

Weltbürger Perspectives and Samhandling

Trygve J. Steiro¹ and Glenn Egil Torgersen²

¹Norwegian University of Science and Technology; ²Norwegian Defence University College

Abstract: The chapter starts with a criticism of management and control concepts that have been rooted in economic or psychological theories and models, although society's complexity and the pace of change will demand a broader and deeper foundation for the development of effective management systems in the future. Other voices need to be put forward. Immanuel Kant (1795/1991) argued for his idea of the *Weltbürger* ("world citizen"), also known as "The Cosmopolitan Ideal". His fundamental philosophy is that all humans are welcome, regardless of time and place, and that all humans are world citizens, regardless of nationality and cultural belonging (Kant, 1795/1991). All people are co-citizens, independent of nationality and cultural affiliation, and the *Weltbürger* is concerned with global problems and solutions. Another central thinker is Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), a French philosopher and writer particularly known for the term "Deconstruction", which is about splitting up words and phrases to find out what they really mean, in the light of the culture and underlying attitudes. Human comprehension requires common words and phrases (language), and a cultural and social context, both of which have formed the basis for conceptual analysis of the terms "hospitality" and "threshold of tolerance". The conclusion is that the concepts of the *Weltbürger* and "hospitality" have important values in and of themselves, and are ideas that are universal and timeless, providing an important compass for *samhandling*.

Keywords: *Samhandling*, *Weltbürger*, Immanuel Kant, interaction, risk, tolerance, international understanding, organizational learning, unforeseen.

Citation: Steiro, T. J., & Torgersen, G.-E. (2018). *Weltbürger Perspectives and Samhandling*. In G.-E. Torgersen (Ed.), *Interaction: 'Samhandling' Under Risk. A Step Ahead of the Unforeseen* (pp. 189–198). Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.36.ch10>

License: CC BY-NC 4.0

Introduction

Samhandling (which roughly equates with “interaction”), can be seen as a deeper form of cooperation and a good way forward, in order to benefit from complementary competency and strive for better services and products (see Chapter 2; Steiro & Torgersen, 2013; Torgersen & Steiro, 2010; Torgersen & Steiro, 2009; Miles & Watkins, 2007). These conditions are not only applicable to complex and flexible multi-national organizations, for example, in the oil and gas industry, and military logistics organizations associated with international operations, but also to national competency-oriented businesses and educational management. The training of managers in contemporary times has been criticized for being too instrumental, narrow and shortsighted; this has created significant debate in recent years regarding the training of managers in business schools (see for instance: Nussbaum, 2010; Ghoshal, 2005; Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Czarniawska, 2003; Mintzberg, 1989). To a large extent, management and control concepts have been rooted in economic or psychological theories and models, although society’s complexity and the pace of change will demand a broader and deeper foundation for the development of effective management systems in future (Torgersen & Steiro, 2009). Here, thinkers such as Immanuel Kant can help us to find the key which underlies relational and social structural phenomena that are otherwise overshadowed by the more applied and instrumental approaches of the field of management. Torgersen and Steiro (2009) argue for incorporating the thinking of Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida. In this chapter, these thoughts are re-introduced and elaborated upon.

Risk and *samhandling*

Immanuel Kant (1795/1991) argued for his idea of the *Weltbürger* (“world citizen”), also known as “The Cosmopolitan Ideal”. His fundamental philosophy is that all humans are welcome, regardless of time and place, and that all humans are world citizens, regardless of nationality and cultural belonging (Kant, 1795/1991). The world citizen is concerned with global challenges and solutions, and all humans are obliged to maintain

attitudes and values in accordance with these basic assumptions. All nations, states, organizations and humans should include others, which implies unconditional courtesy unrestricted by borders, boundaries and thresholds. This type of thinking demands an awareness of our own tolerance thresholds, values and attitudes. The philosophy of the *Weltbürger* calls for an open exchange of knowledge and values; Immanuel Kant was influenced by Adam Smith (1776), who perceived specialization as a means for gaining a competitive advantage (Nussbaum, 2011). Adam Smith has been dubbed the founding father of market-economic thinking; greater specialization calls for experts who are willing and able to cooperate and create something new. Better products and/or services are essential for *samhandling* and meeting the unforeseen. Key words associated with the *Weltbürger* are tolerance, trust, equality, respect, coping and learning.

The *Weltbürger* and hospitality

The Greece philosopher Socrates (470 BCE – 399 BCE) is reported to have denied being called a citizen of the Greece state Athens; he would rather be called a citizen of the world (Hale, 2014). Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a German philosopher and physicist, whose primary concern in his writings was universal ethical rules, including the universal ethical maxim: “always act in such a way that you can also will that the maxim of your action should become a universal law”, which became the foundation for “The Cosmopolitan Ideal” (Kant, 1795/1991). Kant’s thinking constituted a new democratic understanding of societies and organizations, as deliberative democracy is about mutual respect for each other’s understanding, communication and actions.

The main element in Kant’s thinking is that all humans are welcome in the world, regardless of time and place; he called this the *Weltbürgerrecht* or “cosmopolitan right. All people are co-citizens, independent of nationality and cultural affiliation, and the *Weltbürger* is concerned with global problems and solutions. Kant speaks of rights, although duties are perhaps more evident in his thinking. All men are obliged to practice such attitudes and values in their daily lives and to practice human

rights. Originally, Kant stressed that nations and states should be including and not excluding, which has direct implications for management. Several organizations need to think in terms of flexibility and organize themselves to be more flexible, since managers need to interact with a variety of different people. We also see that there is a need for managers to perform what has been termed “T-management” (Hansen, 2009), i.e. managers need to have an overview, while at the same time involving themselves and interacting in projects to help them succeed. Hence, the way we *samhandler* (“interact”) becomes of importance. The ideal, effective leader of the 21st century will have to be able to mobilize people in order to undertake tasks in uncertain, rapidly changing environments (Hays & Kim, 2008). Furthermore, it should be noted that the 21st century leader is “whole”; one who leads with his/her heart, head and soul in order to be authentic and touch others, above or below him/her in the hierarchy – both those who work for the leader and partners and stakeholders (Griffin, 2008). Griffin (2008) also uses the word “wholeness”, as the whole person takes a holistic view of the world and the people around him/her (English, Fenwick & Parsons, 2005). The responsibility for those who educate managers is to make sure that “the whole person” is educated (Boyatzis & McLeod, 2001).

Another central thinker is Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), a French philosopher and writer particularly known for the term “Deconstruction”, which is about splitting-up words and phrases to find out what they really mean, in light of the culture and underlying attitudes. Human comprehension requires common words and phrases (language), a cultural and social context, both of which have formed the basis for the conceptual analysis of “hospitality”, and a “threshold of tolerance” (Derrida, 2005a; 2005b; 2000). Hospitality is unconditional kindness that is not restricted by a limit or threshold, and there are no assumptions or prejudices in the invitation offered to the other party: “*I invite you unconditionally – welcome to my home*” (figuratively speaking). People should be included, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, nationality, culture, position or socio-economic status. Pure tolerance is to accept the unacceptable, as well as accepting that which goes against common sense and may cause discomfort and tolerance problems; this applies to both

individuals, organizations and states. Furthermore, such thinking and action requires an awareness of one's own tolerance thresholds, values and attitudes. This can be achieved through a joint deconstruction of the necessary basic concepts.

Communication and *samhandling*

Samhandling depends upon individual characteristics and skills, structural and cultural components and an awareness that such expertise is a necessity. If participants actively contribute with their expertise to the community, not least by actively listening to each other, this in turn makes them conscious of the necessity. It confirms the importance of involvement and awareness in working together, in addition to being sensitive to each other, so that interactions can be achieved. We see facilitation skills as being important aspects of management, and in a well-recognized book on facilitation by Schwartz (1994), concrete examples are given showing how to interact with openness, "*How come I am right? How come you are right? Maybe we are both right?*". Schwartz (1994) does not refer to Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida, but builds heavily on the thoughts of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (1996; 1978). This form of communication does not put one above the other person, but it opens up for seeing differences as a resource. Quite clearly, the examples of Schwartz provide good, sound examples of hospitality and recognition of the other person ("I welcome you unconditionally"). This is a central fundament for deliberate democracy (Kant, 1795/1991). The Greek philosopher was known to ask questions rather than providing his opinion and forcing it on others. Schein (2013) also advocates the importance of asking questions rather than telling the truth. We further believe that in addition of asking questions and approaching other humans in that sense, also is about the view of humans and interaction between humans is important, since there are some elements of self-fulfilling prophecies, as pinpointed earlier by McGregor (1960) and later reinforced by several authors (i.e. Ghoshal, 2005; Birkinshaw 2012; Steiro, 2015). We need to be aware of our assumptions and be able to integrate and tolerate opposing and conflicting views (Steiro, 2015).

Weltbürger and hospitality as a means of opening up for different perspectives

The well-recognized Harvard researcher, Theresa Amabile, writes that pluralistic thinking and being able to see different perspectives are important for creativity (Amabile, 1996; 1989). Creativity is more and more important for the survival of organizations and in order to succeed with new products or services. Creativity, as we see it, is a key factor in both reducing and mitigating risk after an accident or a deliberate attack. By being open and offering hospitality, the *Weltbürger* puts him/herself in a position to get to know the unusual, the strange and the contradictory better. *Samhandling* has been defined as “... *an open and mutual communication and development between players, in terms of expertise that complements each other and develops skills, directly face-to-face, or mediated by technology or by hand power, working towards common goals. The relationship between players at any given time rests on trust, involvement, rationality and industry knowledge*” (Torgersen & Steiro, 2009:130). *Samhandling* is seen as a key in focusing on complementary skills and knowledge (Miles & Watkins, 2007). Granovetter (1973) writes about the strength in weak ties, which are people or relations that are not very well known to us and that we are unfamiliar with. However, getting in contact could open up for new ideas, thoughts, questions and even criticism. On the other hand, strong ties are family, close friends and colleagues who possess very important values for us, but here the information tends to be known already. In contrast, the unknown and nonhomogenous tend to be unfamiliar to us (Granovetter, 1973). Here, the opportunities for exploration and new possibilities are greater.

Some preliminary conclusions and a brief look ahead

In a more dynamic and complex world, we need some guiding principles in order to ensure mutual respect and understanding. Communication and interaction should be deeply rooted in ethical thinking, and we need to communicate in a way that does not create unnecessary distance.

A stronger focus on communication and interaction between people is needed. Hence, we suggest an approach that uses humanistic knowledge and training, not only through cases but also looking beyond them, to a more holistic approach to the formation of leadership in our society. We think that this will help improve project managers and strengthen their competence, so that they possess and exercise better leadership skills under unpredictable and unforeseen conditions. Key words associated with the *Weltbürger* and hospitality are tolerance, trust, equality, respect, coping and learning, with the difference lying in competence. The *Weltbürger* could be the answer to the challenges of a more globalized world; in that sense, we think that Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida will make a vital contribution to the execution of leadership. The concept of the *Weltbürger* and hospitality have important values in and of themselves, and are ideas that are universal and timeless, providing an important compass for human interaction. A manager with an awareness and attitudes in accordance with these values will be better at meeting different people and cultures, which is also important in that it distinguishes more clearly between people and competence. The “World Citizen Idea” and “World Hospitality” require an open exchange of knowledge and values between citizens, in order to “reach” the way forward to something “new” in regard to inclusion, with the differences being seen as contributing competence. They will assist in the facilitation of experience, knowledge, exchange of values and learning within the organization – the gain is in the “difference”, which is consolidated to create a new and stronger power (complementary power) to meet the unforeseen.

References

- Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in Context: Update to the Social Psychology of Creativity*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Amabile, T. M. (1989). *Growing Up Creative: Nurturing a Lifetime of Creativity*. Amherst Massachusetts: Crown Publishing Group.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational Learning. A Theory of Action Perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1996). *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method and Practice*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

- Bennis, W. G., & O'Toole, J. (2005). How Business Schools Lost Their Way. *Harvard Business Review*, May 01.
- Birkinshaw, J. (2012). *Reinventing Management: Smarter Choices for Getting Work Done*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Boyatzis, R., & McLeod, P. (2001). Our educational bottom line: Developing the whole person. *Journal of Management Education*, 25(2), pp. 118–123.
- Czarniawska, B. (2003). Forbidden knowledge. *Organization Theory in Times of Transition. Management Learning*, 34, pp. 353–365.
- Derrida, J. (2000). *Of Hospitality*. Translated by Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (2005a). *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (2005b). *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Translated by Mark Dooley and Richard Kearney. New York: Routledge.
- English, L., Fenwick, T., & Parsons, J. (2005). Interrogating our practices of integrating spirituality into workplace education. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 45(1), pp. 17–25.
- Ghoshal, S. (2005). Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices. *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 4(1), 75–91.
- Granovetter, M. G. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), pp. 1360–1380.
- Griffin, K. (2008). Metaphor, language, and organizational transformation. *Organization Development Journal*, 26(1), pp. 89–97.
- Hale, J. (2014). *Lords of the Sea: How Athenian Trireme Battles Changed History*. London: Gibson Square Books. Kindle Edition.
- Hansen, M. (2009). *Collaboration: How Leaders Avoid the Traps, Build Common Ground, and Reap Big Results*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Hays, J. M., & Kim, C. Y. (2008). Renaissance Leadership: Transforming Leadership for the 21st Century. Part II: New Leadership Development. *The Australian National University, School of Management, Marketing, and International Business. Working Paper Series*, 3(2).
- Kant, I. (1795/1991). “Perpetual Peace”: *A Philosophical Sketch*. Translated by Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- McGregor, D. (1960). *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Miles, S. A., & Watkins, M. D. (2007). The Leadership Team: Complementary Strengths or Conflicting Agendas? *Harvard Business Review*, 85(4), pp. 90–98.
- Mintzberg, H. (1989). *Mintzberg on Management. Inside our Strange World of Organizations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press.

- Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Schein, E. (2013). *Humble Inquiry. The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Schwartz, R. (1994). *The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Steiro, T. J. (2015). *Helhetlig perspektiv på lederskap. Å stå skuldrene til giganter*. [Holistic Perspective on Leadership. Standing on the Shoulders of Giants]. Trondheim: Steiro Consulting. ISBN: 978-82-303-2848-4.
- Steiro, T. J., & Torgersen, G. E. (2013). The Terms of Interaction and Concurrent Learning in the Definition of Integrated Operations. In: T. Rosendahl, & V. Hepsø (eds.) (2013). *Integrated Operations in the Oil and Gas Industry: Sustainability and Capability Development*. Hershey: IGI global.
- Torgersen, G. E., & Steiro, T. J. (2010). Interactions in Complex Organizations. IMTA Conference, September 27–October 1, 2010, Lucerne, Switzerland.
- Torgersen, G. E., & Steiro, T. J. (2009). *Ledelse, samhandling og opplæring i fleksible organisasjoner*. [Leadership, Samhandling and Education in Flexible Organizations] Stjørdal: Læringsforlaget.

