Leadership co-operation: The existence of sharing managers in Swedish work life

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The notion of what a manager is and how leadership is exercised is changing in both practice and research. In the traditional work organisation, the manager is one person and the manager being two or more persons is an alien conception. This study charts how common shared leadership is in Swedish working life and in what forms it occurs. By shared leadership is meant either a managerial post being formally shared between two (sometimes more) persons or several persons in actual practice sharing one person's managerial duties. Altogether, 41% of managers share their leadership one way or another, and 9% practise hierarchically equal sharing with the managerial post equally between them. Five per cent practise the most far-reaching form, joint leadership, sharing equally in both formal and practical terms and sharing both work tasks and responsibilities. Today's Swedish leadership is co-operative.

Keywords: co-operation, joint leadership, manager, national survey, shared leadership, work organisation.

The notion of what a manager is and how leadership is exercised is changing in both practice and research. In the traditional work organisation, the manager is one person and the manager being two or more persons is an alien conception. Even so, there have been several cases reported in Swedish working life of managers sharing their leadership with someone else, i.e. non-singular or shared leadership (see for example Döös, Wilhelmson, & Hemborg, 2003a; Holmberg & Söderlind, 2004; Lambert-Olsson, 2004; Wilhelmson & Döös, 2002). Given the changed demands of working life, it has been assumed that this is a form of leadership which has been brought forth by new organisational structures and conditions, e.g. the need for coping with flattened hierarchies, larger numbers of subordinates and wider operational fields.

In the study reported here, shared leadership is taken to mean either a managerial post being formally shared between two (sometimes more) persons, or several persons in actual practice sharing one person's managerial duties.

This study sets out to show how common shared leadership is, in what forms it occurs and to what extent[1]. The question of form is concerned with ascertaining whether shared leadership is formally decided on or simply happens in practice, and whether it is an equal sharing between managers in the same hierarchical position. Partial topics of enquiry are concerned with variations of occurrence and form related to such factors as sector, industry, workplace size, managerial level and gender. The study is also of an exploratory nature, owing to the problems entailed by the lack of uniform terminology on the shared leadership subject.

Previous research

Many of the management philosophies and trends impacting on Sweden since the 1990s, however, have not sprung from Swedish experience but have been derived mainly from the USA (Björkman, 1997). The occurrence of shared leadership at low and middle management level in Swedish working life however contrasts with the way in which the phenomenon has been observed in the USA (cf. Greenberg-Walt & Robertson, 2001; Heenan & Bennis, 1999; Troiano, 1999), where it has mainly been a question affecting top management, at the apex of the leadership hierarchy.

Sharing of leadership has received little attention in organisation and leadership research (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2003; Yukl, 2002). There are exceptions, however. In the USA shared leadership has been described as a top management phenomenon, as a new leadership paradigm is emerging (Troiano, 1999) and being the leadership model of the future (Greenberg-Walt & Robertson, 2001). O'Toole, Galbraith and Lawler (2002) claim that the singularity of leadership is a universal myth, for with all facts on the table, even the most written-about solitary leaders have been supported by (a team of) other efficient leaders. Daft (2001) points out that in recent years teams have been experimentally employed at corporate management level for the purpose of better and swifter adjustment to a changeable business environment. House and Aditya (1997) observe that sharing of leadership responsibility between two or more individuals may be preferable in certain circumstances.

Notable leadership trends recently have included a variant of shared leadership known as distributed leadership, in which leadership is viewed as an activity spread out between the members of a group or organisation (Pearce & Conger, 2003b). This form is often connected with autonomous teams and decentralised organisations in which people are expected to share responsibility for the performance of tasks, i.e. forms characteristic of working life in Sweden (Sisson, 2000). Co-leadership at managing director level à la Heenan and Bennis, i.e. between the managing director and his or her right hand, is described as a special instance of distributed leadership, the two-person case. A separate but clearly related concept. What Heenan and Bennis (1999) describe is a co-leadership or partnership consisting of a hierarchically unequal but otherwise equal sharing in senior management positions (managing director level).

McCauley (2004) argues that the main difference between distributed leadership and traditional leadership models is that distributed leadership acknowledges the importance of lateral and bottom-up processes of influence between traditional models focussing on the influence exerted by the manager/leader on subordinates or followers. Joint leadership can be

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[1] The original study (reported in Döös, Hanson, Backström, Wilhelmson, & Hemborg, 2005) also charted managers' attitude to and perception of shared leadership.

viewed in terms of the possibilities it affords for managers to be power-sharing examples (Döös, Wilhelmson, & Hemborg, 2003b).

Döös and Wilhelmson have studied shared leadership in the sense of two managers sharing a position, and have worked through literature on the subject (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2003). It emerged that, in addition to the extent of shared leadership being unknown, its forms and preconditions are for the most part unclear, not enough is known about its effects on corporate performance and implications for associates, there is insufficient understanding of its working processes, and so forth.

Why shared leadership and why now?

Shared leadership can be described both as an innovation which is gaining ground and as a phenomenon extending far back in history. Shared leadership was already being practised by the ancient Romans. For four centuries before the Christian era, the Roman Republic evolved principles for the sharing of leadership between the two highest officers of state, the consuls. They acceded and retired together and, according to Sally (2002), were to share their duties in a manner implying equality of power and glory and were expected to show a certain degree of self-denial and humility. The basic principles applied, not only to the consuls but to all normal offices of state, the implication being that "every official must have a colleague with equal authority" (Wistrand, 1978: 206). Thus the consuls shared power at the apex of a system that was power-sharing throughout (Sally, 2002).

There is a lack of research-based figures concerning the occurrence of shared leadership. It has been asked whether shared leadership is at present on the increase. When shared leadership is described as a growing phenomenon in working life, the causes are seen in contemporary phenomena and the demands they make on managers. This applies to such outward circumstances as globalisation and the increasing complexity and interconnection of markets, the number of mergers and takeovers, and a growing number of partnerships and alliances (see e.g. Greenberg-Walt & Robertson, 2001; O'Toole, et al., 2002; Troiano, 1999). Shared leadership is also seen as belonging together with teams and autonomous groups and associates. Leadership research and literature stresses that modern organisations with management by objectives – organisations in which the associates have a great deal of personal responsibility and participatory influence – call for a different form of control and leadership (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2002; Streatfield, 2001). A need to share leadership may also be connected with organisations in which the number of associates per manager has increased, e.g. due to a flattening of the hierarchy or the amalgamation of departments. In this way, a management task is created which among other things entails greater complexity and a wider field of responsibility.

Administrator, leader and stage director – three tasks within the framework of the manager's assignment. Managers today hold key positions both for handling creativity and development and for safeguarding the existing state of affairs and continuity. The task of the manager has moved towards demands for the exercise of leadership, i.e. standing for proactivity and change, guiding and stimulating other people (cf. Tyrstrup, 2002). In an organisation where a high level of employee participation is wanted, the manager also incurs a third task, that of "stage-directing" the processes of work, influence and participation (Backström, Döös, & Wilhelmson, manus 2006). This includes facilitating processes leading to the growth of mutual understanding, closer cohesion and innovations, which in turn means supporting the emergence of a new comprehension and new working methods (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2002). Management today, then, calls for other insights and capacity for creating unconventional

working processes and conditions than was needed when management was mainly a question of rules and instructions (Döös, 2004; Moqvist, 2005).

Given this background, it is not surprising that studies have shown many managers finding the work of management strenuous (Hildingsson & Krafft, 2003). The work of the manager, moreover, is often characterised by reactivity and lack of reflection. There is little opportunity for second thoughts, emergencies are the order of the day and decisions have to be taken *stante pede* (Tyrstrup, 1993; 2002).

Managers sharing their leadership on a joint leadership (see definition below) basis give reasons concerned with improving the profitability and quality of operational performance, making themselves more accessible to associates and achieving a more tenable situation for themselves, in that work becomes more fun and more gratifying (Döös, et al., 2003a; Heenan & Bennis, 1999; Holmberg & Söderlind, 2004; Karlsson & Rubensson, 2001; Sjöberg, 2000). One also finds that 75% of managers in Swedish working life have a positive approach to shared leadership (Döös, et al., 2005).

Shared leadership in one form or another could be taken as a means of handling the work situation which many managers are faced with today and find strenuous. Partly for this reason, closer knowledge is needed concerning the frequency of shared leadership, the forms assumed by shared leadership, where it occurs and to what extent it is practised in different sectors and industries, as well as the pros and cons of shared leadership as perceived by managers.

Lack of agreed upon concepts

One difficulty about investigating the occurrence of shared leadership is the prevailing conceptual confusion, despite the long history of shared leadership. This study, accordingly, has charted a phenomenon which people as well as managers in general have not yet conceptualised.

Holmberg and Söderlind (2004) note that shared leadership often has quite different meanings in different contexts. They define it as two persons sharing a managerial post, both being full-time managers. They refer to that two persons sharing a managerial post means that all powers are vested in both of them, that they incur joint responsibility in both fair weather and foul, and that work tasks are shared between them in such a way that the operation will run smoothly.

A tentative division of shared leadership into four different forms (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2003) formed the basis on which the interview questions for this study were drafted. The point of departure for that division was whether sharing was hierarchically equal or not and whether responsibilities/powers and work tasks respectively were held in common or divided. Hierarchically equal sharing was taken to include joint leadership[2] (common responsibility and common work tasks) and functionally divided leadership (common responsibility and divided tasks). Extensive parity between a manager and an assistant (divided responsibility and common tasks) was characterised as shadow leadership (cf. the co-leadership of Heenan & Bennis, 1999), while "matrix leadership" meant both responsibilities and tasks being divided but with a pooling of personnel.

The shared leadership phenomenon, then, incorporates relatively unreflected and immature views concerning both its nature and the value to be put on it. Yankelovich (1991) describes

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[2] "Samledarskap" in Swedish.

three stages on the way towards "public opinion" having attained a reflected and firmly based view of something: "consciousness raising", "working through" and "resolution". During the first stage the general public becomes aware of the actual existence of a certain phenomenon. Phase two involves the individual working through the conflicts, ambivalences and defence mechanism aroused by this unknown phenomenon. Solutions of a cognitive, emotional and moral nature are then devised. Yankelovich describes this as an endeavour based on reconciling conflicting values and making them compatible.

Methods

The results are based on data from telephone interviews – conducted in 2004 – with managers at a representative sample of workplaces, in both the public and private sectors, having at least 10 employees. The study proceeded by two stages. In the screening stage the HR manager (or equivalent) stated the number of managers at different levels in the workplace. A sample of these managers were then asked whether they shared their leadership. The response rate was 70%. For an exhaustive presentation of the method, see Döös, et al. (2005).

The sample has been upscaled by a weighting procedure to correspond to the manager population in Swedish working life as regards the breakdown by sectors and number of employees in the workplace. Estimates indicated a total of some 350,000 managers at Swedish workplaces with ten or more employees. The results are generalised to this population. Given the response rate for the study, the weighting meant that the replies corresponding to an estimated 313,000 managers. Following non-response analysis (based on register data for the workplace and the HR manager's perception of the occurrence of shared leadership), the replies have been assumed to be representative of the manager population in Swedish working life. Base numbers from the weighting procedure have been used as base numbers for percentage calculations in the study; the percentages given should be treated as approximations. The size of the sample limited the extent of subdivision possible with reliability unimpaired. The weighted material is based on a total of 404 interviewees.

Background variables in the manager population in Swedish working life

Tables 1 and 2 show the breakdowns of a number of background variables. More than half the managers (54%) were in the private sector, 46% in the public sector. The breakdown in terms of workplace size was such that nearly half the managers (46%) were to be found in small workplaces, 25% in medium workplaces and 29% in large workplaces.

Table 1. Percentages of managers to which the managers in the survey are generalised, by sector, workplace size and industry. N = 313,000.

	Percentage managers in Swedish working life
Sector	
Private	54
Public	46
Total	100
Workplace size	
Small workplaces (10-49 employees)	46
Medium (50-199)	25
Large workplaces (200-)	29
Total	100

Industry	
Raw material extraction	1
Manpower-intensive manufacturing	15
Manpower-intensive services	28
Knowledge-intensive services	15
Welfare service production	39
Capital-intensive manufacturing	2
Total	100

Table 2. Percentages of managers to which the managers in the survey are generalised, by gender, age, managerial level, and no. years standing as manager. N = 313,000.

	Percentage managers in Swedish working life
Gender	
Women	37
Men	63
Total	100
Age	
20-29 years	3
30-39 years	17
40-49 years	38
50-59 years	38
60- years	4
Total	100
Managerial level	
Senior	38
Middle	16
Junior	46
Total	100

The managers were asked questions about their position and whether they themselves practised any form of shared leadership (formally decided or in practice only, division of tasks and responsibilities), what name they gave to their sharing and if so, what they shared, how and with whom. The most specific questions were addressed to those sharing formally and equally. The interviewees were also asked for their opinions on shared leadership.

Definitions

A categorisation by Härenstam (2005) was used for the presentation of industrial identity. It groups activities according to organisational, managerial, competence-related and market-related similarities. In the screening, shared leadership was narrowed down to the question of whether the HR manager (or equivalent) knew whether any of the managers in the workplace shared responsibility for their managerial duties, i.e. whether there were managers who assumed joint responsibility and made joint decisions in their managerial capacity and thus shared the task of management between them.

In the manager interviews shared leadership was operationalised in a process of stepwise definitions. The least precise form concerns those who share one way or another. In the next step it was distinguished between those who share leadership by virtue of formal decisions and those who share on a parity basis only in practice. Definitions will now be given of the names employed in the study. See also Figure 1.

1. Sharing one way or another: The least specific level. Leadership is shared with one or more others, formally or in practice (i.e. without a formal decision), on a parity basis.

2a. Sharing the managerial position formally: a formal decision whereby two (or more) managers share the same managerial position and accordingly, the overarching responsibility for the operation or unit concerned.

2b. Sharing in practice (only), sharing informally: no formal decision to share the position, but in practice responsibility for managerial work tasks is shared with one or more others.

3a. Sharing formally and unequally: formally sharing the same managerial position, as subordinate (deputy, vice etc.) or as superior manager to the person one shares with. Subdivision of 2a.

3b. Sharing formally and equally: formally sharing the same managerial position with someone else without any formal ranking order between the managers. Subdivision of 2a.

4a. Joint leadership: subdivision of 3b, having subordinate responsibility and all types of work tasks both formally and in the practical, everyday context wholly or mainly *in common* and holding separate appointments.

4b. Sharing functionally: subdivision of 3b, having subordinate responsibility and all types of work tasks both formally and in the practical, everyday context wholly or mainly *divided* and holding separate appointments.

4c. Other equal sharing: others formally sharing the same managerial position with someone else on an equivalent level. Subdivision of 3b.

### Occurrence and extent of different forms of shared leadership

Shared leadership occurs everywhere in Swedish working life, in different sectors and industries, at all managerial levels and at workplaces of different sizes. Altogether 41 per cent of managers in Swedish working life share their leadership one way or another. Formally (15%) or in practice only (26%), they share their managerial position with one or more others, and in this way all of them assume an overarching responsibility for the operation. Nearly one manager in ten (9 per cent) shares leadership on an equal basis. Five per cent practise the most far-reaching form, joint leadership, sharing equally in both formal and practical terms and sharing both work tasks and responsibilities. See Figure 1.
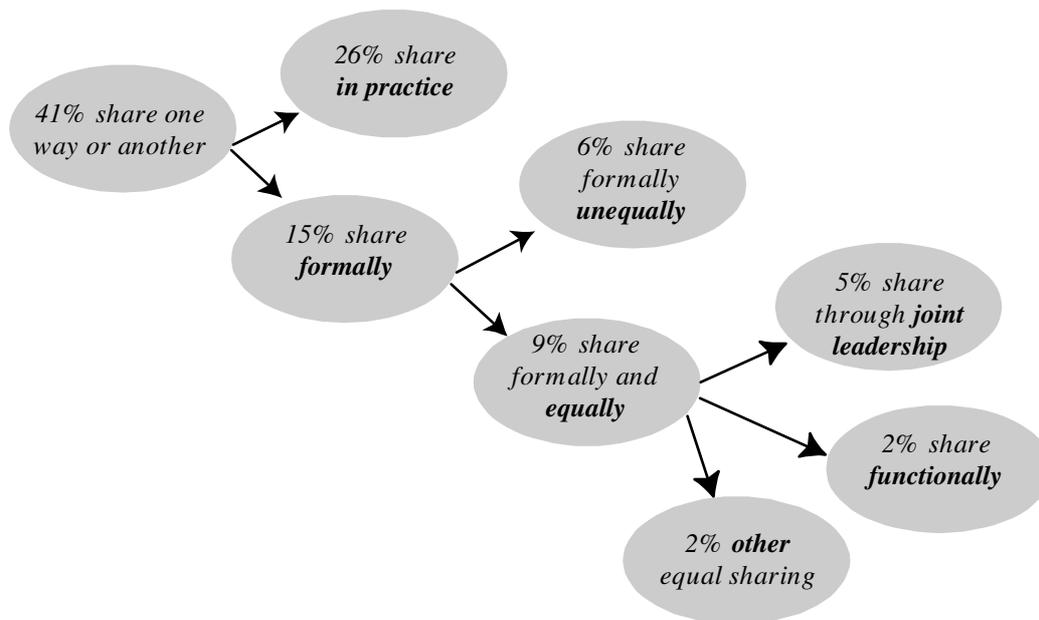
Figure 1. Occurrence of different forms[3] of shared leadership, n=404.

Most sharing managers do not give any name to their way of being managers together. Shared leadership is the commonest of the expressions mentioned. Other names used by managers are co-operation and shared responsibility or joint leadership, pair leadership, shared management, management team and executive management. Some use expressions specific to certain activities, e.g. head teachers, head teacher team and (hospital) department management. Team, teamwork and team-based leadership occur, as well as shared ownership, a matrix, coaching and single-bureau concept.
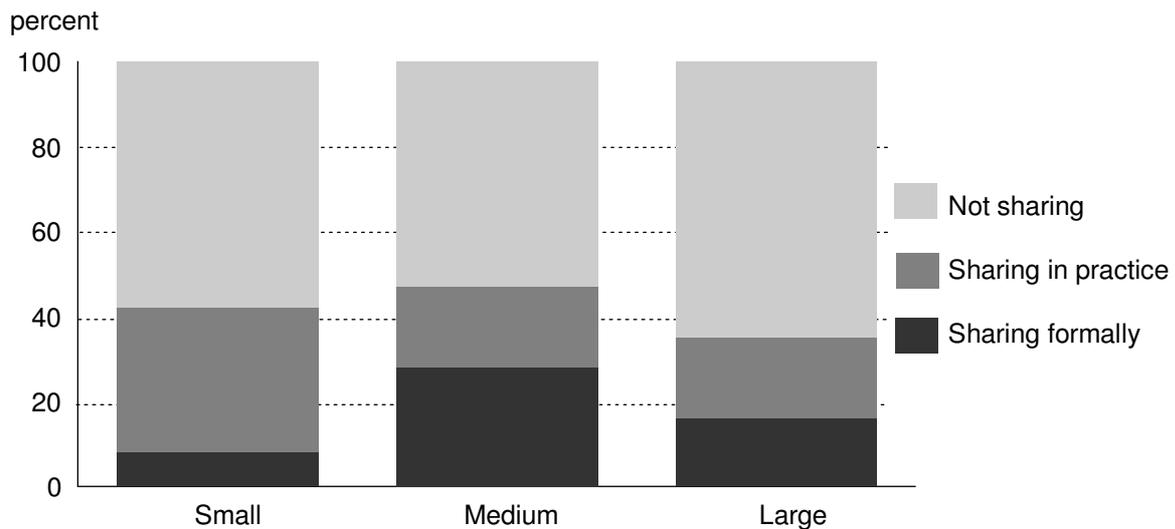
The practice of managers sharing leadership one way or another is equally common in both the private and public sectors. Formal and equal sharing is most often found in the public sector and at lower management levels. Sharing in practice only, on the other hand, is somewhat more common in the private sector. See Figure 2.
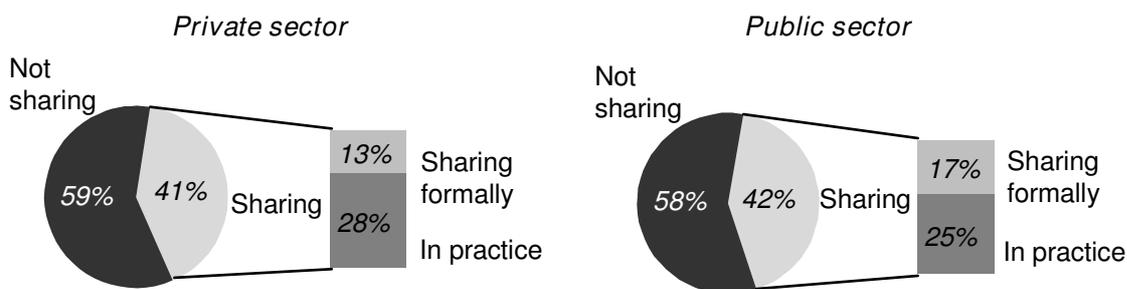
Figure 2. Percentage of private and public sector managers sharing leadership by formal decision and in practice only, n=404.

Shared leadership in one form or another exists among managers in both small, medium and large workplaces. It is particularly common in medium (46%) and small (43%) workplaces. Formally shared leadership, like the formally and equally shared leadership, is most widespread in medium-sized workplaces, 28% and 15% respectively. In small workplaces, sharing is mostly in practice (34%). See Figure 3.

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[3] Sharing in practice and unequally, respectively, are not subdivided in the figure, for reasons connected with the feasible scope of the interview questionnaire.

Figure 3. Percentage of managers in small, medium and large workplaces sharing leadership respectively by formal decision and in practice only, n=404.

The proportion of managers sharing leadership one way or another varies from one industry to another, ranging from 36% to 52%[4]. It is most widespread in the manpower-intensive service sector, which for example includes retail trade, goods distribution, service production and brokerage. Formal sharing too is somewhat more widespread in manpower-intensive services than in other industries. Sharing in practice, without any formal decision, is quite evenly distributed between different industries.

All forms of shared leadership exist at all managerial levels. Sharing one way or another, like formally and equally shared leadership, is more frequent at lower than at higher levels; see Figure 4. Purely informal sharing is equally common at all management levels.
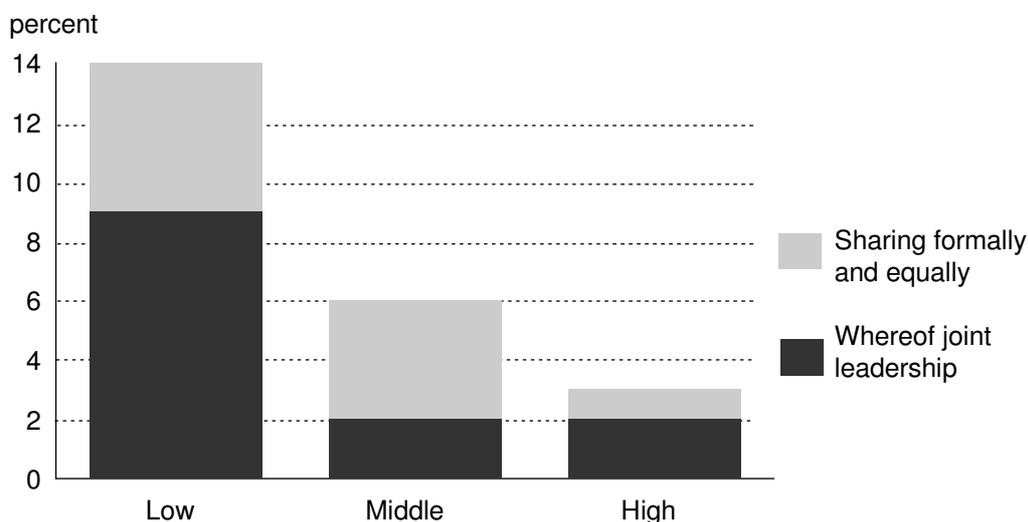

Figure 4. Percentage of managers at different management levels, by formally and equally shared leadership and joint leadership, n=404.

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[4] The percentages for Raw material extraction and Capital-intensive manufacturing have not been included, because the survey sample for these two industries included too few people.

Background factors and constellations

Those sharing leadership are for the most part experienced managers of various ages, with men and women equally represented as in the population of managers in Sweden. Women more often than men practise shared leadership with formal decision-making powers, while men tend more often to share in practice only. See Figure 5. Women also share formally and equally more often.

Sharing formally (n = 52)   *Sharing in practice (n = 96)*
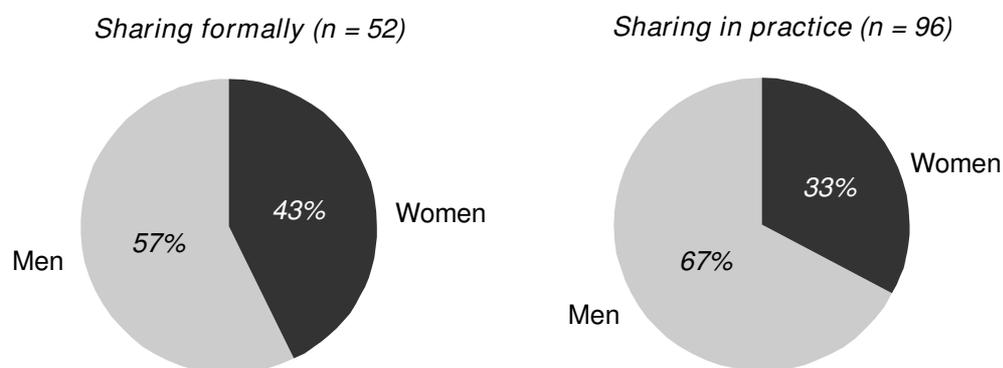
Figure 5. Percentages of male and female managers respectively sharing leadership by formal decision and in practice only.

The age structure of those sharing leadership one way or another roughly agrees with the age structure of managers in Swedish working life. Those formally sharing their leadership are on average slightly younger than the group of sharing managers as a whole.

The length of time for which the managers have been practising shared leadership is four years or less for over half of those sharing in one way or another. Experience of shared leadership has also been relatively short among the managers sharing formally, and still more so among those stating that they share in practice only. See Table 3.

Table 3. No. years as manager with various forms of shared leadership. Percentages.

	Percentage				
No. years as manager	Managers in Swedish working life (n=404)	Sharing one way or another (n=149)	Sharing formally (n=52)	Sharing in practice only (n=96)	Sharing equally (n=31)
< 2 years	6	5	0	7	0
2-4 years	20	23	29	20	15
5-8 years	21	23	24	24	23
9-12 years	11	15	17	12	23
>12 years	42	34	30	37	39
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Sharing with one person is the commonest arrangement, but almost one-third of those sharing leadership do so with more than one other person. See Table 4. The commonest arrangement is men sharing with women. Mixed-gender constellations and women sharing with women come second. Pair constellations (two persons sharing) are commonest both among those sharing formally and in practice, and among those sharing formally and equally and on a joint leadership basis.

Table 4. No. persons the sharing managers share leadership with.

No. persons sharing with	Percentage (n=149)
One person	62
Two persons	15
Three persons	13
Four or more persons	5
Don't know/no reply	5
Total	100

All-men constellations are commoner in the private sector, which matches the sectoral breakdown of the sexes among managers in Swedish working life. All-men constellations are commoner at senior management level, while at the junior management level there is a larger proportion of all-women constellations. All-men constellations are more extensively to be found in small workplaces, all-women constellations in large ones.

Discussion and conclusions

In this study a search has been made for equal assumption of responsibilities or alternatively for a formal mandate for decision-making, both individually and together, affecting the full range of responsibilities attaching to the managerial post. A total of 41% of managers share their leadership one way or another and 9% practise hierarchically equal sharing, meaning that the managerial position is shared between two (or more) persons as equals. Shared leadership is not a form of leadership exercised to a higher degree by women. The fact of more men than women, totally speaking, sharing leadership mirrors the balance of the sexes among managers in Swedish working life, with men outnumbering women.

What do the results really tell?

41% and 9% can both be regarded as high figures for the occurrence of shared leadership. It all depends on fears or expectations. What figure can be taken as the conclusion of this study depends on what is meant by sharing leadership. Without putting the bar for inclusion too low, a number of those sharing formally but unequally should be added to the 9% sharing equally, because both previous and ongoing studies show that there are managers who practise joint leadership in every respect, apart from the absence of a formal decision in the matter. Joint leadership of this formally unequal kind (cf. Heenan & Bennis, 1999) has for example been found between two Ericsson unit managers (Wilhelmson & Döös, 2000; 2002), between certain head teachers and their assistants and between pre-school superintendents. Of those sharing (solely) in practice, a particularly large number are *highly* positive concerning shared leadership (Döös, et al., 2005). Sometimes too, it seems to take a while before an organisation is ready to formalise an informally shared leadership (cf. the experiences of national team captains in Döös, et al., 2003a). A further reflection concerning the 9% practising equal forms of sharing is that, in order for the replies to be included in this category, the managers had to have separate posts. This entails an underestimate, in that, for example, managers sharing a managerial post in very close co-operation and working half time each have been left out. Part of the aim of this study was to single out the managers

sharing leadership in a manner going beyond traditionally divided co-operation. In this respect, 15 or 20% sharing leadership seems a reasonable estimate.

As its purpose makes clear, this study also has an exploratory approach referable to the problems caused by lack of uniformity, concepts and terminology where shared leadership is concerned. The question is whether the difficulties of measuring, defining and delimiting the shared leadership phenomenon are also connected with the general existence of strong elements of co-operation in management and leadership tasks, elements manifested both in the stricter forms of shared leadership which we set out to capture from the beginning, but also in all manner of co-operation and in more or less indistinct management structures – structures involving the participation of many others besides those appointed as managers. This is the case, for example, when, for legal reasons, one person is put down as manager on paper but responsibility is really divided between five people who are 95% active in their respective professions and each devote 5% of their working time to operational leadership. Or in undertakings where, in addition to managers, the top executive management includes project and theme leaders with no managerial powers whatsoever.

The subject illuminated by this study thus includes additional interesting phenomena worth noticing, namely the host of co-operative arrangements and forms of interaction which managers form part of and resort to in order to administer, lead and direct their activities. It might possibly be that all the tasks which managers find worrying to cope with (Tyrstrup, 2002) have in fact led to a widening of co-operation as a means of maintaining order, directing towards visions and creating good opportunities and conditions for the associates' accomplishment of their duties and operational tasks (Döös, 2004; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2002; Moqvist, 2005).

Actually, then, the results shed light on two phenomena which could be construed as tendencies or trends in present-day working life. First there is the fact of a fairly large number of managers in Swedish working life variously interacting, co-operating and sharing responsibility with one or more other persons in their managerial capacity. Secondly, it is an articulation of the form of leadership which is here referred to as joint leadership and is perhaps the genuinely shared leadership.

Unlike many other leadership trends imported from the USA (Björkman, 1997), shared leadership at middle management level and for first-line management can be described as a Swedish model – a model that fits in with systems where organisational solutions based on autonomous teams, groups and associates are common in the Swedish workplace (Backström, 2003; Nilsson, 1999; Sisson, 2000), i.e. systems in which power is delegated and shared in other respects as well (cf. Sally, 2002; Wistrand, 1978).

A new phenomenon, a new trend?

During the authors' six years of researching shared leadership, there have been signs of it becoming increasingly common. The situation for managers in Swedish working life apparently demands alternative ways of being a manager, and media, employer and unions alike are both observing the possibilities of shared leadership (for managers) and taking an interest in its possible drawbacks (for associates). Others, however, point out that shared leadership is nothing new and say that joint management was in Sweden being practised in the 60s and 70s, inspired by the sharing pairs of that time, e.g. in sport, and sharing was also already practised by the ancient Romans (Sally, 2002). Insofar as shared leadership in our time is to be regarded as a new trend, a reasonable interpretation appears to be that this on the one hand applies to the most far-reaching form (i.e. joint leadership) and on the other is a matter of something – co-operation – already in existence becoming visible.

The managers in the survey stating that they share leadership have as a rule not had very long experience of the practice. More than two-thirds have been sharing for four years at most. This can, but need not, suggest that shared leadership is a phenomenon which grew more widespread in the late 90s and early years of the 21st century. Given the lack of accepted concepts and the low maturity level of the phenomenon (Yankelovich, 1991), this can be seen as an indication of the survey having studied a phenomenon which neither people in general nor the managers actually sharing leadership have put words to.

Many of the people sharing leadership today are doing so on their own initiative, in their own way, with various names for the practice or none at all. If shared leadership as a form of management becomes increasingly visible and acknowledged as a result of the positive experiences of managers who have created their own forms of co-operation, the danger is that organisations in future will appoint managers to be leadership pairs without giving a thought to the preconditions which then also have to be in place. The fact of as many as 98% of those sharing leadership reporting a quite positive or very positive attitude to shared leadership (Döös, et al., 2005) does not, however, suggest that managers have been thrown together against their wishes and with inadequate preconditions. Earlier studies (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2003; Döös, et al., 2003a) have stressed that sharing leaders need to have a platform of shared values, confidence and indifference to prestige. In addition they need sufficient time for colloquy (especially in the early stages) and co-ordination, and they must be able to cope with differences between them in order to benefit from those differences, and they must beware of being played off against each other by their personnel.

Shared leadership is no easy phenomenon to delimit. The study shows present-day managers to have close co-operation in many different constellations and on a variety of issues. Apart from this making it hard to distinguish the managers sharing all responsibility between them from those otherwise co-operating, it is interesting to note the extent of informal and formal co-operation. Insofar as shared leadership is a new trend, a reasonable inference seems to be that it is concerned with different demands which favour co-operation between managers, management co-operation which is now becoming visible and is also seeking formal basis. Today's Swedish leadership is co-operative.

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