

LEADERSHIP AS LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCT -A HOLISTIC VIEW OF LEADERSHIP

Margit Raich^a
Hans H. Hinterhuber^b

^{a,b}Department of General and Tourism Management,
Centre for Strategic Management and Leadership,
University of Innsbruck, Austria

^a margit.raich@uibk.ac.at

^b hans.hinterhuber@uibk.ac.at

Session H-1

Abstract

Organizations are defined as living social systems. People form systems of interactions. Leadership is also the result of patterned sequential behaviour of leaders and followers. The perceptions of leadership in organizations are based on these interactions and in this connection on the individual experiences, knowledge and values of each participant. To generate knowledge about leadership, a deeper insight as to why people are motivated to act and react in the social, cultural and political context is required. The presentation of leadership as linguistic construct occurs with verbal data by the people involved. A holistic view of leadership helps to understand the idea of these values and their linkage to organizational processes.

Keywords: Leadership, Interaction, Construct, Linguistic Analysis.

LEADERSHIP AS LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCT - A HOLISTIC VIEW OF LEADERSHIP

Margit Raich

Hans H. Hinterhuber

Department of General and Tourism Management,
Centre for Strategic Management and Leadership,
University of Innsbruck, Austria
margit.raich@uibk.ac.at
hans.hinterhuber@uibk.ac.at

Abstract

Organizations are defined as living social systems. People form systems of interactions. Leadership is also the result of patterned sequential behaviour of leaders and followers. The perceptions of leadership in organizations are based on these interactions and in this connection on the individual experiences, knowledge and values of each participant. To generate knowledge about leadership, a deeper insight as to why people are motivated to act and react in the social, cultural and political context is required. The presentation of leadership as linguistic construct occurs with verbal data by the people involved. A holistic view of leadership helps to understand the idea of these values and their linkage to organizational processes.

Keywords: Leadership, Interaction, Construct, Linguistic Analysis

1. Introduction

Leadership is one of the most but in the same time one of the less examined fields in management research. Over the years leadership became more and more a consumer good in the sense of literary maintenance. Leadership is thus stylized to a myth, which shifts humans with the consumption of the literature into a symbolic leader. The readers are invited to be a part of an imaginary world, which does not always correspond to the leadership reality (Sims and Lorenzi, 1992). Nevertheless the different leadership concepts as well as theories are for the description and explanation

of leadership processes of relevance. In this connection it is important to win insights into the behaviour of leaders and followers in the context of the environmental conditions.

In former and also current leadership theories especially the missing integration of leadership problems posed in organizations is criticized. The main problem is that leadership research has tended to favour only a small number of aspects. They do not pay attention to the contextualization. Leadership does not exist thus in a vacuum. Osborn et al. (2002) demands a radical change in the view of perspective of leadership, since leaders have to operate in very different environments. The consideration of the specific leadership context allows better insights into concrete problem areas in leadership. For example system-oriented approaches do not regard organizations as isolated entities, but as transformation systems of resources, which convert internal resources like work, ideas, raw materials or capital into outputs, i.e. into goods, services, secured jobs etc.

On the other hand leadership research was strongly limited to the individual, by referring either to the leader or the follower in the sense of an individual person (Fairhurst, 2001). Khandwalla (1977) calls organizations as open and/or living systems which are characterized by interactions. Both systems and subsystems are social units, in which humans interact and co-operate. Since some years an increasing interest is recognizable in social processes, i.e. in the interaction between leader and follower. Leadership is seen as an activity based on mutual relations.

For research the question must be posed, which factors have to be account for, for the analysis of leadership processes in enterprises. Leadership carries out itself in organizations and is the result of relations between events, perceptions and expectations of people. These interactions show the specific circumstances of leadership in the special period-space-context of organizations and lead away from the question, why and how leadership develops, to the question, why and how leadership happens in an organization (Sjöstrand and Tyrstrup, 2001). These questions lead to the social constructions of the members due to their experiences across time, which is formed by cognitive and mental processes and which arise by the characteristics and expirations in an organization. The characteristics of individual organizations also cause specific leadership problems.

The orientation in organizations as living social systems, where people form a system of interaction leads to linguistic relations. The world is described by language. But words are not the picture of the reality. Because of their use in social exchange they

gain importance. Finally the people live in linguistic relations, as also leaders and followers do. The leadership reality is constructed by these relations. Under these criteria the social factors may not be ignored. Constructions are based on experiences and interactions between individuals and groups, to whom a person belongs. To gain insights in leadership relations researchers are able to take care of the knowledge of these members. Because of their experiences with the daily routine in their working environment, people know best about the specific aspects of leadership.

Leadership research deals with unusual problems which cannot be categorized. There is the demand to rethink traditional techniques and methods in research. The development of new traditions could be an answer to questions of that complex phenomenon (Easterby-Smith et. al, 2002).

Leadership research requires in-depth exploration of peoples´ values, beliefs, desires, needs and fears. A deeper insight as to why people are motivated to act and react in the social, cultural and political context should be analyzed by qualitative research. Löckenhoff (2000) argues that quantitative methods, by inherent restrictions, cannot always procure this kind of insight. The analysis of leadership processes with the qualitative method GABEK refers to experienced and perceived interactions based on the relations between leaders and followers. For each organization – out of the interviews done with leaders and followers – a leadership map would be constructed which represents the specific situation regarding leadership.

2. The Complexity of Leadership

2.1. The idea of Leadership

„There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept“ (Stogdill, 1974:7). His words still have validity. Since that time many researchers have undertaken the attempt to define leadership. If someone wants to describe the term of leadership, the numerous definitions do not always deliver satisfying results, because leadership is not able to be understood by the use of abstract definitions (Neuberger, 2002). According to Newman und Chaharbaghi (2000) leadership has to fulfil a matter of fact which lies in a certain logic: Leadership premises inferiors. If there are no inferiors, there is no context for leadership.

Besides the great number of studies and definitions of leadership "several elements can be identified as central to the phenomena of leadership" (Northouse, 1997: 3-4):

- Leadership is a process and involves influence
Leadership is a social influence process in things getting done with people.
- Leadership occurs within a group
Leaders are able to realize their vision with the help of their teams. Leaders have to motivate and inspire them in producing first-rate performance
- Leadership involves goal attainment
Teams try to achieve the desired results. Leadership is required because someone has to set the direction and point the way.

Most definitions of leadership refer to the process whereby people influence other people in order to reach certain organizational and/or individual goals. In this connection it is not only required to develop visions, to create values and to observe a direction as a leader. It is also important that the leader keeps a role model for their followers (Hinterhuber, 2003). The different views of emphasis led to a large number of leadership concepts.

2.2. Dilemma in Leadership Research

Theories of leadership differ on the chosen main emphasis and research methods. But they have one in common: The search for indicators "What makes up a good leader?" An attempt of the representation of leadership theories proves as no easy venture. A classification can be made on the basis of historical criteria. In most approaches the main concern of researchers has been leadership effectiveness.

In the early 20th century leadership research was focused on the trait approach. The essential attributes that were examined were traits, personality and characteristics. In this connection the Great-Man-Theories argue that certain people are born with leadership traits. In addition these models are strongly leader-centred. The development of leadership research showed that the exclusive orientation towards characteristics is not sufficient for the explanation of leadership success however. The trait approach was replaced in the late 1940s by the leader style or behavior. This approach states, it is what leaders do that make them effective. These theories assume that the desired results can be caused by purposeful actions of the leaders. A leader with a certain leadership style is able to effect a certain behavior of the followers. From

the missing attention to situative variables and the criticism that a leader does not use the same leadership style with each follower and not over time, the contingency approach developed in the late 1960s that defines the situation as an important factor for leadership success. One of the most famous works was done by Fiedler (1967) who distinguishes between two types of leadership styles: the task-oriented and the relationship-oriented one. He argues that the leadership efficacy depends on certain aspects of a given situation, e.g. Task and power structure, quality of relations between leaders and followers etc. Other models followed that tried to identify situational conditions, under which a leader's task and/or interpersonal-oriented behaviours were effective or ineffective. But also these theories lost on attractiveness. The empirical studies were limited to small groups and have ignored the larger issue of leading the entire organization. As a consequence, the early 1980s marked the emergence of a new leadership perspective, the so called "New Leadership Approach" focuses on the leader-follower relationships. The success or failure of leaders is dependent on the followers' and/or leaders' perceptions. Different kinds of leadership theories have been developed and are still being developed based on these basic principles e.g. transactional, transformational and charismatic leadership as well as social exchange theories or attributional approaches.

The so called "traditional leadership theories" are criticized because of their close and sterile viewpoints. It was however often very restrictively treated. The results only contribute in a limited way to a better accomplishment of leadership problems in the real world of business. The limitations of the existing leadership models can be explained by different aspects.

It is noted, that leadership has come under increasing criticism because of the strong concentration on the individual leader (Meindl, 1990). There is the lack of follower-centred approaches whereas followers are attributed a passive and leaders an active role in the mutual influence process. Leadership is a social process. Naturally it also applies the actors in the context of leader-follower relations. In this connection it must not be forgotten, that the human acting is characterized by finality, i.e. there are intentions, goals and motives behind each action which make the analysis of leadership processes much more complex.

Most theories mark themselves by conceptual weakness and missing empirical support and predominantly orient themselves on leadership effectiveness. A majority of the results stand in contradiction or is not conclusive. Most investigations are accomplished in small groups which work differently to larger groups like the whole

organizations. These studies stress certain elements of leadership, e.g. Goal formation processes in small groups must be treated differently than in a large organization. The leader-follower relation has to be regarded in a micro and macro perspective, i.e. including the organization as entire building (e.g. firm's structure, history and culture) as well as the attention to specific market conditions, which affect the enterprise.

The researchers very often work within a narrow field of leadership. The outsourcing of variables and the orientation to a small number of central aspects allow a limited explainableness and foreseeableness of actions. This leads to the fact that most leadership theories use only a limited quantity of variables (Yukl and Van Fleet, 1992). There are numerous examples for different kinds of dualism out of this limited quantity of variables. By dualism we understand the confrontation of two apparently opposite elements. Researchers use opposite basic principles for the explanation of leadership behaviour: autocratic versus participative leadership, management versus leadership, transactional versus transformational leadership, egoism versus altruism etc. Since both parts cause themselves mutually, they are also equivalent, i.e. one is not more important than the other one. But not all leadership researchers consider this idea. Some of them represent extreme positions in the sense of „either-or“. For example some researcher holds the opinion of an egoistically oriented leader in the discussion of altruism and egoism. The dichotomies described, allows one to win insights into the leadership process, but they simplify a very complex phenomenon and promote the formation of stereotypes (Avolio and Locke, 2002).

3. Leadership Based on Relations

The management literature refers to a multitude of models and theories of leadership based on a one-way influence process of leaders. Their contents are leadership traits, leadership behaviours, leadership styles, and finally the way how leaders are able to manipulate followers. This approach leads to an instrumental view of relationships between leaders and followers. Organizations are seen as physical entities independent of the actors and the social system.

Barnes und Kriger (1986) state that it is needed to move away from the point of view to declare leaders as only the decision makers. It is essential to move from a hierarchic leadership to a network leadership. In this case leadership should be based on a two-way mutual interaction where leaders and followers are seen as equivalent partners. These relations between the subjects are grown historically and culturally. "The focus of leadership is not the individual, but in the patterned sequential behaviour of leaders

and constituents who form an interactional system” (Fairhurst 2001:383). The whole influence process should be analyzed in the interaction between the mental (cognitive) and the behavioural aspects of social influence processes of both parties. We have to imagine, that the influence process does not only work on the level of direct and face-to-face influence phenomena. Influence also works at cognitive, group, social, cultural or organizational levels (Forgas and Williams, 2002).

The understanding of the world and people are social artefacts. Social constructions are of linguistic nature based on a theory of relations which take for granted that the reality is created by dialogue (Gergen, 1999). People live in linguistic relations. The construction of the leadership world arises from the linguistic interactions between leaders and followers. The individual understanding of leadership is transmitted on a collective level. Based on the reality constructions of the individuals a collective understanding of the leadership world is created. In this connection a certain action, referred to as leadership behaviour, is recognized. The result is a certain leadership culture, which is shown as culture-caused leadership behaviour in an organization (Burla et al. 1995). The context, in which the interactions between leaders and followers expire, diversify depending on the organization (e.g. organisational dynamics like cultures, sub-cultures, working groups, processes, organisational structures, products and services etc.).

Hosking und Morley (1991) raise the relations between people to a higher level by building a relation to the context itself: „(...) that the relationship between a person and a context involves accommodation (changing oneself) and assimilation (changing the context). This means that people are both products of their contexts and participants in the shaping of those contexts. They act in contexts and they act upon contexts at the same time. The relationship is one of mutual creation” (Hosking and Morley 1991:5). Because of this autonomy the members create their own meaning that is affiliated with joined dependence. As a consequence a spontaneous order is created. In a world of rapid change the quality of interaction between members are the key for survival and the success of an organization. Organizations are composed of a multiplicity of actors who are dependent on each other to carry out its activities. There is the need for intelligent social interaction, because people need help and support from each other to realize a common interest (Hosking and Morley, 1991). For the heterogeneous activities there is the need of an organization and an order to structure and obtain collective actions.

Leadership is understood as the creation, encouragement and support of expectations, perspectives and activities in organizations, which are implemented by different interacting individuals (Sjörstrand and Tyrstrup, 2001).

In this connection it is important to turn one's attention to the leadership analysis in the interplay and structuring of

- human being (individual),
- human actions (interactions) and
- organization (structure, culture etc.).

This interplay has to be taken into consideration, by asking leaders and followers about their perceptions of the leadership relations in their organization, how they intervene in running processes and which experiences, beliefs, thoughts, wishes and feelings are connected with them. Out of the specific context of each case study different reality constructions of the leadership world arises. The results serve as the base for the identification of strengths and weaknesses as well as for the deflection of measures in the enterprises.

4. Leadership as Linguistic Construct

The main emphasis of the study was, to picture the leadership reality in each enterprise based on the answers of the involved actors. The objective was to gain new insights and a better understanding of the examined leadership situations and processes. It is useful to structure the knowledge, the experiences and cognitions of the participants to derive a holistic view of leadership.

In two case studies 46 people with and without leadership responsibility were interviewed about the leadership behavior in their organizations in summer 2003.

Companies	Leaders ¹	Followers
Expert organization (29 people)	15	15
Medium-sized organization (15 people)	11	5

Table 1: Sample

¹ 90 % of the leaders operate in the middle and lower management. This fact has to be taken into consideration, because these are people who are, because of their position, in so-called "sandwich-positions". They are at the same time leader and follower.

The interviewees from different structural levels were asked in form of open questions about the tasks of their departments, their individual activities, the ways of collaboration and leadership. In this connection people talked about their experiences, meanings as well as their opinions. The duration of the interviews was about 30 to 50 minutes. The interviews were transcribed. In the next step the texts were analyzed with the GABEK method.

4.1. The GABEK Method

GABEK (Ganzheitliche Bewältigung von Komplexität), developed by © Josef Zelger, is a tool to analyze textual qualitative data. It is based on the theory of “Wahrnehmungsgestalten” (perceptive appearances) by Stumpf (1939), which has been transferred to a theory of linguistic gestalten, designed by Zelger (1999). To this end it is necessary to structure the experiences, knowledge and expressed perceptions of participants, which allows a comprehensive view of individual aspects of the particular situation investigated (Zelger, 2000).

The process of analyzing data is carried out through the development of a rule-based network of data which takes both syntax and semantics into account (Zelger, 1999). The computer implementation *WinRelan* (Windows Relations Analysis) supports the analysis of the unstructured qualitative data. GABEK allows a transparent organization of knowledge based on the natural language processing of individual statements.

The unordered knowledge of the members of the organization is collected and systematized by different procedures. Based on the “(...) specific philosophical concept of comprehension and explanation (...)”, the verbal information is represented as a formal indexing system, which can be used for the representation of linguistic knowledge in different forms (Zelger and Oberprantacher, 2002:4) such as

- conceptual structures to analyze notions within a social context and for the development of mind maps based on verbal information,
- statistical data related to the verbal information,
- assessments as a result of extracting and converting positive, negative and ambivalent evaluations,
- causal assumptions presented in the form of cause/effect graphs and
- linguistic gestalten designed as a result of meaningful text groups containing 3 to 9 text units that are coherent and fulfill syntactic and

semantic rules; the final result is an organizational tree which shows a hierarchical order of organization.

Qualitative research is very often criticized because of the lack of objectivity in the research process. With the support of the software *WinRelan* each step of the data analysis is transparent (e.g. the researchers' syntactic and semantic work, the evaluation and coding processes). The whole process is rule-based and the rules must be observed (Zelger, 1994). The system offers the possibility to test hypothesis and to model and develop concepts or theories. Pictures show evaluations as well as relations between variables on every level. It allows one to maintain the data during the entire analysis, as the researchers are working with the original data. Writing of summaries comprises the respondents' original statements (Buber and Kraller, 2000).

Method	Theory	Questions	Data
GABEK© (Ganzheitliche Bewältigung von Komplexität)	Theory of Linguistic Gestalten	Questions for mental processes, values, attitudes, experiences of individuals and groups	Linguistic information in verbal or written form

Table 2: The GABEK Method (Ganzheitliche Bewältigung von Komplexität)

The following remarks refer to the explanation of one central analysis step, the design building process (of gestalten) that allows a hierarchical order to be built up, which represents the relevant themes in the organization regarding leadership. "A linguistic gestalt is an abstract identity. It presupposes grouping in parts. These parts are statements (i.e. relations between concepts). The linguistic gestalt can be distinguished from the larger linguistic context through the interrelation of the statements with each other." (Zelger and Operprantacher, 2002:57)

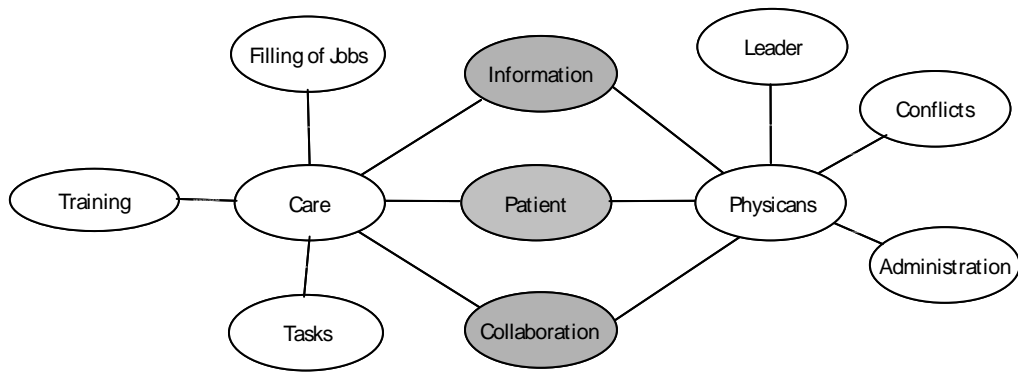


Figure 1: Example for Connections of two Sentences to a Formal Structure

In a formal structure sentences are presented as quantity of lexical expressions. The connections between the sentences arise at least from one expression which they all have in common. With the support of the Software *WinRelan* the strongest connected statements could be emphasized. These are sentences, where the expressions connected occur frequently (Zelger, 1999). Figure 1 shows two sentences that are connected by the key concept “Patient”, “Information” and “Collaboration”. In the group each sentence has to contain at least three concepts, which also occurs in other sentences of the same group (Zelger and Oberprantacher, 2002).

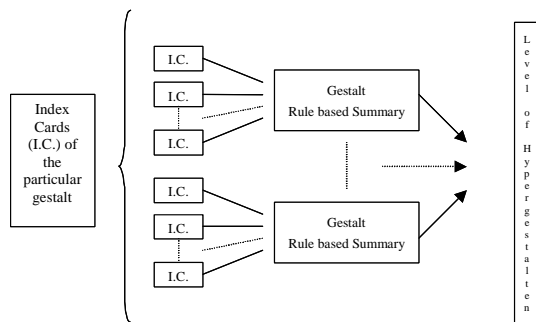


Figure 2: The Principle of Building the Gestalten Tree
(Buber/Kraler, 2002, p. 122)

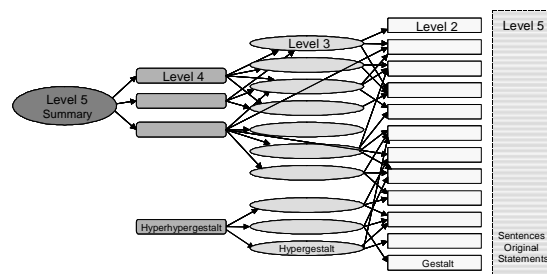


Figure 3: The Gestalten Tree

The process is presented in Figure 2 that is carried out as long as the rules are complied with. As result of the gestalt-building process, the gestalten tree is developed, which is presented in Figure 3. The gestalt-building process is done again on the next levels. As a result we get summaries of summaries, first hyper-gestalten and in the next step hyper-hyper-gestalten.

4.2. Construction of Leadership in the Expert Organization

The first company is an expert organization, a hospital in Austria, which is a regional and a university hospital at the same time. The regional hospital is responsible for the patient supply, the university hospital for research and teaching. Numerous federal and regional regulations affect the events in the hospital (e.g. size of the company, operating expenditures, personnel planning, etc.). The associated different interests are the basis for tensions in the organization again and again (e.g. different federal and regional labour agreements). The personnel structure is characterized by a three-way arrangement in occupational groups: care, physicians and employees in administration. Each group is responsible for certain activities. Last year the organization was confronted with reorganization, measures in process optimization and quality assurance as well as programs for cost reduction in connection with personnel. There is also a demand for more customer and employee orientation. The complexity of the hospital combined with the different interests make the organization and planning complicated. It must not be forgotten that the hospital has to fulfill central social tasks, which must be reconciled with the demands of the responsible financial bodies.

Figure 4 shows the gestalten tree based on the interviews of the 30 people in the hospital. Based on the design of the gestalten 9 hyper-gestalten were formed: "Coordination Activities", "Competences", "Holding", "Leadership Barriers", "Staff Satisfaction", "Executive Functions", "Patient Care", "Attractiveness Hospital" and "Development Enterprise". From these hyper-gestalten 3 hyper-hyper-gestalten, the "Organizational Structures", "Leadership" and the "Object of Enterprise" were constructed. The hyper-gestalten are collected into higher order to hyper-hyper-gestalten applying the same rules again.

As an example for the description of this case we use the hyper-hyper-gestalt "Organizational Structures". The summary reads as follows:

The organization itself and the collaboration among the members is affected by some specific organizational circumstances.

The hyper-gestalt "Holding" as part of the "Organizational Structures" is summarized as follows:

The Holding plays an important role in the company, because it offers diverse supporting activities for the staff (e.g. Personnel Department or Quality Management). But it is also the source for numerous obstacles and obligations (e.g. power structures or shortcomings in budget or personnel). This fact makes the management of the whole organization much more difficult.

The hyper-gestalt *“Holding”* is the result of different gestalten:

“Responsibility”: A problem is the existing class-thinking of the occupational groups that is the source for the many problems regarding competences. Activities are delivered to others, which do not belong to their actual scopes.

“Constraints”: For the management different constraints represent obstacles in the practice again and again. It concerns to a large extent financial obligations.

“Power”: The power distribution is complex. Leaders who only want to take advantage of their positions to demonstrate power is felt negatively. In connection with power oriented leaders are also those people who take on work to systematically expand their power in the enterprise. Conflicts are not always discussed openly but rather run afoul by political power-games.

“Hierarchy”: The hierarchical system is stambed by the trinity, i.e. by three occupational groups - nurses, people from administration and physicians – which are the reasons for many conflicts, tensions and ambiguity.

“Writing”: In the company there is a high degree of formalism in the collaboration, which is necessary from the view of the concerned people. Orders or bringing in requests have to take place in writing. In addition, this writing can be felt as very impersonal, particularly if this writing is used to communicate exclusively with coworkers.

The gestalten tree of the hospital shows the different connections between the different levels of gestalten that are characterized by certain themes. With the help of the summarized texts of the gestalten, the whole enterprise could be analyzed in the structure itself, for example how the gestalten are/ are not connected with each other.

For an example the gestalt *“To Turn Workings”* is part of the hyper-gestalt *“Competences”*. That means that there is a culture that people do not take care of their tasks and prefer to put off tasks. On the other hand many people keep things to themselves because of different reasons and anxieties. Or for an other example the *“Development of the Enterprise”* is seen as a task of the *“Board of Directors”* who have to consider the future direction of the hospital. A clear articulated *“Strategy”* supports this development. But also *“Transparency”* is required in the meaning of open communication; so that the other members know about their journey and can align their activities. Finally *“Projects”* in the house support the development of the organization, e.g. in the fields of information technology, customer satisfaction etc.

Regarding *“Leadership”* the *“Leadership Barriers”* are mentioned. People very often feel alone (*“To Leave Alone”*) in the sense of a lack of moral support and confirmation of the work from the leaders. *“Anxiety”* is mentioned in connection with appraisal interviews, a new personnel tool in the enterprise, but also in connection with pressure (e.g. cost and personnel reductions) the middle management is exposed by the top management. This pressure is passed to the employees in the lower levels and produces insecurity.

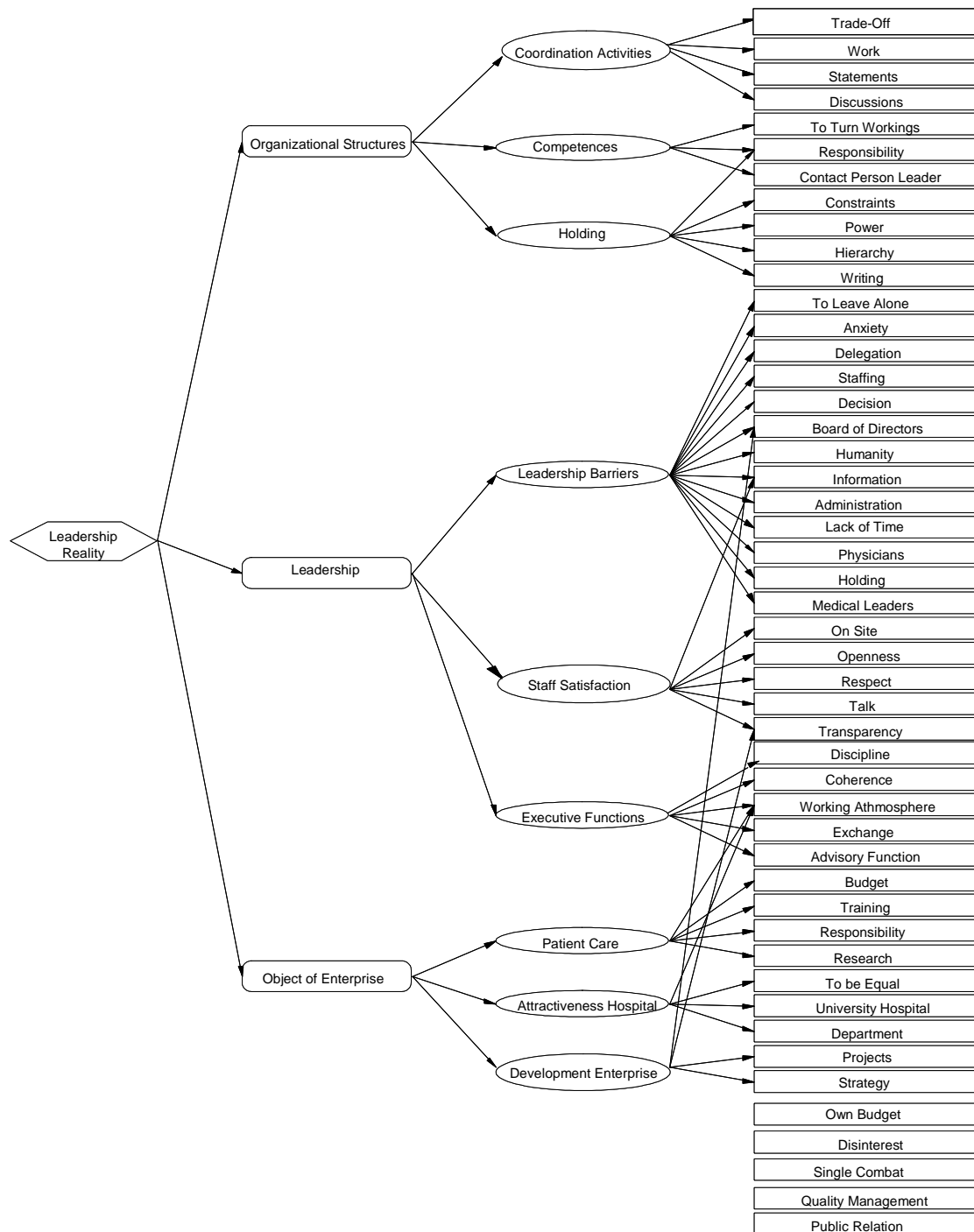


Figure 4: The Gestalten Tree – The Expert Organization²

² The gestalten tree of the hospital presented is the result of one half of the whole tree.

In this way the whole organization is able to be analyzed regarding different themes. In Figure 4 we also find gestalten that are listed below without any connections to other levels in the gestalten tree (e.g. *Own Budget*, *Disinterest* etc.). In these cases the rules couldn't be fulfilled on the higher level. Those gestalten are seen as gentle signals; they are not that important in the eyes of the interviewed people but shouldn't be ignored in the analysis of processes because they can eventually provide an informative basis for a certain business process.

4.3. Construction of Leadership in the Medium-Sized Enterprise

The enterprise is an international-acting, medium-sized enterprise in Austria. For more than 30 years the organization has noted a continuous growth in the enterprise size as well as in the sales and market shares. The founder of the enterprise still plays a decisive role; he is CEO of the whole organization, the holding. Together with his partners he embarks both in the past and in the future strategy to ensure a place among the global players. The enterprise produces its own products and distributes other goods of the same industry. Its design and production occurs by external co-operation partners. The enterprise was situated and still rests in a dynamic market which is characterized by changes, competition and cost pressure. The increasing stress of competition and the changing consumer behaviour was the reason for the sale of one business unit. The decision was based on the analysis of its future perspectives and because of the danger of losing the whole organisation at a later date. The sale involved the lay-off of a quarter of the crew. At the same time the top management reorganized the company which was also connected with notices. These processes caused negative attitudes by the remaining staff and also by the population in the region. Parallel a new international holding structure was built up. Because of the existing competences and technologies new business units were created. Since 2002 the enterprise has rested in a phase of consolidation and is able to refer to growth in sales volume.

Figure 5 shows the gestalten tree based on the interviews of the 16 people. Based on the gestalten 12 hyper-gestalten were formed: "*Familiar Enterprise*", "*Motivation*", "*Coherence*", "*Career*", "*Spin-Off Business Unit*", "*Employee Satisfaction*", "*Market Attractiveness*", "*Leadership Barriers*", "*Transparency*", "*Entrepreneurship*" and "*Give Direction*" and "*Changes*". From these hyper-gestalten 5 hyper-hyper-gestalten, the "*Corporate Culture*", "*Issues*", "*Corporate Attractiveness*", "*Leadership*" and "*Future*"

Oriented Management” were constructed. Also in this case the hyper-gestalten are collected into higher order to hyper-hyper-gestalten applying the same rules again.

As an example for the description of this case the hyper-hyper-gestalt “*Corporate Culture*” is used. The summary reads as follows:

The corporate philosophy is that only satisfied organization members of staff are able to perform services and to contribute to the success of the enterprise. This philosophy is stamped by the founder and is seen in the existing culture.

In the next step, the hyper-gestalt “*Familiar Enterprise*” is summarized as follows:

Because of the familiar situation the staff get the feeling of not standing alone. At any time support is provided, which is not always the case in larger enterprises. The people feel comfortable with that situation.

The hyper-gestalt “*Familiar Enterprise*” is the result of different gestalten:

“CEO”: The enterprise is associated 100% with the CEO. He is the person who forms the organization in different areas, e.g. the interaction, the way of communication, the working atmosphere etc..

“To Know People”: The size of the enterprise is personal in order to get to know most people well or moderately. It goes up to the CEO. The good subsistence amongst each other naturally promotes the working climate.”

“Openness”: Openness is the indicator for successful leadership in the enterprise. This openness is lived forwards by the top management.

“On Site”: The CEO does not live in an ivory tower although there is a danger because of the variety of the required activities he has to occupy.

“Cooperativ”: The cooperation in the organisation works well and is the basis for the collaboration.

“Non-Hierarchic-Thinkin”g: There is no classical hierarchical thinking in the meaning of traditional organisational structures. There is a flat hierarchy. This fact is seen as a positive factor for the communication and motivation of the employees. Thus a climate of straightforwardness is created.

“Long Membership”: Long-time employees help themselves in the case of problems. They dispose of the required freedoms and experiences to solve these problems. They know about the enterprise and they know whom they should contact when necessary.

In this case we find other themes which are of relevance in the eyes of the acting participants because of the historical development and past events. For an example the “*Motivation*” of the staff is on the other hand because of the “*Products*”, because they meet the spirit of young people. The innovative and novel products enthuse the people. Every member has the possibility to enhance personally in the company. They are able to attend courses and other events. But the initiative must derive from the employees. If someone decides for “*Training*” he will get the necessary support in the

organization. The “Freedom” of leaders and employees in the exercise of their activities is estimated because they have the possibility to form the organization.

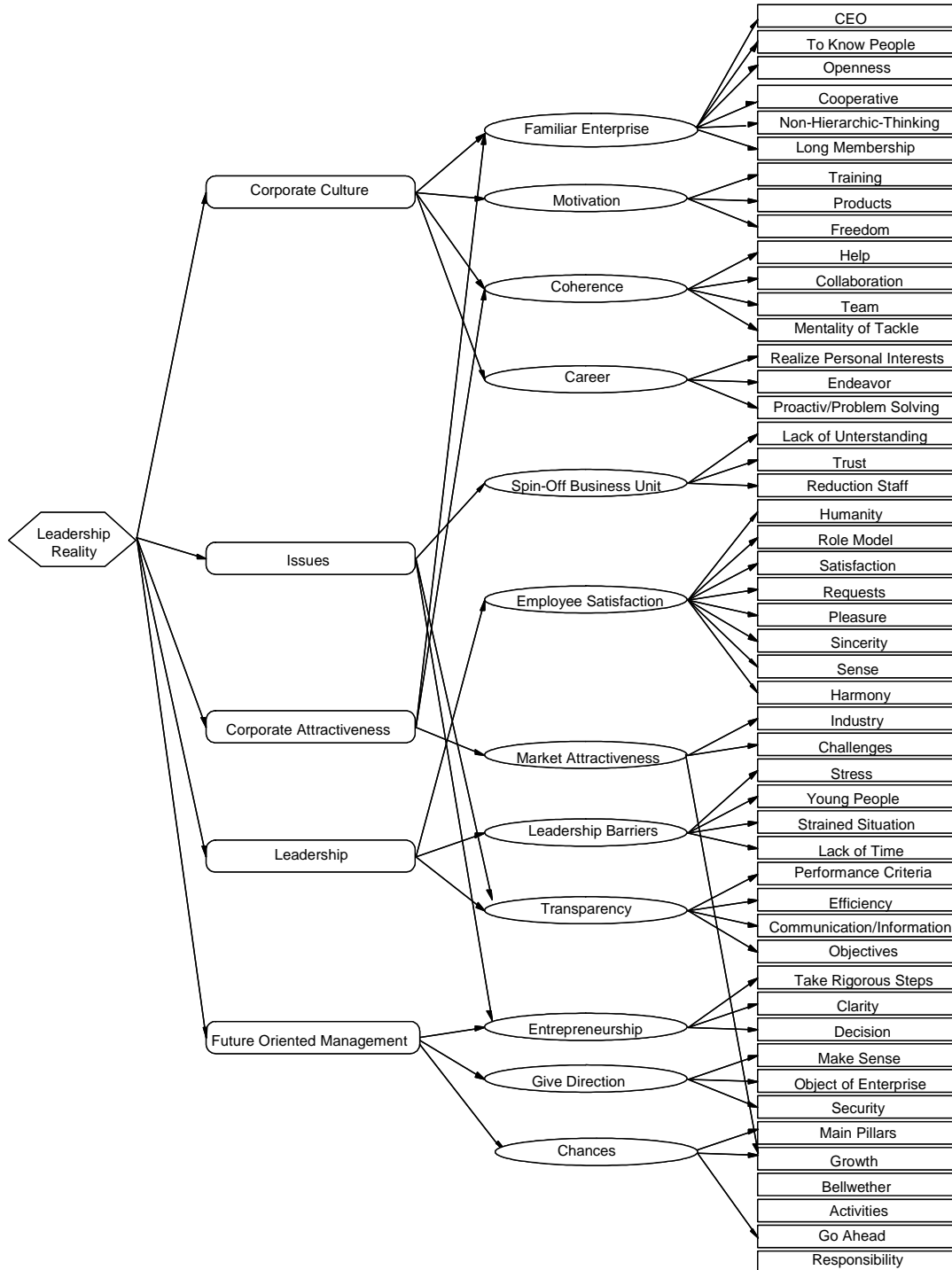


Figure 5: The Gestalten Tree – The Medium-Sized Enterprise

In this case much less “*Leadership Barriers*” are identified. “*Stress*” in the case of much work and the “*Strained Situation*” because of the spin-off of the business unit complicates leadership. Large changes or new situations stress the relations between leaders and followers. The “*Lack of Time*” of leaders causes the delegation of work to others, what is seen as not subserve for the relationship to the followers. For the given situation there is a need to “*Give Direction*” which means to convey to the followers a “*Sense*” in general and meaning for their work to engage much more for the business. Therefore the “*Object of the Enterprise*” must be clear articulated and communicated. Besides, the members are given security for their own but also for the future journey of the enterprise.

5. Leadership as Linguistic Construct: Implications for Leadership Research and Practice

The organizational trees of the two cases show the topics in a descriptive way, which are of great relevance from the acting participants’ point of view. All concepts and meanings which are given on the highest level are used within more complex details on the lower ones. On the highest level we find the most general results. Each result can be sourced by the original answers on the lower level. And with *WinRelan* it is possible to navigate horizontally as well as vertically in the organizational tree to check the summaries. If someone is interested in a certain topic, e.g. Entrepreneurship in the medium-sized enterprise, the system permits penetrating into the subject more deeply.

The combination of different knowledge, experiences, perceptions and attitudes of organisational members of different structural levels of an enterprise are the base for an effective organisational development. The co-operation and the working processes could be improved and contribute to the well being of the members.

As mentioned before leadership theories often neglect factors which are of relevance for the analysis of leadership in organizations. Thus a holistic view of leadership is not allowed. Traditional methods and techniques for the analysis fail.

Gergen (1999) claims that people live in linguistic relations. The language and other forms of expression receive their meanings out of the way how they are used in relations. In and through these interactions members construct a social order, which protect and support their own - more or less - shared values and interests. This social order is constructed symbolically, influences processes and is of relevance for the understanding of social relations.

With GABEK the different relations and coherences of leadership are presented as well as the results based on the texts of the interviewed people who express their positive and negative experiences, needs, values etc.. The aim of the research was to present by use of texts a linguistic construct of leadership, a picture of the reality of leadership for each organisation, how the involved individuals perceive and explain leadership. The leadership reality based on the cognitions of each actor that are constructed in the daily interactions with other people in working life. These cognitions produce a holistic picture of the perceived leadership reality for each enterprise.

By using GABEK as an analysis instrument the interviewed people are given a voice, because their statements are taken into consideration in the presentation of the results. It allows new ways in the generation of meaning in organizations and at the same time it supports the research in leadership regarding theory building.

6. References

Avolio, B. J./Locke, E. E. (2002): Contrasting different philosophies of leader motivation. Altruism versus egoism, in: *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 13, p. 169-191.

Barnes, L. B./Kriger, M. P. (1986): The Hidden Side of Organizational Leadership, in: *Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 28 , p. 15-25.

Buber, R./Kraler, Ch. (2000): How GABEK and WinRelan Support Qualitative Research, in: Buber, R./Zelger, J. (Eds.): *GABEK II. Zur Qualitativen Forschung. On Qualitative Research*, Studienverlag, Innsbruck, p. 111-137.

Burla, St./Alioth, A./Frei, F./Müller, W. R. (1995): *Die Erfindung von Führung*, Hochschulverlag AG, Zürich.

Easterby-Smith, M./Thorpe, R./Lowe, A. (2002): *Management Research: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Sage Publications, London.

Fairhurst, G. T. (2001): Dualismus in Leadership Research, in: Jablin, F. M./Putnam, L. L. (Eds.): *Organizational Communication*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, p. 379-439.

Fiedler, F. E. (1967): *A theory of leadership effectiveness*, McGraw Hill, New York.

Forgas, J.P./Williams, K.D. (2002). Social influence, in: Forgas, J.P./Williams, K.D. (Eds.): *Social influence*. Psychology Press, Lillington.

- Gergen, K.J. (1999): *An Invitation to Social Construction*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.
- Hinterhuber, H. (2003): *Leadership*, Franfurter Allgemeine Buch, Frankfurt a. M.
- Hosking, D. M./Morley, I. E. (1991): *A social psychology of organizing: people, processes and contexts*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead.
- Khandwalla, P. N. (1977): *The Design of Organizations*, Hartcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York.
- Löckenhoff, H. (2000): GABEK in Dialog, Task, Accomplishment, Conflict Resolution, in: Buber, R./Zelger, J. (Eds.): *GABEK II*, StudienVerlag, Innsbruck-Wien, p. 93-110.
- Meindl, J. R. (1990): On leadership: An alternative to conventional wisdom, in: Staw, B. M./Cummings, L. L. (Eds.): *Research in organizational behavior*, Vol. 12, Jai Press, Greenwich, p. 159-203.
- Neuberger, O. (2002): *Führen und führen lassen*, 6th ed., Lucius & Lucius, Stuttgart.
- Newman, V./Chaharbaghi, K. (2000): The study and practice of leadership, in: *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 4, p. 64-73.
- Northouse, P. G. (1997): *Leadership, Theory and Practice*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.
- Osborn, R. N./Hunt, J. G./Lawrence, R. J. (2002): Toward a contextual theory of leadership, in: *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 13, p. 797-837.
- Sims, H. P./Lorenzi, P. (1992): *The New Leadership Paradigm. Social Learning and Cognition in Organizations*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park.
- Sjöstrand, S-E./Tyrstrup M. (2001): Recognized and unrecognized managerial leadership, in: Sjöstrand, S-E./Sandberg, J./Tyrstrup, M. (Eds.): *Invisible Management*, Thomson Learning, London, p. 1-27.
- Yukl, G. A./Van Fleet, D. D. (1992): Theory and Research on Leadership in Organizations, in: Dunnette, M. D./Hough, L. M. (Eds.): *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, p. 147-197.
- Stumpf, C. (1939): *Erkenntnislehre*, Bd. 1, Johann Ambrosius Barth, Leipzig.
- Zelger, J. (1994): Qualitative Auswertung sprachlicher Äußerungen. Wissensvernetzung, Wissensverarbeitung und Wissensumsetzung. In: Wille, R./Zickwolff (Eds.): *Begriffliche Wissensverarbeitung: Grundfragen und Aufgaben*, Wissenschaftsverlag, Mannheim, p. 239-266.

Zelger, J. (1999): Wissensorganisation durch sprachliche Gestaltbildung im qualitativen Verfahren GABEK, in: Zelger, J./Maier, M. (Eds.): GABEK. Verarbeitung und Darstellung von Wissen, Studienverlag, Innsbruck, p. 41-87.

Zelger, J. (2000): Twelve Steps of GABEK*WinRelan*: A Procedure for Qualitative Opinion Research, Knowledge Organisation and Systems Development, in: Buber, R./Zelger, J. (Eds.): GABEK II. Zur Qualitativen Forschung On Qualitative Research, Studienverlag, Innsbruck, p. 205-220.

Zelger, J./Oberprantacher, A. (2002): Processing of Verbal Data and Knowledge Representation by GABEK[®]-WinRelan^{®1} , in: FQS – Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research [Online Journal], 3 (2). Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-eng.htm> [11.12.03].