIC countries (China, Russian) but also CIS-countries (former non-Russian former Soviet republics), Japan and Singapore as well as "second wave emerging markets" such as Mexico, South Korea and Vietnam. Further, managers from operations in US, Canada and Middle East (Kuwait and UAE) are included in the study in effect leaving Africa as the only continent not represented.

The opinions voiced in the report only reflect the point of views of individual managers speaking for themselves based on their own experience and not the individual companies involved in the study. Similarly, the content of this report solely presents the interpretation, perception, and analysis of the authors. Names of the global leadership practitioners and HR-professionals who participated in this study are kept anonymous and reference will be made only to the informant's organizational role (e.g. global manager) and type of global job role referred to as Category, 1, 2 and 3. Statements directly quoted from taped interviews are marked with quotation marks and highlighted in italic.

### **2.3 HR-PROFESSIONALS/GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT SPECIALISTS**

In addition to global managers, global HR-professionals and global leadership training specialists are included in this study as a contrasting, supplementary view in two different ways:

First, a group of 12 global HR-professionals and global training specialists have been interviewed in parallel with global managers to provide a different, "expert" point of view and framing of leaders' viewpoints. They have been interviewed in their capacity as individuals whose area of responsibility and competence is within global leadership development and/or training design and have been instrumental in terms of given an opposing, alternative view; particularly on managers' views and experiences with global leadership competence development in Chapter 4. The following companies are represented by HR-professionals/global leadership training "expert" interviews:

- Danish MNCs: Solar, Velux, FLSmidth and A.P. Møller-Maersk
- External consultants/training providers: Global Mindset, Living Institute, People & Performance, Allegrow-Change Leadership/Ashridge Business School and CBS Leadership Lab.

Secondly, global HR-practitioners are included as reflective practitioners and just-in-time research participants in a set-up where a preliminary "alpha-version" of the present report including the main conclusions of the analysis has been subject to an external "implications for practice as seen by practitioners"-

view. Based on a personal and engaged reading of the report, HR-practitioners have been charged with the task of reflecting and commenting in writing on the results of the study in 1–3 page "reflection memos". These reflections are included in the report in order to pinpoint the practical consequences and other types of reflections that the results of the study give rise to, seen from a global HR-specialist point of view. 10 global HR specialists representing 8 Danish companies are included in the study: Velux, Danske Bank, Coloplast A/S, Orifarm, Leo Pharma, Knauf, Schneider Electric, and Cheminova. Highlights of the reflection memos are presented in Chapter 6 to add perspective to the conclusions of the study presented in Chapter 5.

## 2.4 FOCUS AREAS & LIMITATIONS

Even if global HR-professionals and training specialists are included in the study, the central viewpoint reflected in the analysis and conclusions is that of the global managers themselves. In effect, this study takes a managerial perspective on global leadership competences and learning, focusing on the point of view of global managers self-reporting on their personal experience and individual practice. It is beyond the scope of the study to evaluate whether or not other organizational stakeholders (e.g. HR-organization, superiors, peers or subordinates) perceive of the individual manager's global leadership practice in the same manner or if it is reflected in (better) performance.

Global leaders working in Denmark for non-Danish corporations are not part of the study. Also, third country nationals (persons with a nationality of neither the MNC home country nor the host country) as well as foreign managers placed in Denmark or on locations abroad is not part of the study as the focus area of the Global Leadership Academy is Danish corporations and the particular challenges and opportunities connected to doing global business from a Danish point of departure.

### 2.4.1 "Danish design" – the study in context

This study focuses on Danish multinational companies. This is not to suggest that non-Danish experiences on global management and leadership are irrelevant or necessarily different from Danish experiences. Rather, the study has been limited to Danish-based companies in appreciation of the focus of the Global Leadership Academy on doing global leadership from a Danish point of departure and adherence to the overall goal for which funding was given to the Global Leadership Academy by the Industry Foundation: Supporting the competitiveness of Danish companies.

Furthermore, it is the hope that a Danish perspective may circumvent the "Not-Invented-Here-Syndrome" where Danish global managers feel marginalized in the debate on globalization as having to do with very large and geographically dispersed companies of which Denmark only has a few. Size matters: Even if the companies represented in this study cannot be considered small-and-medium sized enterprises (in DK/EU = less than 250 employees; in

the US = less than 500 employees and a turnover of € 50 m or less or a balance sheet total of € 3 m or less), they certainly are much smaller than the case stories of globalization in predominantly Anglo-Saxon literature and training concepts pointing to experiences of companies such as Huawei (more than 140,000 employees) or Coca-Cola (app. 74,000 employees worldwide). There is a long way from Huawei to Danske Bank (19,000 employees) or Lundbeck (6,100 employees). Even "big" Danish MNCs are small in global comparison.

Regardless of size, companies represented in this study sometimes operate in 10 or 20 countries with 1,000 employees and even if your company is far from Huawei or globally matured over decades of internationalization *"you get the full package of globality problems from Day 1 when internationalizing ..."* as one global manager puts it (Category 1 manager, Interview 9).

#### 2.4.2 A Global Leadership Academy study

The present study has been carried out under the auspices of The Global Leadership Academy. The Global Leadership Academy consists of Danish multinational companies, Copenhagen Business School, public organizations, industrial PhD students, international collaboration partners, and DI – Confederation of Danish Industry. The Global Leadership Academy member organizations – both private and public – are at the core of the research and development collaboration. They play an active role to ensure that business relevant research and development activities are conducted. Information about the Global Leadership Academy and the research activities commissioned by the Global Leadership Academy is available in Appendix 2.

Although being part of the research activities conducted under the auspices of the Global Leadership Academy, the content of this report solely presents the interpretation, perception, and analysis of the author and not the individual companies involved in the study or the Danish Confederation of Industry.

The study has been completed by PhD Rikke Kristine Nielsen, assistant professor at Aalborg University/external lecturer at Copenhagen Business School and research assistant Jens Boye Nielsen, Global Leadership Academy.

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### 3. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE: ACTIVITIES AND BEHAVIOURS

This present study adds to the extant knowledge on global leadership conducted from a Danish point of departure by proposing and exploring three different types of global leadership roles:

Category 1: Global managers placed *in Denmark* with a *global* role

Category 2: Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *local* role

Category 3: Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *global* role

**As outlined in the methodology section, 37 global managers representing the three categories of global leadership have been interviewed. The interviews have sought to solicit managers' views on the activities and behaviours associated with a global leadership role through the three following themes:**

- 1. The challenges and opportunities of practicing global leadership.**
- 2. The leadership activities and behaviours deemed necessary for overcoming challenges and capitalizing on opportunities.**
- 3. The learning needs of global managers and how the global managers experience the nature of their leadership practice.**

Based on the knowledge accumulated on points 1 and 2, this section explores the first half of the central research question: "*Based on their own practice of global working and leading, what do global leaders see as the key competences and behaviours they need to perform in a global job role?*"

In the following, global leadership behaviours and activities reported by global leadership practitioners are presented for each group of global leaders in turn.

#### **3.1 CATEGORY 1: THE GLOBAL MATRIX NAVIGATOR AND KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATOR**

Global managers *placed in Denmark* with a *global* role are typically placed at corporate HQ, although a few are situated at the Danish subsidiary. Typical job titles of this category are "Group IT Hosting manager", "Regional Sales Manager", "Technical Director", "Vice President", and "Director Global Key Accounts". Development and implementation of group-wide concepts, formulation of "white books", design of systems, manuals, policies etc. feature centrally. Strategy implementation and knowledge transfer from HQ/home country to international subsidiaries are central tasks that involves a variety of activities and behaviours:

- Countering "Not-Invented-Here-Syndrome" and advocating "Proudly-Stolen-Elsewhere"-mentality
- Pinpointing and demonstrating local business case and value proposition of group perspective to subsidiaries
- Treating subsidiary colleagues and reports as internal costumers: Actively show value of HQ coordination and liaison
- Actively soliciting feedback from subsidiaries to circumvent "big brother vs. little brother"-asymmetries
- Proactively acquiring knowledge on subsidiary perspective (travelling, taking on assignments in subsidiaries)
- Upwards representation of foreign operations' local perspectives (particularly where there is no local representation in management board).
- Explain and represent country of origin national culture to subsidiaries.

An additional avenue for knowledge transfer is focus on knowledge transfer by people transfer in terms of talent spotting of managers/employees with a potential for conducting a global role outside Denmark as well as facilitating this development. Also, facilitation and on-boarding of non-home country inpatriates and reintegration of international assignees and expatriates is emphasized. A special instance of knowledge transfer is connected to outsourcing or flagging out of tasks to subsidiaries or external providers, in which case global managers in this category are often project managers as well as in charge of handling the lay-offs often associated with such activities.

Virtual collaboration and distance management challenges are central for this category of global managers. In this respect, the activities and behaviours emphasized as central to their leadership practice reflect research on virtual/dispersed team leadership and distance management (e.g. Larsen et al. forthcoming). Global managers in this group stress that leadership is leadership even at a distance, but there is an additional complexity stemming from an increased need to cross organizational, professional, and physical boundaries. (Also see: Danish Association of Managers 2015 member survey on distance management).

Global managers in this group report that this complexity in turn sparks a need for a higher degree of formalization (as opposed to informal hallway chats and spontaneous coordination popping in and out of each other's offices), more time spent on aligning expectations and spelling them out in detail (as a stand-in for daily interaction and as safety valve for different interpretations in different communities of practice), a distinct focus on socialization (so as the off-site co-workers in subsidiaries are not "up in the air" and lost in translation between the two worlds of corporate/HQ and local or regional operations) as well as adequate technological support structures and mechanisms (to secure effective, smooth exchange of information in particular and lower knowledge transactions costs in general).

Performance management/KPI management is advanced as a central collaborative principle, sometimes to the detriment of the "softer side" of management, i.e. leadership that is seen as a central challenge. In addition, this group is characterized by heavy workload on dotted-line collaboration demanding an additional skill set of mediation, negotiation, conflict resolution, project/program management and sales/presentation techniques.

Metaphorically speaking the global-local mixing ratio of this group is 80 percent global-20 percent local. The practice of this group of global managers is characterized by a strategic helicopter view looking to instigate a "one-big group"-feeling and formulation of group-wide concepts, templates, best practices and standard operating procedures. In this respect policing alongside with motivating for adherence, compliance, and alignment stands out as central activities for global managers placed in Denmark performing a global role.

### **3.2 CATEGORY 2: THE EXPAT CLASSIC LOCAL CHAMPION AND (FIRST) MAN ON THE GROUND**

Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *local* role are typically in charge of managing a single subsidiary, e.g. a production facility or a sales and marketing representation. Typical job titles for interview persons in this category of global managers are "CEO of Subsidiary in Country X", Vice President, Director and Country Manager.

This group of global managers is characterized by a traditional expatriate identity and role perception stemming from having made considerable personal investment in uprooting career and sometimes family to a different life outside their home country. Their global leadership role is characterized by considerable investment in the locality with regard to acquiring knowledge of the country, culture and habits. Local language skills are not perceived of as mandatory, but definitely conducive to success, and this group is likely to engage in language training and taking pride in local language knowledge. In addition, this category of global managers stress the ability to endure emotional acculturative stress and counter loneliness by building a local network outside the job as a consequence of not being able to "bond" with subordinates and not enjoying frequent trips to HQ/home country.

A global leadership task featuring centrally is the establishment of new operations/subsidiaries (and termination of existing local partners gently and politely) and balancing entrepreneurial spirit with group compliance in the process. In this connection, local recruitment of successors (in start-ups) with a view to corporate country-of-origin (national) cultural fit is seen as a very important task. With respect to personnel management tasks, motivation of local employees/managers, whose career options are at best dim as well as on-boarding and integration of HQ-global assignees/expats are emphasized as critical.

Liaison and networking with corporate is stressed as important in both a proactive and a more defensive way: First, networking is conducive to being top of

mind with top management in competition with other foreign markets defending territory against internal competition for attention and other resources. In this sense, this group of managers mirrors the classical MNC-challenge of subsidiary managers competing with other subsidiary for attention and resources and the associated dangers of suboptimization. On a more constructive note, networking with HQ/corporate should also see to it that local employees are spared against the effects of HQ misunderstandings as well as facilitate that local knowledge reaches strategy formulating levels of the corporation.

Metaphorically speaking the global-local mixing ratio of this group is 20 percent global-80 percent local where interaction with local direct reports is the primary personnel leadership task. In this respect, this category of global managers emphasize role modelling and transfer of corporate core competencies and values to the subsidiary, in effect being a local corporate representative, ambassador and cultural bearer. Strategy execution and translation of group strategy into local action is highlighted as important, especially with regard to serving as an information hub to local branches outside country HQ/regional reach, which are not physically placed in the same location as the global manager. Also, this group points to local compliance challenges with regards to code of conduct and corporate social responsibility in connection with health and safety concerns (disease, terrorism, crime, rule of law etc.) both from an individual and a corporate point of view.

### 3.3 CATEGORY 3: THE "GLOCAL" IN-BETWEENERS

Global managers placed *outside* Denmark with a *global* role are typically placed in a function with a group-wide/corporate responsibility such as a non-HQ shared service centre or a centre of excellence. Also represented in this group are managers with a regional responsibility of considerable geographic breadth, such as for instance EMEA or Americas-Asia-Pacific. Additionally, although corporate CEOs are not included in this study, one global manager representing a company that has relocated HQ of a specific business unit to a location outside Denmark is included. Typical job titles from this category would be "Group VP", "CEO", "Regional Manager", "Director" or "Managing Director."

Global managers working a global role outside Denmark perform a regional role of "little corporate." A central activity in this respect is the mediation between HQ and subsidiaries of the region paired with a pragmatist and realist "art of the possible"-mindset. Boundary spanning and bridge building vertically is important, but so is horizontal bridge building between different operations within the region as well as reaching out to subsidiaries outside the region. This is particularly seen as a question of impacting formulation of group-wide processes in a way that fits their region, but also of communicating the diversity of market, cultural and economic differences within a region; i.e., Asia-Pacific may seem straight-forward enough from a helicopter perspective, but reveals a plethora of diverse local specifics upon closer inspection.



The span of control and responsibility of global managers working global roles outside Denmark typically covers a lot of ground; e.g. managers have responsibility for vast geographies such as Asia-Pacific-Americas or Russia-CIS containing a diverse group of smaller operations. In effect, this group of managers is particularly prone to performing a variety of different managerial roles simultaneously. Often regional managers also have responsibility for local operations in the country in which a regional function is placed or serve in an interim management role in connection with establishing new sites or representations in new markets (of the same or adjacent regions). This also entails that "micro management" operational tasks or use of functional specialist expertise takes up a considerable amount of the managers workload due to limited site size and breadth of local competence in newly established ventures.

This group of global managers also highlights distance management and virtual collaboration as a central part of their practice. Given the often operational part of their leadership role, however, "management by orbit" seems to be an adequate label: This group of managers emphasizes the necessity of non-stop travelling to ensure local visibility as well as collection/dissemination of local intel and transfer of HQ knowledge. As management by orbit is sometimes restricted by travelling budget and/or the sheer geographical vastness of the area of responsibility, global managers in this category also point to the ability to make a "leap of faith" with regards to recruiting competent local managers and employees and then "leaving them to it" as important. Lack of control-freaking should not, however, be mistaken for *laissez-faire*: Clear goal setting and follow up is central to this leadership role. In this respect, recruitment of local staff/managers feature centrally for this group as does subsidiary talent spotting and facilitating the potential use of that talent elsewhere in the organization (within or outside the region).

This group of global managers also point to the ability to identify regional candidates for acquisitions as well as lead and participate in due diligence and post-merger management processes. For companies experiencing rapid growth, post-merger management takes up a considerable part of global managers' time and in newly established operations networking and engaging in liaison activities as the local figure head and representative of corporate are pointed to as an essential part of the job.

Metaphorically speaking the global-local mixing ratio of this group is 60 percent global-40 percent local and so this group of global managers is original local-global in-betweeners, "glocal tweens". They are not part of HQ, but at the same time has rather weak local ties acting as corporate citizens without being "HQ's (wo-)man". In effect, this category of managers feels rather left to themselves even if they enjoy a high degree of attention and interaction with HQ. Consequently, within this group you are also likely to encounter worries of repatriation and doubts of their own ability to adjusting for more locally oriented or domestic jobs in the future. Competence acquisition is only half the story; global managers represented in this category are also concerned with competence divestiture and global leadership unlearning.

### 3.4 GLOBAL ROLE PRACTITIONERS: INTERGROUP COMMUNALITIES AND OVERLAPS

As is clear from the analysis, there are intergroup overlaps between the groups with respect to certain aspects of the global job role. For instance:

- Global job role practitioners placed in Denmark with global responsibility shares distance management-issues as a central challenge of their leadership practice with global job role practitioners placed outside Denmark with global responsibility.
- Leaders placed outside Denmark with either local or global responsibility share the task of bridging and explaining local perspectives and specificities to HQ/top management.
- Leaders placed outside Denmark share cultural encounters as a particularly challenging concern, even if managers with a global/regional role tend to have more contact with English-speaking and better educated staff than country managers.

The concrete practice of carrying out these tasks at an operational level, however, varies between the groups and commonalities are not necessarily related to geography or hierarchical level as a more classical approach to global leadership would suggest.

Generally, the three groups of managers share the fact that they have no objections towards the proposed categorization of three different types of global leadership practice. Indeed, respondents were generally able to make out how they fit into the framework, which intuitively seems to make sense to global managers. It is interesting that the proposed categorization of global leadership work has not aroused debate or questioning which we had anticipated – after all it does differ from a more traditional approach to (global) leadership development, based on either geographical location i.e. global managers as permanent or temporary expats, or hierarchical level of the manager and his/her reports.

On a related yet different note, the three groups of managers do not mirror a hierarchical leadership pipeline approach in that the direct reports of all three categories may be both "leading others" and "leading leaders". For instance, leaders placed outside Denmark with global responsibilities do not necessarily lead leaders, but may be leading others. This is also evident from the examples of typical job titles presented in connection with the analysis of the three categories above: To a large extent titles are the same across groupings. This could of course be a sign that titles are conferred in many different ways in Danish MNCs, but could also echo the fact that the hierarchical level of the respondents are often the same or similar even if the content of their global job role is not.

This suggests that the three categories presented in this study may work as a supplementary framework for selection of participants for global leadership learning opportunities such as mentoring relationship, cross-functional/

cross-border communities of practice or traditional plenary course work – a point that we shall return to in Chapter 4.

### 3.5 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ROLES IN CONTEXT: 7 DUALITIES

The previous section represented global leadership competences and behaviours according to preconceived categories of global leadership constructed by the Global Leadership Academy research team and the author. These categories served as presuppositions of the study, a preunderstanding to be explored and unfolded in terms of the practice associated with the different roles, in the meeting with global leadership practitioners.

In interviews global managers insisted on even further customization of global leadership practice than presupposed in the three-groups research design. During the analysis of the interviews of global managers where data in the form of arguments/points/quotes of individual leaders were grouped in categories, a supplementary set of differentiators in the shape of contextual factors impacting on global leadership practice emerged inductively. In addition to seeing global leadership practice as a matter of job role locality and "global-local" mixing ratio, interviewed managers consistently made reference to situational and contextual factors that in their view impacted heavily on the way in which each of the three global leadership roles were practiced.

Typical comments of this kind would be initiated with a *"this, of course, has to be seen in relation with the growth strategy of our company"* or *"but this is exacerbated by the fact that top management is relatively new to Asia"* and similar (examples from pre-interview correspondence between author and prospective interviewees).

This section introduces the patterns that emerged from the analysis presented as seven dualities; that is seven continua where the extremities indicate two opposite poles of the same phenomenon or situation – for instance, is the general situation of the company characterized by a growth scenario or a recession/decline scenario? The point here is that although the job role requirements within the three groups of global managers are shared within each group, the practical implementation is influenced by the position of the global leader and his/her market's/company's position on seven continua:

#### 1. Development path: Growth vs. decline/recession scenario

E.g., is the company and/or specific market in a situation of growth and ample resources or is the situation characterized by closures, cutbacks and rationalization?

#### 2. Internationalization mode: Acquisitive vs. organic growth

E.g., is the company and/or specific market growing organically by establishing foreign daughter companies/subsidiaries, growing acquisitively by mergers and acquisitions – or a mix, possibly including joint ventures?

**3. Degree of core competence transferability: Localization vs. standardization**

E.g., to what degree is it profitable to transfer home country core competences relatively unaltered to foreign operations generally or with regard to a specific market or function (standardization)? To what degree is it necessary with a high degree of customization to cater to local specificities (localization)?

**4. Internationalization rationale: By force vs. by choice**

E.g., is the company generally or specifically with regard to a particular market proactively engaged in internationalizing – or rather reactively following suit due to customer demands for global presence or forced by low or negative growth rates in domestic markets?

**5. Global maturity: Established vs. entrepreneurial**

E.g., is the company globally mature and experienced or relatively new to doing business globally? Is the global manager assigned to establish a new venture or take over a "going concern"?

**6. Top management mindset: Ethnocentric vs. global governance style**

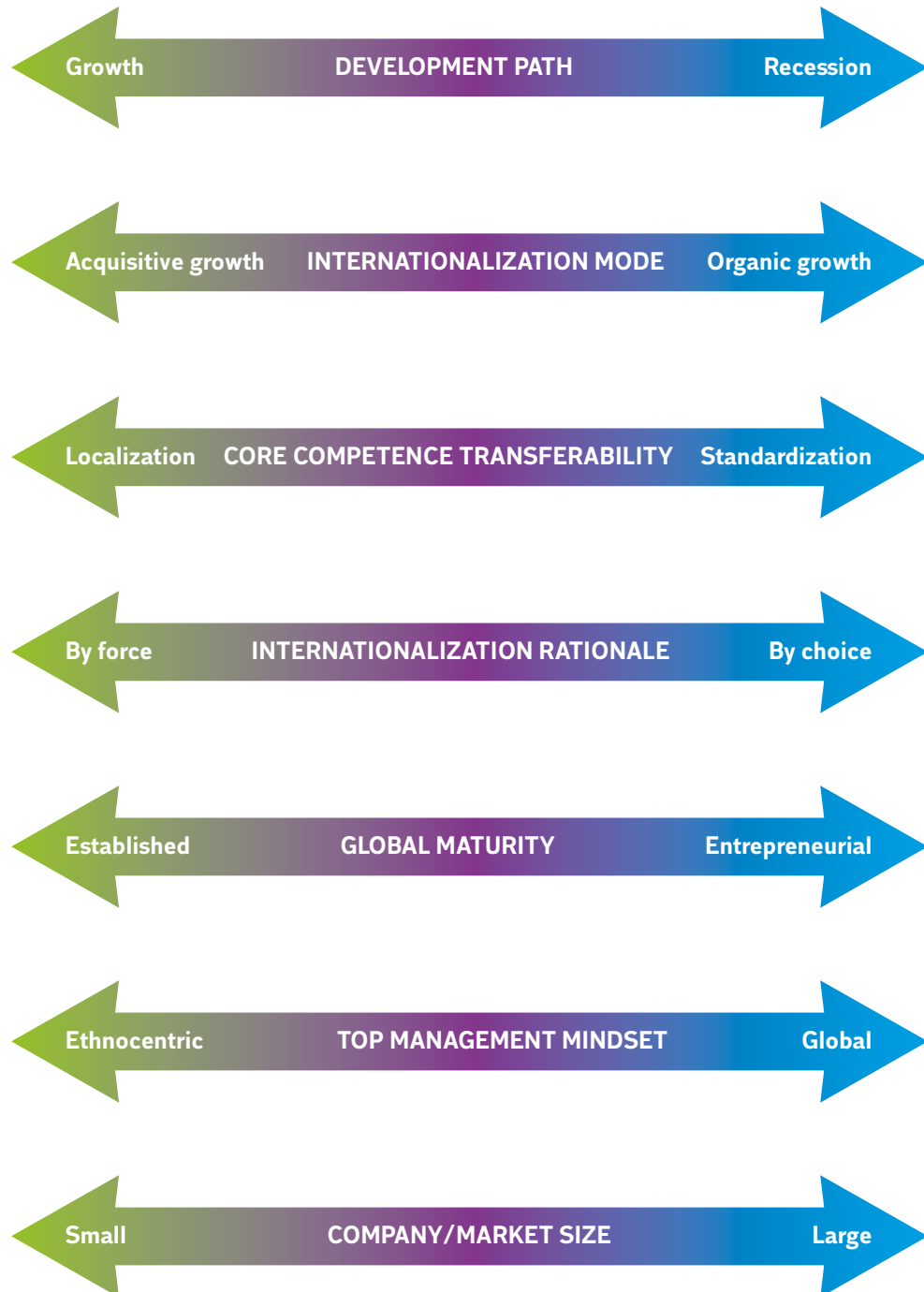
E.g., is the top management internationally experienced, perhaps with an expatriate background, understanding the nature of global leadership? Alternatively, are they more ethnocentrically or domestically minded and find it difficult to understand the work of global leaders and may have unrealistic expectations?

**7. Company/market size: Small vs. large(r)**

E.g., is the company so big and influential in foreign markets that it is likely to be a deal-maker rather than deal-taker? In addition, what level of corporate support is offered to global managers?

The seven dualities are visualized in figure 3 below and explored in turn in remainder of this chapter:

**FIGURE 3:**  
**Internal contingencies of global leadership: Seven dualities**



### 3.5.1 DEVELOPMENT PATH: Growth vs. decline/recession scenario



Global leadership practitioners point to the fact that the (financial) situation of the parent company as well as individual subsidiaries affects global leadership practice.

For instance, knowledge dissemination and solicitation of feedback from subsidiaries are central to the group of global managers placed in Denmark with a global responsibility. The practice of performing and facilitating two-way knowledge transfer is however, quite different depending on the circumstances in which it takes place. So, the leadership role of a global manager in a company where the knowledge transfer situation is that of out-flagging tasks from one unit to another, firing the knowledge transferers in one unit as the process comes along, hiring knowledge recipients in the task receiving unit, is quite distinct from that of a global manager facing an overall growth scenario with ample travelling budgets and other resources to support interaction and conditions more welcoming for establishing a win-win situation.

Further, facilitating feedback loops and knowledge transfer from a foreign subsidiary fighting for its financial survival is quite a different scenario, than a situation where assistance and resources from corporate are ample.

### 3.5.2 INTERNATIONALIZATION MODE: Acquisitive vs. organic growth



The parent corporation's mode of growth and internationalization is also reported by global managers as having an impact on their global leadership practice. For instance, organic growth tends to be slower, starting out with establishing own representation. This process may entail termination of existing partners in foreign markets and building a new venture from scratch, demanding much of the global manager in terms of entrepreneurial spirit and a varied management role. Where use of non-native host country managers is not considered a viable option at all (e.g. due to language issues or local law) in effect limiting the use of Danish expats to an interim start-up position, handing over the reins to locally recruited managers is an important task as is identification and socialization of suitable candidates.

In contrast, an acquisitive growth mode is characterized by global leadership practitioners' participation in due diligence processes and post-merger management, which is seen to require change management skills and ability to bal-

ance synergy effects stemming from integration of acquired business units into the buyer's business model with the destruction of business and learning opportunities inherent in the acquired company.

### 3.5.3 DEGREE OF CORE COMPETENCE TRANSFERABILITY: Localization vs. standardization

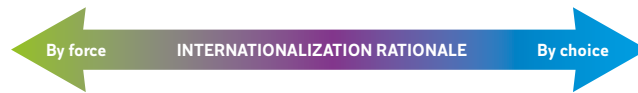


Global managers point to the fact that global leadership practice in all three categories of global job roles is affected by the degree to which their corporation's core competence is generally transferable across markets and thus conducive to standardization of resources, skills and strategies or rather non-transferable in effect laying the ground for localizations of operations of subsidiaries in foreign markets. Are local markets and operations too different to meaningfully develop corporate-wide templates to be copy-pasted? The higher the degree of core competence transferability, the more support and knowledge sharing opportunity is available to the global leadership practitioner.

This holds true not only when it comes to the overall core competence of the parent corporation, but also for particular business units or processes. Indeed, different functional and business areas may be affected differently: For instance, production techniques or business processes could be highly transferable, while marketing to local customers necessitates specialization as do HR-processes in order to comply with local laws and regulations.

In this sense, global leadership practitioners emphasize that the global-local mixing ratio of different functional areas might be different, adding to the complexity of the global leadership role. This, in turn, underlines that sub-optimization may occur in both subsidiaries and HQ: In the cases where (core) competence transferability is low, a corporate or top management monopolization of global mindset as synonymous with (more) harmonization, synthesis and integration is tantamount to sub-optimization. But so is a too narrow local interpretation in the cases where (core) competence transferability is high: In cases, where core competence transferability is high, global leadership practitioners point to the risk of foregoing synergy effects as a result of localizing too much instead of adhering to corporate templates. Striking this balance and communicating it is critical for global leadership practice. Thus, different balancing acts and mixing ratios of local differentiation and global standardization affects the global manager's challenges and practice across the three types of global leadership roles.

### 3.5.4 INTERNATIONALIZATION RATIONALE: By force vs. by choice



Global leadership practitioners emphasize that the internationalization rationale of the parent company is an important contextual factor for performing global leadership. In essence, they point to the nature of the rationale for internationalizing as critical: Was internationalization an active choice rooted in a strategic mission and vision of globalization of the business? Or rather a result of "forced" internationalization due to stagnation of growth, a need to retaliate on the home market of new entrants – or more neutrally going global with customers that prefer to do business with a limited number of global suppliers?

The business reasons for internationalization have a spill-over effect on global leadership practice in terms of the process of entering into a global leadership role (either of the three) and the associated opportunities for careful planning and preparation or not. In this sense, entering into global leadership practice can be characterized by planning, emergence or ad hoc, depending on how performing a global role was sparked off:

- A crisis or acute business opportunity arose and the global manager assumed the role in haste
- The manager was the most adventurous individual when the corporation's internationalization began
- The manager was the only person available with a particular functional competence
- Talent rotation programs where working globally in different roles is standard operating procedures were in place

Most respondents describe themselves as characterized by assuming a global role as consequence of emergence or ad hoc, rather than a predefined development path. The more chaotic the circumstances of practicing global leadership and the more motivated by functional ability, the more ambiguous the situation, and the poorer the preparation.



### 3.5.5 GLOBAL MATURITY: Established vs. entrepreneurial



Global managers in this study report that global leadership practice varies depending on the overall global maturity of the organization they are employed by and/or of the specific operation for which they are in charge.

The rationale is that an established global player has developed HQ back-office support functions, white paper or templates on "how to open a new subsidiary" and has HR competence with regard to compensation and benefits, housing and other practical expatriation challenges. Indeed, some managers point to the fact that it may be more important that the employing company is experienced and competent with global working and expatriation than that the leader is well-prepared: Standard operating procedures and a "template" to follow make up for individual managers' lack of experience, provides global managers with a safety net and a sense of security conducive to performing under difficult circumstances, even if some degree of localization may be needed. Thus, the global (im-)maturity of the corporation affects the scope and scale of decision making and discretionary prioritization of global managers across the three types of global leadership roles.

In newly internationalized companies, support that goes beyond mental support is of a very basic nature and much is left up to the individual manager to figure out as he/she goes along.

In a similar vein, taking over a going concern in a foreign market is quite a different task from being the first (wo)man on the ground. Incoming managers appointed to established businesses report of the danger of finding a less than welcoming environment for being "corporate's emissary"; entrepreneurial global managers start from ground zero and may have to start with renting office space and look for a place to live – or by firing existing local partners such as agents or distributors. In accordance with the more varied and complex job role of entrepreneurial managers in new ventures (domestic or international) as reported by Mintzberg (e.g. 1973), many managers perform more than one global leadership role at the same time and often a managerial role is supplemented by participation in operational tasks, contribution with specialist knowledge or key account responsibility.

As pointed out in the methodology section, many of the interviewed managers have *previous* experience from other categories than the one they are placed in in this study based on their *current* job role. However, managers often have responsibilities that place them in two categories at the same time in their current role; e.g. a regional manager of Americas who is also country managers of the US; or a local country manager of South Korea, who also hosts a corporate cen-

tre of excellence or a corporate sales manager who also has responsibility for sales in two foreign markets. This is particularly the case in newly established sites/subsidiaries, but also has to do with the fact that non-HQ home country operations (even in more matured MNCs) are less developed and sometimes quite small (e.g. 1–10 persons) and thus the hierarchical make-up and specialization is less mature. In this respect, many international sites are entrepreneurial in their set-up or have been so relatively recently, which sets the global manager up for a different more complex and ambiguous situation than global managers working in established operations.

### 3.5.6 TOP MANAGEMENT MINDSET: Ethnocentric vs. global governance style



Individual CEOs are sometimes portrayed as the main drivers of organizational mindset: *"... in some extreme cases the personal mindset of the CEO becomes the single most important factor in shaping the organization's mindset"* (Paul, 2000). Whether it is individuals or a team of top managers, their view of internationalization and their governance preferences frame leadership practice. And so, top management mindset and the ensuing governance style was another factor that interviewed global managers emphasized as important for performing in any of the three global leadership roles.

Global managers of this study echo to Perlmutter's classical typology (Perlmutter, 1969; Perlmutter & Heenan, 2000) of HQ/corporate mindset towards subsidiary operations as ranging from ethnocentric (HQ/home country way is preferred), polycentric (local decision-making authority to cater to local needs), regiocentric (regional decision-making) and geocentric (truly global with functions and authority placed in accordance with competence, not geography). Top management's experience, degree of global mindedness as well as (realistic) expectation about global business opportunities, can pave the way for global leadership practice – or the opposite.

With regard to top management governance style Ghemawat (2011) argues that top managers suffer from "globaloney", globalization madness, rooted in highly exaggerated notions of globalization and its consequences due to the fact that top managers live much more globalized (working) lives than the rest of the organization. They overestimate the scale of globalization and its impact on the staff and the company in general. This is generally not the danger reported by global managers as most imminent, even if there is one example of top management being so eager to internationalize that they have relocated to establish new foreign ventures, leaving the operation of HQ and home market under the administration of a country manager.

While some global managers report of particular top management attention and preferential treatment on strategic focus areas, the most commonly cited challenge is that top management *“does not understand exactly what I do in terms of cultivating and building up foreign markets”* (Category 1 manager, interview 10) or cannot be moved beyond globalization hype: *“Now, global has become a buzz word, everybody has to be global. But it is critical to understand why you are global, why you established in foreign markets, why it is important to have sales- and marketing people located in the proximity of an airport and knowing where to find the right competences”* (Category 2 manager, interview 24).

Also, global managers comment that top management teams with no knowledge of international markets may have completely unrealistic expectations to business results or the way local operations are run: *“If you want to operate the way you do in Ikast, then build in Ikast. Do not build in Vietnam or Laos or similar places.”* (Category 2 manager, interview 27). For some global managers top management buy-in is there, but perhaps only with a minority group in effect leaving global leaders in a vulnerable position.

In sum, an ethnocentric or otherwise globally immature top management mindset and governance style impacts on global leadership practice as does the existence of a top management with a global outlook and a globally mature governance style.

### 3.5.7 COMPANY/MARKET SIZE: Small vs. large(r)



Global managers also point to company size as an important contextual factor for their leadership practice, primarily in the sense that larger MNCs are much more confident of their ability to be deal-makers rather than deal-takers: To what degree is the company able to impose its own standards and preferences on local operations/customers/employees and to what degree is the company more or less forced to adhere to local norms in order to be accepted and come across as legitimate?

Global managers performing a global leadership role in larger operations generally report that their jobs are made easier due to the fact that they are able to implement corporate country-of-origin flavoured cultural idiosyncrasies and standard operating procedures more easily. Global managers employed by smaller players are much more cast as the sales person, that has to argue his/her need to a customer. Global managers of smaller companies (and to a certain extent also global leaders operating in smaller markets in larger MNCs), have more freedom to build a position and brand, but also starts at a much lower level.

Larger companies are not only able to offer back-office support functions, templates and "plug-and-play" assistance for global leaders, but they also tend to be able to offer global managers a different point of departure than a small employer. First, global managers point to the fact that as a global manager working for a large MNC you probably have the opportunity to learn from a large community of people, working with or in a particular region such as is explained by a HR-professional: "*We have moved beyond culture in our leadership development. If you are sent to the Middle East, we recommend that you talk to colleagues with experience from that geographic area. In addition, we have e-learning training resources that are available*" (HR-professional, interview 7). In addition, the corporation is probably also recognized as an international employer which makes it easier for global leaders to attract globally talented employees and managers, as well as attracting talent in general in local markets.

The downside, managers report, is that really big organizations get so complicated that navigating is a challenging task in itself as is building social capital and network, in effect favouring internally recruited talent. The upside is that HQ needs to move beyond micro-management due to a larger number of subsidiaries and define (new) ways of working and formulate governance principles tailored to a multinational organization, instead of implementing foreign operations into an existing more domestic-oriented set-up.

### **3.6 SEVEN DUALITIES ... AND BEYOND**

Research on global leadership calls for further exploration of the degree to which global leadership practice is influenced by contextual internal and external factors in general. This study offers insights into the nature of contextual factors that Danish managers, performing a global leadership role either in or outside Denmark employed in Danish MNCs, perceive of as important. Given the qualitative nature of the research design, the reported perceptions are tied to the leadership context of the individual manager. Although we contend that the dualities have relevance and inspirational value for global leaders in other industries and corporations as well, extending the results to be generally applicable or relevant is beyond the scope and data material of this study.

The presentation of these seven dualities of global leadership is based on the points of view of the global managers' interviewed. As such, this overview makes no claim to being conclusive or all-encompassing of all types of contextual factors that are relevant for global leadership practice. If corporate CEOs had been included in the study, additional dualities are likely to have come forth, for instance the impact of ownership structures. Further, one might speculate that the nature of the corporations' business strategy, such as for example a cost strategy or disruptive strategy has an impact in its own, that goes beyond growth style or global maturity. In addition, some research suggests that particular types of corporations such as internet-businesses or "born globals" are particular with regard to global leadership. Also, businesses operation in a particular industry may be subject to particular institutional pressures exerting an influence on global leadership; e.g. international regulation of pharmaceuticals.

## 4. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP LEARNING (BY DOING)

This chapter deals with the ways in which global leaders perceive of the means through which they acquire and sustain the necessary competences for practicing global leadership. As such this chapter answers the second half of the central research question.

The picture of acquiring global leadership competences painted by interviewed global managers is a mixed one. Only half the respondents have participated in leadership training activities. To the extent that respondents have participated in leadership training at all, training activities provided by either the employing company and/or an external provider (consultants and universities) typically centres on topics such as classical 1:1 leadership, product management or budgeting.

So, generally global managers in this study are partially or wholly self-taught autodidacts when performing a leadership role. This holds particularly true for performing a global leadership role. Most have no global leadership training. In the few cases where respondents report having participated in training activities directed at global working, cultural awareness training is mentioned, which was experienced as helpful and relevant.

It is rather ironic that cultural awareness training is the only form of formal training for global work reported, when respondents generally report that cultural differences are in fact not the differences that pose the most difficult challenges for them in global work. Global work training aimed at some of the challenges deemed particularly challenging, e.g. distance management and performance management, is conspicuous by its absence.

Global managers paint a mixed picture of the merits of global leadership development training: *"Training has more to do with learning more technologies of doing things; that is not tantamount to being a global leader and being able to act in a global community"* (Category 1 manager, interview 5) – an assessment which is supported by others, for instance arguing that: *"In my experience the best training is on the job in the invaluable mentoring form of senior managers to junior managers"* (Category 1 manager, interview 14).

It is not *"long educations, high intelligence and God only knows what that is important for being well-functioning in a cross-cultural situation or not."* (Category 2 manager, interview 27), even if training and education may be part of a developmental journey as global leaders: *"It has opened a window to some issues that I have incorporated into my experience and personal style."* (Category 1 manager, interview 10). For most managers, the means of competence development has

been learning by doing (not to be confused with some formalized set-up for on-the-job-learning, which is not the case).

Global managers point to previous global jobs as their primary source of competence development and when asked where that experience typically comes from the answer is; learning by doing. Trust and faith from the closest managers in their ability to take on a global role paired with traditional Danish freedom with responsibility, room for educational failing (within limits) and a certain amount of sense of adventure is global managers' answer to how they have learned.

Learning from role models internally in the company and from participation in networks – both inside and outside the employing corporation including social media, are also pointed out as relevant sources of global competence development.

#### **4.1 DOTTED-LINE MORE DIFFICULT THAN FIRM-LINE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**

Traditional global leadership research focuses on managers who, in addition to business performance responsibility, have a personnel management responsibility of hiring, motivating, developing, assessing and laying off employees/managerial direct reports. In addition to traditional firm-line leadership responsibilities, however, global managers are increasingly instructed to take on group-wide dotted-line responsibilities in global matrix constructions participating in cross-border projects or programs, membership of advisory boards and integrated processes along the entire value chain globally.

In this study, this is particularly the case for leaders with global roles placed in Denmark, but increasingly also for leaders placed outside Denmark, who are required to take on group responsibilities that go beyond their own reports and business area. With regard to competency development, global managers emphasize that the skill-set needed to perform in a dotted-line global collaboration role stands out from classical managerial skills mentioning mediation, negotiation, marketing, sales communication and project management as particularly important.

Also, quite interestingly global leaders report that dotted-line relationships are much more difficult to handle than firm line-relationships suggesting that there is a large(r) development need and potential in focusing on developing dotted-line and matrix management competences than development of traditional "firm-line leadership".

A related, but different development need may arise when global managers increasingly need to lead employees that are party to global matrix constructions. In these cases, global managers lose some of their information hub and gate keeper role in that subordinates participating in group-wide projects and matrix arrangements may now have access to more or more recent information

than the closest managers on the topics they are involved with (HR-professional, interview 10). Whether this is construed of as undermining of managerial authority or delegation and empowerment is a matter of competent global leadership as well as training of subordinates to participate in such arrangements.

The complex leadership role of global managers in this study, increasingly combining traditional firm-line leadership with dotted-line leadership and matrix management, is exacerbated by the fact that many global managers in the study wear many different hats at the same time; e.g. a regional manager of Asia-Pacific who is also country managers of China, or a local country manager of Vietnam who also hosts and manages a corporate shared service centre. In effect, the complexity of the jobs role requirements as well as of training and development needs increases.

#### **4.2 COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN: LIABILITY OR ADVANTAGE?**

Another interesting feature of global leaders' views on global leadership competence development is the degree to which Denmark as country-of-origin and national cultural point of departure is a liability (to be unlearned/mediated through training) or advantage (to be made the most of albeit with modifications).

Danish global leaders are generally positive with regard to the leadership merits of their national cultural background as Danes in a Danish company. Some point to the fact that there is unleashed potential in Danish management style, if handled with care and creativity. For instance, the traditional Danish non-authoritarian management style is seen as well suited for global working and management condition of cross-boundary interaction.

Further, it is not a physical law that followers prefer a leadership style rooted in their own national culture. As one HR respondent exemplifies: *"Just because you are Indian does not necessarily mean that you prefer an Indian leadership style."* (HR-professional, interview 5). Indians may be able to live with long working hours and authoritarian leadership, but that does not mean that they would not rather get off at 5 o'clock and have more interesting tasks delegated to them.

Certainly, this assessment may be the result of unconscious incompetence on part of the managers as critics of the transferability of a Danish leadership style to other countries and regions would suggest (Poulfelt & Larsen with Nielsen, 2015; global leadership training specialist, interviews 6 and 9). Cultural differences may not be recognized as more of a problem because cultural differences are not detected as the source of the problem, such as this example provided by a global leadership specialist suggests: *"A cultural training specialist says to a Danish manager, 'You aren't being very inclusive to the Chinese delegate' and the Dane says, 'well, he isn't saying very much and it's not very interesting.' But that's the whole bloody point!"* (Global leadership training specialist, interview 9). Further, not experiencing problems may be tantamount to not realizing the full potential, i.e. settling for a mediocre, yet unproblematic state of the art.

On the other hand, interviews with Danish global managers, working for non-Danish multinational corporations of which five interviews have also been conducted as background material, suggest that the (alleged) problem of Danishness may not only stem from the characteristics of a Danish leadership style (such as low-hierarchy, delegation, trust, empowerment, development, work-life balance/Scandinavian Management). Danish leaders working in non-Danish multinational companies do not feel that their leadership style is perceived of as being particularly Danish – or as one puts it: *“Presumably, many of my reports are not aware that I am Danish, and many of those who are, do not know where or what that is.”* (Category 2 manager, interview 25).

Part of the potential challenge of Danishness, may stem from the fact that the nationality of Danish managers in Danish MNCs is seen as synonymous with “country-of-origin culture/MNC parent country culture/Corporate/HQ-culture” and because they are either physically placed at HQ in Denmark or have been assigned to a foreign, local subsidiary starting from a position in Danish HQ: *“People automatically assume that when they receive a mail from a Dane located in Denmark, then it must be corporate. But it’s not in fact as I am working in the Danish subsidiary.”* (Category 1 manager, interview 26). The significance of Danishness takes on a new dimension when Danish is also the corporation’s maternal ground zero, which begs the question if some of the cultural problems do not rather stem from classical HQ-subsidary differences of point of view than cultural differences?

#### 4.2.1 Overcoming cultural differences through socialization – of managers or foreign country nationals

Without a doubt, national cultural differences (e.g. Danish leadership style meets with Vietnamese subordinates) arising when Danish managers interact with foreign culture nationals are deemed important and challenging by the global managers in this study as could be expected. One respondent says on performing a global leadership role outside Denmark: *“In the Middle East, you have to swallow a camel or two a day”* (Category 2 manager, interview 25) being supplemented by a Danish-based global leader: *“I can tend to be quite firm in my views, but that won’t work as a global manager. You have to give and take even if you feel like you are about to explode. Being able to just take it for now, knowing that you can return to the matter at a later point is something that only comes with experience”* (Category 1 manager, interview 8).

In this respect, country-of-origin is also seen as a disadvantage; not particularly due to the characteristics of Danishness, but simply as a result of coming from a different cultural background than subordinates. Emotional stress of being the minority in their workplace when working abroad and the experience that none of your previous (domestic/local) experiences can help you in a global work situation is also reported by managers: *“I guess it has been the most traumatic experience of my life, but I said to myself: ‘You are not giving up, you are not going home’”* (Category 2 manager, interview 26). This position is typically represented by managers with foreign subsidiary country responsibility being the only Dane surrounded by foreign direct reports.



Generally, cultural differences are deemed to be most pertinent when paired with language differences in cases where direct reports have poor English skills. However, although recognizing cultural differences as essential for global leadership practice, some global managers in the study, primarily leaders leading others, face so many different and changing cultures at the same time that for all practical purposes using cultural differences as a source of behavioural guidelines makes little or no sense. For instance, for regional managers working with 10 or 15 different locations, national cultures cues would point in too many different directions effectively rendering the manager paralyzed.

In addition, global managers point to (newcomer) socialization efforts as important for working inter-culturally or for neutralizing cultural differences: *"I see already now that the two Chinese managers that are on their way up in the system will not be a problem. And if managers are not properly socialized by the time they enter into management, then we only have ourselves to blame"* (Category 3 manager, interview 29). Managers see high potential in socialization of foreign country nationals to a corporate culture or parent company country culture. And so, some global managers offer *"Do not despair over the fact that you have a weird Danish manager"*-courses (Category 3 manager, interview 37) to local, host country national employees in order to introduce the parent company and the manager's cultural background. Such socialization efforts could be offered by subsidiaries working together with other Danish companies represented in the host country where local employees share their experiences or by corporate offering *"the ins-and-outs of working for a Danish employer"*-onboarding.

A variant of this line of argumentation is found in managers suggesting realistic recruitment with a view for (national) cultural fit as a workaround of cultural differences. For instance, some point to recruitment of persons with prior experience of working for a multinational corporation regardless of national cultural background.

#### 4.2.2 "Be yourself" vs. "fake-it-till-you-make-it"

Against this backdrop it is hardly surprising that global leaders believe in the power of authenticity and "being yourself" in global leadership: *"By and far, I believe that you hold on to who you are. I also believe that it is more satisfactory for the company that you hold on to who you are and have your integrity. If you start changing yourself just because you are told by HR, then in the end nobody knows who you really are, and then they start pushing you even more because they can tell that you are not on top of things."* (Category 2 manager, interview 26).

Cultural training specialists are rather critical of the "just-be-yourself" strategy of global leadership: *"Then there is the authenticity issue, I get that often – 'I am who I am, and that's the way I do it!' Well, I don't want you, I want an effective leader!"* (Global leadership training specialist, interview 9). Other global managers point to a "you can't argue with success"-argument: Even if you do things in a different way, just see to it that you are successful – then nobody will ask you to change anything, the philosophy seems to be.

Certainly, if a manager tries to take on a leadership style without personal-grounding, you may end up becoming more extreme than the locals themselves, overdoing it as a poor substitute for anchorage in the manager's own personality and comfort zone either involuntarily or because the manager finds it to be an easier solution than developing a locally viable version of the manager's (national culturally flavoured) leadership style: *"There is no place where it is easier to be autocratic than emerging markets"* as one manager exemplifies it (Category 3 manager, interview 35).

Ability to juggle different styles in different national cultural contexts as part of a broad personal repertoire only comes with experience for the build-up of which "fake it till you make it" is a recommended strategy by some managers. Obviously, trying out a new style might be going out on a limb in the beginning until such time that it becomes second nature and part of a personal style. Over-extending may well be part of that journey.

Finally, a small group of global managers in this study have spent so much time away from home and/or working in international companies for so long that, although they still hold Danish passports, their behaviour and preferences are no longer in keeping with what cultural typologies (e.g. Hofstede or Trompenaars) or notions of "Scandinavian Management" would predict in which case country-of-origin is no longer deemed relevant as neither liability nor advantage.

#### **4.2.3 National cultural differences – "okay, they're there, but they are not the most challenging differences"**

In general, the leaders interviewed for this study do not see national cultural differences as being quite the central challenge it is often made out to be in (research) literature and practical training activities on global leadership. In consequence, they perceive of being Danish/working in a Danish corporation rather as advantage than liability. More to the point is the fact that other types of differences are often evaluated as more critical for collaboration and performance than cultural differences. For instance, leading people with different professional backgrounds, collaborating in projects and matrix-/dotted-line relationships or leading across business units with competing or different KPIs are mentioned as critical differences.

In a similar vein, national border-crossing collaboration is deemed less challenging than boundary-crossing in general; i.e. crossing of business-units, hierarchical boundaries, time zones, professional backgrounds or generations. And so, leaders point to the fact that distance management of sales persons working off-site (e.g. out of their own homes or in airports etc. "on-the-go"), regardless of their national cultural background and physical proximity to their manager, may be more challenging than leading reports in a faraway subsidiary. Similarly, working with people in another building at the same main address is in some cases experienced by global managers as more challenging than leading virtual team members in a different country and/or with a different cultural background.

Further, several leaders point to the fact that there is too much emphasis put on cultural differences as problem and challenge rather than opportunity and synergy potential. Global leaders represented in this study dismiss what they perceive of as an "intercultural problem"-discourse from specialists/HR-professionals and feel that a more positive outlook is more in keeping with their personal experiences – and more helpful with regard to maintaining a positive outlook when faced with conflict or confusion where national cultural differences are in fact identified as the root cause.

A related, but independent point arising from the data material with regards to the importance of national cultural differences is that global managers experience that national cultural differences are used as a handy (bad) excuse masking the "true" cause of disagreement being for instance classical HQ-subsidary differences of opinion. Playing the "cultural differences"-card is portrayed as an effective show-stopper argument that detracts from discussing the "real" issue at hand and leaves participants in a stale-mate situation.

This point of view could also be construed of as a recognition that cultural differences are reported to be more important for behaviour in situations of ambiguity, uncertainty, and complexity where people seek refuge in their comfort zone: *"Some say that leading globally is 'double-up', but that's rather because you do it wrong locally: You set poor, ambiguous goals that you adjust as you go along and interact in everyday collaboration. That is possible locally, but it is a disaster when working globally. Goals have to be very concrete and measurable"*. (Category 1 manager, interview 4). As this quote illustrates, ambiguity leaves room for confusion that causes problems. Lack of goal-setting and high-quality performance management leaves the scene open for culturally rooted conflict (imagined or real) in that people revert to their comfort zone and "cultural autopilot" when faced with uncertain or otherwise stressful situations.

### **4.3 STARTING WITH THE BEGINNING**

This study does not "fact check" the view of managers on their own learning experiences; i.e. they may indeed have participated in activities that planners or designers of development activities might label as "global leadership training" on intercultural awareness or other aspects of global working.

The fact remains, however, that whether or not the global managers of this study have participated in such activities or not, the impression that has remained with them is that they have not. The interesting point here may not be resolution of differences or arriving at a conclusion stating "who is right and wrong." Rather, the differences between an HR-view and a managerial view portrayed here may prepare the ground for engaging in dialogue with managers on global leadership in a manner which is in keeping with their views of the situation.

The lack of global leadership training may also stem from the fact that Danish MNCs (more or less consciously) subscribe to the view that global leadership is not too different from general and "domestic" leadership and hence choose not

to engage in training activities dealing directly with global working challenges? Critical HR-voices point to an "HR sickness" indicating that the opposite may hold true: HR people are fascinated with intercultural differences and the prestige connected with all things global and therefore frame global leadership development activities as being "global" although there is nothing particularly global about them besides the fact that they take place in a setting with participants from different countries. Following this line of reasoning, it is unsurprising if leaders are left with the impression that they have not received training for the challenges experienced in a global leadership role, although they may have been party to development activities framed as a "global leadership development program" or similar.

It might also mirror the fact that many Danish companies represented in this study only seem to have worked systematically with leadership training during the past 5–10 years. A professionalization of general management is taking place, and it is perhaps unsurprising that a general leadership quality improvement starts out with a focus on general management before turning to specifically addressing global challenges (e.g. HR-professional, interview 8). Also, getting leaders together across an MNC in itself indeed creates networking opportunities and knowledge of each other conducive to global collaboration and learning, even if the content of the courses do not specifically address global working conditions. Further, some leadership training specialists argue that return on investment by improving the general level of managers without prior leadership training may very well outperform return on investment from specifically focusing on global leadership training.

At the other end of the continuum, global training specialists interviewed for the study point to unconscious incompetence on the part of Danish HR-professionals, who are too ethnocentric in their approach to leadership training – they do not see the need for specific training because they themselves lack global competence. Others point to the financial crisis as the decisive factor for not engaging (enough) in global competence development: No need in talking about problems and challenges that HR-professionals do not have resources to help managers tackle anyhow.

Another avenue for explaining the lack of global leadership training is the viewpoint that top management and HR rather interpret failed global interaction and foregone business opportunities as an isolated problem of a particular (unlucky or erroneously recruited) global manager's poor performance, rather than as the result of lack of support mechanisms and proper training. Hence, the failure is attributed to the individual manager, not the organizational set-up or support and hence no remedial action is deemed necessary.

Similarly, a perception of being successful in international endeavours, as is paired with the bliss of ignorance in terms of lacking insights into the results that might have been obtained with superior competences and different circumstances, may result in a lack of "burning platform". As one global leadership specialist ironically comments; *"Sheer luck beats bad leadership any day – but*

*you may be running out of luck ...*" (Global leadership training specialist, interview 1).

In a similar vein, global leadership training specialists point to the fact that it makes no sense developing training activities for general global leadership disconnected from the business context in which training activities takes place. This point of view suggests that provision of general global leadership training has little chance of being a strategic HR initiative when decontextualized from the concrete business context and objectives. This is a point which global leaders themselves seem to adhere to in their call for the taking into consideration of contextual factors pertaining to the concrete milieu and situation in which their global leadership practice unfolds.

For some global managers, the strategic contribution of general (global) leadership development may come by rather as an effect of 'my employer cares for my employability and potential which makes me generally more motivated and loyal' than a "competence-leads-to-better-business-performance" cause-effect relationship. As one global manager ponders with regard to the relevance of (global) leadership development training: *"Well, I do not know if I actually learned anything that makes me a better manager, but I guess that it's always nice that your employer demonstrates that you are someone worth investing in"* (Category 3 manager, interview 36).

#### **4.4 CHANGE OF THE (OLD) GUARD IS COMING**

One of the reasons why global leadership training seems to be a rare commodity in the employing MNC of the interviewed global managers may be that some of the companies are too small or too early on in their internationalization process to have established critical mass for internal activities. For instance, fully-fledged talent rotations programs are difficult to implement as there is a lack of next step positions where heavy language training is not required.

Only one of the companies represented in this study has the size and global maturity to have established a global rotation program as a standard of leadership development. For another group of respondents, a different scenario is played out as many of the global managers have been with their current employer for a long time – and have started in the company at a time, when it was less international/global or in the early stages of internationalization. These managers could be seen as home-grown global talent whose global careers develop with the (slow) speed of the internationalization of their employer. So, step-by-step they have been exposed to global leadership starting with entrepreneurial "experiments" to fully-fledged global/international business: CEO of Siemens (Denmark), Jukka Pertola recently commented at a global leadership conference hosted by the Global Leadership Academy and the Danish Associations of Managers that the complex structure in Siemens works *"because we have managers that know their way around the organization for many years and can network their way around"* (September 2015). Next generation leaders start in a global

situation and will not have the luxury of "slow learning by doing": Goodbye to growing and developing as a manager with the internationalization of your employer – new leaders get the complex package from Day 1. The "Company X Mr. Internationalization Pioneer"-global managers are not too far away from retirement and succession planning initiatives will have to look for different tools to assist the next generation of managers who cannot rely on network work-arounds and a work life of social capital build-up as ways of learning and making-do on their own.

As reported in the previous chapter, managers working global jobs in Denmark are responsible for identifying talent for international assignments. Global managers in smaller companies report a mobility problem of getting managers that were hired into local jobs interested in taking up global positions. Participants from larger and internationally seasoned companies experience mobility issues as well, but predominantly with attracting talent for the more humble places and with a non-exuberant compensation package.

And indeed, among Danish multinational employers with a long track record of being "global career platform of choice" there is a strong self-selection among potential applicants who seek and expect a global job. In a situation such as this, employers also experience a push from an upcoming group of globalists that research literature has framed "self-initiated *corporate* expats" – i.e. a group of talent that seek out global opportunity and assignments on their own within the company. This situation is not indicative of the general picture described by global managers and HR/training specialists in this study; most have to make do with a more meagre gross group of potential global leaders – and eager globalists may not be in possession of the functional or managerial talent in highest demand.

Short-term assignments are an avenue of increasing mobility internally in multinational corporations, which is often insufficient, global managers report. Recruitment of foreign market local talent and third country nationals is seen as viable alternatives. Local talent recruited in foreign markets could also be Danes that are self-initiated expats, i.e. "*internationally mobile individuals, who have moved through their own agency (rather than through an organizationally assigned expatriation) to another country for an indeterminable duration.*" (Ariss & Crowley-Henley, 2013, p. 79). Although this group has not been socialized into the company culture, they share a Danish point of view and thus match the view advanced by several global managers working outside of Denmark that more emphasis should be put on recruiting for "cultural fit" in the sense of both "natural cultural fit" and "multinational corporate culture fit." This group of managers find that local talent is willing and able to be inpatriated, but often find it difficult to motivate such talent as local career paths are short.

It has been beyond the scope of this study to include global competence development for inpatriated foreign managers or third country nationals, but the message from Danish global managers included in the study is that the talent is

there, but managers need assistance in developing it. In this sense, global leadership competence development may focus on global managers' ability to facilitate competence development of other types of global talents and managers.

#### 4.5 GENERATION NEXT?

Research informs us that an increasing number of leaders and employees work globally. Even if increased globalization and financial crisis led observers and researchers to predict a fall in traditional expatriation 5–10 years ago, actual development has proven such predictions wrong. What has actually happened is a general increase in the total number of international assignments, short and long term. It is true that short-term assignments are on the rise, but not at the expense of long-term assignment. A general globalization of work lives is instead the case.

Similarly, a recent European research project on global collaboration observes that *"[c]ompanies choose different approaches when setting up their organizational frameworks for global collaboration, but more and more leaders and employees find themselves in complex cultural environments."* and they continue: *"... an increasing number of individuals require some degree of sensitivity to different cultural perspectives in order to do their jobs well and to successfully navigate within complex global organizations."* (Gertsen, Søderberg & Zølner, 2012, p. 3). The tendency is that managers and specialist recruited for a global career becomes gradually younger and consequently less experienced. Typically, managers are selected for at global career based on "domestic" results – even if they may not possess the competences needed for a global job. The outcome is that some do really well, some burn out, and most deliver a mediocre performance (Straub-Bauer, 2014).

Future generations of global managers with lower seniority and/or externally recruited cannot rely on "grapevine" and informal networks and social capital ties as work-arounds to the complicatedness of complex global structures and reporting relationships. This places higher demands on communication lines and simple formalization in the future, as well as more formalized learning opportunities.

The group of HR-professionals and global training specialists interviewed in parallel with global managers also point to the fact, that learning by doing is too slow and too expensive a development mode even if global leaders are generally not complaining about the current level of training opportunities provided to them. Furthermore, a "swim or sink-philosophy" can be characterized as a non-sustainable and unethical use of human resources as well as being tantamount to throwing away or wasting scarce talent and potential, owing to the fact that most multinational corporations have more global leadership challenges than they have global leadership natural talents.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how managers practicing global leadership in different types of global job roles perceives of their own leadership practice, the behaviours performed as part of this practice as well as their view on the learning needs and nature of their learning experiences. The central research question guiding this exploration is:

**Based on their individual practice of global working and leading, what do global leaders see as the key activities and behaviours they need to perform in a global job role? What are their views of the means through which they acquire and sustain the necessary competences?**

This study has explored the practice of global leadership from two different perspectives: A managerial perspective and an HR-professional/training specialist view summarized in turn below. This study primarily focuses on what global leaders do, rather than what they are; and on the competences, they need to act. It focuses on what global leaders report they do; not what specialists or research normatively informs us that they ought to be doing. The practical implications of the conclusion is explored in more depth from a global leadership development perspective in the final Chapter 6 discussing highlights of 10 global HR practitioners' reflections.

### 5.1 A MANAGERIAL VIEW ON GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

From both a practical and academic perspective, "global leadership" is a very general, abstract concept that is difficult to act on in practice. To this end, differentiation around a common base of global leadership as well as contextualization is needed. This study perceives of global leadership as a question of job role, not of geography. In addition, it is a basic premise that global leadership also contains locally directed leadership behaviour – in some global leadership roles more than in others – in effect making global leadership a question of local-global mixing ratios. In order to cater to the fact that research emphasizes that global leadership is a question of both geography, cultural diversity and strategic complexity in connection with which both behaviours directed at local communities as well as at global groupings, this study qualitatively investigates global leadership in terms of three different categories of global leadership practice:

Category 1: Global managers placed *in Denmark* with a *global* role

Category 2: Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *local* role

Category 3: Global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *global* role



Metaphorically speaking, the global-local mixing ratio of global managers *placed in Denmark* with a *global* role is 80 percent global-20 percent local. From a group-wide helicopter vantage point this group is preoccupied with advancing a "one company" feeling, designing corporate systems, formulating standards and implementing corporate strategy. To this end, knowledge transfer and dissemination of best practices feature centrally often carried out in virtual and distance management set-ups placing demands on managers' communication competences and the ability to formulate clear goals and follow-up "policing." Knowledge transfer takes the form of facilitation of passing around of knowledge itself as well as the people carrying knowledge in terms of inpatriation, preparing for expatriation and engaging in outsourcing and out-flagging activities.

Metaphorically speaking, the global-local mixing ratio of global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *local* role is 20 percent global-80 percent local where interaction with local direct reports is the primary personnel leadership task. Local strategy execution and translation of corporate concepts are key activities as is coping with national cultural differences as well as regional differences within the country where the subsidiary is placed and reaching out to local branches placed at different locations away from "subsidiary HQ". Starting up of new ventures and sites are central tasks placing entrepreneurial work as well as participation in operations as an important part of the job. Defending and branding of the subsidiary vis-à-vis HQ and top management is the most important task directed at corporate level.

Metaphorically speaking, the global-local mixing ratio of global managers placed *outside Denmark* with a *global* role is 60 percent global-40 percent local and so this category of global managers hosts original local-global in-betweeners, "glocal tweens". For this group, vertical and horizontal boundary spanning and bridge building is central to their practice. Often, this group has several different managerial roles at the same time and often covers vast geographies leading them to rely on a combination of management by KPI, recruitment of high quality local talent and "management-by-orbit" and non-stop travelling. Identification of partners and candidates for acquisition as well as due diligence and post-merger management are central to this group of global leaders.

The customization around a common base of global leadership into three different groups of global leadership practice is diversified by the context in which a global leadership role is performed. Emerging inductively from interviews, global managers find that the practical performance of their leadership role is significantly impacted by contextual factors internally in their organizations.

Seven dualities of contextual factors emerged:

**1. Development path: Growth vs. decline/recession scenario**

E.g., is the company and/or specific market in a situation of growth and ample resources or is the situation characterized by closures, cutbacks and rationalization?

**2. Internationalization mode: Acquisitive vs. organic growth**

E.g., is the company and/or specific market growing organically by establishing foreign daughter companies/subsidiaries, growing acquisitively by mergers and acquisitions – or a mix, possibly including joint ventures?

**3. Degree of core competence transferability: Localization vs. standardization**

E.g., to what degree is it profitable to transfer home country core competences relatively unaltered to foreign operations generally or with regard to a specific market or function (standardization)? To what degree is it necessary with a high degree of customization to cater to local specificities (localization)?

**4. Internationalization rationale: By force vs. by choice**

E.g., is the company generally or specifically with regard to a particular market proactively engaged in internationalizing – or rather reactively following suit due to customer demands for global presence or forced by low or negative growth rates in domestic markets?

**5. Global maturity: Established vs. entrepreneurial**

E.g., is the company globally mature and experienced or relatively new to doing business globally? Is the global manager assigned to establish a new venture or take over a "going concern"?

**6. Top management mindset: Ethnocentric vs. global governance style**

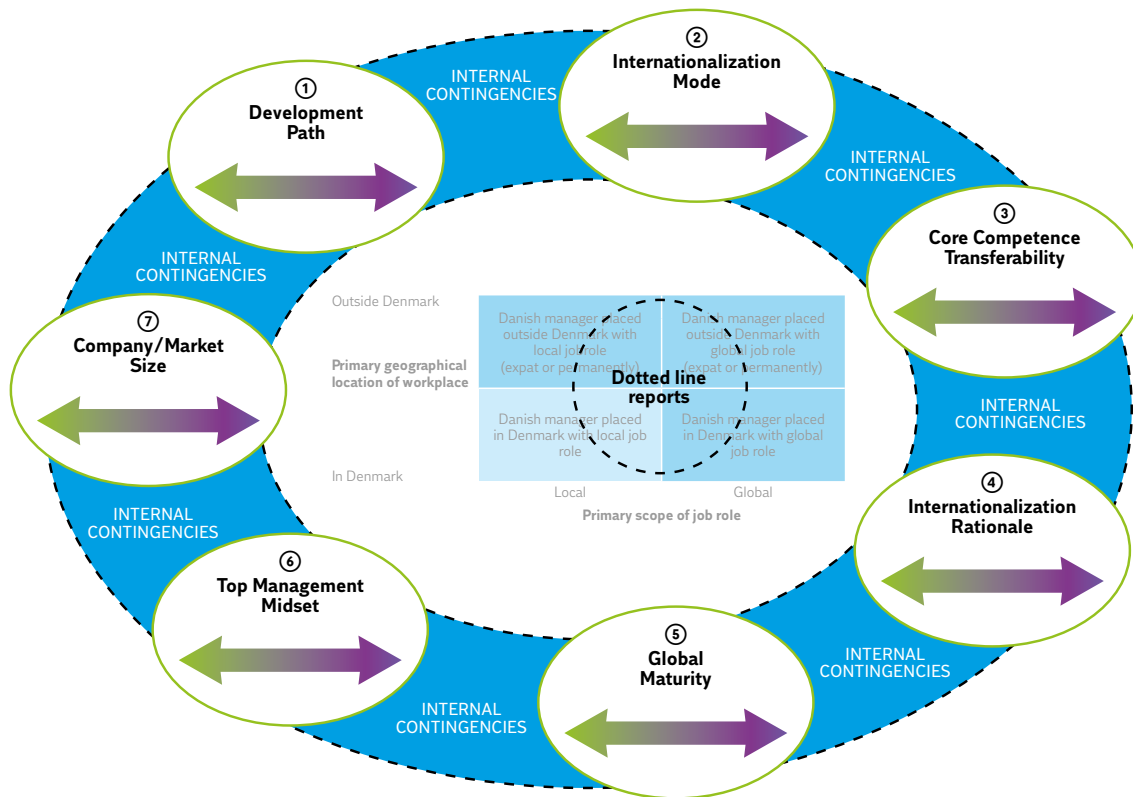
E.g., is the top management internationally experienced, perhaps with an expatriate background, understanding the nature of global leadership? Alternatively, are they more ethnocentrically or domestically minded and find it difficult to understand the work of global leaders and may have unrealistic expectations?

**7. Company/market size: Small vs. large(r)**

E.g., is the company so big and influential in foreign markets that it is likely to be a deal-maker rather than deal-taker? In addition, what level of corporate support is offered to global managers?

These contextual factors constitute even further customization around a common global leadership base. The influence of contextual factors on an already differentiated picture of three different categories of global leadership roles, is to make the picture of global leadership behaviours, activities, and development needs even messier. Building on the study’s point of departure in three different types of global leadership roles (cf. page 16), the landscape of global leadership laid out by the global managers participating in this study can be illustrated in the below illustration:

**FIGURE 4:**  
**Global leadership role requirements and internal contingencies**  
**– 3 global roles, 7 dualities**



Mirroring the results of the analysis, the seven dualities are pictured as internal contingencies. The individual manager's type of global leadership role is framed and formed by their position on and combination of each of the seven dualities. For example, the practice of two global leaders working the same global role, e.g. working local roles outside Denmark, vary depending on the placement on the seven continua. For instance, performing a local role outside Denmark is framed by the global maturity of the managers' corporations so that the manager has access to a vast support system and back office services, whereas a manager in a corporation with limited global experience may be "the first man on the ground" and left to figure many things out for himself/herself for better or worse.

The three global leadership roles form the basis of global leadership core activities competencies, but a dotted-line transgressing the different types of roles have been added to the original figure (cf. page 16) to cater to global managers experiences that dotted-line relationships and matrix management are important and challenging (non-personnel leadership oriented) tasks.

**With regard to the means through which the competencies for performing a global leadership role are acquired, it stands out from the analysis that:**

- Many global managers have no formal leadership training and few global managers have participated in global leadership development activities
- To the extent that managers have participated in development activities directed at global working conditions, it is typically intercultural awareness training focusing on handling cultural differences
- Intercultural awareness training is regarded as relevant, but cultural differences are not the most challenging differences to handle when working globally. Hierarchical, geographical or professional differences are deemed as more pressing differences to handle
- Global managers feel discouraged by a perceived "cultural problems"-discourse and generally are rather positive when it comes to the merits of their national cultural background as Danes
- Global leaders focus on "learning by doing" and learning from mentoring relationships with superiors and closest manager. Many global managers can be characterized as home-grown talent who has developed their global leadership practice in parallel with their employers' internationalization process
- Managing dotted-line relationships are experienced as more of a challenge than firm-line relationships

## 5.2 A GLOBAL HR/TRAINING SPECIALIST VIEW ON GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

The managerial view on global leadership practice and development is supplemented by global HR/training specialist views. When applying this (contrasting) perspective on global leadership practice and competence development, a quite mixed picture emerges on the needs and state-of-the art in Danish multinational corporations highlighting that:

- There is a lack of burning platform for investment in global leadership training due to a "trap of success" and because global business failure is not attributed to global leadership competence deficiencies. In effect, no remedial action is initiated
- Danish MNCs are experiencing a leadership professionalization. Due to the fact that many managers have no formal leadership training, addressing this competency gap is prioritized by HR developers to the detriment of more "elitist" problems of global leadership training
- Global HR specialists are not sufficiently global in their outlook. In effect, they produce ethnocentrically conceived development programs
- Development activities labelled "global" may be global only to the extent that they comprise participants of many different countries covering the entire multinational corporation. If courses do cover themes pertaining to global leadership working conditions, they do so in a (too) generic manner decontextualized from business strategy and a "one-size fits all" or "one-size fits this hierarchical level"-perspective regardless of the nature of global work of managers

## 5.3 HINTS AT ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

The suggested categorization of managers into three categories depending on their location and global-local task mix have made sense to the participants of this study, HR-professionals and global managers. Indeed, no respondents opposed to being placed in one of the categories and could easily place themselves in a category. Yet, training initiatives are not designed and participants not selected based on the job role requirements.

When combining the three different global leadership roles with the contextual factors suggested by global managers as being important for the practice and hence development needs of the individual global leadership practitioner, a matrix of a larger number of possible positions and mixes of activities and behaviours is the result. Considering the relatively small size of Danish MNCs in global comparison, one may doubt how many companies that will actually be able to arrive at a critical mass of any combination of global leadership challenges.

To gain critical mass, Danish MNCs might consider pooling resources with other MNCs in similar situations and/or industries. In this respect, global leaders working outside Denmark are particularly open to learning from other locally represented Danish MNCs from different industries or even local (foreign or Danish) competitors. In this sense they mirror one of the outcomes of a workshop on expedient development of global mindset in Danish MNCs held by the Danish Association of Managers, Network of Corporate Academies and the Think Tank DEA in 2013 (The DEA Think Tank, 2013) where learning from competition ("colleague-competitors") was recommended by practitioner participants.

Another option, of course, is to completely individualize global leadership developments because there is a need for customization and individualization around a common base of global leadership that renders general programs ineffective. Supporting managers in tailoring development activities "by patchwork" – i.e. combining external, internal and cooptational development opportunities to suit the individual global manager's needs – may be a viable alternative.

Further, an avenue for catering to both individualized and complex training needs as well as a dynamic, global business context is to focus on just-in-time training in the form of mentoring relationship or an accelerated performance review/development dialogue-cycle. These formats cater to the perception of managers that "learning by doing" is the way ahead and closest managers and peers the primary sources of inspiration and motivation. At the same time, such arrangements take into consideration that research suggests that practical learning experiences of global leadership only trump traditional class room learning situations to the extent that the practical experience has generally been positive and if fora for assisted reflection on-the-fly are created; i.e. space for pausing and pondering on the nature of experiences and implications is created while in the process on acquiring experiences – not before or after the fact (Eisenberg, Lee, Brenner, Claes, Mironski & Bell, 2013).

## 6. DISCUSSION & PERSPECTIVES

As highlighted in the methodology section, global HR practitioners are included in this study as reflective practitioners and just-in-time research participants. A group of HR-reflectors have been presented with a preliminary "alpha-version" of the present report including the main conclusions of the analysis which has been subject to an external "implications for practice as seen by practitioners"-view. Based on a personal and engaged reading of the report, HR-practitioners have been charged with the task of reflecting and commenting in writing on the results of the study in 1–3 page "reflection memos". Central argumentations present in the reflections are presented from a global HR-specialist point of view in this section of the report in order to pinpoint the practical leadership development consequences of global managers' view of global leadership practice as presented in the previous chapters. In this connection, the authors also reflect on some of the themes that HR reflectors, contrary to our expectations, have not mentioned in their feedback. 10 Danish HR specialists representing eight multinational companies contributed to this part of the study: Velux, Danske Bank, Coloplast, Orifarm, Leo Pharma, Knauf, Schneider Electric, and Cheminova. All HR reflectors are of Danish nationality.

### 6.1 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT – "ONE SIZE FITS ALL" VS. DIFFERENTIATION

First and foremost, it stands out that the general design of the study presenting global leadership as three different types of global leadership roles resonates well with HR practitioners. Generally, all HR reflectors have a positive view on the three categories and recognize them in their own companies. This being the case, even if some emphasize that they did not consider this differentiation view on global leadership previously and indeed usually think of managers (domestic as well as global) as a collective focusing on similarities rather than differences: *"I have been in several networks and normally we try to talk about the competencies global roles have in common – rarely the things that differentiates them"* (HR reflection 1). And so, a "one-size-fits-all" approach to (global) leadership training is common, although often customized around the hierarchical level of the managers in keeping with a "leadership pipeline" approach *"due to critical mass issues and the outcome of just bringing people together to create the trust needed for global collaboration"* (HR reflection 2, 3, 4).

HR reflectors also highlight the network effect of facilitating that leaders meet with other leaders, global or domestic, thus echoing interviewed global leaders who reported that their training (if any) focused more on general leadership and less – if at all – on the specificities of performing a global leadership role. This underlines the outcome of the analysis of interviewed leaders' global leadership experiences showing that only a small minority has received leadership training directed at performing globally. Generally, HR reflectors report that leadership

training is "unisex" in the sense that it focuses on similarities of general leadership which could explain why global leaders do not report to have participated in specific global leadership training. Against this backdrop, it is interesting that some HR reflectors are surprised that leaders do not see a difference between domestic and global leadership even if this may stem from the very fact that the HR developmental efforts do not differentiate.

## **6.2 LACK OF GLOBAL TRAINING – LABELLING, CONTENT, AND LACK OF ROOM FOR REFLECTION**

HR reflectors call for further knowledge on the issue of lack of global training: *"The fact that most managers expressed lack of training/development for their global role is interesting to know more about. What kind of training would they consider targeted to this role (is there a labelling or content problem?)"* (HR reflection 2, 3, 4). The authors share the interest expressed in this quote, and at the outset of this study we had an expectation to generate more detailed knowledge about the specific nature of global managers' learning experiences, formal as well as informal (cf. second half of research question focusing on global managers' view of the means, through which they acquire and sustain the necessary competences for performing in a global role).

In practice, global managers mainly made references to learning by doing and general leadership training to the extent that they received any leadership training at all, making inquiries into the nature of their global leadership learning experiences a rather futile endeavour. Chapter 4 on global leadership learning brings forth different interpretations of this including a view of the situation as resulting from a labelling issue: Is global leadership training defined as activities that have a global group of participants? Or is it activities directed specifically at handling global working conditions? Or perhaps general leadership training is synonymous with global leadership training? This study cannot answer these questions conclusively, but raises these questions as being relevant to address when designing and evaluating global leadership training.

In this connection, the argument that HR professionals might lack the necessary expertise for advancing truly global leadership development activities resonated with HR reflectors. One reflector seems to somewhat agree saying that: *"HR professionals do underestimate their ethnocentric starting point"* (HR reflection 8). Another writes that the conflict between HR and leaders is real, but also undergoing change: *"HR lacks international experience and the ability to reinvent global learning as it often consists of people that has never been abroad"* (HR reflection 1). This points toward a global HR development training need.

For many interviewed managers our questions on training activities were deemed irrelevant as they (in their view) had no global leadership training; for others engaging in a reflection on the nature of their learning experiences seemed to be very difficult. This is interesting as the global managers interviewed in this study can generally be characterized as talkative, very open and personal in their accounts and come across as very interested in engaging in a



dialogue on experiences that clearly matter to them and have a huge impact on their lives. This could suggest that there is a lack of room for assisted reflection on global learning experiences, formal or informal, resulting in a diminished capacity for learning. This is stressed by a HR reflector stating that: *"Maybe top managers lack the ability of structured learning? Maybe the fact that the leader of the manager sits in another geography makes coaching difficult? Many expatriations are stretching people without the feedback element. How often do their boss in another country give them feedback – apart from complaining about the lack of results?"* (HR reflection 1).

Of course, one might suggest that it is of little consequence that the global leaders are unable to talk about their own learning experiences as long as they have actually learned and changed their behaviour accordingly. It is questionable if this is indeed the case, and to the very least it is also problematic from a learning optimization point of view in that learning opportunities are lost and customization made difficult.

As expressed in this report, a discussion of vocabulary and labelling of global leadership training activities should take a managerial point of view into account when discussing global leadership development with the global managers. Yet, other HR reflectors simply take the stance that it is not a question of wording, labelling or leadership program content, but rather an invitation to take a managerial view as point of departure for global leadership training: *"When learning by doing is the activity with most effect to the leaders, then training possibilities should be built around that exact thing."* (HR reflection 5).

### **6.3 CUSTOMIZATION AROUND A GLOBAL LEADERSHIP BASE: INDIVIDUALIZATION**

HR reflectors all highlight individualized training, commenting that this could be rather expensive, but probably also very profitable and therefore would be worthwhile. Definitely, acknowledging that global leadership roles are highly diverse need not entail that collective efforts are futile. Knowledge of the different role requirements and internal sources of differentiation might serve as a basis for forming subgroups in connections with more generalized development efforts.

However, HR reflectors state that a more individualized approach might be needed: *"Next step might be to focus on individual development in the future (mentor/coach etc.) in order to meet the needs of different types of global leaders and also to compensate in a certain degree for the lack of network for some global managers"* (HR reflection 3). This resonates well with a HR reflectors arguing that global leaders lack abilities in structuring their own development concluding that: *"The ability to work more flexible with assignments is on the agenda. This puts demands on HR to think differently."* (HR reflection 1).

High complexity and the fact that some global managers perform several global roles simultaneously makes an impression on HR reflectors. One HR reflector

states: *“Some global managers really seem to be working in a very complex setting with many roles and relations to care for! An individual pro-active effort will probably be needed in order to get support, since no one else knows the full picture.”* (HR reflection 2). This is not necessarily just an HR job, but also a matter of coaching and on-the-job-training with senior leaders and the reflectors highlight socialization as an important issue. Here the report described the use of role models and colleagues who are familiar with particular markets, as training for performing a global role. This is mostly described in the report as a tactic used by larger corporations where such experience is available – unfortunately the HR reflectors have no comments on how this could be utilized on a smaller scale.

On a side note, one of the HR reflectors brings up the issue of the exclusively Danish background of interviewed global managers emphasizing the importance of not neglecting inpatriation of non-home country managers to HQ, which has not been addressed in this study. This reflector underlines that inpatriation is an increasingly important leadership task *“and something many Danish companies are interested in but not terribly good at managing”* (HR reflection 1). Interviewed managers of this study do recognize the importance of this task (see section 3.1 on managers performing a global role in Denmark) and certainly global leadership development efforts should consider the specific needs of this group, which is likely to have been neglected along with specificities of other global manager subgroupings.

#### **6.4 CULTURAL (SELF-)AWARENESS – CULTURE AND BEYOND**

An issue that solicits quite a strong reaction from the HR reflectors is the “Danish leadership as advantage”-argument. Here a number of the HR reflectors suggest that the leaders might be kidding themselves with regard to the importance of a Danish leadership style. HR reflectors, then, mirror some of the HR professionals interviewed in the first data collection round of the study. In this connection, a group of HR reflectors underline that they in their company see Danish leadership as an advantage due to a humanistic empowering approach and have it as a part of company specific leadership principles, which are behavioural guidance and used in performance reviews. Coupled with this they add that there is always a need for local cultural adjustment.

This connects with the issue of specific, national cultural training – which is dismissed by a number of the leaders interviewed. The HR reflectors agree to this and add that what is needed instead is general cultural awareness training. One states that Danes have an overly positive view on Danish culture, which is why we need cultural awareness training, but includes that the report also show that this is clearly not the only thing needed in referral to the specific competencies

Overall, cultural awareness training is emphasized as more suitable than national culture training, because it can cover the complexity of mixed cultures – which is a growing reality in many MNCs. Interestingly, some HR reflectors emphasize that cultural awareness training should be extended to include professional/vocational cultures and geographical cultures. This goes some way in

addressing global managers' view that cultural differences constitute an important global leadership challenge, yet only one of many challenges arising from collaborating with people with a different mindset or background.

## 6.5 MATRIX MANAGEMENT

Just like a number of the global managers interviewed (see Section 4.1), HR reflectors advance the view that dotted-line leadership can be a bigger issue than cultural challenges. Matrix management is a problem but a well-recognized one, one HR reflector emphasizes: *"Some of the findings, like dotted-line being more difficult, are not new and represent a recognized/well documented challenge."* (HR reflection 8). HR reflectors, however, offer little advice or give specific suggestions as to how this should be taken into consideration in global leadership development practice.

One group of HR reflectors does add to the report's section on leadership competencies pointing out that some of these are mainly important because of matrix structure/dotted-line and not a result of leading in a global setting per se. Dotted-line leadership challenges are not particular to working in a global setting, but often take on increased scope and scale in a global setting. Although matrix management is a classical problématique, one HR professional reflects on matrix management and project management that *"[t]hese two areas are deemed very important for the interviewed leaders and it is the two subjects that we use the least time on in our training programs for global leaders. Perhaps we should look a bit more into this. Not necessarily only in our global programs but also when we talk about 'normal' leadership development."* (HR reflection 5).

HR reflectors also point to the importance of clarity of roles and responsibilities, both for direct managers, campus managers, and HR business partners as to avoid problems when leading across competing KPIs being an inherent challenge of matrix management. In doing this, the importance of governance structures for advancing global leadership development and success is emphasized – an area that is usually outside the direct sphere of influence of HR professionals, thus placing demands on HR professionals to engage in matrix management themselves when trying to influence the structural settings surrounding the individual global manager's practice.

This resonates well with some of the global leaders underlining the importance of companies having experience with global work being as or more important than having experienced individual global managers. HR reflectors report that there should be an increased focus on gaining and sharing knowledge of global leaders and how this is approached at an organizational level. In this sense, global leadership competence is not only construed of as a competence of the individual manager, but as an organizational competence of the multinational corporation. In this view, global leadership development is also a question of organizational development.

## 6.6 MANAGEMENT VS. LEADERSHIP

In a similar vein, one HR-reflector points to a lack of differentiation between management and leadership in the study (HR reflection 9). This mirrors the fact that interviewed managers do not themselves refer to such a distinction in their view of their global role. This may stem from the fact that interviews were conducted in the native language of respondents. (A selection criterion for participation in the study was to be a Dane, practicing global leadership in a Danish-based multinational corporation.) The distinction between management and leadership as representing "hard" (i.e., steering, controlling) and "soft" (i.e., motivating, developing) parts of a managerial role is not reflected in Danish, where "ledelse" would be used about both types of tasks.

That said, some global managers do make reference to the fact that the "softer" management tasks in keeping with leading rather than managing are the first to suffer when boundaries and borders make "live" interaction the exception rather than the norm in a global job role. Operating with a management-leadership distinction is an area for further exploration that potentially further adds to the need for customization around a common global leadership base as has been suggested in this study's differentiation perspective of three roles and seven dualities.

## 6.7 DUALITIES AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

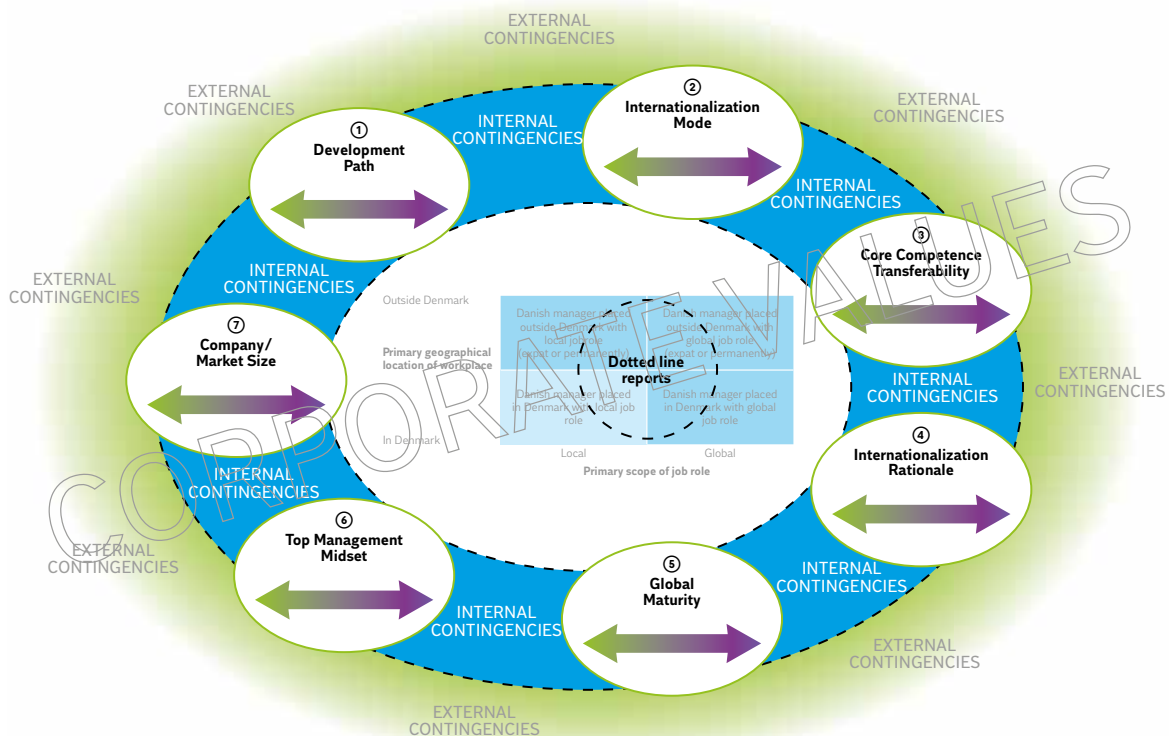
HR reflectors in general found the dualities very useful in understanding the challenges met by global managers: *"The categorization of the different types of leadership practice do indeed make sense. Likewise, the seven dualities, which gives a good framework to understand the global leadership challenge"* (HR reflection 8). One HR reflector adds that in his company they experience differences between market areas, but that their program has not looked at specific differences. Here he believed that the dualities could help them both in recruitment and training of managers: *"The 7 dualities makes perfectly good sense and provides me with a framework of rethinking leadership development in the global context, since the conditions in our different market areas are very different, and our program does not look into these specific differences. As a group we need to look into how this can be taken into consideration when we recruit and train leaders to work globally."* (HR reflection 5).

Another HR reflector points to the fact that many global managers are not up for the task of handling this degree of complexity: *"The seven dualities are definitely relevant and they do demand different styles. Not all leaders can manage this"*. (HR reflection 1). Indeed, some of the HR professionals interviewed on the nature of global leadership in parallel with global leaders pointed to the fact that cognitive capacity of global managers is an area becoming increasingly more important for predicting success in a global role where navigating complexity places high demands on the cognitive ability of managers.

Looking at the internal contingencies presented as seven dualities, it was our expectation that HR reflectors might suggest a host of new dualities or propose a different framing of suggested dualities. Surprisingly, this did not come to pass as most HR reflectors do not make suggestions for amendments. Some do, however, point to the role of corporate values or leadership principles as missing from the picture: "Assuming that most companies have a set of common leadership principles and values, you add on top of this the skills and mindsets needed to do a SPECIFIC global role – AND the different organizational context the business can operate in." (HR reflection 1).

Adding corporate values to the study’s point of departure in three different types of global leadership roles, and the landscape of global leadership laid out by the global managers presented in the conclusion in the previous Chapter 5, produces the following revised model on global leadership. Corporate values are added to the middle of the figure laying the foundation of the three global leadership roles and internal contingencies:

**FIGURE 5:**  
**Global leadership role requirements, internal contingencies**  
**supplemented by corporate values and external contingencies**



As illustrated, HR reflectors suggest that corporate values constitute a base on which the three roles and internal contingencies influence global leadership practice.

(Also added to the revised figure above are external contingencies; a point which we shall return to in 6.7.2 below.)

It is interesting that HR reflectors (mirroring HR-professionals interviewed in parallel with global managers) attach high importance on corporate culture or leadership principles as both glue technology, competitive differentiator, and social infrastructure in multinational corporations when in fact, global managers themselves generally do not advance corporate values as important.

Global managers in the study are indeed preoccupied with transferring knowledge, core competencies, and corporate values throughout the global organization, but they do not mention that corporate values or leadership principles are central to performing a global leadership role. Out of 37 interviewed global managers, only two respondents, from a company with a 30 year legacy of implementing corporate values in a stable growth environment in an industry where compliance to regulation is standard operating procedure for legal reasons, emphasize corporate values or leadership principles as impacting their global leadership practice significantly. This suggests that HR-professionals might overestimate the importance of shared corporate values or the degree to which shared values are widespread and integrated into their corporations.

Corporate culture is a collective phenomenon typically construed of as a set of assumptions guiding thoughts and behaviours which a critical mass of organizational members adhere to – typically paying attention to the role of managers as culture communicators and bearers. Seeing as corporate culture is collective and includes both managers and employees, it is interesting that the values of non-managerial members seem to play little or no role when it comes to global leadership. If leadership is a co-creative endeavour, then leaders and followers perform leadership together. In that sense global managers' suggestions that development of employees is also necessary for global leadership practice should not be dismissed as a bad excuse for assuming managerial responsibility and engaging in personal development, but a reasonable suggestion for co-creative global leadership development.

### **6.7.1. Inside-out vs. outside-in**

Also included in the revised version of the global leadership figure are external contingencies which are conspicuous by their absence in the conducted interviews and therefore do not form part of the seven dualities. These contingencies such as the degree of global maturity in the corporation or its reliance on organic or acquisitive growth as internationalization mode formulated by global managers are all internal to the corporation as is HR-reflectors' emphasis on corporate values and leadership principles.

External contingencies, environmental factors outside the organization that impact on the practice of global leadership, are not represented in the concluding figure presented in Chapter 5. Indeed, factors such as the actions of direct and indirect competitors, technological developments (e.g. robots/automation, social media, mobile trade, crypto currencies), legal framework, political environment, demographic developments (e.g. generation X, Y), general economic trends (e.g. euro crisis, general recession), or megatrends such as urbanization and migration, climate change, economic shifts (BRIC-countries, second-wave countries), war, disease and terrorism are not central to interviewed managers or HR-professionals. Thus, participants of this study predominantly view global leadership from an inside-out perspective, rather than an outside-in perspective.

This may stem from the fact that top managers or board members are not included into the study. Given that top management is responsible for positioning the corporation vis-à-vis competitors and customers and formulating business strategy, it is likely to assume that external contingencies would feature more centrally if top managers had been interviewed. In addition, the internal contingencies mentioned by participants of this study do not, of course, exist independently or in isolation from external contingencies. Indeed, internationalization modes and growth patterns of multinational corporations highlighted as important internal contingencies by global managers also in part mirror the competitive situation in the external environment. In this sense, external contingencies feature if only indirectly.

That said it may give cause for concern that the external environment feature only indirectly and that participants focus on current strategy implementation, global utilization of present core competence and living the existing corporate values of the organization paying little attention to disruption, dynamism, and the complexity that comes with doing business in a VUCA-world (Volatility-Uncertainty-Complexity-Ambiguity).

The holy grail of a "strong corporate culture" of shared values may come to be tantamount to being caught in a trap of past success; core competences and sources of competitive advantage may soon turn into core rigidities in the face of market change. This calls into question the viability of a global leadership development strategy focusing on shared values, as socialization processes are generally slow and even slower in multinational corporations where fewer opportunities for "live" interaction are present. In response to this, some global leadership practitioners suggest that focusing on formulation and development of global leadership behaviours instead of values is a flexible, viable way ahead.

Paying attention to fostering capacity for rapid change as well as facilitating and supporting global leadership learning "on the go" in a VUCA-world seems to be somewhat at odds with "one-size fits all" general leadership training implemented through large company programs. Although the socialization effects of such arrangements should not be underestimated, it seems that truly supporting global managers realizing company objectives calls for a more flexible approach.

This study has presented global leadership as consisting of three roles and seven internal contingencies, calling for even further customization around a common base of global leadership requirements and specificities.

In addition, corporate values have been introduced as framing global leadership practices as well as the importance of matrix relationships and external contingencies and some HR-reflectors have introduced the need to differentiate between management and leadership. This begs the questions if it makes sense to work with generalized corporate global leadership development programs as vehicles for actual training for working a global role? Might realizing that company training programs are well-suited for socialization to corporate values, but not suited for customized global leadership learning, pave the way for attention to flexible, individualized, and just-in-time development arrangements of assisted reflection and learning?

With regard to supporting the everyday practice of global managers, a more individualized approach of mentoring, coaching and assisted networking "on the go" seems timely. Indeed, this study not only revisits global leadership practice from a managerial perspective but also revisits and calls for a revision of the traditional HR-approach to global leadership development.



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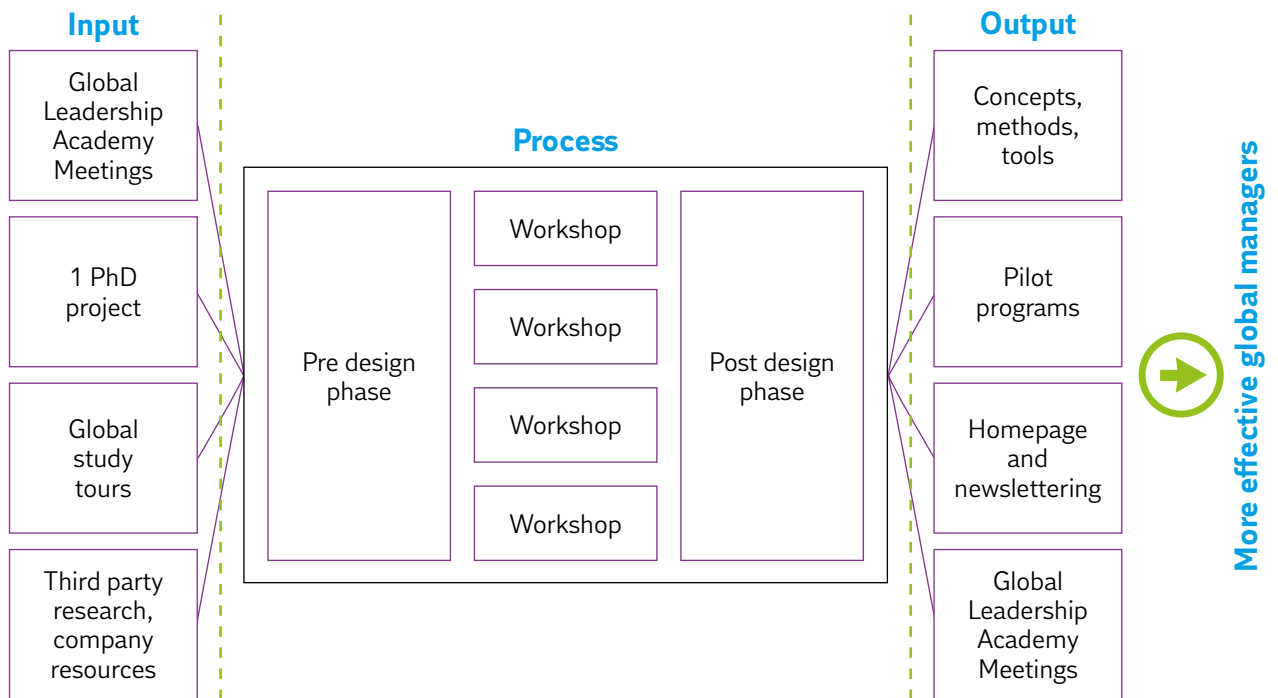
## APPENDIX 1: GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY STUDY

Confederation of Danish Industry is the founding father of the Global Leadership Academy (GLA). Copenhagen Business School (CBS) is the co-founder of Global Leadership Academy and is guarantor for the quality of research and analyses conducted. The Industry Foundation supports the Global Leadership Academy and its research, development, and knowledge dissemination activities for a period of 5 years starting in the spring of 2011 where an application entitled "Global Leadership Competences for the Future" was approved. The project was initiated with the aim of strengthening Danish companies' and managers' ability to seize global business opportunities the rationale being that a number of analyses suggested a big potential in developing the competencies of Danish managers with a view to acting more effectively and successfully in a global setting. The project aims at supporting Danish companies and managers' leadership competences by:

- Identifying critical leadership competencies necessary for global success.
- Develop useful training concepts for global leadership development.
- Disseminate and communicate new knowledge on global leadership through conferences, research reports, business cases, and newsletters generally available to Danish companies.

The activities carried out in the Global Leadership Academy with a view to supporting Danish global managers, their corporations and Danish competitiveness in general and the contribution can be illustrated as follows:

**FIGURE 6:**  
**Global Leadership Academy activities and contributions to Danish MNCs and global managers**



As can be seen from the illustration in the left hand corner, third party research is part of the activities conducted in the Global Leadership Academy. The present report is the sixth research report commissioned by the Global Leadership Academy prepared by independent researchers or Danish universities and business schools. This report adds to and supplements the knowledge already created in connection with the academy on different facets of practicing global leadership from a Danish point of departure. A brief overview of the research conducted under the auspices of the Global Leadership Academy is presented in the following paragraph.

## **CONNECTING THE DOTS – PREVIOUS GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY KNOWLEDGE CREATION**

Previous reports sponsored by and carried out for the Global Leadership Academy can be downloaded from: [di.dk/globalleadershipacademy/reports](http://di.dk/globalleadershipacademy/reports) and include:

### **Danish Leadership Style is a Global Context**

Danish-style leadership – exercised in a global context – can be characterized as democratic and equality oriented as well as informal, open, and trusting; i.e. very similar to its manifestation domestically. In general, Danes have strong international leadership skills when compared to other nationalities. Yet, while Danish leadership can be extremely effective in some situations, it can be outright destructive in others. Researchers from Aarhus University have identified both upsides and downsides of Danish-style leadership when practiced in an international work setting.

### **The Challenge of Cultivating a Global Mindset**

A global mindset is *“one that combines an openness to and awareness of diversity across cultures and markets with a propensity and ability to synthesize across this diversity.”* This definition is the outset for a more thorough investigation into global mindset of how it is established and developed among a group of highly mobile global talents. The research was conducted by post.doc Marianne Storgaard and post.doc Irene Smith.

### **Trust and Conflict in Global Work**

The ability to manage issues related to trust and conflict is fundamental for the success of Danish professionals working in international job roles. However, trust is not “just trust” and conflict is not “just conflict.” Several different types of trust and conflict exist, all of which have a different impact on global collaboration and, accordingly, need to be managed differently. The aim of this report is to raise Danish leaders’ general awareness of issues related to trust and conflict in global work and provide tangible managerial advice in order to increase the effectiveness in global work. Researchers from Aarhus University and the University of Southern Denmark have carried out the study based on both quantitative and qualitative data.

### **Virtual Collaboration**

The amount of virtual collaboration in international firms is growing, yet very little research on global virtual work has been conducted – in particular in a Danish organizational context. The purpose of this study was to understand how temporal dispersion, cultural/linguistic differences, technological challenges and distance leadership all influences global virtual collaboration. The

results build upon 110 qualitative interviews and observations in three international organizations, as well as quantitative data from three separate surveys in different Danish owned international organizations. The research was conducted by Professor Jakob Lauring, Aarhus University, and Assistant Professor Anders Klitmøller, University of Southern Denmark.

### **Global Leadership Behaviour**

Research conducted by Aarhus University has identified two main leadership styles that characterize successful global leaders – they call it an alignment-oriented and a diversity-oriented style. Both styles have their advantages and disadvantages, but there is potential for achieving even better organizational results by strategically shifting between the two; and *“it is this leadership agility that can make all the difference,”* the researchers from Aarhus Business School conclude.

### **Global Mindset as Managerial Meta-competence and Organizational Capability**

One of the Global Leadership Academy members, Solar A/S, has hosted an industrial PhD research project on global mindset as managerial competence and organizational capability:

Nielsen, R.K. (2014): Global Mindset as Managerial Meta-competence and Organizational Capability: Boundary-crossing Leadership Cooperation in the MN. The Case of “Group Mindset” in Solar A/S. PhD Series 24.2014, Doctoral School of Organization & Management Studies, Copenhagen Business School.

The PhD dissertation: [openarchive.cbs.dk/handle/10398/8974](http://openarchive.cbs.dk/handle/10398/8974)

A short 2-minute video-version of the dissertation:  
[tv.di.dk/video/9006603/rikke-kristine-nielsen](http://tv.di.dk/video/9006603/rikke-kristine-nielsen)

## APPENDIX 2: ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**RIKKE KRISTINE NIELSEN** MSc (Int.), PhD in global strategy and leadership, assistant professor in organization communication at the Department of Communication, Aalborg University Copenhagen.

Rikke's research interest and work centres on leadership, strategy execution, human resource management and collaboration in multinational corporations (MNCs). A particular focus area is global mindset as both an individual and organizational competence for successfully handling the implications of globalized patterns of work and business. In this respect, Rikke has worked with a number of MNCs on the practical consequences of leading and collaborating with a global mindset. Also, Rikke is keenly interested in co-creation of knowledge between academia and practice and in exploring ways in which research can be designed and carried out with a view to both academic and practical value creation.

Prior to embarking on an academic career, Rikke has 10 years of experience with leadership development working with research communication in the small e-entrepreneur LeadingCapacity A/S – a provider of research-based blended learning on human resource management and leadership/management ([leadingcapacity.dk](http://leadingcapacity.dk)). Rikke has been a business columnist for the past 10 years and has broad experience as a speaker and workshop facilitator within a number of people leadership and management topics. From 2007, while also working in her position with LeadingCapacity A/S, Rikke has been employed as a research assistant and subsequently part-time associate professor with the Department of Organization, Copenhagen Business School. Here, she has taught a range of BA and MSc courses on international human resource management and global leadership.

Practical experience of cooperating across borders and boundaries has been part of both Rikke's private and professional life. Since the beginning of her work life, she has spent five years outside her native country of Denmark and has lived, worked, and studied in the EMEA-region (Germany, Turkey, Spain, Morocco and Tunisia).

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**JENS BOYE NIELSEN** MSc in Anthropology, research associate with the Global Leadership Academy. Jens has ample experience with anthropological fieldwork and processing of qualitative data. Prior to being affiliated with the Global Leadership Academy, Jens was working on his thesis on perceptions of value creation in the production and delivery of food for elderly in the Copenhagen area. With regard to international experience, Jens has been a development worker in Nepal for six months.



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# GLOBAL LEADERS AND HR PROFESSIONALS ON GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

**”In the Middle East, you have to swallow a camel or two a day.”**

— *Global manager*

**”Sheer luck beats bad leadership any day – but you may be running out of luck ...”**

— *Global HR professional*

**”Top management does not understand exactly what I do in terms of cultivating and building up foreign markets.”**

— *Global manager*

**”I guess it has been the most traumatic experience of my life, but I said to myself: ’You are not giving up, you are not going home!’”**

— *Global manager*

**”HR lacks international experience and the ability to reinvent global learning as it often consists of people that has never been abroad.”**

— *Global HR professional*

**”If you want to operate the way you do in Ikast, then build in Ikast. Do not build in Vietnam or Laos or similar places.”**

— *Global manager*

**”I have arranged ’Do not despair over the fact that you have a weird Danish manager’-courses.”**

— *Global manager*

**”Just because you are Indian does not necessarily mean that you prefer an Indian leadership style.”**

— *Global HR professional*

