

## Danish University Colleges

### English Summary "The Trojan Hobbyhorse"

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*Publication date:*  
2009

*Document Version*  
Tidlig version også kaldet pre-print

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for pulished version (APA):*  
Andersen, F. B. (2009). *English Summary "The Trojan Hobbyhorse"*.

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## ***English Summary***

Frode Boye Andersen:

### ***The Trojan Hobbyhorse***

#### **Observing Leading Communication**

#### **Inquiry**

This thesis examines the opportunities for leadership in projects of learning and development in types of organizations characterized by a low degree of steering influence and a high degree of dependence on the participants.

The thesis takes off empirically in six pictures (Pictures I-VI) from a project of organizational change in an organization called [The School]. These pictures reproduce the developmental process of [The School] according to six combined perspectives dealing with the task of leadership; this task concerns the progression in the project process as well as it concerns the learning processes in the organization and for the participants within the frames of the project. The six pictures describe the development project of [The School] - partly outlining the project as a whole and partly presenting five key themes whose analytical treatments will be leading sequentially the argumentation of the thesis.

Niklas Luhmann's systems-theoretical perspective - viewing the organization as a social system operating autopoietically and self-referential by its recursive communication of decisions - is the basic inspiration and reference for the inquiry of the thesis into the possibilities for leadership in a project of organizational change. In this way the systems theory is working at two levels in the thesis' exploration of the question of leadership and in the analysis of the underlying empirical study: The systems theory furnishes both the ongoing strategy of analysis and the theoretical main-perspective regarding the perception of organizations and their functionality. Thus the analytic weight of the thesis unfolds especially through the examination of the empirical question from a systems theoretic point of view. In this work of analysis the thesis, above all,

draws upon the distinction-borne observation as a fundamental methodological concept - and upon its operational equivalent: the guiding difference.

The irradiating by systems theory provides the crucial screening of the themes of the thesis but the thesis, additionally, considers compatible contributions from the prevalent organization theory. This supplement works fruitfully as a differentiating sidelight on the fairly generalized systems theory of organization.

## **Chapters**

Following the three introducing chapters, in chapter 4. I establish the fundamentals of the thesis: the systems theory and the basic conception of perception as construction. Hence I link up creation of knowledge with observing (of) observing and through this opening I recount the conditions for an inquiry based on systems theory; at the same time I initiate the actual analysis by generating the guiding differences of the inquiry. With the thoroughness of this chapter I make an attempt to ensure accessibility to readers who are not deeply acquainted with the perspective of system theory but first of all I intend to show the impact of the systems theory on the way the case emerges and on the relation between me and the case study. Thus, this is not only the mere announcing of a theoretical position but especially an effort to transform pragmatically parts of a copious theoretical system into a capable research practice: analytically strategic second-order observing.

Then follow five chapters; each of those submitting their picture to analytic examination. Chapter 5. analyses through 'participant dependence' the culturally observing in the organization: via Picture II of [The School] the understanding of autonomy in the organization is observed. In [The School] the world is already initially cloven in autonomy and not-autonomy and from this point the culture is to be observed as a distinct expression of participant dependence. It will not be possible to lead change in the organization being regardless of the participants connecting culturally. Hence the culture in organizations similar to [The School] is considered to be a developmental eye of the needle. What are the opportunities for leadership in an organization which observes itself through autonomy?

The chapter claims that 'observation' as an alternative to the deterministic 'assumptions' in conventional organization theory would increase the chances of engaging the cultural dimension in the leading communication.

With organizational processes which are both infinite and unpredictable, one has to anchor up in contingency; in chapter 6. I bring forward the 'project' as a metaphor generally depicting organizational processes characterized by a low degree of steering influence and a high degree of dependence on the participants. The essential differences in the anatomy of such a process begin with changes in the way of pointing out the direction for the organization. Picture III shows [The School] framing the direction as both ambiguous and specific - a kind of vision - and I examine the possibility to capture 'vision' as a medium for communicative connecting, for direction and for steering influence.

The chapter emphasizes the functional mode of the vision in the organizational processes; to create connection there has to be something to link up to; and to orientate the change of an organization there has to be a direction. A vision seems to provide both, and the analysis stresses how the leadership action needs to be increased in the preliminary phases.

Leadership by proxy; this is chapter 7. in a short version. Picture IV illustrates [The School] organizing widely with leadership by proxy through a coordinating committee, through 'disturbances', consultants etc. - and that the leadership in general turns out more vicariously. As a nub of the analysis more leadership is required; this is actually not contrasting [The School's] own organizing leadership functionality but a reasoning for more leadership of a certain indirect kind. It is a need which cannot be redeemed by proxy only.

Thus the response to the low degree of steering influence will be neither releasing a more arbitrary engagement nor the calling for more conventional steering but more leadership in the very sense of: leadership of second order. And this means: more leading communication based on the crucial distinction of decision premise and decision.

Second-order leadership and leadership concerning learning in the organization become joint perspectives. Picture V indicates that leadership in [The School] will intensify substantially in arranging for learning processes in the organization. Due to analysis of its own the leadership of [The School] must arrange in an interfering manner which, at one and the same time, calibrates the steering influence and complies with the participant dependence.

Hence chapter 8. observes 'learning' as an expression of the general functionality in organizations submitted to contingency. The chapter brings forward the argument that leadership concerning learning in the organization relies conditionally on the ability of maintaining 'didaktik' on behalf of the organization; this thinking stretches from defining the direction for the organization to facilitating of the individual participation in the process. I therefore recommend a (re-)construction of 'organizational didaktik' as a both simple and comprehensive description of the task for contemporary leadership.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the chapter lets the 'didaktik' loose from being tied to educational institutions concerning their core contribution; instead it constitutes organizational didaktik as a general programme for leadership - thereby for instance superseding 'strategic' leadership in conventional organization theory.

Picture VI is observed according to the conception of second-order leadership and within the frame of organizational didaktik. The focal point reaches beyond a second-order withdrawal and into the efforts of establishing second-order intervention. Based on Picture VI of [The School] I analyse the extend to which the organizational didaktik pays attention to the leading matters of communication.

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<sup>1</sup>The Scandinavian and German term 'organisationsdidaktik' (cf. Dale (1989, 1993, 1998, 2003), Lehnhoff 1998 og Geißler 2000) defies translation because of the differences in meaning between 'didaktik' and 'didactics'. If, then it would be 'organizational second-order didactics' but I prefer holding on to the hybrid: 'organizational didaktik'.

I recommend on this basis a concept for leading communication of second order: 'processing criteria'; the processing criteria become 'the Trojan hobbyhorse' of the leadership system. The concept of processing criteria, based on such as 'applied distinctions', 'orientated observing' and 'crafty leadership', is a contribution to a practical redeeming of some of the challenges in a second-order leadership. The processing criteria benefit inspiringly from project leadership, from the horizon of 'didaktik' and from the distinction between decision of premises for decisions and decisions. Thus processing criteria offer a communication capable of leading the entity of a low degree of steering influence and a high degree of participant dependence. The idea of processing criteria cannot be said to be non-controversial in organizational types like [The School] because it admits the leadership a more seductive repertoire, likely to be interpreted as both undemocratic and manipulative.

Chapter 10 reconsiders the analytically strategic achievement as a whole: How do the guiding differences make leading communication emerge in an organization like [The School]? And finally, chapter 11., closely connected with chapter 4., discusses the research strategies of the thesis.

### **The summary of the summary**

Within a systems-theoretical frame the thesis claims analytically that leadership according to developmental changes in an organization like [The School] - as well as in general in modern, loosely coupled organizations characterized by a low degree of steering influence and a high degree a participant dependence - has to be observed as second-order leadership. Leadership of second order refers to a basic distinction of decision premises and decisions; thus it will be concerned with premise decision through communication of premises for other decisions. On account of the analysis strategic inquiry the thesis recommends how leadership of second order as a reflective matter (leadership of leadership) is to be redeemed through organizational didaktik.

Second-order leadership must be elaborated in a second-order-way; in order to succeed as a leading communication in the organization by orientating in a

direction the observing done by (sub)systems and simultaneously to optimize the conditions for these systems leading themselves. This cannot be accomplished by a mere second-order withdrawal but has to be gained through an adequate second-order intervention. The thesis contributes to the unfolding of a conceptuality of such a leading communication seen as an intervening second-order leadership; metaphorically bringing forth the Trojan hobby horse of the leading communication; empirically and analytically emphasizing the decisively distinguishing and observing in a conceptualized idea of processing criteria.