

CBS Leadership Initiative  
16. December 2022

**The Ethics of Authentic Leadership:  
A Heideggerian Perspective**

Florence Villesèche, Associate Professor/ Sverre Spoelstra

**Faces of Trust in Public Management  
and Governance**

Steen Vallentin/ Elisabet Skov Nielsen

**CBS LEADERSHIP**

*Research Paper Series*

A discussion among peers

30. November 2022

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Research Paper Series – discussions among peers on leadership, and part of the CBS Leadership Initiative

The Leadership Research Paper Series is a part of the CBS Leadership Initiative that aims at making CBS the Nordic center for leadership knowledge, research and education – connecting academia and practitioners from both the private and the public sector.

The Research Paper Series is a forum for junior and senior colleagues, as well as visiting and guest scholars, to present and discuss leadership research in progress from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and theoretical traditions. Presenters will receive constructive feedback from discussants and attendees with the aim of developing their papers and arguments for eventual publication.

The Paper Series will also function to promote discussion and debate across CBS about leadership and leadership development and, finally, it will put attention on how research can be applied on a daily basis by business professionals who carry out leadership on a practical level.

Welcome to the Research Paper Series talks and to the CBS Leadership Initiative!



*The Research Paper Series events are connecting colleagues and peers across CBS to discuss on-going research - how to make it even better and how it relates to leadership challenges in practice.*

CBS Leadership Research Paper Series

## Questions for Consideration

1. What is the spirit of leadership presented here?
2. How can this work inform CBS' contribution to society or to Denmark's leadership?
3. What can practitioners learn from this work about leadership?



# The Ethics of Authentic Leadership: A Heideggerian Perspective

**Presenter:** Florence Villesèche, Associate Professor, Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy (co-authors: Anders Klitmøller & Cathrine Bjørnholt Michaelsen)

**Discussant:** Sverre Spoelstra, Professor, Associate Professor, Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy.

**Facilitator:** Nicole Ferry, Dept. of Management, Society and Communication

## What is the spirit of leadership presented here?

Authentic leadership has gained traction among practitioners as a moral approach to leadership in the wake of corporate scandals and societal crises in the last few decades. An authentic leader is guided by personal values, has an ethical mindset and a sense of purpose towards others. However, is this view of authenticity one that can ground more ethical business conduct? Drawing upon philosopher Martin Heidegger's work, the paper argues that searching for the true self and core values to guide leadership is an ill-advised strategy that can instead lead to inauthenticity and unethical conduct. The paper argues that authenticity rather arises when facing difficult and anxiety-provoking situations – for instance when stated values conflict with business – and being attuned to the way this affects oneself and others. In this view, authentic leadership is about realizing the limits of leadership.

## How does this inform CBS' contribution to leadership in society?

The paper argues that authentic leadership is leadership that realizes its fallibilities and challenges, rather than trying to avoid them by promoting a particular personality or guiding values. Being attuned to the limits of leadership – also in a business context – helps opening up a shared conversation about what to do and how to do it, thus essentially making daily leadership better considered and aware of ethical dimensions.



*Florence Villesèche presented research and examples of “airport literature” on leadership that could need more light and shade in their points and recommendations*

## What are the concrete take-aways for leadership practitioners?

Rather than tucking away leadership failures or difficulties, such events are occasions for self-awareness. What kind of emotions do they stir in the leader? What are the fallibilities of leadership? Being open to reflecting on such questions is also opening up for a more authentic and dialogical approach to leadership.

# Faces of Trust in Public management and Governance

**Presenter:** Steen Vallentin, Dept. of Management, Society and Communication

**Discussant:** Elisabet Skov Nielsen, Industrial PhD Fellow, Department of Organization

**Facilitator:** Nicole Ferry, Dept. of Management, Society and Communication

## What is the spirit of leadership presented here?

To trust other people is foundational for social and economic interaction, but trust is not an easy thing to define or establish. The paper argues that trust in public authorities comes in four forms that are reflected in different forms of governance: “Institutional trust” is typically built into formal rules and principles; “economic trust” through marketization and calculative indicators such as price and value; “moral trust” through displays of foundational or personal values; whereas “relational trust” develops through social interaction.

Leadership plays a particular role in creating relational trust, which may also work to supplement or repair the limitations or shortcomings of the other forms of trust.



## How does this inform CBS' contribution to leadership in society?

The paper underscores that a core element of leadership is to build and repair trust through relational means when other forms of trust building mechanisms fail or have negative side effects. This includes an awareness of the precariousness of trust and that confidence in leadership is difficult to secure top-down. Leadership needs to cater for trust building in the design and management of organizations as well as in daily interaction and collaboration with staff and stakeholders.



## What are the concrete take-aways for leadership practitioners?

Leadership practitioners should reflect upon their trust relationships with employees and stakeholders. How can they strengthen these? This includes awareness of how institutional, economic, and moral dimensions of the organization contribute to trust building and how leadership should supplement these through constructive and responsible relations and social interaction.

# SUGGESTED READING

Sverre Spolestra (2018), *Leadership and Organization: A Philosophical Introduction*. London: Routledge

Charles Taylor (1992), *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Bentzen, T. Ø. (2019). The birdcage is open but will the bird fly? *Journal of Trust Research*, 9, 185–202.

Vallentin, S. (2023). *Trust, Power and Public Sector Leadership. A Relational Approach*. Oxon: Routledge.

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