OPINION LEADERSHIP IN AN ORGANIZATION CHANGE CONTEXT - CASE STUDY FINNISH FORESTRY COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

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Opinion leadership phenomenon is widely used in marketing literature, especially from the view of diffusion of innovations. However, studies on social networks and leadership literature indicate that the opinion leadership phenomenon can be found from all parts of society. With an organizational view on the phenomenon, this case study research focuses on the opinion leadership phenomenon in an organizational change context.

The case study organization was facing an organizational change in the Autumn of 2019. First the organization members were asked via questionnaire to name a person who has affected their opinion of the change. On the second part of the case study, after analyzing the survey results, the persons who gained the most nominations were interviewed to study the opinion leadership phenomenon in this case context.

The main findings were that the opinion leadership phenomenon was divided inside the case organization and that it could be observed also on other persons than persons acting on supervisory positions. Also, all the opinion leaders interviewed in this case study thought they can influence people around them and that the influence is done both knowingly and unconsciously. The opinion leaders defined situations where the influence attempts might happen, such as meetings and gatherings involving several people, but also one-to-one discussions between the employees and supervisors were mentioned. It also seems that the nominated opinion leaders might have acted as change agents inside the organization during the organizational change.

Keywords: Opinion leadership, Power, Influence, Social networks, Change in organization

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1 INTRODUCTION

As of finalizing this research paper there are ongoing presidential elections in the United States. I find it highly interesting how opinions are flown out from different parties in the media without necessarily having any factual context. For an external person on the whole process, it seems also quite puzzling that a global company such as Twitter is marking these tweets and opinions involved related to the election process by categorizing them if they are disputed or not. It raises a question: what actually influences those voters and votes cast? Already in 1940 Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948) studied the voting behaviour in their Voting study. The study made findings, that for example individuals who made their voting decision on the latter part of the vote or changed their voting decision were more inclined to mention that the role of personal influence had an effect in their voting behaviour. In the same study the importance of the flow of personal influence was noted and that opinion leaders can be found at every level of society who are very much like the people they influence (Katz 1957).

I have always been fascinated about social networks and influencing. While studying leadership and management I stumbled into this phenomenon defined as opinion leadership and when researching the phenomenon, I noticed the vast majority of research is focused on it from the marketing and consumer behavior -perspective. For example, Rogers (2003) has adapted the opinion leadership phenomenon (two-step flow model) for the diffusion of innovations theory popularized by him. While this focus is also interesting, I am more keen on the phenomenon itself and how it is expressed in an organizational context. As Valente and Pampuang (2007) write, opinion leaders are not necessarily the earliest adopters of innovations and instead tend to monitor the climate of opinion and exercise their influence when the advantages of new ideas are apparent.

Cambridge dictionary defines an opinion leader as follows: “A person whose opinions about something such as a product or issue have a big influence on the opinions of others (Cambridge University 2020) and the website provides an example that the computer technicians are often opinion leaders. As Valente & Pampuang define opinion leadership: “Opinion leaders are people who influence the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of others” (2007, 881). I see there is a difference in depth between these two definitions, so I think it is prudent to study the phenomenon and definition based on earlier research articles to create a defining framework for the term in the theoretical framework section. Also, on the literature review I will portray different aspects that are involved in opinion leadership in an organization context such as how power is used and what is the basis for social networks in organizations. I will also shortly grasp the role of change agents in the literature review.

This case study will not focus on the particular change in the case organization in a way whether the change was for good or the way the change was received and implemented in the organization: my research objective for this case study is to study the opinion leadership phenomenon happening in an organizational change context. The case study is conducted between 2019 October and 2020 Spring as the case study company was facing an organizational change in the Autumn of 2019. The research questions are:

1. Can opinion leadership –phenomenon be observed also on other organization member positions than on members who act on supervisory positions?

2. Do people chosen for this case study-interview from an organization experience they are influencing others knowingly and how do they reflect on the phenomenon through interview?

The case study consists of two parts: first a voluntary survey was sent to the approximately 90 employees of the case organization in order to nominate possible opinion leaders inside the organization and a simplified social network analysis was conducted. In the second part of the case study, I interviewed four case organization employees nominated as having affected others' opinion considering the change and using applied thematic analysis analyzed the interview data within this case study, and the answers are showcased in the results-section. I conclude this case study with discussion and implications for future research based on my case study findings.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature and theoretical framework for my case study consists of the study of opinion leadership phenomenon in earlier research studies, theories on power and interpersonal influence, social networks as part of the organization and finally the role of change agents in the change process. I will start by familiarizing some chosen earlier studies on opinion leadership phenomenon. The second chapter of literature review will start with the basis of power theory by Raven (2008) as he reviews the theory as the opinion leaders are noted to exert influence. The power theme continues with the article by Elias (2008) as he makes indication on Ravens power/interaction model of interpersonal influence. The framework for power theories is concluded with Brauer and Bourhis (2006) research article on Social power -literature and their The Powerful and The Powerless as actors - model.

To provide the framework for social networks (and organizations) I have chosen first the Kilduff & Tsai (2003) book "Social networks and organizations" to provide the basis for social networks definition and building blocks and then for the second part of social networks chapter I have chosen a case study example from Cross and Thomas (2009) where culture and strategy were aimed to align using social network by way of organizational network analysis. Finally, even though I am not studying the particular change in this case study, I have chosen two articles providing insight for the role of change agents in a planned change.

2.1 Opinion leadership

I have chosen three different research articles to define the opinion leadership phenomenon for this case study. The decision made on these three articles is because of their different, but also similar, characteristics to define the phenomenon. In the first article Katz (1957) is studying the original "Voting study" with the aid of three other study settings to test the Two-step flow of communication hypothesis where opinion leadership plays a vital role. The second article by Valente and Pampuang (2007) provides ten identification techniques to seek out opinion leaders for future health programs, the identification model stemming from a vast literature review of opinion leadership phenomenon in the field of healthcare. The third article portrays a business case by Harkola and Greve (1995) where the technology diffusion between Japanese construction sites studies the opinion leadership phenomenon. These three articles act as the framework to define the opinion leadership phenomenon in my case study.

2.1.1 The Two-Step Flow of communication: An Up-To-Date Report on a Hypothesis

In the research article Katz (1957) is studying the "The two-step flow of Communication "-hypothesis, according to which the effects made by the media are first reached by opinion leaders who then, according to the hypothesis, influence other people. This hypothesis grounds on the original book "The People's Choice" (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet 1948) and compares the original study "The Voting Study" from the book to four other study settings utilizing the hypothesis (Katz 1957). As Katz states:

> These studies will serve as a framework within which an attempt will be made to report on the present state of the two-step flow hypothesis, to examine the extent to which it has found confirmation and the ways in which it has been extended, contracted and reformulated. More than that, the studies will be drawn upon to highlight the successive strategies which have been developed in attempting to take systematic account of interpersonal relations in the design of communications research, aiming ultimately at a sort of 'survey sociometry' (Katz 1957, 62).

The voting study was organized in 1940 (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948) and led to original formulation of the hypothesis of the two-step flow of communication. Katz (1957) names three distinctive findings from the study. The first observation is the role of personal influence which Katz portrays by an example considering voting behaviour. Individuals who had made their voting decision on the latter part of the vote, or changed their voting decision, were more inclined to mention that the role of personal influence had an effect on their voting behaviour. It was also noted that personal contacts appeared to be more frequent and more effective than mass media in influencing voting decisions. (Katz 1957.)

The second finding according to Katz was the flow of personal influence, which was tried to determine by portraying two questions to individuals in order to single out the opinion leaders. The questions were: "Have you recently tried to convince anyone of your political ideas?", and "Has anyone recently asked you for your advice on a political question "(Katz 1957, 63). When opinion leaders were compared to others it was observed that they were more interested in the ongoing election. As Katz writes:

> And from the almost even distribution of opinion leaders throughout every class and occupation, as well as the frequent mention by decision-makers of the influence of friends, co-workers and relatives, it was concluded that opinion leaders are to be found on every level of society, and presumably, therefore, are very much like the people whom they influence (1957, 63).

The third observation was the link between opinion leaders and mass media. Compared to the rest of the population, opinion leaders were found to be more exposed to radio and newspapers, to the formal media of communication. (Katz 1957.)

Katz (1957) compares observations made from the original voting study between four later studies organized in different parts of society. "The Rovere study" (Merton 1948) was organized gradually as questionnaires and interviews for a small New Jersey town in order to define the influencing members of the community. Hundreds of nominations were mentioned in response and those who were designated four times, or more were considered as opinion leaders. After this phase, the nominated people were interviewed. (Katz 1957.) The first difference between Rovere study and The Voting study is the definition of opinion leadership according to Katz: "First, there is a difference in the conception of opinion leadership. Whereas the voting study regards any advice-giver as an opinion leader if he influences even one other person (such as a husband telling his wife for whom to vote), the leaders singled out by the criterion employed in Rovere were almost certainly wielders of wider influence" (1957, 66). The second difference according to Katz was that The Rovere study took for granted the role of interpersonal influence in decision making and its relative effectiveness compared to mass media as Rovere study proceeded to try to find people who play key roles in its transmission. (Katz 1957.)

"The Decatur study" was organized between 1945-1946 by interviewing persons who had been defined as influential by other people. The aim for the study was not only the perceived opinion leaders, it focused also on personal influence and the relation between the opinion leader and the person making the nomination, opinion leader/advisor -advisee dyad. (Katz 1957.) As the dyad could be constructed by following from an advisee to adviser, it was also possible to do the other way around by first talking to a person claiming to be the advisor. Then a snowballing method was used to also offer the opportunity to study to which extent people claiming to be opinion leaders were confirmed to be so by advisees. But as Katz writes, the study goal itself started to change:

> But about the time it became evident that this goal was within reach, the goal itself began to change. It began to seem desirable to take account of chains of influence longer than those involved in the dyad; and hence to view the adviser-advisee dyad as one component of a more elaborately structured social group (1957, 67).

The Elmira Study (Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee 1954) later portrayed that the opinion leaders themselves often reported that their own decisions were still influenced by others. The Decatur Study also noted that opinion leadership could not be viewed as a trait which some people possess but instead that the opinion leader is influential at certain times and that the opinion leader is empowered to be so by other members of their group. (Katz 1957.)

As a fourth study example Katz examines the "The Drug Study". The study was conducted to determine how doctors make decisions to adopt new drugs (Katz 1957). Doctors with relevant specialties were interviewed in four different cities. In addition to background, attitudes, drug-use, exposure to various sources of information, each doctor was interviewed to name three colleagues they talked most frequently about cases, three colleagues they saw most often socially and three colleagues to whom they looked for information and advice.

(Katz 1957.) This was later used to mapping of the networks and interpersonal relations and also provided the basis to study the diffusion of specific items/drugs getting acceptance. One of the findings for the study was that doctors who adopted the new drug early were more inclined to participate out-of-town medical specialty meetings. Also, it was possible to deduce the role of social relations in a doctor's decision making using the doctor's own answers on social influence and from the location of the doctor in the network map. (Katz 1957.)

Comparing these studies with the original The Voting study, Katz (1957) made some findings that he categorizes as:

1. The impact of personal influence
2. The flow of personal influence
3. Opinion leaders and the mass media

On the impact of personal influence Katz first notes the comparison with personal and mass media influence. For example, it was found in the Decatur study that personal influence was more frequent and effective than the influence of mass media. (Katz 1957.) The second factor for the impact of personal influence was homogeneity of opinion in primary groups, meaning for example in the voting study when homogeneity of political opinion was indicated among members of the same families and among co-workers and friends (Katz 1957). Katz also writes of the role of mass media:

> The 1940 voting study explored some of the reasons why personal influence might be expected to be more influential in changing opinions than the mass media: It is often non-purposive; it is flexible; it is trustworthy. It was suggested that the mass media more often play a reinforcing role in the strengthening of predispositions and of decisions already taken (1957, 71).

As for the flow of personal influence, Katz writes that it appears the influence is related to (1) personification of certain values, (2) to competence and (3) to strategic social location. Social location also divides into whom one knows inside the group. Katz continues, that influence is often successfully delivered because the influencee wants to be as much like the influencer as possible. (Katz 1957.) The Elmira study (Berelson et al. 1954) also found slightly greater concentration of opinion leadership among more educated people on each socio-economic level implying the necessity of competence. In the Rovere study (Merton 1948) it was reported that the leadership of the local influentials was based on their central location in the network. Individuals can also be influential not only because people inside their group look to them for advice but also regarding whom they know outside that group (Katz 1957).

The third aspect for the two-step flow of communication hypothesis is the assumption that opinion leaders are more exposed to mass media. There is support for this assumption in the studies, for example in the Drug study as Katz writes:

> The drug study showed that the influential doctors were more likely to be readers of a large number of professional journals and valued them more highly than did doctors of lesser influence. But at the same time, they were as likely as other doctors to say that local colleagues were an important source of information and advice in their reaching particular decisions (1957, 76).

To conclude Katz ponders on opinion leaders:

> Opinion leaders and the people whom they influence are very much alike and typically belong to the same primary groups of family, friends and co-workers. While the opinion leader may be more interested in the particular sphere in which he is influential, it is highly unlikely that the persons influenced will be very far behind the leader in their level of interest. Influentials and influencees may exchange roles in different spheres of influence. Most spheres focus the group's attention on some related part of the world outside the group, and it is the opinion leader's function to bring the group into touch with this relevant part of its environment through whatever media are appropriate (1957, 77).

The emphasis on the two-step flow hypothesis is on the interpersonal relations as channels of communication. According to Katz there are at least two additional ways on how the interpersonal relations influence decision-making. The interpersonal relations are also sources of pressure to conform within the group, but also sources of social support. (Katz 1957.)

2.1.2 Identifying Opinion Leaders to Promote Behavior Change

Using opinion leaders to promote behaviour change is a concept that can be found in many health promotion models (Valente & Pampuang 2007). But as often opinion leadership is identified with the diffusion of innovations model, that definition might not always be prudent as Valente and Pampuang write:

> Opinion leaders are not necessarily the earliest adopters of innovations, although by definition they often embrace an idea before the majority does. Opinion leaders tend not to be the earliest proponents of new ideas as this might be risky and jeopardize their opinion leadership position. Instead, opinion leaders tend to monitor the climate of opinion and exercise their influence when the advantages of the new ideas are apparent or when it is clear that norms will change (2007, 882).

So rather than waiting for opinion leaders to learn about new health practices, efforts are now made to identify the opinion leaders and use them as change agents. In this article, by describing opinion leader identification techniques, Valente and Pampuang aim to help future health programs attempting to use opinion leaders. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.) The identification techniques were created by the researchers after comprehensive review of literature in five different health-related search engines:

> Because various terms can be used interchangeably with the term opinion leader(s), a search was performed using the following search terms: opinion leaders, health

advocates, lay health advisors, health champions, promotoras, behavior change agents, celebrities, community leaders, and peer leaders (2007, 889).

Valente and Pampuang define methods, techniques, advantages, disadvantages and instruments used for identifying opinion leaders according to their review on literature using cursory and systematic methods. Ten techniques for identifying opinion leaders are portrayed as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each method (Valente & Pampuang 2007). On the definition and usage of opinion leaders Valente and Pampuang state:

> Opinion leaders are people who influence the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of others. This simple definition, however, masks a rather extensive literature on defining leaders and leadership. The roles and activities of leaders and leadership span numerous political, social, economic, and public health issues. Opinion leaders have been used in public health to gain support for and implement community health programs. The use of opinion leaders, and discussion of techniques used to identify them, is likely to increase as health promotion programs become more community oriented (2007, 881).

Table 1 and Table 2 below are created by Valente and Pampuang (2007, 883-884) to define opinion leaders, with the aid of categorization made from previous studies.

Table 1. Methods, Techniques, Advantages, Disadvantages, and Instruments Used for Identifying Opinion Leaders

Method	Technique	Advantages	Disadvantages	Instruments
1. Celebrities	Recruit well-known people who are national, regional, or local celebrities	Easy to implement Preexisting opinion leaders High visibility	Contradictory personal behavior Difficult to recruit	Media or individuals identify
2. Self-selection	Volunteers are recruited through solicitation	Easy to implement Low cost	Selection bias Uncertain ability	Individuals volunteer for leadership roles
3. Self-identification	Surveys use a leadership scale and those scoring above some threshold are considered leaders	Easy to implement Preexisting opinion leaders	Selection bias Validity of self-reporting	When you interact with colleagues, do you give or receive advice?
4. Staff selected	Leaders selected based on community observation	Easy to implement	Staff misperceptions Leaders may lack motivation	Staff determines which persons appear to be opinion leaders
5. Positional approach	Persons who occupy leadership positions such as clergy, elected officials, media, and business elites	Easy to implement Preexisting opinion leaders	May not be leaders for the community Lack of motivation Lack of relevance	1. Do you hold an elected office or position of leadership? 2. Are you a member of any community organizations? Which ones?
6. Judge's ratings	Knowledgeable community members identify leaders	Easy to implement Trusted by community	Dependent on the selection of raters and their ability to rate	Persons who are knowledgeable identify leaders to be selected and rate all community members on leadership ability

(continued)

TABLE 1 Methods, Techniques, Advantages, Disadvantages and Instruments Used for Identifying Opinion Leaders (Valente & Pampuang 2007, 883).

Table 1. (continued)

Method	Technique	Advantages	Disadvantages	Instruments
7. Expert identification	Trained ethnographers study communities to identify leaders	Implementation can be done in many settings	Dependent on experts' ability	Participant observers watch interaction within the community and determine who people go to for advice
8. Snowball method	Index cases provide nominations of leaders who are in turn interviewed until no new leaders are identified	Implementation can be done in many settings Provides some measure of the social network	Validity may depend on index case selection It can take considerable time to trace individuals who are nominated	Randomly or conveniently selected index cases are asked who they go to for advice Those nominated or a random selection of those nominated are also asked this question
9. Sample sociometric	Randomly selected respondents nominate leaders and those receiving frequent nominations are selected	Implementation can be done in many settings Provides some measure of the network	Results are dependent on the representativeness of the sample May be restricted to communities with less than 5,000 members	Randomly selected sample or cases are asked who they go to for advice
10. Sociometric	All (or most) respondents are interviewed and those receiving frequent nominations are selected	Entire community network can be mapped May have high validity and reliability	Time-consuming and expensive to interview everyone May be limited to small communities (i.e., less than 1,000 members)	All respondents are asked who they go to for advice

TABLE 2 Methods, Techniques, Advantages, Disadvantages and Instruments Used for Identifying Opinion Leaders (Valente & Pampuang 2007, 884).

The first method to identify opinion leaders in order to support behaviour change is to recruit celebrities who are already pre-existing opinion leaders in their communities. The advantages are that they are highly visible and are usually accustomed to being in the spotlight. They often also enjoy taking on causes that are important to them. The disadvantage on the other hand is that their behaviour may contradict with the message hoped to be endorsed. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

Self-selection technique requires recruitment of individuals volunteering to be opinion leaders. Individuals identified with this technique are not necessarily leaders in their community but are motivated by personal reasons. Self-selected opinion leaders are often referred to as peer educators or mentors. There are many advantages for this technique (such as that it is cost efficient in a health behaviour promotion context) but the main disadvantage is that they may not be perceived as opinion leaders by the people whose behaviour is desired to be changed. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

Self-identification requires individuals to fill out a survey measuring their perceptions of their own opinion leadership qualities. One advantage of this method is the identification of pre-existing opinion leadership within a community, but the disadvantage may be the bias of the responders in their answers. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.) Staff selection technique requires the staff to select opinion leaders based on information from observation inside the community. This method has been used for example when researchers have recruited health advisors to promote awareness. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

The positional approach allows the selection of opinion leaders based on their occupational or organizational roles in the community. These can be for example elected officials, church leaders, community organizers etc. The positional may be more reliable than staff selection as with the positional approach defined people occupy specific roles that have societal value. The disadvantage for this method is that these "formal" leaders may not be perceived as leaders inside the "informal" community. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

The methods involving Judges' ratings and expert identification both rely on knowledgeable individuals within the community to identify the opinion leaders. The judges- rating leans on informants and the expert identification on trained scientists to determine possible opinion leaders. The disadvantage in expert identification is it depends on the abilities of the expert. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

The last three methods all capitalize social network analysis methods in order to identify the opinion leaders within a community. The Snowball method uses a randomly selected sample who are interviewed and asked to nominate others in the community who are considered opinion leaders. The disadvantage of the method is that it is dependent on the individuals selected randomly, also called the index cases. Sample sociometric method also uses social network analysis, but in this method, it starts with a representative sample to point out the opinion leaders. The data is then analyzed to determine who in the community receives nominations. The difference between sample sociometric and snowball methods is that the sample sociometric has a much larger data sample. In addition, with the limitation with the individuals, the sample sociometric method also needs clearly defined borders for the sample, such as schools or organizations. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.) The tenth method, sociometric, may provide the most valid and reliable means for identifying the opinion leaders according to Valente and Pampuang as all community members are interviewed and social network analysis is created. The advantage of this method is that the entire community structure can be mapped and centrality techniques can be used to seek out opinion leaders. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

Opinion leadership is a function of at least three qualities which consists of the leaders' values and traits, their competence or expertise or their social position meaning who they know, who knows them and how accessible they are (Valente & Pampuang 2007). The 10 opinion leader identification techniques may differ on how they capitalize those qualities. As Valente and Pampuang state, self-identification method may provide a good measure of the leader's values and traits but sociometric methods may provide better insight of their social position (2007). The second factor for opinion leader identification is as written by the researchers:

> A second factor that might influence opinion leader selection method is the behavior change process being activated or the theory guiding the program. Opinion leaders influence behavior in their communities through at least four pathways. They (a) raise awareness, (b) persuade others, (c) establish or reinforce norms, and (d) leverage resources. Awareness refers to the opinion leaders' greater visibility making their actions more visible to others. This greater awareness increases the likelihood that others will adopt the behavior, because awareness is often the first step to behavior change. Persuasion refers to opinion leaders' overt attempts to convince others to engage in a behavior (Valente and Pampuang 2007, 891).

As for reinforcing norms, this refers to the message sent by the opinion leader inside the community on which kind of behaviour is popular. Leverage on the other hand refers to the adoption of behaviour. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

To conclude, Valente and Pampuang state that:

> A person identified as an opinion leader through expert identification (#7) and peer nominations (#8-#10) is most likely a highly regarded opinion leader and may be well suited to leading a behavior change program. Using multiple methods may also facilitate identification of both formal and informal community leaders who are important for motivating and sustaining behavior change (2007, 894).

In this research article the opinion leader phenomenon was utilized in different communities to promote behaviour change, especially in the field of healthcare. It was noted that the role of an opinion leader has been important to start the process and communication towards healthcare-program partners. In addition to this, opinion leaders are acting in their communities as role models in the behaviour change processes and can also act as an asset supporting aimed goals. Opinion leaders can also continue to influence community members long after a specific health program is dismantled. (Valente & Pampuang 2007.)

2.1.3 The Role of Opinion in the Diffusion of a Construction Technology in a Japanese Firm

The research was conducted on two large metropolitan areas in Japan. The aim of the study was to study the diffusion of construction site -technology utilizing social network analysis to define the influence of the opinion leaders. In the research article Harkola and Greve (1995) create the basis for the assumption that even in large and multidimensional organizations there are individuals who can affect the decision making of another person and the distribution of technology. Researchers Harkola and Greve note that one key player for the diffusion of innovations research is the opinion leader and that an opinion leader can be considered as an informal leader. (Harkola & Greve 1995.)

The technology to be studied in this research was a rheological foam method and it is used to stabilize the cutting face for the earth pressure balance type of shield tunneling. The study was conducted with a structured interview in english and the questions were positioned to map out the pivotal interaction structures in construction sites. The site personnel were identified and divided into tunnel specialists (110), technology-experts (28) and finally into the sample was added important co-workers for the respondents until the sample totalled 209. 90 of them were interviewed and the rest were sent a questionnaire by fax. (Harkola & Greve 1995.)

Based on the interviews and questionnaires Harkola and Greve (1995) utilized two different software platforms to analyze the database and create closeness centrality and to portray mapping of opinion leaders. Based on this the researchers chose four persons with a high influence in the social network mapping and named them as formal opinion leaders for the study since all of them had formal authority for the development and dissemination of technology (all of them which happened to be technology experts). The researchers then selected four of them for the study. After this the researchers erased all the rest of the technology experts from the study analysis and then chose six people with the highest closeness centrality as informal opinion leaders. (Harkola & Greve 1995.)

In this phase the research was then divided into comparison between two tunnel worksites. In the area 1 the foam technology was used by 95% of the personnel, meanwhile on the area 2 the percentage was 60. Harkola and Greve (1995) evaluated the influence of opinion leaders on diffusion by relating general technical exchange between project decision makers and opinion leaders with project utilization of the foam method. The researchers then used a multiple nominal logistic regression analysis to test the effects of opinion leaders. (Harkola & Greve 1995.)

The results showed that only two formal opinion leaders had an effect on the probability to take the new foam method into use. One of the opinion leaders was even observed to have a negative effect on the process, which might have resulted from the slow development on the area 2. Harkola and Greve (1995) add that formal opinion leaders might have had a weak influence depending on where they were positioned, but also that on the social network there might have been other, more influential, factors than the formal opinion leaders. Taking from the six informal opinion leaders only one proved to be as active on all interaction levels studied on the network, but that person also proved to be a negative opinion leader. One informal opinion leader had a positive effect on the use of the foam method and another one a negative effect. (Harkola & Greve 1995.)

Harkola and Greve conclude in their research article that opinion leaders did have a moderate effect on the diffusion of new technology in their study. As Harkola and Greve write:

> The ability of opinion leaders to influence decision-making may be related to the development of group norms. Opinion leaders can be seen as repositories of organizational "know-how," and this research implies that they are able to influence decision-making. This study showed that opinion leaders may have a decisive impact in local social environments. People in the two main areas had come to divergent understandings regarding the appropriateness of foam use (1995, 255).

Regarding informal opinion leaders the researchers ponder:

> We found that the most central site people 'informal opinion leaders' gave information to potential users during the diffusion. Their influence on utilization may be in developing or keeping with group norms. Do opinion leaders represent the norms of the group? If so, does negative opinion leadership mean that the group opposes the innovation? Once differing opinions become "fact" it could be more difficult to mitigate the impact on the group consensus regarding the technology's efficacy (Harkola & Greve 1995, 255).

2.1.4 Definition for an opinion leader in this case study

From the opinion leader identification methods described by Valente and Pampuang (2007) I have chosen the one method the researchers describe as "sample sociometric". Sample sociometric utilizes social network analysis in order to seek out possible opinion leaders inside the case study organization, as the researchers note that a person defined through expert identification or peer nominations is most likely to point out a highly regarded opinion leader. According to Katz (1957) opinion leaders are very much alike the people they influence and that they usually belong to the same primary groups such as family, friends or co-workers. Valente and Pampuang (2007) offer more detailed definition as they describe opinion leaders as people who influence the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations and behaviours of other people. Valente and Pampuang (2007) also add that opinion leadership is a function consisting of three qualities: the opinion leaders' values and traits, the opinion leaders' competence or expertise or social location and how accessible they are. Harkola and Greve (1995) found in their study that opinion leaders had an effect on the diffusion of new technology and that the opinion leaders could be seen as repositories of organizational know-how and that the opinion leaders are able to influence the decision making inside the organization. Based on these three research articles I see that an opinion leader in this case study context would be a person who influences others' opinions inside the case organization and that the person is possibly nominated by other members of the organization such as co-workers. As the original voting study described by Katz (1957) regarded any advice-giver as an opinion leader if they influenced even one person, I focus on the opinion leadership phenomenon in a similar way, but I will focus to study the phenomenon by possibly interviewing only those that gain most nominations inside the case organization.

2.2 Power

2.2.1 Bases of Power

In the research article "The Bases of Power and the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence" (2008) Berthram H. Raven summarises their work regarding the study of bases of power. The original work "The Bases of Social Power" (1959) by French & Raven has provided groundwork for decades for other researchers studying power from different views. Raven defines social influence and the six bases of power as the follows:

> In our initial papers (French & Raven 1959; Raven 1965), we first defined social influence as a change in the belief, attitude, or behavior of a person (the target of influence), which results from the action of another person (an influencing agent). Social power was defined as the potential for such influence, the ability of the agent or

> power figure to bring about such change, using resources available to him or her. These resources are represented in six bases of power: Informational, Reward, Coercion, Legitimate, Expertise, and Referent (Raven 2008, 1).

Informational power. Raven describes this base as a power that leads to socially independent change. For example, this basis of power can be seen one that a supervisor might use, explaining instructions for a subordinate in order for them to complete their job. This might involve persuasive reasons on how a subordinate could complete their task more efficiently, resulting in acceptance of the reasons by the subordinate and a behaviour change. This informational influence, that results in cognitive change and altered behaviour, Raven describes as "socially independent change" (Raven 2008). Interestingly, Raven describes that the target (subordinate) can now continue without even remembering that the influencing agent (supervisor) was the reason for change.

Reward power. Reward power originates from the positive incentive offered by the agent, if the targeted person complies with the offer. These offers might relate to for example raise in pay, work privileges or promotion. In reward power the influence is socially dependent since the target complies with the actions offered by the agent. According to Raven, reward power and coercive power differ from other bases of power, because their effectiveness requires surveillance by the influencing agent. For example, surveillance would not be necessary for informational power. (Raven 2008.) Reward power may also bring up positive feelings associated with the reward for the target and lead to greater acceptance of the change (Raven 2008).

Coercive power. In coercive power the agent aims for a change by threatening the target person with negative consequences. These consequences can be for example a termination or a demotion or other undesirable task for the target. Coercive power, like reward power, is socially dependent as compliance is needed by the target for these consequences. (Raven 2008.) Raven (2008) writes there is also a greater chance that the targets of coercive power will resent the threat of punishment and to bring up ill feelings towards the agent.

Legitimate power. Per Raven (2008) Legitimate power comes from the targets' acceptance that the agent has the right to require changed behaviour and the target is obliged to comply. Raven describes legitimate power stems from social norms that require this kind of compliance for orders by the influencing agent. As for what is legitimate position power, Raven writes the following:

> It is the most obvious form of legitimate power and stems from a social norm that requires that we obey people who are in a superior position in a formal or informal social structure, such as a supervisor or a higher-ranking military officer influencing a subordinate. Other examples, reflecting various cultural norms, might be the right of parents to influence children, of older people to influence younger, teachers to influence students, police officers to influence citizens. There also are additional, subtler forms of Legitimate Power, based on other social norms" (2008, 4).

Raven also states that legitimate power might have legitimate power of responsibility, an obligation to help others who cannot help themselves, also sometimes referred to as "power of the powerless" according to Raven (Raven 2008).

Expert power. Expert power comes from the targets' belief that the agent has superior insight or knowledge compared to targets' knowledge on the situation. This understanding of the reason differentiates expert power from informational power. (Raven 2008.)

Referent power. In referent power, the target identifies with the agent or sees them as a model that the target would like to emulate. Per Raven, this might come from the targets' admiration for the supervisor or the strive for satisfaction that comes after the target has completed tasks according to the supervisors' way. (Raven 2008.)

2.2.2 The power/interaction model

In a research article "Fifty years of influence in the workplace" (2008), Elias studies the history and future of French & Raven bases of social power taxonomy within organizational settings. Elias provides an overview of Raven's power/interaction model (1993) as he studies how the taxonomy has been updated over the past decades and provides an overview of the model from the perspective of a supervisor influencing a subordinate (Elias 2008). Elias writes that after several decades of research, Raven came to appreciate that social power is more complex than it would involve only forms of power in order to gain compliance from target (Elias 2008). Therefore, as Elias states, Raven developed the power/interaction model to help determine "what means of social power an individual will use when attempting to influence another person" (Elias 2008, 274). The power/interaction model according to Raven (1992, 1993) portrayed by Elias:

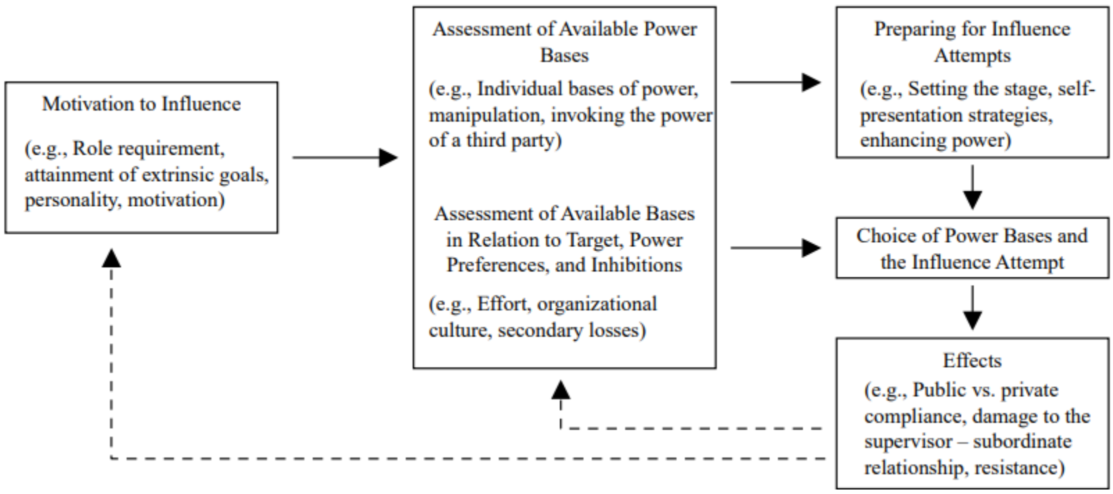

FIGURE 1 The power interaction model modified by Elias (Elias 2008, 274)

The first part of the power interaction model, motivation to influence, focuses on motivational factors that "impact a supervisor's choice of influence strategies" (Elias 2008, 274). The motivation to use power can be either instrumental or intrinsic and according to Elias' example, supervisors with a strong power motive will be more likely to desire influence over subordinates and may use a wider selection of power bases (Elias 2008). On the other hand, supervisors who use power only when they must reach some organizational goals are more likely to rely only on legitimate forms of power associated with their supervisory position (Elias 2008). Also, according to Elias:

> In a similar manner, a supervisor's role requirements or display rules (e.g. service with a smile) may motivate him or her to only utilize those bases of power that will conform with his or her organization's standards and be perceived of in a positive light (Elias 2008, 275).

The second part of the model, assessment of available power bases, focuses on different types of power a supervisor may have in their use including the possible outcomes of power tactics. Per Elias:

> For instance, while some supervisors may feel they have substantial direct informational power at their disposal, they may refrain from using it due to the perceived effort that would go into logically explaining their requests. Likewise, a supervisor may know that he or she possesses impersonal coercive power (e.g. the ability to terminate employment at will), but does not wield it frequently because such actions run counter to the organization's culture and can result in a backlash (Elias 2008, 275).

Also, if a leader possesses a strong in-group identification with their subordinates, they are unlikely to use coercive or caustic power bases because of the possible backlash: the negative behaviour may also be then directed to them (Elias 2008). Elias (2008) also adds that supervisors should estimate the intelligence of their audience to determine what kind of persuasive message would be most effective, indirect or direct.

The third part of the model, preparing for influence attempts, is focusing on setting the stage for the use of power. Elias gives an example for this, for example physicians might enhance their positive expert power by showcasing their study degrees and certifications, so they present themselves in a certain way as to remind other employees that they possess social power. (Elias 2008.) Another example for this part of the model is from a study based on interviews for female employees about creating an image around the workplace. The study indicated that if the female employees wanted to portray a powerful image, they should wear jewelry made from expensive materials (Rubinstein 1995, Rucker et al. 1999).

The fourth part of the model, choice of power bases and the influence attempt, is about the supervisors' decision on which power base to use and the attempt to influence a subordinate. This final "component" of the power/interaction model "serves as a feedback loop that has the potential to impact supervisors' future influence attempts. Specifically, the outcomes associated with an influence attempt will have an effect on the supervisors' future motivation to influence, and his or her assessment of available power bases" (Elias 2008, 275). Elias gives an example concerning coercive power: if personal coercion faces strong resistance and discontent from the employee, the supervisor may no longer think personal coercion is an effective base of influence regarding that employee. In this example case, as the effect on the influence attempt was not desired, it has weakened the managers ability to use personal coercion. (Elias 2008.)

To conclude the model, Elias states that it is likely that social power is at use always in the workplace when two or more workers are interacting with each other (Elias 2008). Especially education workshop-, in-service trainings- and leadership development program -practitioners would benefit from the understanding of the power taxonomy and the power/interaction model (Elias 2008). An example for this, as given by Elias, is from Northouse (2007): for example, when an employee is seen as possessing a great deal of social power, this can still be without being assigned a leadership role inside the organization. This kind of great social power without management role may exhibit emergent leadership from the employee, and the power/interaction model could help leadership development practitioners to understand this (Elias 2008). But Elias sees also limitations with the existing model:

> Furthermore, it is worth reiterating the fact that the power/interaction model offers a theoretical perspective as to how several variables interact to influence the ways in which we use social power. While numerous studies have been cited as evidence for the veracity of certain components of the model, confidence in the model will be greatly enhanced once research has been completed that examines and supports the model as a whole (Elias 2008, 277).

2.2.3 The Powerful and the Powerless as Actors

In the research article "Social power" (2006) Brauer and Bourhis study the theoretical and empirical contributions on the research for social power. In the article Brauer and Bourhis define differences between powerful and powerless individuals based on earlier research and define a model "powerful and the powerless as actors". The researchers also comprise what kind of behaviours are characterized for powerful and powerless individuals as well as powerful and powerless groups. Their model is portrayed in the picture 4. (Brauer & Bourhis 2006.) For example, individuals with high power mindset activated are more likely to take action to remove an irritating object (in the study case an annoying fan) than individuals in a low-power mindset (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee 2003). It is also noted that high power individuals display more emotions, especially positive, when discussing controversial issues with others and also express their opinion more openly (Berdahl & Martorana 2006).

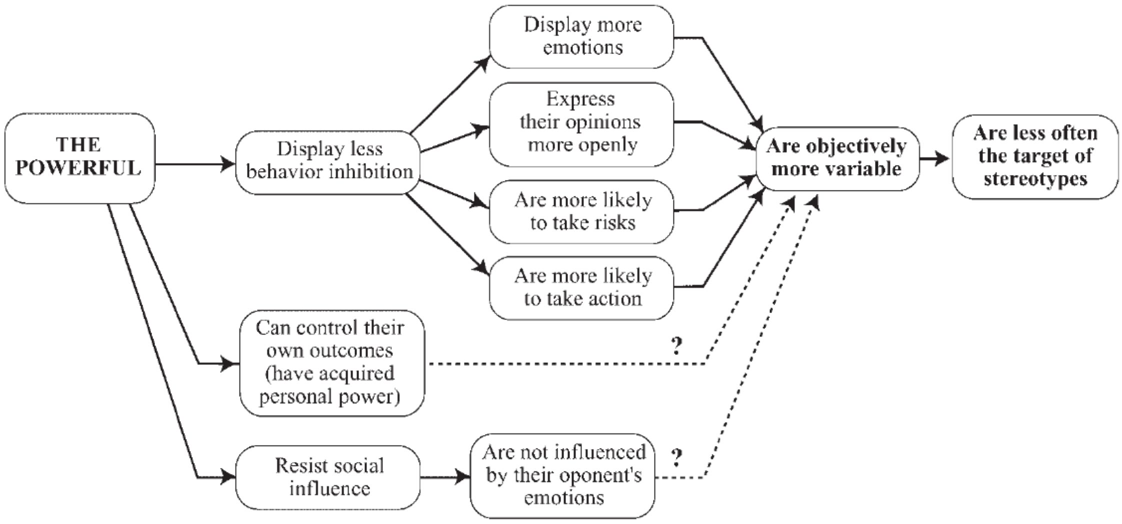

FIGURE 2 The powerful and the powerless as actors (Brauer & Bourhis 2006, 611).

The "more likely to take risks" dimension to the Brauer and Bourhis model comes from the research conducted by Anderson and Galinsky (2006). They demonstrate that a high-power position increases optimism in the way risk is perceived and that positive events are seen as more probable and negative ones as less probable. Finally, Brauer and Bourhis categorize that according to Keltner, Gruenfeld and Anderson (2003) individuals in powerful positions display less behavioral inhibition compared to powerless individuals. Individuals also aim to build power differential between themselves and others around them, but this desire to build power is not a desire to increase the social power to control others, but personal power to control own outcomes (Van Dijke & Poppe 2006).

As the researchers' state, social power affects interpersonal and intergroup relations in many ways. As Brauer and Bourhis write:

> As actors, the powerful tend to behave in a more idiosyncratic, risky, and variable manner than the powerless. This difference in actual variability enhances the perceived difference in variability even further. Given that perceptual biases and reality constraints cause perceivers to view powerful individuals as more heterogeneous, stereotypes are less readily applied to members of powerful groups than to members of powerless groups (2006, 612).

On the other hand, if the powerful are as perceivers or judges they endorse a social dominance orientation and have more stereotypical perceptions compared to the powerless. As targets, the powerful are often viewed as hardworking and competent. (Brauer & Bourhis 2006.)

2.3 Social networks and organizations

2.3.1 Social networks

In the book Social Networks and Organizations, Kilduff and Tsai (2003) start with the importance of studies on social influence: "Despite the apparently decisive effects that social contacts can have on the lives and well-being of individuals, much social science research has been silent concerning social influences" (2003, 3). For me, social influence has always been of intrigue and I feel it is vital for my thought process to think who wields social influence in the everyday situations I face. To provide more basis for my study, I see it is important to define what is a social network in an organization and for that I chose this particular textbook as it focuses also on the business organization view of social networks.

Kilduff and Tsai (2003, 4) start with the importance of cognition on organization social network research. Not only does learning happen in personal interactions between an individual and other, learning happens also while observing others' interactions. For example, if your colleague thinks you are friends with an important person in the organization, they might view you as a high performer (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 4) or while observing interactions make deductions based on who is friendly towards whom. This is because individuals expect network relationships to follow certain patterns and with time each individual will develop a more or less accurate map of relationships between people in their organization. As individual cognitive maps of a social network can be different, people who are more accurate in their perceptions can gain informational advantages in organizations. (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 5.) Kilduff and Tsai bring an example for this from Krackhardts study (1990) where the perception of who goes to whom for advice in an organization predicted how powerful the individual was seen by the other. As Krackhardt writes in his article "Assessing the political landscape: Structure, cognition and power in organizations" (1990) where he studied accurate cognition on an informal network in a small firm:

> The network analysis conducted on Silicon Systems confirms the major proposition of this study, that an accurate picture of the informal network significantly correlates with power. But the overall model presented in (citation to Krackhardt research), relating structural factors to cognition and power, received only qualified support. As predicted, formal position is significantly related to power and advice centrality. Contrary to the model's predictions, formal position does not significantly correlate with cognitive accuracy (1990, 356).

Krackhardt continues:

> The study showed that reputational power of the members of the firm was significantly related to cognitive accuracy of the advice network, not the friendship network. Perhaps this is an indication of the extent to which power surrounded those who were capable of handling relatively routine operational problems. In answering questions about influence and power, employees were responding according to their experiences in their day-to-day lives in the organization. As mentioned above, those people in the "advice" network, the experts, are likely to derive power from such routine situations (1990, 357).

According to (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 5) the second factor important for social network research is the relations between individuals. As networks will not exist only inside the heads of individuals but also as structures and opportunities negotiated between individuals, it is important to study what happens in this social interaction. Kilduff and Tsai (2003) cite earlier study conducted by Podolny and Baron (1997) and notify that people who act as go-betweens in organizations connecting other individuals and groups inside the organization, may receive benefits, including faster promotions.

When looking on the social network structures, dyads, triads and cliques come to the stage. Dyad is a two-person unit on the network, triad, a three-person group and clique consist of people who all interact with each other but have no common links to anyone else. (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 6.) Dyad is used to examine the experiences of the two persons in organizational life and the basic idea that Kilduff and Tsai present is that pairs of friends are likely to be constrained in their attitudes and behaviours. A triad differs from a dyad because coalitions, mediation and other social processes are possible. (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 6.) Holland & Leinhardt (1977) have also considered these triads as pivotal parts for informal networks. Inside the organization, cliques can consist of numerous people who may form the basis for a clique based on their shared demographic characteristics (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 6).

According to Kilduff and Tsai (2003, 6) businesses have formal mechanisms in place in order to coordinate the activities, such as business units, but social networks still have a role as they are presented on the interpersonal level.

> The study of the social networks that spring up between business units can inform us concerning how important resources are hoarded or shared, and why some units are likely to succeed whereas others may fail. The networks of interest include, but are not limited to, inter-unit workflow, personnel exchange, resource exchange and knowledge-sharing (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 6).

Many of the concepts in social network analysis come from graph theory. The points and lines we see on the graphs represent actors and their ties in the social network. Directed graphs, arrows, are used to showcase the relation between the actors (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 39). On the Figure 3 below it is shown how social network connectedness can be shown in a graph:

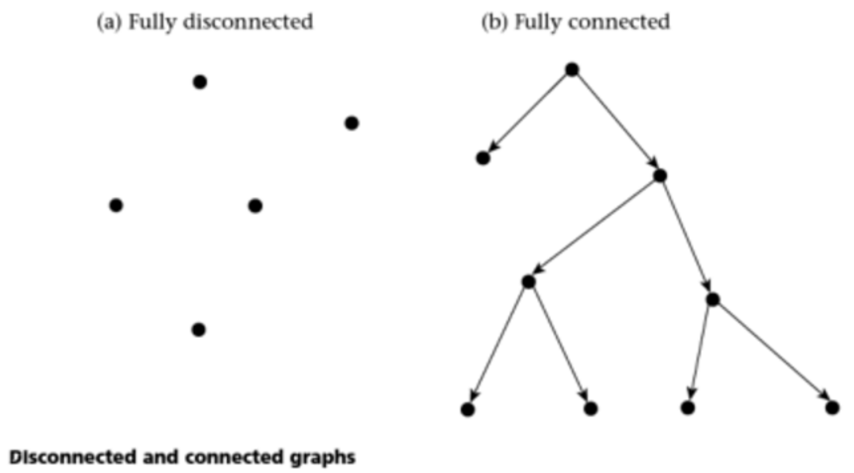

FIGURE 3 Disconnected and connected graphs (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 39)

The social ties on the right graph are all linked as on the left graph no actor reaches another. This disconnectedness indicates division in the social system and a disconnected communication network may impair the organization's ability to engage its members, but on the other hand increasing the connectedness may signal increased resource sharing and collaboration. (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 39). Graph hierarchy (as showcased with the arrows) according to Kilduff and Tsai:

> This refers to the extent to which the informal organization is hierarchical, with relations of authority proceeding in a single direction from those with more status to those with less. The greater the hierarchy, the more the informal network resembles an organizational chart of a status-conscious mechanistic organization (2003, 39).

Comparing the fully hierarchical graph as shown on Figure 3, below in the Figure 4 is an example of a graph that violates hierarchy. Kilduff and Tsai state that according to earlier research, people tend to expect influence relations to be hierarchical and they have difficulty in learning the social structure when the social structure violates the “pecking order” (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 39). In this kind of example, the influence relations are not according to the one-way direction as shown earlier.

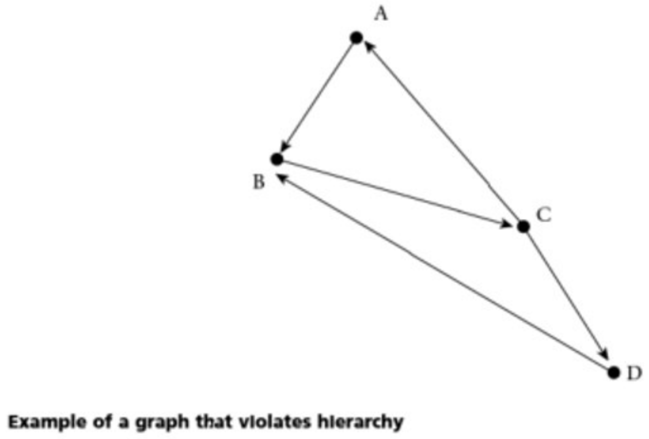

FIGURE 4 Example of a graph that violates hierarchy (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 40)

Finally, the last aspects of the graphs are the graph efficiency and least upper boundedness (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 40). Graph efficiency measures "the degree to which the number of links in the network approaches the minimum necessary to prevent the network fragmenting into two separate parts (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 40). In the Figure 5, if one link is removed for any reason, for example one individual stops speaking to another, the organizational network becomes disconnected. According to Kilduff and Tsai a clique, where all actors are connected to all other actors, portrays maximum inefficiency (2003, 40). Least upper boundedness indicates the extent of each pair of actors having access to a third person, also called the "upper bound", to which person they both connect (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 40). In the below picture is shown a situation where pair A and B have no common superior: "person C suffers from influence from two 'bosses'. In networks in which few of the pairs have a least-upper-bound actor to appeal to, conflict may be difficult to resolve" (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 41).

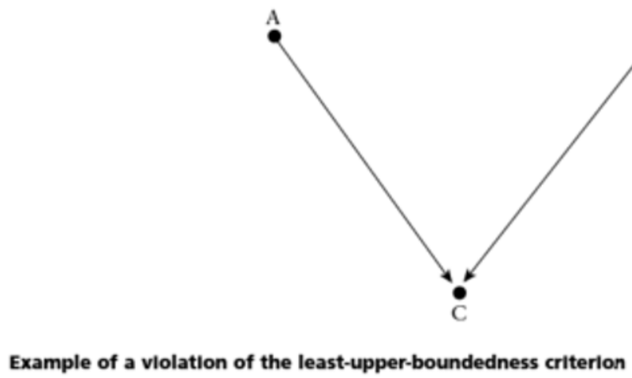

FIGURE 5 Eample of a violation of the least-upper-boundedness criterion (Kilduff & Tsai 2003, 41).

2.3.2 Working through networks to align culture and strategy

In their title “Driving results through social networks: How top organizations leverage networks for performance and growth” (2009) Cross and Thomas describe a case study which they conducted in one of world’s largest consumer electronics organizations. As the researchers describe the starting point:

> One of the world’s largest consumer electronics organizations was under the gun to improve product development speed and quality. To innovate rapidly, engineers with disparate expertise and varying positions in the formal hierarchy were told to collaborate. Mechanical and electrical engineers were to come together to design lightweight, thin, power - efficient notebook computers for a fast - growing segment of the market; and software developers were to work closely with electrical engineers to create the hardware’s multimedia components. Unfortunately, these collaborations did not happen, which resulted in frequent decision - making delays and the inability to innovate quickly enough to gain a foothold in this market (Cross & Thomas 2009, 24).

To study and improve the current collaboration, Cross and Thomas conducted an organizational network analysis for the divisions 105 top managers using cultural inventory and network survey focused on collaboration. The cultural inventory gave them a sense of the employees’ value and attitudes and network analysis allowed them to see the relative prominence of those in the network. (Cross & Thomas 2009, 24.)

When Cross and Thomas assessed the network (Figure 6) they found out that the information flow had become very hierarchical. As Cross and Thomas describe the findings:

> The lines in Figure illustrate who turned to whom for work-related information, and the shapes of each node (person) in the network reflect hierarchical level. In general people were seeking information from those above them in the hierarchy; engineers, who are on the periphery of the network, were not being consulted as frequently as senior managers, who are central. In addition, information silos existed across departments and projects as well as between headquarters and an offsite manufacturing facility (Cross & Thomas 2009, 25).

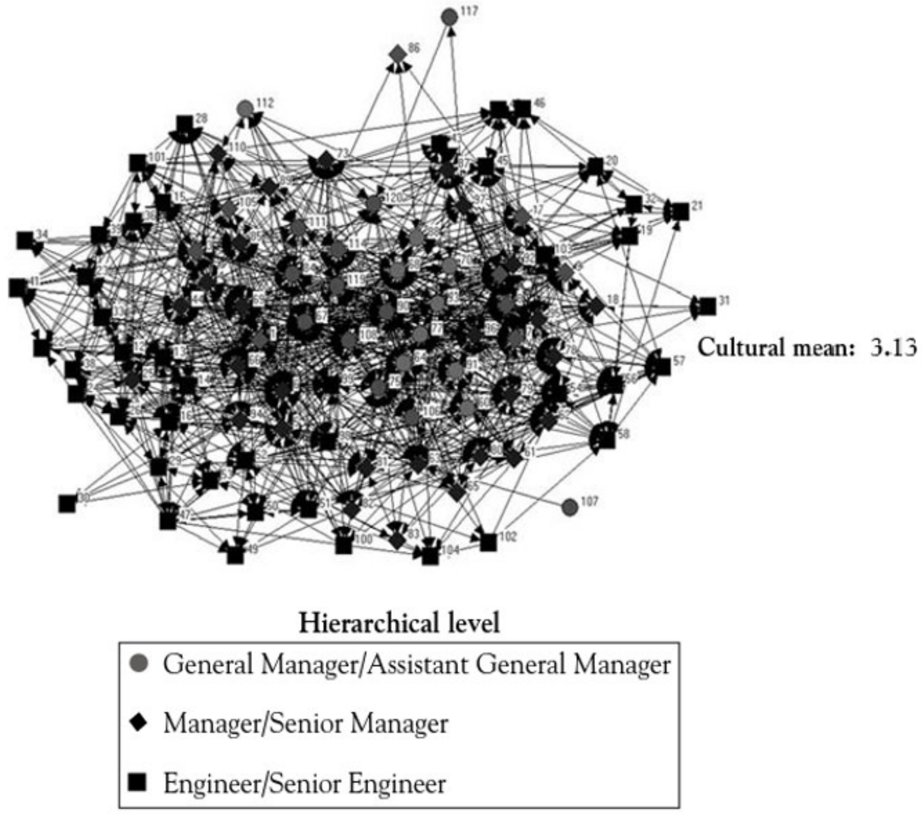

Figure 6 Hierarchical levels of employees in a consumer products electronics firm (Cross & Thomas 2009, 25).

As Cross and Thomas (2009, 25-26) write, this network assessment confirmed managements' suspicions of the ineffective collaboration and affected the ability to innovate and thus gain and maintain market share. The management suggested that the problems could be in workflow and decision-making processes, that the engineers needed to go up in the hierarchy for information. But Cross and Thomas (2009, 26) discovered using the organizational network analysis that the problems were the employees' cultural beliefs. They found out that the leaders and engineers were operating according to different norms and values, the engineers saw the culture as "rigid" and the upper management believed it to be highly flexible (Cross & Thomas 2009, 26). The leaders of the organization thought they had created an adaptive organization to support creativity and lateral collaboration needed by their market strategy, at the same time the engineers reflected the belief that the organization did not value innovative thinking and initiative. Cross and Thomas found out that these differing views had built during time, the leaders' perspectives had shaped during the company's growth when the competition was not so fierce, as the engineers' perspectives came from experiencing day-to-day pressure to meet tight deadlines leaving little time for collaboration or exploration of ideas outside immediate projects. (Cross & Thomas 2009, 26.)

Cross and Thomas (2009, 26) also noticed there were different perceptions on work responsibilities. Those engineers who worked on multiple projects were more positive about the culture, better view of the organization and wider network for information. On the other hand, influential project managers in the network who remained on a single project were more negative about the organization's culture because they felt overburdened. (Cross & Thomas 2009, 26-27.) Of this problematic situation Cross & Thomas write the following:

> The leaders of this division knew that breakdowns in collaboration were hindering innovation; however, they had difficulty determining what was wrong and how to fix it. Together the ONA as described by the writers (organization network analysis) and the culture assessment gave them the ability to see how formal structure, such as hierarchy and role, and cultural values were leading to breakdowns in information flow, problem solving, and decision making. As a result, they instituted a number of new practices, such as leadership development and interpersonal coaching, revised staffing and rotation programs, new project - planning and budgeting processes, and project management practices that encouraged reaching out into the network at crucial points in a project (2009, 27).

Ultimately these improvement efforts, such as coaching, were highly targeted and successful: the network analysis helped the leaders to understand precisely where and how to target the efforts, where the influence was inside the organization (Cross & Thomas 2009, 27).

2.4 Change agents

2.4.1 Organization development and change management: whole system transformation

In their article "Organization development and change management: whole system transformation" Sullivan, Rothwell and Balasi (2013) provide tools to cope with the "new normal" which is the dizzying rate of change. Nanotechnology, globalization and healthcare will be the leading stimulants of change according to the writers. Organizational development interventions should facilitate transformation towards organizational agility, which means speedy, flexible and proactive responses to changes. The article and the model is a brief summary of their ten step organizational change methodology for Whole System Transformation, also referred to as WST. The model and methodology is built through collective experiences during the last 40 years in over 1000 organizations. (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013.)

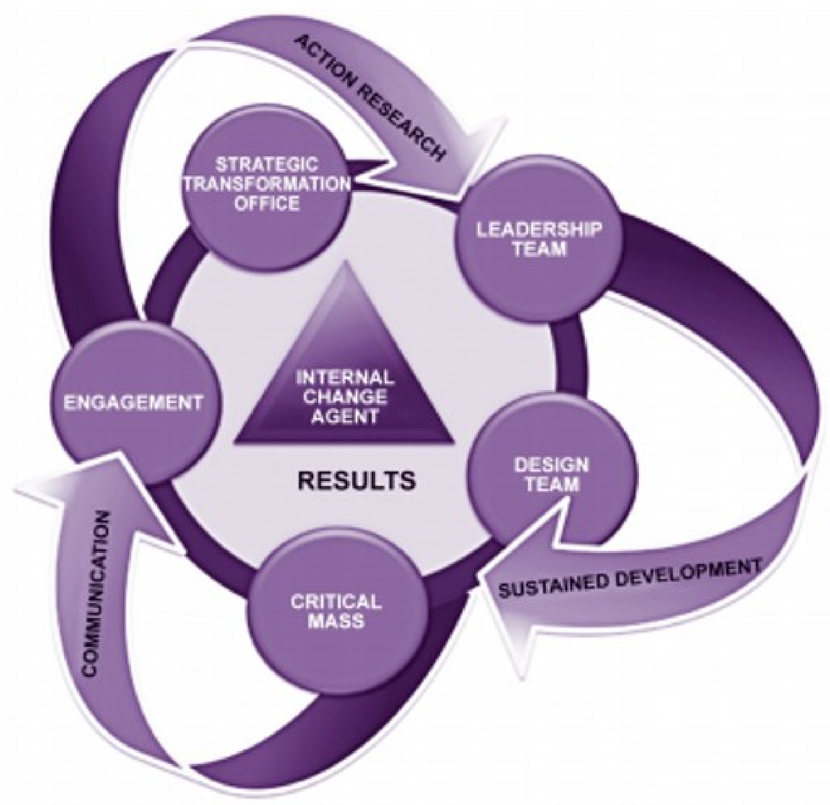

FIGURE 7 Ten integrated practices for a sustainable enterprise-wide organizational development journey (Sullivan Rothwell & Balasi 2013, 19).

First (1) is the role of internal change agent, also referred as ICA, transformation. A highly competent internal change agent is the key for success when they use a proven organization development methodology, and this can be also the most powerful person in a system. This person can be assigned to facilitate the change process as the CEO controls the content (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013). The second (2) step is the executive team transformation. Organizational development efforts may be impaired if top leaders will not act according to the communication. Modeling the change at the top also inspires others and an aligned blueprint to transform the whole system should be articulated. (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013.)

(3) Designing large group interactive summits means that the executive team should draft the purpose and outcomes for a three day long "paradigm-shifting" summit (in model example from 300 to 1000 people). A designing team will create the detailed agenda in order to provide compelling learning and a safe environment where all can speak freely. It is noted that becoming comfortable in a chaotic change situation is important and that wisdom in the group will help to guide the change process forward. (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013.) (4) Transforming the critical mass in summits, this step comes after the executive team achieves an aligned culture and a summit of 2,5-day sessions are held to conclude the collective change. The goal would be to have participative events

that host meaningful conversation leading to committed action. (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013.)

The fifth step (5) aims for engaging stakeholders and this engagement is critical for Whole System Change. Strategies should be created to involve the entire organization and through this other begin to change. One day mini-summits by function or location are held on this step to implement the direction for the change. A mix of social media, project management, learning area functionalities and training programs provide basis for the change in sustainability. (6) Multi-dimensional communication becomes the force for success in change efforts. The communication should enforce transparency, inclusiveness and trust. The large group summits have two elements related to communication: first the relations are deepened and second, there is a free flow of information through communication channels. (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013.)

The strategic transformation office (7) is the next step. The group consists of "change champions" who have to view the entire system from expert views. The strategic transformation office usually involves such roles as executive team sponsor, HR lead, strategic planning head, CIO, middle management representative, lower echelon employee representative, customer advocate and internal change agent. The team should meet on a regular basis and the role of the group is to advise the CEO through system-wide change. (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013.) Paying attention to metrics and results (8) focuses on measuring the impact of change practices on increased organizational effectiveness. This part is especially difficult, as Sullivan et al state:" We experience CEOs having little interest in spending resources on measuring OD practices. They are satisfied by intuitively deciding if results are adequate" (2003, 21).

Journey sustainment (9) means that an effective organizational development still evolves to greater performance years after implementation. It is the part where the development activities are remodeled and recycled according to the needs of the organization. The action research process as the pillar of all change work (10) is the final step and the building block of the model. As simplified by Rothwell, Stavros and Sullivan (2010) the action research intervention process is compiled into four streams. Those are scan, plan, act and re-act. Scan is the assessment of what is or what is not happening. Plan is about imagining the future state and the road leading there. Act means intervening into a system that improves the operation. Re-act is the solicitation of feedback, evaluation and measurement on what has happened and teaches now how to repeat the cycle on the lessons learned from three previous streams. (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013.)

To conclude, after following these previous steps the authors state that this practice "enables and empowers human talent in organizations to accomplish faster, cheaper and sustainable positive change (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013, 22)". This will require the involvement of the of the entire system, at the same time giving ownership of the process to people inside the organization (Sullivan, Rothwell & Balasi 2013).

2.4.2 Implications for change agents in change process of an informal organization

de Caluwe & Vermaak (2003) provide insight for the implications for change agents and change processes. The first implication is that this world deserves to be diagnosed. As informal organization is difficult to recognize fully, gaining knowledge needs more effort than just understanding the formal organization: it needs perceptive ability. A second implication is that change agents will need to use their insights concerning power relations and positions when assigning roles in the change process:

> If power plays a dominant role in the organization, they would do well to involve the most influential players in crucial decision-making processes, or to entice influential opponents into taking responsibility as champions of important parts of the change process or instead exclude them altogether from the process, and so on. The intention of the change agents in these kinds of organizations is to ensure that there is a sufficient power-base behind the intended change (de Caluwe & Vermaak 2003, 16).

Below is a Figure 8 where de Caluwe and Vermaak compare formal and informal organization characteristics. According to Caluwe and Vermaak a change agent can approach the informal organization in two ways: they can initiate informal activities in support of the formal process, for example a weekly office cocktail hour might serve as a place to test out new ideas. Change agents can also start discussions of dysfunctional informal activities. (de Caluwe & Vermaak 2003.) According to the writers the same applies to economic relationships in an organization. Change agents can plan a change process such that everyone benefits in some way and also include extra exchange mechanisms as motivating factors. (de Caluwe & Vermaak 2003.)

FIGURE 8 Formal and informal organization (de Caluwe & Vermaak 2003, 15).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Case study as a research strategy

Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon in depth and real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context is not clearly evident (Farquhar 2012, 5). Case study research allows the researcher to look at the phenomenon in context and in business research that means collecting evidence about a phenomenon where it is taking place, for example a company (Farquhar 2012, 6). As Farquhar writes: "Case study research is suitable for answering questions that start with how, who and why. Its further strength is that it is particularly well suited for investigating events that are occurring in a contemporary context (2012, 6). In the book "Tapaustutkimuksen taito" (2015, 9) Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen write that case study is usually understood as a method, but a case study research involves many different methods and therefore it can be considered more of a research strategy where different research materials and methods can be used.

Ontological stance is the way that the researcher views the world. This stance is nomothetic if they assume that reality exists independently or objectively as structure (Farquhar 2012, 17). If the researchers' ontology is ideographic, it means that they believe the world is socially constructed and understood only by examining the perceptions of participants or actors. The study of knowledge is referred to as epistemology. (Farquhar 2012, 17.)

Qualitative research is often consistent with the interpretivist approach compared to quantitative which is following more positivist tradition (Farquhar 2012, 17). As Farquhar writes:

> A positivist believes that phenomenon is real and precise (e.g. measurable) and, as a consequence, will adopt a research design that allows them to measure what they are investigating. For researchers, who favour a closer engagement with the research phenomenon, their epistemology is interpretivist, phenomenological (Farquhar 2012, 17).

Interpretivist researchers believe that the values help determine what are considered to be facts and interpretation are drawn from these facts. Interpretivist researchers acknowledge that their research may have bias but insist this is a feature they will address (Farquhar 2012, 17). As Farquhar continues:

> The researcher is not a detached observer, as suggested by positivism, but an active agent in the construction of the world through the specific ideas and themes incorporated in the relevant form of knowledge. Complete objectivity is not the aim in interpretivist research and, in fact, interpretivists argue that it is valuable to be able to gain an understanding of cultural realities (2012, 19).

It is relatively common for a research project to involve interviews and a survey as Farquhar writes, but there should be a dominant research philosophy guiding the study overall which will influence the research objectives and the contribution the study makes (Farquhar 2012, 22). This view is supported by critical realists and pragmatists. Farquhar defines critical realists in business context: "The critical realist, within a business context in particular, accepts that our world is socially constructed but not entirely so, as reality makes an appearance" (Farquhar 2012, 22). In a pragmatic approach, as Farquhar states, there is no problem asserting both that there is a single "real world" and that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world (Farquhar 2012, 22).

This case study's dominant philosophy is phenomenological and ontology as ideographic. As a researcher and a part of the case organization at the time the majority of the case study was conducted, I do admit the possibility of bias as brought into attention by Farquhar. But the way I see it, compared to a possibly completely objective external researcher, the double role as an organization member and researcher might actually benefit the case study, to help study the opinion leadership phenomenon in a deeper interview discussion when the interviewed already knows me beforehand. In the end, this case study research focuses on studying this single case.

3.2 Data collection methods

3.2.1 Survey

For the first part of my case-study I have chosen a survey -method in order to point out some of the people in the case organization who have affected others' opinion on the upcoming change. The aim was then, after analysis, to interview some of the organization members about the opinion leadership phenomenon for the second part of the case-study. The survey consisted of two questions, and as categorized by Heikkilä in her book "Tilastollinen tutkimus" (2014, 50) it is a mixed -question type questionnaire since it withholds both open ended and structured questions. The questions were:

1. Name a person who has influenced your opinion on the organizational change?
2. What is my work relation to this person?
    - Team member
    - Team coordinator
    - Team leader
    - Key-user group member
    - Project manager
    - Director
    - Other (open answer)

3.2.2 Theme interview

For the second part of my case-study I have chosen a qualitative semi-structured interview method presented by Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008) in their book "Tutkimushaastattelu: Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö". The term "teemahaastattelu" and the method is quite difficult to translate to other languages, as the writers themselves describe it doesn't exist in other languages, but Hirsijärvi and Hurme do admit similar methods are used around the world (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 47-48). According to Hirsijärvi and Hurme a similar interview method has also been labeled as "the general interview guide approach". As we now understand the difficult nature of the term, I will use the direct translation "theme interview" in my study for the sake of common understanding.

Theme interview-method is based on the book "The focused interview" by Merton, Fisken and Kendall (1956). Hirsijärvi and Hurme (2008, 47) describe four main characteristics for "the focused interview": first of all, we can assume that the persons interviewed have experienced certain situations. Secondly, the researcher has studied the different aspects of the phenomenon and made content - and situational analysis. Third, based on the preliminary analysis the researcher has made some assumptions of the correlation of different aspects concerning the persons involved and constructs an interview structure. At last, the interview is targeted on the participating persons' subjective experiences on the situation at hand. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 47.)

Theme interview as a method focuses on certain themes that will be discussed during the interview (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 48). The idea for the theme interview originates from the assumption that it will not require any one common experience, but all individuals' experiences, thoughts, beliefs and feelings can be interpreted with the method (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 48). Instead that the interview would progress in a direct and pre-planned matter, the theme interview as a method progresses through certain pivotal themes and frees the interviewer from the role of a researcher (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 48). Theme interview takes into account that peoples' perceptions and given meanings are central, also that those meanings are constructed in social interactions (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 48).

Theme interview is closer to unstructured than structured interview, but it is categorized as a semi-structured interview because at least one part of the interview is the same for everyone: the theme. It is characteristic for a theme interview to not have an exact formula, but it isn't completely free such as a deep interview. (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 48.) In a theme interview also, the interviewed will act as definer, as the phenomenon is concreticed for the interviewed based on them and their life situation (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 48).

For this case study analysis, I will use this thematic analysis-method to code and portray possible similarities between the interviewed persons nominated as opinion leaders.

3.3 Data analysis methods

3.3.1 Social network analysis

As discussed already in the literature review -section of this case-study, social networks play an important role in the organizations. To analyze the social networks Knoke and Yang (2008) provide insight for the basic methods for analysis. In social network analysis the points and lines are the elements of a sociogram, and they also define a graph. In sociograms and graphs actors are presented by numerous N points, nodes, and labeled with identifying names, letters or numbers (Knoke & Yang 2008, 45-46). A line between a pair of nodes indicates a relation and the absence of a line indicates there is no direct relation between the two actors. If a line has no arrowhead the relation is nondirected or mutual, for example indicating co-workers. If relations are directed from one actor to another, the result is a directed graph. (Knoke & Yang 2008, 46.) A single headed arrow indicates directed tie going from the actor to the actor at the arrowhead, portraying for example giving advice. A line with arrowheads at both ends indicates two directed ties, a dyad, which suggests mutuality. Some sociograms may differ from the thickens of lines or apply different types of dashes to visually display for example strength, frequency or dyadic interactions. (Knoke & Yang 2008, 46.)

Knoke and Yang illustrate an example from an advice-giving sociogram as pictured below in the Figure 9. A subgraph is a subset of nodes and lines inside the larger graph and can be seen as a triad between Tom, Betty & Jane. In network analysis it is important to notice the "path" which is defined as a "walk", a walk is an alternating incidence of nodes and lines. (Knoke & Yang 2008, 47-48.) A graph is connected if paths exist between all nodes but is disconnected if at least one pair of nodes has no path between them. This node without any connections is called isolate, and we can see an isolate as Mary in the below figure. In a connected graph a node is a cut point if its removal would disconnect the graph. (Knoke & Yang 2008, 48-49.) In the picture Harry is an example of a cut point and lines connecting him are bridges. Organizations with cut points and bridges are more vulnerable to disruption than networks with paths to sustain information and resource flows. (Knoke & Yang 2008, 49.)

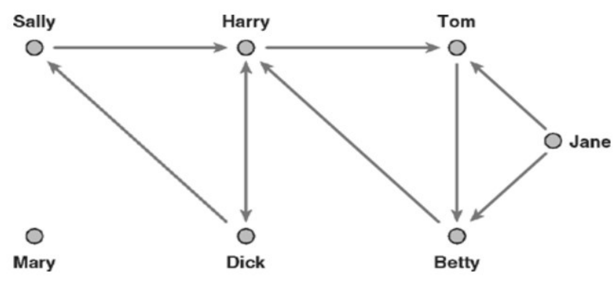

FIGURE 9 A seven-actor directed network (Knoke & Yang 2008, 48).

3.3.2 Applied thematic analysis

"Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis" (Guest, MacQueen & Namey 2012, 10). Applied thematic analysis is linked to grounded theory such as Bernard and Ryan (1998) note. First is the reading of verbatim transcripts, then identifying possible themes. Then comes the comparing and contrasting themes and finally the building of theoretical models. As Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) write, applied thematic analysis involves steps 1 through 3 and a portion of step 4:

> As implied by Step 4, a key attribute of the process is that the resulting theoretical models are grounded in the data. In applied research, our output may or may not be a theoretical model (which comprises a distinction with grounded theory), but as with a grounded theory approach, we are greatly concerned with ensuring that our interpretations are supported by actual data in hand (Guest et al. 2012, 12).

To define the basic terms of applied thematic analysis Guest et al. (2012, 50) portray the following:

1. **Data**: The textual representation of a conversation, observation, or interaction.
2. **Theme**: A unit of meaning that is observed (noticed) in the data by a reader of the text.
3. **Code**: A textual description of the semantic boundaries of a theme or a component of a theme.
4. **Codebook**: A structured compendium of codes that includes a description of how the codes are related to each other.
5. **Coding**: The process by which a qualitative analyst links specific codes to specific data segments.

Of the relationship between segmenting and coding, the researchers write the following:

> "Segmenting text, identifying themes, and content coding are not distinct processes. In fact, the act of identifying a meaningful segment of text calls for some minimal representation of that meaning as a code, a note, a query, or a tag. This is not so much a multistep process but rather a multi-part description: you identify an instance of meaning in the text, note its locus, and describe it. What meaning is conveyed or signified as you read the text? The answer to this question leads to the identification of themes"(Guest et al. 2012, 52).

In applied thematic analysis, one approach is the structural coding, which I will also use in this study when analyzing the transcribed text. In structural coding the questions can be segmented as Guest et al. note: "The text can then be segmented based on the questions or prompts asked by the data collector(s) together with the responses from the research participants. As long as the data collectors follow the structured guide, there is usually a clear start and end point in the transcript for each guide-driven text segment" (2012, 55). In the Figure 10, an example of structured coding given by the authors from an earlier study by Lyerly et al. (2006).

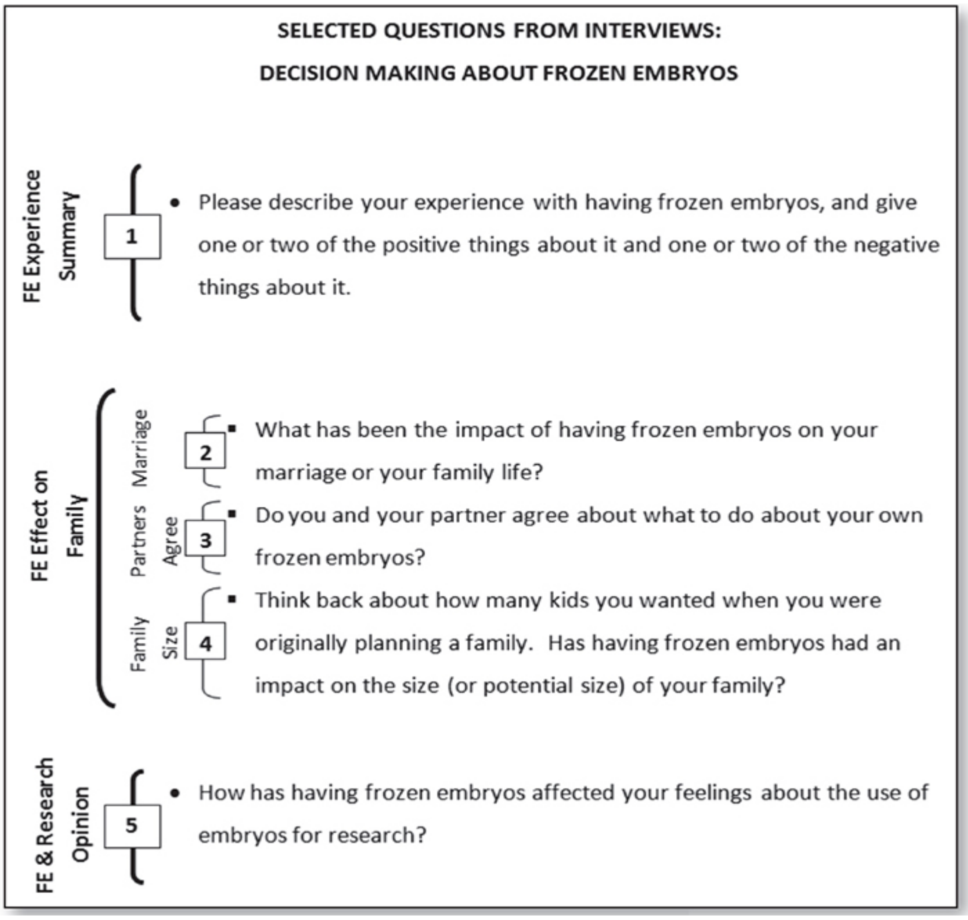

FIGURE 10 Example of and structured coding (Guest, MacQueen & Namey 2012, 56).

As for discovering themes itself after coding, Ryan and Bernard (2003) state that repetition is the most common theme-recognition technique. It is based on the premise that if a concept reoccurs throughout and across transcripts then it is most likely a theme. The number of repetitions is not "set in stone" however (Ryan and Bernard 2003). One other method to discover themes is constant comparison of similarities and differences. This method involves systematically comparing sections of text and finding similarities and differences between the texts (Ryan and Bernard 2003). The researchers state the following regarding qualitative comparisons:

> Conducting a purely qualitative (interpretivist) thematic comparison infers that themes are not counted. Instead, one qualitatively compares the content of narratives and highlights similarities and differences between two or more data sets (groups). At

> the most basic level, an analyst simply examines the differential expression of themes across groups and notes which themes/concepts are similar across groups and which are different. This type of comparison is driven by two overarching questions: 'Are some themes present in one data set but not another?' and, 'If a theme is present in data sets from both groups in an analysis, is the expression of that theme different between groups?' Results from this type of comparative analysis of qualitative data are most commonly presented in narrative form within the results and discussion sections of a report (Guest et al. 2012, 162-163).

Comparability usually also requires that the qualitative data collection process, for example semi-structured interview, keep conditions as similar as possible across data collection events (Guest et al. 2012, 170).

3.4 Research process and timeline

As stated before, my case-study consists of two parts. First a survey was sent to approximately 90 case-organization members using the organization's Microsoft outlook delivery channel in December 2019. The survey was created utilizing Google forms survey capability. Answering to the survey was voluntary, but a reminder was sent out to the outlook list a week after the first email. The answering to the survey was left anonymous with the organizations' managements' decision, since it was thought that me as a researcher, but also as an organization member, would gain too much informational power if I were to compile and analyze a full social network considering this case-study for the answers. I as a researcher I fully supported this decision since I felt also the ethical burden of knowledge within this double role. And in any case, with this way the survey was constructed I was still able to support my study questions concerning the case-study.

To analyze the survey answers (29), I created a simplified social network analysis in order to interview the persons from the organization who had the most nominations, the most links. As the data sample was not too vast, I was able to create this calculation in Microsoft excel and visual presentation by using drawing software.

After analyzing the answers, I invited four people into short theme interviews to study the opinion leadership phenomenon. The interviews were held during the Spring 2020 via Skype and recorded at the same time. These theme interviews I later then transcribed verbatim into text and used applied thematic analysis to analyze similarities and differences between the interview answers.

4 FINDINGS

The main research was carried out in a subsidiary for a Finnish forestry company in Poland. Focus group for the case study was the HR Services organization located in Krakow. The organization in Krakow had approximately 90 employees and the opportunity for this case study arrived when the particular organization was facing an organizational change in the Autumn of 2019. The case organization handles the HR Services globally for the Finnish forestry company. The case organization was divided into country-level self-steering teams which are led by team leaders. In the organization structure the team leaders were included in the organizations' management team.

Since it was decided that the survey answers would remain anonymous, I must highlight the possibility that the survey nominations might include answers where the person has nominated themselves and therefore disregarded the survey questions entirely. But as the survey was organized to point out individuals from the organization and was completely voluntary (sent to the organization members work email, therefore also denying the possibility to limit the answers by Google sign in) I do not see this possibility as problematic for the case study. In the end I trust the case organization employee's common sense and looking at the survey results, the results does not support any malpractice in a wider context. For example, on the second question of the survey "What is my work relation to this person?" the answerer would have needed to lie on their answer and I didn't receive any empty answers for this question. But with this thought, and as always in life, we need to look at the results as a grain of truth for the case study setting.

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Survey results and simplified social network analysis

In the survey I received 29 answers and 32 nominations overall for the first survey question "Name a person who has influenced your opinion on the organizational change", as two of the answers included more than one nomination and decided to include these answers also as it was not forbidden. From the survey answers I compiled the following simplified social network sociogram (Figure 11), to showcase the persons with the most nominations.

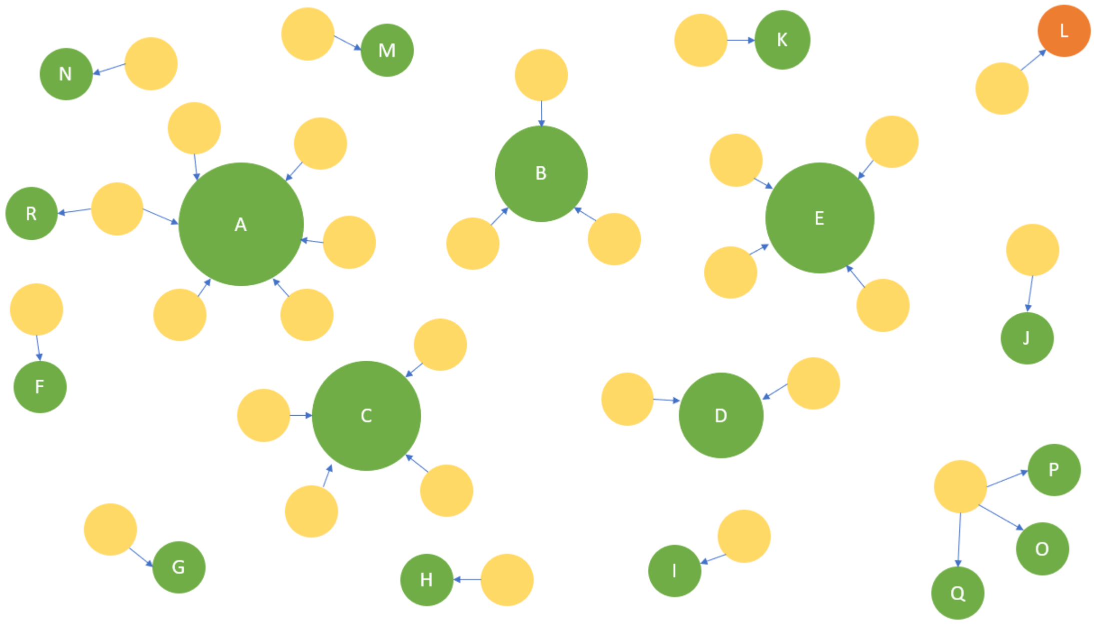

FIGURE 11 Sociogram from the survey answers

Using social network analysis, I have marked all the nominated persons as green circles and given them letter-coding. In this case study sociogram, the position of the circles or the length of the nodes hold no importance, the locations are purely presentational. As we can see from the survey results, all in all 18 different persons received nominations to have influenced the answerers opinion considering the organizational change. Already from this, there can be made the assumption that in this case study context the influence in the opinion about the organizational change seems to be quite divided inside the case organization. But still, from the results, there can be pointed out five different nominees who have received more than one nomination, these persons are coded in the sociogram as persons A, B, C, D and E. The nominee L is marked with a different colour as the person was no longer part of the case study organization.

For the second survey question "What is my work relation to this person" the results are the following as portrayed in the Figure 12:

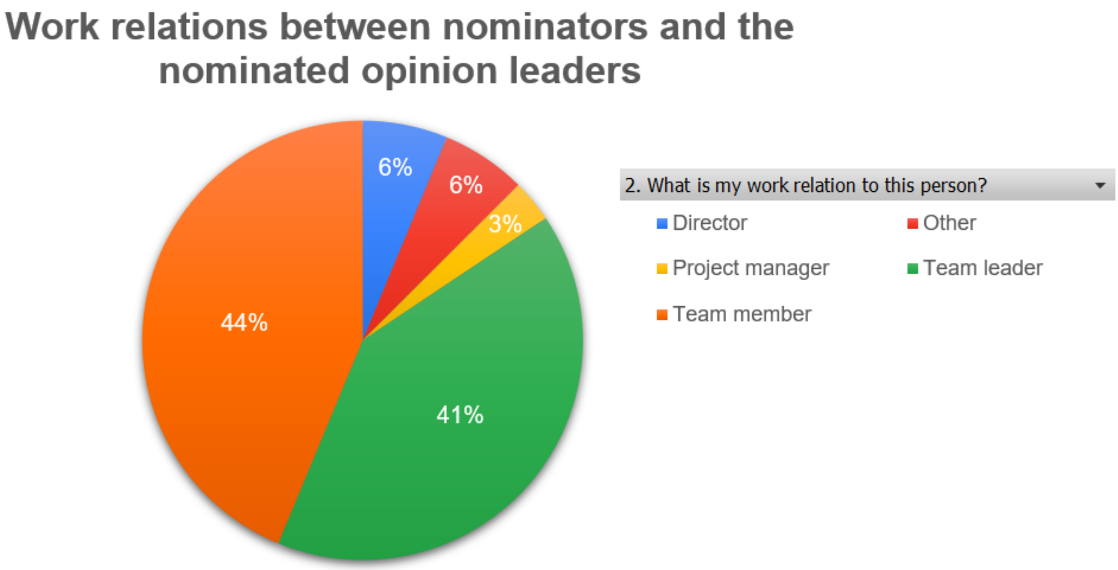

FIGURE 12 Work relations between nominators and the nominated opinion leaders

From the chart we can see that roughly the same number of nominations are for people working as team leaders or team members from all of the nominations. In the chart there is also taken into account those two votes who nominated more than one person at a time in one answer and those are added per the original survey selection made by the answerer in the data. As seen from the results, the positions such as project manager and director were also included in the answers. As for the "other" category, which was an open question option in the questionnaire, in that section are included those votes that did not fall in any other questionnaire category. Maybe one surprising finding in this position category was the one nomination for a former colleague (coded as L in the previous sociogram) who was no longer part of the organization at the time of the change, but still seemed to have influenced the opinion of one of the organization members.

4.1.2 Interview results and applied thematic analysis

In this chapter I present the interview results according to the themes coded by the way of utilizing applied thematic analysis and compare the different answers in order to showcase the similarities and the differences between the interviewed. This part of the case study was organized in to study the people nominated from the organization if they experience that they are influencing others knowingly and how they reflect on the opinion leadership phenomenon throughout the interview. The theme interviews consisted of themes revolving around a person's background, feelings and attitudes towards influencing and opinion leadership phenomenon, situational context of influencing, person's behaviour and possible personality traits, awareness and motives for influencing, change context and finally possible implications for the future. I have divided this chapter under those themes according to the applied thematic analysis coding found in attachment 1 of this case study. As the interviews were done in different languages, the translated quotations into English are done in such a way that the original meaning remains. As portrayed in the survey results and simplified social network analysis sociogram, the interviewed persons are coded with letters, and therefore I will refer to them in this part of the study simply as persons A, B, C or D. Within organizational time constraints I was not able to interview nominated person E.

Background

To keep the anonymity of the interviewed, this theme in the interview consisted only of asking about the time the interviewed person has spent in the organization. I divided the answer options into four brackets, and they were:

A) under one year
B) 1-2 years
C) 2-4 years
D) over 4 years

Two of the interviewed belonged to the group of 2-4 years and the other two had been in the organization for over 4 years. Therefore, none of the nominated interviewed were "new joiners" to the organization and indicated some seniority.

Feelings, attitudes, influencing

When asked if the nominated person were surprised that they were nominated in relation to the study survey to have been influencing other people's opinion on the change, there are differences. Two of the nominated opinion leaders think it is not surprising that they are nominated for this case study, but person C adds that if the number of the nominees is more than two, then it would be surprising. The other two are in some way surprised but can see a reason why they are nominated.

> Umm not necessarily. First of all maybe because I have been involved in developing and thinking about the change, thinking about what kind of model there would be and the model is to a large extent the way originally thought, so in a way that it has influenced opinions is natural.. (A)

> Uuum. I think a little bit umm..but then..no I think actually since I umm since I was involved quite early on"..."..so I am a little bit surprised, but then looking back at it retrospectively it does make some amount of sense. (B)

> In a way I am not surprised because I know that I have talked quite a lot about it and have been part of the change in a way..so I understand that I am but I don't really know, maybe depending on if it's one or two persons or more, so that if there are many it might surprise a bit, but that, that at least someone has nominated, is not surprising. (C)

> Wow! "…" Mm maybe yes, maybe like taking into consideration the time that I'm in the organization is not that surprising, but overall yea a little bit. (D)

When discussing how the nominated person feels or experiences the opinion leadership phenomenon by themselves, there is no clear consensus between the participants, but person A thinks as a theory might create nice ideas but that in the end it is a personality question. For person C the phenomenon is unknown, and D thinks that it is a positive thing if people need convincing:

> Hmmh. Good question. Maybe I experience it so, well the way I see it, is that in the area where I was studying and in the field of economics they have usually managed to do a neat four dimension picture or a model on the subject that is in a way in the end the kind of 'well yeah that is how we are doing it' (laughs), so for those it is neatly summarised the things that work in the situation, so it is like both (important theory or phenomena that just comes in everyday situations), so opinion leadership theory may create interesting point of views on how to utilize it more and to how like grow your opportunities on the subject or like how to act in challenging situations and things like that. But then on the other hand I think it is somewhat a personality question, so if someone doesn't particularly enjoy it or..or experience it motivating to influence a group of people, then it won't come naturally from the person. So it is like both. (A)

> Now you asked a good one. I must say that I don't really know a lot what it consists of or, or what is thought to be opinion leadership in overall, ugh it is a bit so that I don't have an opinion because the area is unknown to me. (C)

> Hmm I like look at it as a positive thing of course. Um like we need to convince people to different things and by like giving the full picture or..explaining well it's not that..difficult or hard to do. (D)

When discussing about their attitudes towards influencing, persons A and B answer their feelings are positive and in comparison, person C experiences somewhat mixed feelings with a negative connotation with influencing and person D would rather let people to come to their conclusion:

> It is ok to influence, but maybe couple of years ago I would have answered differently to this question, but maybe I have found a small salesperson from myself (laughs), or understood it in a way, that in order to get things done it requires that your priorities need to become also other people's priorities and that usually demands some kind of sales - or negotiating skill. So in that sense I think it is really ok to influence as long as you remember that you need to also know how to listen when you try to drive your thoughts forward. (A)

> Hmm positive. Like definitely, like definitely positive. Umm positive connotation. Um I have experienced in, in many situations for myself that umm.. Actually there is a lot of people who have fought through some issues very much profoundly than I have or always also there is also different opinions to different to different subjects and I've found it super helpful having sometimes people who are clearly more experienced or who have thought through some things very well and I think it also helps defining one's own standpoint but then also even developing your reasoning, yes? So looking at those people who are really good at reasoning, so bringing together different

arguments. That's kind of something which is even possible to take there for yourself. Which I think very positive connotation for that. (B)

In a way it's also that if it's knowing or unknowing, so it's kind of a different attitude, because then comes easily that kind of feeling if it is manipulation? If it is so that I knowingly try to influence with my actions or speech to your action, so kind of also a bit negative image comes at first, but then again that kind of when some person might just be that they have experience or knowhow on something, and when they bring it forward, that in a way indirectly affects others' opinions, that I think is a very positive thing so people kind of take influence on that if someone has a better knowhow or experience of something, that in a way when people who doesn't possess the same, like understanding, then receives that influence and can form more enlightened opinion from something. (C)

I would like rather let people to come to the conclusion themselves, but like sometimes if I like have different information maybe or if we are limited somehow, I also express my opinion, yes. (D)

Discussing about the subject if nominated experience they can influence people, all of the interviewed think that they can influence people around them:

Yeah, yes and like I wouldn't be in HR and wouldn't have enjoyed managerial work so much (laughs) if I wouldn't assume that I can influence these people (both laugh) (A)

Interviewer: Yeah ok, so it comes as like in addition also, also that..

Yes, it would be a bad basis for managerial work if you can't believe you can influence anyone..(A)

Interviewer: It might have a bit of like feeling of futility in that

Yes, it might be a bit (laughs) challenging. (A)

Hmm I think so. Yeah. Um I..it will probably depend a lot on the topic, um..and I..I think like I'm maybe more influencing when I have like a really good or close relation with people. (B)

Yes I believe so, I have a mental image that, that when for example in work organization, so already only through that kind of experience and so on you can influence and of course through your own role umm..that I don't know do I do it knowin.. or I try, or in a way maybe you try to do it maybe knowingly in some situations, but that if it happens also like indirectly I don't know. But yeah, short answer yes, I do experience I can influence. (C)

I do. Yes, it depends like probably, like mainly for it was with this um like processes, different ways of working that we had, that we like finding out together with the team. So I think I did have some influence on that. (D)

When discussing if they think their position in the organization had an effect on the nomination as an opinion leader, persons A, B and C think that the position or role they had in the organization had an effect regarding the nomination, although person C feels that the influencing is expected on the role and that it comes more naturally with the role and gives a platform for the person to influence, but that it is not role dependent in general. Person D thinks that it had maybe in theory, but the position would not have a direct effect on the nomination.

> Yeah, yes. And also that I've been in many different roles so I think that partly effects, effects certainly through direct position but also through that, that knows the organization and knows a bit how different parts work so quite well. (A)

> I think definitely, like definitely part of the role simply because um..yeah..because um there wasn't so many other options for taking it on … and it's definitely part of the role as well.. (B)

> Hmmm maybe like in theory yes but like I always try to umm.. and it's not like in because this (position name), so I try like to work on like solutions always together with the team. (D)

> Mm yeah, I don't know if you mean that is it like, like I don't know if it's more efficient, my influence with my role, but I experience that it is maybe expected and it comes more naturally with the role compared to maybe without the role. (C)

> Interviewer: But that is just good that you don't basically experience that it would be that role dependent, that it's more like..

> No. (C)

> Interviewer: ..that it would be basically anyways then but basically it just enforces if I get this correctly?

> Yeah I like experience that my role gives me the possibility to influence and sort of like a platform rather than, or like a channel to influence rather than that with my role I would be more influential than without my role. (C)

> Later on the interview C ponders the importance of role rather than position in general level, considering this particular change context:

> Yeah, yeah like if we are for example speaking about this organizational change like as a one-off situation, I think that it is not dependent on the person rather than how much you influence but specifically like on the role that on the role you are supposed to influence and try to influence, that is how it comes. (C)

Within the themes considering feelings, attitudes, influencing and self-reflection towards the opinion leadership phenomenon, it seems that the phenomenon is not really known to the interview participants prior to the interviews. But even though some of the interviewed are in some sense surprised that they are nominated as opinion leaders for this case study, they can still see the reason behind the nomination. Attitudes towards influencing seems also to vary between the participants, as two of the interviewed have positive feelings towards influencing and person C has somewhat negative connotation towards it. Where all of the interviewed agree on is that they all experience they can influence people around them. Majority of the nominated opinion leaders also feel that the position they have in the organization has an effect to the nomination.

Situational context

When the nominated opinion leaders were asked in the interview to think about a normal working day and the situations the influencing might happen, persons B and C think that shared meetings or discussions where people are gathered are key situations for this. Persons A and D think that the influencing happens everywhere, with D highlighting the thought that it necessarily does not have to be about what you say but also how you behave, like for example being seen as a role model.

> Hmm that is a good question as it might happen everywhere. (A)

> Umm.. Of course like when, I don’t know when like talking to quite big audience like an in HR Service center calls or HR service center infosharings, that’s a very big audience, umm..and that’s of course a moment to influence a large group of people..um.. But then especially also in team discussions, so team meetings, team discussions about certain topics, umm..and how everybody is perceiving it, but then even also arranging to um, to..like country team meetings, yeah.. (B)

> Hmm. I guess mainly al these kind of shared situations, some meetings or gatherings where, where are things are discussed and new things informed together, those might be the most natural where for example if I am informing on certain subject, so of course you say it like with your own words or bring it up with own words so, so it is the own opinion and own experience that probably affects on the way how you express and how others experience it. Umm..but I guess interaction on personal-level is then the other thing that comes clearly, like with colleagues or team members together, like speaking together it affects.. (C)

> Hmm for it might be like also don't have in my opinion..doesn’t have to be something you say, maybe it can also be something how you behave or what you do, so this is the model like role model maybe, that this is also like some things you say like simply the things you discuss or the argument you give in discussion. So it will be like daily work or something the task you do or also like the discussion or like..the ideas you give. “...” Everywhere, it’s everywhere. (D)

Continuing with the situational theme, when discussing more about possible precise places where the influencing might happen, persons A, B and C discuss the importance of one-to-ones in addition to the mass gatherings such as meetings. One-to-ones are half an hour discussions held between the manager and the subordinate once every two weeks per the organizational leadership model. Person D nominates the office kitchen as one particular place where influencing is happening.

Interviewer: Like listening a bit that..like these kind of common meetings and gatherings?

For example yes, yes. And then in managerial work and, and like in any one-to-ones and such, you need to form a common direction from the opinions of two people (laughs) so it is needed in those situations too..and I think like that also that I like to suggest new thoughts and new ideas, so to get anyone excited and thinking ‘hey I see also the point in this’ so that is some kind of influence situation and also that kind of place where the influence is used either knowingly or less consciously. (A)

Interviewer: So it varies? Yeah?

It varies a lot, yeah, and the influence you can have in really a good one to one, um when you’re really talking about something crucial or important, can be just as big or maybe your moments of biggest influence in the two weeks.. Um then compared to presenting something in info sharing, yeah, because of course people are more personal in the one-to-ones also and the challenges they maybe share..so it’s really.. I couldn’t even value..value that, but there is a lot of different moments for lot of different topics. (B)

..So it’s those two, the large masses and alternatively those one-to-ones, but then maybe also in that kind of everyday discussion, I don’t necessarily think that it happens so much and in certain situations I even try to avoid it happening. (C)

Interviewer: Ok, so are there any particular rooms or places, you mentioned like team meetings and..and workshops, are these kind of the places?

Hmm, it can be like your workplace, but you’re talking about our office right now? (D)

Interviewer: Yes, kind of like..

So you would need kind of like places where this opinion leadership is..done or what? (D)

Interviewer: No, I actually don’t need anyplace, just in general what could be that how you feel it but for example now it’s..

Everywhere, it’s everywhere. (D)

Interviewer: ..Yeah especially..

In the kitchen (laughing), everywhere. (D)

It seems that within the situational theme the interviewed feel that majority of the opinion leadership influence happens in shared meetings or discussions during the normal working day. The importance of one-to-ones is also highlighted and two of the interviewed think that the influencing happens simply everywhere.

Behaviour, personality

When interviewed on the theme what the person thinks they are doing differently as they are nominated, persons A and D indicate the importance of experience and A highlights the proof of previous successes as being one reason for nomination. Person D thinks that the showcasing of caring might be the reason. Person B thinks the energetic and active personality to participate in discussion might be one reason and that B has an unbiased angle to topics that aim for the benefits for all. Person C thinks that everyone on the role would have behaved the same way and that C is not doing necessarily anything differently than others and is acting according to the role.

> Hmm well I think that one thing that is not a personality trait is simply the thing that I have been here already quite long and then eventually when you have proof that you can turn ideas into reality, then it is easier to trust that it isn't just a thing thrown into air.. (A)

> Umm..I think I am quite..um..energetic and active when it comes to discussions..so I..I usually try to really participate and um even if the topic doesn't touch on me so much, be active, be aware, bring in perspectives and I..um.. Usually don't try to think it just from my perspective or from my teams perspective so what would do me good, what would do my team good, but also think it from our perspective, so what would us do good as HR service center, what would do good to us as (working area name) and um I think this is maybe something which makes people, like listen also or at least listen to the points that I say because..because I don't just approach it from my angle or from my benefits but for maybe the benefits of the whole group. (B)

> Umm.. I would say that no, like in a way if I compare what I did to other colleagues so I don't believe I have done anything differently. If anyone would have been in a similar way in the role or task with me I think they would have probably behaved the same way, like if we look at the whole organization I did have a different role and I have acted differently because of the role, but in a way if you put anyone else to the same role the behaviour would probably been the same. (C)

> ..Maybe I show that I care more than others..maybe like it's like that I have some experience that might be, like my influence as well."..."And that would be the things that I try, maybe? Do differently..and this..Um It's like for me it's like lot about how people perceive you and how they look at you and the thighs that you do so maybe this..there is something in this? (D)

The nominated opinion leaders were asked to describe their personality traits that could have effect on the nomination and person A brings out the objectivity on topics close to A in a bit of similar way that person B discussed previously, when talking about the unbiased angle on topics for B. Person A also ads their un-hierarchical way of expressing opinions and that it helps with new ideas and innovations. Person B thinks that the gesturing and energetic behavior helps captivate the attention in mass information flow. Person C expresses the calm and clarity as a key trait and that it helps to bring reasoning and background for discussions about decisions. Person D does not feel D has any special traits but more often helps people to come into conclusions by themselves through discussions.

> Considering personality, one thing that may have an effect is that I am super-unhierarcical person, which means that I don't like hesitate to say my opinion aloud and like low threshold to disagree or to bring out or to ask 'hey I don't get it why it is thought this way'. And I like think that stopping yourself (laughs) in a question- or challenge- situation might be the first obstacle for new ideas and innovations and I rarely have it. So it surely helps. (A)
>
> Interviewer: Okay so that clearly lowers the threshold to voice out own opinions?
>
> Yes, and like I have a feeling that even with the bigger bosses I am, I am relatively..what is it, equal starting point in that meeting where I have been invited, so I have the right to speak out and present my ideas no matter who is in that room. (A)
>
> Person A also continues in other part of the interview with the personality subject: ..The other thing that is in a sense not based on feelings is that things that I am excited about, I can look at them critically and objectively, so, so in a way I can step down from that excitement or feeling. (A)
>
> I think I am energetic "…" I think like people just like, when there is, they people just like usually, it's easier to grasp people's attention when you have some energy, when you enjoy what you're talking about, when you're maybe gesturing a lot, yeah, or when you're simply um putting some, some, some energy to the topic. And I think this is something often grasps people's attention, especially because we're having so much information flowing around us the whole time..um that I think um..like rather energetic and how I approach things and this sometimes captivates people's attention maybe. (B)
>
> ..Umm explaining things calmly and clearly and trying to give reasons and bring out the background, that is a typical way of thinking and behaviour for me, so it supports definitely that a certain image remains then to the people and a better image on certain situation. So I feel that it comes to me quite naturally and is more like natural feature for me like a trait for example. (C)
>
> Hmm..um In general I think I don't. Like have those traits that you have described in the book, but I think I have my own..um like own means, own methods how I do it. Maybe it's not like this that leader from the book that you have..the the main traits..but like I think I do it through talking to people, discussing, letting them decide maybe..or like somehow lead to this kind of like conclusion.. I wouldn't call it coaching but like..letting people like of finding their own solution. But I..I little bit influence it. Like help them to come to some conclusion maybe. (D)

Also, the importance of listening on the influencing topic pops-up in the interviews from persons A and B:

> So in that sense I think it is really ok to influence as long as you remember that you need to also know how to listen when you try to drive your thoughts forward. (A)

> ..But for me it’s important when influencing like listening to other people is extremely important. So I would never go with just like walking talking over people, umm like listening to where people are, where their standpoint is like crucial for me to influencing people. If I would like someone to walk from A to B, then I need to of course first understand what is happening at A, why are we at A, what is important in A and umm..so in this way it’s might maybe not a classical sales-skill but maybe it’s more listening and understanding where people are and then picking them up and leading them from there somewhere else. (B)

Sales skills are mentioned also by persons A and B:

> ..But maybe I have found a small sales person from myself (laughs), or understood it in a way, that in order to get things done it requires that your priorities need to become also other people's priorities and that usually demands some kind of sales - or negotiating skill. (A)

> ..But I definitely, I am not an opinion leader in the terms of having extremely good knowledge on something or being the expert or being like super much salesperson, think it happens more when there is like a good relationship quality and people trust you because you have been helping out, giving feedback, giving comments before. (B)

> I think one thing about selling, which I am doing quite good, or which is something that is useful in our environment..um.. I think I can simplify information through the point that is really important and crucial for the people. (B)

Energy and own enthusiasm are also brought up by persons A and B:

> Like that kind of own enthusiasm, energy, it might be that kind of unconscious influencing. (A)

> I think like people just like, when there is, they people just like usually, it’s easier to grasp people’s attention when you have some energy, when you enjoy what you're talking about, when you’re maybe gesturing a lot, yeah, or when you’re simply um putting some, some, some energy to the topic. And I think this is something often grasps people’s attention, especially because we’re having so much information flowing around us the whole time..um that I think um..like rather energetic and how I approach things and this sometimes captivates people’s attention maybe. (B)

Regarding behaviour and personality theme, there are no traits that all of the interviewed opinion leaders would nominate. But still, as portrayed, the importance of listening, energy and own enthusiasm and the need of certain sales-skills pop-up more than once. Within this theme, also the experience gathered inside the case organization seems to be one trait what the opinion leaders think as being a supporting factor for them.

Awareness

One of the main questions for this case study was to study whether the influencing is done knowingly. When discussed whether the person is influencing others intentionally or is it something they are not aware of, the results show that all of the nominated opinion leaders A, B, C and D agree that they are influencing both knowingly and unconsciously:

> Umm I guess both, so I think when I do it unknowingly it's much about that I try to lead by example or act in a way that I hope others would act also. I think that is that kind of unconscious influence, but for example whenever I present any ideas or..or want a green light to carry out some idea then I might think very much ahead how this case should be presented and what kind of things to bring forward and things that I shouldn't (laughs), and.. and then it might lead to it that it will go through like little, little, somehow easier then in that phase when decisions are made around it. Occasionally then it will go in a different (laughs) way than what I had thought. (A)
>
> Interviewer: Understandably..(laughs)
>
> It is often surprising. And then I might do it like in advance before I take it to a wider audience, asking a couple of people what they think about it and often I have knowingly done it that way, that one from who thinks completely opposite and then from another that I know will most likely be enthusiastic towards that idea. So then you get kind of positive excitement like 'yes really good and yeah let's go' and on the other hand also that kind of views that I didn't necessarily think in my own excitement, so those will then improve, improve the proposition or then how it should be presented to wider audience. (A)
>
> Hmmh..Half-half." …"So..umm so that really depends..depends on how much time I had to prepare for situation, for example if I know I'm speaking in info sharing I have time to think what is the important message that I bring, want to bring across, what is the important points for my audience, it's of course a lot more pre-prepared than when we're sitting in a one-to-one or team discussion and something just pops..just pops up. Um.. I think um, I think a lot of influencing..just happens on the go, um I think when I really influence on a certain topic on a very certain issue I am usually aware of it. But for example, um, I'm quite positive person, um, or always maybe rather little bit on the too optimistic-side that things can be done or arranged somehow.. (B)
>
> So I think that in situations for example where I need to communicate some new information, just like these kind of change things, in those my role is precisely to communicate it, umm..like outside, so that is knowingly, umm because of course not that I communicate that information I will try to create a positive picture of it or, or whatever the needed picture is from it, so then of course you think your own words in a way that it leaves a certain image to the listeners. (C)
>
> Interviewer: Hmm..
>
> ..Umm. But then in ordinary life it is more like unconscious or like that it isn't my communications.. or in a way that it isn't necessarily the meaning for me presenting things in order to influence peoples' opinions or attitudes but, but like I present things and then if it creates an opinion for someone based on that, then in a way it is secondary or like a side product of it. (C)
>
> I think like both (laughs)"…"Cause sometimes I don't even know about it and sometimes I feel like I really want to like change something and then I need to influence my team for example. (D)

Continuing with the awareness theme, it was interesting when the interviewed were pondering throughout the interview more about the possible unconscious influencing and how and when it might happen. Person A sees that enthusiasm and energy plays a part in it, A also states that being not defensive on idea proposals might also help. Person B thinks that unconscious reactions to different topics might have an effect on the influence and also the willingness to support others by sitting down and listening/discussing would have an effect. As already pointed earlier, person C thinks that the unconscious influence comes from C's way of presenting topics and that might help create opinions in ordinary life.

> Like that kind of own enthusiasm, energy, it might be that kind of unconscious influencing. (A)

> And then I guess it is unconscious, but like I'm not particularly defensive in that situation when someone expresses critique about that idea. Or at least I aim to it which in a way like through longer time period brings out that it's ok to discuss these subjects and that what I propose is not the last version, but like the best version what I have managed to come by, but then it's like 'welcome to improve it' -type. (A)

> ..But then on other..other areas it's also something which is influencing people around me without me doing anything with it or being consciously aware of it, simply because I might react to something which is for somebody else in the team um 'uuuungh' or like 'nnggghh', like if it's possible to stay a little bit calm or more positive that might just have an influence without me being aware of it. Yeah. (B)

> Yeah. Or then like maybe just for example if someone comes with a problem or an issue or um is like facing really a challenge, like taking the time to sit down with a person and just maybe take a couple of deep breaths and then like as some questions or kind of only just listen to the person to be able to get the challenge and the problem and the stuff somewhere. Um I think this is for example something which I do sometimes consciously but also a lot of times just unconsciously because I want the other side kind of like feel better and get the stuff out of their head or just like come to other solutions for themselves and that's often something what also happens unconsciously. (B)

To conclude this theme, all the participants think they are influencing both knowingly and unconsciously. Examples for knowingly done influence attempts seem to stem from the time and preparedness the interviewed person have had prior to the events described. Considering the unconscious influence, it might be something that happens "just on the go" as B describes, a side-product of behaviour as categorized by C or when something that results after, as A describes, trying to lead by an example.

Change context

Since this case study was organized in a change context, I asked if the participants think that the change context affects how they express their opinion. Persons A, B and C describe that the change context did not affect their way of doing or behaviour and how they are acting is similar in general. Only person D thinks that the context had an effect and states that being convinced has an effect.

I think it is quite similar no matter the context, like maybe then..the thing that changes is how widely I think there is a point to involve people to think about the change. (A)

I think it's a way that I am doing things in general. (B)

I argue that in any situation I would act in a same way and would like, handle the situation in a similar way, so..because yeah I don't think that I needed to change anything in my behaviour, like in this situation, like in any other situation, so I don't think that it would change even though the content would change, so my way of doing would remain, I believe so.. (C)

Propably yes. It's always like this if you are you know convinced to something you expect express, you talk differently, just feel that this is your like task to do your duty then you behave differently, so I would say that yes. If I'm 100 percent convinced on something I think it's like naturally a little bit different that I need to communicate for example. (D)

When asked if the opinion leaders thought their input was significant on the change happening in the organization, persons A, B and C think their input was significant, in case of B at least in some sense. Person D thinks that in this case the input was not significant but overall D's opinion is taken into account.

Yeah, yeah, because first I needed to influence (laughs) the (team name) regarding why this solution would now be good and it took a while before we came into some common understanding and shared view, and before the implementation and during implementation, and then to everybody.. (A)

I think maybe to some extent (person's name) influencing on this topic is maybe even stronger, or definitely stronger (laughs), ummm.. I ..hmm..well I think we moved through it quite smoothly, um and I'm sure that I don't know, keeping in like a calm and like good approach to it helped. But then I am also sure that, I mean, the like, for example with the project at the end with the recruitment and the global team doing their set-up, that's just something like it's..it would have, like if it's with very independent people, yeah, who already know quite well what they are doing , I think maybe my, my contribution there..um was, was maybe helping to run it smoothly but not um..yeah not like, not so crucial. I think the only part where it really made a difference um..was maybe with the um..when we were in the interview phase."..."So we were interviewing for candidates for the global team, I did quite some influencing on some people (laughing) to see, to see whether they would be umm, possible or whether it would be possible for them to join or they would be interested. (B)

Umm-yeah, I do think so. That like because there was a small group whose task it was to communicate, and I had a one clear target group that came for me naturally, on which the change affected me quite strongly. So I would believe that my role.. and I do think that my role was important like 'I need to handle this' and I do feel it had a large effect. (C)

But this is like in this particular example I don't know, rather not. But...this is like hard question."…" So like overall if we come back to this question I think like that my opinion is somehow taken into consideration, yes. (D)

To conclude the change context theme, majority of the opinion leaders feel that the change context did not have an effect on the persons' behaviour or way of doing. But still, majority of the interviewed opinion leaders thought that their input was significant considering the change.

Future implications

In the final part of the interview, I asked if, after these short interviews, the interviewed person would be more self-aware on the subject or if it would be just business as usual. All nominated opinion leaders A, B, C and D see that this short interview would have a possible implication for the future as they were challenged into thinking about the subject during the interview. In person C's case the interview might actually have helped to model C's thinking on the influencing topic from negative manipulation into more positive indication towards influencing.

> Hmm..well yeah and I see it in a way that not only this interview but this role where I am now has sharpened that..the field where you are interacting is very different and like some of the tools that you're accustomed to use that they work, that if they suddenly wouldn't work. That like that what continues from this, I guess for long, is that how to find the new ways that which the will work on these people. (A)
>
> Definitely. Like I think it's a um..I mean you must have noticed during the interview at some point I really needed to stop and think, which is obviously a really good sign because it means I haven't been thinking about the question before, or don't know the answer (laughing).. (B)
>
> Well yeah because I already started to think about like later situations in the meanwhile, for example has there been any similar and how I have acted..umm..that have I acted like in a same way or has there been a change on it, so it already evoked that kind of thinking that 'what do I do in my normal life' and surely will think about going forward, because these kind of similar situations will coke later in life so it's good to be aware what you're doing and how you're doing..so definitely. (C)
>
> Interviewer: Okay, great, so in a way provokes thoughts?
>
> Yes, yes, and like I said in the beginning that I feel in a way negatively towards that kind of knowing influencing or that it feels like that is it then manipulation or something, so then when you think that in a matter of fact you have in a way had to do it knowingly and have not meant any bad things with it but like wanted good with the own influence, so maybe others mainly mean good with it and it is not meant to be manipulative, so maybe own attitudes now that you think about it are changing.. (C)
>
> For sure. Yeah this is like a topic at least I don't think, yeah. (D)"

It would seem, after all, that this case study had positive implications towards the thinking of opinion leadership phenomena, and possibly even change the attitude towards influencing in at least one case.

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

My first research question for this case study was "Can opinion leadership phenomenon be observed also on other organization member positions than on members who act on supervisory positions?" The results in this case study indicate that yes, the phenomenon can be observed also in other positions as almost half of the nominated employees (44%) from the case study organization were team members of the employees who answered the survey. This itself will not tell the truth if the nominated still held supervisory positions inside the organization, but not inside the team context considering the answerer, but we may still assume that not all "team members" were supervisors inside the organization as there simply was not even so many supervisory positions inside the organization as there were nominated people categorized as "team members". The result that the phenomenon is divided throughout the organization positions and persons supports the opinion leadership notion made by Katz (1957) that opinion leaders can be found on all levels of society and that they are very much alike the people they influence. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that co-workers such as team members are nominated in my case study context also, as in society in general opinion leadership phenomenon can be found from all levels of society.

My second research question was "Do people chosen for this case study-interview from an organization experience they are influencing others knowingly and how do they reflect on the phenomenon through interview?" Starting with the first part of this question "Do people chosen for this case study-interview from an organization experience they are influencing others knowingly" my interview results show that all of the four people chosen to be interviewed about the opinion leadership phenomenon in this case study, after being nominated by other organization members, think that they are influencing both knowingly and unconsciously. Examples for knowingly done influence attempts seem to stem from the time and preparedness the interviewed person had, for example when person A describes the need to think very much ahead how the idea should be presented if A wants some new idea to be greenlighted. In case of person B, B mentions thinking about important points for the audience beforehand when presenting, for example in this case company organizations info-sharings and that if person B influences on some certain topic B is usually aware of it. C mentions that this kind of influence on change topic is done knowingly as it is part of C's role and that as the information is new for the listener, C tries to create a positive image about the new information in order to leave a certain image of it to the listeners. D also mentions that if D feels that something should be changed and D really wants it, then D needs to influence the team. Within the power and influence theme, which is pivotal for opinion leadership phenomenon as for example Katz's (1957) definition for the flow of personal influence as part of opinion leadership suggests, all interviewed persons in this case study think that they can influence people around them.

From the interview results, there can also be seen citations to at least four different power bases defined by Raven (2008), such as the presence of informational power, expert power, legitimate power and referent power in the answers. Informational power, as defined by Raven as "socially independent change" that derives from informational influence and results in cognitive change or altered behaviour, this power base can be seen in person D's answer when D ponders that letting people come into conclusion and finding solutions with D's guidance is more of a D's way of influencing and that it helps other people to come to their conclusions. In the case of expert power, A for example describes that A has been already for a longer time in the organization and that A thinks that when you have proof of turning ideas into reality it works as a benefit when thinking about traits and influence in general. Legitimate power is at least in some sense present as the interviewed persons describe the importance of role and position for their perception to have been nominated. Referent power then, it derives from the target seeing a person as a model, for example a role model. In the interview, person A discusses the aim of leading by example as one of the unconscious influence methods A does and person D highlights in the situational context that influence does not necessarily need to be something you say or do, but also how you behave for example as a possible role model in daily work. But from the study results I cannot find meanings defining coercive power or reward power. It seems that in this case these kinds of power bases are not needed or that the persons interviewed did not feel like bringing them out in the discussion. But I think that in this case context, as I am studying opinion leadership and the nomination of opinion leaders was voluntary for the organization members, this might have effect on the power bases in use as formulation of own opinions could be seen to be more voluntarily than forced.

In their model, the powerful and the powerless as actors, Brauer and Bourhis (2006) showcase one dimension for the powerful individual being that the powerful individuals tend to express their opinions more openly. In the interview results expressing of opinions is brought up by persons A and D. A describes their own behaviour as being un-hierarchical and that A is not afraid to voice out own opinion no matter who sits in the same meeting if A is invited there to discuss some matter. Person D on the other hand would like to let people come to their own conclusions but will voice out their own opinion if D has knowledge on the matter discussed.

Considering the unconscious influence, person A thinks that it might be something when A tries to lead by example or act according to the way that A would hope others would act also. A also sees that own enthusiasm and energy plays a part in the unconscious influence and A also states that being not defensive on own idea proposals might also help this. B thinks that a lot of influencing happens just on the go and that the unconscious reactions to different topics might have an effect on the influence. B also thinks that the willingness to support others by sitting down and listening/discussing would have an effect on the unconscious influence. C sees the unconscious influence as the side product of presenting something, as the influence would not necessarily be to communicate in order to influence peoples' opinions or attitudes. D simply states that sometimes D is not aware of own influence. What is characteristic for this awareness theme according to the case study interview answers is the way the persons describe their behaviour. For example, Kilduff and Tsai (2003) state that not only does learning happen in personal interactions between individuals, learning happens also while people observe others' interactions in organizational social networks. For example, this "on the go" influence that B describes happening, also by the way of reactions, this might be observed by others around. In addition, A describes enthusiasm and energy playing a part in the unconscious influence, this might be observed in a similar way by other members of the organization in the workplace. Of course, it needs to be added that interviewing people about something they might not be aware of is quite difficult and the deeper understanding of unconscious behaviour is not possible with these case study methods I have chosen for this study.

Then, how did the interviewed persons reflect on the opinion leader phenomenon through the interview as the latter part of the second study question defined? Starting with the opinion leader definition, the phenomenon was not really known or clear to the persons prior to the theme interview. About the interviewed persons themselves, it was interesting to see that none of them were new to the case organization, all had been part of the organization for over two years and two of the interviewed already over 4 years. This could indicate that in this case study context a certain seniority was in demand from the person to gain more nominations from the organization members. From the interviews it can be also deducted that at least some of the opinion leaders have done various different things during their time at the case organization. As Cross and Thomas (2009) also noticed in their social network study, those engineers who worked on multiple projects had a better view of the organization and were more positive about the culture. When discussing the theme of what the persons might do differently than others to be nominated for this case study, persons A and D also mentioned the importance of experience as one possible reason. Persons A, B and C felt that their position or role inside the organization had an effect on the nomination, although C pondered also that influencing is expected on the role and that the role gives a platform for the person to influence, but that it isn't role dependent in general. The experience and position are also brought into attention from Katz (1957) and Valente and Pampuang (2007) when defining the opinion leadership phenomenon. According to Katz for example, the flow of personal influence is related to personification of certain values, to competence and to strategic social location. Valente and Pampuang see opinion leadership as a function of at least three qualities: opinion leaders' values and traits, their competence or expertise or social position and how accessible they are. Also, as Harkola and Greve wrote in their research article, opinion leaders can be seen as organizational repositories of organizational know-how and that it implies that the opinion leaders are able to influence decision-making as part of the development of group norms (1995). So according to earlier research, experience and positional themes brought up also in this case study might hold importance in the phenomenon in this case study context.

When discussed in the interview about personality traits and behaviour that might have affected the nomination as an opinion leader the interviewed name various traits. Persons A and B bring out the importance to remain objective on the topics discussed. Person A also ads their un-hierarchical way of expressing opinions and that it helps with new ideas and innovations. Person B thinks that the gesturing and energetic behavior helps captivate the attention in mass information flow. Person A also describes own enthusiasm and energy as a playing factor. Person C expresses the calm and clarity as a key trait and that it helps to bring reasoning and background for discussions about decisions. Person D does not feel D has any special traits but more often helps people to come into conclusions by themselves through discussions. The importance of listening is also brought up in the interviews with persons A and B, also the mention of certain needs of sales skills in their communication. According to the "The powerful and the powerless as actors" model by Brauer and Bourhis (2006) high power individuals tend to display more emotions, especially positive positive emotions when discussing controversial issues with others. According to Brauer and Bourhis -model, the powerful individuals display less behaviour inhibition and this leads to being objectively more available.

Since this case study was organized in a change context the role of change needs to be addressed. In the interview I asked if the participants think that the change context affects how they express their opinion. Persons A, B and C described that the change context did not affect their way of doing or behaviour and how they are acting is similar in general. Only D thinks that the context had an effect and person D states that being convinced has an effect. When asked if the opinion leaders thought their input was significant on the change happening in the organization A, B and C think their input was significant, in case of B at least in some sense. Person D thinks that in this case the input was not significant but overall D's opinion is taken into consideration. It is highly interesting that the persons A, B and C all think that the change itself played no factor on their actions but still they thought that their role in it was significant. When thinking about this, a thought arises: Did I stumble into change agents while I was studying nominated opinion leaders in this case study? Indeed, some of the characteristics are similar between opinion leaders and change agents. For example, according to de Caluwe and Vermaak (2003) if power plays a dominant role in the organization, it would be best to involve the most influential players on crucial decision-making process or to entice influential change opponents into taking responsibility from important parts of the change process, the intention being that these change agents in these kinds of organizations ensure the sufficient power-base behind the intended change. Sullivan et al. (2013) add that a highly competent internal change agent is the key for success and that the person can be the most powerful person in the change system. It is clear that the persons interviewed in this case study wield at least some influence inside the organization as they are nominated by other organization members to have affected opinions. Also, during the interviews and from the results, a certain seniority and professional image is portrayed from all of the persons interviewed as opinion leaders for this case study. This double role, overlapping role, the notion that opinion leaders can work also as change agents is not completely out of the woods; Valente and Pampuang (2007) already state that efforts are being made in order to identify opinion leaders and use them as change agents. According to Valente and Pampuang the opinion leaders tend not to be the earliest proponents of new ideas as this might be risky for their opinion leader position and instead opinion leaders tend to monitor the climate of opinion and use their influence when the advantages of new ideas are apparent. Therefore, it would be vital to identify these opinion leaders beforehand.

Where did the influence happen then? When I asked the interview participants to think about a normal working day and situations where the influencing might happen, persons B and C think that shared meetings or discussions where people are gathered are key situations for this. On the other hand persons A and D think that the influencing happens everywhere, with D highlighting the thought that it necessarily does not have to be about what you say but also how you behave, like for example being seen as a role model as already stated before. Discussing more about possible precise places where the influence might happen, persons A, B and C discuss the importance of one-to-ones in addition to the mass gatherings such as meetings. One-to-ones are half an hour-discussions held between the manager and the subordinate once every two weeks per the organizational leadership model. Person D nominates the office kitchen as one particular place where influencing is happening. Elias (2008) writes quite similarly about situations while discussing the power interaction model. According to Elias, social power is always used in the workplace when two or more workers are interacting with each other and that especially workshop-, training- and leadership program practitioners would benefit from understanding the power interaction model showcased earlier in this case study literature section. What is interesting also is the mention of the kitchen by person D. de Caluwe and Vermaak (2003) also mention these kinds of informal activities, their example is an office cocktail hour, the cocktail hour serving as a place to test out new ideas.

Conclusion

To conclude, in this case study the opinion leadership phenomenon seems to be quite divided inside the case organization both positionally and individually and the opinion leadership phenomenon can be observed also on other persons than organization members in supervisory positions. Even though the phenomenon seems to be divided in this case study, it was still possible to identify five persons from the results who gained more nominations than others and after interviewing the four nominated persons it can be concluded that these four possess characteristics supported by earlier research studies in a way that they can be defined as opinion leaders in this case study context also. All the interviewed opinion leaders in this case study think they can influence people around them and that the influence is both knowing and unconscious. The opinion leadership phenomenon was not widely known for the interviewed opinion leaders, but they could still in the interview define possible situations where this kind of opinion leadership phenomenon might happen, such as meetings and gatherings but also one-to-one discussion between employees and supervisors. It also seems that in this case study context where a change was happening inside the organization, these opinion leaders might have also acted as change agents inside the organization.

Implications for future research

One possible implication for future research would be to complete a full social network analysis in another organization to gain a better understanding of the social network considering the nominated opinion leaders. Next time I would also change the interview perspective: I would focus on studying what makes an opinion leader in one’s eyes and one possible study setting would be to interview all the people nominating a certain same opinion leader in order to study if there would be similarities in the descriptions. What I also find interesting is that three persons in this case study thought that the person's role or position in the organization had an effect on the nomination as an opinion leader. As Kilduff and Tsai (2003) write that people who act as links in organizations connecting other individuals might receive benefits such as faster promotions, with this thought I ponder that if opinion leadership is sometimes the result of the position or role, could it also be that the role or position is then at sometimes the result of opinion leadership phenomenon? Also, as all of the nominated opinion leaders in this case study agree that the short interview had possible future implications, as they got to think about the subject, it would be interesting to return to the case organization and interview the persons whether something had changed in their behaviour after this case study. The study of the role of informal organization as presented by de Caluwe and Vermaak (2003), the possible coalitions and presence of manipulation, this could also be one future research objective. Also, the role of informal gatherings such as the workplace kitchen mentioned in this case study where influencing attempts might happen, it would be beneficial to understand these informal structures. Finally, the thought that remains is that when in this case study the majority of the nominated opinion leaders saw their role in the change as significant but that their actions and behaviour would be the same no matter the study context, could it be possible to lead a change project in the future by first identifying the opinion leaders inside the organization and then include them in the change process?

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APPENDIX

Attachement 1: Theme interview questions and coding

Theme	Possible questions
Background, A	1. Time approximately in the organization a) Under a year b) 1-2 years c) 2-4 years d) Over 4 years
Feelings, attitudes, self-reflection, influencing B	2. Are you surprised that you were named in relation to the study question? 3. How do you feel or experience the phenomena yourself? 4. What are your attitudes towards influencing? 5. Do you experience you can influence people? 6. Do you think your position in the organization had effect on this?
Situational context, C	7. If you think of a normal working day, what are the everyday situations the influencing might happen? 8. Any particular rooms or places?
Behaviour, personality, D	9. What do you think you are doing differently? 10. Personality traits, do they affect, what would those be?
Awareness, motives, E	11. Is the influencing done knowingly, or is this something that you are not even aware?
Change, F	12. Does change context affect on how you express your opinion? 13. On change situation, do you feel your own input is significant?
Future, G	14. What about in the future, now that we had a short interview, do you think you are more self-aware or is it just business as usual? 15. Could this even improve the charasteristics?