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# Leadership On Demand: Followers as initiators and inhibitors of managerial leadership

Martin Blom<sup>\*</sup>, Mats Alvesson<sup>1</sup>

School of Economics and Management, Lund University, Box 7080, 220 07 Lund, Sweden

## KEYWORDS

Leadership;  
Followership;  
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**Summary** A key aspect of leadership is the followers' constructions of its value and relevance. Based on two empirical, qualitative case studies, this paper highlights the importance of the 'demand' for leadership when leader–follower relationships are established. We further discuss how followers influence, inhibit and initiate managerial leadership (i.e. leadership acts from their formal superior targeting themselves), and suggest 'Leadership On Demand' as a useful metaphor when trying to conceptualize the leader–follower dynamics in our study.

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## Introduction

Leadership is often described in terms of influencing meanings, norms, feelings, thinking and values, mainly through interpersonal, non-coercive means (Kotter, 1985; Ladkin, 2010; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Zaleznik, 1977). Influencing thoughts and meanings involves a voluntary side; followers need to be persuaded, not just enforced by formal authority of management. You can order people to do a particular task or to comply with standards, but not to alter their moods or buy into a certain value or definition of reality. In organizational settings, this makes the members' *demand* for managerial leadership crucial. With *managerial leadership* we refer to leadership (in the way previously described)

exercised by people holding a managerial (appointed or elected, but formally superior) position, targeting formal subordinates (Yukl, 1989). It is here important to bear in mind that many aspects of everyday managerial work therefore fall outside the scope of 'leadership' as described above. Demand indicates the interest in 'receiving' managerial leadership, i.e. taking a clear (but possibly temporal, conditional or situation-specific) followership position in relation to a formally superior manager and viewing him/her as a leader, i.e. a significant source for meaning-making, support, and/or direction.

Understanding the subordinates' demand for leadership is a challenge facing many organizations and managers. The important and fairly recent turn in leadership research with an increased interest in and focus on *followers* as important co-constructors of leadership processes (e.g. Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Collinson, 2005, 2006; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hollander, 1992; Kelley, 2008; Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008; Shamir, Pillai, Bligh, & Uhl-Bien, 2007), opens up new possibilities to explore this issue. In this paper, we build on this body of literature that deals

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author. Tel.: +46 46 222 96 21; fax: +46 14 622 24 23.

E-mail addresses: [martin.blom@fek.lu.se](mailto:martin.blom@fek.lu.se) (M. Blom), [mats.alvesson@fek.lu.se](mailto:mats.alvesson@fek.lu.se) (M. Alvesson).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +46 46 222 42 44; fax: +46 14 622 24 23.

with the views and roles of ‘non-leaders’, and their agency when it comes to how acts of leadership are framed, conducted and evaluated. Despite the growing interest in followers and followership during the last years, ‘the vast majority of research continues to focus on leaders and leadership’ (Bligh, 2011, p. 426) and as Carsten et al. (2010) writes: ‘we still know very little about how followers enact their own roles as part of the leadership equation’ (p. 544). Hence, there are many aspects of followership that remain to be addressed (Kelley, 2008). One such followership-related research question that remains ‘relatively unexplored’ (Bligh, 2011, p. 432) is how leaders and, perhaps especially, followers play an active role in ‘managing’ dynamic leader–follower processes (see also Baker, 2007, p. 56). We claim that one important aspect of this complex question is related to the understanding of followers’ demand for leadership, since it most likely affects how leadership initiatives will be PERCEIVED and received by the targets, i.e. the followers. A ‘demand’ perspective gives here a new angle, contributing to (a) a downplaying of a leader-focus and (b) to a more open view of the experienced need for managerial leadership as a helpful organizational practice.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the question of how subordinates, as potential followers, ‘manage’ dynamic leader–follower processes, and especially how they can be involved in the very initiation of managerial leadership processes.

In this study, we therefore investigate and pay careful attention to followers’ views on leadership, what leadership (if any) they expect from their superiors, when leadership is called for, how it is influenced and initiated. We also investigate how their superiors understand and relate to their subordinates’ demand for leadership. It is important to note that we are studying the perceived or experienced need for and interest in managerial leadership, and *not* managerial leadership processes per se, or how they are enacted and negotiated in specific instances (e.g. real time conversations). It is rather the overall constructions and the negotiated nature of the relationship (potentially in terms of leaders and followers) that we are interested in. Approaching leadership–followership as a complex and socially constructed phenomenon (Bligh, 2011; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010), we ask not only how followers contribute to the construction of leadership, but we are also open to the whether they are interested in constructing their relations in terms of leadership–followership at all?

We do not want to pigeonhole the study too narrowly (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011), but position it in the context of follower-centred approaches to leadership and leadership theories that privilege the role of followers from a constructionist perspective (e.g. Carsten et al., 2010; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Meindl, 1995). We further locate the study within a ‘moderate’ (rather than radical) constructionist stance (Barlebo Wenneberg, 2001). The paper contributes by empirically investigating the followers’ *demand* for (interest in and receptivity to) acts of managerial leadership, in contrast to the numerous studies of the construction (the meanings) of leadership per se, or how different follower traits, attitudes, and emotions influence their perceptions of certain types of leaders (see Bligh & Schyns, 2007 for an overview). We see our contribution as of broad relevance to the understanding of how subordinates, as potential followers, influence managerial leadership.

This introduction section of the paper will now be followed by an overview of literature that deals with followers’ potential need for and active part in managerial leadership processes. The review of the literature is structured in three related subsections: (a) the dynamic construction of leaders and followers, (b) followers in less need of managerial leadership, and (c) (pro)active followers as co-producers of leadership. After this literature review, we present two empirical case studies. The findings from these studies are then compared and discussed.

## Followers’ ‘need’ for and active part in managerial leadership

### The dynamic construction of leaders and followers

The discursive and fluid construction of leadership and followership (the latter more or less explicitly) has been explored and emphasized in various ways by scholars such as Bresnen (1995), Carsten et al. (2010), Collinson (2005), Cunliffe (2001), Fairhurst (2007), Gemmill and Oakley (1992), Grint (2000, 2005), Kelly (2008), Ospina and Sorenson (2006) and Vine, Holmes, Marra, Pfeifer, and Jackson (2008). The meanings and reasoning of followers are crucial for when leadership relations are established, emphasized respectively de-emphasized and marginalized (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hollander, 1992; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Shamir, 2007). We agree with Fairhurst and Grant (2010) when they write: ‘... leadership [as well as followership] is co-constructed, a product of sociohistorical and collective meaning making, and negotiated on an ongoing basis through a complex interplay among leadership actors, be they designated or emergent leaders, managers, and/or followers’ (p. 172).

Leadership/followership-relations are therefore not just simply prescribed or determined by formal hierarchical positions, but are dynamically claimed/granted (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Subordinates are not always followers, just as managers are not always leaders (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006). Leadership and followership should rather be seen as ‘reciprocal and mutually reinforcing identities... endorsed and reinforced within a broader organizational context, and is dynamic over time’ (DeRue & Ashford, 2010, p. 627). How people in formally subordinate positions construct their work situation and organizational context is therefore vital, being a key part in the formation of a possible demand for managerial leadership. This demand for (and potentially positive reception to) leadership interventions is not given, but follows from the subordinates’ views of themselves, the situation and the relationship with their superior (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Powerful managers can persuade subordinates that they ‘need’ (experience that they strongly benefit from) leadership (Gray & Densten, 2007), i.e. that the visions, value propositions, cognitive framings, moral and psychological support, advice and instructions offered by the manager/leader is highly valuable. But still, when it comes to leadership, subordinates need to accept these suggestions and understand themselves as followers: ‘[I]f a person claims leadership in a setting but others do not reinforce that claim with supportive grants... [It is] insufficient for a

leader–follower relationship to emerge’ (DeRue & Ashford, 2010, p. 632).

### Followers in less need of managerial leadership

The growing literature on followers and followership deals with the myriad of varieties of leader–follower relationships and how followers (at least partly) are influencing the leadership processes (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hollander, 1992; Kellerman, 2008; Meindl, 1995; Riggio et al., 2008; Tengblad, 2003). We see here a trend to upgrade followers and to downplay strongly asymmetrical and rigid leader–follower divisions (Carsten et al., 2010; Shamir, 2007; Shamir et al., 2007). In this body of literature, we sometimes find ‘followers’ who are able to do rather well without much tangible leadership interaction (e.g. Kelley, 2008; Lovelace, Manz, & Alves, 2007), even if it usually seems to be viewed as an exception from the norm. The notion that especially qualified and highly skilled people (experience that they) need less managerial leadership is common in studies on knowledge-intensive firms and organizations (e.g. Alvesson, 2004; Pearce & Manz, 2005; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004; Ropo and Parviainen, 2001; Trevelyan, 2001; Von Nordenflycht, 2010). There are, however, those that emphasize that qualified and committed employees, such as the ones often found in knowledge-intensive and/or creative organizations, still need leadership, but of a different kind. Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, and Strange (2002), for example, claim that leadership is vital for all aspects of creative work from idea generation to coordination, structuring, production mission, social support, people involvement, output expectation, rewarding, team building, networking, and so forth. Here the manager doing leadership is assumed to be absolutely central, rather than one source out of many for attaining direction and/or support.

The debate on whether competent and committed subordinates can do without (much) managerial leadership or not, can furthermore be linked to the literature on substitutes for leadership (Jermier & Kerr, 1997; Kerr & Jermier, 1978). According to this body of literature, contextual variables such as subordinate characteristics, organizational characteristics, and task characteristics can substitute for, neutralize, or enhance the effects of leadership (Dionne, Yammarino, Howell, & Villa, 2005; Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). This will in turn decide the need/opportunity for managerial leadership interventions. The idea of subordinates in need of no or minimal managerial leadership can also be found in the literature on situational leadership (Blanchard, 2008; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977), where the subordinates’ ‘development levels’ are seen as pivotal for whether a ‘delegating’ leadership style (low directive and low supportive leadership interventions) is assumed to be most effective (Blanchard, 2008). Notably, it is the manager’s task to evaluate his/her subordinates’ development levels and adjust his/her leadership style accordingly.

A similar idea to delegation is the notion of ‘management-by-exception’ (Bass & Riggio, 2006), where management-by-exception leadership is divided into two types: passive and active. When leaders employ a passive management-by-exception approach, they wait for signals of performance deviations, breaking of rules/procedures, complaints,

etcetera, before taking action. Active management-by-exception implies leaders that proactively monitor and watch for deviances from acceptable performance and then intervene. Again, in both cases, it is the manager’s/leader’s privilege to define the situation/identify problems and decide what leadership interventions that are ‘necessary’. The leader stands for the decisive construction of the situation and it is assumed that subordinates buy into this, i.e. they are hardly (actively) involved in the construction processes.

### (Pro)active followers as co-producers of leadership

This view (active leader, passive follower) has however been challenged in several studies that remind us of the importance of seeing followers as active co-producers of leadership (Carsten et al., 2010; Kelley, 1992; Shamir, 2007). Collinson (2005, p. 1422) for example, suggests that we should ‘re-think followers as knowledgeable agents ... as proactive, self-aware and knowing subjects’ and look at the dialectics, including resistance in the leader–follower relationship.

The notion of the active follower is sometimes associated with ‘shared leadership’ (Pearce & Conger, 2003) or ‘distributed leadership’ (Gronn, 2002; Lindgren & Packendorff, 2011; Thorpe, Gold, & Lawler, 2011). Howell and Shamir (2005) emphasize followers’ active role in forming charismatic leadership processes (see also Shamir, 2007), and Hollander’s (1992) early notion of follower agency/involvement still seems relevant:

‘Given their need for mutual responsiveness, leadership and followership can be considered to be reciprocal systems requiring synchronization. Leadership is usually seen as the more active system, but followership can be proactive, not only reactive. ... Empowerment in some sectors of activity would be another instance of giving followership a more proactive role, as an accompaniment to leadership in the traditional directive mode.’ (Hollander, 1992, p. 46)

In a more recent study, Carsten et al. (2010) comes to the conclusion that followers display a great variety in terms of activity/agency, and construct themselves as passive, active or proactive (see also Kelley, 1992). Followers constructed as passive emphasized taking orders, loyalty with the leader and a submission in relation to the leader’s knowledge and authority. Active followers described themselves as ‘offering opinions when given the opportunity, but remaining obedient and loyal’ regardless if they were in agreement with the leader (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 556). In contrast, proactive followers ‘saw themselves as active participants ... working to advance the mission of their department or organization ... willing to constructively challenge their managers if needed’ (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 556).

Our paper broadly supports and contributes to this view of proactive subordinate/follower influence on managerial leadership, but goes further than just assuming that followership also can be proactive in terms of challenging the views of the manager/leader (as implied by the quote above). Followers are here regarded as absolutely central in the construction of whether managerial leadership is put into being at all by reactively or proactively granting their manager a

leader identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; DeRue, Ashford, & Cotton, 2009), thereby more or less proactively accepting follower identities for themselves.

## Method

### Research design

Constructionist studies on leadership display great variety in terms of ambition and methods in use (Cunliffe, 2008; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). In this paper, we draw upon a case study methodology (Stake, 2000) and ideas on empirical material always being interpretations of the phenomena targeted (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Steier, 1991). In line with our constructionist ontological view and our interpretive analytical approach (described more in detail below), we do not claim to produce generalizable results or data mirroring an objective reality in the specific instances investigated. Instead, an interpretive approach typically focuses on the level of ‘meaning’ (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009), which we find useful, relevant and compatible with our interest in peoples’ (co)constructions of the need for managerial leadership (some authors even refer to and advocate ‘hermeneutic constructivism’ (Marcel, 2001, p. 2)).

A problem with much leadership research is that it is based on just one source, e.g. managers giving responses about themselves or subordinates asked to assess their managers or when both are studied, e.g. by many LMX researchers, the data is often questionnaire-based and quite thin. Interestingly enough, such studies show a fairly low degree of correspondence between managers and subordinates assessment of the situation (Cogliser, Schriesheim, Scandura, & Gardner, 2009), indicating that it may be very difficult to draw conclusions on leadership based on studies of only one part of the relationship. In contrast, we present two empirical qualitative case studies, where we investigated how people viewed their relations as superior–subordinates in terms of the need for and interest in managerial leadership – doing and receiving it, with a special focus on organizational contexts where less directive managerial leadership could be expected, in our case two R&D departments within the wireless communication industry. Studying leadership in knowledge-intensive organizations with supposedly creative, highly skilled workers allowed us to further explore the common notion that this type of organization demands particular (usually less directive), non-traditional forms of managerial leadership.

The rationale for using two qualitative case studies is that it allows a combination of depth, richness and variation. Our interest in peoples’ reasoning and constructions of the need for managerial leadership (doing and receiving) calls for studies of both managers and subordinates, which is fairly demanding in terms of access and understanding of what is going on, where creating a sense of trust in order to encourage people to talk openly about their relations and refraining from following available social scripts and standards for leadership talk, possibly echoing available discourses (more than one’s own experiences and observations) is key (Alvesson, 2011a). This ambition is often easier to fulfil with fewer cases, or even a single case study. With our two cases, we are also reducing the risk of over relying on the idiosyncrasies of a specific unit/manager and his/her relations. The two cases

further enable us to do interesting comparisons, both in terms of reasoning from subordinate versus superior positions within each organization, as well as between the two cases.

Given our interest in *meanings* on the need for managerial leadership, we primarily based our case studies on open-ended interviews. These interviews were complemented with some observations of meetings/interactions where managerial leadership could be expected to be exercised. We do not directly refer to our observations in this text (with exception from one quote based on ‘natural occurring talk’ between a manager and two of his subordinates in Case 2), since these broadly confirmed the impressions from the interviews. Often observations display rather little of clear examples of leadership: people in interactions discuss technical issues and it is seldom clear who, if any, is the ‘leader’ (e.g. Lundholm, 2011; Rennstam, 2007). This was also the case in our two studies.

### Selection of cases and interviewees

The two cases – ‘EHT’ and ‘Allied Tech’ (both pseudonyms) – included in the empirical study were selected based on geographical closeness (allowing flexibility in setting up agreements for interviews and observation) and the fact that a large proportion of their employees were highly educated engineers (i.e. examples of ‘knowledge intensive’ organizational settings) and engaged in innovation work. The firms offered good access without any constraints.

The first study was conducted over approximately six months at an R&D unit at EHT, a global consumer electronics company. The field study was based on open-ended interviews with seven managers at three different hierarchical levels. In total, this study included nine interviews (for more details on the interviews, see Appendices A and B). Also the second study consisted of a case study of an R&D unit within a global high-tech company called Allied Tech. The study of Allied Tech comprises thirteen interviews over the course of a couple of months (for more details on the interviews, see Appendices A and B). Common for both studies is that we conducted the first interviews with the head of each unit and then moved downwards in the organizational hierarchy (purposive sample) until we thought we had data enough to make interesting interpretations (see Appendix A). The first study receives more space below as the inclusion of three levels meant that a richer empirical material could be produced, as all involved (junior, middle and senior) levels could offer accounts of both superior and subordinate relations. As on the whole experienced and qualified persons, they also expressed many insightful experiences. In the second case, all except the head of the unit were ‘first-level’ (non-managerial) professionals and much younger and less experienced than the subjects in the first case. All in all, even with a fewer number of interviews, the first study contained more useful accounts given our research interest. Therefore Case 1 is somewhat more extensive than Case 2 below.

Based on our research question, our two a priori themes – ‘supply’ and ‘demand’ of managerial leadership – are saliently reflected in the design of the interview scheme (see Appendix B). The overall framing of the interviews was explicitly, but rather openly, related to ‘leadership’ (i.e. the reason for the interviews was presented as a ‘study on leadership in knowledge-intense organizations, such as

yours'), but we deliberately kept the definition of 'leadership' open for interpretations (i.e. we did not impose our view of managerial leadership – as discussed in the introduction section – on them), and it was up to the interviewees to fill the label with meaning and specific examples. It also allowed people to go outside this theme (or use of vocabulary). The result was a variety of examples of what *they* saw as managerial leadership activities, more or less in demand.

## Analytical approach

Analytically, as a first step, we tried to evaluate which parts of the recorded interview (or raw field notes if not recorded) that seemed relevant given our research question. Parts that were deemed 'irrelevant' at this stage were not transcribed. Transcribed texts were then targeted for close readings and we categorized the accounts in terms of our two broad a priori themes (constructions of supply and demand of leadership). In addition to this, we created new empirically driven sub-themes related to 'leadership', most of them explicitly referred to by the interviewees (but also of course partly coloured by our own interpretative repertoire and pre-understanding of the phenomenon). Examples of such themes included 'non-interference', 'protection', 'acting upwards', 'inhibiting leadership', and 'initiating leadership'. We aggregated what we regarded as related topics into broader themes, or broke up what we thought being to broad themes into more fine-tuned ones. We did not engage in detailed codifications, often giving a misleading impression of precision and hiding the ambiguities and context-dependence of material that are domesticated by the codification (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Instead we were eager to get a good feeling for context and relations. We looked for patterns as well as deviations and were surprised by the fairly high level of common views on leadership issues expressed. The few but important variations identified in the accounts were taken seriously and further explored as potential themes (e.g. '(mis)alignment of expectations'), rather than methodological problems or inconsistencies. After this procedure, we then shared and compared our themes (including meanings, significance, underlying assumptions, context, etc.), in order to generate, contrast and evaluate different lines of interpretation. Finally, we compared the two case studies for similarities and differences.

The purpose with this interpretative analytical process, inspired by e.g. Gadamer (1989), Gubrium and Holstein (1997) and Marcel (2001), was to get a deeper sense of the meaning of the phenomenon, in our case how people relate to 'managerial leadership' and construct their need for it. In the process one tries to get close to those studied and their ways of making sense of and develop meanings around selfhood and relations, but also to critically bear in mind that expressed understandings may reflect limited overview, want to give a good impression, a self-understanding exaggerating agency and autonomy and downplay or deny dependencies and conformism.

## Case 1: EHT

### Introducing the case

EHT is a large, global consumer electronics company. The part of the company included in this study is a software R&D

unit called *Platform Technology Planning*, consisting of 80 highly skilled engineers functionally organized in 'sections' based on specific technology areas. We have been able to study two of these sections (Sections A and B) and their managers. The head of Platform Technology Planning is *Julian*, a 45 year old engineer. The main task for his organization is to conduct novel research within each technology area, but also to support the product development projects with expertise and solutions at later stages in the development cycle. Key challenges for Julian include raising the number of (for EHT) useful patents and keeping service levels high in relation to the internal product development projects.

### Limited demand for managerial leadership

A key theme dominating many of the interviews about the relationship between the interviewees and their managers is 'non-interference'. One middle manager thinks that he encounters leadership (from his manager, Julian) mainly if something extraordinary happens. Because he knows his job, he does not expect nor want much leadership, apart from in exceptional cases.

I would put it like this: when I end up in a situation where leadership is invoked upon me it is an extraordinary thing, if you see what I mean. I have rather extensive degrees of freedom when it comes to the daily operative activities, perhaps thanks to my background within the organization. Julian knows that I am on top of things. . .

(Magnus S)

The construction above, implied to be shared ('Julian knows...'), is that under ordinary conditions, with competent people, work is 'leadership-free'. Managerial leadership is, unless under very rare conditions, unwelcome, and is constructed as something that is motivated for subordinates that are not 'on top of things' and stands in opposition to trust and competence. Actually, managers eager to practice leadership are sometimes experienced as frustrating.

The managers I struggle with most are the 'motivating' types, who try to create energy and momentum, but only move back and forth without keeping a clear direction.

(Magnus S)

The point here is that people taking leadership too seriously, perhaps inspired by all the literature on 'transformational leadership', are creating problems rather than improving people and the business. People eager to do leadership are constructed as overambitious; the idea of being able to motivate others through specific communication does not work. One can note that the manager refers to several examples and a pattern, not just one deviant case. One junior manager is even more salient in deviating from the view that much leadership is needed or is, on the whole, a good thing.

My work has seldom received much leadership. Something which I appreciate (laughter)! I have had pretty much carte blanche from the beginning. Sometimes this can be

tricky, but mostly I find it stimulating. I am directed by goals and dislike being told what to do. So who or should I say what is leading me? The projects' milestones and the projects' resource capacity lead my work. This is what I and my group primarily have to adapt our work to.

(Steven A)

In addition to time schedules and resource plans, peers/fellow experts within and outside the company are mentioned as 'the most significant' sources of influence according to one of Steven's colleagues in Section A.

I think that the ones that exercise the most significant influence on my work are as a matter of fact the other experts in the global virtual community. And in addition to them, we have the agreed plans, schedules and deliverables that provide boundaries for what I can do.

(Andrew M)

Of course, we cannot generalize from this, but we can understand that in some situations, getting advice in horizontal relations with respected and competent colleagues, are seen as beneficial compared to reliance on a 'fixed' hierarchical leader–follower relation as the source and context of direction and support. Managers are often stressed and short of time (Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010) adding to the situation, and sometimes encourages subordinates to find other solutions than managerial leadership, both as an immediate response and as a long-term orientation, thereby fuelling a low demand for managerial leadership. But rather than viewing these substitutes as simply being there and then functioning as compensating for or reducing the role of leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), one could say that an initial or gradual downplaying of leadership as a social construction may bring these qualities (intrinsic motivation, etc.) into being. Constructing peers – more than leaders – as central for direction and support from the followers' point of view is key in this regard.

### Managerial leadership initiated by the followers

So the basic rule in the Platform Technology Planning unit seems to be non-interference from superiors, indicating a general low demand for managerial leadership. When managerial leadership on rare occasions is called for, it seems to be common that the *subordinates* – not the manager – initiate or trigger the managerial intervention/support.

Magnus [Andrew's immediate superior] is a sound person that you really can talk to. You can always pop into his office when you have a problem. His door is always open so to speak... But when it comes to everyday work, we hardly do not interact... I would say that he has more of a supporting role, where we contact *him* if we need his ideas, opinion or assistance.

(Andrew S)

The manager is here constructed as mainly 'reactive' and more or less 'on call', ready to assist, but only when asked for by his subordinates. 'We' implies that it is not just this

particular relationship (Magnus–Andrew) that is referred to. This construction seems also to be shared by the manager in question, even if he indicates some doubts regarding his sufficiency as a leader in the eyes of his people.

I am sometimes asked for advice and ideas... Perhaps I should try to be more engaging and create more energy in my group. If think I ought to but find it hard, partly because of the person I am. I am no party animal and do not like to stand up in public and sing. I am more offish and thoughtful. I think this affects how I lead, and can lead.

(Magnus S)

This pattern, with a mainly reactive manager/leader, can also be found in Section A, where Andrew describes the relationship with his manager Staffan and his other colleagues.

Patrick is also an experienced colleague that is useful when you need an advice. Therefore, I ask Patrick for help when it comes to concrete and tangible issues. On the other hand, when it comes to for example important resource conflicts, I will go to Staffan [his manager].

(Andrew M)

Again, the phrase 'I will go to...', indicates that it is Andrew who takes the initiative when it comes to trigger 'leadership' from his managers part. Andrew's manager, Staffan L, confirms the view that he is not very active as a manager (acting downwards) and that his subordinates usually neither need, nor want interference from their boss. Below, he constructs himself as mainly reactive, responding to the initiatives from others.

Well, mostly it is them [the subordinates] that contact me when they need help with some issue... They need a leader that is sufficiently technically skilled in order to be able to give them support, but generally I do not think they need or want any interference from the boss. I have received a lot of feedback that confirm this.

(Staffan L)

The consensus about the relationship across hierarchies is striking. Usually, it is the subordinates who initiate the leadership interventions from their managers, when they see a need for it.

### Managerial leadership inhibited by the followers

But the subordinates do not just initiate managerial leadership interventions. They are also more or less proactively influencing or even inhibiting managerial leadership acts. One example is how they divert what they refer to as 'leadership' from themselves, upwards the hierarchy or outside their own organization unit. The rationale for this is said to be top management's tendency of complicating work, something that should be inhibited or at least moderated.

Management, and now I am talking about the levels above Julian [Head of department], have a tendency of to frequently and easily making decisions without involving us first. Decisions that often alter the conditions and 'rules of the game' for our activity, and often lead to consequences they do not see nor understand. In addition, issues that they do not want to handle have a tendency of quickly be thrown upon the TWGs [Andrew's own organization].

(Andrew S)

Top management is here constructed as sometimes ignorant and creating problems. Defence and protection are needed against all the disturbances and unrealistic demands, also emphasized by Steven below.

We need someone who defends our freedom. Someone who can protect us from all these small, fragmenting, time-consuming issues. Someone who protects us from the product development projects. It should be we, not they [the product development projects], who dictates what needs to be done when it comes to R&D-work.

(Steven A)

The most senior manager in the unit, two steps up in relationship to Steven and Andrew, seems on the whole to be aware of and sympathetic to his junior managers' views on the subject matter of 'leadership'.

My role as a leader is primarily to ensure peace and quiet for my people in order to enable them to do their job. . . .What I can do is to manage their [the subordinates'] problem escalation in an effective way; is it a local problem that should be allocated to a certain individual or group within my organization? Or is it a bigger problem that we either must solve collectively or escalate upwards in the hierarchy? My developers may be brilliant at what they are doing, but they seldom escalate or manage their issues and problems in a politically correct way. That is probably one of my most important tasks as a leader; to understand the political system and translate the issues, messages and interests of the organization in a politically smart, or should I say passable, way, in order to have effect higher up in the hierarchy. Here I can contribute.

(Julian A)

Again, there is not much about directly leading subordinates. Julian mentions that an important role is to 'ensure peace and quit' and to help them resolve issues, often upwards in the hierarchy and emphasizes these as tasks for him as a 'leader.' He talks about 'my role as leader' and notes that 'one of my most significant tasks as a leader is to understand the political system' and 'to have effect higher up in the hierarchy'. The subordinates' demand for 'leadership' is here again constructed as being about protecting them from disturbing and distracting events, promoting their interests outside the unit, keeping hands off and just letting them keep on doing what they are doing. This indicates that

the subordinates'/followers' efforts of redirecting management attention (and thereby managerial leadership interventions targeted at themselves) outside the unit, have had some effect. According to these fairly shared constructions, 'leaders' are supposed to affect meanings and exercise influence over their superiors, not their subordinates!

Whether this form of upward influence should be labelled 'leadership' (as done by our respondents) is of course debatable. As Carroll and Levy (2008) writes, 'leader' has often no specific meaning different from 'middle manager', illustrating that people often are uncertain about the leader-manager distinction and use the term leadership in vague and varied ways. Kelly (2008) uses the concept of 'language games' when theorizing on the various applications of the label. As mentioned in the methods section, we have been open for the interviewees' own constructions of 'leadership', and can just note that it deviates from our, rather conventional definition of managerial leadership as described in the introduction section. But regardless of the usefulness of labelling this upward influencing activity leadership or not, it (more or less deliberately) diverts managerial attention from the subordinates towards other actors, thereby inhibiting managerial leadership acts targeting the subordinates and turning them into 'followers'.

## Summary

The key themes/categories that emerge from this analysis (indicated by the chosen sub-headlines above) are (a) a generally low demand for managerial leadership, (b) managerial leadership often initiated by the subordinates/followers, and (c) managerial leadership inhibited/diverted by the followers. The subordinates do not expect or favour much leadership directed to themselves, occasionally there is a conflict about resources or there is a need for discussion or advice, and here a senior person exercising leadership is viewed as helpful, but being lead in a distinct, directive sense by a senior is not prominent. The superiors confirm this picture of the demand of their subordinates and on the whole think it is appropriate and act accordingly. The desired role of managers is mainly to work and exercise influence upwards in the hierarchy. Some respondents define this as 'leadership', but it does not seem to be about leading followers. When managerial leadership is exercised towards the subordinates/followers, it is often initiated and framed by them, rather than their manager.

## Case 2: Allied Tech

### Introducing the case

Allied Tech offers advanced network-based products and solutions for corporate customers worldwide. George, our focal manager at Allied Tech, is in his 30s and the newly appointed head of the *Product Platforms Group*. One of George's first tasks was to try to (re)define the objectives, role and responsibilities of the unit. George is heading a group of eight development engineers doing advanced programming of micro processors that are key components of the technologically advanced products developed, manufactured and sold by Allied Tech.

## Limited demand for managerial leadership

George is eager to work as a manager, doing leadership. He has an engineering background, but has just been promoted and strongly identifies himself as a manager exercising managerial leadership. This means working with the group and its internal relations, clarifying responsibilities, increasing job satisfaction, facilitating collaboration and development, etc. He emphasizes that he, as a leader, is non-directive and highly dialogue-oriented:

I base my leadership on respect for those who really are close to the actual work and I do not have any tendency of telling people what to do. Instead, I base my leadership on trust, respect and a very open dialogue with all my subordinates. No hidden agenda from my part, so to speak.

George clearly expects that being open, honest and considerate – an ‘authentic leader’ (as some authors like to put it, e.g. Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999) – will shine through in how others view him as a leader.

I’m quite sure that they think that I am open and that I am very inviting. . . I tell them about my private situation and I say what I can and cannot do, and so on. And I hope they have caught that. . . But then, I think, my group has no potential project leaders, so to speak. They are really deep technologically, and want to be deep technological. And, it’s not to be prejudiced, but it is a fact that this category [of people] does not reflect so much over their manager. . .

This quote indicates a limited interest on the behalf of the subordinates (hardly constructing themselves as followers). George is worried that they may have not even noted or bothered about his leadership efforts (‘I hope they have caught that’). His view is that the engineers are unreflective about and unresponsive to leadership from his part and possibly about other ‘non-technological’ related issues as well. At least the disinterest in managerial leadership is confirmed by the subordinates. When asked about George’s leadership specifically, one of them says about their relationship to their manager:

Hmm. . . what do we do really? We go to his meetings and answer his questions, and beyond that. . .

The rest of the sentence is left unsaid and indicates that not much come out of this. The engineer confirms George’s understanding, although he would probably not construct this as a matter of ‘limited reflection’. Later, when asked about what functions George has for the group, another subordinate explains:

Well, what functions does he really fill, apart from being an administrator? Well. . . if we are now expected to work in a different way he has something to do with defining that I guess. And he has involved himself into that, enthusiastically. A bit too much, because I mean, we have been able to work well before and suddenly it has to be defined and structured, it feels a bit overambitious, to say the least.

While acting as an administrator is fine, affecting work is not. Arranging meetings is not viewed with much enthusiasm,

either. It is quite clear that interference is not welcome. A good manager, it seems, refrains from (over)ambitious leadership, but also other interventions. Another subordinate reinforces the impression when arguing that:

. . . trusting the people in the group to do what they should and not intervene and decide everything. I feel that it is quite important. Especially when you have worked here for some time. You want to be trusted. You want to feel that the manager trusts that I can handle this.

The view seems to be that doing managerial leadership is almost like displaying distrust and exercise unmotivated interference. The need for personal development, feelings of commitment and joy are attributed to the work content – the very thing the subordinates want George to stay away from. Also, this programmer (above) wants to decide for himself, i.e. exercise professional autonomy. A third subordinate summarizes his view in a rather lukewarm comment:

So far there haven’t been any problems [with George].

All in all, it is rather clear that managerial leadership targeting the subordinates seem not be in high demand in this organizational unit, according to the interviewees.

## Managerial leadership influenced or inhibited by the followers

When asked about what leadership the subordinates need from their manager, after a few seconds of thinking, one engineer emphasizes the ‘social’ dimension:

It should be someone who makes. . . parties and such.

Managerial ‘entertainment’, rather than influence, direction and support related to work, seems to be in demand. This follower driven direction of managerial focus seems also to have had some effect on how George view his role as a leader:

I walk around the corridor five to nine and tell people ‘breakfast is served’. I think it is appreciated.

In addition to breakfasts, George later also introduced ‘beer tasting’ just before Christmas, something that also seemed ‘very appreciated’ by his subordinates.

Another example of how George’s ‘followers’ significantly influence his ability to do leadership concerns the everyday work content. George describes one of his developers:

One of my long-timers is rather challenging. . . It is not a conflict or so, but he does question me at meetings and so on. . . I know that other managers are scared of this expert. . . He has significant degrees of freedom, both when it comes to his presence here at the office and what he is supposed to work with, so to speak.

How the subordinates more or less are able to self define what to do, is further illustrated by a conversation between George and two of his developers. George:

Think also a little bit about what we shall do in the future. What are you interested in and what do you want to dig into? I would really like to learn more about what you would like to work with, what each of you would like to do here.



Related to this, George admits that it is hard to exercise leadership targeting his subordinates and their everyday work because of his problems with understanding what they actually are doing in combination with their tendency of working individually and being somewhat 'secretive' with how they spend their time at work.

Mainly they sit at their desktops and write code... They do not interact that much with each other under normal circumstances... What they are working with is among the most complicated you can do as a software developer. Therefore it is extremely hard to comprehend and understand. It is actually!... Therefore I have to trust the people in my organization. What they tell me regarding time plans and recommendations, for example.

The complex, solitary engineering work combined with a shared unwillingness of interference and to construct themselves as 'followers' is of course a challenging environment for a manager eager to exercise leadership in relation to his subordinates, in this case leaving him to arrange parties, serve breakfast and work with administration. By directing management attention and focus on activities other than leading subordinates, the intended followers thereby inhibit managerial leadership interventions targeted towards themselves and their work.

## Summary

The key themes/categories that emerge from this case (indicated by the chosen sub-headlines above) are (a) a generally low demand for managerial leadership, and (b) managerial leadership inhibited/diverted by the subordinates/followers. To the subordinates, George's efforts of doing leadership through developing them or directing their work, do not evoke much positive response. It is quite clear that they care more about the work than about leadership and see managerial interventions as distractions. George is still seen in moderately positive terms, though. As long as he doesn't interfere and cause problems, he is OK according to his subordinates. As long as he doesn't bother the engineers and developers too much, he may just as well continue. There is a shared understanding among the group members, constructing themselves as autonomous and disinterested in leadership. George on the other hand thinks that leadership is important and wants to do more for his subordinates. As they are 'deep technologically' this is needed, he feels. Of the exact same reason, the subordinates are not very interested and prefer to concentrate on their work and see managerial leadership efforts as something that should be minimized, since it is constructed as standing in opposition to trust, freedom and competence. The leader-wannabee in search of followers meets those preferring some administrative support, celebration (arrangement of parties, breakfasts and beer tasting) and being addressed as professional engineers with as much autonomy as possible.

## Synthesis and comparison of the two cases

As we just have seen, a few categories/themes of significant importance for our research question emerge from the two cases; *Limited demand for managerial leadership* (Cases 1

and 2), *Managerial leadership initiated by the followers* (Case 1), and *Managerial leadership influenced/inhibited by the followers* (Cases 1 and 2). We will now in turn discuss each one of them.

## Limited demand for managerial leadership

The two cases seem to share many characteristics. The two units are both expected to develop innovative software solutions. They consist of highly skilled engineers with long formal education. The organizational members claim to be highly committed to their work within their special area of interest and expertise. The types of task are also similar and consist of qualified and complex technological problem solving and envisioning of future trends/scenarios within each technology area. In both cases (partly expected a priori given our sample strategy), there seems to be plenty of means to substitute managerial leadership as a source for guidance and stimulation in these settings (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), and the subordinates seem to be close to what Kelley (2008) would call able and self-starting 'star followers' with less need for, or interest in, managerial direction and support (see also Bennis, 2000). Trust and freedom from interference are dominant constructions of the manager-subordinate relationships. Other roles of the manager than 'leading' followers, e.g. keeping track of administration, acting upwards as a spokesperson for the unit, deciding salary, funding parties, may be seen as important, but are somewhat different from a leader/follower identification and relationship (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007).

As put forward in the introduction section, if there is a lack of interest to be lead among the targets for the leadership interventions, there is a significant risk that the outcome of the intervention will be different than intended, e.g. fuel dissatisfaction (Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007), trigger resistance (Collinson, 2005), or that the leadership efforts just will be ignored, i.e. non-acceptance of a follower identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Especially the focal manager in Case 1 seems to depart from his subordinates' preferences, indicating a fairly high level of consensus between those involved regarding the limited need for managerial leadership. Both superiors and subordinates construct the situation similarly and seem satisfied with the relationship, possibly reflecting an organizational cultural understanding (rather than just a set of individual views) on leadership and how to organize support and direction (Alvesson, 2011b; Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001). Case 2 indicates a somewhat less shared construction on the need for managerial leadership, where the head of the unit seems to want to 'lead' his engineers more than he currently does, while they do not really see the need for this and construct it as conflicting with employee competence, freedom and trust. From a manager's perspective (eager to do leadership), lack of leadership/followership could be seen as an expression of shortcomings, possibly affecting self-conceptualization and identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; DeRue et al., 2009). From a subordinate's perspective however, the same absence of leadership/followership can be viewed as a confirmation of competence and trust.

DeRue and Ashford (2010, p. 628) emphasizes the importance of 'clarity' when it comes to establishing leader-follower identities/relations: 'When... clarity exists, there

is greater acceptance of the right of the person constructed as leader to exert influence over the person constructed as follower. When this clarity is missing, we expect increased conflict and tension in the relationship'. In our empirical studies, it seems hard to explain the general lack of leader–follower identities with lack of clarity (many interviewees indicate a rather elaborated and unambiguous view on the relationship across hierarchies). Instead, we think that the general low demand for managerial leadership can be derived from their (rather clear) constructions of their work, their peers and their superiors. There is a tendency to see management and leadership as *the* solution to any unsatisfying situation (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011). Managers may do 'too much' or 'too little' (and of course also the wrong type of) leadership, in relationship to subordinates' experienced needs, interests, and identities as followers. Even if it is the 'right' or 'positive' kind of leadership – not toxic (Lipman-Blumen, 2004; Whicker, 1996) or aversive (Bligh et al., 2007), but well intended as intellectually stimulating, considering, etc. – it may still be seen as too much and be perceived as 'interference'.

### Managerial leadership initiated by the followers

Particular salient in Case 1, the subordinates seem to have a shared understanding that managerial leadership should be 'by invitation', i.e. that it is the junior person that initiates the senior person's intervention. Rather than just laissez-faire, neglect or managerial abdication (usually condemned managerial behaviour in most text on leadership), this could instead be understood as leadership 'on call', i.e. the superior manager is reactive but alert, responsive and ready to intervene, but only when called for by his/her subordinates.

Taken together with the low demand for managerial leadership in our two cases (above), this leader–follower relationship could perhaps be understood as 'self-leadership' (Lovell et al., 2007) or some other 'follower-less' leadership approach such as 'shared leadership' (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce and Manz, 2005) or 'distributed leadership' (Gronn, 2002). It also relates to what Carsten et al. (2010) refers to as 'upward leadership' (p. 558). In our study however, the subordinates clearly open up for or invite their formal superior to exercise (non-distributed/non-shared/downward) leadership, thereby accepting a temporal and partly conditioned followership position and identity for themselves (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). A leadership position/identity is therefore not just claimed and granted (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), but proactively 'offered' by the followers. This behaviour is in our view also different from the concept of 'management-by-exception (passive)', where the leader intervenes/takes action only if standards are not met, rules have been broken or mistakes have been brought to the leaders attention (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In contrast, our study shows followers with significant agency in the very initiation of the leadership process, and no 'mistakes' or 'rule breaking' needs to precede it. The observed leader–follower relationships also correspond somewhat with the notion of 'delegation', but usually also delegation departs from the manager's framing and construction of the situation (e.g. Blanchard, 2008). In our empirical cases we find this misleading; again, our results indicate that it is the followers – rather than their manager – that define the leadership

situation. Our results can therefore rather be related to Carsten et al.'s. (2010) observation of 'proactive' followers and Shamir's (2007) notion of followers as active 'co-producers', but the role of subordinates when it comes to *trigger* managerial leadership in our study is worth highlighting and adds to the other two aforementioned studies.

### Managerial leadership influenced/inhibited by the followers

In both case studies, the subordinates generally construct themselves as active co-producers of managerial leadership outcomes (e.g. strongly influencing managerial activities and exercising significant control over their own daily work/priorities) and also the absence thereof. This is a result broadly in line with what other scholars have written about (pro)active followers (Carsten et al., 2010; Hollander, 1992; Kelley, 1992; Meindl, 1995; Shamir, 2007). In the interviews, they also often come back to the idea that their manager should direct the attention outside the organizational unit and especially higher up in the hierarchy, in order to influence top management and protect the unit from annoying decrees and ideas. By complying with these subordinate preferences (especially salient in Case 1), the ability to influence and claim follower positions and identities for the subordinates diminish. Previous research has showed how subordinates use upward influence to obtain resources (Allen & Porter, 1983), but here the intention seems to be (at least in addition to securing resources and influencing top management) to divert attention in order to inhibit unwanted managerial leadership interventions.

As DeRue and Ashford (2010, p. 632) writes, claiming and granting leader–follower identities can be done verbally as well as non-verbally, direct or indirect. The same seems to apply for *resisting* such identities, thereby inhibiting managerial leadership. The example above illustrates how the subordinates verbally, but indirectly inhibit leadership towards themselves by diverting or redirecting managerial attention to other 'targets'. But also by just looking grumpy, bored or generally demonstrate a limited interest in managerial leadership acts, the subordinates can (as implied in particular in Case 2) – verbally and non-verbally – more or less directly inhibit managerial leadership initiatives, thereby acting as influential 'co-authors' (together with their managers) of organizational realities (Cunliffe, 2001).

### Discussion

A major finding in our study is that even *managerial* leadership may bear strong imprints of the constructions of subordinates and is even often initiated (or inhibited) by the very targets for leadership, i.e. the 'followers'. This is to some extent in line with parts of the literature on active, self-leading followers, but in contrast, our study highlights the followers' *initiation* of the managerial leadership process, and therefore adds a new angle. Inspired by our empirical studies and contemporary customer orchestrated media consumption (Video On Demand), we propose '*Leadership On Demand*' (managerial leadership practices in terms of direction and/or support, initiated and to large extent defined by followers) as a useful metaphor for describing the leadership

dynamics at hand. Here, the subordinates not only define what type of leadership they need in terms of quantity and quality, but also *when* (and even *if*) they need this managerial leadership intervention. Importantly, the metaphor captures the experienced need and interest of those supposed to benefit from the managerial leadership acts – the followers. The targets for leadership here rather explicitly ‘open up’ for being exposed to managerial leadership, followed by a potential response from the manager/leader, usually passive in terms of leadership interventions targeting subordinates, but ready to act if asked for. ‘Followers’ then become drivers, or as the metaphor implies – selective or even fastidious consumers – of leadership. But they are also active as ‘editors’ or inhibitors of leadership. When in various ways – via open dialogue or in more tacit manners, directly or indirectly – constructing themselves as non-followers and discouraging the manager from a clear leader identity, it affects the manager and his/her agency as a ‘leader’.

To sum up, our results and findings highlight the vital role of followers in the initiation phase of managerial leadership, thereby contributing to an ‘expanded view’ of leadership/followership-dynamics (Bligh, 2011; Carsten et al., 2010). The result also indicates how a general low demand for managerial leadership affects – in particular limits – the ability to claim and grant leader/followership identities (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). It is therefore also an example of how social constructionist studies can be social relevant to organizational concerns (Grint & Jackson, 2010).

## Limitations

There are of course important limitations with this study that deserve to be highlighted. Given our qualitative approach and small sample size (both in terms of cases and number of interviews) we cannot empirically generalize, as discussed in the methods section above. In order to say something about how common or applicable our findings are, we need further studies in more organizations and industries, but the fact that both cases show some common features suggests that the findings have broader relevance.

Moreover, due to our focus on so-called knowledge intense organizations, some constructions may be more common (and anticipated) in these types of organizations compared to others, due to characteristics such as highly educated co-workers, complex and highly specialized work tasks, claims of intrinsic motivation linked to the work itself, etc. In a setting

with less formally qualified employees, more standardized routines, more significant gap in terms of knowledge/formal education between managers and subordinates, the result might have been somewhat different.

Finally, the findings are based on data from a Swedish sample. It is likely that constructions of leadership/followership vary across cultures. Sweden is often being characterized by its egalitarian society/work settings and low power distance between managers and subordinates, which of course might be of great importance for our result. Data from a more autocratic setting with a more salient power distance might have given us a different result.

Taken together, these points at interesting avenues for future research including empirical studies in different organizational/cultural settings than those that have been included in this study. More studies on the actual real-time interaction between leaders and followers in the initiation phase of managerial leadership would also add important knowledge in relation to our somewhat retrospective and interview based study.

## Concluding remarks

Even if participatory, coaching, delegating, supportive, shared, distributed and other post-heroic views of leadership are popular, there is still an emphasis on leadership playing an important role. It is therefore important to remember that there are many different ways of organizing work and providing direction and support, some leadership/followership-based, others not. As demonstrated in our study, this does not necessarily mean that managers abdicate as leaders, but that managerial leadership interventions are fairly rare, and to large extent initiated/inhibited by the ‘followers’ – an approach we have labelled Leadership On Demand. In accordance with other writings on (pro)active followers, our study shows how followers play a proactive role in ‘managing’ leader–follower processes (Bligh, 2011; Carsten et al., 2010). Managers may, as leaders, be ‘authors of organizational realities’ (Cunliffe, 2001), but there are co-authors and readers, perhaps most importantly in the form of followers, who also can choose to act as ‘non-readers’ of the leader-authors’ reality constructing text efforts. Without their interest the effect of the ‘manager-authoring’ is limited and a collective authorship may make the lead-author appear less saliently when trying to understand who is holding the pen.

## Appendix A. Overview of the two field studies

### Study 1 – EHT.

Interview	Length (min)	Electronically recorded (yes/no)	No. of pages transcribed
Julian A, Head of department (Platform Technology Planning)	55	No	8
Julian A, Head of department (Platform Technology Planning)	95	Yes	14
Julian A, Head of department (Platform Technology Planning)	35	No	4
Suzie B, Corporate Head of Innovations	30	No	3
Staffan L, Head of Section A	60	Yes	8
Magnus S, Head of Section B	70	Yes	10
Andrew M, Head of Technology Work Group 1	65	Yes	8
Steven A, Head of Technology Work Group 2	55	Yes	7
Andrew S, Head of Technology Work Group 3	50	Yes	10

The empirical study of EHT was conducted by one of the authors.

### Study 2 – Allied Tech.

Interview	Length (min)	Electronically recorded (yes/no)	No. of pages transcribed
George S, R&D Manager Product Platforms	90	Yes	16
Giacomo G, Manager New Business Models	80	Yes	8
Albert A, Co-worker New Business Models	25	Yes	2
Barry B, Co-worker New Business Models	30	Yes	4
Carrie C, Co-worker New Business Models	30	Yes	2
Daniel D, Co-worker New Business Models	25	Yes	4
Kurt K, Manager System and Services	75	Yes	5
Eric E, Co-worker System and Services	35	Yes	3
Freddy F, Co-worker System and Services	30	Yes	2
Gertrud G, Co-worker System and Services	30	Yes	3
Jasper A, Developer Product Platforms	25	Yes	2
Hannah B, Developer Product Platforms	30	Yes	3
Lenny C, Developer Product Platforms	30	Yes	2

The empirical study of Allied Tech was conducted by Dr. Johan Alvehus, a former member of the research group.

## Appendix B. Interview schedule

### Questions to superiors

1. Interviewee's biography and background within and/or outside the organization (preferably answered before the actual interview)?
2. Please describe the major tasks and responsibilities of your organization/team.
3. When do you think you are exercising 'leadership'?
4. How do you exercise 'leadership'?
5. When and how do you think your 'leadership' has a significant effect among your subordinates?
6. How would you, ideally, like to exercise 'leadership'?
7. What kind of 'leadership' do you think your subordinates need in order to perform their tasks successfully?
8. What kind of 'leadership' do you think they prefer?

### Questions to subordinates

1. Interviewee's biography and background within and/or outside the organization (preferably answered before the actual interview)?
2. Who (if any) is leading your work?
3. When do you feel someone is exercising 'leadership' on you and your work?
4. Describe how 'leadership' is exercised upon you and your work.
5. Describe 'leadership' that has been particular helpful or harmful in regards to your work.

6. Describe the type of 'leadership' that you think you need in order to be able to perform your tasks as successfully as possible.
7. How does this differ from the current situation?
8. Is 'need' the same as 'prefer' for you when it comes to 'leadership'?

The interview schedule (intended questions) looked more or less the same for Studies 1 and 2. All interviews were conducted in Swedish. Hence, all questions above include translation from Swedish into English.

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