Abstract

Leadership as process from an ontological point of view

Despite many different social constructionists’ perspectives on leadership, the aim of this research is to investigate leadership in leaderless movements from a fairly new and uncommon lens: leadership as process. The leadership as process approach tries to investigate interactions among people, but this research proposes a new theme, which is the investigation of interactions among people and also interactions between people and things. The latter is the new approach for leadership, which seeks to set leadership free from taken for granted facts, i.e. leaders and followers. In this sense, the focus of leadership as process is on ontological point of view, trying to uncover taken for granted concepts in the leadership field from a critical lens and as the intellectual support of critical judgement in the deliberative process of asking about the ‘if’, ‘when’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of leadership. In other words, leadership as process attempts to revise our mode of abstraction and style of thinking, which will help to find new potentialities in the leadership field. The case study of the research is the Occupy London movement, which has been claimed to be leaderless by its members.

The Occupy movement has been presented in the media as a leaderless movement similar to its inspirational movement, the Arab Spring. This research attempts to examine the meaning of leadership to leaderless groups’ members in general and especially to the members of the Occupy movement. It tries to clarify how the rejection of leadership as a concept affects what members of the movements do and how they organize themselves. In other words, what happens in place of the leadership? To answer these questions, this research employs leadership as process by using process philosophy from an ontological point of view. For the reason that this research appreciates leadership as a process and tries to investigate taken for granted facts from the leadership research field, other nonhuman actors such as media and space will be examined in order to shed light on the blurred side of leadership. Therefore, the role of media in these types of movements will also be examined, in order to get a broad understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This includes the examination of media –mainstream media, as well as social networking sites and blogs - from Occupy movements to answer questions such as: to what extent is Occupy a media event that is sustained by circulating images? How is leadership or leaderlessness produced through image production/circulation and media representation? Finally, to what extent is there a potentiality for the media to take over the leadership role of these leaderless groups? The argument of the research is about the role of physical and virtual spaces that have been occupied by the Occupy movement and whether or not these spaces can become leaders for the movement. This is related to adopting leadership as process, where leadership is redefined in terms of processes and practices organized by people and things and their interactions.