

Izak, Michał & Monika Kostera (2020) (with Michał Izak) " King Popiel, the killer mice and the story of the post-lie leadership", in: Wendelin Kupers, Matt Statler (eds) *Leadership and Wisdom: Narrating the future responsibility*. New York: Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315232997>

King Popiel, the killer mice and the story of the post-lie leadership

The legend of king Popiel

A very long time ago, at the heart of the land that is now known as Poland, in the ancient city of Gopło, there stood a beautiful tall tower, the pride of the Slavic people inhabiting the area and the symbol of their unity and brotherhood. The Slavs have always believed in these principles – alas, the actual practice of them was not up to the ideal. But the tower was there to remind them, and every time they looked up at it, they knew that it was important for them to strive for them.

The Slavs were then ruled by a king presiding over a council of elders, all coming from the same noble family. The custom was to meet regularly, debate important matters of state and make the most important decisions together. It worked fine for a long time. And so it also was at the times when the young ambitious Popiel became king. He and his German wife Gerda were a glamorous and magnificent couple, infatuated with power, believing themselves to be superior to the rest of the royal family. They looked good and spoke well, they were bright and persuasive, and knew how to make a great impression on others.

Now, it is said that the king had been warned, as a little boy, that mice would bring him misfortune. Therefore, he was very careful about hygiene and grooming thus there were, in fact, no mice in his castle, something of an unusual achievement in those days.

Whilst the queen's foreign ancestry was frowned upon by the more suspicious people, the royal couple grew increasingly prosperous. Yet, they were not satisfied with what they had. They incessantly wanted more and more. Even more, they felt that they deserved better than what was supposed to be the fate of provincial rulers. Increasingly, they were getting impatient with the way things were being done and considered them too slow, old fashioned and, simply, ineffective.

When the date of the next council approached, Gerda addressed her husband and stated.

"We have been putting up with these old fools for too long. Just look how things are done in other countries. This is a backwards way of ruling a kingdom. Is it, in fact, a kingdom at all, or a party of old men?"

"You are right, my wife", Popiel readily agreed, "these councils are a bore and a burden to the kingdom, and they are an insult to the acumen of the king. We should look for a way of ending the sad spectacle and convert our backwater land into a prosperous, modern kingdom."

"Yes, my husband. We should indeed. Look at these old men, all they think of is diminishing you, your power, one day they will end up disposing of you, I am telling you."

"But pray??????, how can we rid the country of their sad influence? The people seem to be regrettably attached to this form of government. We cannot just pronounce ourselves monarchs, as the bumpkins are not able to understand the matters of reason and rule."

“Yes, my husband, and that is why we are not telling them about our plans in that vulgar open fashion. We will say that we are coming together for even greater unity and brotherhood. Let us invite these old fools for supper after the next council to our castle. The people will be happy about such a gesture of perfect unity.”

“Yes! They will! We shall talk to the people about the virtues of accord, family, brotherhood and involvement! We shall propagate the values of even greater togetherness and harmony! And then?”

“And then we shall kill them,” Gerda said.

“Yes, my dear, we shall do that! And to the people we will say that they now are so close to our hearts that they have decided to stay with us and live together with us, until death do us part.”

“Until death do us part, indeed!”

And that is what they did actually. Their people were told how important unity and brotherhood were to them and how seriously and literally they were taking them. They invited the councillors for supper. The elders were happy to accept the invitation, believing that their rather troublesome young sibling and his wife were at last ready to engage in building of good and close relationships with all the member of the council. After the meeting they all joined the king to his castle to eat and drink together. When they were all quite inebriated with the good mead that was flowing at the table, the hosts produced another jug, this time, carrying poison diluted with the mead. While they themselves abstained from the round, all of the elders drank their last toast to brotherhood and unity and fell instantly dead. The royal couple ordered the guards to carry the dead bodies under cover of the night out of the castle and drop them into the nearby Gopło lake, each weighed

down with a heavy stone. The next day they announced to the people that the brotherhood and unity has reached a higher level and now all of the council members were living together under one roof. The elders would now focus on work and so they would not leave the castle until some important matters of state were settled. In rapid procession there followed a number of oppressive rulings, which were all explained and justified to the people by invoking the authority of brotherhood and unity. And each time the royal couple claimed that this was a decision of the council, one which would make the kingdom even more excellent and successful in the future.

The land was soon sagging under the tyranny and the people were suffering from increasing pressures and demands from the king, but what could the people do? They believed that the council must be right, that there indeed must be a superior reason to what was happening, something that the elders saw and understood, as they were all working so hard that they were not even able to go out for a walk in the wood. So the peasants and the craftsmen kept on working harder and harder, and the royal couple got richer and richer.

While the unity seemed to prosper and wealth unites all people (or at least those who believed in them), the occasional mice' squeaks commenced to be heard in the corridors and chambers of the once impeccably clean and pest-free castle. To Popiel's horror any and all attempts to eradicate the plague were in vain. Then, one particularly dark, moonless night, a multitude of mice emerged from the lake and invaded the royal castle. The mice were born out of the lies of the king and queen, one mouse for each lie, and they fed on the bodies of the dead elders until they grew big and fat. The horde stormed the royal chambers, and the king and the queen woke up in utmost alarm and fled, in their nightgowns, to the upmost floor of the tall tower. But the mice were well fed, so they were

good climbers and they followed them up to their topmost hideout. They were now getting ferociously hungry from all the running and climbing. When they found Popiel and Gerda, yelling insults at each other and blaming each other for their plight, they jumped at them and simply ate them for supper. Only the bones remained. When the servants discovered the sad remains, the guards confessed what they had done with the dead bodies of the elders. There was much unrest and alarm among the people, but also much anger which at last surfaced and found a way out.

It all ended in celebration, when people realized what was being done to them behind the façade of pretty declarations, which were in fact all deceit and outright lies. The castle lay deserted as all the servants fled and everything was left to the mice, who devoured everything they found edible and then left too, fleeing into the fields and beyond. The people gathered and decided that they must elect another king. After much deliberation they designated Piast the Wheelright who, together with his wise wife Rzepicha, was running a small workshop, and was known as a careful and devoted craftsman and very much respected by the neighbours. He accepted the nomination with a pure and humble heart and, being a good guild member himself, knew about the real value and meaning of unity and brotherhood. Therefore, he always listened to the council, even when he, as any king, sometimes had ambitions and ideas of his own, tempting him to go off in his own way. He had a son, Ziemowit, who, as it happens, at the day of his father's election, was celebrating his passage from boyhood into manhood. He was blind from birth, but the presence of all the people of the land made his eyes miraculously open and he gained sight on that very day. From that day and on, he was watching everything studiously, observing and learning diligently about different people, the soil, the ghosts and the animals. He learned intensively and saw that, taken together, it was all a unity – the Land as such. That is

how the tribe acquired its name – Polanie, people of *pola*, which means the land. When his father died after many years of good reign, he took over as the first dynastic king of the Polanie, second in the peaceful and magnificent line of the Piasts, who since ruled the country between the rivers Vistula and Odra for centuries, nurturing the Land and the principles of brotherhood and unity.

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Introduction

We have chosen the legend of old king Popiel and the killer mice, because it shows the consequences of disconnecting leadership from the people and the land, and it also points to a way out of the seemingly desperate situation this kind of leadership produces. If there ever was a historical Popiel, his were the times of transition from a society of tribes to a more organized societal form. It must have been a difficult and turbulent time, when old customs were losing their hold on people, yet no new ones were fully formed to replace them. There must have been much trouble and turbulence.

Today, we too live in a time of uncertainty and turbulence. Zygmunt Bauman (2012) adopts the metaphor of the interregnum, coined by Antonio Gramsci, to describe this time as

a time-span of yet unknown length, stretching between a social setting which has run its course and another, as yet under-defined and most certainly under-determined, which we expect or suspect to replace it (Zygmunt Bauman, in Bauman, Bauman, Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2016, p. 17).

Old social institutions are crumbling, become eroded, questioned and purposefully destroyed, and no ready replacements are yet in sight (Streeck, 2016). Considering that

social institutions are the taken for granted what make social reality inter-subjectively comprehensible and thus collective action possible (Berger and Luckmann, 1966/1991), such times do not offer much in terms of hope and consolations for the social actors. People are bound to experience loss, fear, and anxiety when looking towards the future, as well as trying to make sense of the present.

The old is dying and the new cannot be born. In this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms can appear. (Antonio Gramsci, 1971, p. 276)

The future will not materialize as if by a good spell, there are too many real and sobering dangers present, posing as a threat to the future of humanity and the whole planet. We must actively look for a viable and sustainable future for human society and it is a task of utmost urgency, as Zygmunt Bauman cautioned us in his book *Retrotopia* which, unfortunately, turned out be his last:

The present task of lifting human integration to the level of all humanity is likely to prove unprecedentedly arduous, onerous and troublesome to see through and complete. We need to brace ourselves for a long period marked by more questions than answers and more problems than solutions, as well as for acting in the shadow of finely balanced chances of success and defeat [...] More than at any other time, we – human inhabitants of the Earth – are in the either/or situation: we face joining either hands, or common graves. (Bauman, 2017, p. 167)

Capitalism has always been full of contradictions and conflicts, but now the erosion has reached beyond the limits formerly regulated by a set of socio-economic institutions. We now have an interregnum rather than just another crisis: we are facing an urgent and imminent danger to the planet's ecosystem (Klein, 2014). Moreover, the irreversible disintegration of democratic and economic institutions, and the crisis is neither transformative nor adaptive (Streeck, 2016).

The current economic system transgresses the Earth's environmental limits, creating and augmenting man-made climate change, destruction of the bio-sphere and pollution of water (see e.g. Klein, 2014 and Monbiot, 2017 for an extensive discussion of the consequences).

Management is no longer about production, but about extraction (Fleming, 2017), ruthless depletion of natural (Klein, 2014) and human commons and resources (Fleming, 2017).

Democracy is being destroyed, on the one hand, by the complete disconnection from the living world, as political power is as good as owned by destructive industries (Monbiot, 2017). On the other hand, it is being nullified by the increasing disconnection from others, society, the people supposedly being "led" or represented by leaders, who, instead, base their power by projecting ever more empty, mendacious and narcissistic claims and images of themselves (Alvesson, 2013).

Even though the situation appears exceptionally bleak and, as Gramsci (1971) predicted, many morbid symptoms do indeed appear, there is an ever more noticeable chorus of voices making itself present in the public sphere, proposing ways out of it. In particular, they suggest doing so by engaging imagination (e.g. Graeber, 2015) to reconnect with place and the living planet (e.g. Monbiot, 2017; Klein, 2017) and with our own sociality in a radically altered context (e.g. Wright, 2010; Harvey, 2014; Bauman et al., 2016). And last but not least – the "negative capability" to critically approach claims made by leaders (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016) to detect lies and, ultimately, to reclaim the truth by parrhesia and organizational resistance (Weiskopf and Tobias-Miersch, 2016)

In this text, we use the legend of king Popiel to answer this call: use imagination in order to point to natural and social roots and consequences of leadership and invite to a creative

journey to find ways of reclaiming the missing roots, or what we regard as the truth (and practice) of leadership.

Morale of story

In short, the morale of the story is pretty straightforward – without a connection to people and the land, power becomes disconnected from the social and natural context, losing legitimization and, ultimately, becomes usurpation in need of a justification to persevere. Such justifications can be constructed out of supposedly superhuman qualities of the leader or by manipulation and empty promises made to the followers. They can also be created by the invocation of ideas out of context, such as assumptions and traditions not sufficiently linked to the present and grand values, employed normatively rather than as actual objects of faith and dedication. Finally, they can be weft from other, similarly fragmented aspects of the cultural process of organizing, such as those conceptualized by Mary Jo Hatch (1993). The way that the whole makes sense in cultural terms and how a leader can approach it to fulfil her or his role is directly linked with the coherence of this process. Mary Jo Hatch, Monika Kostera and Andrzej Koźmiński (2005) explain that leaders both represent what is and encourage the embracing of possible futures by their symbolic role in the cultural dynamics of organizing. They represent order – in spite of the very process of leadership emergence being messy (as discussed below) – and they inspire by engaging an organization's creative potential and the change it brings. Vision and inspiration not only fuels the imagination required to change, but also reassures people as members of organisation, helping them to face their fears. By taking part in the process of organizing in their proper, that is, responsible) function (emplaced role), that is as taking symbolic

responsibility for the whole, leaders play three important roles: that of *managers*, ensuring order, *artists*, inspiring change and *priests*, keeping alive the most cherished beliefs and values (ibid.). A disconnection from that system of cultural ordering (as happened with Popiel's and Gerda's self-centered leadership) causes a radical separation between power and meaning. In other words, leaders get locked into their own bubbles of meaning, distanced from the experience of the followers as well as stakeholders thus from living sources of legitimization. Leadership becomes self-absorbed, even narcissistic, claiming superhuman entitlement, but effectuating actual control by coercion and deception (Kets de Vries, 2006). Starting out as charismatics, narcissistic leaders lose connection to the outside world, concentrating exclusively on their own bubble and making an increasingly idealized image of themselves and tweak an equally false image of the world to fit their image of self and their own agenda (as per Popiel and Gerda's case). Often, in pursuit of ever more 'ambitious' and abstract goals, increasingly distanced from the embedded context from which they derived, maimed by the incessant drive to always aim for the 'upper right' (indicating progress), they easily lose their bearings. Furthermore, the detached disconnect between themselves and realities in which other people live intensifies over time. Narcissistic leaders (such as Popiel and Gerda) close themselves to all signals that ruin their sense of entitlement and their heroic efforts. In the end, untruth becomes the only possible approach (ibid.).

Personal resonances

For one of us, this legend evokes a generalized experience [1] of perils of the 'ivory tower syndrome' suffered by management and managers insulated from the wider context of their

leadership practice. When understanding of what the organization is about, why it exists and which values it is driven by is either lost or indeed never established by a leader (and the memories of both and either are rather unpleasant to the author), it ceases to be clear what the purpose of leadership is and it risks becoming autotelic. All too often does this conclusion seem to resonate with us in the neoliberally-imbued organizational contexts facilitating tolerance for short-termist leadership agendas. These agendas then drive obsession with and towards constant change and which, trading rationality for rationalization, paradoxically draw upon long-term visions and manifestos. In this vein, the legend equally evokes the fear of 'not having a vision' and thus being stigmatized as lacking leadership skills. The managerial "postalgia" being a condition of projecting a "Golden Future" has been recognized a while ago (Ybema, 2004), it nevertheless seems even more relevant now. In particular, this seems to be the case as its symptoms are worsen, alongside the generally accelerated pace of organizational and societal change. Again, across sectors, countries and industries, the managerial imperative of 'looking forward and beyond' strikes a chord with the experiences of one of the authors, thus rendering the re-reading of Popiel's legend both timely and interesting.

Another resonance concerns the second half of the story. Since 2012, one of us has been conducting an ethnographic study of alternative economic organizations, operating on the margins of the capitalist system (Kostera, 2014; 2018). They are self-supporting enterprises and collectives, operating towards other aims than profit. The "profit" they make is regarded as means toward that end, which typically includes environmental and democratic ideas and ideals. People in all the studied organizations often see the role of work as a higher human need and many were more or less explicitly created in order to be a workplace devoid of alienation. They often express, both in formal interviews and in their

everyday conversations, a conviction that they are an alternative for the future, a germ for a new possible economy. As one of the organizers put it succinctly, “capitalism is a giant compost heap” (Łukasz, Good Coop) and these organizations are sprouts of new life in its (less toxic) margins. One of the more radical interlocutors (Paweł, Radical House) likened his organization as a kind of a rat, street smart and nimble, grabbing what it needs to survive from the ruins of the system and making room for itself on its own terms. “Green” ideas, images, goals and connections appear in much of the interview material, and are prominent in everyday conversations, actions and symbolism. Some of the organizers emphasize the importance of direct, constant contact with nature and people living in the countryside, for business reasons (organizations engaging in the cultivation trade and of natural agricultural produce) and because it is good for human beings to have contact with living nature. For many, if not all, it is also very important to keep and develop close ties with local people and communities (stakeholders) and, more generally, with the place where they operate. Organizers from one organization, a vegan bar, emphasize that the bar is there not just to sell food, but to offer a place where people can hang around without having to pay huge amounts of money. People can sit and talk as long as they like, over just one coffee, if they prefer. Paweł from the Radical House introduced the ethnographer to an even more revolutionary local café, where guests can sit, read, or chat entirely for free. The sense of rootedness and physical space and place is prominent in all the studied organizations, and in some it is quite central in conversations and daily operations. In the words of Iphigenia of the Good Coop:

People come around just to have a chat, sometimes. It’s a pleasure.

The idea and practice of democracy is also of pivotal importance. The organizers firmly believe in it, and for many it appears as a central issue, even more important than place and product. One of the organizers of Vegan Heaven, a bar in central Warsaw, explained to the researcher that it was far more important to him to sincerely practice democracy than to cook food. True, he loved it, but he could easily do something else, such as building houses, for example. For many democracy was something of a declaration of love, bringing not just the warm feelings of being a family, but also the quarrels and conflicts inherent to sisterhood and brotherhood, or in the words of an organizer, Ania from Rosa Hostel, “like in a good old marriage, we spend most of the time quarrelling with each other”. Most of the organizers would consider this hard but good: living relationships are not a harmonious stasis but vibrant conflict, tension and difference.

Leadership is never individual centred in one person, in these organizations. It is shared, from duos to full collective leadership, and/or rotational. As one organizers put it:

I just feel like I don't want to do anything alone, ever again. (Marianna, Space of Games)

Relevance for leadership practice

Popiel's legend – as indeed any good story – may be read in a variety of ways and we would merely like to offer three among many alternative interpretations. We also suggest how those readings may help to discuss leadership beyond the rigid notion of 'a model' - as outlined in the final section of this chapter.

Certainly, on the most immediate level, dramatic, though well-deserved death of the rulers of Goplo and subsequent twists introducing the new man in charge can be read as a

cautionary tale. No matter how powerful you are, betting on short termism, collusion and forceful solutions, ignoring discord and indignation which it feeds (quite literally so in Popiel's case) will get you nowhere. Ruling from the high tower of self-serving interest, manipulating others towards one's own selfish gain, distancing oneself from the wider social good, all that may be seen as a ready-made recipe for "bad" leadership. Not necessarily entirely ineffective in a short term, it is without any prospects for offering sustainable solutions in a longer run. In this respect, Popiel-Gerda's leadership practice resonates closely with e.g. discussions on psychopathy in organizational context (Boddy, 2010; 2011) and other aspects of dark triad of personality (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). Corporate psychopaths are callous, remorseless and lacking empathy, whilst highly extrovert, influential and often perceived as charming and attractive by those they take advantage of (Boddy, 2006). Similarly to our protagonists, psychopaths are 'organizational destroyers', highly disruptive to organizational legitimacy and potentially threatening the very existence of organizations, which they lead (Boddy, 2011, p. 3).

The said reading however largely ignores the ambivalence and thus the positive model, which from a different perspective, may seem espoused in the legend. After all most of the dominant features of the above narrative are matched against incomparably more productive, visionary leadership by Piast the Wheelright, his son Ziemowit and the subsequent Piast dynasty. 'Visionary' is of course a keyword here: not only half-legendary Ziemowit (though his historicity is nowadays relatively rarely questioned, cf. Jasinski, 2007), but also his grand-grandson, Mieszko I – undoubtedly historical figure, 10th century ruler, regarded as a creator of the Polish state – were (after Gallus Anonymus) blind until early adolescence. In both cases, regaining vision (and thus sweeping away their parents' shame, as child's disability was socially stigmatized at the time) was associated with the rite of

passage towards manhood, or metaphorically shedding away of child's naïve perception of the world. The historical context facilitates such reading, as for both, Ziemowit and Mieszko, the 'new gaze' is associated with a new perspective on matters of state and politics of their time – much needed after a period of socially traumatizing rule of Popiel and politically unstable conditions of Mieszko's emergence to power, respectively. In both cases, traditionally at least, the times that follow are comparatively more prosperous.

Similarly, the mice feast at Goplo marks the crucial transition from enclosed, paranoid, exclusive leadership towards the one based on openness, at least to some extent, readiness towards dialogue and interaction with its people and (some degree) of social participation. In this vein, the social gathering occurs productive both for Mieszko and Ziemowit, and Piast the Wheelright seems to emerge as a leader, through some form of a social consensus – or semblance thereof. Characterizing the latter leadership style as empowering would not do justice to medieval social and political context, yet certainly the above traits (openness, participation, dialogicity) may invoke conditions necessary for empowerment to occur. Conventionally, the all-embracing vision, courage to implement it and wisdom to do so in a socially empowering manner belong to a professed model of a 'good' leader.

And yet, this very model is always contingent and in need of further problematizing – in fact the closer reading of Popiel's legend may encourage such scrutiny. For once, the singularity of leadership needs unpacking in this case: the "anti-model" of leadership evoked above in itself seems to consist of two somewhat distinct agencies. The strong, yet conspicuously morally aberrant 'voice' of Gerda and somehow less agentic - though in no way morally superior - formal enunciation of Popiel "normalizing" the former. We do not think those distinct presences are necessarily ethically diversifiable (as both can be perhaps seen as

equally repulsive), but they do differ in terms of function as well as source of power in both cases defying expectations. In this respect, Popiel-Gerda leader-follower relationship may be seen as reversed, due to formal power element (Popiel) acting as a post-rationalizing agent, normalizing the agency exercised by the tacit element (Gerda). This bi-modal ventriloquism of leadership makes it more difficult to identify the source of power in the name of which actions are undertaken, the agencies undertaking them and the underpinning rationale(s), thus rendering the leadership a much more elusive process than it is often purported to be. As this approach opens up the possibility for perceiving leadership in pluralist and processual terms, the questions previously (perhaps) regarded as straightforward assume a new, **uncanny** shape, and are thus in need of re-visiting:

For example “If and why was Popiel a bad leader?” may be turned (as below) into “Which aspects of leadership process were decisive in bringing about the change (for the worse)? What were they founded upon and influenced by? Which/Whose agencies were involved?”

Those traits are pivotal for discussing the implications of the emergence of a honest, truthful and ‘sustainable leadership’ – as an ongoing (processual) endeavour – which we address in the last section of this chapter.

Footnotes:

[1] Those experiences were gathered both in the academia and private sector (consulting) in Poland and in the United Kingdom from 2004 onwards.

Questions for reflection and discussion

Instead of normative conclusions in this part of our story, we propose a list of points or questions for reflection and discussion in particular for students.

1. Consider the role of charisma in leadership. How come, do you think, that leaders like Popiel and Gerda become popular and even worshipped? Think of two similar stories from real history, older and more recent. Are there different kinds of charisma? Different uses?
2. Compare the legend of King Arthur with the story of kings Popiel and Piast. Make a list of similarities and differences. Now consider the role of the Holy Grail in the Arthurian tales. Make a thought experiment – what would happen if Popiel sent his followers to find the Grail? What would happen if Piast did the same thing?
3. Write a fictive tale titled: CEO Popiel of Software Goplo. Re-imagine the legend as a contemporary management case study.
4. Do you think Popiel and Gerda could have been educated to be more honest and truthful leaders, more sensitive to nature and to their people? Make an argument for and against such a possibility. Propose a teaching programme that would, in your opinion, have been useful for Popiel and Gerda in order to make them re-think their position, or at least consider the existence of other alternatives.
5. In your opinion, which aspects and stages of leadership process determined the outcomes (both good and bad) in case of Popiel and Piast/Ziemowit? Now, list the reasons for which you believe those were the crucial ones.
6. Preferably, once you have done (5): assume an alternative scenario, in which Piast and Popiel – as leaders – would trade places (that is, a person with Piast's mentality is now

married to Gerda, and a person with Popiel's mindframe is running the small workshop in the vicinity of the castle). How differently would the story evolve in your opinion? What might stay the same?

7. Revisit your list from point 5. Consider the factors not related to physical presences of Popiel, Piast and Ziemowit. Which role does the social and cultural context play in the story?

8. Now, assume it is possible that they (Piast, Popiel, Ziemowit) were not exercising their own agency, but rather acted as agents of an external superior power (e.g. God or Nature/ the Land). Taking this assumption into account rewrite the legend from the perspective of a commoner living in the 9th century in the Gopło area.

Implications for the development of more responsible and sustainable leadership practices

If nowadays organizations indeed exist in the post-truth era (Davis, 2017), the nuanced understanding of the processes underpinning leadership unfolding in them may be more in place than attempts to inform them with any 'truly best' practices and models. In the following, final section, we shall build on the notions of *heterogeneous* leadership recognized above, to discuss the possibility of sustainable post-lie leadership.

Lying in leadership context may be identified as a conscious manipulation of somebody else's worldview through intentional misrepresentation of facts on which it is based – thus as an attempt to gain control and gain advantage by remaining 'in charge' of the message conveyed. In that respect, post-lie leadership is as much about the alignment of facts with some actually perceived reality, as it is about reshaping the function of the leader as well as

relationship between the leader and those who are led. In the post-lie context, recognition of diversity *within* leadership (the multiplicity of voices, rationales and motivations) goes hand in hand with appreciation of heterogeneity in those subjected to it. To embrace post-lie leadership, it is hardly enough to truthfully match ones' statements with underlying facts. Admittedly, this is a good start, as psychopathic manipulators and permanent liars tend to disregard the worlds of others almost by default – which we see as a stumbling precluding sustainability. Therefore, it is not the factual correctness that makes a post-lie leadership model tenable, as the former is equally (if not easier) attainable in highly formalized and mechanical processes, in absence of the human factor. The post-lie model – the one embracing, but stepping beyond truthful representation – is sustained by the leader's openness regarding its own agendas and motivations. Furthermore, this is also coupled with recognition and appreciation of similar diversity of impulses and dispositions in its followers. Post-lie leadership is therefore about dialogue, establishing understanding and, subsequently, creating common platform from which to act together.

While theoretical resonances in social theory are in this respect multiple (cf. Habermas, 1984; Bakhtin, 1981), and calls for dialogic and socially embedded leadership are certainly not new, in this chapter we do not aspire to building a new theory on the basis of existing ideas. We would merely like to show that resources for contemplating the alternatives to the current excesses of unethical and downright deceitful leadership modes featuring on the highest echelons of social strata (Keyes, 2004), are available more readily than we often care to admit – often residing in all-too-familiar tales and legends passed between generations. As these tales occurred resistant over the years and centuries of being conveyed by the diverse people in a variety of social circumstances, chances are that their

durability is owed not to uniformity of meanings imposed, but rather to relevance to those peoples and nations at different times.

Therefore, rather than perceiving their protagonists or behaviours which they describe as ideal models – carriers of a set of undisputable attributes imposed on readers and students oppressively– they should be allowed to resonate with a much wider scope of our sensibilities and meanings which we dare making.

In this vein, rather than talking about the model emerging from Popiel's legend, we may identify in it a variety of predispositions, agencies and rationales contrasted against the common themes significant from the leadership perspective. These could for instance be leader's role (e.g. ensuring order vs inspiring change), communication (dialogic vs monologic), style (autocratic vs participatory), and other more. Like any good story, the predispositions such as those are only as viable as they are relevant to lived experience of those they pertain to and only as informative and transformative as they are suited to increase our understanding of the world around us. This is where organizational story encounters the myth, and where the opportunity for leadership to learn the lesson from folklore lies.

Referring back to our initial suggestion, could you offer some brief additional reflections on these questions and consider them while revising your contribution.

- **Why did you to choose this text?**
 - Perhaps some additional, personal reasons and motivations.
- **How has this text been relevant in your own (inter-)personal and experience?**
 - Or have you used this text in your teaching?
- **What is "the moral" of the story *in relation to wisdom*?**
 - Here you may offer some further links and implications concerning practical wisdom for or wise practices of leaders and/or leadership

- What (further) implications does this text have for specific forms of organizational and/or leadership practice?
- What (further) lessons does this text hold for undergraduate, graduate, and/or executive business students as well as for practitioners seeking personal and professional development?

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