Leading, sensemaking and the future
Leadership in times of crisis

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Absorbing uncertainty & establishing a framework of orientation

Open communication of contingencies of decision making
Call for leadership in crisis situations ➔ Expectation to lead ➔ Over-taxing the role of leaders?
Leading in crisis situations

Sensemaking

Future temporal perspective of things to come
Non-crisis situation => „normal life“

past | present | future

meaning as continuous
Non-crisis situation => „normal life“

continuity construction

continuity experience
„What is going to happen? What will the future bring? I do not know, I have no presentiment. When a spider flings itself from a fixed point down into its consequences, it continually sees before it an empty space in which it can find no foothold, however much it stretches. So it is with me; before me is continually an empty space [...].“
Søren Kierkegaard, Either | Or
If we take up Kierkegaard's metaphor, then in crisis situations we find ourselves in free fall.
Reconstitution of meaning

a) How does something come to be an event?
b) What does an event mean?
c) What should we do now?
The constitution of a crisis

„no glory“ \hspace{1cm} „times for heros?“

\textit{crisis prevention}

manifestation of a crisis

contested terrain!
The constitution of a crisis

to create urgency

„Drop your tools“

repeal the „law of instrument“

Get new tools!

... but how?
Leadership

• fast decision-making
• in an unprecedented way
• for a collective

As a possibility of:

to lead =
to constitute and to make use of an
asymmetric situation
of influence
Leadership

to lead =
to constitute and to
make use of an
asymmetric situation
of influence
Leadership

A

sense of urgency
tool dropping

new tools

purpose

B

crisis

sensemaking

leading

influence

following
Leadership

sense of urgency  tool dropping new tools  purpose  crisis sensemaking

leading

influence

following

why?

rational shared framing

faith and trust in the framing

rational approach ↔ emotional approach

“This is a pandemic!”  “physic distancing”  “home office”  “home schooling”  “flatten the curve”
Leadership

A

sense of urgency

rational approach

B_1, B_2, B_3, ..., B_n

shared framing

faith and trust in the framing

B

rational approach

emotional approach

reasons

leading

crisis sensemaking

new tools

purpos

sense of commonality

influence

following

why?

“This is a pandemic!"

“physic distancing”

“home office“

“flatten the curve”

“home schooling”
making sense within the crisis
making sense within the crisis
making sense within the crisis
Leadership = absorbing uncertainty

unfolding by leaders & followers

“acting-as-if”
....there’s a lot more to say, of course...
….but I hope I've inspired you to think further!
Thank you for watching, take care & stay healthy!