

Investigating the Theoretical Notion of Leadership

- A Critical Realist Contribution

Maria Qvist Clemens

MASTER THESIS

Business Administration and Philosophy, 2014

Supervisor: Michael Pedersen

August 1st, 2017

181.413 characters

79,7 pages

Abstract

The confrontation with the paradoxes and conundrums of contemporary management serves as a starting point for the forthcoming thesis, which seeks to illuminate the structure of *Leadership* in academic literature, mainly from the perspective of John P. Kotter, representing and presenting the mainstream ideals, and Suze Wilson, representing critical theory. These initial considerations enable the three main questions to be investigated in this thesis: Firstly, what is leadership, and how is it characterized by *mainstream* and *critical* theory respectively; secondly, to what extent is Wilson's critical methodology able to challenge mainstream theory; and thirdly, how might a third, new reading of leadership theory present itself. The third research question will be elaborated by including the philosophy of critical realism, developed by Roy Bhaskar.

The thesis will show that proponents of mainstream leadership theory are confident in the potency of leadership, as being capable of instigating change and transformation. However popular the established dogma on leadership theory is, the necessity for rethinking only becomes more urgent. As such, the critical reading of leadership theory, proposed by Wilson, will be investigated for its ability to adequately challenge the mainstream notion of leadership. The analysis of her critical take will however illuminate that even as her findings are comprehensive and certainly challenge mainstream ideals, her conclusions don't provide an adequate alternative for understanding and *explaining* leadership. The argument of this is that as she adopts what critical realists term *an actualist view on powers*, she is not able to explain the origin of the powers working to produce the notion of leadership.

Finally, the thesis will propose that a critical realist reading of leadership theory provides valuable insights into the social structures and generative mechanisms, which can be said to produce the social phenomenon of leadership. The purpose of this critical realist reading of leadership theory is to challenge the tendency to adhere either to a positivist or constructionist dichotomy in methodical approaches, and to provide new understandings of the structural workings and manifestations of leadership.

Content

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Methodology	5
2.1 Methodological research strategy.....	5
2.1.1. Part One.....	5
2.1.2. Part Two.....	6
2.2. Choice of literature and Delimitations	9
3. Literary Review – a presentation and analysis of overarching tendencies in antecedent theories.....	12
3.1. What leaders and managers really do.....	12
3.2. Thinking differently about leadership	16
3.2.1. How we got here - The course of leadership theory development	17
3.2.2 New Leadership – the paradigm of today’s leadership theory	20
4. A critical take and a methodological discussion.....	25
4.1. A critical review of New Leadership	25
4.2. Problematizing Wilson’s conclusions and methodology	30
4.2.1 Contesting the naturalization of leadership thinking.....	30
4.2.2 The unstable ontology of leadership.....	31
4.2.3. Effects without cause	33
5. Concluding remarks: Issues left unexamined.....	38
6.0. Metatheory – Critical Realism	41
6.1. The matter of Ontology	41
6.2. Structures, Mechanisms and Causality.....	45
6.3. Common Objections	47
7. A critical realist reading	49
7.1. Real structures and mechanisms inherent in leadership	49
7.1.1. The structure of leader-follower	51
7.1.2. The concurrent and contesting mechanisms of the manager-leader	54
7.2. Modeling the causal sequence of New Leadership.....	61
8. Conclusion	68
Bibliography.....	71

1. Introduction

“I will do whatever it takes to turn you blue” my boss told me, when I was hired as a telemarketing team leader at UNICEF. I had to ask him what he meant. “I will turn you blue; blue as the color of UNICEF” he replied smiling. What my boss was aiming at, was to make me passionate about the values and purpose of the organization to a degree where it became an incorporated part of me. I was hooked. What an amazing situation, having a boss, a leader, who was concerned with my passions and personal development. I threw myself into the work, and became fascinated with the energy demonstrated by my colleagues and my boss. The fundraising department was driven by the eager to make results, which in turn meant collecting money enough to change the lives of children around the world. This also meant constantly improving, bettering and innovating as we ran the department. My boss used to say “we cement as we drive”. This was the mantra we worked by; as everything had to move quickly, we would have to make decisions and changes as we went along. This became my favorite expression, as it emphasized the up-tempo pace of the department and promised a premise for continued progress. As time went by, I became more and more like my boss; capable of advancing my employees, both personally and professionally in light of the blue values we promoted. However, during this process I began to question the logic of what I was attempting: On one hand I was creating emotional ties to my employees, by influencing their values and mindsets. On the other hand, I was pressing them for change and demanding never-ending adaptability. Doing this, I often felt morally conflicted, as the lines blurred between being friend, coach and leader, while concurrently being their superior with accompanying formal authority. As my wonders concerning the notion of leadership grew, I began my search for answers to the questions: What is leadership and why am I expected to embody this kind of leadership? It was at this time, my work-related wonders turned into academic curiosity and the foundation for this thesis was created.

The purpose of this thesis will be to investigate the developmental trajectory of the notion of leadership and will include elaborating on the current notion of leadership characterized by change and transformation; this is a commonly held view, illustrated amongst others by senior lecturer Suze Wilson (Wilson 2016: 133-135). Thus, the phenomenon under investigation is *leadership*, which has already been a subject of an abundance of theoretical investigation. The contribution of this thesis to the current field of leadership theory, will consist in sketching out a new way of theoretically approaching the phenomenon; namely by investigating leadership through the lenses of critical realism. It is however not possible to

evaluate which problems critical realism responds to, if it is not compared with other methodological positions. Therefore, to enable the thesis in illuminating different and nuanced perspectives on leadership, the phenomenon will be investigated from different angles; that is, it will include mainstream leadership theory and a critical Foucauldian reading of the mainstream notion of leadership. Finally a critical realist reading will be attempted. The claim put forth by critical realists is that much theory in organization and management studies is rooted respectively in empirical realist ontology and social constructionist ontology (Fleetwood & Ackroyd 2004: xvi). In response to this, critical realism offers an alternative; it proposes that experienced phenomena are produced by underlying structures and generative mechanisms, and that a theory of any social matter must be investigated by seeking out these structures. This philosophy is thus operationalized to explore the gap which will be shown to exist between mainstream leadership theory rooted largely in psychology, and a critical Foucauldian critique, rooted in constructionist ontology.

The philosophy of critical realism has yet to gain broad recognition. Subsequently, there is currently not a lot of literature which applies the meta-theory of critical realism to a body of leadership theory, as this thesis attempts to do. As such, this thesis moves into largely unknown territory and its contribution is therefore only expected to provide a preliminary outline of a critical realist reading of leadership.

The inquiries of the thesis will be guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What is leadership according to contemporary mainstream represented by John P. Kotter, and according to critical theory, represented by Suze Wilson?*
- 2) To what extent is the logical structure and content of Wilson's critical methodology able to challenge mainstream theory?*
- 3) How might a third reading of leadership theory be possible? That is, what new insights may a critical realist analysis of the notion of leadership provide?*

2. Methodology

2.1 Methodological research strategy

The thesis at hand is divided into two parts. This division is founded in a difference in methodology, and the following will present the methodological research strategy operationalized in each.

2.1.1. Part One

The first part comprises a literary review and an analysis and discussion of contemporary leadership theory. This part will study New Leadership (specifically transformational leadership) as the current mainstream¹ theory, proposed amongst others by John P. Kotter (2001), and a Foucauldian critique against this type of mainstream theory, as it is proposed by Suze Wilson (2016). These two readings of contemporary leadership theory will be investigated by applying an inductive research strategy.

The aim of the Inductive research strategy is to establish limited generalizations about the characteristics of individuals and social phenomena (Blaikie 2010: 83).

As the quote states, the inductive approach aims at illuminating tendencies within the field of analysis, delimited in this thesis to concern the phenomenon of contemporary, Western mainstream and critical leadership theory. By following an inductive research strategy, Part One will draw conclusions from selected, particular examples of leadership theory, and hereby seek to establish a unity from the parts represented by Kotter and Wilson's theory. This is essentially the trajectory of an inductive analysis; drawing generalizing conclusions from selected parts (Danermark et al. 2002: 85). These theories comprise the empirical data of the thesis. Thus, the thesis will move from an identification of tendencies in these chosen works to a generalizing conclusion about leadership; as such an inductive strategy is applied. As the conclusions are thus derived from particular theories, it follows that the conclusions of the thesis' Part One are neither necessary nor universal, but rather limited generalizations confined to the time and space in which the empirical data (comprised of the chosen theories) has been collected and analyzed (Blaikie 2010: 83). That is to say, different conclusions might be reached if this study had been carried out in another time or within a different cultural tradition than the Western (as the leadership theory used as empirical data represents a Western body of leadership theory). In addition to the inductive research strategy, a qualitative approach to the theories is adopted. When textual material (such as theory) is treated qualitatively, the focus is placed on the identification of connections between phenomena, establishment

¹ The term *mainstream* is applied to describe the first reading of leadership theory; it is used to indicate the popularity with which this leadership theory is produced and read by practitioners.

of themes and finally a development of descriptive and interpretive investigation of these (Blaikie 2010: 207-209). In Part One of the thesis at hand, this will result in

- 1) a historical trace of leadership theoretical development
- 2) an analysis of the thematic tendency of combining the notion of the manager with the notion of the leader
- 3) an analysis of the issues resulting from mainstream theory
- 4) a discussion of the methodologies adopted by mainstream theorists and Wilson as a Foucauldian

Besides being inductive and qualitative in nature, Part One will conduct its investigations by drawing on the discipline of philosophy of science. Specifically, the line of reasoning presented in this part will concern itself with investigating the argumentative structures within the presented theories respectively. As such, the analysis and discussion (provided in chapter 4), will identify, elaborate on and explain certain issues which the theories are not able to answer or take into account, due to their methodological standpoints. As such, conclusions made in regards to the specific texts will be of a deductive nature; and only when they are suggested to apply in a broader sense (i.e. exceeding the specific theories) the final conclusions of Part One will be of an inductive character.

2.1.2. Part Two

The second part will attempt to conduct a third reading of leadership theory, which is founded in the metatheory of critical realism. Critical realism is a philosophy for science, which was originally developed by the philosopher Roy Bhaskar in his work "A realist theory of Science" (1975). It emerged as an alternative to respectively positivism and anti-positivism and differs by arguing the necessity of ontology (A&S 2009: 39-40). In critical realism it is argued that the world must be understood as being differentiated, stratified and structured (Danermark et al. 2002: 5). By characterizing the world as such, Bhaskar introduces a multilayered view of the world, which is divided into three domains, namely the empirical, the actual and the real. The real domain comprises the real structures and mechanisms which, when triggered, produces (and reproduces or transforms) the conjunction of events and concrete experiences belonging to the actual and empirical domain (Bhaskar 1975: 56). Within the terminology of critical realism, the ontology comprises what is termed the transitive dimension (covering the empirical and actual domain) and the intransitive dimension (i.e. the domain of the real). This differentiation entails that what we experience, e.g. by observation, does not grant us direct access to the underlying structures and mechanisms which produces what we experience. As such, critical realism claims that any knowledge we may attain about the world

(belonging to the transitive dimension), will always be fallible, as there exist a gap between the world as such and our epistemological access to it (Bhaskar 1975: 16, Archer et al. 1998: xii). A core element derived from the differentiated understanding of the world, is that social science should not focus merely on empirical, observable phenomena or conjunctions of events, but should rather search for “the activity of generative mechanisms and structures independently of any particular sequence or pattern of events” (Bhaskar 1975: 14).

When generative mechanisms, instead of the phenomena produced by them, are considered the object of science, a strategy which holds the potential of revealing the real structures and mechanisms is needed. This line of thought is found in Norman Blaikie’s account of retroduction as a research strategy:

“The logic of retroduction refers to the process of building hypothetical models of structures and mechanisms that are assumed to produce empirical phenomena (Bhaskar 1979: 15). It involves working back from data to a possible explanation” (Blaikie 2010: 87).

Danermark et al., concur, that the research strategy in coherence with the philosophy of critical realism is retroduction (Danermark et al. 2002: 11). Part Two will therefore be conducted by following this research strategy. Retroduction is essentially concerned with exploring the characteristics and constitutive elements of structures and generative mechanisms, and the goal is “to discover underlying mechanisms to explain observed regularities” (Blaikie 2010: 84). Unlike induction (or deduction and abduction), retroduction does not provide a formalized mode of inference (Danermark et al. 2002: 96). The following will therefore sketch out the key maneuvers within the strategy.

According to Danermark et al. and Blaikie, retroduction requires as a first step, a description of the social phenomenon to be explained, including the regularities found in and in relation to the phenomenon (Danermark et al. 2002: 110, Blaikie 2010: 87). According to Blaikie, in this step, the inductive research strategy becomes an adequate tool (Blaikie 2010: 87). The thesis has therefore taken its beginning in a qualification of phenomenon of leadership, presented in Part One. Part Two will proceed from the inductive presentation of Part One into the critical realist analysis itself, which will be carried out by following the subsequent steps of a retroductive research strategy.

The first analytical part of Part Two, will investigate the enduring structures of leadership; that is the constituent properties which makes something what it is, as opposed to something else. By working back from the data of Part One, this will be done by investigating the enduring relationality between follower/leader and manager/employee, as well as proposing possible generative mechanisms at work in

these structures (i.e. causal powers). As such, the thesis moves from the transitive domain (i.e. the field of leadership theory) and into suggesting preliminary ideas of potential structures in the domain of the real. It is at this step the model-building begins, mentioned by Bhaskar in the quote from Blaikie. Having thus suggested structures and possible mechanisms, the analysis will move into the next step of the model building; building a causal sequence as explanation for the manifestation of new leadership. According to critical realist Stephen Ackroyd, something is *explained* when it is placed in a causal sequence; this sequence is to illuminate the mechanisms inherent in certain structures, and the context in which they operate (Ackroyd 2004: 149-150). Building an explanation in this manner will in turn explain the observable effects. In this thesis, the aim of the model building is to propose a causal sequence based in the relational structure of the follower/leader and manager/employee. The sequence will be suggested to produce the effects of new leadership, when the causal powers of moral and formal authority are influencing each other's workings.

In accordance with the paradigm of critical realism and retroductive research strategy, the methodological actions mentioned above are based not only on relevant theory on the subject (to be presented in chapter 3 and 6), but also on "disciplined scientific thinking aided by creative imagination, intuition, and guesswork" (Blaikie 2010: 87), and on abstraction. Abstraction is by Danermark et al. viewed as an appropriate tool for conducting social science within the paradigm of critical realism. Abstraction in brief, is concerned with the mental exercise of isolating certain aspects of the object under investigation, in the realization of the impossibility of creating a social setting in which particular mechanisms are investigated without the influence from other mechanisms (Danermark et al. 2002: 43). Hence, abstraction is a thought process, which provides the possibility to zoom in on a particular *aspect* of a social phenomenon, thus abstracting from other aspects of that same phenomenon. Though this does not reduce the complexity of generative mechanisms influencing the occurrence of the phenomenon under investigation, it does provide a basis for dealing with that complexity.

According to Blaikie, the final steps within a retroductive research strategy, is concerned with investigating the findings in concrete, empirical settings. This is however not possible to do in this thesis due to the limited scope. This will have to be a task for further research. This brings us to the next paragraph, concerned with the choice of theory and further delimitations.

2.2. Choice of literature and Delimitations

The main theories used in the thesis at hand are provided by John P. Kotter in “What Leaders Really Do” (2001), Suze Wilson in “Thinking Differently about Leadership – A Critical History of Leadership Studies” (2016) and critical realist Roy Bhaskar, primarily in “A Realist Theory of Science” (1975).

Firstly, all the literature has been selected to cover a thematically coherent content. As the thesis takes its point of departure in a desire to investigate what leadership is, one theme to be covered was theory concerning contemporary leadership. Kotter and Wilson contribute to this aspect, as they have both dedicated their work to elaborating on the subject. The choice was also made, to investigate leadership as understood from different positions, so as not to conduct a one-sided, confirmatory analysis. As such, the second theme inspiring the choice of theory was methodological pluralism: Thus, Kotter was chosen as the representative of a mainstream approach to leadership based in scientific methodology and Wilson was chosen to represent a Foucauldian, constructionist critique of mainstream leadership theory (such as Kotter’s). Finally critical realism represented by Roy Bhaskar was chosen to counter both Kotter and Wilson’s positions, as he represents a paradigm which counters both positivist and anti-positivists positions (the former corresponding to Kotter’s approach, the latter corresponding to Wilson’s). It should furthermore be noticed, that all the theory used in the thesis at hand has been produced within a Western society. As such, the thesis wish not to make any claims regarding its applicability in other parts of the world, but confines its findings to a contemporary Western context (in line with the inductive research strategy presented above).

Secondly, having decided on the thematic coherence, the specific representatives have been chosen for different reasons. John P. Kotter has been chosen as representative for mainstream, contemporary leadership theory, as he is one of the widest known and most acknowledged contributors to this field (www.hbs.edu). Suze Wilson, being much less known, has not been chosen due to status within the field of critical leadership studies. Rather, she has been chosen to represent critical leadership studies, because of the extensiveness of her work. Wilson contributes a comprehensive analysis of leadership studies through time, and thus covers a vast amount of leadership theory. Her work enables this thesis to make inductive conclusions on a much broader foundation than would have been otherwise possible within the limited scope of the formal requirements to a thesis. As such, Wilson concurrently provides a critical analysis of leadership theory and a presentation of further mainstream theory as proposed by mainstream scholars such as Bernard M. Bass and James Burns (who will be presented in addition to Kotter, albeit as part of the review of Wilson). Regarding the latter, Wilson has a highly pedagogical way of conveying her findings. She consistently quotes and refers, wherever she presents mainstream theory, and thus enables the reader to understand when she portrays theory, as it is presented by proponents of mainstream theory,

and when she provides her critical take. This makes her suitable as a source not only for a critical reading of leadership theory, but likewise for enhanced knowledge about mainstream leadership theory.

Critical realism is first and foremost represented in this thesis by the works of Roy Bhaskar. Although other proponents of critical realism (such as Margaret Archer) has contributed comprehensive further developments of the theory of critical realism, Bhaskar has been chosen as primary source, as he is the original founder of this philosophy.

Andrew Sayer and Danermark et al. are also important sources of theory in this thesis. The latter has been chosen as they contribute a comprehensive investigation of the paradigm in connection with application in social studies, and the former because he is an acknowledged proponent of the paradigm and furthermore has done research specifically on Foucault (Sayer 2012). Sayer's critique against Foucault (and post structuralists) is used to support the critical claims made by this thesis against Wilson, and furthermore establishes a foundation for these claims to be generalized inductively. It can thus be said, that Sayer provides a theoretical bridge between Wilson, Foucauldian post structuralists more generally, and the need for a third, critical realist reading of leadership theory (as paragraph 4.2.3 will unfold).

Due to the limited scope of the thesis, a presentation of Foucault was chosen not to be included. The argument for this is that the thesis does not set out to critique Foucault himself, but rather to investigate the potential problematization of a *Foucauldian*, namely Suze Wilson; as such, it is Wilson's adoption of the Foucauldian framework which is under scrutiny. The following paragraphs (3.2.1 and 3.2.2) will present the content of the study made by Wilson, which she has produced on the basis of a Foucauldian reading of management and leadership literature, and so the Foucauldian methodology will only be elaborated on with reference to Wilson's interpretation of him, and to the extend needed to carry out the analysis of Wilson as a Foucauldian.

A final delimitation to be mentioned is concerned with the topics within leadership theory which are of current concern. The thesis will investigate the notion of *what leadership is* by investigating subjects such as who the leader is, what the leader's tasks and objectives are, what the leader's relationship towards the followers is characterized by, as well as the methodologies, used in producing existing theory regarding these topics. As such, additional leadership related topics such as managerial decision making, strategy, and theories concerning motivation etc. will not be touched upon.

Part One

Transformational Leadership

And

A Foucauldian Critique

3. Literary Review – a presentation and analysis of overarching tendencies in antecedent theories

The following chapter will provide a description of the notion leadership, by presenting two different theories on the subject, represented by John P. Kotter and Suze Wilson. As such, the literary review at hand will seek an understanding of the social phenomenon leadership, and investigate which characteristics arise from a comparative reading of mainstream leadership theory and a more critical take on the historical development of the notion. There will however also be supplemented with additional theories to broaden the picture in a way, which allows for an enhanced understanding of the development of leadership theory and the phenomenon of leadership.

3.1. What leaders and managers really do

John P. Kotter, retired professor of organizational behavior at Harvard Business School, has contributed a comprehensive amount of works to the field of leadership theory, which is concerned with illuminating the true objectives regarding the importance of leadership as a discipline concerned with transformation. One of his key points regards the distinction between managers and leaders and is presented in his article “What Leaders Really Do” (2001). In this article, Kotter advocates an understanding of management and leadership as being distinct, but complementary. The distinction resides in their different objectives of managing complexity by creating sense of stability, and instigating change (Kotter 2001: 86). To achieve these different objectives, Kotter proposes three core tasks which both the manager and the leader should attend to (Ibid.).

The first task consists of deciding what needs to be done. When deciding a cause of action, the manager will rely on deductive planning, in order to bring about a sense of stability in the form of orderly results (Kotter 2001: 87). As such, this activity stands opposite to the leader’s objective of instigating change. The leader should thus act on this task by setting a direction and bringing about a vision (Kotter 2001: 86-87). Kotter proposes that the task set out for the leader is of a more inductive nature, where data and patterns are taken into account and subsequently formed into vision and strategies (Kotter 2001: 87). These should be informed by comprehensive strategic thinking and should propose a direction which “can be translated into a realistic competitive strategy” (Ibid.). This kind of direction-setting is under no circumstances to be confused with long-term planning, which Kotter propose to be the most common mistake made by over-managed and under-led organizations (Ibid.).

The second task concerns the creation of networks and relationships (Kotter 2001: 86). For the manager this task concerns organizing and staffing, hence designing human systems which can carry out the plans as efficiently as possible. The manager is responsible for hiring the right employees, organizing reporting systems, and informative communication regarding the plans to be carried out, as well as structuring economic incentive systems (Kotter 2001: 90). All of these actions are part of ensuring that the relational conditions enable the plan to be carried out. The equivalent leadership action concerns aligning people, rather than organizing them. This distinction implies that the leader focuses on communicating the vision and strategies and make employees understand the alternative future which is outlined in the vision (Ibid.). As there is no guarantee that the employees will immediately buy into the idea of the proposed alternate future, the success of the communicative alignment of people will be dependent on such things as the leader's credibility, the leader's track record regarding previous and similar communication (including consistency between words and action), the content of the proposed vision, and the integrity and trustworthiness of the leader (Ibid.). If the leader succeeds, he will have ensured the movement of people in the right direction.

The third task is to ensure that people do, what they are supposed to do. The manager does this by control and problem-solving. This implies that the manager must set up systems of control which detects deviations from the plan by comparing the system behavior with that plan (Kotter 2001: 93). The leader should contrary conduct this task by motivating:

...for leadership, achieving a vision requires *motivating and inspiring* – keeping people moving in the right direction, despite major obstacles to change, by appealing to basic but often untapped human needs, values, and emotions (Kotter 2001: 86, original italic).

Kotter advocates that the leader should tap into the unexploited needs by 1) articulating a vision that resonates with the listeners, 2) provide guidance to support employees in the realization of the vision and 3) show recognition (e.g. in form of rewards) when appropriate (Kotter 2001: 93). This, Kotter suggests, will in turn ensure that “the work itself becomes intrinsically motivating” (Ibid.).

In summary, Kotter proposes the following differentiation between the action systems of the manager versus the leader:

Table 1

Task	Manager's action scheme	Leader's action scheme
Deciding what needs to be done	Planning and budgeting: Deductive short time planning	Setting a direction: Identify best path, and suggest an alternate future by providing vision and strategy
Creating networks of people to accomplish the agenda	Organizing and staffing: Designing human systems, which can achieve the targets of the plan	Aligning: Communicate the vision and ensure buy-in, to get people moving in the right direction
Ensuring that the work actually gets done	Controlling and problem-solving: Detecting deviations by comparing the plan with the system behavior	Motivating and inspiring: Provide guidance and recognition to energize employees and help them overcome challenges

Kotter proposes that good management is important, and has become so especially as a consequence of the emergence of large organizations. Due to the vast and increasing complexity, good management is supposed to instigate a sense of predictability and stability by coping with this complexity (Kotter 2001: 86). Simultaneously, leadership has become of paramount importance in order to push the organization forward, in a world where status quo or mere marginal development is not enough to stay competitive (Ibid.). Thus according to Kotter, management and leadership in correlation respond to the challenges facing contemporary work life: By organizing and systematizing, management responds to the concrete challenges of instigating a sense of stability in an ever-changing world, and leadership on the other hand responds specifically to that ever-changing world by instigating change and preparing employees for that change. These different challenges should be responded to by acknowledging the complementarity of the two action systems of management and leadership. Kotter therefore states that the one is not more important than the other, or rather that leadership is not *necessarily* better than management, and certainly cannot be a substitute for management (Kotter 2001: 85-86). Successful companies are thus capable of succeeding in both of the contradictory systems of action; that is, are able to instigate and prepare for change (through leadership) and simultaneously ensure a sense of stability (through management). This distinction does not demand a distinction between the subjects who are to carry out the action systems, and Kotter proposes that companies are right in disregarding literature which refuses

the possibility of managing and leading concurrently; he advocates that with the right grooming, leader-managers will arise, capable of carrying out both action systems (Kotter 2001: 86).

When analyzing Kotter's propositions presented in the article, a self-sustaining, circular argumentation with deterministic connotations seem to lurk underneath. Kotter begins his reasoning by referring to the external business environment which has become increasingly change-demanding. In order to overcome this challenge he proposes a specific action system to be carried out as leadership, and states that organizations should strive for fostering an environment, which elevates more people to become leaders: "The more that change characterizes the business environment, the more that leaders must motivate people to provide leadership as well" (Kotter 2001: 93). As such the action system of leadership is the one which responds one-to-one to contemporary challenges. Management in turn becomes sort of a bi-product. That is to say, the action system of management does not have the objective to respond to the challenges but rather to function as a remedy for the effects caused by the leadership objective. As thus it can be derived, that the more the environment demands change of businesses, the more leadership must provide that change, and the more management will be demanded as well. Thus the action systems are not only different and complementary as Kotter states. They must also be considered as reinforcing one another. That being said, a subsequent point must be stressed: As leadership, and not management, is the action system which responds directly to contemporary work-life challenges (according to Kotter), it follows that leadership is what should be strived for, by all. This is also explicated by Kotter himself, as he concludes his article by expressing what, in his opinion, should be considered the true act of leadership:

Just as we need more people to provide leadership in the complex organizations that dominate our world today, we also need more people to develop the cultures that will create that leadership. Institutionalizing a leadership-centered culture is the ultimate act of leadership (Kotter 2001: 96).

When zooming in on leadership itself, this too becomes self-sustained, as indicated by the quote; the more the environment is characterized by change, the more leaders must make others capable of leadership by creating opportunities and an environment, which fosters more leadership by creating more leaders (Kotter 2001: 95-96). Since the objective of the leader is to instigate even more change, the result of this process enhances the change-character of the business environment, which then again will increase the demand for more leadership; and as such the self-sustaining spiral is established. This conclusion will at least be reached, when it is acknowledged that businesses are not closed entities secluded from the business environment, but an active part of it (hence what is produced within a business also becomes part of the business environment).

In conclusion: Following Kotter as presented, leadership is considered the solution to all problems arising from the state of the world, regarded as ever-changing and complex. Whereas Kotter claims the equal importance of the two action systems, he emphasizes the necessity of leadership. It may be conjectured that he does so, because he considers the ontological state of the world (i.e. being ever-changing) to *demand* leadership as a necessary condition. As such, the value of leadership is placed beyond question. Since 1990, where Kotter first published the article “What Leaders really do”, an abundance of leadership theory has arisen, which focuses on the change-oriented and transformational aspects of leadership². The vast majority of this theory is produced by scientific methodology, most of which is founded in the discipline of psychology. Suze Wilson has estimated that no less than 80 % of contemporary leadership theory falls within this category (Wilson 2016: 21).

Having now provided one reading of the notion of leadership, the following paragraph wishes to counter this understanding by presenting a critical reading of mainstream leadership theory and thus bringing leadership back into questioning.

3.2. Thinking differently about leadership

The purpose of the work of Suze Wilson³ has been to illuminate the need for thinking differently about leadership (hence the title of her book: “Thinking Differently about Leadership – A Critical History of Leadership Studies”, 2016). Wilson experienced in her former capacity as General Manager in a large organization, how increasing demands to her as a person and as a leader, made it impossible for her to deliver in all expected respects simultaneously (Wilson 2016: 3). This made her wonder whether current ideas about leadership ask too much of leaders and simultaneously make employees too dependent on leaders (Wilson 2016: 4). She realizes through her research that these questions are not answered; in fact they are not even posed, in mainstream theory. Wilson is therefore concerned with confronting the way scholars and practitioners have grown confident in the idea of leadership, as the potent solution regardless of the problem (Wilson 2016: 1). Wilson suggests that this confidence has grown as a result of the scientific methodologies, based mainly in psychology, which are most commonly applied in mainstream theory production (Wilson 2016: 17-19) and thus one of her main objections towards mainstream theory is this tendency; namely the adoption of scientific methodologies, which is expected to generate authoritative

²To exemplify this, a Google scholar search from July 8th shows that from 1940-1990. 2810 results come up when searching “transformational leadership”. In comparison, “transformational leadership” gives 133.000 hits in the period from 1990-2017. (www.scholar.google.dk 1; www.scholar.google.dk 2)

³ Suze Wilson is currently senior lector at Massey University and has a doctoral in philosophy and management (www.massey.ac.nz)

results. What the scientific methodologies and the discipline of psychology offer is the testing against hypothesis and models, underpinned by a positivist epistemology. By means of e.g. surveys and statistics, psychological contribution to mainstream theory production often touch on subjects such as motivation, behavior and personality (Wilson 2016: 20-21). This type of measuring e.g. patterns of behavior is however ill suited to cope with the broader social context in which leadership is placed (Wilson 2016: 21). As such, several issues concerning leadership theory goes largely unchallenged.

In order to confront the mainstream confidence in the powers of leadership, Wilson adopts a Foucauldian approach to investigate the historicity of the discursive regimes which have dominated at different times. By reviewing discursive regimes, Wilson adopts a constructionist approach to research by holding that language is constitutive of reality, and that critical analysis should concern itself with analyzing discourse (Wilson 2016: 8). Discourse in this view comprises the combination of language and the practices associated with it. This forms the discourse; and is considered a discursive regime, when it comprises “a particular way of ordering human activity” (Wilson 2016: 8-9). It is by this approach Wilson proposes a critical reading of existing leadership theory (Wilson 2016: 3).

3.2.1. How we got here - The course of leadership theory development

According to Wilson, there is general agreement about different paradigms of leadership theory having dominated at different times (Wilson 2016: 102). These shifts in paradigms are not to be understood as clear-cut events, where one paradigm has substituted the previous from one day to another. Rather the dominating ideas within the different paradigms have gained footing during course of time, and, Wilson proposes, in response to historical events and shifting problems (Wilson 2016: 101, 115). Yet, for pedagogical reasons the paradigms are often presented as sequential and separate, and this form is adopted in the following.

Since the Second World War, three leadership paradigms have dominated (Wilson 2016: Chapter 6, Barley & Kunda 1992: 372-384). At this time, a shift occurred in the general, scholarly approach to leadership. From the 1940's and onward, leadership theory narrowed in on managerial leadership understood within an organizational framework, namely as work-place leadership (Wilson 2016: 122, 163). Following the narrower scope on managerial leadership, the role of the leader came to be understood as a manager-leader. During this development, a shift also occurred within managerial thinking; scholars were to a large degree moving towards a human-oriented perspective, leaving behind practices focused on a Taylorist

approach relying on control⁴ (Wilson 2016: 116). According to Wilson, the first paradigm within this line of development, sprung from behavioral theory in the 1940s, and focused on the specific behavior-patterns of managers (Ibid.). Under the paradigm of behavioral theory, the subjectivity of the specific individual was regarded irrelevant. The good leader was understood to be he who behaved in a certain supervisory manner, which was proposed to apply to all sorts of situations (Wilson 2016: 118). This rendered the idea of leadership character- and context independent. By the beginning of the 1950s, specific patterns of supervisory behavior had been articulated. The first was termed 'consideration', referring to the need for respectful and friendly behavior on the manager's part, towards his employees. The second was 'initiating structures', referring to the supervisory behavior of creating optimal, organizational working-structures by which he should guide the employees. With this discourse, employees came to be understood as dependent on supervisors/leaders for both support and guidance (Wilson 2016: 118). The conception of leader-like supervisory behavior was by then expected to include not only a focus on the organization as such (represented by initiating structures), but equally behave in a human-oriented manner (represented by consideration) (Wilson 2016: 118). It was furthermore during this period Abraham Maslow proposed his theories of self-actualization⁵ (Barley & Kunda 1992: 275), most widely known for his hierarchy of needs. This development also lent inspiration to the paradigm's notion of leadership. In conclusion, the leader was under this paradigm expected to pay equal attention to capital and labor, and to know how to reconcile these interest (Wilson 2016: 122). As such, leadership theory of this paradigm, acknowledged the two interests as being distinct from each other.

The behavioral approach to leadership did not last long, as it became clear that the behavioral recipe of supervisory potential did not deliver across contexts (Ibid.). As it faded, a new paradigm focusing on exactly context arose. Whereas behavioral theory promoted a character- and context independent view on leadership, the subsequent paradigm took opposition and proposed the ideas of situational and contingent leadership in the mid 1960's (Wilson 2016: 125). Now, the leader was identified based on his preferred behavior and the extent to which this behavior matched the specific situational factors, such as an organizational need for e.g. autocratic or democratic leadership approaches (Wilson 2016: 126). With this new focus, a shift occurred with regards to researchers' contributions; from providing "one size fits all"

⁴ This refers to the ideas of scientific management proposed by Frederick Taylor, which includes the principle of transferring all power and responsibility to the manager (i.e. control), so that the manager should do the thinking and deciding, leaving the worker to implement and to the 'doing' (Morgan 2006: 23).

⁵ The theory of self-actualization was first presented in his article "A Theory of Human Motivation" in 1943. Later, in 1954 Maslow elaborated more comprehensively in "Motivation and Personality" (www.en.wikipedia.org)

recipe" (Wilson 2016: 127), to a contingent approach, where different researcher would propose different courses of action for different situations (Ibid.). The good leader was by then regarded to be the person who could assess the situational setting, diagnose challenges and possible resistance amongst followers within a given context, and in turn be able to respond to this situation, with proper and due diligent behavior (Ibid.). This was followed with an authorization to, in Wilson's words, "reach much further into the minds of followers, to colonize their thinking more completely and to enhance their productivity" (Wilson 2016: 128). As such the discourse of this paradigm raised the status of the leader, compared to the previous paradigm, as being in "possession of sophisticated diagnostic and decision-making skills deployed responsively" (Wilson 2016: 131).

Compared to the presented aspects emphasized by Wilson, Stephen R. Barley and Gideon Kunda provide additional perspectives on the paradigm. In their acknowledged and cited⁶ article "Design and Devotion: Surges of Rational and Normative Ideologies of Control in Managerial Discourse" they place their emphasis on the aspects belonging to the contingency paradigm slightly differently. According to them, the situational/contingency paradigm promoted a rational ideological⁷ approach to leadership, where "[...] with an appropriately analytic orientation and knowledge of contingent relations, managers were led to believe that they could consciously design more effective firms by manipulating structures and decision processes" (Barley & Kunda 1992: 377-378). Their study proposes that the managerial paradigm of this period provided explicit discursive antipathy towards the previous human relation perspective, as the rhetoric of the new paradigm was preoccupied with advocating systems rationalism (Barley & Kunda 1992: 379). An example of this more rationally oriented aspect is the substitution of Maslow's theory of self-actualization with "motivational schemes grounded in rational calculation and "cognitive decisionmaking"" (Barley & Kunda 1992: 378). Barley and Kunda propose that the discourse of this paradigm was not only shaping an elevated status of the leader, but simultaneously proposed that the leader, if only he/she understood organizational systems, did not have to concern himself with details, and was thus able to handle any organizational problem he encountered (Barley & Kunda 1992: 380).

In summation, the paradigm of situational and contingency leadership provided a vast variety of solutions in order to accommodate the now acknowledged differentiations between situations and across contexts. Yet, as Barley and Kunda presents, the complexity of leadership which arose with this paradigm (in moving from a two-patterned behavior in the previous paradigm into a paradigm with an open-ended amount of

⁶ Cited more than 1500 times as of July 25 (www.scholar.google.dk 3).

⁷ Ideology is here to be understood as "a stream of discourse that promulgates, however unwittingly, a set of assumptions about the nature of objects with which it deals" (Barley & Kunda 1992: p. 363).

situations), could be managed by rational and systematized modeling, and with this approach the leader was able to become the diagnostician he was supposed to be.

According to Barley and Kunda, the paradigm faced challenges in the 1980s (Ibid.), and they state: “Thus, in guise of social and economic change, managers found themselves confronting problems for which systems rationalism seemed ill-suited” (Barley & Kunda 1992: p. 380).

3.2.2 New Leadership – the paradigm of today’s leadership theory

Finally, the foundation to the current paradigm of new leadership was laid out in 1978. Like Barley and Kunda, Wilson too, proposes that this new paradigm gained momentum in response to a world characterized by transformation and change (Wilson 2016: 133). Following such events as the Vietnam War and the oil crisis, the trust in leadership as hitherto conducted in America had diminished, and thus paved the way for a new paradigm to come into being. The foundation to this new paradigm was laid out by political scientist James M. Burns, published in 1978. Burns contributed with a work-place independent account of leadership, which took as its point of departure a need for transformational change. According to Burns, leadership was to be understood as something arising from the natural way the human psyche works, and thus advocated leadership to be concurrently an ideal of psychological workings and as necessary in a contemporary societal context (Wilson 2016: 134-135). With regards to the content of leadership, Burns regarded the leader as one with highly developed moral abilities, capable of instigating change and transformation in and amongst his followers (Wilson 2016: 133). According to Burns, the most important task for a leader was to instigate change (Wilson 2016: 134). In the characterization of the relationship between the leader and the followers, Wilson quotes Burns’ work in characterizing the relation as being: “not only of power, but of mutual needs, aspirations and values” (Wilson 2016: 133). Thus, in conceptual opposition to the notion of a power-relation where the leader is connected to the follower through ‘ruling and obeying’, the idea of mutuality was added to highlight the co-dependence which was proposed to exist and affect the relationship. Leadership came to be understood as emerging from and returning to the needs of the followers, and thus the follower under the discourse of this paradigm can be said to have received an anchoring status. Along those lines, Burns also assumed that followers were able to choose between leaders, change or entirely withdraw support, if a leader showed behavior or made choices which did not correspond with what was deemed acceptable (Wilson 2016: 134).

The leader came to be understood as someone capable of leading followers to their self-actualization, referring to the hierarchy proposed by Maslow, now reintroduced by Burns into leadership theory (Ibid.).

But the leader was also in his position understood to outlive his own potential. Wilson sums these points up by stating that: “leaders are understood as persons driven to express themselves through leadership, while followers are understood as persons whose potential can only be released through the leader’s influence” (Ibid.). In this manner of speaking, the leader and the follower were by Burns considered to be co-dependent; the one cannot reach his or her potential without the other.

Amongst the most prominent people within mainstream leadership (specifically transformational leadership) theory to follow up specifically on Burn’s foundation was Bernard M. Bass (Wilson 2016: 135). Bass developed a framework suitable for workplaces, where the notions of transformation and leadership processes combined was proposed to provide *transformational leaders* who could “achieve the dramatic changes in performance now positioned as being the true value of leadership” (Ibid.). To achieve these changes in performance, Bass’ framework comprises four transformational constituents, including *Intellectual Stimulation*, *Individualized Consideration*, *Inspirational Motivation* and *Idealized Influence* (Ibid.). Reviewing these constituents make it possible to analytically place Kotter in this line of thinking, as his proposed leader action system, resembles Bass’ idea of transformational constituents; the following table sums up their similarities:

Table 2

	Transformational constituents	Leader’s action system
1	Intellectual Stimulation: The leader’s ability to innovate and generate new ideas, by which he may challenge the status quo way of thinking	Task of inductively analyzing patterns to propose an alternative future, which can challenge the status quo
2	Individualized Consideration: The capability of the leader to acknowledge everyone as a unique individual, and always encouraging individual growth	Creating environment which elevates the employees (by encouraging growth)
3	Inspirational Motivation: The leader’s ability to set forth and promote invigorating visions and goals and to obtain support for these	Setting a direction and motivating employees to move in the proposed direction
4	Idealized Influence: The way, in which the leader presents himself as a role model, whose example is worth following	Aligning people, which will only succeed if the leader is trustworthy and presents himself as someone others would want to become

Bass' four constituent elements further emphasize the anchoring role of the followers first proposed by Burns; hence the follower is granted an important role in Burns' as well as Bass' theory. The role of the employee was as such combined with the role of the follower as portrayed in the theory of Burns. This pivotal development within leadership theory, first proposed by Burns and elaborated by Bass in a workplace context, has been followed up by the idea of 'the cultural turn' (Costea et al. 2008: 666). This term captures the way in which the subjectivity of employees were placed at the center of leadership theory, and furthermore supports the notion presented by new leadership theory, of human beings being considered the most valuable resource, or asset, of an organization (Costea et al. 2008: 665-666). Hence the leader should appropriately nurture, inspire and transform to full potential, the organizational resources made up by the employee-followers. It is important to notice here, that the idea of a cultural turn does not imply a revival of the behavioral distinction between organizational goals and human consideration. Rather, the notion highlights the importance of leading *on* the subject. In behavioral theory, the subjectivity of the employees was not important, as has been presented, since the paradigm concerned itself with behavior rather than subjectivity. It is furthermore mentioned by Costea et al. that the cultural turn emphasizes how "human subjects are exhorted to expand and intensify their contribution *as selves* (as 'human resources') in order to enhance production, maximize value, thus leading the organization to success" (Costea et al. 2008: 666). This runs contrary to the idea of behavioral theory, where human consideration was considered of *equal* importance to economic interests, hence not as a means to enhance organizational success.

Bass' four transformational constituents, was assumed to be carried out by managers, who from the nature of their position held a transactional relation to their employees, consisting of their powers to promote, fire, reward and sanction employees. According to Wilson, this move is to be understood as a combination of the moral authority of the leader with the formal authority of the manager. Wilson emphasizes in this context her term which captures this tendency; 'manager-leader' (pointing to the combination of the two types of authorities). This terminology thus resembles the notion of the leader-manager, albeit the wording is reversed, presented by Kotter. The term is under the paradigm used to describe the leader, who is capable not only of managing formal authority but also capable of "inspire others through emotional appeals and intellectual stimulation and concerned also with the needs, views and development of individual followers" (Wilson 2016: 136). As thus, it provides content to the specific discourse under the paradigm. This conception is however a complex one. While the two types of authority melted together in the notion of the leader, the combination simultaneously created a positioning of the 'leader' as superior to

he who is merely a 'manager' understood as one only practicing formal authority (Ibid.). The differentiating between the manager and the leader thus becomes of the following sort: "while one might hold managerial authority, it is only through engaging in 'visionary change', which 'transforms' others that one's credentials as a leader can be firmly established" (Ibid.). To emphasize this point, Wilson quotes Bennis and Nanus, who support the superiority of leaders by stating that "managers are people who do things right while leaders are people who do the right thing" (Ibid.). Thus, Bennis and Nanus praise the role played out by the leader in contrast to the manager. On the other hand, scholars such as Henry Mintzberg agrees that a combination of authority is in order, yet criticizes the idea that the manager is the one doing things right and the leader is the one doing the right thing. Rather, Mintzberg argues, managers should lead more, and more importantly leaders should manage more:

Have you ever been managed by someone who didn't lead? That must have been awfully discouraging. Well, how about being lead by someone who didn't manage? That could have been much worse. How is such a "leader" to know what's going on? (www.mintzberg.org).

In his opinion, too much focus is placed on leadership to a degree where the more concrete aspects of management are neglected. By concrete aspects, Mintzberg refer to those tasks which are conducted 'on the floor', between and amongst employee (Ibid.), and thus it could be suggested that 'concrete aspects' refer to the actions which Kotter placed within the managerial action system (cf. paragraph 3.1). On the face of it, it thus seems that Mintzberg disagree with Kotter. The latter emphasizing the difference between the two, and the former proposing an end to the distinction. Two analytical points may be conjectured from here:

Firstly it may indicate that a change has occurred over the course of time. In 1990 Kotter's article was published the first time, in which he states that most U.S Companies at that time was under-led and over-managed (Kotter 2001: 85). Then 25 years later, Mintzberg criticizes the inverse tendency by stating:

It has also become fashionable to complain that we are being over-managed and under-led. The opposite is now a greater problem: we have too much heroic leadership and not enough engaging management. We need to recognize that some of the best leadership is management practiced well, also that anyone with ideas and initiative can exercise leadership. (www.mintzberg.org).

Secondly, an analytical point can be drawn from the seeming difference between Kotter and Mintzberg, visible in the quote. At first glance it seems as if Mintzberg is proposing what Kotter discourages, namely that leadership may be substituted by great management practiced well. Yet, when reading the two quotes by Mintzberg in combination, it becomes more plausible that Mintzberg simply understands management and leadership to be essentially compatible and in need of fusion. In this interpretation, he is in alignment with Kotter's notion of a leader-manager, the idea termed in reverse wording by Wilson (i.e. manager-

leader). Thus, the seeming disagreement stems from the emphasis of the leader as superior to a manager, yet simultaneously strengthens the fusion of the manager and the leader into a manager-leader. Whether one agrees with one or the other, this disagreement visualizes that even across differences the manager-leader should entail a notion of the leader as someone *capable* of representing and practicing moral and formal authority concurrently, and thus is supposed to be able to both lead and manage.

The transformative potential which new leadership promises extends according to Wilson (and the proponents of the paradigm) further than what has usually been considered as residing within the sphere of a workplace. The 'new' leader is expected not only to inspire by emotional appeals, but also to affect and instigate change in the follower's beliefs systems, e.g. regarding personal aspects such as religion, ideology, sense of moral and human nature as such (Wilson 2016: 136). As opposed to situational/contingency theory, in which follower's personality was mostly regarded as potentially disruptive (Wilson 2016: 137), the new leadership paradigm proposed that "followers are expected to 'transcend their own self-interest for the good of the group, organization, or country'" (Ibid.). This quote indicates the focus on follower's potential, which may be unleashed with the intervention of the leader.

Hence, the fulcrum of the paradigm of new leadership is the leader's superior ability to instigate change, e.g. by guiding and transforming his followers to fulfill their full potential and gain self-actualization, and by motivating and persuading (by appealing not only to facts, but to emotions and values as well) to push visionary goals. In short; the leader is capable of, and expected to "shape others' reality, values and beliefs" (Wilson 2016: 138) with the goal at heart to avoid and fight back against stagnation, to ensure constant, transformational change.

4. A critical take and a methodological discussion

As shown in the literary review, new leadership proposes a leadership paradigm focused on substantial change and transformation. It promises not only to meet the modern challenges of complexity and change, but also to work on the followers to unleash their potential and strive for self-actualization. The critical works of Wilson, on the other hand, chooses a different starting point for analysis. Rather than accepting contemporary mainstream theory, she reviews different paradigms and thus uncovers how the notion of the leader has had different defining characteristics. These characteristics vary from specific patterns of behavior, to comprehensive diagnostic skills, on to a charismatic approach to setting visions, and to leading followers into transformation and self-actualization.

The following paragraph will look critically at new leadership as a concept. New leadership, as presented above, offers a framework through which substantive change is both possible and praised. Yet several critical implications are neglected by contemporary leadership theory. The following paragraphs will present and discuss objections and issues identified by Wilson, firstly with regards to the paradigm of new leadership specifically and secondly against the methodology adopted by mainstream leadership theory. The final paragraph will end the chapter with a discussion of certain objections, which can be raised against Wilson's own methodology.

4.1. A critical review of New Leadership

The first important issue neglected by proponents of new leadership, is the potential dangers of the role, rights and responsibilities granted to the leader. As manager-leaders are considered to not only be capable of, but also obligated to instigate transformation in the minds of their followers, the manager-leaders are appropriated the right to enter deep into the psyche of their employee-followers. She argues that a discourse that *expects* leaders to alter the reality of their followers, simultaneously constructs an idea of the follower being inadequate. The problematic point, Wilson argues, is that the discourse of new leadership considers this to be a necessary condition for conducting leadership (and business in general) in a world where constant change is needed to stay competitive as a business (as argued by Kotter, cf. 3.1.).

However, viewing this tendency as an issue, rather than a necessary condition, leads to further challenges. The proposed relation between manager-leaders and employee-followers is by new leadership proposed to be in the interest of the followers, as they would otherwise be deprived of self-actualization. Yet, Wilson questions, how this kind of intrusion is not viewed as a "gross invasion" and "abuse of managerial

authority” (Wilson 2016: 139). On part of the latter, it must be contended that the working on other’s psyche cannot be conceptualized as an abuse of authority, when it is understood as part of that authority, as the responsibility of the leader. In that case, the same claim could be made against e.g. practicing psychologists. This point is overlooked by Wilson. The nuances which could potentially cause abuse are not investigated. E.g. if a psychologist attempts to plant false memories, this could be categorized as an abuse of power. Likewise, if the manager-leader used his moral authority to instigate immoral changes, this too would be abuse of power, since it deviates from the goal that legitimizes the intrusion - namely self-actualization. As such, it is not the power to work on another’s psyche which is an abuse. It is what is actually done and what could *potentially* be done with that power.

Since this discussion is not put forward by Wilson, her analysis makes the argument of intrusion more troublesome for the proponents of the paradigm. This is the case since the premise of the new leadership theory does not legitimize wherefrom or why the authority ‘to intrude’ is granted. Wilson formulates it as the leader simply being authorized to colonize the employee-follower by the discourse (Wilson 2016: 139). In doing so, autonomy and personal responsibility of the follower is neglected, and the path to self-actualization is placed in the hands of the manager-leader. As new leadership claims this to be a necessary condition, it follows that it is not questioned within the discourse. Wilson argues that this omission has brought about the continuing and persisting legitimacy of manager-leaders to assert their influence, and the lack of questioning has led to this legitimacy being naturalized (Wilson 2016: 147).

Furthermore, as Wilson presents the paradigm of new leadership, she holds that the discourse of the paradigm has constructed leaders who express themselves through others and leaders who strive to release the potential of the followers for them to become more like the leader. Consequentially Wilson states: “Leader success is thus here akin to reproduction by way of cloning” (Wilson 2016: 140). This authority of the manager-leader to influence even values, religion and ideology, has been naturalized according to Wilson (Wilson 2016: 147). Hence, it is no longer a matter for questioning, but rather considered a matter of fact.

Wilson herself questions how this view has become commonly acceptable. She suggests that this view has been made possible by a context “primed to see those in authority as fundamentally benevolent in intent and effect” (Wilson 2016: 138). This argument is, however, only halfway valid in light of Wilson’s own premises. In her presentation of the ‘process of formation’ of the paradigm, she emphasizes how leaders, such as e.g. J.F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, paved the way for a culture with trust in the moral capacities of leaders (Wilson 2016: 133, 137). Yet, she also points out how the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War “provoked a significant unease about the moral authority of leaders” (Wilson 2016: 137).

Wilson argues that this unease was addressed by new leadership with its focus on follower needs. Yet, this becomes a circular argument, where the unease regarding moral authority is solved by giving leaders authority to enter into the very core of the followers in the pretext of meeting the needs. To meet the followers' needs, the manager-leader is authorized not only to enter into the psyche, but also to alter the psyche. As such, it seems equally plausible to conjecture that employee-followers would place their trust in manager-leaders, not as a result of a previously established trusting environment, but perhaps because of the gains expected in form of individual self-actualization and larger scale transformation promised by the paradigm. This reasoning presumes that employee-followers do in fact trust their manager-leaders. And that the relation in question tends to be one of trust, and not e.g. coercion based on a power relation. A third explanation, proposed by proponents, focuses on a relational structure assumed to ensure trust, namely a symbiotic relationship. Wilson presents it as:

Leaders' ability and apparently fundamental need to change the beliefs, values and reality of others is said to be governed by a relationship of symbiosis that is to be formed between leaders and followers. This apparently will suffice to ensure that leaders do not abuse their position (Wilson 2016: 140).

How this symbiotic relation is supposed to come about is not at all clear; rather it is merely assumed to arise, as a consequence of the benevolent and impressive capabilities of the manager-leader to identify and meet the mutual needs of the followers.

A second issue concerns the prominent status of the leader, which Wilson considers completely out of proportions. What Wilson points to, is new leadership's claim that leadership holds the potential of solving all kinds of problems, and that 'New Leaders' are portrayed as almost super-humans. This places the manager-leader in a position well above any ordinary person, as he is exalted to be someone mundane people may aspire to become like. In addition, the manager-leader is portrayed as someone with an almost omnipotent ability to penetrate and understand complex issues too complicated for others. It is taken for granted, that on the one hand manager-leaders are benevolent, and on the other they are superior - in the sense that no follower will be able to meet his own potential without the intervening of a manager-leader. Put differently, the manager-leader knows the authentic needs of the followers more intimately than they do themselves, since they are viewed as being passive and inauthentic without the intervention by a leader (Wilson 2016: 141). This also has as a consequence, that were the manager-leader to succeed (or even just half-way succeed) the follower-employee would become deeply reliant on the manager-leader (Wilson 2016: 4). This again emphasizes the exalted status granted the New Leader.

An additional challenge arising from this tendency to view the manager-leader as superhuman is that it poses enormous expectations to the manager-leader. When summing up the rights and responsibilities of the manager-leader, it appears as if he is supposed to be a miracle worker, for whom nothing is impossible (Wilson 2016: 140). He is able to visualize alternative realities, and he is capable of inspiring, motivating and developing his employee-followers. In summary, “leaders function here in creative, strategic, operational and interpersonal modes with equal ease” (Ibid.). Thus, the issue at hand is not only concerned with the problems associated with the almost super-human characteristics ascribed to the leader, but also with the pressure laid upon manager-leaders.

A further analytical point to be made in this regards is one not addressed by Wilson. As presented, the discourse of new leadership expects of leaders to unleash the potential of followers, so that they may become more like leaders. Kotter even goes as far as claiming that the ultimate *act* of leadership is to institutionalize a leadership-centered culture (Kotter 2001: 96). As the discourse of the new leadership paradigm suggests as its goal to make everyone leaders (i.e. to elevate them by way of cloning), it can be conjectured that the enormous expectations to managers are also essentially in its final instance being placed upon the follower-employees. From here it may be derived that; (1) when leaders are considered to possess almost super-human abilities, and (2) the employee-followers are expected to elevate to the leader’s level, then (3) the extreme expectations to leaders are in its final instance also placed upon the employee-follower. As such, the employee-followers are not only subjected to become deeply reliant on their leaders; they are simultaneously being implicitly subjected to the same tremendous pressures which the discourse explicitly places on the manager-leaders.

The third and final issue concerns a two-fold paradox inherent in the theory of new leadership. According to the views held by new leadership theorists, *change* is considered the ultimate goal, as the solution to any possible problem. This change-orientation was in the analysis of Kotter’s theory (paragraph 3.1.) shown to produce a self-sustaining spiral, whereby a business context in constant change demanded increasing transformational leadership to instigate change in the organization, which would in turn influence the wider business context to become, again, increasingly changing. This problem is also noticed by Wilson. She illuminates how the change-driven discourse of the paradigm sustains itself, by “continuously problematizing modern society as being so complex, ever-changing and demanding that leadership is vital to the continued progress of human society” (Wilson 2016: 133). Instigating change thus becomes a “compulsory requirement” for the leader, as there is constantly something that needs to be, or merely *can* be, changed (Wilson 2016: 140). When looking closer at some of the more concrete expectations to this

change-objective, a paradox seems to lurk underneath: The open-ended idea of constant change seems to be in conceptual opposition to the goal of the leader to transform and elevate his employee-followers to be more like him (by way of cloning, as Wilson calls it (Ibid.)). By this is meant that 'becoming like someone' seems to be a dynamic, yet finite progression towards a stage where one can (at least) say, 'I am more like him today than I was yesterday', thus referring to 'him' as a somewhat set entity or essence one may aspire to become. This paradox is only resolved if it is assumed, that the manager-leader himself changes, so that the employee-follower won't ever be able to 'catch up'. If the issue is resolved in this manner, the consequence is that the task for the manager-leader to develop his employee-followers to become like him becomes impossible. And as such the change-objective renders the cloning objective impossible. On the other hand, it could be contended that a play of developmental 'catch up' would still let the employee-follower, at some point, reach a capability level, at which the manager-leader was at some point in the past. In this manner of speaking, there need not be a static essence of 'leadership quality' for the follower to pursue; there need only to be a trajectory of development, which he should follow. This would resolve the cloning problem.

However, then a new problem arises, inherent in the cloning-objective (i.e. the cloning objective has an inherent paradox, even if the change-compulsion is nullified).

Problematically, it seems that if followers become leaders, a proposition posed as the ultimate achievement of leadership, this would result in both leader and follower losing their distinctive subjectivity and role as well as their *raison d'être*. As a potential identity script for actual persons to deploy, the 'new leadership' discourse thus offers a precarious existence. (Wilson 2016: 141).

As Wilson states in her presentation of the paradigm, New Leadership is concerned with transformation and change and with the objective of reaching the potential of employee-followers and manager-leaders alike. As presented in paragraph 3.2.2., Burns proposed that a co-dependence exists between the two, so that one may only reach his or her potential by virtue of the other. This entails, that there must be a difference between the two, for each of them to exist. Hence, if the employee-follower does in fact manage to become a manager-leader, then their respective subjectivities disappear.

4.2. Problematizing Wilson's conclusions and methodology

4.2.1 Contesting the naturalization of leadership thinking

As mentioned in paragraph 3.2, Wilson's study presents a fundamental objection against mainstream leadership theory - namely an objection against the fact that the vast majority of leadership theory is based in scientific methodologies. Wilson's estimate that 80% of contemporary leadership theory is founded in psychology makes this very clear (Wilson 2016: 21). It can thus be argued, that although a psychological approach to leadership theory may be able to provide valuable contribution, the production of leadership theory runs the risk of becoming one-sided. Regarding the methodology applied in leadership theory thus far, Wilson makes the following summation:

Today, leadership scholarship is generally understood as according with the standards, values and norms of modern social science. Most crucially, this means it is understood as offering an objective assessment of independently verifiable evidence leading to findings that, while always provisional, can nonetheless be trusted as accurate, fair and reliable until proven otherwise. Knowledge generated via scientific methods is expected to be continuously improved, authoritative and to serve all of humanity, not just partisan interests. (Wilson 2016: 100)

In this quote, Wilson concludes that most studies of leadership theory have been carried out according to the standards of modern social science. Her study backs up this claim. As presented in the literary review, the paradigm of behavioral theory is based on the tradition of behavioral psychology. The situational and contingency paradigm is theorized by applying systems rationalism. And finally, the new leadership paradigm has arisen largely from the discipline of psychology. Each of these paradigms has proposed a new idea of leadership, which has been considered "accurate, fair and reliable" until proven otherwise. Wilson argues that this assumption has led to the naturalization of thinking about leadership as a universal fact of human nature (Wilson 2016: 2, 6). This view has been established partly because it yields true discoveries of what leadership really is, as a natural phenomenon and an ontological fact (Wilson 2016: 29, 143). This has subsequently resulted in a contemporary theorization of leadership, which does not concern itself with essential questions, such as whether current leadership theories ask too much of leaders and simultaneously make employee too dependent on leaders.

The quote also emphasizes the continuity of improvement, which resides in this scientific methodology of discovery. Wilson rejects this idea of improvement-continuity, since her study has indicated that the paradigms are more likely to have arisen as discursive regimes responding to contingent historical developments, rather than because of a 'scientific progress'. She is able to do so, because of her constructionist approach, where language is considered constitutive of reality, meaning that language isn't considered as descriptive of a pre-existing, objective reality, but rather as the thing which *construct*, and

thus constitute, reality (Wilson 2016: 8). Wilson asserts that rather than being an observable fact, leadership is a *social invention*. Her study indicates that as such, leadership has been invented and re-invented by discourse in many shapes and forms during time (Wilson 2016: 2). This point of view sets Wilson apart from mainstream theory in a matter of ontological conception; since it must be conjectured, that what Wilson contests, is the empirical realist ontology, which scientific methods have usually adopted.

By means of Foucauldian discourse analysis, and adoption of a constructionist approach to language and associated practices (i.e. discourses) as being constitutive of reality, Wilson has identified certain issues which have been deemed problematic in different times. She has proposed how different discursive ‘truths’ about leadership have emerged in response. As the above presentation and analysis of Wilson’s study reveals, there are certain pitfalls inherent in contemporary mainstream production of leadership theory; some of which arise from the scientific approach based on positivist epistemology mentioned by Wilson. Although her objections in this regard are comprehensive, the conclusions which she draws from her critical constructionist approach only scratches the surface. And her observations and conclusions themselves leave questions unanswered.

4.2.2 The unstable ontology of leadership

In opposition to the mainstream notion of leadership, as being a necessary condition and a natural fact of human life, Wilson uses her discursive analysis to conclude that leadership has an unstable ontology, rather than being a necessary answer to the ontological state of the world (as Kotter proposed, cf. paragraph 3.1). Wilson’s argument is that a fixed essence is nowhere to be found when considering leadership theory across paradigms.

At the level of basic ontology, while the Classical Greeks and 16th-century thinkers argued that leaders were rare, today the vast sums committed to leadership development programs rely on the claim that many people possess the potential and ability to lead. The prevalence of a phenomenon is a key ontological characteristic requiring *explanation* if we are to claim a scientific grasp of that phenomenon, so the shift in understanding demands our attention. (Wilson 2016: 172)

In this quote, Wilson admits that explanation is needed (as well as further research on the subject (Wilson 2016: 173), to account for the shift in the way leadership is understood. However, she still holds that the finding (i.e. that leadership potential changed from being rare to being everywhere), supports her conclusion, i.e. that “leadership is an unstable, contingent invention” (Ibid.).

This, however, does not seem like a sufficient argument. According to a common definition, ontology is “The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being” (www.en.oxforddictionaries.com); which entails that ontological questions are concerned with what the world is really like. What must be dealt with within basic ontology, concerns the necessary and distinctive characteristics of being (Lübcke 2010: 526). The understanding of leadership as practiced by a few compared to (potentially) many, is thus not a question of basic ontology. The question whether it *is practiced* at all (that is, the existence of leadership), is a question of ontology. But that is one which Wilson has shown to be true even across time; i.e. leadership *is practiced*, and *has discursive reality*.

The number of people potentially able to be leaders is a numerical question, not an ontological one. The only way this could be challenged, was if the number of people practicing leadership was regarded a necessary part of the definition of leadership. First of all, however, this would most likely turn into a very arbitrary discussion (e.g. do we think 5% or 37% have the potential to lead?). Secondly, what Wilson’s study has shown, regarding ontology, is exactly that the numerical potential for leadership is *not* stable or necessary across time. This however, does not render the ontology unstable; it only shows that it is not a necessary part of its characteristic of being.

When analyzing the quote along the lines of Wilson’s premises, another argument is possible - namely the argument that the *characteristics* has not been consistently prevalent, but rather changing. As her findings show, the phenomenon of leadership has changed. From being a matter of two-patterned behavior, independent of character and context, to be entirely a matter of context and ‘best fit’ between that context and particular characters. And then finally becoming a matter of new leaders as almost omnipotent beings, who are capable of all of that, which mere employee-followers are not. From this, Wilson could have more plausibly concluded that leadership is completely open for re-invention. It could be argued, that since the characteristics of leadership are unstable, then by extension so is leadership itself. This, however, could be challenged as well, since the behavior and persona of the leader are empirical questions concerning *the ways* of being leader - and not the *being* of leader itself. Although the characteristics of leaders are certainly different and could be termed unstable, they are not ontological, but rather empirical. Thus we can discuss the epistemological access to the different empirical embodiments of ‘leadership’, i.e. *ways of being leader*. But we cannot conclude anything definite about the ontological state of leadership, i.e. *the being of the leader*, from such studies.

This is to say, that the most Wilson can conclude from her findings is, that leadership has an unstable way of *showing* itself. Thus, even as the positivist epistemology does not explain leadership adequately, it also does not seem right to conclude that the ontology of the leader is decidedly unstable.

Along those lines, Wilson's conclusion seems to confuse epistemological issues for ontological ones; that is to say, she conflates what we *know* about leadership with what leadership really is. What she illuminates about leadership is more concerned with ways of being leader, than it is with the being of the leader; hence, the constitutive elements regarding the ontological being of leadership are left unexamined, as she solely focuses on the epistemological knowledge about ways of understanding leadership. Wilson also admits that Foucault himself sidesteps ontology (Wilson 2016: 224). In reviewing her book it seems that she follows his example. Instead, as presented, she focuses on the epistemic underpinnings, the knowledge of which we have of the world; hence her analysis is based in epistemology. She also does not assert explicitly a relativistic ontological standpoint, albeit this is the ontology which aligns with a constructionist approach to research. Based on this, it seems highly confusing that she draws conclusions as to the ontology of the leader, as the domain of ontology has gone largely untouched throughout her work.

Thus, current theory on the subject of leadership leaves two modes of reasoning. Either leadership is understood as an ontological necessity as a universal fact of human life, and as a necessary response to the ontological state of the world (following Kotter and mainstream theory in general). Or it is understood as being highly relativistic and open for re-invention in whatever shape and form wished for. As this discussion has illuminated, neither of the two propositions seem adequate: There is something left un-examined; something, which makes it possible to conceptualize the enduring idea of leadership as leadership, even if the ways of understanding leadership has varied.

4.2.3. Effects without cause

Besides confusing epistemological issues with ontological ones, Wilson also runs into problems with regards to her conclusions concerning the contingency of the production of leadership theory.

Based on her study, Wilson conjectures that leadership theory is completely contingent to issues deemed problematic in a larger context. This conclusion leads her to suggest that the continuing development of theory may be developed as one sees fit. What is required is just a new way of thinking about leadership. Following this it will become possible to establish new discourses; hence inventing new realities:

What my case studies reveal, then, is the highly contingent nature of the 'truth' about leadership. In response to various issues being seen as problematic, leadership scholars have repeatedly invented a particular response that they contend will address the issues of concern, referencing current values, norms, beliefs, epistemologies and methodologies so as to render their ideas relevant and plausible. This is arguably no bad thing: needs, values and norms change, and adapting our ideas about leadership in response seems a valid and desirable move (Wilson 2016: 161).

What Wilson explicates here, is exactly the contingent nature of leadership. She also focuses the conclusion on the invention of leadership. This overwhelming emphasis on the contingency (i.e. contingent invention and re-invention) has relativistic connotations, and seems to suggest that we may develop theory exactly to mirror what we value, with no further ado. This is also visible in the following quote:

I set out a flexible framework which can be used to invent forms of leadership uniquely tailored to specific circumstances and reflecting different norms, values and assumptions. (Wilson 2016: 9-10)

Taking the two quotes together, it can be suggested that leadership is completely contingent to issues deemed problematic. However, *when* something has been identified as problematic, it can be conjectured that this identification in turn determines the subsequent discourse response. As such it can be suggested that the discursive notion of leadership will be determined by extra-discursive externalities such as societal events and/or developments. The quote simultaneously indicates that development of new discursive realities are relativistic, in the sense that anyone can decide for themselves what should be deemed problematic and thus which shape and form leadership should take. This would in the outmost consequence result in a notion which would no longer have common meaning.

It can furthermore be suggested, that where Wilson's aim is to provide a framework for *thinking differently* about leadership, she runs the risk of re-inventing certain aspects of the situational/contingency discourse, rather than suggesting something substantially different. That is to say, that future productions of specifically tailored leadership theory (as Wilson proposes), may come to resemble the idea that researchers can (and should) propose different courses of action for different situations (cf. 3.2.1). This thought may be supported by Wilson's premise that discourses arise as *responses*: The behavioral theory was substituted by the situational theoretical discourse to deal with a contextual complexity, which the behavioral universal recipe of a patterned behavior was not able to deal with. It can similarly be suggested that Wilson proposes an invention of a 'new' tailoring discourse in response to new leadership, which is here likened to behavioral theory in its proposal of a universal 'one size fits all'. This comparison is conjectured, because new leadership "is here associated with change, reform and upheaval, with whatever is bigger, better, faster, stronger and newer, expected to conquer whatever is smaller, slower, weaker and older" (Wilson 2016: 139). As such, non-satiated change is proposed by new leadership as *always being* the appropriate recipe for good leadership, and it can thus be said to constitute a 'one size' which fits all.

As such, Wilson's study may be comprehensive, yet her conclusions lack conceptual coherence. What Wilson acknowledges and investigates are the epistemic underpinnings which make a certain 'truth' about leadership viable. In new leadership these underpinnings have been shown to comprise change-oriented

and constant developmental progress, which may be termed 'episteme of progress'. As such, her analysis provides an understanding of *how* certain discourses flourish, and are considered intelligible. Yet, the conclusions drawn by Wilson, do not adequately explain *why* one discourse, and not another, gains footing as responses. This is problematic if one aims to transform leadership theory in the future, and as stated in the quote above, this appears to be Wilson's objective. What Wilson is concerned with, is analyzing the effects of the discourses, and to do so she asserts "'structures of thought', or episteme, which make it possible for those 'truths' to be considered intelligible and plausible" (Wilson 2016: 223). Presenting this particular quote supports this discussion's claim, i.e. that rather than investigating the constituent components of the structures themselves, these structures are postulated as effecting the initiation of a discourse, which is *then* considered the object of analysis.

As Wilson draws from Foucault, it seems natural to search for support of these claims in criticism posed against Foucault. Such a criticism is found with critical realist Andrew Sayer in his article "Power, causality and normativity: a critical realist critique of Foucault" (2012). In this article, Sayer sets out to improve the theory of Foucault. Sayer does not wish to rebuttal Foucault's methodology, but rather seeks to fill in certain gaps (Sayer 2012: 179). First and foremost, Sayer notices how Foucault (and post-structuralists in general) attempts to avoid any notion of causation, yet often explains how certain effects have been produced. Sayer holds that *power* (a key concept within the Foucauldian framework and consequently in Wilson's work) albeit being ubiquitous and dispersed as Foucault claims, also presupposes causality and causal powers (Ibid.): "I argue that concepts of dispersed power actually presuppose a concept of power as a potential possessed by all objects. Foucault and followers reject causality in their explications of power" (Sayer 2012: 180). Although Wilson mentions that her analysis aims at showing *why* and *how* we have come to understand leadership (Wilson 2016: 10), she does not investigate to what objects the powers, which produce these understandings, belong. She rather asserts that effects exist in the form of discursive responses to societal and historical events and challenges. But she does not propose *from where* these powers are activated. Hence, she does not investigate the causality of the powers. As such, she does not explicate wherefrom and why the powers which produce the new discourses arises, she merely asserts that they do arise as effects (i.e. are caused).

To take an example from the prior analysis, it was proposed that Wilson implies that the New Leader receives legitimate authority to enter into the psyche of followers by virtue of the discourse's omission of the potential moral problems this may cause. I.e. she concludes that it results from the *lack* of questioning of this tendency (cf. paragraph 4.1.). Her attempt however, to propose an explanation turned out to be conceptual invalid. She proposed, on the one hand, that there was a lack of trust in leaders. And, on the

other hand, that the context was prone to view leadership as benevolent (Ibid.). She then ends up conjecturing that the underpinning episteme of progress, makes this legitimacy come about. She does not seem able to foster an explanation for *why* the legitimacy has gained a firm grip, as she does not explicate an analysis of the origins of powers involved in respectively formal and moral authority; she can do nothing but assert the discursive powers of the 'truth' about legitimacy. As such, she is also not able to adequately explain which objects future theory must deal with in order to bring about change in the notion of leadership.

Bringing Sayer into the discussion again, he states that "there is no such thing as power-as-such, just powers of concrete particulars" (Sayer 2012: 181). Sayer goes further and point out that the notion of power within a Foucauldian framework lack the opportunity to explain the *why* (which is the causality) of powers, because the theory asserts, rather than explains, that power is everywhere and comes from everywhere (Sayer 2012: 184-185). As such Sayer's critique can be applied to Wilson's study. On the subject of power, Wilson states the following: "Foucault conceives of *power* as being dispersed, potent and ever-present within the social system" (Wilson 2016: 229, original italic) and goes on in saying: "through deploying the Foucauldian conception of power in my analysis of scholarly discourse on leadership, I seek not only to expose its workings in the formation of claims to speak the truth about leadership but also to render the status quo more open to challenge" (Ibid.). When a Foucauldian understanding of power, as coming from everywhere without explanation, is adopted into an analysis of "the workings in the formation of claims", it seems fair to conjecture that Wilson has not even considered the causal explanations to be relevant (this may furthermore be supported by the fact, that Wilson does not use the word 'causality' in her entire book). Investigating the working *in* the formation simultaneously omits an explanatory analysis of the powers that brought the formation about. This trajectory of thought is therefore, hereby concluded by proposing that Wilson, like Foucault, focuses on the effects of power to a degree where the causality of the workings of power, as well as the objects which these powers pertain to, are overlooked.

What is important to notice in this context is that discourse is also by Sayer considered to be of power. Sayer fully acknowledges that the powers associated with discourse can bring about changes, by e.g. hindering or fostering change (Sayer 2012: 183). However, Sayer contends that powers of discourse are also causal powers, exactly *because* they may bring about effects. The discursive powers are, however, dependent on the condition of their situation (Ibid.). On terms of this premise, an analysis which is primarily concerned with the workings of power (understood as their effects) only provides half the picture. Consequently, an analysis of the constituent elements which make possible these powers as causes is needed.

According to Sayer, the tendency of focusing on the workings of power, instead of the origins of power, is by critical realists termed an actualist notion of power (Sayer 2012: 186). This implies that it is the actualization of power, which is of interest, and not the power's causal properties. This again means that it is the manifestations of power, and not the properties of power, which are considered relevant for analysis. The problem arising for the actualist view is, that it is not able to explain powers which are *not* activated. Sayer exemplifies this, by proposing that an actualist understanding of power cannot explain that an unemployed person has the power to work, since when being unemployed, those powers are not activated. It is from this analogy possible to compare Wilson's study with an actualist view on power, in that Wilson focuses her analysis on the *manifestations* of the discourses (which can be compared with the analogy's actualized manifestation of being unemployed). This claim can be further reinforced by referring to Wilson's suggestion, that the leader's authority to work on the followers psyche is given as a consequence of the omission of the problematization of this authority. Hence, the fact that the powers of problematization are not actualized, renders these powers non-existing and what is instead actualized (and consequently considered a subject for analysis), is the leader's moral authority and the follower's inadequacy. Thus, by proposing that Wilson adopts this actualist understanding of power, it is argued that she is not able to speak of powers which are possessed, but rather unexercised. This provides an indication for a possible, critical re-reading of the notion of leadership. It provides preliminary insights into why a Foucauldian, constructionist critique may not be adequately equipped to *explain* the notion of leadership as it has come to be developed. Perhaps the notion of leadership is not unstable, and maybe it has not been completely contingently invented and re-invented. Perhaps it is rather produced by powers, which have at different times been activated and at other times been dormant.

5. Concluding remarks: Issues left unexamined

Part One has contributed a presentation, analysis and discussion of two readings of leadership theory; a mainstream reading represented by John P. Kotter and a Foucauldian, critical reading represented by Suze Wilson. The presented content of Wilson's study furthermore made it possible to draw on additional knowledge of the mainstream reading by introducing Bass and Burns. The primary findings from Part One can be summarized as follows:

New leadership understands leadership as a necessary answer to the challenges arising from the contemporary, ever-changing state of the world. As such, leadership holds the promise of instigating change and transformation. The leader is expected to achieve change by unleashing the potential of their employees by leading on their subjects, by identifying and exploiting untapped needs, values and emotions. Hence, the expectation of leaders to instigate change concurrently regards setting visionary directions and working on the psyche of the employees as human resources. It has furthermore been suggested, that the internal logic of new leadership theory results in a self-sustaining spiral, where more leadership increases the change in the environment, which then demands more leadership. This was in the later discussion used as support for suggesting that new leadership, much like behavioral leadership, proposes a universal recipe for leadership; namely non-satiated change-orientation. Wilson has in opposition contributed a historical, critical reading, which has illuminated that leadership cannot comprehensively be understood as a necessary matter of fact, as it has taken a variety of shapes and forms during time. Instead, she proposes, leadership must be understood contingently as discursive paradigmatic responses to issues deemed problematic. With this offset, Wilson's analysis concludes that the discourse of new leadership constructs 1) inadequate employees, who are passively ripped of autonomy without intervention from the leader, 2) omnipotent leaders subjected to enormous pressure and 3) a cloning paradox, where the striving to make everyone leaders will result in a loss of both leader's and follower's subjectivity.

From the analyses and discussions provided in Part One, three overarching issues are left unexamined: Firstly, even though Wilson illuminates that the notion of leadership is not a necessary matter of fact, her subsequent conclusion that leadership has an unstable ontology, was shown not to be sufficient; that is, as Wilson makes her assumptions based on *ways of being* leader, the question of *the being* itself of leadership is so far left unexamined. Secondly, it has been suggested that Wilson is not adequately able to *explain why* the leader's authority to enter into the psyche of employees has been legitimized. By introducing Sayer's notion of the actualist view on power, the discussion suggested that Wilson does not analyze the origins of power, and is therefore left to *assert* powers rather than explaining their workings. Thus, the origins and

workings of moral and formal powers must be examined. The final issue which remains to be dealt with relates to the development of leadership theory. Although Wilson has made comprehensive arguments against the idea of *discovering* leadership as a natural fact, her alternative view that leadership can be invented as one sees fit, does not seem plausible either. As such, it may be possible to propose a critical re-reading of leadership theory, which places itself in-between a positivist methodology proposing determined outcomes, and constructionist methodology proposing relativistic outcomes.

Part Two

A Critical Realist Contribution

6.0. Metatheory – Critical Realism

6.1. The matter of Ontology

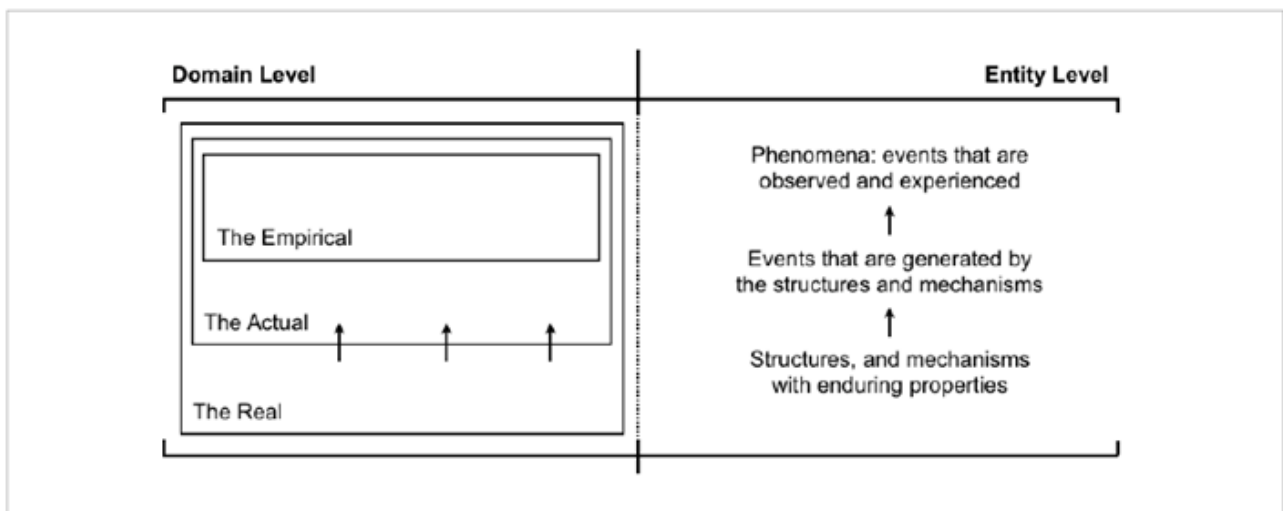
The ontological standpoint adopted in this Part Two of the thesis is critical realism (hereinafter CR), which was developed in the 1970ies by Roy Bhaskar, in his work “A realist theory of Science” (1975). The paradigm offers an alternative to positivism, empiricism and constructionism, which are criticized for being superficial and critically anthropocentric, as their sole focus is on human experience and observed phenomena, and thus gives priority to epistemology rather than ontology (A&S 2009: 39-40). CR provides a framework comprised of principles and ideas through which science is to be viewed, understood and practiced (Bhaskar 2011: 141); it emphasizes that science is a continuing activity in a persistent transformational process, where the goal is the production of knowledge about the structures and mechanisms, which generate the flux of phenomena in the world we inhabit (Bhaskar 1975: 17).

According to Bhaskar an erroneous tendency in Western philosophy, including the mentioned paradigms, has been to equate ontological questions with epistemological ones; that is, reducing questions *about the world* to *what we can know about the world*. This is by Bhaskar termed the epistemic fallacy (Bhaskar 1975: 16, Archer et al. 1998: xii). An example of this has already been pointed to above; it was suggested in Part One, that Wilson conflates epistemological and ontological questions and subsequently reaches the conclusion that leadership has an unstable ontology. With the vocabulary of CR, it can now be said that Wilson’s study falls into epistemic fallacy. As an alternative, CR provides a transcendental outline of an ontology which captures a conception of ontological reality as including our epistemological access to reality, albeit not reducible to it (Archer et al. 1998: xii). One of the main elements within this trajectory of thought, is that experiences and sequences of events, i.e. that which we have epistemological access to, is not alone constitutive of reality. Rather, in order to investigate social phenomena within open systems, researchers must interpret these phenomena transfactually, by searching not for events, but for “the activity of generative mechanisms and structures independently of any particular sequence or pattern of events” (Bhaskar 1975: 14). With this elaboration, it can additionally be said that Kotter too (as well as general mainstream leadership theory as presented) falls into the epistemic fallacy; by focusing on what leaders *do* he neglects what *enables* this doing.

The structures and generative mechanism are according to Bhaskar distinct from the events they generate, and these events are in turn distinct from concrete, occurring experiences. This distinction entails that the

world according to critical realists is differentiated and consists of three domains, termed the *empirical*, the *actual* and the *real* (Bhaskar 1975: 56). This differentiation is illustrated in Figure1 below. The domain of the empirical is comprised of what we immediately experience. Distinct from this, is the domain of the actual, which is greater than the empirical. Within this domain patterns of events transpire and occur, whether we experience them or not; that is with or without the recording of them (Danermark et al. 2002: 20, A&S 2009: 40). And finally, these two domains are separate from the domain of the real, which consists of the real structures and mechanisms *behind* events and experienced phenomena. This domain is non-transparent, meaning that structures and mechanisms are neither readily observable nor equal to our epistemologically access to them (Danermark et al. 2002: 20). It is these mechanisms which are considered generatively productive of social phenomena (A&S 2009: 40).

Figure 1: The ontological map of CR



(www.researchgate.net 1)

It is a further point that the domain of the real is stratified. This means that there are several layers of structures and mechanisms which are sorted in a hierarchy. Bhaskar terms these levels 'strata' (Bhaskar 1975: 169). A stratum indicates one layer of structures and mechanisms, which can be found to be generated by deeper-lying layers. In this manner, the strata come to be organized hierarchically, so that "each new stratum is formed by powers and mechanisms of the underlying strata" (Danermark et al. 2002: 60). Hence, when a researcher identifies that a mechanism is relying on a deeper level of mechanism(s), she is finding a new stratum of reality, which explains the production of the first.

This ontological map implies that there are different kinds of depth so to speak (Archer et al. 1998: xii): Firstly, a transitive dimension covers that, which we have epistemological access too; i.e. in the domain of the empirical and the actual (Ibid.). It is within this dimension that epistemic fallacy occurs, when the so-called empirical world (including the domain of the actual) is equated with the world as such, i.e. the ontological reality. In contrast, CR insists that science, whilst being socially produced, still has the potential of revealing real mechanisms and structures which operate independently of their discovery, this being the intransitive dimension (Ibid.). Put differently, it is by introducing this multilayered understanding of the world that CR avoids the epistemic fallacy, where the real and its causal mechanisms are reduced to the empirical, thus becoming one-dimensional (Danermark et al. 2002: 21). The distinction between a transitive and an intransitive dimension, has as a subsequent result that the knowledge we may have about the world (belonging to the epistemological, transitive dimension), will always be fallible; as such, a gap exists between what we can know about the world and the world as such (Bhaskar 1975: 16, Archer et al. 1998: xii).

The distinction between a transitive and intransitive dimension implies that transitive, social phenomena, such as leadership, are neither found (as discovery in positivism) nor constructed (as in constructionism) in the transitive dimension, but produced by intransitive, underlying, real mechanisms, which in turn produces that, which is knowable in the transitive dimension. This entails for scientific research, that the intransitive dimension becomes the object of social research, and the transitive dimension the immediate conception of that object (A&S 2009: 41).

With the introduction of intransitive structures and generative mechanisms, the paradigm shows that what and how we are as humans presuppose things which are apart from us, including a world that existed before *we*⁸ existed. If one turns to the field of natural science it is not difficult to exemplify an autonomous reality; there *are* structures which preexist epistemological knowledge about them, such as the physical impossibility of walking on water or through walls (Danermark et al. 2002: 18). When it comes to the social world the same kind of preexisting structures can be found. As examples can be mentioned social duties and practices such as e.g. using monetary assets to conduct trade and acquiring goods, or relying on leadership to solve the problems businesses are faced with. Constructionists would argue that these duties and practices are mere social constructions, dependent on our conceptions of them. CR does not deny the

⁸ 'We' indicates people living today. Within the natural science, the 'we' would have been substituted with 'human beings', but as the social world differs in that it cannot exist without humans, a temporal aspect is introduced: For all human beings, there are pre-existing structures in place, yet these structures have been produced by *previous* social action.

existence of social constructions, albeit differentiates itself from constructionism by holding that a phenomenon such as leadership, although socially produced and defined, is still very real (A&S 2009: 41); there *is* a thing such as a particular monetary system and leadership. In the same way as there *are* such things as buyers, sellers, unemployment etc. independently of how we speak and think of it. In summation, human beings don't merely construct society, because there are social structures which pre-exist them:

Society is both the ever present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is, conscious production, and (normally unconscious) reproduction of the conditions of production, that is society. One could refer to the former as the duality of structure, and the latter as the duality of praxis. (www.centreforcriticalrealism.com)

As this quote indicates, the notion of structures as necessary conditions for human activity should not be confused with a neglect of human agency. Society and human action are necessary conditions for each other; they influence one another in an intrinsically interrelated manner. As thus, it is human agency which holds the potential of changing the structures, thereby transforming the ontological reality. As Bhaskar puts it:

While we don't create society, we do re-produce or transform it. So when you're starting action, you always have to take the social structures as given, but in your action you can transform it. And for the most part, change in the past has been produced as a result of unconscious action, and we need today conscious action – and transformation. (Bhaskar, Interview 2013: min 7.11)

The relationship between real social structures on the one hand, and human agency (or praxis) on the other, is conceptualized by Bhaskar as the transformational model of social activity (Bhaskar 2011: 147). The idea is to emphasize the relation between the two; real, social structures function as necessary means (or media) for human action, however, they are also dependent on human agency, which reproduces *or* changes them (Ibid.).

Thus far it can be summarized that a critical realist approach to leadership theory will be concerned with identifying the underlying structures, which are the present conditions under which leaders and followers work; and which in turn may be reproduced or transformed by the actions taken by leaders and followers. As such, a critical realist approach places itself in between positivism and constructionism; it proposes a 'both-and' alternative to the two other paradigms' focus on *either* objectively true discoveries or relativistic discourse inventions. It can thus be preliminarily suggested that Kotter and Bass may be right in claiming a true reality of new leadership, however, only as present conditions, which Wilson can be considered right in asserting are changeable; albeit CR would advocate that this change does not come about as inventions out of nothing, but as transformation of the underlying structures.

6.2. Structures, Mechanisms and Causality

As the ontology presented above comprises a complex view of the world, the following paragraph will define and concretize the essential elements; specifically by elaborating on the content of the domain of the *real*.

According to CR, what is real is that, which has an effect (e.g. by affecting behavior or otherwise make a difference) (A&S 2009: 41). Within the domain of the real, it is possible to list at least four modes of reality; the material and the artefactual real, and the social and the ideational real (Fleetwood 2004: 32). In this division, the material real covers physically, material entities such as mountains, the weather and volcanos (Ibid.); the artefactual real comprises a synthesis between material, social and ideational reality, exemplified in e.g. computers and musical instruments (Fleetwood 2004: 34-35). The socially real concerns practices, norms and forms of economic and political organizations (Fleetwood 2004: 35, Bhaskar 1975: 196). Lastly, the ideationally real refers to language, discourse, and ideas; understood broadly, the ideationally real regards conceptual entities (Fleetwood 2004: 33). As such, it is important to emphasize that social structures, even if they can be the subject of discourse, are never reducible to discourse.

The most important elements within the domain of the real are *structures and mechanisms*, and for a comprehensive understanding of these concepts, a more elaborate characterization must be made, starting with structures.

“The objects have the powers they have by virtue of their structures, and mechanisms exist and are what they are because of this structure; this is the nature of the object. There is an internal and *necessary* relation between the nature of an object and its causal powers and tendencies. This can also be expressed as follows (Collier 1994: 43): ‘Things have the powers they do because of their structures. ... Structures cause powers to be exercised, given some input, some “efficient cause”, e.g. the match lights when you strike it’ This in turn is an example of a mechanism having generated an event.” (Danermark et al. 2002: 55).

What structures are, is derived from the natural necessities within the object or phenomenon under investigation. By natural necessity is meant the properties which constitutes the object or phenomenon, that is, the conditions which must be satisfied for it to exist in its particular form. Danermark et al. therefore define structures as “a set of internally related objects” (Danermark et al. 2002: 206), where the internally related objects are the properties. This relationality refers to what an object or practice is by virtue of its nature (Danermark et al. 2002: 55). It is essential to mention, that *natural* does not refer to some unchangeable essence within the object; rather what is natural and necessary is that, which in the particular moment “determines what a certain object is” (Danermark et al. 2002: 44). This in turn, as pointed to above, can be changed through the transformational model of social activity. When conducting

research within the social sciences, the relationality of interest is that of enduring relations, that be between individuals and/or groups, and their relations to e.g. artefacts (Bhaskar 2011: 147). As examples could be mentioned parent-child, manager-employee leader-follower; these relations share the characteristic, that one could not exist without the other (e.g. the leader cannot exist without a follower). As such, they form a necessary, symmetrically internal relation (Danermark et al. 2002: 46).

Generative mechanisms on the other hand, are defined as “What make something happen in the world” (Danermark et al. 2002: 206) and “nothing other than the ways of acting of things” (Bhaskar 1975: 14). Thus, when the structural properties are satisfied, the designated, generative mechanisms have the power to produce effects. As the quote above states, there is a necessary connection between the nature of a phenomenon and its causality; thus *causing* an effect refers to mechanisms ‘making something happen’, which emphasizes the causal powers emerging from the structural properties of a phenomenon. As such the question within this paradigm is not concerned with causal connections between events (belonging to the domain of actuality in the transitive dimension), but rather with that which makes something happen in the world, meaning mechanisms (belonging to the domain of the real in the intransitive dimension) (Danermark et al. 2002: 54). Hence in virtue of the structural properties, “water has the causal powers to quench fire, living creatures have the power to reproduce, people the power to speak and think” (Ibid.). When turning towards matters of social interaction, human beings also have the powers to create social structures, such as power- and domination structures. This can be exemplified with e.g. the creation of organizational hierarchies, where managers have the powers to promote or fire employees. This is also an example of something *socially* real, which conditions human activity: The way the paid labor market is organized today, conditions human activity to be carried out within the social structure between employee and manager.

An essential point to be made here is that the powers of the mechanisms in the structures exist whether they operate or not; the manager *has* the power to fire or promote the employee, disregarding the specific circumstance of him choosing to exercise either of these powers. Thus, the causality is not dependent on any specific pattern of events, such as the manager being able to promote, and the employee actually being promoted. Hence the causality according to CR is present whether A leads to B, or A does not lead to B as determined outcomes (Danermark et al. 2002: 55). As a result, ‘causal laws’ must within the paradigm of CR be analyzed as tendencies (Danermark et al. 2002: 56-57). Here tendencies may be regarded as powers, so that ascribing a power is to say that a thing will tend to cause something “under the appropriate conditions, in virtue of its nature” (Bhaskar 1975: 175). Using the manager as example, we can say that a

manager will tend to promote an employee who continuously delivers excellent results. However, this event will not occur, if other mechanisms inhibit its powers, e.g. budget constraints. Under such circumstances, the powers of the budget-mechanisms do not nullify the powers belonging to the structure; rather it overrules it in the specific event. Another way of emphasizing the explanatory power of viewing causal laws as tendencies is to look at another kind of structure, such as the aerodynamics which makes an airplane defy gravity; one would not say that the laws of gravity have been nullified when the airplane takes off, but rather say that other mechanisms have taken over (Danermark et al. 2002: 57).

That an object, or phenomenon, possesses causal powers even if they are not actualized (i.e. when A does not lead to B), is to say that the power emerging from a given structure is not nullified, even if A does not lead to B. Critical realists are thus able to acknowledge powers as respectively possessed but unexercised, exercised but not realized (e.g. when overruled by contesting mechanisms), and powers actualized (Bhaskar 1975: 18). When powers are actualized, they can be said to act factually (i.e. generating its effect), and when they are interpreted as enduring even if not actualized, they are said to act transfactually (Fleetwood 2004: 46).

In summation, when investigating explanations for certain phenomena, one must look beyond empirical observations and pattern of events, to seek out the underlying structures and mechanisms producing the phenomenon in question. The ontology of CR has thus been elaborated on as being structured as well as differentiated and stratified. Thus, with the hopes of identifying and explaining the causal powers related to new leadership, chapter 7 will conduct an investigation into the real structures and mechanisms which could be suggested as producing the observable characteristics of the phenomenon 'leadership, which has inspired the theoretical proposals made by Kotter (and mainstream theorists) and Wilson.

6.3. Common Objections

One objection which can be posed against CR regards the ontological gap which exists between the transitive and intransitive dimension. Critics points out that CR assumes a reality which exists beyond our knowledge of it, concurrently with assuming science to be fallible in attempting to capture this reality. In this manner of speaking, the paradigm simultaneously claims, that "Ontology is defined as both a fallible interpretation of reality and as a definitive definition of a reality beyond our knowledge claims" (Cruickshank 2004: 1). This however, does not constitute a contradiction. It is not the *ontology* that is defined as a fallible interpretation, but our knowledge about the ontological reality; and acknowledging

that we have limited epistemological access to reality is not the same as saying that there is no such thing as reality (Sims-Schouten et al. 2007: 105).

CR's claim about a 'definitive definition of a reality' is also met by a second objection by anti-positivists; namely that it resembles positivism (and its related discourses such as scientism, objectivism and foundationalism) (Fleetwood 2004: 30-31). This inappropriate understanding of *realism* as tied together with positivism arises due to the similarities in outlook (Ackroyd 2004: 149). This objection seems to propose, that because CR is content in using the term 'science' in labelling its practice, it must be like positivism. This is however, an erroneous conclusion, as CR is a distinct philosophical position and highlights ontology rather than epistemology, and hereby differentiates itself from positivism (Ibid.). As a result hereof, the critical realist's view of how things in the world may be explained is much different from positivism; where positivists conclude, "what can be observed is real", realists emphasize that "what is real is not given" (Ackroyd 2004: 150).

Support for disputing this second objection can furthermore be found by dealing with a third objection: As one of the main tenets under the paradigm of CR has to do with real structures said to condition human activity, it may by some be read with deterministic connotations. However, as powers are understood to exist transfactually, and the ontologically real structures are considered dependent on human reproducing or transforming them, there is no foundation for speaking of a positivist search for causal laws. As presented, CR talks instead of causality as tendencies, and explicitly refutes talking about laws in the social world (Fleetwood 2004: 31). As such, CR cannot justifiably be juxtaposed positivism. Its philosophy should also not be understood as bearing deterministic connotations, as causal powers are interpreted as acting transfactually, and as such a causal power cannot be equated with a determined outcome. Furthermore, determinism is overcome, when the transformational model of social activity is introduced, since this allows for actual change of the structures, which thus cannot be deterministic. In conclusion, when the specific transfactual understanding of causal powers is combined with the transformational model of social activity room is left for human agency and choice to instigate change.

7. A critical realist reading

The following will propose a third, critical realist reading, which will challenge the two readings proposed by Kotter, Bass and Burns as representing new leadership, and Wilson as representing a constructionist critique of new leadership. What these readings provide are respectively a notion of leadership as being *necessary* and determined by the ontological state of the world as being ever-changing, and a critique which in opposition argues, that leadership when analyzed historically is *not* necessary but rather completely contingent to the issues deemed problematic. As already pointed out in Part One, several inconsistencies exist between the existing theories' own premises and their conclusions, as well as contradictory tendencies internally in their conclusions. This has illuminated a need for improved theoretical development, and thus justifies as well as calls for new paths of explanation. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to attempt an outline of a new way of theorizing about leadership. This third reading wishes to place itself in between the existing theories, by reclaiming causality in a critique against the deterministic and positivistic approach adopted by new leadership scholars.

The first two paragraphs will investigate the ontological structures of leadership and the origins of the moral authority of the manager-leader to enter into the minds of their employee-followers; and thus attempt to respond to the question left unanswered by Wilson. To do so, the paragraphs will investigate the real structures and mechanisms which may be said to influence the production of the phenomenon of leadership. This will be done by abstracting the notions of the leader, the manager and the manager-leader, and their powers (i.e. generative mechanisms) of moral vs. formal authority.

The third and final paragraph will suggest how leadership theory may be analyzed as a causal sequence. This sequence, it will be proposed, will help explain how empirical manifestations of leadership are linked to the structural capabilities of leadership.

7.1. Real structures and mechanisms inherent in leadership

The first and foremost point of differentiation compared to the readings presented in Part One, regards the ontological status of leadership. The following paragraph will take this as its point of departure.

According to CR, something is ontologically real if it has an effect, by affecting behavior or otherwise making a difference. As such, leadership is real, not because it is a universal, observable fact of human nature, and not because we create it as we talk about it, but because it causes things to happen. This is to

say, that a manager-leader has powers, which when triggered, affects behavior and makes a difference. When something is real, when *it* has an effect, what is real cannot be that effect itself. This point is of interest, because this is what differentiates CR from both the positions represented by Kotter and Wilson. In the very beginning of Wilson's work, she states the following quote by Bass: "Leadership is not a 'mystical or ethereal concept'. Rather, leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices. Certainly leaders make a difference" (Wilson 2016: 1). According to Bass, leaders certainly make a difference. It must be conjectured that Kotter also is a true believer in the potency of leadership, as he strongly advocates that leaders should attempt to create environments which foster more leadership (Kotter 2001: 96). Despite her critical approach to mainstream leadership theory, Wilson too agrees that the current notion of leadership affects behavior. Her study however elaborates on this as being contingent to the invention of discourse, and as such, it is according to her *the discourse* of new leadership which certainly has an effect. Yet, this discourse, even if sufficient to instigate effects, is not necessary across times and contexts. What can subsequently be concluded is, that leadership, or leadership discourse has effects; whether it is understood through the specific actions taken by new leaders, or understood as constituted by discourse. Hence, in critical realist terms, new leaders are real, and by extension, so is new leadership.

What Wilson, Bass, and Kotter must also all agree on (derived from their respective positions), is that leadership is to be investigated by the observable practices it comprises. Bass states this explicitly in the quote above, and the presentation of Wilson's position regarding the real as being constituted by discourse, entail the same; when Wilson asserts that "we can only 'be' and 'do' that of which we can speak intelligibly, meaning possibilities for being and doing which cannot be spoken of intelligibly are rendered impossible and unacceptable" (Wilson 2016: 8), then people can only be leaders, and leadership can only be done, when we are able to talk about it, hence have an observable, intelligible language for it. This furthermore supports the claims of paragraph 4.2.3 that Wilson has an actualist view on powers; it is only that of which we can speak that can be at all.

What this analytical line of thought makes evident, is that Kotter, Bass and Wilson all agree that effects exist and should be investigated within what critical realists term the transitive dimension; and as mentioned, it can thus be argued that both positions falls into an epistemic fallacy (cf. paragraph 6.1). When leadership can be said to have effects, hence is real, it follows within CR that it has structures which preexist the acknowledgment of them; that is to say, e.g. that an employee does not need to be aware of the leadership practiced in order for him to be affected by it. Because of this ontological view, a critical realist reading would suggest that leadership should be investigated by digging through its constituting, ontological layers; hence, move beyond the theoretical surface discussion of observed phenomena and

conjunctions of events. Therefore, to get a better understanding of the causal powers which generates effects, an investigation into the real structures and mechanisms of leadership is required.

7.1.1. The structure of leader-follower

One constituent relation, which has transcended the historicity of leadership theory, is the one which exist between leader and follower. This is an example of *enduring relationalities*, as Bhaskar terms it (Bhaskar 2011: 147). As such, the foremost structure which should be of interest for leadership theory is the social structure of the leader and the follower. For the time being, this structure will be presented on its own terms; that is in its abstracted form, independently of workplace, and without the combination of the manager-leader. When investigating the notion of leadership, it is conceptually necessary to understand leadership as something which occurs, or is practiced, between two entities, namely leader and follower(s). As such, these two entities are necessarily related to each other and thus form an enduring structure. This is another way of saying, that one cannot be a leader without having followers, and followers cannot be so, without having someone to follow. This relation thus resembles the enduring structures of parenthood which comprises the necessary relation between a child and parent; they are each dependent of the others existence in order for themselves to exist and are therefore symmetrically, internally related (Danermark et al. 2002: 46). As such, it becomes possible to conclude that even across times and context, at least one consistent, real social structure may be found; that is the structure between leader and follower. In order for leadership to be practiced, it can be suggested that a third property must be satisfied within the structure of leader and follower, namely a shared purpose; something to lead towards. That is to say, the relational structure between the leader and the follower is also necessarily related to the ideational entity of a purpose. This can be derived by referencing to the theory of Burns. As he suggests, leadership should be understood as emerging from and returning to the needs of the followers, and thus the notion of shared, or mutual, needs, aspirations and values is pivotal for understanding leadership (cf. paragraph 3.2.2). This can be used to suggest that what binds leader and follower together (hence, enshrines their social position in relation to one another), is their shared aspirations, needs and values, which bundled together comprises their shared purpose. The notion of a shared purpose does not entail that conflicts cannot occur between follower and leader; it is certainly possible to conceptualize e.g. follower resistance to a leader's decision. However, as will be elaborated on below, conflicts arise as effects from causal powers belonging to the structure. As such, conflicts must be investigated in relation to the workings of the mechanisms, belonging to the relational structure between leader, follower and purpose. It is at this point possible to suggest that the idea of a purpose in relation to leadership is of a specific sort; it can be argued,

that the purpose must mirror the symmetrical and internal relation between leader and follower, which would mean that the purpose must be symmetrically shared and as such be the same for leader and follower. This is to say, that the leader's purpose and aspiration, is the same of that of the follower. An example of this could be found by referring to Martin Luther King, whose purpose was to break with racial segregation and discrimination (www.nobelprize.org); a purpose which his followers shared. This definition furthermore makes it possible to differentiate the influence practiced as leadership from other influential activities such as salesmanship or the practicing of psychology: The salesman must practice influence in order to *create* a need which was not there to begin with (had the need been there, the salesman would not need to practice influence); hence a shared purpose is not there prior to the exercise of influence. Regarding the psychologist, he would practice influence in order to accommodate the need of the patient, which would likely have no value to the psychologist. As such, a shared purpose is what makes leader and follower come together and make them enter into the social relation of leader-follower.

The way the purpose manifests itself may vary; it may be a matter of ensuring stability in times of crisis, to fight a moral battle, or it may be to ensure survival and relevance in an ever-changing world of high complexity. Following this line of reasoning, it must be explicated, that the purpose of leadership does not necessarily revolve around forward moving change such as Kotter and other new leadership proponents, propose. With the analysis conducted by Wilson it is clear, that leadership has had several different purposes throughout times and contexts, and thus a forward-moving idea of direction setting cannot be said to be necessary. What is however necessary, is that there *is* a purpose and a direction; something that binds leader and follower together, and sets them apart from other groups (such as salesmen and psychologists); but this direction may be forward-moving as well as retreating or enclosing⁹.

As such, the regularity found in leadership theory, comprise on the most generalized level, the enduring relation, which make out the structure of leader and follower. The context may be understood as the purpose of leadership, which will subsequently also contain the societal context, in which the purpose is relevant (e.g. segregated society, with unequal opportunities between races). The outcome will finally be what is observable (hence, practiced leadership). As the theory of CR claims that the final output is

⁹ Of recent examples can be mentioned the election of Donald Trump as the president of the U.S.A, who gathered a movement of followers under the slogan "Make America Great Again", thus referring to a direction of retreat (www.businessinsider.com). His political stand on trade and immigration furthermore gathers people in the direction of enclosing, by proposing a direction of enclosure from import by calling for "America to be more self-centred and inward-looking" (www.economist.com).

produced (or reproduced) by generative mechanisms inherent in the structure, these must be further looked into. This will be the subject of the following.

Following Burns, the authority of the leader is based in the overlapping values and interests between followers and the leader. As such, the generative mechanisms comprise the powers to instigate a common movement within the context and towards a purpose. The leader has the causal powers to decide how to act and to instigate influence and transformation in and amongst his followers, and the followers have the causal powers to follow or to refuse, if the leader's decision is deemed unacceptable. It can thus be conjectured, that the followers will *tend* to follow, where the leader's proposed cause of action resembles or mirrors the followers interests and values. Likewise, the follower will *tend* to withdraw their support to the leader, if the leader should conduct him-self in a manner which is considered unethical. As such, it is the workings of the causal powers of followers which have the potential to manifest itself as conflict. It could for example be suggested, that a follower sharing the leader's overall purpose may cause conflict by triggering his power of withdrawing support, in the context where the leader's suggests actions which the follower deem immoral (e.g. if the leader suggest that the purpose justifies violent actions).

Within the framework of CR, it becomes possible to conceptualize this kind of causality without claiming deterministic or necessary outcomes, because the powers only *tend* to produce a given outcome. Other generative mechanisms may play a role, e.g. by hindering a specific outcome. As such, a follower's power to withdraw support may be inhibited by contesting mechanisms. Lack of alternative communality (which could be due to e.g. discriminating structures), could as an example inhibit the followers real choice of support-withdrawal. That is however not to say that the power of resistance disappears. The transfactual interpretation of powers makes a critical realist theory of leadership able to conceptualize the powers of followers as existing, disregarding their actualization, and explains how the powers may lie dormant for as long as the contending mechanism is triggered. It could also be the case that a follower exercises his power of withdrawal, but that contesting mechanisms, e.g. contractual constraints, inhibit the actualization of the power; in this case, the power will have been exercised, but not actualized. As such, a critical realist reading makes it possible to conceptualize *and explain* how the powers of followers may be actualized and cause conflict, or be exercised but unrealized (e.g. due to contractual constraints), or possessed but unexercised (e.g. when discrimination structures makes alternative communality unattainable).

As such, it is possible to make the preliminary conclusion, that leadership does not have an unstable ontology, but rather an unstable, or contingent way of manifesting itself (within the transitive dimension).

By abstracting the notion of leadership, it is here suggested that the social structure, incl. its mechanisms, which produces leadership (i.e. the structure of leader and follower), is not only stable, but also a necessary property which makes leadership what it is, in an ontological sense.

The above discussion may not provide revolutionary new insights into the substantive notion of leadership. Rather, it contributes by re-focusing how to theorize about leadership. To exemplify, both Kotter and Bass focus their theories on the tasks and roles of the leader, and Wilson focuses on the effects (or expressions) of discourse and the function of this discourse. Having chosen this focus, Wilson goes as far as stating, that reviewing the powers involved in leadership is trivial and therefore not of interest to her:

Because leadership, especially when it is tagged to positions of authority, fairly self-evidently involves power, I do not see that any contribution is made by labouring this basic point in my analysis. Rather, what I focus on is how power is given specific, often subtle and multi-faceted expression in the form of different discourses (Wilson 2016: 229-230)

What is claimed so far however, is that the structural properties, which make leadership what it is as compared to something else, must be of interest to a theory of leadership, and by extension, so must the generative mechanisms; that is the causal powers which produce the phenomenon of leadership.

7.1.2. The concurrent and contesting mechanisms of the manager-leader

As Part One presented, leadership theory narrowed in on managerial leadership in relation to the workplace after the Second World War. In the wake of this development, the idea of the leader was combined with the notion of the formal authority of the manager. As such, the contemporary work-related notion of leadership must also be investigated in relation to management. However, the specific relation between the manager and employee must be investigated, before going into a discussion of the combined notions of a manager-leader and employee-follower.

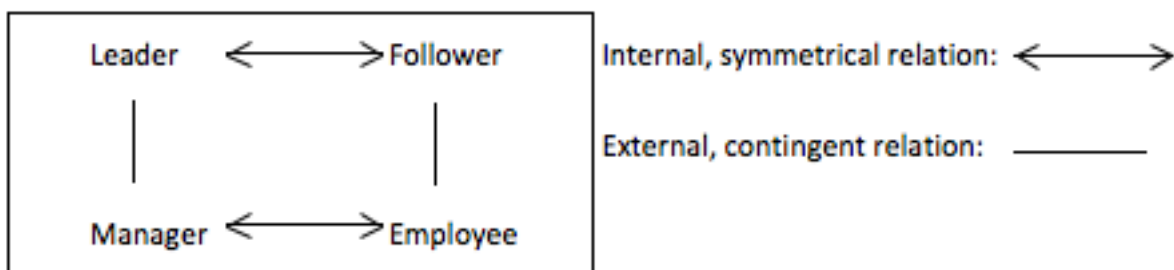
Like the enduring relational structure between the leader and follower, an internal and symmetrical relation also exists between the manager and the employee (Tsoukas 1994: 292). Hence, the constituent properties of *management* (i.e. the structure) comprise the social and enduring relation between manager and employee. Management understood as distinct from leadership, is largely concerned with the transactional aspects of organized work-life. As Kotter proposed, the action system of the manager is concerned with short-term, deductive planning, designing human systems, which are able to carry out these plans, and creating appropriate control mechanisms, to ensure that people actually do what they are supposed (cf. paragraph 3.1.). As such, the structure between the manager and the employee is based in reciprocal transaction, which is equivalent to the shared purpose binding the leader and follower together.

The employee has the power to demand a paycheck, and the manager in turn has the powers to e.g. delegate tasks and decide what each employee should do (in adherence to the plans), who to promote or hire (designing systems), and fire or sanction (control). This is to say, in return for pay, the manager gets formal authority to transform labor power into actual labor (Tsoukas 1994: 294). These powers are not given to the manager by virtue of the task at hand. Rather the effect is caused by the causal powers (generative mechanisms), which is part of the transactional structure between the employee and the manager. This is also to say, that the power to promote, fire etc. are not reliant on their actualization. The powers do not disappear even if they are not actualized.

As described in Part One the foundation for new leadership was laid with the theory of Burns, which was adopted by Bass. As subsequently analyzed, the formal powers of the manager were conceptually enshrined as combined with the moral authority of the leader. Several contemporary leadership scholars have assisted in enshrining this combination of leadership and management. As such it has been highlighted that today, it is no longer considered sufficient to practice management; leadership has taken priority, and not only managers, but employees as well should strive to release their potential and to become leaders (or at least more like leaders). It must therefore be investigated, how the combination of management and leadership can be understood in light of the structures discussed above thus far.

First of all, the relationality between manager and leader must be discussed:

Figure 2



Following the discussion above, it seems incomprehensible to talk about an internally necessary relation between a leader and a manager. As presented, the two exist in relation to followers and employees respectively, and thus they would only be internally related, if e.g. the manager was a follower of the leader, but in that case, the manager would be related to the leader through the social position of a follower, not in virtue of his position as a manager. The argument can also be made horizontally across the model: An employee receives this social status through a transactional relation, but this transactional relation does not entail that it is to a leader. Rather, the leader becomes a leader, due to his social status towards followers who enter into the relation due to a shared purpose. In the same way, albeit inversely, it

can be argued, that there is no necessary relation between a manager and a follower. In conclusion, it cannot be argued that an internal, symmetrical relation exist between a manager-leader and an employee-follower. This is not to claim that the combination is not possible, but it *is* to say that they don't comprise a *necessary* relation. To compare with another example, the notion of a father can be combined with the notion of the provider of the family. Like the combination of the manger-leader, the father-provider combination is contingently related and may emerge as a result of other cultural mechanisms (e.g. discrimination of working women). In the same way, external factors may affect the emergence of a combined notion of a manager-leader. In this regard, the theorists presented in Part One are in alignment: Kotter was shown to propose that the challenges in need of managerial and leadership response is an ever-changing environment, which requires a response of concurrent stability-creation and change-instigation. Wilson, and Barley and Kunda, was also shown to point out that new leadership gained footing as a response to a world characterized by change and transformation. Wilson however, brings to light that even if the issue of transformation is deemed problematic, the subsequent development of the notion of new leadership is not necessary, in the way Kotter claims. However, as already argued in paragraph 4.2, Wilson *asserts* this conclusion based on her historical analysis, but as she does not investigate what critical realists call the powers possessed by objects, she is not able to *explain why* the combination is not necessary; she only asserts that it is not. As thus, a critical realist approach to leadership theory, not only shows that leadership on its own does not have an unstable ontology, but it is also able to explain that, which Wilson can't.

Even if there is no necessary relation between a manager-leader and an employee-follower, Wilson has still illuminated in her study, that this combination non-the-less has an effect, and hence in critical realist terms, is real. This can be substantiated with two arguments.

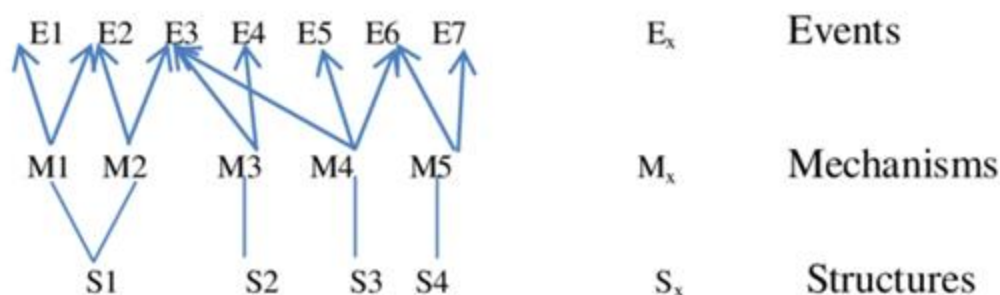
The first argument runs along the lines of Wilson's study; the notion of manager-leader, even if it has no socially necessary structure, still has discursive expressions. That is to say, the manager-leader exists in part as an ideational reality, because it is possible to talk intelligibly about two known properties (i.e. a manager and a leader, and likewise employee and follower) in correlation. That is to say, in the empirical domain of experience, it is possible to connect the real notion of a manager with the real notion of a leader with a hyphen, and people who understand what each of the notions mean, will understand its combined expression. The same can be said about the combining of father and provider. This claim is thus in agreement with the study of Wilson, but in the same way as Wilson's conclusions are not sufficient as explanations, this too is not. An explanation is still needed as to *why* the discourse is possible. Ideationally

real discourse may assist in reproducing social phenomena, but as discourse only covers the actualized powers of language, the possibility remains, that un-exercised or exercised but unrealized powers still exist in underlying social structures which cannot be reduced to discourse.

The second argument picks up, where the first leaves off, and concerns the generative mechanisms which can be suggested to make the discourse of a manager-leader possible. The argument rests on the previously discussed structures of manager-employee and leader-follower, and thus takes its point of departure in the claim that the powers of management and leadership respectively emerges from each their structure.

To make this argument, the following analysis will operationalize a model originally developed by Sayer. The model illustrates the critical realist understanding of the workings of mechanisms (i.e. causal powers). It illustrates how the powers of mechanisms emerge from the underlying structures, and how they, when triggered, produce different events. Operationalizing the model consequently makes it possible to elaborate how the notion of a manager-leader can be understood within the framework of CR.

Figure 3: events, mechanisms and structures



(www.researchgate.net 2)

Focusing on the left half of the model, let us make S1 designate the structure of manager-employee, and S2 designate the leader-follower structure. As presented, these two structures have different powers emerging from respectively a transactional relationship and a relationship of shared purpose. Thus, M1 could be the managerial mechanism of paying wages in return for labor, and M2 could be the mechanism of sanctioning (e.g. by firing or giving reprimands). E1 could then be understood as the event of receiving a paycheck of a certain amount by the end of the month. As the model indicates, the manifestation of E2 is

influenced by the workings of M1 *and* M2. This entails that the event E2 must be different from E1, as it is produced in the cross-field of M1 and M2. An example of an event (E2) produced by these two mechanisms, could be an employee who somehow steps out of line and the manager therefore chooses to sanction him (triggering M2), by cutting his salary (influencing M1). This example thus illustrates how a manifestation of an event is produced by one mechanism influencing the workings of another. This manifestation (as well as E1) is thus categorized as a manifestation of management, as the events are produced by the underlying structure of manager-employee.

Moving to the event E4, it was claimed above that this event can comprise a manifestation of leadership. This is derived from the following operationalization of the model: Letting S2 designate the leader-follower structure, the mechanisms of moral authority emerges, that is M3 (i.e. the leader's powers to instigate change in and amongst his followers and decide cause of action, and followers' powers to withdraw support). In a context where these powers work un-influenced by other mechanisms, the production of E4 will *tend* to manifests itself as common movement in a proposed direction (where followers deem the leader's actions acceptable) or conflict (where the actions are deemed unacceptable, wherefore the follower withdraws his support). This exemplification makes it possible to conceive of E4 as a manifestation of leadership, as it is produced by the mechanisms of the underlying structure leader-follower.

Finally, the point of interest is now E3; this event is produced by the mechanisms M2 and M3 which emerge from each their structures (S1 and S2). It is this event which is proposed to produce the manifestation of manager-leader. The following will clarify support of this claim:

Kotter proposes that the powers of leadership may affect the powers of management (i.e. the moral powers vs. the formal powers); if all tasks within the action systems are carried out properly, he suggests that the powers of leadership may turn formal powers of reprimands into empowerment (Kotter 2001: 90). Connecting this line of thought to the model, Kotter suggests that the workings of the powers of M2, which tends to produce the event 'sanction', may under influence of M3 produce an experience of empowerment. The underpinning assumption is here, that the employee has grown confident in the purpose proposed by the leader (i.e. has become a follower), and thus the mechanisms emerging from the leader-follower structure overrules the workings of the sanctioning (M2). The subsequently produced experience of the reprimand is then in its actualization regarded as empowerment. Proponents of new leadership may then use this as an argument as to why managers should strive to become more like leaders, as this shift will make negative experiences such as reprimands manifest themselves as positive empowerment, and hence tend to produce the experienced events of personal growth aligned with the

organizational interests. As such, the possibility of M3 influencing the workings of M2, makes possible the discourse of a manager-leader which Wilson has presented.

However, it is just as plausible to suggest that the formal powers may influence the moral powers, as vice versa. That is to say, that M2 may also influence the workings of M3 and consequently produce a different event. Let's assume that the superior has succeeded in gathering his employees as followers (hence positioned himself as a leader). In this instance, he may wish to trigger M3 that is to motivate his followers by leading *on their subjects*, to move in a certain direction. As argued, this power is given to the leader by virtue of the followers' powers to (potentially) withdraw their support. However, in the context of a workplace, it is plausible to assume, that the causal powers of formal authority (M2), will inhibit the employee-followers' real opportunity to withdraw their support; because withdrawing their support would simultaneously mean that they did not honor the transactional relationship they have entered into as employees. Interpreting the workings of these powers transfactually, it is here suggested that the formal powers of the manager to sanction may inhibit the workings of the powers of the employee-follower. The employee-follower as a follower may possess powers to resist (i.e. withdraw support), but will *tend* not to exercise that power, due to the contesting mechanisms of the transactional relationship he has as employee to the manager. That is to say, the workings of the moral powers are inhibited by the workings of the formal powers. Focusing on the manager-leader, the argument is, that he has the powers by virtue of the transactional relation, to sanction (e.g. fire) any employee-follower, who is not willing to conform to his purpose (i.e. isn't willing to grant support to him as a leader). As such, the mechanisms described emerge from each their structure, and holds the potential for influencing each other's workings, which may in effect produce the phenomenon of a manager-leader.

By revealing the underlying structures (incl. disputing the necessary structure of manager-leader and employee-follower) this discussion is able to answer some of the unanswered questions of Part One.

Firstly, the findings above are dependent on the researcher not following Wilson's example in conflating socially real structures to discourse. That is to say that the social structures cannot be reduced to discourse even if they *can* be a subject of discourse. As the above analysis suggests, the real social structures of leader-follower and manager-employee are necessary conditions for a discourse about manager-leader to be possible. The argument in summation is, that the events produced by the two structures respectively produce manifestations of either management or leadership, and as such, it is only when the mechanisms

emerging from these structures are influencing each other's workings, that the subsequently produced events can be said to be subjects of the discursive notion of a manager-leader.

Secondly, the moral power of the manager-leader to enter into the psyche of his followers is granted when the manager-leader is able to gather employees as followers. As Wilson however pointed out, this seems like a gross intrusion, even if she is not able to explain why it is so. This analysis suggests that it can be considered an intrusion, because the formal powers are able to render followers' powers of support-withdrawal ineffective (i.e. hindered in their actualization).

Wilson's methodology furthermore left her to conclude that employee-followers are constructed as inadequate as they are in constant need of a leader's intervention. As such, her study renders the employee-followers as passively docile bodies. She is left to conclude so, because her methodology only allows her to consider the actualized powers of discourse. That is to say, as she is only able to take into account the language used, her study can only conceptualize employee-followers as constructed by the existing discourse, which neglects their autonomy. Hence, by focusing only on actualized discourse, she is not able to conceptualize that employees *have* powers, because these powers are not explicated (actualized) in the new leadership discourse. Yet as this critical realist discussion has illuminated, the employee-follower has concurrently the powers of demanding pay (in the position as employee) and the powers to withdraw support when their superior positions himself as a leader to be followed. It was however suggested, that the latter power will tend to stay un-actualized, due to the contesting mechanisms of the transactional structure between employee and manager. This however, within the ontology of CR, does not equal that the powers are non-existing, and it can thus be suggested that future leadership theory should strive to explicitly acknowledge the powers possessed by employee-followers.

It is at this point possible to sum up the differences between the theories presented in this thesis:

Table 3

	Mainstream (Kotter, Bass, Burns etc.)	Constructionist, Discourse (Wilson)	Critical Realism (suggested by the thesis)
Ontological status			
- Leadership	Natural fact of human life	Unstable and contingent	Emerging from real, social structures
- New Leadership	Necessary solution to the challenges of the state of the objectively true world	Discursively invented in response to contingent challenges deemed problematic	Leadership is real, but its actualization (empirical manifestation) is dependent on the workings of causal mechanisms emerging from underlying structures
Employee-follower	Human resources to be elevated to reach their full potential	Constructed as inadequate and passive	Possess powers, which tend not to be actualized
Manager-leader	Capable of and expected to instigate invigorating changes and elevate employees; including creating more leaders	Omni-potent, super humans, to whom enormous expectations are posed	Produced by two different mechanisms which influence each other's workings; each emerging from the structures of respectively leader-follower and manager-employee

7.2. Modeling the causal sequence of New Leadership

This final paragraph will now turn to investigate the contemporary notion of leadership, by digging through the ontological layers of the phenomenon of new leadership.

To discuss the developmental foundation of new leadership, the following will combine the knowledge attained thus far about managerial leadership, and place it in a critical realist model; that is in a causal

sequence. To do so, the following will draw inspiration from such a model, developed by professor and organization theorist Haridimos Tsoukas. Tsoukas published in 1994 an article titled “What is Management? An Outline of a Metatheory” In this article, Tsoukas proposes a theoretical framework based in CR, for understanding management as being ontologically differentiated and stratified. What he proposes, is to understand management through four ontological layers of management. Tsoukas’ argumentation is founded in an abstract categorization of certain aspects of leadership theory; namely the categories of managerial *roles*, managerial *tasks*, managerial *functions* and finally managerial *control and cooperation* (Tsoukas 1994: 296). He contemplates that these four categories each exists as an ontological layer (Tsoukas 1994: 295). Following the ontology of CR, this refers to different strata, and means that each layer is produced by the underlying layer, without being reducible to it. In his article, Tsoukas develops the following model:

Figure 4

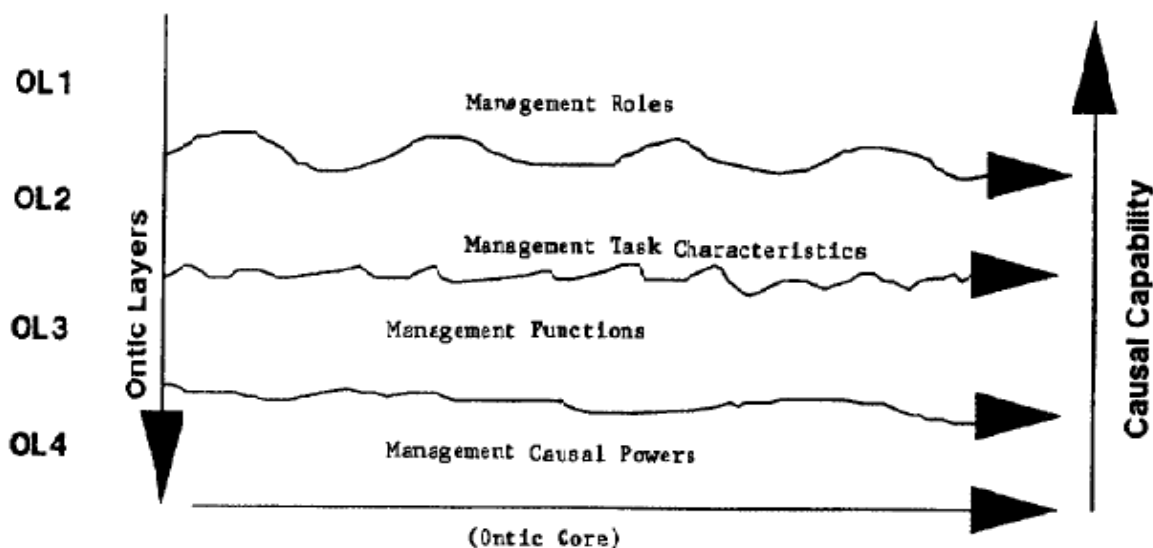


Figure 1. A realist redescription of management

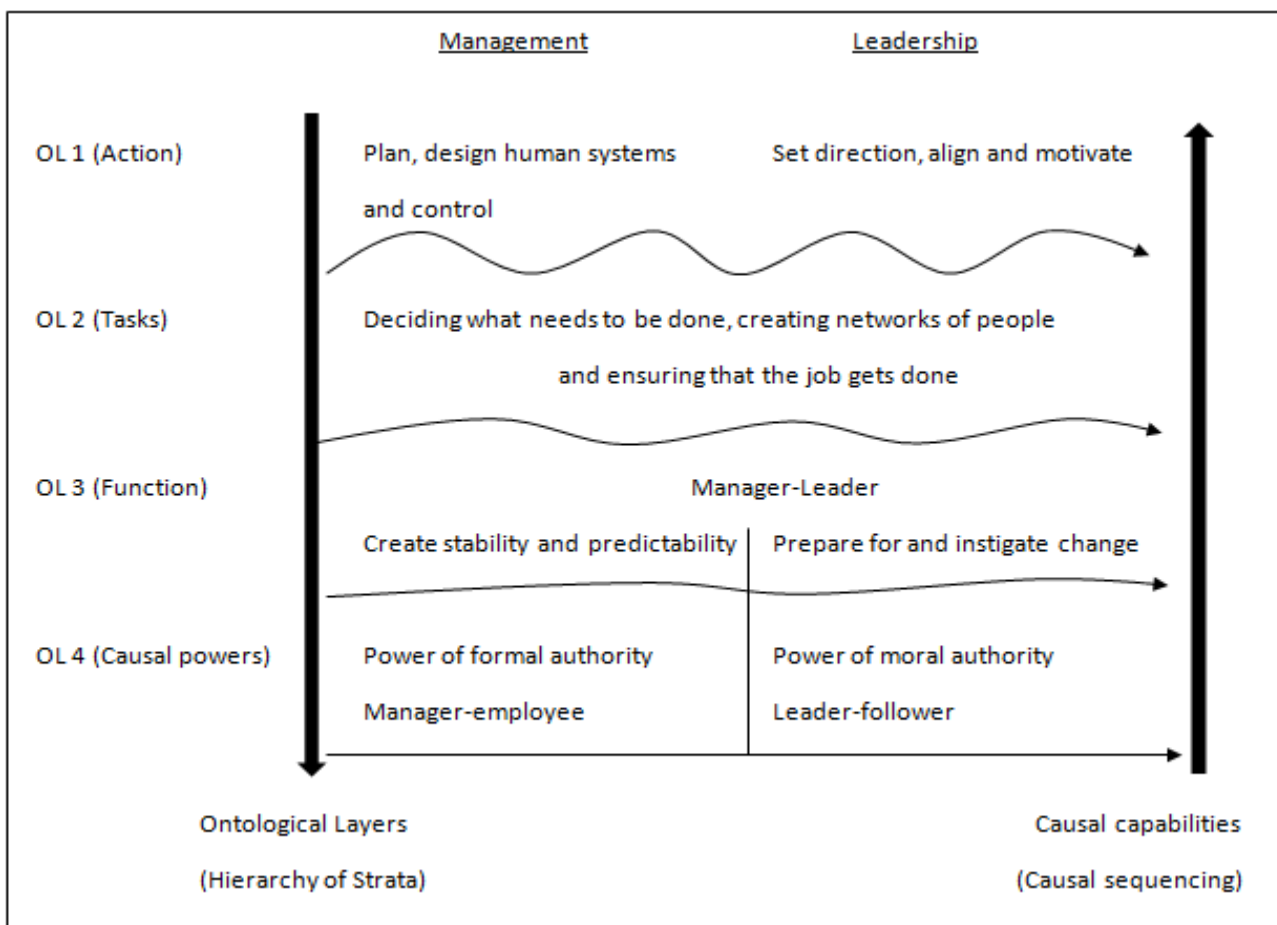
(Tsoukas 1994: 296)

In this hierarchical model, Tsoukas proposes that the ontological layers¹⁰ (OL 1-4) refer to each of the four categories listed above (indicated by the down-ward pointing arrow). The upward-pointing arrow to the right indicates how the underlying layer has the causal powers to produce the content of the upper layer. In

¹⁰ In the model Tsoukas uses the term ‘ontic’; however, throughout the article, he uses the word ‘ontological’ to describe the nature of the layers in the model. In accordance with the paradigm of CR, the word ‘ontological’ is the correct term, and so this will be used in the following model. As Tsoukas himself is consistence in using the word ‘ontological’ outside the model, it is assumed that an unconscious error in terminology has been made.

critical realist terms, this hierarchy is thus founded in the question ‘what must the necessary conditions be, for the higher layer to be what it is?’; that is, to understand and *explain* each layer, the underlying structures (i.e. the necessary properties) and productive mechanisms (i.e. causal powers) must be explained through causal sequencing. As such, Tsoukas argues that the observable behavioral practices in which the manager engages (the management roles) can be considered possible due to a “certain configuration of management task characteristics” (Tsoukas 1994: 296). Similarly, the tasks carried out by managers are possible due to the management functions, which are again possible due to the causal powers of management, which according to Tsoukas consists of control and collaboration, which is placed into a larger socio-economic context (Tsoukas 1994: 297). What Tsoukas furthermore proposes, is that the four layers have different “rate of temporal change” (Tsoukas 1994: 295); this means, that the surface layers are considered more likely to change than the lower layers. This is in the model indicated by the different shapes of the horizontal lines. Using this model as a platform, as well as the theory presented and analyzed thus far, it is possible to suggest a causal sequence regarding the notion of new leadership as follows:

Figure 5



Firstly, the exercise in this model is one of abstraction: Drawing comparatively on Kotter's action systems, as well as Bass' four constituent elements within transformational leadership (c.f. paragraph 3.2.2), it is possible to abstract e.g. Bass' notion of intellectual stimulation and Kotter's idea of proposing alternative futures and strategies, to the overarching *set of actions*, which resides in the first ontological layer. These may again be abstracted into the category of the overarching task of deciding what should be done, which belong to the second layer of overarching *tasks characteristics*. Secondly, elaborating on the model from the top, down through the ontological layers, it should be noted, that the layer of managerial roles, proposed by Tsoukas, has been replaced by a layer of concrete 'actions'. This shift is a matter of terminology more than it is a difference in content: Tsoukas states in his article that the study of management roles more specifically deals with "the organized sets of behaviour, identified with managerial positions" (Ibid.). From here it becomes possible to juxtapose the idea of roles with the action systems proposed by Kotter, as systems of action must be said to reside in the same ontological layer as an organized set of behavior; this level concern the observable, potential outcomes of management and leadership.

The model above illustrates that the specific behavior (OL 1) carried out by a manager as well as a leader will be contingent to and dependent on the tasks (OL 2) he is to carry out. That is to say for example, that a leader would not firstly choose to act by e.g. setting a direction, if his task was not to decide what should be done; he would not only secondary decide which task he carried out with an action. As such, it is the task, which affects and makes possible a certain behavior (action) deemed appropriate to solve that task. In the same way, it can be argued that the function (OL 3) which the manager or leader is to fulfill, makes possible the tasks (OL 2) that he is to handle and eventually carry out in action (OL 1). That is to say, the tasks are made possible by virtue of the function of creating stability and instigating change. Conceptualizing leadership theory in this manner makes it furthermore possible to explain that changes in theory are more likely to occur with regards to the prescribed actions, less likely to change in regards to the tasks, and even less likely to change with regards to the function (the rate of temporal change is indicated by the horizontal, curvy arrows in the model). This is derived from the claim, that the third ontological layer (comprising functions) is more fundamental than the layers above, as this layer *makes possible* the above layers. In the same way, the second ontological layer makes possible the manifestations of the first layer.

Relating the causal sequence explicitly to the action systems proposed by Kotter, the model suggests that when a manager has the function of creating stability and predictability, this function makes possible the managerial task of e.g. creating networks of people, which in turn makes it possible to carry out the action of designing human systems (e.g. by hiring new people). The actualization of this power is to

be understood as possessed, whether it is exercised or not. That is to say, the power to hire a candidate is present due to the underlying layers, whether the manager chooses to do so or not; this is indicated in the model by the up-ward pointing arrow, which illustrates that the generative mechanisms, or causal powers, are emerging from the layers below. It could e.g. also be exemplified that a manager wishes to exercise his powers to create networks of people, but the actualization could be hindered if e.g. there were no applicants. This again does not render the power non-existing; rather it is exercised but unrealized. This furthermore points to the web of powers influencing the process (such as applicants powers to apply or not, which may again be influenced by other structures such as levels of unemployment in general). A similar sequence as just presented can be found in the leader's action system: The function of instigating change makes possible the task of creating networks of people, which may potentially produce the final outcome of getting people aligned through successful communication of an alternative future. As, however, the notion of power within CR is not equivalent to that in positivist scientific methodologies, it cannot be said that the leader's powers to successfully communicate a vision, *will* result in an actualization of that power: The outcome (i.e. successful alignment) may be contingent to other factors such as the follower's willingness to listen. This, however, does not nullify the powers, but it may inhibit the powers from being actualized.

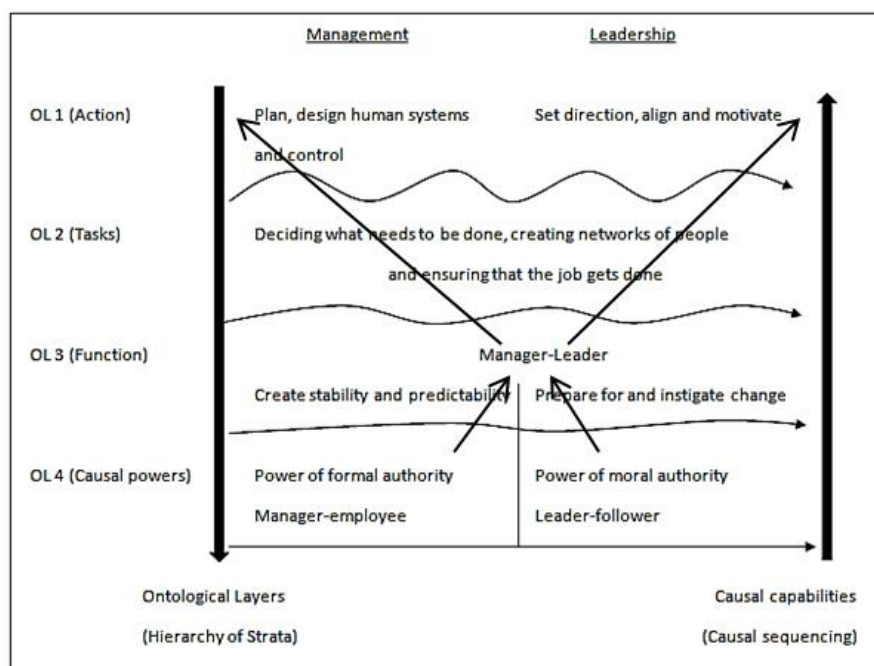
The causal sequence proposed in the model thus differentiates between actualized powers and possessed powers, and between manifestations in the empirical domain vs. the structures in the real domain. To exemplify how this reading of leadership theory differs from the theory proposed by Kotter, attention should be brought to the action of control (in OL1). The critical realist sequencing proposes, that the manager cannot practice concrete control in the top layer, if there is no benchmark for what is to be controlled (e.g. if there was no plan, standard to check against). But even with a benchmark, he still cannot practice control, if he does not have the authority, which grants him these powers to begin with. As discussed, the powers of a manager are granted by the transactional relationship in the deep structure of OL4. That is to say, an employee could be aware of the plan and he could thus also become aware if something did not live up to this plan, but this employee could not produce a controlling output, because he does not possess the social, structural powers which would make an outcome such as sanctioning occur. The same may be said for the leader; a leader will not be able to align people at the top layer, if he did not have the moral authority, belonging to the forth layer, to do so; if he did not have the social structural properties constituting a leader (i.e. having followers with whom he share a purpose, as proposed in

paragraph 7.1.1), he would also not have the powers to set a direction and align people in pursuing a set direction.

The above elaboration of the model is concerned with linking the empirical manifestations of management and leadership respectively to their underlying structures. However, as it was found that new leadership advocates a combination of a *manager-leader*, this notion must also be placed into the linkage between structures, mechanisms and manifestations.

As the discussion in paragraph 7.1.2. proposed, the combined notion of a manager-leader manifests itself when the *mechanisms* (i.e. causal powers) of the manager-employee structure and leader-follower structure influences each other's workings. In the model, this is illustrated by placing the *manager-leader* in the ontological layer of functions, albeit *above* the function of stability and change creation. This placement indicates that the manifestation of a manager-leader is made possible, when 1) the social structures of manager-employee *and* leader-follower exist, and 2) when both the functions of creating stability and instigating change are present. When these propositions are satisfied, the function of a *manager-leader* is produced. It can thus further be suggested, that the production of the function of the manager-leader, in consequence makes possible the tasks and the actions of both leader and manager. This is indicated by the now added arrows in the model:

Figure 6



In conclusion, the model has illustrated how leadership theory can be placed into a causal sequence when it is investigated by means of a critical realist meta-theory. The explanation of the sequence has illuminated, how a critical realist reading is able to differentiate between manifestation of power, the *workings* of powers and the origin of power. The final issue to be brought up, also relates to issues arising from Kotter as well as Wilson's focus on the actualized powers, that is, the observable manifestations of leadership, whether as discovered practice or invented discourse. In critical realist terms, it has been suggested that they both conflate the three domains (i.e. the empirical, actual and real), and subsequently are left to *assert* the underlying productive mechanisms rather than explaining them. In other words, they both neglect the discussion of the most fundamental structures within new leadership; namely the social structures between leader and follower, and manager and employee; and the subsequent production of the phenomenon of a manager-leader.

Tsoukas too problematizes the tendency to focus on observable practices and the carrying out of tasks. In pointing to one issue arising from the empiricist focus on observation, Tsoukas quotes Finnish Professor Uskali Mäki in saying: "if our descriptions are restricted to the surface level, we are forced to refute or modify them every time a substantial change on that level occurs' (Mäki 1985: 128)" (Tsoukas 1994: 296). The analyses and discussion carried out throughout this thesis suggests that the same issue arises from a constructionist approach to e.g. Foucauldian discourse analysis. That is, when the subject under investigation regards *observed* and actualized language as discourse. It was previously presented that the horizontal, curvy arrows in the models proposed by Tsoukas and this thesis indicate different rates of temporal change. Bearing this in mind, the quote of Mäki also support the claim that change is more likely to occur in the higher ontological layers, when theory is concerned only with empirical and actual manifestations. It can thus be suggested that the discursive paradigms, which Wilson has presented, each comprise a change in the upper ontological layers. However, the underlying structures of manager-employee, leader-follower and the emergent powers, which are capable of influencing each other and subsequently produce the phenomenon of a manager-leader, have been stable. As such, positivist theory focused on discovering leadership, as well as constructionist theory attempting to rebuttal the positivist notion by claiming contingent and relativistic inventions (or construction), run the risk of neglecting the powers, which have produced the phenomena they observe. As such, this critical realist reading of leadership theory proposes that future trajectories within the development of leadership theory, should be concerned not only with empirical observation or actualized discursive powers, but also seek to *explain* the origins and workings of the generative mechanisms emerging from underlying structures.

8. Conclusion

The thesis set out to investigate the social phenomenon of leadership in order to gain an enhanced understanding of the contemporary notion of the phenomenon. To enable a nuanced discussion, the choice was made to analyze the notion of leadership from three different methodological positions.

The substantial body of the thesis was opened with Part One. This part presented how proponents of new leadership understand leadership to be a necessary fact and a potent solution to the issues resulting from the world characterized by constant change. It was furthermore shown that leaders are considered capable of instigating change by setting visionary directions, and align and motivate employees by exploiting their untapped values and needs. Having introduced Wilson's study into the analysis, it was concluded that leadership is now so vastly praised, that it has resulted in a constant strive for elevating more people, employees as well as managers, to be leaders (or at least, more *like* leaders). As such, it is no longer enough to be a manager; one must also be a leader, and the combined notion of a manager-leader subsequently arose. In introducing the study of Suze Wilson, it was proposed that the mainstream understanding of leadership has become naturalized as a consequence of the scientific approach to leadership theory underpinned by a positivist epistemology. As a result, the value and potency of leadership has gone largely unquestioned. To counter this conception, it was presented how Suze Wilson conducts a Foucauldian, critical reading of mainstream leadership theory, which suggested that the discourse of new leadership constructs employee-followers as passive and inadequate and leaders as almost super-human beings. A discussion furthermore illuminated that mainstream leadership theory does not adequately explain, where the legitimacy to enter into the psyche of the employee-followers stems from.

Thus, the study of Wilson has provided a comprehensive historical discourse analysis, which assisted in illuminating that leadership is not a natural matter of fact. However, when the final paragraphs of Part One investigated the logical structures and content of Wilson's theory, it was made visible that even if her study is comprehensive, it leaves questions unanswered. Firstly, it was elaborated how her conclusion that leadership has an unstable ontology was supported by epistemological and not ontological grounds. As such, it was suggested that Wilson's conclusion was drawn from insufficient premises. Secondly, it was shown that even as her findings illuminated that mainstream leadership theory does not justify the leader's legitimacy to instigate change in their followers, she was not able to *explain* why this legitimacy is non-the-less widely accepted. Lastly, Wilson's idea of leadership as being contingent and open for tailored re-invention was proposed to be fragile; in support of this claim, the argument was posed that as Wilson has an actualist notion of power, hence only consider manifestations of the powers of leadership, the

possibility remains, that a critical re-reading might find causal explanations for the workings of the powers of leadership, not only the manifestations of those powers.

To respond to these questions, Part Two opened with the presentation of the meta-theory of critical realism. It was here suggested, that science should be aware not to confuse ontological questions with epistemological ones. The ontology of CR was shown to suggest that the world should be understood as differentiated, stratified and structured. The presentation also clarified how social phenomena such as leadership, should be understood as belonging to a transitive dimension, comprised of an empirical and actual domain. The *production* of the phenomena however, resides in the domain of the real, comprised of generative mechanisms (i.e. causal powers), and their underlying structures, which make something what it is as opposed to something else. It was lastly elaborated how causal powers in CR should be interpreted *transfactually*, whereby determinism, scientism etc. is avoided.

This ontological meta-theory of CR was subsequently operationalized in proposing a third reading of leadership theory. This analysis and discussion illuminated that the phenomenon of leadership is produced by the generative mechanisms of moral authority, belonging to an underlying social structure consisting of the necessary properties of *leader*, *follower* and *shared purpose*. The phenomenon of management was shown to be generated by the mechanisms of formal authority, belonging to the social structure of *manager*, *employee* and *transaction*. This analysis supported the conclusion, that leadership does not have an unstable *ontology*, even if our epistemological access to *knowledge* about leadership comprises contingent *manifestations* of the phenomenon.

It was consequently discussed, that the combination of leader-manager and employee-follower is not a necessary, but rather contingent relation. The phenomenon of a manager-leader, thus *tend* to result, when the mechanisms of respectively moral and formal authority influences each other's workings. Part Two hereby concluded that a critical realist reading of leadership theory can explain that the legitimacy to instigate change in and amongst employee stems from the workings of moral authority belonging to the social structure of leader-follower. It was subsequently suggested that this results in a possible inhibition of the employee-followers real possibilities for actualizing their moral powers (i.e. withdrawing support to the leader); it was suggested that the formal powers (derived from the manager-employee structure), would tend to overrule the moral powers of the followers (derived from the leader-follower structure). This trajectory of thought led the thesis to propose that employees should *not* be considered to be inadequate and passive constructions, but rather real, active, autonomous people whose powers are possessed, and perhaps even exercised, but often within new leadership unactualized.

Finally, Part Two introduced a causal sequence, which explained the linkage between manifestations of leadership and the underlying productive strata. This sequence highlighted the difference between, on the

one hand positivist and constructionist alike, and on the other critical realism: Where the former confine their theories to the surface layers comprised of actualized manifestations (belonging to the transitive dimension), critical realism is able to explain the origins of the causal powers which have the ability to produce the phenomenon of new leadership. The thesis thus concluded that a critical realist reading of leadership theory explains, that when leadership theory is concerned with observable events (whether it be mainstream or constructionist critique), this theory is only able to capture the surface manifestation of the phenomenon leadership. A critical realist reading on the contrary is able to identify the real underlying structures and generative mechanisms, which must be the object of study, if one hopes to instigate a real transformation in the way leadership is understood.

Bibliography

- **Ackroyd**, Stephen (2004): "Methodology for management and organization studies – Some implications of critical realism" in *Critical Realist Applications in Organisation and Management*, part II, chap. 6, pp. 135-163, edited by Steve Fleetwood and Stephen Ackroyd, Routledge
- **Alvesson**, Mats and Sköldbberg, Kaj (2009): *Reflexive Methodology – New Vistas for Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, second edition
- **Archer**, Margaret, Bhaskar, Roy, Collie, Andrew, Lawson, Tony and Norrie, Alan (1998): "General introduction" in *Critical realism – Essential readings*, pp. ix-xxiv, edited by Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collie, Tony Lawson and Alan Norrie, Routledge
- **Barley** Stephen R. and Kunda, Gideon. (1992): "Design and Devotion: Surges of Rational and Normative Ideologies of Control in Managerial Discourse", *Cornell University*
- **Bhaskar**, Roy (1975): *A realist theory of Science*, Leeds Books Ltd.
- **Bhaskar**, Roy (2011): *Philosophy and the Idea of Freedom*, Routledge
- **Blaikie**, Norman (2010): *Designing social research – The Logic of Anticipation*, Polity Press, second edition
- **Costea**, Bogdan, Crump, Norman and Amiridis, Kostas (2008): "Managerialism, the therapeutic habitus and the self in contemporary organizing", *Human Relations*, Volume 61(5), 661-685, The Tavistock Institute
- **Cruickshank**, Justin (2004): "A tale of two ontologies: an immanent critique of critical realism", *The Sociological Review*
- **Danermark**, Berth, Ekström, Mats, Jakobsen, Liselotte and Karlsson, Jan Ch. (2002): *Explaining Society – Critical realism in the social sciences*, Routledge, London
- **Fleetwood**, Steve (2004): "An ontology for organization and management studies" in *Critical Realist Applications in Organisation and Management*, part I, chap. 1, pp. 27-53, edited by Steve Fleetwood and Stephen Ackroyd, Routledge
- **Fleetwood**, Steve and Ackroyd, Stephen (2004): "Preface" in *Critical Realist Applications in Organisation and Management*, pp. xvi, edited by Steve Fleetwood and Stephen Ackroyd, Routledge

- **Lübcke**, Poul (ed.) (2010): *Politikens filosofi leksikon*, Politikens Forlag, København, 2010
- **Morgan**, Gareth (2006): *Images of Organization*, updated version, Sage Publications, USA
- **Kotter**, John P. (2001): "What Leaders Really Do" in *Best of HBR*, Harvard Business Review, Breakthrough Leadership, December 2001
- **Sayer**, Andrew (2012): "Power, causality and normativity: a critical realist critique of Foucault" in *Journal of Political Power*, Vol. 5, No. 2, August, 179-194, Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group
- **Sims-Schouten**, Wendy, C. E. Riley, Sarah and Willig, Carla (2007): Critical Realism in Discourse Analysis: A Presentation of a Systematic Method of Analysis Using Women's Talk of Motherhood, Childcare and Female Employment as an Example, *Theory & Psychology*, Sage Publications. VOL. 17
- **Tsoukas**, Haridimos (1994): "What is Management? An Outline of a Metatheory", *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 5 289-301
- **Wilson**, Suze (2016), "Thinking Differently about Leadership – A Critical History of Leadership Studies", Edward Elgar Publishing

Websites

www.businessinsider.com: Engel, Pamela, (2017), "How Trump came up with his slogan 'Make America Great Again', 18 th of January, *Business Insider* <http://www.businessinsider.com/trump-make-america-great-again-slogan-history-2017-1?r=US&IR=T&IR=T> (last accessed 28 th of July, 2017)

www.centreforcriticalrealism.com: "Critical Realism", *Centre for Critical Realism*, <https://centreforcriticalrealism.com/about-critical-realism/basic-critical-realism/> (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.economist.com: (2016), "How Donald Trump thinks about trade", 9 th of November, *The Economist*, <https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21709921-america's-next-president-wants-pull-out-existing-trade-deals-and-put-future-ones> (last accessed 28 th of July, 2017)

www.en.oxforddictionaries.com: "Ontology", *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ontology> (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.en.wikipedia.org: "Maslow's hierarchy of needs", *Wikipedia*,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.hbs.edu: "John P. Kotter", *Harvard Business School*, <http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/profile.aspx?facId=6495>, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.massey.ac.nz: "Dr Suze Wilson – PhD, BA", *Massey University, University of New Zealand*, <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/expertise/profile.cfm?stref=319250>, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.mintzberg.org: Mintzberg Henry (2015), "Managing to Lead", 19 th of February, *Henry Mintzberg*, <http://www.mintzberg.org/blog/to-lead>, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.nobelprize.org: "Martin Luther King Jr. – Biography", *Nobelprize*, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html, (last accessed 28 th of July, 2017)

www.researchgate.net 1: "Figure 1. The Stratified Ontology of Critical Realism (adapted from Bhaskar 1975)", *ResearchGate*, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/256456333_fig1_Figure-1-The-Stratified-Ontology-of-Critical-Realism-adapted-from-Bhaskar-1975, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.researchgate.net 2: "Figure 1: events, mechanisms and structures (source: Sayer 1992)", *ResearchGate*, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/281206837_fig1_Figure-1-events-mechanisms-and-structures-source-Sayer-1992, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.scholar.google.dk 1: "Transformational leadership 1990", *Google Scholar*, https://scholar.google.dk/scholar?q=Transformational+leadership&hl=da&as_sdt=1%2C5&as_vis=1&as_ylo=1940&as_yhi=1990, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.scholar.google.dk 2: "Transformational leadership 2017", *Google Scholar*, https://scholar.google.dk/scholar?q=Transformational+leadership&hl=da&as_sdt=1%2C5&as_vis=1&as_ylo=1990&as_yhi=2017, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.scholar.google.dk 3: "Stephen Barley and Gideon Kunda", *Google Scholar*, <https://scholar.google.dk/scholar?hl=da&q=Stephen+Barley+%26+Gideon+Kunda+%281992%29>, (last accessed 30 th of July, 2017)

www.youtube.com: (2013) "Roy Bhaskar Interview", 6 th of August, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YGHZPg-19k>, (last accessed 7 th of October, 2016)