AUDITIVE LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Lessons from symphony orchestras

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Introduction

Symphony orchestras are interesting contexts in which to reflect on leadership. First, the relating processes in this large artistic collective are unique. One hundred musicians play together, managing to keep the same rhythm and balance, making sense out of the many ongoing relational processes. Second, the communication is largely non-verbal through body language, sensuous perception and the craft of playing. Musicians in symphony orchestras employ their senses in order to play well and have developed their listening skills to a particularly high level.

Inspired by the unusual and intriguing world of symphony orchestras, I examine possible leadership narratives with the help of the relational constructionism (Dachler and Hosking, 1995; Hosking, 1999, 2000) and the aesthetics literature (Levin, 1989; Strati, 1999; Welsch, 1997). I make particular use of the concepts of visual culture and auditive culture. In the former, the eye dominates over other senses while the latter is based on listening. A symphony orchestra is one of the very few organizations where listening is so obviously such an essential skill.

I begin by constructing two leadership narratives that each can be related to symphony orchestras. When I combine the ideas of visual and auditive cultures with my reading of leadership literature, interesting discoveries can be made. I argue that the visual culture is closely connected to the traditional leadership literature whereas the auditive culture and the more participative approaches to leadership have many things in common. Finally, the central element of auditive culture, listening, is discussed.[1]

Visual leadership narrative

In the literatures of organizational behavior and business and organization studies discussions of leadership (e.g. Howell and Costley, 2001; Yukl, 1998) are dominated by possessive individualism or a realist ontology (Dachler and Hosking, 1995). Possessive individualism has two central epistemological themes. The first is the assumption of a knowing individual who is understood as an entity. These individuals have access to their minds, and their mind contents and knowledge are viewed as entities, as individual possessions. In other words, individuals possess properties such as expert knowledge, mind maps and personality characteristics. This individualism can also be seen in the way groups and organizations are treated as having individual characteristics.

The second assumption follows from the first: individual possessions are the ultimate origins of the design and control of other people. For example, people become leaders based on their superior characteristics and skills. These personal characteristics of the knowing individual allow her to control other people. These assumptions only allow a subject/object understanding of relationships where the subject is active and knowledgeable and the object passive. Correspondingly, in leadership literatures this would mean that the leader is the active subject that has the necessary knowledge and wisdom to influence passive

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[1]The article builds on my extensive study at Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra and The Philadelphia Orchestra in 1996-1999 (Koivunen, 2002; 2003). The ethnographic study includes 41 interviews (33 tape-recorded) with musicians, managers and conductors, non-participant observations at concerts and rehearsals, and unofficial talks with the musicians at cafes or on back-stage.

subordinates. When social relations offer a way to achieve knowledge and influence over other people, the relations are very *instrumental* in nature.

It follows from the above that traditional leadership research would focus on the conductor as a strong, individual leader and treat musicians as one object, almost as one big instrument. The conductor is assumed to be the knowledgeable leader and the musicians are assumed to be relatively passive subordinates, responding to the leaders expertise and authority in subject/object relation. Thus, the researcher of this tradition would study the conductor's personal attributes, his leadership style and philosophy in order to make leadership understandable. One of the main questions might be: how does the conductor communicate his message to musicians? Or how does he use the relationship to musicians to accomplish his vision? Charismatic leadership theory (e.g. House, 1977; Conger, 1989) would have a field day when studying orchestras and conductors: in many management textbooks conductors are depicted as omnipotent heroes and as such, perfect examples of charismatic leaders. Traditional leadership researchers would also notice the strict hierarchy that prevails in the orchestra and the exact division of labor, resulting in a clear division and differentiation between the leader and the subordinates (Yukl, 1998).

If we now approach the orchestra example from a very different theoretical perspective, some interesting claims can be made. My reading of the aesthetics literature suggests that the traditional leadership literature bears a close resemblance to the central properties of visual culture as described by philosophers David Michael Levin (1988, 1989) and Wolfgang Welsch (1997). In short, visual culture means the dominance of the eye over other senses. The similarities between traditional leadership literature and visual culture are rather striking. Leadership literature is an ode to individuals, and vision is a sense of individuality as well. Vision isolates, distances and separates the viewer from the object in a similar manner the leader is separated and distanced from the subordinates. Due to the distance, the leader and the viewer are not closely affected by what happens to the objects. Both leadership literature and the visual primacy expect clear and permanent results that can be observed, rechecked and controlled. The culmination of this is the literature on visionary leadership that praises vision as the highest value.

Recent western cultures are very strongly dominated by the visual sense and visual metaphors. Welsch (1997: 153) explains how the primacy of vision first emerged at the turn of the fifth century B.C., principally in the fields of philosophy, science and art. Before that, the culture had been determined by hearing. But Heraclitus declared that the eyes are more accurate wittnesses than the ears, which is said to signal the transition from the primacy of hearing toward the primacy of vision. The visual model completely prevailed in Plato. From that point on, clever thoughts were called *ideas* that built *theory*. Aristotelian Metaphysics praised vision and its model character for insight and cognition, while medieval light metaphysics was a singular ontology of visibility. Leonardo da Vinci called vision divine and the Enlightenment literally called for light and visibility, even modernity knows no value higher than transparency. Levin (1989:33) explains how the Enlightenment brought the visual paradigm to its dominating role. The Enlightenment created a vision that took the 'light of Reason' as its guide. This soon became generally accepted and there were few who saw the need to question the legitimacy of this universal 'Reason'. This universal Reason was to bring healthy rationalization into people's lifes but some of the consequences were less healthy, resulting in violence and repression of difference and otherness.

Welsch (1997: 154) continues his argument by pointing out that despite these problems, vision has become our most noble sense. This visual primacy nests in countless details of our everyday orientation. Welsch also suggests that 'knowing' is synonymous with 'having seen', and most of our cognitive expressions – 'insight', 'evidence', 'idea', 'theory', 'reflection' - are visually tailored. However, this kind of cognitive knowledge is limited in

nature as Levin (1989:31) points out. The knowledge attached to vision is a knowledge that the Greeks called *episteme*. *Episteme* can be compared with *sophia*, which means a wisdom that understands. This word comes from *epi*, meaning 'in front of', and *sta*, meaning 'set down', 'posited', 'standing'. In other words, according to Levin's interpretation, *episteme* means knowledge that can be seen, is situated in front of us, standing still, unchanging. As Levin (ibid., 31) puts it:

> *"This is the metaphysics of vision; a metaphysics that tends to overvalue constancy, uniformity, permanence, unity, totality, clarity and distinctness."*

Levin also argues that this is the situation that makes people believe in one absolute truth, the one that can be seen by all.

Parviainen (1998:21-25) explains how the Cartesian gaze still prevails. Since Descartes stressed the separation between body and mind, the dichotomy has persisted incredibly long. In this model, mind is the home of the intellect, the superior of these two, while body consists of emotions and feelings that can be unpleasant and is thus inferior in nature. Parviainen explains how the sight refers to the intellect, separated from the "lower" nonintellectual senses: tactile, smelling, tasting and hearing. Thus, vision is disembodied and also detached from the synaesthesia of other bodily senses and belongs to the realm of 'mind'. This mechanical vision, or the Cartesian gaze, is essentially detached from any feelings. It observes the world outside but is not involved in any of its events. Being an absolute spectator, the Cartesian subject detaches things and other human beings from herself. The Cartesian gaze has decisively altered our history as visionary beings.

Welsch's (1997) and Levin's (1989) arguments suggest four key characteristics of the visual culture. First, both argue that vision refers primarily to spatial, *enduring* phenomena. Vision is concerned with constant, enduring being that allows rechecking, control and assurance. Second is the ability to isolate and take *distance*. Sight situates the observer outside of what she sees, at a distance. It orders, distances and masters the world. Levin (1988) explains how the viewer is eager to control outer reality by her ego. From this it can be understood that vision was able to become the dominating sense. Seeing is also not possible without the separation into subject and object. Third, *inaffectuality* means that we can close our eyes and remained untouched or unmoved by what we could see. In seeing we are affected least of all bodily, we can keep the world at a distance. Fourth, vision also gives a sense of *individuality*. A typical visual ideal is clarity and distinctiveness, a taking apart. Vision separates people from one another instead of trying to unite them.

Visual aspects in leadership literature

If we now take a look at the mainstream business and organization leadership literatures, we can see these qualities of a visual culture. I discuss the four above-mentioned features of visual culture in reference to leadership research.

Endurance. First, the literatures focus on clarity and enduring phenomena. The emphasis has been on measurable outcomes rather than on the organizational processes through which these outcomes can be attained. This includes objectifying the subjective, laying it all out in explicit words and figures. These figures are then meticulously rechecked and controlled. This kind of knowledge that is attached to vision is a knowledge that the Greeks call *episteme*. Episteme means unchanging knowledge that can be seen and is situated in front of us, as Levin has already explained (1989: 31). This situation also makes people believe in one absolute truth,

the one that can be *seen* by all, the one that is permanent. Matters that cannot be made explicit or visual are not important nor deserve the status of knowledge.

Organizational processes are considered less important than permanent, measurable outcomes. The logic goes like this: visionary individuals at the top of an organization's hierarchy know what the future holds in store; it follows that the favorable outcomes are also known and need to be measured or otherwise clearly indicated. The idea that the future might be constructed in interaction with a number of key actors across time is not a common philosophical approach in leadership thinking. The rational goal model developed in the days of early industrialization still prevails. Its effectiveness criteria, such as productivity, accomplishment, direction and goal clarity continue to be important outcomes to be measured and controlled.

Distance and differentiation. Distance and differentiation between leaders and subordinates is very typical. Leadership research and contemporary business magazines are full of examples of heroic leaders, CEOs and company presidents who are idolized and set apart from 'ordinary' people. The well-known leadership trait studies are one remarkable source of vision-induced leadership which assure us that good leaders are equipped with skills and characteristics well beyond those of their subordinates. The unexpressed assumption seems to be that leaders know better, which reveals the underlying trust in hierarchy and control. Dachler and Hosking (1995:12) also indicate that the notion of leadership includes "a self-concept that depends on differentiation and social-emotional separation from others". It follows that leader relationships are: "artificial not natural; instrumental not self-developing; short-lived, not long-term and involving".

The distance between leaders and subordinates is clearly exhibited in organizations. In addition to the differentiation based on traits and talents, leaders are separated from subordinates by physical and organizational distance. Organizational charts and hierarchies define a person's position in the organization. Hierarchy also points out the location of power and knowledge in the organization. In this kind of reality it is possible for the leaders to keep the outer world at a distance as well as the employees, colleagues, sometimes even customers and other stakeholders.

Flatter organization charts have become more common; in particular new business fields like information technology prefer more informal and unbureaucratic structures. Nevertheless, one still sees many alternative ways to exhibit the position and value of a leader. Company architecture provides one example. Even today, leaders' offices are often situated on the highest floor of the building, above everyone else, as if suggesting the pecking order of the people in that company. In addition to location, the size and decoration of the office rooms also reflect the same order. The location of the parking space, designated areas in company cafeteria and other innocent-appearing arrangements in the same fashion convey a powerful symbolic meaning and easily raise strong emotional reactions in people. The pyramids and their symbolic message are still with us.

Even if there have been changes in organization structures and processes, organizations seem simultaneously to develop more layers to organize human energy (Whittington, Pettigrew, Peck, Fenton and Conyon, 1999). Even new organization forms such as networks and cross-functional terms may maintain similar types of practices, meanings and values as before. Thus, leadership continues to manifest itself as a standing order coming through the hierarchy as rational organizing of employees, production and work environment (Ropo, Parviainen and Koivunen, 2002). In other words, in the world of visual primacy people tend to behave in a way that requires a certain rank order among them. If the traditional hierarchy is abandoned, a new form such as a network, team or project is created or emerges by itself. And the old hierarchy continues to live in this new form of organizing.

One could argue that this is unsurprising, given the visual model which divides rather than unites.

Inaffectuality. Leadership literature presents a rather normative and idealistic understanding of the reality in organizations as if the leaders were not at all in touch and affected by it. Due to distance and differentiation the leaders are protected from the outer world, for example by being sheltered from the daily contact with most employees as well as possible conflicts and disagreements. Leadership theories target harmony and balance; annoying contingencies need to be identified and catered for (Ropo et al., 2002). For instance, problems need to be identified effectively and conflicts have to be managed constructively to keep people committed and productive.

Leadership research is badly prepared for the fact that workplace realities can involve roughness, ugly situations and confrontations with colleagues, arguments and tension, even aggression. Pelzer (2002) even goes a step further and writes about disgust in organizations. People experience disgust at a very bodily level and this occurs in organizations as well. According to Pelzer, everyone in organizations is aware of these dark aspects, except for top management who seems to stick or pretends to stick, to the idealized vision. While employees may grow ever more disillusioned with their work, leaders may continue to live in their world of future visions. And disgust never penetrates these visions. Apparently, leadership literature is mainly written to top managers or it is written from the perspective of top management.

To feel and experience organizations to the fullest requires bodily presence and involvement in situations. Sending out memos or e-mails does not achieve the same result as meeting employees at their workplaces. If leaders are not present among employees, it is easy too remain distant and to close one's eyes both literally and figuratively. Leadership literature easily reduces employees to human resources, which can then be dealt with like any other figures. Employees are no longer flesh and blood, people with feelings and emotions, but figures.

Individuality. A great deal of the traditional leadership literature emphasizes individuals rather than groups or collective action: leadership is traditionally seen as an individual level phenomenon. Many scholars in this field focus their research on studying leaders' behavior, skills and efficiency. Leaders are important people, thus everything in them is under scrutiny and worth studying. Leaders are seen as originators of all action, they define the rules and order and provide guidance and orientation. People become leaders because of their superior knowledge and other possessions, such as charisma. By contrast, subordinates are treated as objects of this leadership, being less active and less knowledgeable than the leader. In this setting, leaders are clearly subjects and subordinates are objects. In this visual mode, it is impossible to find another kind of arrangement; in order to see one needs to separate things into subjects and objects.

The above themes come together in the literatures on *visionary leadership*. Visionary leadership literally reveals the deep connection between leadership and visual primacy. Throughout history, vision has been held to be important; people who see visions have been considered forerunners, even prophets. Vision became the most often repeated buzzword of the 1990s, and has ever since had a central role both in research vocabulary and in business world. It would be difficult to find a leadership text today that does not discuss or idolize visionary leaders. In fact, visioning is at the heart of describing one particular trend in today's leadership, namely leading change. Theories of transformational leadership emphasize vision and envisioning, as do the vast amount of charismatic approaches to leadership.

Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), charismatic leadership (Conger, 1989; House, 1977) and visionary leadership (Westley and Mintzberg, 1989) emerged in the 1980s. Together these labels reveal a conception of the leader as someone who defines organizational reality through the articulation of a vision. This vision is a reflection of how the leader defines an organization's mission and values that will support it. First, the leader needs to articulate the vision. Second, he must communicate it and make it relevant and appealing to the followers (Bryman, 1996: 280-281).

Transformational leaders have a vision of a desirable and possible future for their organization. It is sometimes just a vague dream and at other times a more concrete one like a written mission statement. These leaders "move followers to higher degrees of consciousness, such as liberty, freedom, justice and self-actualization" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985: 218). A clear and appealing vision serves several important functions. One function is to inspire followers by giving their work meaning and appealing to their fundamental human need to be important, to feel useful and to be part of a worthwhile enterprise. Another function of a vision is to facilitate decision making, initiative and discretion by employees at all levels. Knowing the organization's central purpose and objectives helps people to determine what is good or bad, important and trivial (ibid., 1985; Yukl, 1994: 363-364).

Several researchers (e.g. Bennis and Nanus, 1985) have also established a link between transformational leadership and vision. Peters and Waterman's (1982) popular book "In Search of Excellence" asserts that almost all highly successful companies had been influenced by a transforming leader at some stage of their development. The importance of articulating a vision was found to be a central element in successful transformational leadership. Correspondingly, the lack of a clear vision has been identified as the major reason for the decline of companies and entire industries in the recent years.

Auditive leadership narrative

Instead of marveling about great conductors we might for a change admire the relating processes through which musicians and conductors create music. This interaction process, or multiloguing (see Dachler and Hosking, 1995:6), is non-verbal in nature, involving communication through body language, sensuous perception and the craft of playing. In the heart of this communication is sound.

Again, I draw on the aesthetics literature to search for descriptions of auditive culture. Joachim-Ernst Berendt (1992), Mary Lynn Kittelson (1996), Levin (1989) and Welsch (1997) all argue for the advantages of hearing and highlight those qualities in contrast to vision and visuality. In other words, their main criticism is directed toward the dominance of vision. As Berendt (ibid., 28) points out, there is a serious imbalance in our sensuous perception which cannot be healthy for us. He provides evidence that suggests that the dominance of the ear is directly linked to compassion and peacefulness, while reliance on the eye produces divisiveness and aggression. He calls for a 'democracy of the senses' in which an equal treatment of hearing and seeing could bring an intensification of receptivity, gentleness, femininity, understanding, discretion, openness and tolerance. In conclusion, Berendt states that at the core of every culture lie the knowledge and wisdom gathered by listening. Gemma Corradi di Fiumara (1990) discusses listening in relation to speaking, and criticizes the dominance of producing words over receiving and listening to those words. Walter Ong (1967, 1982) describes auditive cultures in contrast to literate cultures, and demonstrates the consequences that literacy has had on auditive practices. I have been influenced by all of these perspectives and lean toward those texts that treat hearing in relation to seeing.

Qualities of auditive culture

Hearing and sound have particular qualities. Sound is *temporal*, it vanishes in time. Audition is concerned with the fleeting, transient, the event-like. Hearing demands acute attention to the moment. Furthermore, when sight isolates the sound *incorporates*. Sound pours into the hearer. Berendt (1992:28) describes how seeing is not possible without the separation into subject and object, and how hearing disperses this separation. The listener does not put the emphasis on herself or even the other person, she does not insist the separation between subject and object. The ear implies unity rather than division. Another quality of hearing is *exposure*. Hearing is intimate, participatory, and communicative; we are always affected by what we are given to hear. Hearing does not keep the world at a distance, but admits it. What we hear penetrates our entire body. Such exposure and vulnerability are characteristics of hearing. In hearing we are unprotected (Welsch, 1997:158). Ong (1982:72) suggests that hearing is a unifying sense. When typical visual ideal is clarity, the auditive ideal is harmony, a putting together. Hearing is linked with people, with our social existence. Thus, hearing is a sense of *collectivity*.

Listening does require a special mindset or an attitude which seem to be very challenging for many of us. Being prepared for spontaneous action and having the openness and tolerance to meet unexpected matters are the essential qualities of listening.

Natural, effortless listening. The ability to wait and listen seems to be one of the most difficult skills for human beings. For animals it is completely natural to wait or be aware, but human beings seem to be lost when waiting and encountering unpredictable interaction with the world. Many philosophers, especially those in the Zen tradition have discussed this principle of waiting. One central theme has always been to abandon the stereotypes and to open the mind to something new, something different from oneself. Spontaneity is appreciated; sincere action is not studied or planned in advance. For example, Alan Watts (1957:133) describes this spontaneity by saying that "For a man rings like a cracked bell when he thinks and acts with a split mind". According to him, the illusion of the split comes from the mind's attempt to be both itself and its idea of itself. To stop this illusion the mind must stop trying to act upon itself from the standpoint of the idea of itself which we call the *ego*. The ego must not disturb sincere action. Watts expresses this complicated thought in other words in a poem:

> *"Sitting quietly, doing nothing,*
> *spring comes, and the grass grows by itself."*

Watts (1957:137) explains how this "by itself" is the mind's and the world's natural way of action, as when the eyes see by themselves and the ears hear by themselves. The emphasis is upon naturalness and spontaneous action. However, this can be difficult for us. If a human being is so self-conscious, so self-controlled that she cannot let go of herself, she dithers amongst alternatives. Or if the mind cannot let go of itself. As Watts puts it: "It feels that it should not do what it is doing, and that it should do what it is not doing. It feels that it should not be what it is, and be what it isn't". That sounds like a valid description of the human dilemma.

Sitting quietly, doing nothing or *wu-wei* suggests that listening should also be very natural and happen by itself. One should focus on listening but not too much in order to remain fresh and spontaneous. One should not let the outer world interfere with listening nor

observe oneself as a listener and allow the ego's influence. In the process of listening, second thoughts are only harmful (Watts, 1957:148). Others have also found this natural and effortless quality important in listening. Levin (1989:233) talks about how 'just listening' is often a playful listening, a listening that enjoys itself and which ultimate purpose is to be without purpose. Just listening aims at cutting loose from the incessant reproduction of rational life and the demands of the ego. Just listening is a joyful listening that wanders and drifts. 'Poetic listening', a term suggested by Kittelson (1996:53), bears a close resemblance to Levin's concept of 'just listening'. Poetic listening means listening in wonder, like a child. The listener is capable of being in uncertainty and doubt, without a need for fact and reason. Listening poetically means not being set, not being agitated by expectations for certain pre-known ideas or feelings.

Openness and tolerance. Gadamer (in Corradi Fiumara, 1990: 28) argues that: "Anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without this kind of openness to one another there can be no genuine human relationship. Belonging together always means being able to listen to another". This is nevertheless no easy task. We sometimes encounter people and things and enter into situations, with great openness, eager to enjoy a fresh experience, while at other times we tend to enter into situations with closed minds and deaf ears – anxious, tense or defensive. Levin (1989:19) argues how we often have our minds already set, our course of action fixed, and our experience predetermined. We sometimes begin an encounter absolutely certain of our knowledge and understanding, absolutely convinced that we have nothing to learn from the encounter itself: we enter the situation totally under the spell of our stereotype, our preconceptions. We can hear only what we want to hear, or what we already know and believe; we can hear nothing different, nothing new. There are some things we can hear only with great difficulty, only with great pain. There are some things we *need* to hear, but probably never will. There are things we would *like* to hear, but we are also too afraid to listen.

Varto (1990: 36-43), a philosopher, describes how we are sometimes so defensive, so threatened or vulnerable, that we encounter people in a way that defers any genuine experience, any real encounter. We are like shells, living in our little worlds that represent totality to us. We are aware of other people and the outer world, but have excellent means to resist their influence on us. When the other tries to enter our shell, we cover it with pearl essence, swallow it and forget it. We suffocate the other in order to proceed with our familiar and secure life. Tolerance would mean learning to accept the otherness and learning to encounter that otherness in everything and everyone. We would try to open our shells and communicate with the other out there, to tolerate the other and accept it. This also means resisting the numbness of daily routines. These skills can be learned; waiting and listening skills can be developed, like the musicians have learned them.

Levin (1989: 47, 58) believes that developing our listening skills also means improving the practice of compassion and increasing our capacity to be aware of the interrelatedness and commonality of all human beings. He also believes that we can respond to the historical arrival of nihilism and realize the social dream of humanism, if only we develop our capacity for listening.

Building on these ideas, I will point out the similarities between auditive culture and the shared and more participative approaches to leadership.

Auditive aspects in leadership literature

There is a lot less in common between the writings about auditive culture and leadership literature than was the case with visual culture and leadership theory. As we shall see, some elements of auditive culture can be argued to be related to approaches such as shared or dispersed leadership. Theories that emphasize teamwork and employee participation also include elements of auditive culture. Yet, the stereotype of an active, dynamic leader who gives orders, informs and convinces employees, still prevails. An "inactive", receptive leader who would listen, receive and allow does not appear a very appealing concept.

We have little familiarity with what it means to listen, we are used to living in a culture in which leaders are predominantly involved in speaking, shaping and informing. Our intellectual heritage, especially in the western world, commonly defines communication as a capacity for ordering and explaining, detached from any propensity to receive and listen. Leadership books do emphasize the mutuality of communication, but in practice the nature of interaction between leader and followers reflects the dominant, hierarchical logic where the leader's message is more important. The research on shared leadership offers a different approach to this condition.

One example of shared leadership research is the partnership model suggested by Dachler and Hosking (1995:14-16). In this partnership model, identity is constructed from *being in relationships, being connected*, as contrasted with the individualistic construction of identity through separation and competition. The ability to form and nurture partnerships is highly valued, in contrast to the individualistic needs to emphasize one's own strengths in comparison to others. Competition rarely facilitates partnerships of any kind. Further, the relationships are understood as caring. This means sharing responsibility for oneself and others and respecting other standpoints, giving a central voice to the issues of team working, and cooperation in the sense of all interacting actors sharing responsibility. The appointed leader is only one voice among many. Since the subordinates also have responsibility for the cooperation, they are also responsible for the kind of relationship they construct together with the leader. One could say that the involved actors are participants in "co-constructing the choreography" in which joint action "enlarges the world".

Networking becomes an important means to share information and knowledge. The partnership model emphasizes the ongoing process of meaning making, multiloguing and multiple realities. Here, the networking managers seek to understand the meanings of the others' conversational contributions. Meaning making is regarded as a joint activity. It is not a leader's responsibility, as Smircich and Morgan (1982) suggest when speaking of the management of meaning. When negotiating is viewed as a process of multiloguing, trading away differences is no longer important. It is pointless for participants to argue about the correct meaning of a certain event or matter. Negotiating becomes a process in which the manager and others may come to know each other's perspectives and construct a shared understanding about their relations. Networking and negotiation are seen as processes that produce and reflect connectedness and interdependence as egalitarian relations, and as processes that construct collective authority and responsibility (Dachler and Hosking, 1995).

Yukl (1998: 351-375, 409-437) discusses leadership processes in teams, self-managed groups and executive teams. He indicates that the essential points in leadership processes are building consensus around a shared objective, maintaining cohesiveness in the team, tolerance for diversity and mutual cooperation. Important tools to facilitate group learning are reviews held after an activity and dialogue sessions. In these sessions the members are able to share their knowledge and the group is willing to listen to and receive the experiences. Executive teams are becoming more common, and they are currently being successfully used in many countries, such as Japan. Sharing knowledge, building trust and cooperation were held vital also in executive-level teams. Similarly, the diverse backgrounds of the team members were found to be useful; they facilitated both learning and the tolerance for

differences. In summary, trust, cooperation, sharing knowledge and tolerance for diversity were considered important in shared leadership. I will go on to argue that all of these qualities are present in auditive culture. However, I should also add that the concept of shared leadership invites a further question of whether leaders will be needed at all. Within the concept of shared leadership it is no longer necessary to assume that a leader/subordinate relation is required to accomplish something. Instead, self-organizing groups could function without a person in charge of them.

Temporality. Project organizations, performances in the art sector or various events like conferences, exhibitions or fairs reflect the temporal nature of the auditive mode. A performance or a concert may be held only once after which it disappears, a project organization may cease after the ship or a power plant is completed. Art performances, such as concerts, theatre plays or dance performances are immaterial and unique in nature, one can never hear exactly the same concert twice. A ship or a power plant does exist also after it has been delivered to the buyer, one can always visit it and experience it all over again, but the production was a unique process.

Processes are difficult to define, describe and measure. They are temporal, constantly changing and complex. Where visual culture cherishes permanent and measurable outcomes, auditive culture clearly involves fleeting, transient phenomena. Or more specifically, auditive culture admits that the nature of many events is temporal and cannot be measured with figures. As the relational theory suggests, knowledge is situated and created in relational processes (Dachler and Hosking, 1995). In the relational view, knowledge is theorized as temporal and changing all the time, and not as mind stuff.

Incorporation. Auditive culture implies unity rather than division. In teamwork this would signify that the team's objectives are more important than individual ambitions. Too much, if any, competition between the team members is not beneficial and disturbs the unity of the team. The purpose of teamwork is to establish a shared understanding or a decision about a particular matter. A team might have no appointed leader, all team members have influence over and responsibility for the team. Some teams may be cross-functional that entail people from the marketing, financing and production departments. The objective of teamwork there is to overcome the departmental differences and work together in a creative way. Different opinions become the fuel for creativity, it is harmful to suppress them. This kind of teamwork would give voice to the multiple perspectives of participants, recognizing and respecting differences as different but equal (Dachler and Hosking, 1995:23).

Business enterprises have also noticed the importance of team spirit or unity. Team building exercises have become popular and the employees are sent, sometimes to quite extreme conditions, to learn how to function as a team. People learn how to work with each other and eventually how to trust each other. The purpose is not to find the best individuals but to evaluate and train teamwork skills. The purpose is not that the team defines a rank order between the members, divides and differentiates but rather to recognize and respect one another's unique capabilities and build a team spirit based on them.

Exposure. Auditive leadership culture is bound to develop in an organization where traditional hierarchies with a strict division of labor and chain of command have lost their meaning. Many expert organizations and new organizational forms nurture a more lateral and informal culture where also the leaders are exposed to collective daily activities. Being part of the interaction process, relating with other people, being exposed to such situations is crucial in auditive culture. Leaders as well as employees are all involved in and responsible for the

intense flow of events. Such a way of working requires patience, tolerance for differences and uncertainty and an open and receptive mind.

In such a relational process, a great deal of tacit knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Polanyi, 1962) is shared. The nature of tacit knowledge is such that it is very difficult to verbalize and thus share with others without being exposed to situations. It also often requires a considerable amount of time to acquire. It may be gained during an apprenticeship or a period of learning by doing. One feasible way to share tacit knowledge with others is through a process of demonstration, or 'show-how' (Roberts, 2000). This show-how, showing others how to do things, requires social interaction between people. It also requires bodily presence, the transmitter and the receiver have to be present in the same location. Leaders lose the opportunity to gain show-how if they are away from the organization a lot or prefer to sit in their offices most of the time. Distance work may be possible but not distance show-how. Instead, leaders could be present in their organization, interact with other members and expose themselves to situation in which they can construct new knowledge with others.

Collectivity. Auditive culture emphasizes collective aspects and interaction among colleagues. Knowledge is created in a relational process between people that requires active participation from both sides. Listening is of central importance in such a relating process. People who take part in this process, like musicians rehearsing a piece or company employees preparing a project, all share their knowledge and experience with each other. Important knowledge does not reside only at the top of the organization. In the negotiating process knowledges are discussed and shared. In this multiloguing process, listening is of crucial importance.

To conclude, auditive leadership does not simply mean that leaders acquire an additional leadership skill in their repertoire, that of listening. Rather, auditive leadership culture paves the way to a paradigmatically different understanding of leadership knowledge. One of the biggest challenges for leaders may be the change from an active sender of orders and information who determines the organization's future into a participant in a collective sense-making process. Particularly, the highly knowledgeable professionals in expert organizations are not used to being told what to do; they find authoritarian leaders uncomfortable. In other words, the leaders do not need to form and structure the organization extensively, they can concentrate on constructing the collective wisdom and knowledge with the subordinates.

The skill of listening

Previously I have discussed listening and auditive culture from a theoretical perspective. Listening is the concrete skill in auditive culture, it can be learned, practiced and emphasized. The present chapter makes an effort to extend the discussion to more pragmatic fields by illustrating some listening practices in organizations. My data from symphony orchestras and music have been the major source to discuss listening.

In my opinion, the most unusual talent possessed by musicians and conductors in symphony orchestras is their expertise in listening. In their profession, they make use of auditive impulses, sounds, and transform them into aesthetic knowledge by concentrated, well-trained listening skills. The quality of their work is evaluated by listening, both by themselves, the audience and the critics. Musicians have extremely well-trained ears to listen to different sounds at the same time. They listen to their own playing, to their fellow players,

the sound of the instrument section and the sound of the whole orchestra. Using all that auditive information, they adjust their own playing, tune themselves to the orchestra's sound. They make sense of the chaotic situation in a symphony orchestra by listening and making aesthetic judgments on the basis of that situation. All this reflectivity takes place simultaneously.

Listening can be defined as an individual skill but it can be theorized from a relational constructionist perspective as well. When human beings hear things, they start making sense of these sensations by communicating with other people. The sensations are worked on and made understandable through relating with others. This communication can take place verbally or, as in symphony orchestras, by playing music together. In other words, we co-construct our perception in relations with others.

Another dimension of listening is more metaphysical or abstract in nature. In addition to physically hearing sounds from many players, the musicians are in a permanent position to receive. They are alert, expecting something and prepared to react upon that signal immediately. The musicians receive, admit and tolerate various articulations for the music, choices of particular music traditions and interpretations for the music and respond by their playing. They have to adjust to these conditions, regardless of whether they like them or not. Developing an open-minded attitude that gladly invites and accommodates a huge variety of different opinions, interpretations and styles is a very challenging task.

And indeed, it can happen that musicians grow tired of always receiving and tolerating, year after year, when changing conductors ask for almost completely opposite interpretations of the same music or when their own idea of playing Mahler is violated by a totally different approach. The concert process itself is demanding, a new project each week that requires fresh energy and adjusting to a new guest conductor. Only enduring the intensive rehearsal process is demanding. Consequently, it can happen that musicians lose some of their sensitivity for listening and become routine listeners. They become closed to the Other.

Another aspect of listening is related to self-confidence and trust. Listening to other players requires trust in others and self-confidence. When you carefully listen to other people's playing, you put yourself in a vulnerable situation, surrender to others. This is very difficult and threatening. The same phenomenon applies to soloists and conductors who often avoid listening to other artists' interpretations. Different approaches and interpretations are too great a threat to one's own artistic personality that has been built up with great care and conviction, and therefore artists often prefer not to know them.

If playing in symphony orchestras builds on both visual and auditive elements, a jazz orchestra works almost totally with auditive impulses. Jazz musicians seldom, if ever, use notes since they play by the heart. Many organization scholars have been interested in jazz orchestras and their improvisational abilities. A pioneering work in the field is the study on Utrecht Jazz Orchestra by Bougon, Weick and Binkhorst (1977). More recently, Mary Jo Hatch (1999) has used the jazz metaphor to explore organizational structure and Frank Barrett (2000) has been interested in jazz improvisation as a self-organizing system.

Berendt (1992: 169-172) confirms that in the group of improvisers meaningful music comes into being by highly alert listening on the part of the individual musicians. He continues by pointing out that one must listen to the other musicians more than to oneself. After all, one knows what one is up to. The players unconsciously strive for attunement with the other players. This mysterious phenomenon of collective improvisation has been discussed in many books and studies. One explanation is such that posits a harmonic scheme and a framework of chords where the improvising musicians meet up. Berendt does not find such a mechanistic model sufficient but believes more in the alternative explanation, that of synchronicity.

Synchronicity is the meaningful coincidence of two or more events that cannot be explained in causal terms. The 'law' of synchronicity prevails within group musical improvisation. Such a group moves like a flock of migrating birds. There is no leader that would regulate the formation, the flock moves synchronistic ally. The group of birds is capable of spontaneously changing direction or making abrupt curves without disrupting their grouping. It is a system, or a single organism. A group of improvising musicians is also a system in that sense. If it is really together, it can react, move and change as if it were a single being or a flock of birds. What happens in such a musical group obeys the laws of synchronicity rather that those of causality, and cannot therefore be explained to the last detail. Musicians cannot do that either, but they talk about the 'high' that carries them along when the improvisation is particularly successful. Or they speak of a 'sense of uplift'[22] (Berendt, 1992: 171-172).

These occurrences of optimal experience (or flow) happen in symphony orchestras as well. The musicians explained how they develop a special bodily skill through which they can feel if the playing is good or bad. Sometimes the playing goes extraordinarily well, reaches unusual heights, and a very special atmosphere is created. The playing is breathing well, the musicians find the same level of consciousness, reaching what is known as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). If the playing goes badly, if there is a blockage somewhere, people can feel it. If the music is not flowing, playing becomes suffocating and heavy. One Philadelphia musician also mentioned the flow phenomenon and had developed a concept of his own to describe it: he called it entering 'the zone'. Moreover, one Tampere musician used the exact metaphor of a flock of birds to describe how playing in a symphony orchestra at its best can be: everyone reacting to everyone else. This is a rare phenomenon though, but not impossible, even in such a large ensemble as a symphony orchestra.

In addition to musicians, there are other professions that involve good listening skills. Therapists, medical doctors and many other occupations in the service sector require a receptive attitude and a willingness to listen to the patient, client or the customer. In the business world, management consultants often have the role of providing listening services to the top management. Top managerial jobs are often very lonely and these executives want to have someone who would listen to their problems and worries. Consultants understand their work and are qualified to give knowledgeable comments and advice. Management consultants get paid for their presence, willingness to listen and receive the problems of their customers.

Listening has an essential role to play in the interaction between people. It requires concentration, an interest and a sensitivity to listen, something that seems to be very difficult for most of us. Someone is willing to share something with us, but we hesitate to accept it. Listening appears to be a crucial element in sharing. When you admit to listening, you become involved in the situation and lose the neutral position of an observer at a distance. You are involved with your whole being, with your body, in that situation.

Listening is an act of tolerance and openness. One needs to try to get rid of one's introversion and be prepared to receive something new and unfamiliar, possibly different and unpleasant. Accepting something different can be risky, it can threaten one's personality. It is usually easier to reject any unfamiliar impulses even before they reach the outer borders of our identity. On the other hand, the willingness to listen, to receive and accept can lead to remarkable discoveries about ourselves and others.

Everyone can practice the skills of listening. Just as the composer can learn by practice to hear what the score sounds like simply by looking at the notation, so other people

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[22] This is one more example of visual primacy: even the metaphors used for describing clearly auditive phenomena are defined according to the type of visual appearances, e.g. a flock of birds or a sense of uplift. Welsch (1997: 154) draws attention to this paradox as well.

can learn to listen to their fellow people. Each relationship is unique in the sense that the patterns of interaction can vary significantly. It may take a long time to learn how another person communicates and relates to others. Even successful relationships will not endure without a constant effort to nurture the interaction. Interaction patterns are not permanent and stable, but change considerably and require active readjustment.

Some conclusions

If individuality is one of the cornerstones of traditional leadership research, then rationality is another. In leadership literature, leadership is clearly depicted as an intellectual activity that includes planning, ordering and controlling in the most effective way. People are treated as human resources or as pure minds that are abstracted from their bodies that sense, feel and experience. Since leadership theory ultimately aims at harmony and balance, any unpredictable elements such as emotions and bodies are disregarded. However, as early as in 1750, Baumgarten defined two categories for knowledge, the intellectual and the aesthetic. Leadership research has only focused on the intellectual part, leaving the understanding of the phenomenon severely incomplete. The field would greatly benefit from incorporating aesthetic knowledge in its scope and providing a more holistic understanding of human behavior.

This article has made an attempt to bring the aesthetic perspective into leadership research. This has been done by presenting two leadership narratives that direct attention to the role of sensuous perception in our knowledge formation. In particular, hearing and auditive culture have been investigated. It is evident that hearing is generally neglected in our society and seeing is the dominating, most noble sense. This can be concluded on both practical and metaphysical levels. Visual culture promotes individuality, distance and endurance while the auditive culture cherishes collectivity, exposure, unity and temporality. The concern here is not to replace the visual model with the auditive culture but merely to draw attention to auditive aspects and to reach a healthy balance where all senses are equally appreciated.

Interestingly, traditional leadership research embraces the characteristics of the visual culture to a great extent. Furthermore, the shared or dispersed approaches to leadership entail many aspects of auditive culture. The partnership model suggested by Dachler and Hosking (1995), for example, incorporates many auditive features and their dominance model clearly reflects visual culture. This suggests that one of the essential characteristics of shared leadership builds on auditivity, listening and receiving.

To conclude, let us consider what an auditive leadership culture could be like. First of all, listening would be a very important and well-trained skill. It would significantly enhance the multiloguing process of employees. Leaders would also participate in the knowledge construction. This requires sensitivity and tolerance for differences and uncertainty. There would be more concern for creating unity than supporting competition, division and differentiation among employees. These leaders would also be exposed to the relational processes themselves, they would not take a distance from the central activities of their organization. The leaders would acknowledge the temporal nature of events and thus focus on processes, not on permanent structures or figures. The leaders would trust that all knowledge already resides in the organization, their job would be to let it come out, allow it, accept it. Just like conductors trust musicians, inviting their musicality to emerge, respecting it and letting the music happen.

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