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Manifestations of the Implicitness of Systems Intelligence in Leadership

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Abstract

Various leadership studies present different ways to approach leadership. As a fresh viewpoint, Systems Intelligence (SI) has come forward in order to explain successful leadership with positively charged situational sensitivity that is always present in efficient leadership. The purpose of this study was to explore how systems intelligence manifests itself in leadership, and whether some key concepts related to the SI approach would be applicable for the use of seasoned leaders to structure their experiences.

In this research eight leaders with considerable experience were interviewed. These semi-structured interviews were kept in a rather free form, so that the thoughts and reflections of the interviewees would lead the conversation as much as the interviewer. The idea was not to impose any theoretical structure or pre-fixed terminology as the frame reference for the ensuing discussion. The interviews were recorded and analysed afterwards. A categorisation was made in order to describe the essentialities of the leadership. Systems intelligence was also categorised in order to help gain systemic approach to the analysis.

The following classification for the leadership emerged in the interviews. Leadership consists of categories: Leadership behaviour, Work guidance, Contemplating the big picture, and Improving the organisational atmosphere. One of the main findings was that the interviewed leaders resisted the use of any particular isms to describe their work. They did not wish to fall within any particular category and denied that they follow any one kind of thinking in the actual conduct of their leadership, emphasising instead that they aim to discover situationally the best practise for the environment in question. Their personal leading styles have developed from the unique history and experience they have. The main emphasis in work guidance is contributing people to work success. In perceiving the big picture, situational acting stood out as the most effective way to improve the organisational performance. Finally, according to the experience of the leaders that were interviewed, organisational atmosphere seems to be one of the driving forces in bringing about success. If the people are not enthusiastic and motivated enough, work flow cannot be achieved and the organisational performance descends. Without motivated people, organisations cannot aspire the ever ascending limits of high performance.

The leaders did not instantly see the SI concepts descriptive of their own leadership experience. The idea was considered to be rather useful, but as a first impression, systems intelligence was seen as a relatively technical term. Systems intelligence could be found from the reflections of the leaders, but only implicitly. Situational intuitive choices, experience of best practises and the courage to go towards new directions can be seen as manifestations of systems intelligence in action.
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1. Introduction

This is a study made in Systems Analysis Laboratory at the Helsinki University of Technology, in the Systems Intelligence Group. The concept of Systems Intelligence (SI) was introduced in 2002 and since then SI has been applied to different fields ranging from organisational settings to pedagogy, good everyday living to change analysis and to influence management. Systems intelligence is a behavioural competence that stands for acting intelligently as a part of a complex system involving interaction and feedback, when influenced by the whole, and influencing it (Saarinen & Hämäläinen 2004: p. 9). Given its emphasis of impact and of acting within a complex whole, it is natural to presuppose that the field of leadership involves systems intelligent aspects and that the actions of actual leaders demonstrate it. Various theories have described leadership in multiple ways, but SI can be seen as providing a synthetic perspective that combines a number of different perspectives fruitfully together. The purpose of this study was to find out how SI manifests in the words, models of thinking and frames of reference of experienced leaders as they reflect upon their leadership experiences. The aim was also to find out, whether the SI concepts would characterise their leadership work, and to what extent the SI terminology is applicable for the leaders in structuring their experiences.

In this research paper I will present background for the study, the research process including the following research methods: coordination of the semi-structured interviews, short introduction of the interviewees, and the analysis methods. As the results I will present the SI categorisation and the analysis of the some of essential domains of leadership, especially leadership behaviour, work guidance, contemplating the big picture, and organisational atmosphere. Then I discuss the leader’s considerations concerning the SI terminology. These are presented with the help of translated quotations from the interviews. Finally I will draw conclusions of the study and evaluate the research methods and analysis.

1.1. Research questions

The main objective of the study was to obtain answers to the following questions:

1) How does systems intelligence manifest itself in leadership?

2) How do leaders see the usability of the systems intelligence concepts with respect to their operating environment?

These questions were studied by interviewing leaders with great experience from different organisational branches. The interviews were analysed to find examples of systems intelligent behaviour, emphasises of leadership thinking, and choices of words in the different experiences.
2. Background for the study

The vast leadership literature contains various leadership definitions. Different studies and viewpoints of leadership indicate it to be a largely inspiring area of study. By examining leadership from different point of views, the phenomena can be understood in multiple ways. Interestingly there is not that much literature on how leaders themselves perceive different theoretical approaches. Leaders do not seem to follow just one particular theory, but the actions seem to be chosen situationally from the surrounding operating environment.

David Buchanan and Andrzej Huczynski (2004) present a British National Health Service study, which introduces qualities that distinguish “effective and outstanding leaders”. The research, made in 2002, involved 150 chief executives and directors. Fifteen different leader qualities in three clusters were discovered. Leader’s personal qualities were conceptualised as self-belief, self-awareness, self-management, drive for improvement and personal integrity. Qualities of setting direction consist of seizing the future, intellectual flexibility, broad scanning, political astuteness and drive for results. Delivering the service comprise leading change through people, holding to account, empowering others, effective and strategic influencing, and collaborative working. (Buchanan & Huczynski 2004: p. 722)

Various leadership definitions include leader’s ability to influence and motivate employees in order to work efficiently on behalf of the organisation and to achieve the common goal. For example Richards and Engle (1986) define leadership as articulating vision, embodying values of the organisation, and creating such an environment where it is easier to get things accomplished (Richards & Engle, 1986: p. 206). However, the ability to clarify the vision and values of the organisation to the employees is not as such sufficient. According to Warren Bennis (2003), the leader also needs to put focus on people, inspire them, create trust, innovate and develop. The key issue is how to lead people, make them inspired, enthusiastic and motivated to do the work needed (Bennis 2003). Nevertheless, the most crucial thing is to see the big picture, understand the long term effects, and lead the organisation to its desired direction. Bennis distinguished the difference between management and leadership by saying that management is “doing the things right”, but leadership is “doing the right things” (Bennis 2003). Systems thinking and in particular systems intelligence (SI) steps forward at this point, for SI is a way to understand, and act within complicated interaction relations.

Systems thinking is a way to perceive and understand even the less obvious relations in a larger system. Peter Senge (1990) elaborates the concept of systems thinking by reference to examples of our everyday life. People are surrounded by systems that have interconnections, even though we do not perceive them all. However, we can understand the outcomes of these familiar systems by contemplating the whole (Senge, 1990: pp. 6 - 7). We tend to focus only on specific sections of systems and do not recognize the feedback structure and the connections surrounding. Therefore, when we experience feedback due to causal loops, we may not fully understand them. Senge introduces systems thinking in the organisational field, and states systems thinking to be the essential corner stone in learning organisations. The key is to understand the system, all the small effects, feedback and delays that are built in. By changing the right pattern effectively, the system will improve itself.

When the system is malfunctioning, the symptoms can usually be cured quite easily, but the outcome will not last long, if the system is not explored thoroughly, and the root cause persists. The solution to systemic problems could be some very small and not so obvious actions which
can cause effects on a significant scale (Senge 1990: pp. 63 - 64). Systems thinking also includes cumulating effects of the system, direction, and effects with delay (Hämäläinen & Saarinen 2007: p. 7). Dennis Sherwood (2002) connects systems thinking to everyday management, and illustrates the benefits of it. With the help of systems thinking, the complexity of the organisation can be structured, and the systemic whole becomes easier to understand. By using visual causal loop diagrams, the processes will be understood coherently, and an effective way of influencing systems can be found.

Barry Oshry (1999) describes three general processes of systems. After understanding these profound system elements, it is much easier to lead them: 1) the system works as a whole, but still each of its members operates independently of one another while cooperating and interacting in the system level; 2) minor parts of a system, that is, subsystems, develop their own manners of behaviour, and have their own functions. However, all of them share a certain commonality in their processes; 3) while the form and the function of a system change over time, its processes have certain continuity. In each of these system elements there can be problems, and biased combinations of these can cause complications in leading the system. For an organisational system to function, the Top system, that is the leaders responsible, should try to balance their differentiation of each other with the strategies of homogenization in order to truly function together. The Middle system, the middle managers, should direct their attention to integration, and improve the interactions in their subsystem. Finally the Bottom system, the employees of an organisation, should work on the individualization and differentiation of its members (Oshry 1999: pp. 56 - 57, 112 - 131).

Systems intelligence is intelligent behaviour in complex systems including feedback as well as interaction. When individuals use their SI, they can perceive themselves as part of the systems and act on the grounds of it. The surrounding environment appears systemic, and it is possible to distance oneself from the isolating style of thinking, and become truly aware of the system. Systems intelligence is a behavioural competence one can develop. (Saarinen & Hämäläinen 2004: pp. 9 - 11)

Leadership is a human endeavour which takes place in complex settings, and is judged on the basis of the results achieved, hence a field of interest to systems intelligence. Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2007) describe systems intelligence to be the human intellect in action. However, very few leaders tend to use the terminology of systems thinking, even though it could bring clarity to the complexity of the organisational field. Systems intelligence studies leadership from within the organisation. The leader is a part of that system and cannot perceive the organisation objectively. However, this point of view generates the possibility of organisational superproductivity, term introduced by J.T. Bergqvist (2007). But this can happen only if the systemic point of impact is utilised. For the connections systems have, this productivity is truly accessible. The positive outcome is not just an exception, but probable as Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2007) point out, when the system is lead with systems intelligence. By self-supporting spirals, the system generates positive energy and the positive results appear naturally. Much of the leadership work is situational and cannot be structured; leaders might act without full knowledge of all influencing factors. Still the decisions and outcomes appear to be correct. Systems intelligence is present even though it may not always be defined as that.
3. Semi-structured interviews

The method of semi-structured interviews was chosen for the purpose of this study. Every leader had slightly different working background, the organisations were different, and the personal characteristics varied. For this reason the progression of each interview was somewhat unique. Vera John-Steiner (1997) describes having interviewed over fifty different individuals for her work. Each of the interviews had to have their own unique course of discussion every time. In this study, the interviewees could freely respond to the questions, and the matters that came up could be discussed further. Certain themes were chosen to be discussed in the interviews, and were written beforehand, but not shown to the interviewees in order to keep the discussion concentrating as much as possible in the leadership themes the interviewees considered important.

Interviewees could speak rather freely about their leadership experiences and methods. The course of the interviews was loosely structured by the scripted question framework. This method was chosen in order to obtain leadership stories and reflections from the experienced leaders in their own words and interpretations. By using other methods such a span of personal reflections might not have been reached. For example by using questionnaires, the information might have turned out to be somewhat different, and the spontaneity and the personal level of discussion would not have been obtained. The personal contact and presence in the interview situation generates an atmosphere where the essential reflections can truly be attained.

3.1. Coordination of the interviews

Professor Esa Saarinen initiated the contact with the interviewees telling briefly about the research. The general outline of the inquiry is presented in Appendix 1. He told that Reetta Vartiainen, a student from the research group in the Helsinki University of Technology, will make contact and arrange an interview. During the second contact by phone or email, the time and place for the interview were arranged. The matters discussed in this second contact are presented in Appendix 2.

The interviewees were told that the interview involved discussing leadership experiences. Practical issues discussed before and after the interview are listed in Appendix 3. All interviewees agreed that their names can be connected to their reflections in the report.

The interviews were carried out during February and March 2007 often in the facilities of the interviewees’ organisations or in the conference room of the Systems Analysis Laboratory. The interviews lasted from one hour up to two and a half hours. Each session was recorded, and transcriptions were made afterwards.

The question framework used in the interviews was in accordance to Appendix 4. However, as a semi-structured interview, the situation did not necessarily follow the exact order of the questions listed, but rather the stream of thought of the leaders. The interviewer made sure that all the question areas were somewhat discussed, but encouraged the interviewees to go on, when systems intelligently important issues were being discussed. The questions were not sent in advance to the leaders in order to maintain a certain amount of spontaneity in the discussions.
3.2. Interviewees

The original intention was to interview five to ten leaders with considerable experience in leadership. After contacting several leaders the final number of interviewees settled to be eight. The leaders interviewed had rather different backgrounds. Some of them had established their own company; others had a long-term history of being a Chief Executive in a certain company, and some had worked as leaders in different organisations in various positions.

The different organisational branches of the leaders included wholesale trade, the auto industry, electrical engineering, food industry, military, industrial cleaning and stone processing. The organisations are of different sizes ranging from multinational organisations to family businesses with couple of hundred employees. The leaders have effected tremendously the improvement of the profitability on their organisations, and have been participating in various novel tryouts within their organisations.

4. Analysis

The data collected by the interviews was analysed qualitatively. The transcripts were studied in a phenomenological way so that the research questions and the material both conducted the analysis (Woodruff Smith 2003). On one hand, the analysis approach was inductive, for the essential points of leadership were examined from the material. On the other hand, deductive approach was utilised, as the concepts of systems intelligence were brought from outside the interviews.

Even though the reflections of the leaders were quite situational, the main points of the interviews concerning leadership were sought afterwards by making cognitive maps and categorisations. The objective was to understand the most essential points in leadership according to the leaders interviewed. The transcriptions were further examined, and from the basis of the research questions, the substantial paragraphs were selected in order to receive a more compact version of the interviews without loosing any essential information.

From the descriptive comments and cognitive maps, the essentials of leadership were analysed to belong to four main categories and their subcategories. The compact interviews were examined, and descriptive paragraphs were grouped into correct categories. After placing the comments, the category titles were reorganised, some of them renamed, new titles were added, and unnecessary items removed, in order for the categories to better describe the interviews.

From each of these categories, the most descriptive comments were chosen. In these comments, the essentials of leadership are described well, and there are explicit manifestations of systems intelligent behaviour. As the interviews were made in Finnish, the citations used in this report have been translated into English.
4.1. Categorisations of leadership and systems intelligence

From the transcriptions, the essential points of the interviews concerning leadership were categorised as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The essentials of leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership behaviour</th>
<th>Thinking about one’s own thinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading style and learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interacting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Implicitness of using isms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work guidance</td>
<td>Delegating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Involving employees in the organisation of their work</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitating individual success</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contemplating the big picture</td>
<td>Placing employees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Developing interaction processes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Visioning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Situational performing</td>
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<td>Organisational atmosphere</td>
<td>Observing the ambiance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Optimism with people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Motivating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Participating</td>
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The essential parts of leadership can be divided into four groups, as presented in table 1. Each leader has different Leadership behaviour. They think about their own thinking, have a certain style of leading and learning to lead, interact with their subordinates and peers, and use isms in their work merely implicitly. Secondly, leader uses Work Guidance methods in assisting individuals to perform successfully in their work. This is done by delegating, involving people in the organisation of the work they are doing, facilitating individual success, and finally giving feedback. Thirdly, leader contemplates the big picture, and furthermore places employees to better working entities, develops interaction processes among people, does the visionary work, and is performing for the advantage of the whole by acting in a situational manner. Finally, the organisational atmosphere is probed. The work ambiance is observed, people are confronted with an optimistic attitude, they are motivated, and leader is participating in the activities. When people are motivated, their performance can be notably more efficient.

Alongside with the previous categorisation, the concept of System Intelligence (SI), especially in leadership, was divided in five categories as illustrated in Table 2. This categorisation was done with the help of literature review. It was then further analysed and categorised.
Systems intelligence can be divided to five building blocks: systems thinking, perceiving oneself in the system, focus on human issues, positivity and situational sensitivity as presented in table 2.

First there is systems thinking, with some of the dimensions presented by Hämäläinen and Saarinen in their work (2007: p. 7). The whole refers to seeing the organisation as a system, which contains various elements but also individuals. The whole can perform in a different manner than its parts and the leader should have constant awareness of the whole performance. The whole has a complex structure, which cannot be completely understood, the parts of a system are connected to each other through complicated interconnections, which have their own interaction patterns. The system and its subsystems have causal loops, which bring feedback to the system in complex ways, and can at times have cumulative effects. The system is constantly changing due to its environmental factors or the parts or the interconnections they have. That is why perceiving the system, or an organisation, should be recurrent.

Secondly SI consists of perceiving oneself as an active part of the system, where the actor inside the organisation understands the common goals, or shared vision as Senge (1990) designates it. Here the individual is thinking about his/her own thinking, the personal values and normal ways of reflecting. The person in the system rises mentally up to the meta-level in order to perceive the system better, and to understand the other viewpoints the system always has due to its components.

Table 2. Systems Intelligence components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems thinking</th>
<th>Whole</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complex structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interconnections</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Causal loops</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dynamic development</td>
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<tr>
<th>Perceiving oneself in the system</th>
<th>Thinking about one’s own thinking</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Mental rising to the meta-level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affecting to and from the system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understanding system from other viewpoints</td>
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<tr>
<th>Focus on human issues</th>
<th>Humanly generated systemicity</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considering emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making individuals blossom</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positivity</th>
<th>Emphasis on the positive</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspiring common good</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transition from “no” to “maybe”</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Situational sensitivity</th>
<th>Situational intelligence</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensitivity to seize possibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sensing the systemic points of impact</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Flying with the system</td>
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SI has an emphasis on the human issues. Organisations are human systems, so the human factors need to be taken into consideration when acting systems intelligently. The systemicity of how an individual is acting is always humanly generated. Working with other people in systems brings the concept of social intelligence forward. Daniel Goleman (2006) describes interpersonal brain-to-brain connections of individuals to be integral part of social intelligence. The systems are strongly made of social interconnections with unconscious emotional effects as well. As social intelligence is involved, the systems intelligent actor actively takes the emotions of others into consideration, and furthermore can make others blossom in the systemic environment.

SI consists of thinking more positively, and seeing the greater effects of positive approach – an important field of psychology, applied in the leadership research as well (Henry 2004). The emphasis is on the positive and the positive loops are activated and sustained. The positive loops create positive energy that further motivates people. That way the whole organisation works in a positive way, with a positive attitude, and this improves the organisational performing and result making as well. The systems intelligent way is to perceive the common good, which is worth aspiring for everyone. The signals received – even from the unexpected directions – can suddenly open up to possible directions.

The situational sensitivity brings forth the unique circumstances the dynamic systems continuously have. SI is the situational intelligence that perceives the uniqueness of situational factors the present moment has. It is tuning to the point of sensitivity that perceives the possibilities, and having the courage to try them out. SI actor senses the effective points of impact, where by a minor action the system can be altered to become something much greater. The systemic influences can launch their own mini systems that work on their own within the upper system. SI-person sees the possibilities of superproductivity, and can “fly” with the system due to the positive energy it contains.

The concept of emergence is considered essential in systems intelligence. It refers to phenomena emerging from the interaction of system’s parts that become apparent in the unfolding present moment. Interactions generate performance exceeding the combined results of behaviour of single parts. This is a progress linked closely to other SI elements. The theme of emergence requires sensitivity to seize, perhaps creating a transition from “no” to “maybe”. This can launch mini systems of positive loops with significant amount of positive energy involved making individuals fly with the system. This in turn makes people blossom in the system they are a part of.

Systems intelligence is most of all acting in systems intelligent ways.
5. Results

The results section presents a set of the most important aspects of leadership that emerged in the interviews. Systems intelligent aspects are applied to the leadership presentations, and furthermore SI is examined in leadership work from the different examples leaders told. First, the leadership aspects found in the analysis, and categorised in the previous analysis section are discussed: Leadership behaviour, Work guidance, Contemplating the big picture, and Organisational atmosphere. Then the positioning of the leaders towards systems intelligence concept in the use of their work is examined.

5.1. Leadership behaviour

In the interviews leadership was considered to be based on the own reflections and behaviours of the leader. In order to lead successfully, it is essential to first think about one’s own acting and ways of thinking; the most suitable leading style needs to be discovered through learning experiences; the interacting with the subordinates has certain matters to be taken into consideration; and isms are not considered to be useful per se.

Thinking about one’s own thinking

Leadership originates from the reflection and thinking about one’s own thinking. Challenging the everyday thinking can prove to be quite refreshing. From the SI point of view, this is a crucial step in order to perform successfully in a system. By perceiving oneself as a part of the system, the system and its possible points of impact are detected better. The dynamics of a system is quite different when perceived from the inside. System influences people in less apparent ways. The whole system can work more productively once its members realise the influence of the system to oneself, and at the same time the influencing potentials they possess to the other parts of the system as well.

Self criticism and self reflecting rose from the interviews as an important aspect of leadership. When possible, the leaders contemplated the current situation, future actions, everyday operating and the decisions made. However, many of the leaders described having too demanding schedules, so they rarely use their spare time for reflecting, which would take some time and concentration. By reflecting, aspects of thinking or acting can emerge that do not go together with the picture leaders have about themselves. Eventually this kind of reflecting strengthens the person, and the decisions made will become more rationalised.

“I try to analyse why I think the way I do. It’s happening everyday and every time, and it’s also painful. When you start thinking about your thinking, you often notice that you don’t approve you’re own thinking. It’s healthy, even therapeutic processing, and involves self-criticism. Many times we react extremely fast. When you think things through a couple more times, the reaction can be different.”

“It’s important to give freedom and new environments to my thinking. Even to follow the directions that can be unpleasant to me, but which can open my eyes, in a new enlightening way. So that I won’t only go to, where is pleasant. In my way of thinking art, beauty, goodness and differences are important. I try to interpret very difficult things, in order to develop my thinking. Even though the resistance can be quite hard at times, it confirms my belief in people as well. The point is to concentrate on things that strengthen me, not those that would take me down with them.”
The humanity and positive attitude of SI can clearly be perceived from this comment. But even though the positive approach is present, the aim of challenging oneself will not be left forgotten. Thinking about one’s own thinking is an essential part of the avoidance of myopic behaviour, which is crucial to systems intelligence as well.

**Leading style and learning**

“Without leading yourself, it is clearly very difficult to lead others. This is the starting point. Already Socrates used the sentence ‘know thyself’. “

By knowing oneself - the strengths and weaknesses - the leading can be more confident and clear. Merely imitating other successful leaders hardly ever turns out to be effective in the long run. Benchmarking can be useful, but every leader has their own particular operating environment where the leading skills have to be applied. Every organisation and division requires to be specifically conducted, and various leading ways can turn out to be functional.

In addition, not all have the suitable personality for a leadership role. There are plenty of people who prefer the management style to leadership. Both are needed. By perceiving others, the possible ways of performing open up and the usable points can be adjusted to own environment and situation. In systemic terms: situational aspect needs to be considered. Each environment is unique and the systems intelligent way to operate is sensing the systemic points of influence. After understanding the whole and the necessary actions to be performed, leading is said to be actually quite simple.

“Company management and leadership are actually merely behavioural science. If you’ve read your psychology books and the Bible, had your confirmation classes, and have Christian parenting values, you only need to learn some numbers and key figures, know profit and how to calculate balance sheet and cash-flow analyses. It’s that simple. If you don’t lack any of these components, it’s a piece of cake.”

Successful leader was presented to have different qualities. Leader-type individuals were self-evidently considered to have more extrovert character than manager-types. The enthusiastic and optimistic attitude creates positive spirit to the organisation, generating motivated people who are willing to give their best. When a leader becomes inspired of the work their subordinates have done, the motivation grows. A positive atmosphere is furthermore open to innovative behaviour. When people are shining, it reflects to the leaders as well.

“In leadership I’m inspired by the people, their differences, impressiveness, brilliance. When I see it, it’s something incomprehensible. Fortunately somebody shines every day.”

The criticism towards the leading style was confronted readily, for it is a channel of testing and structuring one’s own thoughts as well. By reflecting and having conversations, the leadership thinking develops, and the confidence to act in different situation grows. The opinions and suggestions of the employees were welcome as well. However, in hard situations, where the decisions have to be made quickly, certain assertiveness was considered important.

“If the situation demands firm actions, I will make the decisions fast, and make the organisation move to the desired direction. Otherwise the going might seem quite convivial, but the hard situations aren’t difficult for me either. If we were on a sinking boat, it would be quite incomprehensible for me to start asking others’ opinions on what to do.”

The status differences between leaders and their subordinates were described to work well, when they were reasonably small, and status symbols were not over shown. The participation and
enthusiastic involvement was presented to give the leader more respect than staying in the background and looking down on the employees.

“If my kids would have come in front of my office with Rolls Royces, it wouldn’t have done any good. Nobody wants to work for the rich aristocrats. It’s extremely hard to teach social equality. You can easily show social inequality, but to show social equality, that is difficult.”

Learning sources of the leaders are multiple. The examples have been taken from the literature, courses, colleagues and own superiors. Different leading discussions have been made with the subordinates, friends and spouses, which have brought insightful knowledge to various situations. By surviving difficult situations, experience and the ability to tolerate pressure develop, and the dynamic operating environments become easier to control.

“The ability to tolerate pressure has developed. The changing situations become routine in a way. The word routine is a bit bad. But in a way you have grown to control situations and you easily see the options, what could be done. When something occurs, you find yourself thinking that it isn’t the worse case scenario. You don’t take it too seriously and you are able to work it out better. You learn to handle different problems. Here the encouraging and positive view on life is truly important. You should seek for positive solutions even from the bad situations. […] You grow by living through really hard times, and then you are ready for bigger challenges. You become a good leader when you have been put through the wringer and you have experienced some really tough times.”

The work of a leader is constant surviving in changing situations. At the same time the leader sets an example to the subordinates – especially during critical times. However, most of the interviewees emphasized that the process of learning is continuous. As a leader, the learning is never completed. All the time the leader is surrounded by unique opportunities to learn more. The learning experience can derive from almost anywhere, so that everything surrounding you can create an extraordinary experience of growth – if the opening is not rejected.

Interacting

A considerable part of the leader’s work is presenting things and sharing information. Understanding system dynamics can help find the right way to present operations that need to be done. Leaders interviewed told about situations where indirect communication was clearly found to have better effects.

“People resist changes.
The president of the Metalworkers’ Union saw that we were drifting to financial troubles, due to the changing conditions. At the time I was trying to push forward contacts made in groups, but the employee’s representatives clearly opposed it. I went to the Union president and asked his opinion in the matter. He said that we should absolutely try them. Finally, he told this suggestion to the representatives, and then the idea pulled off. If I had forced them to do this, it wouldn’t have turned out well. “

“Last year we had a surprising business deal, when an entrepreneur suddenly called me wanting to sell his business to us. You never can tell the employees straight away about these deals, they’re secrets, and we didn’t have a plan to buy something from this area. It’s quite hard to get the work started and moving in the right way. As soon as I had the chance, I told this as extremely good news, but in a way that it’s good news for you: ‘Just think, you have wanted more customers from this area, and now you can have them. And you have the competitor out of the way. You’ve done a great job!’ I told it like this, in a positive way.”
Just by finding the positive approach, the same thing can have totally different effects. Systems intelligently speaking, these examples indicate the power of positivity in social systems. The openness also makes a difference in communicating. Telling about essential matters to the employees increases understanding, and the guessing part diminishes. Surely you cannot reveal all the factors behind decisions, but the ones you can, should be told without secrecy.

“No matter how good a leader you are, someone is always speaking ill of you. The old saying of organisation as a ladder says: The higher you climb, the more your bottom is on display. In a way it’s easy to judge, for you can’t explain all your decisions to everybody. But when I’ve had to make these decisions, I have later returned to the subject, and explained to people: ‘Now I can tell you this…’ I’ve had good feedback about doing this, for the employees have had a totally wrong idea of the situation. [...] I’m in the favour of openness. All the substantial things should be told to the people – including the worse things – and things ease up when they are discussed. If you’re hiding something, you should have really good reasons. There can be seen a lot of intentional not-telling, and that is wrong. The term trust is important. Superiors should have a trustful relationship with their subordinates, where they can discuss matters a bit more extensively.”

Even though assertivitity is stated to work in many critical situations, where fast movements are required, the communication in more settle times can involve more discussing and interacting.

The subordinates should be treated with equal respect, but still they cannot be managed as a mass resource, but as individuals who are all competent enough. Everyone has a different situation in life. There can be restorative and depressing personal events happening in the personal lives that have a tremendous influence on the working performance. If a leader can act supportively, the individual feels cared. Therefore it is a totally different thing to cut down expenses than human resources.

**Implicitness of using isms**

One of the main issues noted from the interviews is the strong need to distance oneself from defining own leadership belonging exclusively to any particular leadership theory. Rather, the manifestations of the leadership theories are implicit and context dependent. Each environment and situation is considered to be exceptional. Even though leadership literature is widely read among the leaders and parts of different theories are exploited in the leadership work, no single theory is adopted. The somewhat rejection to be categorised is noted also in the positioning to systems intelligence, even though the idea was welcomed.

“I don’t like anything with a certain ism in it. I like reading and I do take influences, but these influences have to be applicable to my own actions. I really don’t like anything that has to be memorised.”

“I really can’t name any specific sources of influence to me. It is the whole set. I have always tried to find something for me from different isms: quality management, process thinking, knowledge management, or teamwork issues. I try to pick and find the essential from every theory that I could apply in my own work. Often when I read a book, I find something special from the pages 189 – 192. This makes the reading of the book worthwhile.”

The experienced situationality of the organisational leadership was strong. The leaders do explore the best practises, welcome the good ideas and viewpoints, but no single theory is fully approved. Even though there is a lot of study behind each theory, they are not seen to explicate the uniqueness of the organisation in question.
It seems as if the leaders are implicitly using a meta theory that is applying these different theories. Systems intelligence could be this implicit theory used, for it contains elements of different leadership approaches, but the key point is in the systems intelligent acting, which is always situational. When perceiving the organisation as a system, no leadership procedure can be directly applied to any environment. The situational factors are always considered, and the systemic points of impact are utilised in a holistically improving manner. Therefore what works, comes first, why it works, comes second (Hämäläinen & Saarinen 2006: p. 193).

5.2. Work guidance

The work of the leader is not to do the work of their subordinates. They do not need to completely know all aspects of their work. However, the leadership work is to ensure that people can perform in the positive and effective way they are capable of. If the work setting does not enable people to blossom in their work, they can never achieve the personal success that could further evoke the whole organisation to perform maximally.

In the work guidance section I will discuss delegating work to the subordinates, involving employees in the organisation of their own work, facilitating individual success, and aspects of giving feedback.

Delegating

The interviewees emphasised the importance of delegation. The leader can not do all the work, and does not need to know what exact tasks are being done in different parts of the organisation. The more emphasis is put on the minor things, the more easily the big picture is forgotten. By having the confidence on the employees, tasks should be delegated to them, and without excessive control left for them to handle.

“Trust works always in a two-way manner. Sometimes building trust is understood wrong. In the two-way aspect it is essential that both trust each other. This doesn’t develop, if you aren’t open, and your performing isn’t predictable and transparent.”

If the two-way trust cannot be achieved, in an extreme situation it might even be better to change the subordinates or your own working environment. Without the confidence on the people, it is not easy to provide them the freedom to do their job in a most suitable way for them. Often the larger amount of freedom in work produces innovations and more effective practises to everyday work.

“I used to be a tough boss, and thought I had to know everything. It is extremely exhausting to assume that others think you should know everything. Then you’re trapped. In order to grow, you must let go, delegate, trust, empower and let people succeed. Furthermore, there can be more time for you to really reflect these things. If you are stiffened by the routine, there is no time to think about anything. Learn to be more coaching and let go, then you can receive more.”

The task of letting go is hardly ever simple. Due to the experience and better knowledge of the leaders, it often seems easier and faster to do the work themselves. Yet, that way no one will ever learn these tasks, and development does not occur. Surely the guidance may be necessary, but the responsibility of the task needs to be on the people doing it.

“Leader must learn to let go. Even though you could do the things better than the person performing them, you mustn’t do that. This is sometimes quite painful. You have to learn to do this, and it’s not a question of laziness. Many times it’s more difficult and time consuming to delegate, and then
experience the pain when it goes wrong. Still you have to allow it to happen – if it isn’t a matter of life and death. Otherwise the learning process won’t happen. Learning out of the work is actually quite hard. I think many young leaders may have the problem of thinking too much about the work performance. Then if the pressure is high, the risk of burnout increases.”

Distributing responsibility makes people more committed to the task at hand. That is why delegation can be used in various situations.

“People don’t automatically seek interaction with one another. Certain systems need to be built. We had meetings on Wednesday mornings from 8:00 to 9:15. Everybody had to come – or at least the team leaders. It was interesting to see, how at first people came there, not daring to skip it. Then there were more and more absences. I had to find a way that people would certainly come, and come prepared. I put a responsibility: ‘you preside this meeting, and he’ll do it next time’, anybody could do it. Our organisation had only twenty employees and the warehouseman was also there, so he also presided. It would have been quite normal and approved, if I would have always presided the meetings. But I didn’t do that. Everybody had the responsibility to do it.”

In this citation the leader determined it obligatory for the people to attend meetings. Even though the intention of the meetings was good, the people did not see the connection with attending meetings and improving the interactions in the organisation. Assertively with a firm grip, the attendance was made to affect everybody. By keeping the option of anybody presiding the meeting, the participation was increased, and people were more prepared. As a by-product of these actions, better interaction in the organisation was made possible. Systems intelligently the bigger significance was underlined to the employees as well. The leader saw the further benefits, and by changing the existing system of the meetings, rearranged it to produce greater results.

**Involving employees in the organisation of their work**

Majority of the leaders accentuated the positive aspects of the employee involvement in the goal setting of their own work. When individuals or teams can set their goals, they are more motivated in attaining them. They can also define the indicators for the follow-up. Interviewees pointed out that people set their goals much higher than anyone from the outside would have set. If the goals are dictated, and there are no possibilities to affect the development of own work, the motivation can descend, and the commitment weakens.

“Normally people set higher goals to themselves, than when they are guided to do so. In a good organisation, with a good feeling, almost without exceptions, they reach the objectives. There has to be encouraging and enthusing environment, doing with their hearts, and someone walking by their side. Only when these lack, people won’t reach their goals.”

“People should be given the chance to think and respect themselves, not be commanded. Then they have a good feeling, and are most sensitive to listen, do and participate together to the work. […] Very often I encourage people not to give in to me, if they feel they’re right. All the time I’m saying ‘Don’t give in. You were right.’ They gain confidence in themselves and to the cause they are advocating, and they keep coming to present their ideas.”

As presented in the previous example, the involvement of the employees is crucial, for the people are experts of their own work. They need to be involved in the goal setting, as well as the development of the work. As the work of each person creates its own entity, the link to the organisational aim is seen more clearly.

“We started from the process thinking. I said that all the important processes have to be described and you who are responsible for them, you describe them, and think how the lead time of the process can
be cut in half. I didn’t want to tell the answers, the people in the process should find them. When these solutions have been found, people can tell them to their colleagues. Every Friday during coffee break some team told about something that had been done. You could see the shining in their eyes when they were telling about their achievements.”

Facilitating individual success

As a continuum to the previous section, the aspect of facilitating individuals to succeed in their work follows from the goal setting and involvement phase. After the goals are set for the employee, the function of the leader is to help people achieve them: How the subordinates can perform better, and is there anything that can be done in order for the work to be performed successfully. The leader is there as a back-up, ready to help, support and stand by while keeping the big picture in mind, and seeing the wider effects of the actions taken. In some organisations this has been executed by having the leaders work physically side-by-side with the subordinates, so that there is clear access to discuss with the leader. Furthermore, the significance of time management was underlined. The leader should always have time for the subordinates.

“The leader should really have time. The significance of time-management is extremely important. You cannot give a much worse signal than being away, busy, or looking busy. You should calm down. The intention is that you should always be available for your subordinates. The old saying: leading by walking around, is not bad. Your work as a leader is not to do the job, but to lead the job. In order to lead it, you have to know what they are doing and be interested in it. Normally all the positive and nice things handle themselves, and a leader isn’t needed. But the corner room is visited when something is wrong, or there’s a problem people can’t solve. Then there has to be time to ponder, for the others are already in panic. If the leader joins the same panic as well, there will be no proper thinking that would make things work.”

Facilitating individual success is one of the most important aspects of the leading work, where sharing information with the subordinates is crucial. This for example reduces the misunderstanding of some decisions that the leader has made. Information sharing affects the work of the subordinates directly. Organisational atmosphere improves when transparency improves. As individuals have understanding of the common goals or the shared vision, work performance advances.

Giving feedback

Evaluation of the work and feedback is often given less time and weight than it deserves. Commonly the planning phase and the actual work are performed properly, but the reflecting and thinking of the things learnt, follow-up and evaluation are given quite little time. Giving feedback gives out a signal of how well the management is aware of the work made in subordinate level, and how interested they are of it. For employees, personal feedback can help to understand their own part in the organisation’s work, and this can motivate them to perform better. As an important aspect, specific feedback of how the work was performed - what were the results and consequences - gives an individual a holistic image of the work system.

“People forget to evaluate, give feedback and reflect on how we did it, and what we learned. It’s quite natural that we plan and do something, but then we forget to evaluate – globally in this organisation. We storm to new things all the time and don’t even see how we performed. From the employee satisfaction survey we see that globally, thousands of people say ‘I wish I could even sometimes have feedback’. I’ve also heard things like: ‘I’m doing so much, but nobody cares’. Someone has even said: ‘I have performed badly on purpose, and the worst part was, that even then they didn’t notice it’” Leading isn’t rocket science. People – even engineers – like when someone says: ‘Good job’, especially on a bad day. [...] You should know how to give feedback in a right situation in the right way, sometimes systematically, but also spontaneously. Spoken reward should contain what somebody did
By showing the significance of the work in a larger scale, the systemic whole becomes more apparent to the subordinates. The work obtains its value and meaning. The timing is extremely important as well. If people are given feedback of something they have already forgotten, the constructive effect is not that strong.

“Feedback timing is important. You must not hold it back. If the feedback doesn’t relate to a concrete event or situation, but is given unrelated, the other person doesn’t get it. You should have courage. I’m not saying you should be giving feedback all the time about everything, but positive and negative feedback has to be given in suitable amounts close to the actions made. In the Finnish culture feedback is normally understood as negative. But really it’s both. You should give positive and negative feedback in balance, and in a constructive spirit.”

By giving feedback the work performance can efficiently be adjusted. People do what they are rewarded for. As people are different, the feedback should also correspond to the ways people prefer it. While many wish for positive feedback, some would like to receive more constructive feedback in order to improve their work. Different personalities should be taken into consideration as well, for example more timid people can be encouraged to gain more self-confidence.

“It would be really rewarding to find out the right way to encourage shy people. We have tried to do this by putting to our information screen innovations people have come up with, and emphasising the positivity of them. There may be a little reward for these also. Letting people know that it is a good thing to tell these.”

The balance between positive and negative feedback should be taken into account. Negative feedback has a stronger effect for most people; therefore positive evaluation needs to be given more frequently. Negative criticism should be given in private, while positive can be given in public. However, the feedback must always have a real purpose, and relate to the task performed. Appraise and criticism should be real, not coming automatically or as a must-do, but by truly being aware of the work done. If the feedback cannot be given sincerely, it might be better not to give it at all. Nonetheless, the feedback should not flatten out the enthusiasm of subordinates. There are situations from which people are really enthusiastic about, even though the results could have been better. The feedback in these situations can be positive to encourage the work ahead. Even though positive feedback should be given more, the negative feedback must not be forgotten. Leader should have the courage to give negative feedback as well.

In giving positive feedback, all kinds of rewards can be used. Here as well people have different needs and preferences, which can further alter in various situations in life.

“Salary is important, but I have noticed that when the feeling is good, nobody thinks about the payment. When everything’s going strong, you should as a superior give salary increases or extras, before anybody asks for them. That’s also a smart move. Rewards, trophies and presents are really significant – even better if you can surprise them. For example I received good feedback concerning a salesperson from a customer. I could have been quiet about it, but instead I brought it up, so that it was a surprise for the salesperson. It doesn’t have to be anything else than taking people into account: ‘A customer has told this about you to the director. Here’s a 200 € gift voucher’.”

Even though the reward is not that large, the remembering and noticing are more important. In a humanly way the significance of a person is lifted up and furthermore the motivation and
enthusiasm increases, which in turn increases the performance and finally is more profitable to the organisation. In systems intelligent terms, here the humanity is considered with the positive approach. By doing so, it can launch a positive loop, which stays in motion.

5.3. Contemplating the big picture

Contemplating the big picture, and keeping it in mind during various work operations, is one of the most important tasks of a leader. Details of single actions are not as significant as seeing the general direction, and being able to understand consequences of actions for the organisation, controlling the whole, and energy flows and key processes within it. As this task is not trivial, the subordinates can question operations. Therefore certain amount of openness can open up the decisions to be understandable. The work of a single employee always has an effect to at least some other parts of the organisation, therefore the understanding of the systematic properties are important to discover for all the people in an organisation. As a leader the understanding of other viewpoints of the organisational life may help to perceive the whole system, and perceive the systemic points of impacts better. Investing to certain actions can often produce much greater results.

“There is an old story where a man is visiting stoneworks. He asks the first worker about his job. ‘Can’t you see, I’m cutting this stone, and working with it. This is my job’. The man goes to the next person doing the same work, and asks the same question. ‘We are making a temple. This stone piece I’m working on is a very important part of it. It will be placed in the front corner of the temple.’ This is a good comparison to the atmosphere in any organisation. In our own work, we should be able to see the whole, and not just focus on the small task we are doing. Together we should make the product, which people can enjoy. This thinking can be used in the communications as well. To get people to understand that together we are making the temple.”

Particularly in leadership, the matters to be considered in the decision making process are not always clearly defined; the possibilities are almost anything. That is why at all times the leader can receive signals of intervention possibilities, from all around the operating environment.

“In management, scripted processes are steered like engine drivers of a train. They have the tracks where to travel, their control devices, break and accelerator, and the only thing they have to observe, is whether or not there are cars coming from the level crossing. On the contrary: Leadership is like rally racing. You drive corners with full throttle trying to keep roughly on the road. You try to move as fast as you can, and you are using much more tools to keep on track. Leadership has rules, but it isn’t so controlled than the process management which can be systemised, defined, graded and measured with various instruments. In leadership, the holistic perceiving is more demanding and more sensitive, because it doesn’t have all the rules and restrictions. It requires communicating with the organisation, sensing the official and also the weak signals while leading the interpersonal relations. In addition, environmental factors need to be managed more widely.”

In this section of contemplating the big picture the matters discussed are: placing the employees to tasks most suitable for them, developing the interaction processes of the organisation, visioning and situational performing.

Placing employees

Many interviewees described having a positive view concerning people. People are expected to be a more important resource than material resources. When the framework is working, the research is done, and the machines are working, people are the way to extensively improve performance. By finding the work each person enjoys doing, and are skilful in doing, the performance of the whole organisation will increase.
“I’m inspired by the idea of roles and personalities. We all have different roles, for example in a family life: role of a mother or a father. Not every personality fits to a certain role, and that produces conflicts. There are also different roles of leading that are needed in different situations. The closer the role and the personality are, the better it is for the role, the organisation and for the person. When you are building an organisation, you need to – just like in ice hockey – make sure you have the right person as a goal keeper, as a defenceman, and so on. What would you do with an organisation, if the people are wrong? That’s why it’s important to find out what your team is like.”

By finding out the interests of individuals, and maybe utilising work rotation, the most suited people for the task at hand can be found. Personal relations also have their effect. Some people work well together while others keep having conflicts. In leading people these human factors are to be considered. In case of a conflict the root cause of the problematic situation can be found by enabling people to communicate with each other to prove prejudices wrong, or improving otherwise weak interaction. If these do not work, some work rearrangements can be done to improve the organisational atmosphere. As much of the work is done by teamwork, the team interaction needs to work. That is why in the team building phase personal relations should be observed.

“Generally people have similar brains or similar capabilities. They are probably programmed differently, but the capacity is mainly similar, or at least good enough. The challenge of leadership is to get the brain capacity to the use of community, so that it isn’t running idle or in use of other sectors. I have seen in many organisations how average people start to blossom in a new environment. They can be any kind of stars in sports clubs or in politics, or they can move as average people to another organisation, and become stars there. That means you have failed. You haven’t been able to use the existing resources. This comes down to equality and respect. They are basic values that come from the backbone. You cannot act them out, because people sense extremely easily whether you appreciate them or not. Whether you are just kissing asses or being sincere.”

Firing people is a part of the employee placement. If a person cannot fit in the organisation, after trying to get things working, there is no need to avoid firing. After all, if work is left undone, probably not even the worker is personally satisfied with the situation. The firing can then be in the favour of the organisation, as well as of the person to be fired.

Developing interaction processes

If the interaction processes do not work in an effective way, the organisation system can contain systems of holding back. As people understand the whole and their compensation to it better, they start to appreciate the work of the others. Large organisations may contain prejudices of the other parts, and the communication can work like a Chinese whisper between these parts. If no true communication is achieved, the negative loop keeps on going. Without providing better chances for the people to interact with one another, the negativity cannot diminish easily.

“When we were building this office, an architect had designed a lot of walls everywhere. When you think of the dynamic world we’re living in – why build walls? I decided that no walls, other than for meeting rooms. The coffee machine would be in the middle, so that people could meet each other more informally while drinking coffee. I observed a little, what the people were talking about. Naturally they discuss about their own things, but every once in a while they would talk about work issues: ‘Have you heard about this?’ or ‘I thought we could do this like this’. Somebody says something, and another one adds something, and so on. In three minutes some larger matter has made progress, compared to people arranging meetings through their secretaries in two weeks time. When they meet and discuss like this, the things work out faster and more effortlessly.”

The same company has in a similar way the post delivered next to the coffee machine, so interaction is made easier in these situations as well. Various work place arrangements have been
made. In one organisation the seating is altered every once in a while in order to get the people working in similar projects side by side. In another organisation there have never been permanent work places, but people sit where ever they please. The use of open-plan office is rather popular. By using these methods, the interaction between people improves. Naturally they do not work for all organisations, but in different environments there can be found various methods for improving mutual interaction. Many times free form conversation can generate unexpected results.

“When I was in charge of the parent company, I called all the Chief Executives to meetings where we didn’t have agendas. These meetings were the best. When people arrived, they wondered what we were going to do all day. ‘Well, we have this problem...’ said somebody. ‘and we have this challenge and this.’ All the politics was no longer involved, when everybody realised that we can’t be here without doing anything, while the company is paying us. We must do something. So we made the agenda right there in that moment.

By trying to get people to see that the common good is actually worth of aspiring, the collaboration can improve significantly with everyone facing the same direction. Additionally reserved people are made to understand the work of the other party by actually taking them to other workplaces so they can see the actual work others are doing. Normally people are only complaining about each other and not really thinking about the causes of the behaviour of others. Nor do they make suggestions for the people next on the process chain. The others do not come to think of these improvements, even thought the realisation would not be that hard. The others in the process need to be thought as an internal customer who can be made a bit more satisfied by simple change of actions.

“In this province there are officials, economists and enterprisers – a very wide range of people. Generally the officials are asking from the enterprisers: ‘Why aren’t you trying? We could even give you money’ while focusing strictly on how many posts have been made, or other matters of their own. The enterprisers on the other hand are complaining that ‘when you give papers to the officials, they are immediately demanding new reports’. To improve this situation seminars have been arranged, where the aim is to contemplate as a province together what could be done. Not by whining, but by identifying the strengths and using them, by motivating each other, and getting the efficiency from there.

When an organisation has a feeling of working as a whole, there is less opposite work performed. A wider perspective to own work premises can be gained by taking employees to excursions to facilities of other companies. This way they will understand their own work situation in relation to other work places better.

**Visioning**

A vision is required for organisations and their employees to set a direction for collective work. The work of a leader is to be a visionary, to discover the vision and communicate it to the subordinates in a way that everybody “gets it”. The vision has to be shared in order for it to work.

“Visioning and willingness to achieve the vision are really important. You should come up with such a simple vision it will go through to as many as you can. I try to have one or two central themes, which go through the organisation. Many leaders tend to do many pages of strategic planning, and when going a couple of steps down the organisation, it isn’t understood at all. Vision should be like a dream, where we wish to be in three or five years. Let’s say we have one essential theme: profitability. Then, in every decision and move we think whether it supports the strategy or is inconsistent with it. When the people get excited and go for it, it’s amazing. It’s like Finland in the Winter War. Everyone had a clear goal, and everybody was working towards it. If you have a few thousand people, and you can get them all working in the same direction, it’s strange if nothing happens. But this isn’t the situation in most of
The leader is setting an example of the organisation’s vision by the work they are doing. If the actions are in contradiction to the vision, no one will adopt the vision, and move towards it. Even the gestures and attitude of a leader have an influence on the subordinates, especially in critical times.

“When you are working in a crisis zone as a leader, everybody’s observing you: the things you do, how you react, what are your operational principles, expressions and the choice of words you are using. Setting an example is always crucial in a rapidly progressing situation. You need to have self-control, and take the troops under your command. Our people had been wounded, and our bases were destroyed. People needed examples. In these operations it has been interesting to see, how every soldier needs the leader’s support. You don’t have to do anything. It’s enough if you’re calm, behaving right, and do the things rationally, are at their disposal, interested and ready to support. No special tricks are needed. Once again, it all comes down to predictability and transparency.”

Setting an example is important in undisturbed times as well. Exemplary leader makes it clear that the vision you are going after truly is the shared vision all need to reach for.

“I need to motivate you by co-operating, going side-by-side, having conversations or setting an example for you. Then you can see, that ‘Ok, she put herself at stake there’, or you find the example you can use in your work, and you adapt it. They are little things, non-verbal signals, from which a person can get the point.”

Situational performing

Systems intelligence always includes actions. When the situational factors are understood, the actions take them into consideration, consciously or unconsciously. By sensing the systemic points of impact one can seize the opportunities around us. In the surrounding environment – internal or external – there are constantly a great number of signals. The difference that systems intelligence makes here is to allow oneself to go with the signals, and use the surrounding possibilities of the window of opportunity.

“I have noticed that when I’m observing the whole and possible scenarios, I suddenly see that ‘well, there might be something that in a couple of years is going to come up’.”

Some people are so strictly focused on the work at hand, they lock themselves away from the outside world, and prevent the possibilities of happening. People are often too afraid of trying out new things, even though as Russell L. Ackoff (2006) points out, actually much larger mistakes are made when people refuse to try new things. Fear of failure blocks all the experiments. This error of omission can have much larger effects, but stays unnoticed as the focus is on the errors of commission, that is when an individual or an organisation does something that should not have been done (Ackoff 2006: p. 706). The signals to prevent the error of omission can sometimes be quite small.

“The use of organic grain in our products was discovered when I was in an exhibition in Sweden. I didn’t even believe we had anything to sell there, but I went there anyway. One customer came up to me and said: ‘You could start doing organic products. It is the word of day, and will be popular in the future’. This started to go round and round in my head, and as a result we started making organic products, and established a good reputation with it.”
The signal was followed, and this quite new and different idea was given a chance, which proved to be very profitable. In most critical cases situational acting is required, especially when something unexpected happens. With calmness and assertivity the situation can be handled, even with minor actions.

“We had a search operation in a village in the crisis zone, where we went to capture a murderer. We decided to go there early in the morning so that the villagers wouldn’t wake up, and start making counter-measures. Five o’clock we went to the house, and arrested the man, but at the same time someone woke up next door, and raised the alarm. Our thirty men were surrounded by about a thousand villagers, some of them armed. A scuffle started, with shooting, throwing rocks, and few of our men and many locals were injured. People were in shock, and when I tried to talk to them, their eyes were rolling, and I couldn’t get a grip of them. Therefore I moved the troops a hundred metres sidewards in my command, even though the move itself didn’t really make any difference. But they had to move with me, and start the operation from the beginning. This simple movement was enough. The crucial matters were my example, taking them with me, the reassurance, giving the assignment, and then we could continue with the operation.

The operating environment can change rapidly, and then one needs to adapt to it. Frequently change is desired, and old habits need to be dropped. However, the possible change resistance in the organisation can be quite strong. Here the role of the leader includes the proper communication, explications, and sometimes finding the systemic intervention methods. The following is an example of a situation where work premises were altered to become open-plan office.

“Some people wanted to have rooms, hallways and walls. They thought that surely the wages clerk needed to have her own room, so nobody would be able to see which salaries were counted. But what if that person has a desk with walls on its sides, and when the salaries are being counted once a month, and that data file is opened for that day, a red ribbon – like in an airport – is drawn in front of the desk. If the ribbon is there, everybody knows not to go there. If in a change situation, systems intelligently, this wages clerk also says: ‘I don’t need a room’, others may have hard time justify their need to have a room.”

Alongside with the situational performance, the courage to use the creativity leaders already possess came up from the interviews. The capability to follow the weak, sometimes meaningless seeming input can produce unexpectedly good results. The challenge is to perceive these signals, and convert own response to them from automatic rejection, to admitting their possible usability. Trying out the things you believe in can prove to be quite triumphal, and the leaders emphasised this belief to be essential. It has to originate from oneself. Nobody else can believe in the things leaders are advocating, if leaders themselves do not have the confidence in them. Systems intelligently observing, these situations are examples of unique situational performing, knowledge that cannot be passed on, and without any possibility of reproducing them. Still, they are good examples of systems intelligence in action. That is operating in situations with intuitiveness, by observing the weak signals from the surrounding environment, and understanding the structure and operational principle of the system in question.

5.4. Organisational atmosphere

When the fundamental processes of the organisational structure have been constructed, it is the human power that can be developed increasingly. At first the processes, machines need to work, research and the products made. Then the focus moves on to the people, and to the human in-between. While machines have a top level of efficiency that cannot be exceeded, motivated employees can reach out to unbelievable amounts of superproductivity. Naturally there is always
risk of overexertion, if the processes do not follow the terms of the employees. Forcing cannot bring results, but involvement, concern and motivation can. Organisational atmosphere can motivate employees, but on the other hand can suppress them. These two outcomes have significant differences.

In this section the following themes will be discussed: follow-up, so that all the time the leader is aware of the situation in the workplace, optimism towards people in order to find the blossoming opportunities for the employees, motivating people, treating them with equality and justice, and leader collaborating with the subordinates. The people are the key to the success, and leading them is not easy.

“It’s quite tricky to lead the world of the jungle. It is the core of leadership, rather than management of objects. The more people have been intimidated, the harder it is to gain information from the world of the jungle.”

Observing the ambiance

Nearly every leader interviewed pointed out the importance of the well-being of the employees. When the well-being of the personnel is high, the results of the organisation are better in the long run. But you cannot do improvements and then assume that it is enough. The follow-up is required, in order not to slip to negativity, and to systems of holding back, from where rising is not that simple. By building the culture during successful times, the worse times are managed more easily.

“Leadership contains atmospherical follow-up. Many times chemistry between people doesn’t work in the desired way. A leader should ensure that the situation won’t go to worse, for example by arranging the work. If the situation grows bigger, it’s always problematic. Good people, but they don’t get along. We have changed the work tasks, and made sure that they don’t have to work much together.”

Observing the organisational environment does not need a measurement structure. Everyday life of an organisation reveals a lot. Therefore time management rises again to be significant. Leader needs to have time to observe the organisation. Observations can be done solely by walking around the working areas, meeting people in their work, and perceiving the attitude that they have.

“Management by walking around.

I have a habit that where ever I am, I walk around the working areas once a day to see the people’s eyes. One of the most wonderful indicators is whether the eyes of the people shine or not. Do they look at me directly peacefully, or do they look down. If the general expressions are okay and people look me in the eyes, everything is fine – assuming the numbers are also okay. Small signals express a lot: how people confront you in the working area, is it clean or messy. You can’t lead from the ivory tower and think you’re in control. You have to be among people.”

By being among people and interacting with them, you get to know them better. Likewise the employees learn more about each other by working side-by-side every day.

“After all, you spend more time with your workmates than with your spouse. Why wouldn’t you learn about them and know how to communicate with them.”
Optimism with people

The interviewees emphasised the optimistic attitude towards people to produce positive outcomes. Even the most desperate attempts can succeed, if the leader gives a positive example to the subordinates.

“In the early stage of the company, I had hired twenty unemployed men. I had to make them to believe in themselves and to work itself. I had to recognise different characters and competences. There was a man, who was a bit lazy, but pretty good in inventing new things. On purpose I gave him machines that weren’t quite finished. After a couple of days, he had ideas how to improve them. His own workload decreased, and when he saw the machines in action he was extremely satisfied.

- They say that laziness is a gift, if you know how to use it.”

By having an optimistic approach to people, they can start to blossom. Positive attitude functions efficiently also in the communication practises. Things can be said in various ways, but the more positive approach can prove to be more productive. Often positivity is attached on implicating not taking matters seriously. This was rejected in the interviews. On the contrary, positively and humanly charged systems can contribute to overall organisational performance.

“Companies have a too negative approach to a lot of things, even though the positive would turn out to be better. Generating positive loops is the thing. Every cloud has a silver lining. Positivity is the driving force in leadership. It doesn’t mean being soft – easily it is thought that with positivity there are no measurements or structure. But it doesn’t mean that at all. I would even see it the other way around. The structure specifically is needed in order to use the positive loop. We have the operating system, where there are quality standards and environmental systems. When the basics are functioning, it’s much easier to build positions to gain even more positivity, which shows up in the concrete performance measurements. In the divisions where the work is being done with a positive feeling, and the right emotional charge, they are doing the best results, no matter what measurements we observe. Whether it’s the customer satisfaction, happiness barometer, new business or profitability, they have the best results. Without a doubt.”

Alongside with the positivity, the optimism expands to expect people to be good, have rather similar capabilities, and not wish to intentionally harm others.

“The starting point is that I believe in people. We have chosen to adopt a positive conception of people. I’m not saying that every second everyone is subscribing to it, because many things are trying to diminish it. But when we are talking about a time of peace, people want to perform well and succeed. Nobody comes here intentionally to curse, mock others, and complicate their work— unless it’s time of crisis or we have failed in the leadership work.”

Even as the positive approach might generate good results, it is certainly not trivial to keep up the positive approach while people surrounding might seem to prefer negativity and pessimism.

“There are always people with different viewpoint, conation, chicaneries and backstabbing. It’s really hard to keep up the optimistic way of thinking, and somehow naive believe in the humanity, so that you don’t poison your mind, and become cynical when backlashes occur. Keeping up a positive attitude towards life is a full time job. When you look at older people, cynical attitude comes normally as you get older. All the young idealistics, before they know, turn into embittered cynical people. You can’t lead people with that attitude.”
Motivating

People work best when they are committed and motivated to do the work. This is why the motivating work should already be done when the situation tightens. Motivated people doing their work do blossom. When the organisation is committed to the individual, the individual will also be committed to the organisation. Monetary rewarding system is often considered a way to commit people, but for the people are in different situations, and have different preferences, monetary rewards confirm the commitment only in some cases. The leader has an essential role in motivating and inspiring people.

“My central concept in leadership is inspiring. My job is to get people moving. The ability to lead is that first I have to be inspired as well. A bored person can’t motivate others. You have to fly with it. I had over 4000 subordinates, surely I couldn’t lead everybody. But I had to get the nearest people and preferably the second level as well to become inspired. I believe that when others evaluate me, they say that I was a master in motivating.”

“The leader can destroy the organisational atmosphere; kill the enthusiasm and motivation, but also the other way around: make it maximal. If a leader can’t inspire, motivate and keep up a positive atmosphere, the leader has failed radically. The financial profit might be good, but are the results long-lasting, and does that kind of leadership create capability to take the organisation further?”

“People said to me that because you have good results, people are happy. I said, no, on the contrary. I first created the feeling, and from that the results. I still believe you have to achieve the will to do, have the passion, and then you can get results. The will to do comes from the good atmosphere. Good team atmosphere is like a brick. It’s much stronger than the little individual shingle. Juha Mieto is a good example of this. He was in a mass start, looked at the other competitors and said: ‘Let’s see who’s going to be second today’. It describes well the will to win. Similarly team members should be looking at each other and say: ‘We won’t give in’. Everybody is doing the best they can at all times.”

Participating

As discussed previously, the leaders have found gaining respect from the subordinates by joining the activities, being available for questions, discussions and coaching.

“I took care of the social side, I sang and played along. I didn’t think that I would lose my authority that way. On the contrary, I gained respect by being along rather than watching without participating. Very typical for management leading is that the real party starts at the time the manager leaves.”

Even though the leader is not in the exact situation as the subordinates, they are all in the same organisation, their goals are in the same direction, and without cooperation these goals cannot be achieved. Therefore the leaders need not to be separated from the employees – on the contrary. The more there is interaction and communication between these groups, the more easily the shared vision can be achieved. When people are together outside work enjoying themselves, and not only discussing work issues, the togetherness grows, and hence the work matters are easier to do together, and the motivation is stronger.

When I was in the parent company, I took the sales managers from the companies, we went to Italia, and did things together. One morning we had a wake-up at five o’clock - even though everybody had resisted it. I gave maps to everyone, and told where we should go. The orienteering was a bit hard, for the maps were made in the twenties or thirties, and the landscape was quite different. There were new roads, houses, villages. Soon people realised how complicated it is to navigate with an old map. Then I gave them updated maps and we found the right place. At 6:30 we were on top of this hill, where apples and apple juice were already waiting for us. When the sun rose, we walked down the hill to a farmyard, where we had the best breakfast we had ever tasted, with all fresh ingredients by the Alps.
Afterward we went to a river. On both sides there were equipments, and the sales managers needed to build a bridge across it with a team on both sides of the river. The river was quite wide, and the water was cold. Some people stood in the river for almost an hour holding up something in order to build the bridge. There were about 25 people building it. We took photos we later used in different occasions. It was great to see people planning and working, and finally to see how they felt when they finished it. You could see it in their eyes. The bridge itself wasn’t that brilliant, but it was big, and it worked. *Building better bridges* – we used that in changing the way we think, and in the implementation of the values.”

Just to experience something that differs from the everyday work together with a team or a larger group strengthens the relationship within the group. The leader can come up with something enlivening, and be a part of it. The surprising events have proved to work to improve the feeling of togetherness. For the people spend so much time together in the work places, the interacting can be improved to become more enjoyable.

> "Enthusiasm and inventing creative things are important. For instance you can take the subordinates or the executive group out, as a reward for a good profit made. I had situations where I had talked nothing in advance, but just called the executive group for a meeting. When people came, I said that the meeting is being held in another location. We went to have a fancy lunch in a restaurant, and afterwards went to a theatre. Everyone was thrilled. “

### 5.5. Systems intelligence concepts in use

Systems intelligence (SI) in leadership was studied in two ways. As presented in the previous chapters, the transcripts of the interviews were examined and the implicit systems intelligence was pointed out from the different areas of leadership. In addition, in the interviews the SI concept was presented, and the reactions to the term and the idea of it were examined in order to generalise the willingness to utilise systems intelligence within leadership.

In the beginning of the interview, the term *System* was introduced for the leaders. The responses were quite mixed. Only two leaders considered it as a descriptive term in organisational life. Others described the word to be too technical and systematic to describe the wide scale of leader’s work.

> “I think systems and systematic actions are closely related to management. Leadership, however, has more creativity and situational sensitivity involved. There are certain working methods, and ways to lead people that recur, but often you find yourself creativity adapting to different situations. “

In the end of the interview, the concept *system* was expanded to *systems intelligence*, with the definition of Hämäläinen and Saarinen as presented in the Appendix 4. As a word systems intelligence was thought to have a more positive sound, but still the term was thought to be a bit too difficult and not so self-evident. After defining the term, the idea of SI was welcomed, and considered descriptive.

> “If you define it that way, I think it’s a rational way of thinking. But as a term, systems intelligence is a bit unclear. It’s not understandable without explaining. It sounds technocratic, opposite of what its content is. Systems intelligence sounds more like engineering technology, and process management than uncovering the intelligence or mental capacities. “

> “I have read this definition many times and it sounds good. It introduces the utilisation of human resources differently than before. Formerly the management of objects and people have been spoken as two separate actions. Here, instead, are the resources that underlie in the creative capacity, and in individuals ready to be activated. I think it’s good.”
After defining systems intelligence, the five levels of SI were introduced: 1) Seeing oneself in the system, 2) Thinking about SI, 3) Managing SI, 4) Sustaining SI, and 5) Leadership with systems intelligence (Saarinen & Hämäläinen 2006). As a list, the five levels were not adopted straight away. Most would have wanted more time to acquire to systems intelligence before commenting it. Modestly, leaders did not want to highlight their own work as having adopted these stages but still perceived these as possible classification. Most leaders connected systems intelligence and the five levels of SI to their work, and immediately saw possible application points. Still, the need to act situationally without defined isms is great, and therefore the interviewees did not want to consider leadership to be “only” systems intelligent.

“I’m sure these are all good descriptions, but the last level isn’t so easy to implement. […] In the management of the general view, there are several variables. Some interactions can easily escape the attention. Because of success in one thing, the others might have less attention, even though they also should need the attention. You really should focus on the big picture.”

“Of course you have to be modest, but I identify these levels in our work here. In the first level it’s essential to understand how the own work is connected to what the organisation is doing. It’s a salient point. For example our warehouseman was delivering products to another company. In the customer company he saw something, so he acted as a consultant or a salesman and told how our company could help in the matters, and then we got a project there. It wasn’t that he would only deliver the products, and that’s it. No, he understood what the company was doing. […] in order to sustain the systems intelligence, you need to have communication, share information, take dynamics into account, and let people tell about their own successes to the colleagues. You have to have the culture of caring, and as a leader make these all possible. Otherwise nothing works, things don’t happen by themselves. Superiors and leaders have the responsibility.”

Even though the leaders do not define their actions necessary as illustrations of SI, the leadership work does seem to contain implicit use of systems intelligence. This manifests especially in situational acting rather than in systemic knowledge. Once again the idea of actions is emphasised. The successful actions have to be made constantly. The reason why they work, is important for the holistic understanding, but it has only a secondary value following the results achieved.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed at answering the research questions. The first question was how systems intelligence manifests in leadership. SI can be found in the actions of the leaders, but it is not clear whether it is a result of successful leadership, personal characteristics, or tendency to seize the opportunities. Or is it the other way around – that these features are the results of systems intelligence behaviour?

The most essential factors of the leadership of the intervieweed leaders is the reluctance of falling into any particular ism, and the emphasis on the situational factors and own performing with respect to the context at hand. Whatever leadership theories might be udes by a given leader, they remain implicit and context dependent. Each environment and situation is considered exceptional. Leading people is performed by participating and by letting the employees participate in the setting of their own goals and work development, by constantly being aware of the whole organisation and its functioning. This way the contributing to the work success of the employees is enabled. Optimistic attitude towards the employees makes it possible for them to blossom in the work they are doing. With motivation and enthusiasm involved, the efficiency can be raised to the level of superproductivity.
I am confident that SI can be found in various locations in human life. Systems intelligence can be seen in the positively effective patterns or insights. As the definition implies, SI thinking would be an eligible way of conducting. The question still remains, whether it is essential in leadership work or would it be of advantage for leaders to adapt SI behaviour. After describing briefly the meaning of SI, only few leaders did actually describe their way of working specifically systems intelligent. Even though many considered the idea to be acceptable, they did not present their own actions as systems intelligent. They distanced themselves from behaving in any categorised way. Hence the conscious approach of behaving in a SI way is rather improbable – even if this particular concept would be named differently. However, it seems that systems intelligence is implicitly present in the leadership work. On the other hand SI can be applied to almost any kind of actions aiming to produce positive results.

Would the learning of the SI concept improve the work of a leader? Perhaps it might open up some perspectives of thinking and contemplating the environment, so that some new thoughts could be generated in the leading work. But as Russell L. Ackoff (2006) pointed out, the error of omission, or failing to do something that should have been done, goes normally unnoticed. Even if SI behaviour would prove out to be the most efficient way of performing in the organisational field, the cost of omission goes unnoticed as nothing is changed. When the fear of failure, or error of commission, as Ackoff calls it, is as dominant as it is currently in organisations, SI tryouts do not take place. The advanced theory of systems thinking has proved its advantages in the organisational field. Nevertheless, the actual implementation and adoption are still missing (Ackoff 2006). The same phenomena can happen with systems intelligence. When the error of omission is left generally unnoticed, new experiments and approaches are left untested.

The leaders interviewed do find it important to think about their own thinking. The questioning of the ways of thinking was found useful, but the lack of reflection time diminishes the actual time of contemplating. As the leaders do not want to connect their leading style to only one specific theory, they find their own actions arising from the dynamic situation they are part of. Therefore the usability of SI is not adopted straight away. As leaders said, they would like to get acquainted with the concept thoroughly before determining the ultimate usability of it in their own work. As a term systems intelligence was not considered to be intuitive. It sounded more like a technical engineering term. Once the definition was brought up, the idea was somewhat accepted. But intuitively it was not perfectly understandable.

6.1. Evaluation of the research

The interview method used in research felt natural to use, for the discussion proceeded to the unforeseeable directions. Because systems intelligence can be found in many different environments, too precise question frames most likely would not have worked as opposed to the more open approach I adopted. The questions were thoroughly thought in order for the interviews to reflect broadly the topic of leadership. However, it is possible that the questions asked in the interview situation were too leading. Or, as an interviewer I may have concentrated more on the issues I personally found more interesting, and therefore discussed too much about them with the leaders. These might have caused a lack of focus in the areas that could have been essential with respect to SI or leadership. For example it is possible that I focused too much on issues concerning human resources while strategic management may have been discussed too little, with respect to the actual challenges and practises of the leaders in question.

The time spend with the leaders was not the same from one leader to the next. Some leaders had more time to spend for the interviews than others. That affected the issues discussed, and many
times due to the lack of time, the last matters to be discussed – including the systems intelligent concepts – were covered more briefly than the original intention was.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Due to translation, there might be quotations that are not altogether accurate because Finnish and English have somewhat different ways to express things. It should also be noted that majority of the interaction between people is formed by the nonverbal communication, which cannot be written down and might not reflect in the transcripts. However, I have made an effort to write down the quotations as they were intended.

It can be estimated that the amount of the material from the interviews was adequate. As there was quite a lot of transcript material, there were similarities in many of the interviews. The aim was to bring forth the most essential parts from the material, and group them adequately and in an illuminating way. But because one can approach leadership from so many different angles, the conclusion reached here will necessarily be somewhat tentative.

Even though the number of the interviewees was rather small, the interviews lasted quite a long time, so the sufficient amount of material needed for the analysis can be seen to be achieved. The idea of the use of the systems intelligence can be applied to other organisations and leaders as well, even though all the organisations have quite different environments. However systems intelligence covers quite a number of different themes, so it can be adjusted to various leadership contexts – giving chances of possible novel openings for the leadership work.
References


Opening contact by professor Esa Saarinen

The phone call made by Professor Saarinen contained the following information:

- Reetta Vartiainen, a student from the Helsinki University of Technology would like to conduct an interview.
- The purpose is to discuss with experienced leaders (5 - 10 individuals) on their leadership thinking and leadership experiences.
- When and how (a phone call or an email) can Reetta be in contact and arrange an interview?
Consequent contact by Reetta Vartiainen

I contacted the interviewees by a phone call or an email message. The purpose of this contact was to discuss the following information:

- I would like to interview you on your leadership experiences. The interview can take place where it is most suitable for you.
- My research is part of the leadership research of professors Esa Saarinen and Raimo P. Hämäläinen.
- When would be a good time for this interview? It will last approximately one and a half hours, although due to the semi-structured question framework, it might also take up to two hours.
Practicalities to be discussed in the interview

As an introduction for the interview, the following matters were discussed:

- My name is Reetta Vartiainen, and I am from the research group of professors Esa Saarinen and Raimo P. Hämäläinen. This research project is part of the leadership research.

- Thank you again for having the time to participate in these interviews.

- How long do you have time for the interview.

- The purpose is to collect big and small leadership stories and experiences. The aim is to study leadership from a systemic perspective.

- I am going to record the interviews in order to remember correctly the expressions. I hope it is fine with you.

After the interview the discussion contained the following information:

- The research based on these interviews will be public. I would like to use the names of the interviewees in it. I hope this is not a problem? I also have the option to use the interviews anonymously.

- When the research paper is finished, the report will be distributed to all interviewees.
Interview framework

In this interview I do not offer definitions of leadership. It would be preferable that you would keep to your own definitions and views of leadership.

In the literature the term leadership is defined, for example in the following ways:

“Leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished”

(Richards & Engle, 1986: p. 206)

“[…] the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization”

(House et al. 1999: p. 184)

“Doing the right things. Transformational leadership. Innovates, develops, focuses on people, inspires, creates trust, asks what and why and has long term view and an eye for the horizon.”

(Bennis 2003)

Leadership and Systems thinking
- How would you define leadership, based on your experience?
- How does the word system describe leadership, operational environment and challenges? During this interview, feel free to use this concept when you consider it to be suitable.
- Describe your own leadership thinking.
- What are the major themes in your leadership thinking?
- Do you consider important to think about your own thinking?
- On the grounds of your experience, what are the basic features of functional leadership?

Managing entities
- What kind of interaction patterns you have in your work? What factors contribute directly or indirectly to your work?
- Do you recognize yourself using recurring behaviour-models in different situations?
- How do you keep yourself aware of all the things needed? How are you aware of course of the events in the organisation?

Leading people
- Tell me about leading people.
- How do you perceive leadership to be involved with working environment, enthusiasm and work motivation?

Situational factors
- Tell me of a situation, where the operating environment changed unexpectedly.
− Could you describe a situation, which would enlighten the nature of your leadership, where your actions have been very situational or where chance has been utilized?
− Tell me about a critical situation.

Challenges, crises and successes
− How would you describe the leadership challenges in your work? What factors are involved? What is a typical way to confront them?
− Tell me about a crisis.
− What do you experience to be difficult in leadership?
− What do you experience to be inspiring?
− Tell me about an experience of growth.
− Tell me about an especial success.

Learning
− Has your leadership style changed in the course of time?
− What factors have influenced this change, an environmental change or a change of your own actions?
− What have you learnt?
− How can you recognize the successes of your work?
− Have you obtained ideas to your leadership work from certain sources, such as literature, colleagues, education or training?

Systems intelligence
− In this research, leadership is been studied from a systems intelligence perspective. Systems intelligence can be defined:

  “By Systems Intelligence (SI) we mean intelligent behaviour in the context of complex systems involving interaction and feedback. A subject acting with Systems Intelligence engages successfully and productively with the holistic feedback mechanisms of her environment. […] By observing her own interdependence in the feedback intensive environment, she is able to act intelligently.”

  (Hämäläinen & Saarinen 2004: p. 3)

− How would the concept of systems intelligence fit in leadership? Could it describe your actions?
− There are 5 levels of systems intelligence for self-evaluation and measurement of systems intelligence:
  1) Seeing oneself in the system
  2) Thinking about systems intelligence
  3) Managing systems intelligence
  4) Sustaining systems intelligence
  5) Leadership with systems intelligence

  (Saarinen & Hämäläinen 2006)
- What do you think about these? Can these levels be seen in your own actions?