Joint Leadership in the Perspective of Transformative Learning

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Abstract
Joint leadership is the object of study in an ongoing research project. The paper aims at investigating whether the mutual learning process in joint leadership pairs have transformative qualities. Seven pairs of leaders at middle management level, in Sweden, were chosen for the study. They were picked out because of their proven ability to stimulate development and reach solid economic results within their units for five consecutive years or more. The work places belong to different lines of business within the private and public sector and vary in size between 20 and 200 employees. The analysis of the learning processes draws on the theory of transformative learning. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the 14 leaders. Although the seven pairs come from different lines of business, they describe their work and their assessment of the joint leadership in similar ways. The findings point at the existence and significance of: core values; a supporting relationship with joint responsibility and authority; an organization of everyday work processes in fast and short cycles of co-operation; joy and hardships; complementary personalities and abilities; common sense-making and critical reflection as driving forces in daily work tasks and of personal development for the leaders themselves. Differences in opinion between the leaders were used in a joint search for problem solving. Joint leadership provides potential for transformative learning through a deliberate examination of different points of view, through explicitly talking about habits of mind, and through stepwise changes of existing frames of reference, most often in an accumulative way. To conclude, the results indicate that joint leadership offers a potential for a deepened learning process in daily work in a communicative relationship where profound values and ways of acting are openly shared and critically reflected upon. Keywords: Leadership; Joint leadership; Learning; Transformative learning.

Introduction
In this paper focus is on joint leadership, i.e. two people who act as leaders together. Seven pairs of leaders, at middle management level, have been studied. They were chosen because of their proven ability to develop their units. The aim is to highlight this form of leadership, the relations and interaction within the leader pairs and the special possibilities for learning it implies for the managers that are part of it. According to their own point of view, what are the working ingredients in the learning process that takes place, that make the leaders competent in developing their units? And, how can these working ingredients be understood in the light of the theory of transformative learning?

In the research literature on leadership, different forms of non-single leadership are rarely treated at all. Mostly when it occurs it is at CEO-level\(^1\) (Daft 2001; O'Toole, Galbraith & Lawler 2002), when enterprises are being merged (Troiano 1999), as shared leadership in teams (Pearce & Conger 2003), or as mentor and protégé relationships of co-leadership (Heenan & Bennis 1999). The focus in this paper is different and below the concept joint leadership will be used to define situations where two persons in practice share work tasks, responsibility and authority.

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\(^1\) Chief Executive Officer
Theoretical perspective

The theoretical departure is the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1991, 2000) and the possibilities it offers of analysing learning processes in communication and interaction. The reason for the choice of transformative learning theory (TLT), is that it deals with a deepened learning process based on critical reflection/self reflection. This phenomenon is experienced by the joint leaders, according to their own statements. Through the main theoretical concepts the work processes of joint leadership can be analyzed and understood also as processes of learning. Learning as a way to handle change.

Two main theoretical concepts in TLT are “habits of mind” and “points of view”. Taken together, these constitute the selective “frame of reference” through which perceptions are filtered (Mezirow 2000). A frame of reference consists both of cultural paradigms and idiosyncrasy from the personal history. The habits of mind and points of view are developed in tune with the social, historical and cultural currents in society. Learning within existing frames of reference means developing meaning structures since long taken for granted. Critical reflection is needed for a person to be conscious of her/his distorted assumptions. But to free oneself from personal or cultural limitations in the world-view, one also needs to develop an ability for critical self-reflection – to see through constraints that have become part of one’s self-perception and obstacles for development.

Perspective transformation leads to a revised frame of reference, and a willingness to act on the new perspective. A new way of acting is the clearest indication that a transformation has occurred. A transformation may be sudden and dramatic as well as cumulative over a long period of time. Mezirow (2000) speaks of ten phases of transformation, when meaning becomes clarified, as the process of (individual) transformative learning:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (ibid:22)

According to Mezirov, a disorienting dilemma creates a state of disequilibrium concerning assumptions earlier taken for granted, which is the trigger of perspective transformation. This is how the learning process could be understood when it emanates from problems or dilemmas and is managed through critical assessment of assumptions.

Transformative learning, on a collective level (as between the joint leaders), involve perspective change in a communicative context (Wilhelmson 1998, 2002). Perspectives may change in different ways in this context, through broadening, shifting and/or transcending. **Broadening** within a perspective means that no change of perspective occurs, statements are confirmed or ignored. This can be seen as an assimilative process. **Shifting** between perspectives means that a discussion occurs where different opinions meet. This creates a state of disequilibrium, which might open up for perspective change or alternatively get stuck in debate. The **transcending** of perspectives creates a common and qualitatively new understanding. A collectively built new knowledge emerges that could not have been developed from one perspective only. This can be seen as an accommodative process where everyone is adapting to the assessment of reason as they collectively build a new
understanding. The transcending of perspectives is the engine in collective transformative learning. Thus the individual focus of the transformative learning theory can be applied to a small group; individuals learn through the interaction between the members of the group.

Research method

Data from an ongoing research program\(^2\) on joint leadership (Döös & Wilhelmson 2003a, 2003b; Döös, Wilhelmson & Hemborg 2003) have been used for an analysis of the joint leaders experience of their work together. Seven leadership pairs were chosen for the special study accounted for in this paper, they were picked out because of their long (five years or more) and successful work together. My hypothesis was that those pairs have had an opportunity to develop a relationship and ways of interacting that are part of their successful management. Four of the pairs work within the private sector (no 1-4) and three within the public sector (no 5-7), altogether 11 women and three men, see Table 1.

Table 1. The leadership pairs and the interviews made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair no</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Years as joint leaders</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Interview focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 Woman 1 Man</td>
<td>Telecom</td>
<td>5 (1995-1999)</td>
<td>200 engineers</td>
<td>2 individual 1999 1 both 2000</td>
<td>Development processes Development and joint leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 Men</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>7 (1998-2004)</td>
<td>22 players, 13 team members</td>
<td>1 both 2001</td>
<td>Joint leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 Women</td>
<td>Management consulting</td>
<td>5 (1997-2001)</td>
<td>60 consultants</td>
<td>1 both 2002</td>
<td>Joint leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 Women</td>
<td>Public relations</td>
<td>7 (1994-2000)</td>
<td>20 consultants</td>
<td>1 both 2002</td>
<td>Joint leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 Women</td>
<td>Compulsory school</td>
<td>11 (1994--)</td>
<td>120 teachers</td>
<td>2 individual 2005</td>
<td>Joint leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 Women</td>
<td>Elderly care</td>
<td>11 (1994--)</td>
<td>50 nursing staff</td>
<td>1 both 2004 2 individual 2005</td>
<td>Joint leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2 Women</td>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>12 (1993--)</td>
<td>50 pre-school-teachers</td>
<td>2 individual 2005</td>
<td>Joint leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data consist of 13 semi-structured interviews with the 14 leaders, some individual (8) and some with both leaders at the same time (5), as is shown in Table 1. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Since we discovered the phenomenon of joint leadership in a study including pair no 1, the first interviews with that pair were not focused on joint leadership as the following interviews were. The interview guide used for pairs no 5-7 was a little more elaborated than the one used for pairs no 1-4 since we then had learnt more what to ask for.\(^3\)

All seven pairs developed their units and reached solid economic results. Their business activities were all documented as successful in different ways, economically as well as measuring customer and employee satisfaction. Some of them won prizes (3, 5, 6) or acquired high ranking in performance quality (1), one pair was certificated by Investors in People (5).

\(^2\) The research team consists of several researchers at The National Institute for Working Life in Sweden besides the author of this paper: Tomas Backström, Marianne Döös, Marika Hanson and Åsa Hemborg.

\(^3\) Henceforth the pairs will be referred to in the text by their number in Table 1.
Some took on units or groups with a lot of problems and made them work (1, 5, 6, 7) one of them influenced their organisation to make joint leadership the main leadership form (7).

The interviews have in this paper been analyzed with a view to how the leader pairs themselves describe their internal relationship and their ways of co-operating. Those aspects have been selected that the leaders themselves emphasized as important for the way they work together, and that are relevant in an analysis of their collective learning, such as shared core values, a supportive relationship, a common work process, being complementary to each other, sense making and critical reflection, and personal development.

**Findings**

In what follows, a number of quotations from the interviews will be used to illustrate the above-mentioned aspects of joint leadership.

**Core values**

The joint leaders emphasized the necessity of having common values, deeply rooted in a humanistic outlook on persons, being non-prestigious, mutually trusting, loyal and generous towards one-another. This basic platform of core values made it possible to work towards common goals, the leaders stated. Their lived reality, commonplace conceptions and the day-to-day processes were altogether imbued with these core values.

- This was when we started to think about this with empowerment and that there obviously is a power in the individuals and a belief in individuals. (1)
- We work a lot with participation, both by players and leaders. Besides being responsible for their own areas, we try to get everyone, both players and leaders, to feel involved in the work and to have an opinion about everything. (2)
- A further foundation is the belief that you are not allowed to exploit people. I think that each and everyone has the right to be treated as the person he/she is and with the need for personal development that everyone has. (3)
- To trust completely in the ability of others, firstly to want to do good, that is actually one such thing that I often talk of, that you need to believe that people do things because they want to do good. (4)
- Because that is our fundamental approach. To listen. Discuss and talk. We believe that the talk leads to something better than that we could first see ourselves. (5)
- I think that it is so important, partly because we feel a great confidence in each other one really feels that one can trust one-another, that we have the same core values. Non-prestigious, stuff like that. (6)
- We have tried to build up an organisation that is founded upon exactly this commonality, the participation and responsibility, which also leads to improved learning, we think. (7)

As a consequence of these core values the leaders organized their units to work in collective collaborative forms, with distributed responsibilities and a developed communicative infrastructure for meetings and talk.

**Relationship**

A close and tightly knit relationship between the two leaders made joint leadership a way of being together, as when they said things like “one of us sat us down” (4) or “our intuition” (1). The joint leaders emphasized the importance of choosing the right partner. Companions are not interchangeable, and it takes time to build a relationship – to trust and have confidence in one-another, to develop common values and let go of one’s prestige-mindedness. It is a process to develop as joint leaders.

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4 The quotations have been somewhat edited and also somewhat concentrated. The first names used have been invented.
- And since I have a different view on things, it would never have been possible if you hadn’t been so generous in giving up space and listening to this…it is very important to be generous, that there is room for confidence. (1)
- We have really benefited from, when we entered this, not to view what we did together as only self-fulfilling, but that we would grow together. (4)
- And it is about building up trust between one-another. That takes a while to do. Get to know one-another and such…And that you are not prestigious. And that you show solidarity towards one-another and cover for each other when the wind blows. (5)

Thus the joint leaders described a supportive relationship with joint responsibility and authority, which they compared to that of a marriage. One of the pairs (4) even used a therapist at one time to get to the bottom of their relationship: Shall we go on together or not?

The relationship made the leaders strong as a pair. It gave them strength to uphold development and quality work and not get stuck in daily operative tasks. It also made them headstrong in relation to their organisation, to their own manager, to their colleagues and to their employees. Joint leadership gave the leaders a stability to construct themselves as leaders, without being so dependent on the co-construction of leadership that normally takes place between leaders and followers. Together they could decide how to act in front of the employees and what messages to send.

- She cleaves the wind and I follow one step behind, so we were probably a non-defeatable combination. We were stronger than most when we were two. (1)
- If my boss above me came and said: Run in that direction in this work! Then there were two of us to get the courage to say no, that we won’t agree to that. Had I been the only boss I might have agreed to it because I hadn’t had the strength to argue, hadn’t felt brave enough, to stand up to it. So you get more courageous above all, I’d say. We became strong, we became courageous, we became better reasoned, because we were two and could bandy ideas with each other. (3)
- It is easier to cope if you are two than if you are only one, because to develop an organisation you need to be both stubborn and persistent, and when you feel that you are not up to it perhaps the other one has the strength to take over and carry on. Something I think we would have had great difficulties in was, we took over a work team where there were some difficulties among the personnel, and there I doubt that I would have coped if I’d been alone, considering the amount of troubles we had. (6)
- Upwards, we get stronger because there are two of us that can push for things. And yes, it could be that we have more power vis-à-vis the employees also because we are two. I can well imagine that this can be the case that you have more strength if there is something you have decided to do that is not so popular or is less nice to carry through. (6)

The leaders meant that they had to be observant upon the risks of becoming too strong together and thereby closed without the ability to open up, firstly towards the employees.

- You cannot risk driving too fast. The risk is that you support one-another so much, which is a risk. I don’t think that we have done that just because we are out so often listening to people and respect what others think. But the risk does exist that you get so coordinated in this leader team that you instead become cemented. (2)

The strong relationship was built upon a firm intention by both leaders to really share, and share alike the position, they both appreciated the usefulness of it. Thus, at the bottom of the relationship there were warm feelings of approval and of being friends. The leader pairs had a relationship that supported stability based on feelings of trust and safety and of being confident in and generous towards each other. But, as we have seen, the mutual strength also needed to be carefully handled in relation to other people in their workplaces.
**Work processes**

Continually the leaders prepared the everyday process of common work in fast and short cycles of co-operation. Preparing things together, to achieve the same outlook, created the force to act.

- In practice, no matter what tasks that lie ahead, we make a rough plan, then divide the work between us so that one of us work out a more detailed suggestion. Then we get together again. That is, we sort of enter in and out of a kind of process activity the whole time. (2)

The leaders had to handle problems, and they were not always in agreement from the beginning but discussed between themselves until they agreed on practical issues and on strategic plans. They acted as each other’s sounding board. Problem solving and resolution of difficulties through ongoing communication seemed to be the tool for the joint leadership. Never being on your own, always having someone equally interested to talk to about everything was seen as an advantage. Thus the joint leaders supported each other in difficulties and in handling crises. This support also included joy as a driving force in the daily work. Joint analysis of setbacks and shared joy in times of success made them learn from mistakes and gave them energy to go on.

-A joy that is shared is a joy made double somehow because when you are successful you always have someone to share it with and that is much more fun, to say that we did it together: Look, they are satisfied with us and we got this assignment! And then you have someone to toast with, that is not much fun to do on your own. …I can think that this of winning on your own, that is really boring. (4)

- I think that the be-all and end-all in work is the ability to spread some joy. And that is one of the most important things that we leaders have to do, to be positive. I don’t mean to say that we run around like rays of sunshine, but we need to be able to laugh and see possibilities all the time. And by being two and not having to worry so much over those hard things, because we are two, that is only half, it also creates more space for laughter. Being able to laugh at one-another, to laugh with each other. To organize nice parties for the personnel where we can support them and show them that we appreciate them. These are important things that may sound banal, but when you are two everything is so much more fun when you do it. (7)

The leadership often meant hard work, hardships were part of the leader pair’s joint journey.

- We met a lot of resistance. It had its price, that much I can say. It has been tough but we’ve still wanted to see whether it would actually work. Working with group processes is really exciting…Today we can laugh about it. Talk about it in the executive group: Do you remember how it was? And I actually don’t think they realized how much it hurt us. Because we didn’t show what we…Yet there were two of us. But we were still upset about it. (5)

Problems occurred at times when, for different reasons, they didn’t have the strength to stand up for each other. One of the pairs (1) got problems when they merged with another unit and tried to manage as three leaders, for a short period of time. At different intervals the managerial work got out of balance in some of the pairs due to personal weaknesses, lack of experience or an imbalanced distribution of the work tasks.

- Being a boss in our kind of work, it’s a role you take on when you have to make difficult decisions, which probably no one can influence. And I think it is I that have to take on that role a bit more often than Colleen actually do. (7)

- At the beginning I had to deal with more of the hard things, I had been a manager longer, but now things are more equal. (6)

**Complementarities**

The joint leaders considered themselves complementary in capabilities and talents, which meant that their weaknesses could be balanced and their strengths better used. They consciously handled their shortcomings and made use of their different personalities; in that way complementary capabilities also developed over time. They noticed different aspects of
things and took on different roles, which made the relationship both dynamic and energetic. The leaders described themselves as different in ways that allowed time and space for reflection without slowing things down: while one of them is more thoughtful, careful and analytic the other is more daring, fast and unafraid or a “doer”. Or, they describe it as while one is more social and easygoing, the other comes out as harsher.

- It was really stimulating to work with Jenny, because I came to deal with more soft aspects; how people work. And I have never seen anyone use their tentacles in the way she does, to catch what happens and how things feel. And how she manages it, we can talk about a production manager, why he takes the decisions he does. And she manages to bring out the essence of how he thinks when he does the things he do. Things I have never thought of before! (1)
- And then we are different. Ann, she is straighter to the point: Now we know what to do, let’s do it, don’t sit there and dawdle! And I am more thoughtful. But when we do it together, when we formulate our common path,…we find a wider path, one that is less winding than mine and not as hectically straight as Ann’s, but has the good parts from both our sides and then we always reach longer; the sum of our differences always equals more. (3)

They managed the work alike but thought differently. Because of a mutual respect for each other’s ways, personalities and knowledge, and with no intention to change each other, they could take advantage of their personal differences.

**Sense-making**
The joint leaders claimed to both think and act together. They saw, heard and experienced each other in action. By jointly making sense of things they also developed ability for common action. Mutual interests and responsibilities were reinforced by shared and thorough thinking, and through ongoing conversation and action together on an everyday basis. To think, talk, draw, make visible for each other, to continuously verbalize and visualize things makes everything clearer, the leaders said.

- But it is time-consuming, and then you have to kill your darlings, that is, not core values, because then it wouldn’t go, but your own ideas. You have to think like this: Yeah, this would have been really fun to try or this might have been the best solution, but now we don’t take that one but another one. You have to realize that this can be at least as good, it wasn’t my idea, but it might become even better. (4)
- You discuss and talk to each other before you do things. You are better prepared. You have analyzed things more. You’ve had to formulate what it is you want… You are together in different settings, which means that in meetings and different situations there are two experiences of what happened. That you can reflect upon afterwards. (5)
- We reach decisions that have been thoroughly discussed. So when we finally make the decision we know which decision we’ve taken and that we stand for it… Because what you can think is that it takes a lot of time, but when you think about it afterwards it is this that makes us feel that the decision is well worked-out. If I am on my own I will immediately do things. But when there are two of us we discuss: How do we think and what do we do to make this positive when we move on?… As two you have already started discussing things, and you continue, and it isn’t that obvious that you just go ahead and do things that way. I think this later is mirrored also in our work with the pedagogues, that you are open for discussion in situations where there is room for discussion. (7)

Thus, they felt comfort in the common sense making process; their understanding became well grounded since it integrated different aspects and connected values to practice. To talk things through was a work that paid itself in a greater readiness to make fast decisions out of a mutual feeling for what needed to be done.

**Critical reflection**
Mutual and critical reflection on problems and difficulties, as well as the formulation of new ideas, was essential for handling the shared tasks of management. The leaders said they had outspokenly agreed to criticise each other’s ideas. They examined each other’s way of
working on a daily basis. But to question one another also demanded mutual respect and the ability to listen to feedback and critique, they stated.

- We have said that what’s most important in working like this is to critically examine each other all the time. So, if one of us comes up with an idea, or says let’s do this, then the other one should say: Are you sure that is good, or? That way you get two fresh eyes on an idea. If you are on your own, well, then you are pretty pleased. But like this, there are always new questions: Is this the best way? …So I have never experienced that I have been equally well prepared in a football job before as in this one with Robert. But it is extremely important I think that you have a respect for one-another and dare be critical if there is a need for it. (2)
- We think alike most of the time since we stand on the same (value) ground. But we also disagree. And we can discuss that. And we can disagree in front of the group also. I think it is good that they see that we don’t always agree. (5)
- We have some kind of game between us; we look through situations that might arise. I can provoke her so that she can try things out on me. If she has to sit in a tricky situation with someone in the staff and explain something, then I can be the staff and try to live the part. She starts the conversation the way she intends to do it. And then I answer her in a way that she has to react to. That way she has already met the worst resistance and comments by trying it out on me. We have some sort of role-play almost. (5)

Through critical reflection new approaches could be found, according to the leaders. An example of how Pair 6 discussed their differences with regard to the employees can serve as an illustration:

Researcher: Do you have differences with regard to the personnel? For instance, when one thinks this the other often thinks that?
Victoria: No, I don’t think so. It depends on what’s up; it can be one of hundreds of different things when you have a lot of personnel. That you see things from different perspectives and look at things differently, I think.
Elisabeth: Yes, you can see people differently.
Victoria: Exactly. But that is rather important that you can do, I think, that is, I see things one way and feel that Elisabeth doesn’t see that, that we are far apart. To still be able to sit and talk about it and feel as if we can meet halfway. And that you are allowed to say: ‘That is not what I feel, that is not how I see things.’ I think it is rather important that you can do this. And not feel defeated, but that it is quite natural. You hear different things.
Elisabeth: And I think that it is an asset, this that we see things differently, it has to be an asset in development possibilities. Because there wouldn’t be any development if I was to sit on my own and think, because things are seldom black or white, but often in between, you can angle things differently, and look at things differently. I think that it is good to be able to see things differently. Researcher: Do you think that you often have to compromise with your own view of things or is it rather that you move to another position and start to see things also from the other persons perspective?
Victoria: I think that it is both. You have to make compromises with yourself, and feel that even the highway isn’t all straight, it also has sidetracks. So you have to feel that you have to try and think of things from both aspects. But sometimes it is hard, definitely.
Elisabeth: Mmm. It is a process. That also happens sometimes within yourself, that you have to change your mind.
Victoria: Yes, and it is good for you.
Elisabeth: To think again.
Victoria: Absolutely. Yes, I think so, it is.

What these leaders point to, in other words, is the necessity of critical reflection for their own personal development.

**Personal development**

The joint leaders claimed that they helped each other’s development through the common work process. Each of them became a more reflected leader, thus being two had brought with it also personal development. Their own learning was an everyday achievement through the common sense making and critical reflection.
- And to be able to grow also in everyday work, in the moment. For this is what we get all the time when things work well, by sharing things, that even if you have just written something, it is sort of up for discussion immediately. (4)
- And it is a weakness that I sometimes avoid things that make me less popular. Then I think that I have improved in this. I have learnt a lot from Judith. You can be well liked even if you don’t say yes all the time or always are positive. You can still be respected. (5)
- Sensitive and open, yes I think it has changed me. Yes, I think I have changed for the better actually. There I can see that this of being both boss and leader has changed me. When I worked alone, I was more of a boss all the time. As a matter of fact. (7)

To be forced to continuously handle change also demanded continually changed understanding, the leaders stated. Since they had the work tasks in common they had to develop this understanding in common. They talked and changed their way of thinking and said they did this without prestige.

**Concluding discussion**

The special working conditions that joint leadership gives rise to – shared work tasks, authority and responsibility – seem to create a particular breeding ground for leaders to develop in their work. To share work tasks almost forces the leaders to develop together. When they discuss how to handle the many problems they have to face they develop their points of view, and when they encounter problems that pose an ethical or moral dilemma they force each other deeper into a discussion of core values with epistemological and ontological dimensions. In this way and over time they encounter each other’s habits of mind and maybe also challenge each other to do epistemological shifts (Kegan 2000). Thus, the leaders were constantly and deliberately subjected to each other’s points of view. They did this to critically reflect on everyday work, but they also developed a strategic thinking in the long run by explicitly talking about habits of mind, for instance their core values. It is these common habits of mind that provide the stability upon which the constant development work rested that the leaders carried through in their respective units.

In facing challenges and problems the joint leaders place themselves in a situation beneficial for transformative learning, in the first phase of disorienting dilemmas. Since they have a close access to each other they gain the strength to deal with doubts and insecurity and develop creative solutions. They train themselves to get through the various phases of the transformative learning process. They learn that the hard phase of critical assessment of assumptions will lead to a common and better ability to lead their respective units. They do this thoughtfully and yet with speed, and get the strength from being two, thus they can avoid getting stuck in any of the transformative phases. In this way, joint leadership provides potential for transformative learning through stepwise changes of existing frames of reference, that is, in an accumulative way. This might be understood as a deepened learning process in daily work through a communicative relationship, where profound values and ways of acting are openly shared. Together they shifted and transcended each other’s perspectives, and they also made use of other’s deviant perspectives, mainly those of their employees. Thus, through collective transformative learning the joint leaders developed a new, third, alloy of knowledge, possible for both of them to act on the basis of.

The conditions for developmental learning among these leaders are thus partly the stability provided by common core values that give security and direction for the future, partly an ability for openness through critical reflection and critical self-reflection that opens up for creativity. In other words, while the leaders’ focus is on developing their work, parallel to this they develop themselves, as a by-product. They develop as individuals and they develop as a team when they together build up a competent relationship (Döös 2004).
To conclude, the results indicate that joint leadership offers a potential for a deepened learning process in daily work in a communicative relationship where core values and ways of acting are openly shared and critically reflected upon. For transformative learning to occur in joint leadership, safety and trust, together with openness, and a habit of questioning and critically reflect on things, seem to be important. Having equal power, and complementary competencies and interests, also seem important. Dialogue within management is something solitary leaders never get access to. The leaders in this study came from different lines of business and yet, similarities emerge between their descriptions of how they work together, and how they assess the values of joint leadership. No differences due to organizational structures or activities, or gender differences, could be seen in this data, which might be due to the selection of highly successful pairs. A broader selection will maybe give other results when it comes to learning processes for the leaders. This remains to be studied. In the cases selected here the transformative learning quality offers an opportunity for the leaders to be strategically prepared for the future, and avoid getting stuck in concerns for more immediate, transaction-governed tasks. It creates scope for forward thinking and a long-term approach to work. Problems are solved and innovations are created through the mutual and open-minded, continuously ongoing learning processes of a transformative quality.

References