Leadership behind the Screen

New Theory about Leadership in Online Role-Playing Games

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Abstract

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Purpose/Aim:
The aim of this paper is to study how guild leaders in World of Warcraft (WOW) and leaders of real life organizations compare in terms of tasks, every-day experiences, environment, responsibilities and motivation. This comparison is used to build a new theory describing leadership in Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs).

Material/Method:
The paper uses the grounded theory approach to build a new theory. 12 interviews were conducted, six with WOW guild leaders and six with leaders of real life organizations. The Four Capacities Framework and the Leadership Grid were used to analyze and compare the results of the interviews.

Main results:
Leadership in MMORPGs is as complex and challenging as real life leadership with the difference that it stresses the internal relationships of the organization very much while neglecting outside relations to a big extend. Guild leadership is in many ways similar to real life leadership as both require long term political decisions, policy setting and good work in the field of human resources. However, it stresses the ability to build working social relationships and to motivate using only digital communication. Some aspects of real life leadership like customer orientation and an organizational instance over the leader like an owner or share holders that the leader is responsible to are not existent.

Keywords:
Leadership, Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, Four Capabilities Framework, Leadership Grid, Grounded Theory Approach, World of Warcraft, Guild,
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1. Introduction

I am in my brother’s room. He is sitting in front of the computer wearing a headset and talking to someone over it. My mom comes in.

“And what are you two doing today?”

My brother: “More heal on the tank! And move out of the fire. Quickly!”

Mom looks at him confused. “You are playing again. It is like you are in another world. Why don’t you go out, meet some people, instead of sitting here alone?”

Now my brother seems to realize for the first time that she is in the room. But he does not answer. He is stressed. He is leading a raid of 25 people against the Black Temple.

My mother rushes out of the room angry. She does not understand what he is doing there.

But do we understand?

Computer games are a rather young media type. While in the beginning being dismissed as a spare time activity for children, computer games have acquired a wide audience and are now financing a growing industry and inspiring millions of fans and a broad variety of subcultures and interest groups. Computer games have not only gained a bigger audience and economical relevance but also changed in their very nature. The latest generation of computer games has spawned a number of so called “online-games”. Those games can only be played while connected over the Internet to other players or game servers. There are different types of online games the two most prominent being “ego-Shooters” or “First-Person Shooter”, a famous example here would be “Counter Strike”, and “Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games” (MMORPGs) like “World of Warcraft”. These new genres of games are radically different from the video games of the 20th century for example in aspects like gaming with the family, social networking and leadership. However, theories developed to describe “old” kind of games are still used to describe the contemporary ones. In MMORPGs players are required to work in teams and to organize themselves in self-governed groups to be successful. While most players are simple members of those organizations, there are also leading figures who take the responsibility to organize and govern these groups of players. This leadership in multiplayer games is new. It has just not existed at the time at which most of the theories were created.

But how is leadership in MMORPGs relevant anyways? There are two answers for this question. First it is relevant because workplace changes. With the digitalization of work and communication today’s workers will often work with somebody they do not know in person but only through the net. It will become more frequent to work in project groups that are only designed for a special project and only exist as long as it lasts. This is for the leaders an environment very similar to MMORPGs. Also the fast paced digital communication, the access to all kinds of data and the overflow of communication channels that make everybody available always and everywhere are the exact working conditions of a leader in MMORPGs. The similarity of the leadership environments and conditions of today’s MMORPGs and tomorrow’s real life organizations makes it interesting and necessary to take a closer look here. The second point is that people who are leaders in MMORPGs now could easily become the leaders in real life companies in the future. They are interested and skilled in the use of digital technology and have leading skills. Many of them are young and undergoing education. Now when this wave of high skilled people with leading skills hits the real life organizations they might very well expect a leadership environment and bring with them a leadership culture that is connected to MMORPGs. This might make it important for companies to know what they have to expect from this future elite and how they might be able to use it’s potentially to the full.
However, to be able to learn from leadership in MMORPGs or to adapt to it we first have to know what it is like. We are thus in a need of a theory that incorporates aspects such as leadership in MMORPGs.

1.2 Research Problem & Research Question

The phenomenon of leadership in MMORPGs is a rather young topic that has not been subject of theoretical discussions. As the setup for leadership in companies is changing and getting more digital and as MMORPGs are growing and forming the perspective of the future generation of leaders it is important to take a closer look at this phenomenon. The purpose of this paper is thus to create a new theory of online role-play gaming in respect of leadership.

“What is leadership in MMORPGs like? In what respect is it similar to real life leadership and how is it different?”

“What will a new theory of leadership in online games look like?”

1.3 Aim of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to study how guild leaders in WOW and leaders of real life organizations compare in terms of tasks, every-day experiences, environment, responsibilities and motivation. This comparison is used to build a new theory describing leadership in MMORPGs.
2. Background

2.1 Role-Playing Games

“A role-playing game (RPG; often role playing game) is a game in which the participants assume the roles of fictional characters. Participants determine the actions of their characters based on their characterization, and the actions succeed or fail according to a formal system of rules and guidelines. Within the rules, players have the freedom to improvise; their choices shape the direction and outcome of the game.”

There are different kinds of RPGs, some pen and paper-based and some computer-based. This paper is focusing on computer-based games. Computer online games send the player and his character into a synthetic virtual world where he or she can act through the character, solve problems and especially enhance the character by acquiring better gear like weapons and armor and by gaining higher levels and a higher status.

The interactions in those games are only with artificial intelligences (AIs) embodied through computer-controlled characters. There are no other players in the game and the player only follows the path laid out by the game designers until he or she has played through the game.

2.2 Multi Player Games

In multi player games many players can play together or against each other, interact, trade or fight. To make this possible, the players need to be connected to each other or to a common game server in some kind of way. Today players are connected over the Internet to a game server. This means that modern multi player games like WOW can only be played online.

“A multiplayer video game is one which more than one person can play in the same game environment at the same time. (…) Multiplayer components allow players to enjoy interaction with other individuals, be it in the form of partnership, competition or rivalry, and provide them with a form of social communication that is almost always missing in single-player oriented games.”

2.3 MMORPGs

MMORPGs or “Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games” are role-playing games as designed above. The player directs and improves his character. These role play games are played online connected to a server together with thousands of people at the same time. The word “Massively” stresses the importance of the multi player dimension of the game. In this kind of games social interaction are a prerequisite to success and players need to work together to achieve the goals of the game. To make the playing together easier many games support some sort of player club which makes it possible for player to form rather persistent groups of people that enjoy playing together. In WOW those groups are named guilds.

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1 Wikipedia (2008a).
2.3.1 Why WOW?

The example for MMORPGs used in this study is the game World of Warcraft (WOW). I decided to use this game as my example because of multiple reasons. First, I play the game myself and have thus inside information and contacts that help the study. However, more important is the fact that WOW is the most successful MMORPG ever with more than 11 million paying subscribers.\(^3\) There are other successful MMORPGs, namely Everquest, Linage, Eve Online, Star Wars Galaxies and recently also WAR Online and Age of Conan. An analysis of leadership in these games might bring very different results as the forms of organizations and thus of leadership are expected to be largely dependent on game mechanics and design. In the game Eve Online (225,000 members) for example the aim of the game is to set up a successful company. This might influence leadership in this game to be closer to commercial leadership. There are further possible differences to be expected because different games are played in different areas of the world. Linage for example is most played in Asia. However, WOW is the by far most successful, international and influential game of this kind. This is why I choose it as the example of an MMORPG for this study.

2.3.2 What is WOW?

In WOW you are leading your avatar, the being that is representing you in the game, through a medieval fantasy world. You interact with other players or NPCs (non-player characters). Many NPCs are monsters that can be killed. For killing monsters the avatar is rewarded with experience and the loot of the monster. When the avatar has reached the highest level, currently 80, it becomes necessary to team up with other players, the group sizes are 5, 10 and 25, to be able to defeat the hardest monsters and improve the avatar further through better gear. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of WOW to give an idea about what the game looks like.

\(^3\) Blizzard (2008).
This picture shows a raid of 10 players fighting against a boss. It illustrates the huge amount of information the players have to handle while playing. The figures in the foreground are avatars of other players. Their name and the name of their guild are written over their head. The player who took this picture is in the middle of the screen in front of the big spider boss but very hard to see because of the colored text in the middle of the screen that is informing him about what is happening with his avatar. Much of the information that is static on this screenshot changes quickly and is updated all the time in the game. This results in a dynamic that the picture is only partly able to capture.

2.3.3 What Is a Guild?

A guild is an organization set up by players. It can have different purposes according to the members’ interests. The creation of guilds is an element of WOW. The game mechanics are thus supporting the creation and administration of guilds and influence their organizational and power structure. To create a guild, a character has to find a number of other player’s characters signing his guild charter and becoming members of that going-to-be guild. This player is then the formal guild master. The guild master holds different powers as defined through the game mechanics. He can invite people to become members and kick them out from the guild, he can setup the hierarchical rank system in the guild, name the ranks and promote as well as demote people. The guild master can access the guild bank and organize the accessibility of the different deposit boxes. In general the guild master can give some of his powers to other members, normally the officers or class leaders. The formal guild master is in many cases identical with the guild leader even though this is not necessarily the case. The guild mastership can for example be with an alt, a character that is not played, to make
sure that for instance three leaders of the guild have the same powers and none of them can decide on his or her own.

A guild comes with an own chat channel that can be read by all members. There is also a guild message that is posted to every member right after he or she logs on to the game that can be used to inform them about actual developments and news and there is a bigger information sheet written by the leaders normally containing the address of the guild’s home page and TS⁴ server as well as other specific information. There is also an officers’ chat that can only be read by the officers of the guild, not by the other members. Finally, the members can write a note about themselves that can be read by all members and the officers can write a note about each player that can only be read by the officers.

These are all the tools a guild in WOW has through the game mechanics. In addition, many guilds have a home page containing a forum for discussions, planning and exchange of information, a TS server to be able to use Voice-over IP communication, a calendar for simpler raid planning and a tool to administer the DKP (Dragon-Kill-Points). The guild leaders can be the administrators of those pages and tools but they do not necessary need to. The rent of the TS server and the costs of the homepage domain are dealt with differently among different guilds.

2.3.4 What Does a Guild Do?

The main purpose of a guild is decided by the guild leaders and the members. It can change when the circumstances in the game or the life of the players change. As the aims and policies of a guild are an important topic in the accumulation of members it is often made sure that the new members are sharing these goals and aims to make it possible for the members to play together. The leaders of the guild have a strong influence on the guilds orientation as they have the power to kick unwelcome players and invite new ones and can promote and demote. Different guilds who are sharing the same goals can fuse together to create one stronger guild or enlarge their member pool to make it possible to complete tasks that were impossible to fulfill before. Guilds can also just work together in a coalition and keep their structure as two different guilds with different leaders. If guilds are at the same level and share the same goals, they are in a competition for good members. It is a matter of seconds for a player to change to another guild if he gets invited there. The common practice of changing guilds makes the competition about skilled members fierce. A guild that is not successful any more runs the risk of losing its players and dissolving. Many guilds dissolve as quickly as they are created if things do not go well any longer and even big and established guilds always face this risk.

⁴ Shortening for “Team Speak”, a widely used Voice-over IP program, a server is rented and the players log on to it and can talk to each other.
3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Theories on Gaming

A classical description of playing and its social functions can be found at Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*. Huizinga defines playing as a spare-time activity motivated by the joy it brings itself and therefore self-related and cut off from the “real life”. He explains further that playing has the ability to fill out our lives and make them more enjoyable and thus becoming an inevitable part of human life. It creates social relations and becomes a way of expressing oneself and a cultural function. This role of playing as cultural function is also the way on which concepts like necessity and obligation find their way into playing as it becomes more a social tool than a self-motivated spare-time activity.5

This description of playing is still relevant in many ways. Games bring joy to the players and they have to do that because otherwise the players will stop to play the game as unlike work players are not dependent on the game to earn the money they are living from. However, the clear difference between playing and the rest of life that Huizinga describes might, at least in the field of MMORPGs, be rather questionable. As described above already, the setting up of a guild requires the organization of out-of-game communication tools. The strong role of social relations in MMORPGs makes it easy for in-game relations to enter the real life, people getting to know each other in the game fall in love and get married in real life, and vice versa real life relations to have effects in-game. It is easy to imagine that personal conflicts emerging from some not game-related topic can become a problem for a group of people and their leader in the game.

Another element of Huizinga’s explanation, the self-relatedness and fulfillment in itself of games, is rather questionable for MMORPGs. Taking a look at a study about the gameplay of WOW6, it becomes clear that there are two different phases. The first phase can be called “leveling”. It holds on until the avatar reaches the maximum level and the second phase called “endgame”. In the first phase players can reach their aims alone and do not need to rely on social groups like guilds. This changes when they reach the last level and the endgame. The numbers of social connections, of social centrality and of connection weights increase drastically.7 Social networking and inter-player experiences become much more important and the central part of playing.8 The rewards of playing can then also lie in this social network.

The fact that playing can be less about what is actually happening in the game than about the social network build up around the game leads us to McLuhan’s theory on the medium as the message. This theory explains that not or not only the content of a medium but the medium itself influences users and consumers and should therefore be subject of studies.9 This approach is crucial for this paper because it has to be clear that the focus on MMORPGs is not on their content. When discussing MMORPGs, it is not about killing dragons and defeating demons. MMORPGs are interesting because they involve the solving of complex

5 Huizinga (1938: 16-19).
6 Duchenaut et al. (2006:281-317).
7 Duchenaut et al. (2006:308-9).
problems through social interaction and group building in a digital media environment. McLuhan can thus be seen as a pillar of this paper.

Summarizing the theories about gaming it has to be said that they are of limited use in this field of study. McLuhan’s rather general perspective on media is very important as well as some of Huizinga’s view points. However, specific theory on gaming cannot or hardly be used in the context of MMORPGs.\textsuperscript{10}

The scientific journal “Games Culture” is featuring some articles that are analyzing different aspects of MMORPGs like game design and ruling of game worlds. These are relevant to research about MMORPGs and the theoretical background of this paper. The article “Building an MMO With Mass Appeal: Taking a Look at Gameplay in World of Warcraft”\textsuperscript{11} is providing statistical information about WOW that is for example showing the importance of social connections in the endgame of WOW. The article “From Tree Houses to Barracks: The Social Life of Guilds in World of Warcraft”\textsuperscript{12} mentioned the importance of guild leadership for the success of the organization as well as it described the concepts of a raiding guild. There is also one study that is focusing on leadership in games. This study is using a model of leadership, the 4 Capabilities Leadership Framework, to analyze the activities of leaders in MMORPGs. The final aim of the study is to get information that can be used to help commercial leaders and companies to develop. It “matches game ideas with enterprise interests in leadership.”\textsuperscript{13}

The results of the study are that:
1. all leadership dimensions formulated in the 4 Capabilities Leadership Framework exist in MMORPG leadership but that the dimensions are a bit imbalanced
2. leadership happens quickly, that the roles of leader and follower change often and that the game environment promotes a leading style that involves risk-taking and learning through trial-and-error
3. the easy communication channels and the general settings of the games as well as the game mechanics encourage leadership
4. leadership in MMORPGs will influence commercial leadership in the future in different ways.\textsuperscript{14}

While this paper is valid and useful as a background for this study, it is taking another direction relating its findings about leadership in MMORPG environments to the 4 Capabilities Leadership Framework and trying to make use of the findings for commercial leadership settings. It does not describe the role of the guild leaders, their activities and their experiences in detail and it does not compare them to different kinds of actual real life leadership.

It is important to note that the three articles described above and used in this paper are connected to each other and even share some authors. Nick Yee has been involved in all three articles while Nicolas Ducheneaut and Eric Nickell have been working on the first two. This means that these articles should not be used to back up each other as they are to closely related to represent independent different sources. I am aware of this and use these sources carefully.

\textsuperscript{10} Linderoth & Bennerstedt (2008:72, 73).
\textsuperscript{11} Ducheneaut et al. (2006:281-317).
\textsuperscript{12} Williams et al. (2006:338-361).
\textsuperscript{13} Reeves (2007:4).
\textsuperscript{14} Reeves (2007:10).
3.2 Theories on Leadership

To be able to talk about leadership it is necessary to define what one means when talking about leadership. Leadership is a highly relevant and widely discussed concept in management. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the definition of leadership. Thus a model is needed that is widely recognized as valid and useful and that can be applied easily. It would further be beneficial if the model had a high level of abstraction as it will be applied in many very different contexts. There are different models that fulfill these criteria.

3.2.1 The 4 Capabilities Leadership Framework (FCF)

In this paper I use the 4 Capabilities Leadership Framework (FCF). This Model was developed in by Professors Deborah Ancona, Tom Malone, and Wanda Orlikowski, with Senior Lecturer Peter Senge at the MIT Sloan School of Management. This model features 4 dimensions of leadership:

- **Sensemaking:** making sense of the world around us, coming to understand the context in which we are operating.
- **Visioning:** creating a compelling picture of the future.
- **Relating:** developing key relationships within and across organizations.
- **Inventing:** designing new ways of working together to realize the vision.
- **Change signature:** the individual way a leader makes things happen

![Figure 2: The 4 Capabilities Leadership Framework (FCF)](It is called “Sloan model” in the study.)

While Sensemaking can be described as the mapping out of our environment with analytical tools, it also means the experimenting with new ideas on a small scale to learn and the use of new and different perspectives to be able to grasp and map out the situation as accurate as possible.

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16 Ibid.
17 Ancona (2005:2).
Relating is a somewhat more complicated capability. It involves inquiry, advocacy and connecting. Inquiry stands for the ability to understand other peoples’ ways of thinking and feeling as well as being able to listen to others in an open way trying to grasp their perceptions and their way of sensemaking. Advocacy, on the other hand, means the capability of presenting one’s own ideas to others and influencing them. Connecting is the ability to build up helpful relationships and coalitions.\textsuperscript{18}

Visioning means both creating a picture of the future and motivating the colleagues and employees to reach it. Good visioning will provide people with a feeling of sense and meaning in their work and motivate them to reach the vision.\textsuperscript{19}

Inventing stands in between the mapped out reality of sensemaking and the desirable future of visioning. Inventing involves creating and implementing new structures and processes needed to reach the vision. Creativity as well as analytic thinking and trying new approaches are important parts of inventing.\textsuperscript{20}

It must be stressed that all four capacities are important for good leadership and complement each other. “Without inventing, visions may remain dream that never get realized.”\textsuperscript{21} It is difficult to exercise all four capabilities at the same time as they can easily create tension in an organization. It can thus be beneficial to use the capabilities of not only one leader but of all members of an organization through collective leadership on a certain level.\textsuperscript{22}

The fifth concept featured by the FCF is the change signature. “While the capabilities focus on what leaders do, the change signature is about who a leader is.”\textsuperscript{23} Every leader has an individual change signature that shows what he or she brings to the role as leader in terms of personal skills, experiences and personality as well as how he or she uses the four capabilities. The change signature can be seen as the key connecting individual leaders to the abstract capabilities of the model.\textsuperscript{24}

The downside of this model can be seen in the fact that it is mainly describing fields of activities. That means that it can be used to classify some activity or task as leadership-related. It also means that it cannot be used to give a value to a certain leadership style and that it makes leaders comparable only on a very abstract level by showing which leaders are stressing which capability. This gap can also not totally be filled by the change signature as this individual leader’s signature also stays very abstract on the stressing of certain capabilities or extremely goes into detail comparing actual single actions. To fill this gap, another leadership theory is needed to be able to provide easy comparability of leadership styles.

### 3.2.2 The Leadership Grid

The Leadership Grid is a model that was made for visualizing and discussing leadership styles. It uses two numeric scales from one to nine, the first one showing the concern about production and the second one showing the concern about people. A high number represents a

\textsuperscript{18} Ancona (2005:2).
\textsuperscript{19} Ancona (2005:3).
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ancona (2005:4).
big concern. A nine would thus be maximal concern for one aspect while a one would be minimal concern for it. These scales build a coordinate system, a matrix in which different leadership styles can be described with numeric values. A leadership style with the values 1,9 would thus put results and production far in the background, shown by the value one of the first number, while being extremely concerned about people and trying to create satisfaction and a good working atmosphere, illustrated by the nine as the second number. The opposite would be a leading style with the values 9,1. This style would be maximal concerned about results and not caring about the human side at all. A 9,9 rated leadership style finally would be maximal concerned about both production and people. This style is often classified as committed and intense teamwork with high productivity and strong and supportive relationships between the people in the group. See the following figure (Figure 3) for an example of the leadership grid.

Figure 3: The Leadership Grid
Stewart Associates (2008)

The Leadership Grid is useful as it opens an easy to use way to characterize leadership and as it can be used in many contexts and for many kinds of organizations. It is further beneficial that it makes leadership styles comparable through its numerical value system. The backside of

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26 Blake (1991:77)
27 Blake (1991:56)
28 Blake (1991:189)
the simplicity and inductivity of the model is the limited range of its results. It makes leadership in different kinds of organizations comparable, but only in the terms of concern for people and concern for results. However, this is a central field of leadership and policy setting. The practicability of the Leadership Grid will fill the gap of the FCF which has in detail analysis of leadership activities and capabilities. The two models are complementing each other to build a powerful tool to identify, describe and compare leadership in different contexts.

3.3 Need for a New Theoretical Description of Leadership in MMORPGs

To sum up the theories on games and on leadership, it becomes clear that there is a gap in between. Leadership is a well researched topic. Games, on the other hand, at least contemporary MMORPGs, are not. The “Leadership in Games and at Work” study by Byron Reeves, Thomas Malone and the Seriosity Inc. is an exclamation to that. Also this study states that the topic of leadership in games is rather virginal.29 There is thus a need for a theory describing leadership in MMORPGs and comparing it to actual real-life leadership.

3.4 Grounded Theory Approach

I will use the grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach is a way of building theory. It starts out with an inductive framework in the beginning to make it possible for the new theory to emerge from the data and then uses a deductive framework to test the gained theoretical insights against the data.30 The grounded theory approach focuses on the intense use of data to create new theory. It fits to the purpose of this paper.

The grounded theory approach features three rounds of sampling and coding. The first steps are the open sampling and open coding. Here the first data is collected to get an overview of the research topic, the data to be collected and the fields to concentrate on. The purpose of this step is to acquire as much data as possible and to enable an unconstrained flood of data. As the strong emphasis lies on gaining initial access to data to be able to find first patterns in it and as a more balanced and methodological correct sampling would follow later when there is already an idea of what there is to find in the data, it does not matter much at this stage if the studied objects, the interviewees, are randomly chosen. The open coding in this method has the purpose of finding phenomena, concepts and categories. Concepts are the building blocks of theory. They are used to present in a more abstract way what can be found in the data. Phenomena are the central ideas that can be found in the data. A concept that is presenting such a central idea is called a category.31 Practically open coding involves the investigation of the data and the labeling of events, ideas and information in the data. The labeled concepts are then sorted to see where there are concepts describing phenomena central to the data. Those categories are marked, labeled and used later for the design of the relational and variational sampling and the axial coding.32

These categories point out what more information is to be sought after in the second step, the variational sampling. The new data is then used for axial coding following the traits from the

29 Ancona (2005:6).
open coding and relating the concepts emerging from the data to each other. The aim is to organize concepts in categories and to define their properties and dimensions.

The third and final step is the discriminate sampling and selective coding. Here the categories found earlier are defined in detail, the sampling and the questions asked are adjusted to fill up holes in the theory and to support or contest the categories constructed so far. A central category needs to be defined and connected back to the data and the sub-categories.  

In every step of the study, there will be a discussion of the results using theories and models from former research in the sector, mainly different articles about leadership and online games. The final result will be discussed in detail using theories about games and be compared with the findings of earlier research in the field.

The strength of the grounded theory approach lies in the heavy emphasis and strong connection to the data in all stages of theory building. The single concepts and categories emerge from the data and are double-checked against the data all the time. It is further a useful approach for constructing theory in a field where there has not been written a lot of theory before.

The weakness of the approach is the weak theoretical basis. While in different approaches the theories are the basic framework of a study, hypothesis are built and checked against the data, here the new theory and its hypothesis emerge from the data and are checked against the theoretical background afterwards. This can lead to a weaker theoretical framework. However, I am aware of this risk and I will discuss the findings of the research in every step to make sure that the theoretical framework is embedded in the study and can influence it on the run to avoid asking theoretically irrelevant questions. I have chosen the same leadership model to be used in this paper that is applied in a major study of leadership in Games to make the findings comparable and to be able to use the theoretical background of that study.

The open sampling contains interviews with two leaders of German guilds. The selective sampling features interviews with a leader of a small creative service company, a former air force mission leader and the leader of a public municipal organization, all of the Swedish, as well as the council of a German guild. The theoretical sampling contains interviews with the leaders of the 2nd best German guild up to the 13th of November 2008, an interview with a leader of a big industrial service company and an owner of a shop, the former leader of Uppsala’s student radio and two more leaders of German guilds.

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For an overview of the design of the interviews and different steps of analysis in the study see the following figure (Figure 4):

**Step 1:**

**Open sampling**

Open interviews with the first two guild leaders to get an idea about the research subject and be able to plan the further research.

**Open Coding**

Result, design of step 2

**Step 2:**

**Relational and variational sampling**

Interviews with three real life leaders, a leader of a municipal organization, of a media company and an air force mission leader, to get an overview of many different kinds of real life leadership. Further an interview with a guild council, a group of players leading a guild, to get insights in an alternative leadership structure of guilds.

**Axial coding**

Result, design of step 3

**Step 3:**

**Discriminate Sampling**

Interviews with three guild leaders to get more points of view on the field, fill gaps that showed in the axial coding and reach saturation.

Interviews with leaders of an industrial service company, of Uppsala’s student radio and a workshop owner to get perspectives on real life leadership that were missing in the axial coding and to have even a greater variance of different perspectives on real life leadership.

**Selective Coding**

Result

**Figure 4: Survey Overview**
4. Methodology

4.1 Interviews

I think that interviews are the right choice of method as the aim of my paper is to build new theory and I thus need to get an understanding of the phenomenon. There is no theory to test as there is hardly any theory in that arena to be applied. I do not aim at finding statistically relevant information but a deep understanding of a phenomenon that can be provided by qualitative research and analysis of personal interviews. Interviewing the right people, leaders of guilds in WOW and of organizations in real life, can give me access to core information and data in this field and is thus my method of choice.

4.2 Choice of Interviewees

The requirement for an interview for the guild leaders will be that their guild exists since some time and is successful in what it is doing. An own website and some way of voice communication will also be required for the guild to have its leader interviewed. It is important to filter the guild leaders to be interviewed in this way to ensure that there is a working leadership structure. As the aim is to analyze leadership in MMORPGs it would not be helpful to talk to leaders of small, newly formed, unsuccessful guilds, to leaders of guilds that are more a group of real life friends having out-of-game relationships who play together than a working in-game organization or to leaders who have been appointed a very short time ago.

To avoid these problems there will only be (with one exception, the guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix”, more to that later) interviews with leaders of guilds ranked among the 100 best guilds in Europe. The guilds are ranked after their success in the PvE content. That means that they get points for bosses they managed to kill. As all the successful guilds have all killed the last boss the ranking uses the time they needed for doing so. This means that all the guild leaders interviewed have not only lead there guild to defeating the final boss but also done so in a race against other guild to be as fast as possible with success. All the guild leaders interviewed and their guilds are German.

The leaders of real life organizations were chosen to represent a wide range of different organization types and sizes. This is supposed to give examples of the leadership styles and the experience of being a leader in many different real life settings. The interviews were conducted with the leader of a public service organization in Uppsala municipal, a leader of a small Uppsala-based creative service company, a former member of the Swedish air force, the former leader of Uppsala student radio, the owner of a store and workshop producing sanitary orthopedic technical products and the leader of an industrial service company. The first four are Swedish while the last two are German.

I think that it will be more fruitful to interview in my mother tongue, German, as I will understand the interviewees more easily and fully. The study is therefore most valid for leadership in German language MMORPGs. It might be possible to use the results with respect to possible differences in the rest of the western world but I cannot give any notion

about the exact applicability there. It is further probable that there are differences between for example the western world and Asia in respect of leadership in online games and the findings of this paper should not be used there without further investigation.

### 4.3 Interview Design

The interviews were rather free. I asked open questions to get the interviewees to describe their tasks, duties, responsibilities and experiences the way they perceive them. The aim was to get a lively and colorful description from them. I used a questionnaire to plan beforehand on what information I wanted to get and as a tool for keeping an overview during the interview. I did not ask all the questions in sequence and I did generally not stick to the interview guide but followed the flow of the interviewee and tried to get the interviewees to uncover as much as possible by following up interesting traits in their stories and explanations. The interviews developed over the study and so did the questionnaire.35

As explained in chapter 3.4 the grounded theory approach emphasizes the importance of the data as the base for new theory. This approach is also reflecting on the interview design. The interviews during the first round of data collection, the open sampling, are extremely open. The interviewees get a short introduction to the topic of the study and open leading questions and are free to tell stories and explain whatever they find fitting to the question, related to it, clarifying or simply interesting. The interviewees also get the information that they are allowed and expected to talk that freely and that the researcher will appreciate detailed explanations and colorful stories and pictures.

In the next step of data collection during the relational and variational sampling the style of the interviews changes. They are still rather free but there are some points that turned out to be specifically interesting during the open coding that should be covered during the interviews. This step also contains the first interviews with real life leaders. In these interviews one important point is to find out about the leadership style and leadership experience as it appears in this field of real life leadership. The real life leaders were chosen from different fields and organizational types to guarantee a wide range of information about real life leadership and that purpose was supported through the interview design here as well. However, the interviews were still free to a big extend and the interviewees were still encouraged to tell whatever they deemed relevant, interesting or colorful.

The last step of data collection during the discriminate sampling was somewhat different. The choice of the interviewees and the design of the interviews were clearly matched to the purpose of filling in still existing knowledge gaps from the axial coding and trying to find information supporting or weaken patterns that had emerged from the data. The interviews with the guild leaders tried to reach saturation and the interviews of the real life leaders were both expanding the analyzed leadership types and focusing on information that was central to the comparison with the online leadership. The interviews were thus more guided and it was put more effort to get the interviewees to answer the central questions even if they were more difficult or uncomfortable to answer. The interviewees were also increasingly asked to give examples for central happenings and to talk about their emotions. They were still encouraged to tell stories they found interesting or relevant but also here the interview was more focused and guided.

35 The final form of the questionnaire can be found as Appendix.
This way of designing the interviews is part of the grounded theory approach and supporting the aim of the paper of creating new theory.

As a service for the reader and to give an overview over the actual interviewees there is the following figure (Figure 5). It shows the organization of the interviews in three different steps as well as the names of the interviewees and their roles:

**Open sampling**

| WOW GL 1: Theus Christ (Myth) |
| WOW GL 2: Falco Schwarz (Harlequins) |

**Relational and variational sampling**

| Municipal organization (Monica Fagerström) |
| Air force mission leader (Patrik Stensson) |
| Media company CEO (Peter Mattsson) |
| WOW Guild council (“Schwingen des Phoenix”) |

**Discriminate Sampling**

| Industrial Service Company Manger (Jürgen Tiektötter) |
| Workshop owner (Michael Dzygoluk) |
| WOW GL 3: Benjamin Zschernack (Affenjungs INC) |
| Station manager of Uppsala’s Student radio: Emil Öberg |
| WOW GL 4: Tobias Weber (Nero) |
| WOW GL 5: Ruben Treubel (Unleash) |

**Figure 5: Overview over the Interviewees**

### 4.4 Practical Notes

The interviews were conducted over voice-over-IP and in person depending on the wishes of the interview partners. All interviews with real life leaders were conducted in person while only one interview with a guild leader, Benjamin Zschernack from “Affenjungs INC”, could be conducted personal. This was due to geographical problems and the wishes of the interviewees. I documented all the personal interviews with a recording machine and the online interviews, over Skype or TS, with suitable software. I translated the parts of the German interviews I regard as important or I quoted in the paper. As I translated the interviews myself I was careful with micro text analysis and used the German text as a basis for this kind of analysis. I controlled my own translation by translating parts of it again and comparing it to the first translations to ensure a sufficient quality and stay alert to problems arising from that issue.

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36 GL stands for „Guild leader“.
5. Results of the Study

5.1 Open Sampling

I used for the open sampling two interviews with German guild leaders conducted in German. The interviewees were WOW Guild leader 1, Theus Christ from “Myth” and WOW Guild leader 2, Falco Schwarz from the guild “Harlequins”.

5.2 Open Coding

Choosing the categories here, it is important to bear in mind that the aim was to list and develop an understanding about what it is like to be a guild leader. It is important to list the tasks of a guild leader to get a picture of what the game play is like. However, the focus lies not on simply collecting the guild leader’s to-do list but to describe his or her experience and the phenomenon of leadership in MMORPGs.

5.2.1 Interview with WOW GL 1: Theus Christ (Myth)

“The whole thing stands and falls with me.” Theus Christ (2008)

As the interview with Theus Christ was the first one, the questions were wide and he could talk freely about everything he deemed relevant in any way.

Christ stressed in his interview the importance of the respect of the members for the guild leader as a base for power and the vitality of motivation from the guild and raid leader to the members. He mentioned an oral culture in guilds. He described becoming a leader as a process that is not necessarily initiated by the leader but more or less happens to the leader. He attributed the success of his guild not only to his leadership but to the skillful playing of the members. From his point of view, it is important to have good players to be successful. As his motivation for leading Christ named the feeling of creating something and building something up.

“It’s rather a hobby than a game.” Theus Christ (2008)

5.2.2 Interview with WOW GL 2: Falco Schwarz (Harlequins)

“The guild is our playground which the people learned to love the way we live it.”
Falco Schwarz (2008)

Falco Schwarz brought up the importance of outer communication for example as a means to make recruitment easier for the first time. He stressed especially the importance of being informed about what is going on in the guild as a leader and explained that it is crucial to react fast and solve problems quickly as they can endanger the guild. Schwarz also mentioned
the contrast between being focused on progress and success or on friendship and social connections as well as their connection to each other as a paradox of guild leadership. He gave the guild leadership a big importance in terms of policy setting and defining the aims of the guild and expressed that the members were supposed to adhere to that leadership. However, he also saw the importance of having the respect of the members as a leader. His motivation for being a leader is the solving of complex problems with the other players as his tools and his tactical and leadership skills on his demand.

5.2.3 Analysis of the Open Coding

To be able to recognize the central concepts to be a guild leader, I start out from the tasks coming with the position. These tasks can be divided in different groups. There are administrative tasks, social tasks, and political tasks and there is the raid lead. Administrative tasks are for example the organization and administration of the forum, the organization of the members before the raids, the administration of the DKP or other systems to manage item distribution and the guild bank. Social tasks are the creation of a positive atmosphere in the guild, the introduction of new members, the discussion of problems with members and the solving of social conflicts. Political tasks are decisions about guild aims, policies, rules, administrative systems, member pool, maintenance of power by the leaders, and kicking as well as invitation of new members. The raid lead is the leading of the raids which involves explaining tactics, leading the members and commanding them in the execution of their roles.

Following the lines of the tasks of a guild leader, it is possible to examine the collected concepts to see which ones are describing the central phenomena of guild leadership. The first category is mentioned by both interviewees and has to do with policy setting. Both mentioned the conflict in a guild between being progress- and success- oriented or friendly and familiar. As an example here is mentioned by Schwarz a conflict arising if a former active member has to limit the play time due to a new job situation. According to the orientation towards progress and success of the guild such a person should be taken out of the active raiding party of the guild and replaced by a more active player more fitting the profile and the aims of the guild. However, the kicking of a player that has been playing with the group over a long time and has grown to a valuable and well-liked part of the community, to a friend, is not perceived as an easy step to take. It seems to be a major task for a guild leader to decide about what the guild's policy is going to be and also a troubling role to stick to this policy and execute it. Here both interviewees mention conflict with their conscience and the seeking of advice by a council or other recognized members. The setting up of a guild policy, of aims for the organization and just the way things are done around here seems a very central concept for guild leaders. These activities, policy setting and execution of these policies, can be seen as a part of the visioning capacity of the FCF as well as influencing the relating part. The setting of policies governing the human resources of a guild and the orientation towards success or friendship are clearly dependent on the picture the guild and its leaders have as a vision for the future. The vision to have a guild with strong social binds playing for fun as a spare time activity will yield different HR policies that the vision of being among the best guilds in Europe. As the policy has to do with how much interpersonal relationships are stressed and how central they are to the guilds activity, there is a clear link to the relating capacity. It decides how strong personal relationships can be and if they are the aim or the means of the guild’s activity. Earlier research mentions that it is not so much responsibility of the leaders in games to set the agenda of organizations as the aims are given by the game.37

37 Reeves (2007:11).
However, the data shows that agenda setting is still a big issue for the leaders. It shows that visioning is not only related to finding aims for the guild in the game. They are rather given by the game narrative. The visioning of the guild leaders is more centered on the design and aim of their own guild. Here it seems really important to have a clear aim for the organization to attract the right members and avoid conflicts within the guild emerging from different aims in the game.

The next important part mentioned is the organization of the raids. As raiding requires a well-prepared group of at least 25 people to be online at the same time and spend the next 2-8 hours together it is a highly administrative effort to ensure this many times a week. Players who cannot play need to be replaced, the setup of the raid has to be balanced (there has to be the right number of players in the different roles) and players who do not find a place in a specific raid need to be informed as beforehand and maybe be ordered to keep themselves available in case that they will be needed later in the raid. Dealing with all these preparations seems to be a major time sink for the guild leaders and they are here as well dividing the work load on many shoulders or asking for help with those tasks. Here it is also important to point out the use of different communication tools. In-game communication is used as well as voice-over-IP, normally Team Speak, a forum or simply telephone. Especially in-game chat, TS and forums are further seen as social tools of the guild and the guild leader to create a positive guild climate. This is another task that is stressed by the interviewees. Both state that a guild needs to be a community and that the members need to be friends to work well together. This is again stressing the relating aspect of being a guild leader.

“Being happy alone is not fun.” Falco Schwarz (2008)

The creation of this closeness as well as the anticipation and solution of conflicts in the guild are perceived as a role of the leader as well. Schwarz is further stressing that it is important for the leader to be informed about what is happening in the guild. This means being informed about developments in the group is important for the leadership. For instance, growing social conflicts or simply changes in the working hours of a key player have to be known to the guild leader. This is a part of sensemaking. The leader has to map out his social environment all the time to ensure a working raid.

“There is nothing worse than a guild leader who doesn’t know what’s going on.”

Falco Schwarz (2008)

Another social task of the guild leader and an important part of the playing experience is the motivation of people. It is stated that motivation of the members is crucial to success. Furthermore, both interviewees describe situations in the game when it is a difficult task to motivate the players in the face of difficulties like difficult encounters or other problems. Both explained also that if there are problems a solution has to be found fast to keep the motivation of the players up.

“Here it is about reacting fast. Sometimes raids have to be cancelled where it is exactly that what keeps our members playing.” Falco Schwarz (2008)

Here there is also a difference between both interviewees. While Christ mentioned especially that people need support to believe in them and puts a major emphasis on the relating capacity, Schwarz focused on a process of finding a tactical solution for a certain problem using his inventing capacity.
“When they see, ‘Oh, yes that could work, we will try that’ then I have new motivation that allows me to get the members online on the evening.” Falco Schwarz (2008)

One point that was mentioned by both is that it is important to point out to the members the progress the guild is making especially if it is not easily visible that there is any.

“Sometimes it is important to explain to the people that we are not so far away from a kill even though we wiped again at 90%.” Theus Christ (2008)

Another part that seems to influence the playing experience is the political part of being a guild leader. Both leaders stated that they have to make decisions that will yield results in weeks or even months. They also expressed that they had to sell their decisions to their members and that it was crucial for their leadership to maintain the respect of the members as a base of their power. They feel that they both have basically unlimited power as long as their members respect their leadership.

“Power is relative, I’d say. I have it, yes, but effectually using it I have to ask myself twice if I can do that... and if I am allowed to.” Falco Schwarz (2008)

“It is nearly like politics what you have to do there. You have to take care of that you are always presented in a good light.” Falco Schwarz (2008)

Both described the way to become a leader as a process during the creation of the guild from the fusion of other guilds where one of the former leaders emerged as the leader of the new organization. However, Christ also stressed that the decisions as a guild leader often have to be taken without actual knowledge about what is going on. Especially the beginning of a leader’s career is depicted as a difficult time full of insecurity and trial-and-error learning processes.

“I am not somebody who became leader because he wanted it but because he got pushed into the role a bit. And then you grow into your decisions. A bit like the emperor of China who comes on the throne with 13 years and then has to grow into his power. (Theus Christ, 2008)

The final but also very important part of being a leader is the own motivation. While both mentioned that it felt rewarding to lead a guild as one was creating something, Christ used the picture of planting a tree, they had very different other reasons for loving their job. While Christ stressed gratefulness, thanks and respect from the members, Schwarz mentioned that it was satisfying to solve complicated problems with the guild members as the leader’s tools to do so.

In the very center of the guild lead stands the raid lead. Both guild leaders are also the raid leaders of the guild. This construction is found often. This might have to do with the fact that a raid leader needs to be able to command 24 people successfully. To do so, he needs their respect that has to be earned through competence and knowledge. Here is a clear connection to the requirement of respect in the political part of the guild lead. This connection might be accountable for the fact that the raid leader often becomes a guild leader. Leading a raid is a stressful job. Mistakes are immediately obvious and normally result in the death of all the players, a so called “wipe”. Still leading the raid seems to be the very essence of the leadership for guild leaders and the real reason for doing the job and putting up with the administrative parts. However, this is not yet clear to say from the made interviews and requires further investigation in the next ones.
“It is insanely complex, one has to be there all the time and one has to be aware of thousands of things simultaneously and in addition one gets whispered by 24 others...one runs on adrenaline.” Falco Schwarz (2008)

Both leaders explained that their leadership style could change according to the individual situation. The clearest example here would be that the leadership style in a running raid would be rather authoritarian and direct while after a raid there could be a personal and calm discussion about problems. According to the Leadership Grid the raid lead would be result oriented authority-compliance management and rated somewhere about 9,1. The leadership style outside of raids could on the other hand be much more like a balanced leadership style or even tending towards country club management and team management depending on the task.

### 5.2.4 Results of the Open Coding

As a result of the open coding there are now some categories that start to interrelate and draw the picture of what it is like to be a guild leader. However, for the next sample it will be useful to take a look inside the whole leadership of a guild, not only one person who is part of the leadership. In both interviews a guild council was managed to lead the guild at least at some point of its history or even now. It would therefore be good to interview all officers of a guild or a guild council together. Furthermore, there are many tasks and roles in being a guild leader that sound clearly related to leadership in commercial companies. It will thus be useful to interview commercial leaders and compare their tasks and experiences to those of the guild leaders to see if there and where there are similarities and differences.

Another result is the following model (Figure 4) of guild leading tasks. It shows social, administrative and political tasks and activities related to each other and centered on raiding as the central activity of the guild and the reason for its existence.

![Model of Guild Leading Tasks](image)

### 5.3 Relational and Variational Sampling

With the basic impression and an idea about what to look for from the open sampling and open coding the interviews in the relational and variational sampling are made with both leaders of organizations in real life and a whole guild council of 5 people in WOW.
The guild council was chosen for three reasons. First, the concept of a council leadership was mentioned often during the open sampling which made it interesting to talk to a whole council in a kind of target group like interview situation. Second, the guild council in question leads a guild on a role-play server. This means that the players on this server are acting their characters out. The details about role-play servers will be explained prior to the actual interview coding. Third, the guild on this server is the only one taking part in this study that is not among the best one hundred guilds in Europe. This will be discussed in detail as well in the introduction of the respective coding.

The three real life leaders are leading very different organizations in different contexts. Monica Fagerström is leading a public community organization, Patrik Stensson is a former member of the Swedish Air Force and mission leader and Peter Mattsson is the CEO and production manager in a small creative company. The different contexts, sizes and operational backgrounds of the chosen organizations are chosen to cover a wide range of different leading styles, environments, backgrounds and experiences. Like this it will be possible to compare the data from the open coding to many different real life leadership types. It will also show which real life leadership type will have to be investigated further in the discriminate sampling. Finally, it might make it possible to say what kind of real life organization is most comparable to a guild in terms of leadership.

5.4 Axial Coding

5.4.1 Interview with Monica Fagerström

“We are all on the same floor but I am the boss. Never forget, I have the responsibility, I have decisions and I can take them. I am always the boss. So they know that. And I am not afraid of saying that.” Monica Fagerström (2008)

Monica Fagerström is leading the Vakansförmedlingen in Uppsala. The Vakansförmedlingen is as a part of Uppsala municipal a public organization. It is thus important to note that it is not operating with the aim of making financial profits but to fulfill the law. The Vakansförmedlingen recruits people who can work taking care of old and handicapped people and then organizes their work. It is providing work force for old-peoples-homes in the city if an original worker cannot work because of sickness, holiday or such and it is providing workers for helping old people at their own homes. Fagerström has 15 people working under her and is mediating 700 workers.

The interview with Fagerström was the first one of the interviews with real life leaders. It just produced some results about real life leadership that were reflected in all the interviews with real life economic leaders. The most important three of those are the existence of a customer, the influence of a market with competitors and the economical dependence of the employees on the boss.

Fagerström stressed the importance of her education and experience for her when taking decisions as well as the institutional power difference between her and her employees. For her it was clear that she was the leader of her employees because she has the experience and education to do it and the formal power of having the position in the organization. She
explained the conflict of being responsible to her own boss and to her employees at the same time. Her motivation for being a leader was besides the fact that she liked to be the boss to contribute and make life better for people in her organization as well as the elderly people taken care of by her workers. Fagerström also mentioned a difference in the perception of power of people according to gender.

“I like to stand in the super trooper light and people listening to me. I feel good at that moment.” Monica Fagerström (2008)

5.4.2 Interview with Patrik Stensson

“When you talk about leadership in the air it is always the assessed actual experience that decides who is the one to be the leader.” Patrik Stensson (2008)

Patrik Stensson has been a member of the Swedish Air Force and a jet pilot and mission leader. It is important to note that the picture drawn in the interview is not necessarily reflecting the situation in the Swedish Air Force in general now or in the past and is only a subjective description of the experiences of one single pilot. However, these experiences can still provide valuable insights and possible points of relation and comparison for the study.

Stensson stressed the homogeneity of an air force squad as a group and the strong shared background and organizational culture leading to a trust to each other as leaders and followers as well as to a shared expectation on leadership. The environment of a flying mission with a fighting jet is lethal, small problems evolve very fast and everybody wants to come home alive. Stensson also explained the practice of appointing the pilot as a leader for the individual mission that is objectively the best one for the job without taking military ranks or status into account. The leadership can even change during a mission if the circumstances make it advantageous. Stensson also explained that the leadership culture is influenced by the fact that every single pilot is already a leader, the leader of his own vessel.

“You are both the steering guy and the commander and the decision maker.”
Patrik Stensson (2008)

5.4.3 Interview with Peter Mattsson

“If I were to pick pop every day on the streets to get ‘Populate’ (his company; authors note) to run good I would do it. I would do anything to get the company running.” Peter Mattsson (2008)

Peter Mattsson is the CEO of “Populate”, a creative media company producing video-, audio- and web-media for their customers. The company is placed in Uppsala in Sweden and has 9 employees. Mattsson is both CEO and production manager working as the link between the customers and the production team.

Mattsson stressed his responsibility to the company. He made it clear that he is deciding from the perspective of what is the best for the company also because the company was personally important for him as he has built it up. Mattsson explained that he motivated people by giving them responsibility and having an organizational culture of taking pride in good work. He stated that if an employee is performing poorly in a certain position he would see that as a
leadership mistake as the leader had put the employee onto a task he was not ready for. Mattsson made himself responsible for failures but the whole company for success.

“I have to see things from the company’s side.” Peter Mattsson (2008)

5.4.4 Interview with the Guild Council of “Schwingen des Phoenix”

“The success of the guild is the community.” Guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” (2008)

The guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” is a group of six people leading the guild. As mentioned above, this guild has been among the hundred most successful European guilds. It has not defeated the last level but at least the second last which is still a really good performance for a more casual guild. This fact has to be kept in mind when analyzing this interview. The guild might thus not be oriented as much on success and progress as the other guilds. However, the success the guild has shows still that it has working leadership. Furthermore, “Schwingen des Phoenix” is a guild on a role-play server meaning that players there are acting their characters out while playing. As an example while a player on a normal server would search for members to play a certain level like “Lfm Kara, go go fast run, 2h, only experienced people, gear check” the same request might sound like this on a role-play server: “Our group of brave knights is still searching for members to venture into the Tower of Krazhan and cleanse it from its demonic presence. Experienced heroes, put your sword and your staff in the service of the light and follow us into glory!” This acting of the character might have interesting influences on the leadership of guilds in such an environment which makes the guild more interesting as an interview partner.

The guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” stressed that the community in the guild is most important. While not neglecting the gear of an avatar and the skill of the player if it is about raiding the most important thing for the council was the personality of the player behind the avatar. The guild has a tight community that is also supported by successful real life guild meetings and people who like the guild culture and fit in are welcome to join. The guild council mentioned that their success was a result of the good guild climate which made playing fun and attracted good players. They also mentioned that the guild was welded together by going through hard times and solving problems together. The realm and other guilds were seen as a relevant environment for the leadership of the own guild. The association of the guild with a player who was behaving badly towards others was a new phenomenon identified in this interview.

“The name is the sign board. One has to care for ones reputation.” Guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” (2008)

5.4.5 Analysis of the Axial Coding

In the axial coding the concepts of the different interviews are going to be connected to lead to one picture. The concepts of the real life organizations will be explained first and then related to those of the guilds found in the open coding or in the axial coding itself. For the
axial coding the activities and areas of leadership have been divided into categories that naturally emerged from the data. These categories are tested on their ability to cover the whole topic of leadership in MMORPGs. Where there are problems and gaps in the data this is made explicit and were a connection between concepts is expected for the next step of the analysis this is marked as well. The categories are:

- The Customer
- Competitive Environment
- The Boss’s Boss
- Motivating
- Institutional Leadership
- Conflict Solving
- Human Resources
- Raid Lead

5.4.5.1 The Customer
The first concept that is rather central for two of the real life organizations is the customer. While customer satisfaction, customer relations and competition about customers is a central concept for all real life organizations with some economic background, here the creative company and the Vakansförmedlingen, there is simply no customer for guilds. The closest to a customer of a guild are the fans that are supporting the guild and want it to perform well. The presence of a customer is a big influence on real life organizations. Customer satisfaction is an important aim for real life organizations as they are dependent on their customers buying from them. Thus, delivering good work to a customer can also be a motivation not only to work but to lead. This motivation does not exist in MMORPGs. Connected to customer satisfaction is in the case of Fagerström the contribution to the society and the aim of making something better, in her case elderly care. This is an aim that seems to be fitting well in the context of a public community organization but could also occur in a purely commercial one. However, contribution and making things better can hardly be an aim for a guild in an MMORPG. Here again a contribution could be the publishing of own tactics and tricks to make it easier for other guilds to succeed in certain encounters and help the community. This is done by only a few guilds and is hardly their motivation to play. The presence of a customer is further influencing the ideas of the organization about ethics and responsibility. When asking the interviewees about the ethical principles and values of their organization, the answer depended on if it was a real life organization or a guild. A guild leader would understand the question of ethics about how the members are treated while the leaders of real life organizations with the exclamation of Stensson from the Swedish air force related the question to how the customers are treated and then later on to the treatment of employees. This shows that with the lack of a customer to take care of the employees or members of a guild move more in the focus of policy making and leadership compared to a real life company.

5.4.5.2 Competitive Environment
The next point that is of major importance for real life organizations (again with the exclusion of the air force) is their competitive environment. Competitors about customers and how to outperform them are important topics for commercial organizations. Another important factor is the change of laws and rules in the respective area influencing the business of the organization. These environmental aspects do not exist for a guild. The bosses to kill are always there for the guild. They are not already dead because somebody else has been faster. So, being informed about the market, about competitors and customers, typically falling in
the sensemaking capacity of the FCF, is not required in MMORPGs. However, there is something similar to changes of laws and regulations for real life setups. The changes of the game design imposed by the developers of the game are similar to the changes of laws in real life. The organizations have to monitor them, guild leaders are spending time in certain forums and on community pages to read up on coming changes and patches, and adapt accordingly. Thus, in this respect there is some sensemaking required also from guild leaders monitoring their playing environment and its changes.

5.4.5.3 The Boss’s Boss

Another difference between guild leaders and real life leaders is the fact that real life leaders have a boss or at least a board controlling their actions themselves. This means that they are responsible to an instance above themselves in the hierarchy and not only to their employees. This setup brings real life leaders in a conflict. They are responsible towards their own bosses for reaching organizational aims and producing results while they are responsible for their employees’ welfare as well.

“You have to be a leader for them but you have to listen up there. (...) So you are some kind of a hamburger in between two breads.” Monica Fagerström (2008)

This conflict does not exist in the world of MMORPGs. A guild leader does not have a boss above him. He is only responsible to the members of his guild. This responsibility for the other members of the organization is also mentioned by Stensson when talking about flight missions. This means that guild leaders are not in this conflict between responsibility for the employees and to the boss. As this conflict is felt strongly and requires a leader in a real life organization to make up his or her mind on which responsibility to stress it also influences the self-perception of a real life leader and his evaluation of and relationship to the organization and the employees. Fagerström tends in this question to the employees side.

“It is more important that I have the respect from the staff (...) and that they feel that they have my support than the support of my boss.” Monica Fagerström (2008)

Mattsson decides here differently.

“If we get to that point where we have to cut down even more, I mean I have to take my responsibility for the company. That would probably hurt but... yeah.” Peter Mattsson (2008)

He motivates this decision through this feeling of responsibility to the company. He has build up the company and it is important for him as the CEO to keep it running well.

“For me the company is really important in a personal way. I build this company and I have built it from nothing and...failure is not an option.” Peter Mattsson (2008)

Here is a similarity to guild leadership. Also guild leaders have strong personal ties to the guild they have built up and they want it to be successful. However, they have no boss, no owner or stock holder to report to. Peter Mattsson as a leader of a small company in which he knows everybody personally and plays indoor bandy with all the employees every Friday is still concerned about the employees.

38 Reeves (2007:11).
“Everybody has to have food on their table and a roof over the head.” Peter Mattsson (2008)

It is possible though to imagine leaders that are only focused on the responsibility to their boss recognizing the needs of the employees only as far as possible to keep them productive. This would be one extreme approach rated 9.1 on the Grid table. Tending to the other extreme is the approach of the guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” stressing the members’ welfare over all. This approach would equal country club management and earn a 1.9 rating on the grid table. 

“The success of the guild is the community.” Guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” (2008)

At this place there is not enough data as there has not been an interview with a leader in a big commercial organization. Another interesting point would be to interview the leader of a non-profit real life organization to see how that setup influences leadership. These points are implications for the discriminative sampling later that will hopefully yield more information about this point.

5.4.5.4 Motivating

The different leaders report different practices of motivating people. While Mattsson would give responsibility to his employees to motivate them to give their best, Fagerström influences her employees to adapt her set of seeing the world and her motivation.

“I try to tell them all the time how to think.” Monica Fagerström (2008)

Leaders of guilds when asked about how they motivate relate the question to the raiding situation, not to everyday guild life. That means that their view on motivations is that it is needed if things go wrong, people mess up and the raid is not successful for a period of time. Guild leaders mention that the motivation of players drops in the case of missing success. They explain that it is crucial to keep people motivated to keep the guild running. This seems to be connected to the fact the players in guilds are not paid for their time unlike employees in a real life organization. At this point more data is needed again and the importance of motivation of players as connected to the nature of play as unpaid activity will be stressed in the interviews in the discriminative sampling. Again, a non-profit unpaid real life organization would be of interest to look at. Another difference in the respect of motivation between real life organizations and guilds is that the guild leader can only motivate through digital media while the real life leader can have a face-to-face meeting which is supposed to be more efficient. Where the real life leader can thus just see if a person looks really tired or stressed, a guild leader has to understand these details about his members and their problems without seeing them. This might lead to a strong empathy through digital media on the side of guild leaders or simply to less concern about problems of guild members as they could appear not only unsolvable from the distance but even un-diagnosable.

5.4.5.5 Institutional Leadership

A leader in a real life organization has some kind of institutional leadership position. This position is fixed and cannot be influenced by the employees. In MMORPGs this is different. The leader is often elected from the members like the guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” and the guild leader needs the respect of his members to stay in office. This dependency of the leader on the members can make him much more focused on his reputation
among the members than the real life leader has to be on his among his employees. A guild leader has to explain his decisions, involve the sub-leaders into the decision-making process and be sensitive to moods and movements in the guild. He has to make his own politics to stay in power. Here there is a stress of the sensemaking and visioning capacities for guild leaders. They have to reassess the social environment, their guild, all the time, adjust their vision of the future of the guild in order to keep it appealing to the majority and get people to believe in his vision in order to stay in power. This finding is contradicting the contemporary paper about guild leadership as that states that sensemaking and visioning are less required in game environments than in real life environments.\(^{39}\) Sensemaking and visioning are required, only their topic is different. As mentioned in the chapter about competitive environment, sensemaking is not as important in the field of extern environment as it is in real life organizations. However, it is more important for assessing the social, intern environment. The sensemaking for guild leaders is thus focused on inner social environment rather than outer competitive environment but it is there and it is important.

5.4.5.6 Conflict Solving
Conflict solving is somewhat related to motivating as people are losing their motivation if they have to endure interpersonal conflicts of if conflicts are paralyzing the guild. Thus, conflicts in guilds have to be solved fast putting weight on the relating capacity of the leader. Here is a difference to real life organizations. In real life organizations people come to work at least partly to earn money.

“We are here to work.” Monica Fagerström (2008)

There is thus a motivation to come even if there is a conflict with a colleague. Here is again a connection to the fact that playing in a guild is unpaid just like in the motivation chapter above. A deeper look into this matter in the discriminative sampling is thus also required from the conflict solving situation.

5.4.5.7 Human Resources
Human resources are an important field for organizations in real life and MMORPGs alike. Many things are similar between both fields here. Both real life organizations and guilds need good people to be successful. They give out descriptions of open positions, run interviews with applicants, go head hunting if they do not get the needed applications and have trial phases for newly employed people. In these respects, HR is rather similar in real life organizations and in MMORPGs. However, there are certain differences. The first big difference is that there is no economic dependency of the guild member on the guild in contrast to the employees of the company. This makes it much easier for players to leave their guild than for employees to leave their company when they are not satisfied any more. They simply do not have to worry about not being able to pay the rent even if they need some time to find another guild. This fact is mirrored by the absence of any protection from being fired in MMORPGs. While an employee cannot be fired because of a single fight and while it is costly for the employer to get rid of an unwanted employee and takes quite some time a guild leader just has to right click on the respective member to open a menu and select “Uninvite”.

“It is almost impossible to get fired.” Monica Fagerström (2008)

\(^{39}\) Reeves (2007:11).
The ease of uninviting of guild members by the guild leader is only limited by the leaders credibility and his or her need of being respected as a leader by the members.

“We cannot kick somebody without a good reason. That would destroy your credibility.”
Guild council of “Schwingen des Phoenix” (2008)

The constellation that members of a guild can leave without fearing economical consequences seems to be one of the reasons why guilds have to solve conflicts quickly and have to keep a high motivation among their members. It is again an issue connected to the fact that players do not earn money by playing. HR seems to be a very central aspect of guilds. As much as real life organizations are dependent on having good employees they are still also consisting of some infrastructure like production machines, offices, computers, vehicles and so on. Guilds are only consisting of their members and a homepage.

5.4.5.8 Raid Lead

The last field of guild leadership is raid lead. While the raid is the very center of a raiding guild in WOW and many MMORPGs, it is hard to compare raiding to anything in real life organizations. It could be comparable to a circus where all the activities of the whole circus, the practicing, taking care of the animals and building up the tent are centered on the show. However, a good comparison for raid leading could be found in the descriptions of Stensson about leadership on flight missions in the Swedish air force.

The first striking similarity of raiding and flying a jet is the fact that every person is the leader of his or her own vehicle. A pilot is flying a jet.

“You are both the steering guy and the commander and the decision maker.”
Patrik Stensson (2008)

A player is manning an avatar. Both are deciding about what their vehicle is doing and both need to be skilled in controlling it to get it to do what they want. The next thing that is similar between the two fields is that both have a cockpit displaying certain information needed for making decisions. The plane’s cockpit might report about weapon and gas status, the player’s cockpit reports health and mana (magical energy) of the avatar and the group. The third similarity is that players as well as pilots can see certain data about the other members of their team in order to make it easier to lead. For pilots this system is called a “data link”. It shows certain information about the machines of the other pilots in the group. A leader can thus see how much gas each machine has left and if the weapon systems are working and so on. A raid leader can see detailed information about the status of his members in the game as well. The fourth similarity is that the leader of the operations is taking part in it. The mission leader is flying with his pilots while the raid leader is playing with the other players. Fifth, problems evolve in both environments really quickly if they do not get solved. These similarities influence leadership. The first and most striking one is that the person leads the operation who is at the given moment the best guy for the job. This means in the context of the air force that the leader of a certain mission might be lower in the military hierarchy than one of the normal pilots but still gets to lead the mission because he is the better man for the job.

“When you talk about leadership in the air it is always the assessed actual experience that decides who is the one to be the leader” Patrik Stensson (2008)
This even means that the leadership can change during a mission. If for example something unexpected happens and alters the nature of the mission another pilot might be the better one and thus take over the leadership. If the leader’s instruments are defect and he cannot see well or if another pilot is having a better point of view to command from he takes over the leadership. This “assessed actual experience” is also deciding about who is leading a raid. If the normal raid leader has an especially stressful job at a certain point he might give responsibility and task away to others. If a player is because of his role in the raid predestined to do a certain job, maybe because he has a very good overview from his position, he take that job over. A difference is here that a leadership swop in the air is clearly communicated. The current leader tells the leader to be that he will take over the leadership and that one replies that he will do it. In raids tasks are often taken over by a player spontaneously and if the player performs well in this role he stays in it. There are certain players who take over such tasks frequently and are expected to continue doing so in the future.

There are also differences between leading a raid and an air mission. The first one here is that a failure in the air leads to catastrophe. The environment is lethal and people can die. In a raid avatars can die and that is it. 25 people have to walk back to their corpses, revive and try again.\(^40\) In comparison to a flight mission there is nothing at stake. The next difference is the strong trust between the pilots fostered by the homogeneity of their group, their similar values and their common education. Pilots trust each other with their lives. They know each other and they know that the other pilot would probably take the same decision that they would. Members of guilds can also be homogenous and trust each other but they have often never seen each other. It is thus questionable if they would trust each other with their lives. However, as they do not need to do that this question is not further relevant and leadership in flight missions can thus be seen as useful for explaining leadership in raids.

5.4.6 Results of the Axial Coding

The results of the axial coding are that the chosen categories are describing leadership in MMORPGs well and are useful for comparing it with leadership in real life organizations. However, there are still gaps that need to be closed. A focus for the discriminate sampling is thus to be put on the fact that players in guilds do not earn money there but that it is an unpaid activity. Further data is required about leaders in big companies that might be responsible to the owners and stock holders and how their leadership style compares to leadership in high-end raiding guilds. A leader of a small producing company could be interesting to get yet another viewpoint on leadership. Finally a leader of a non-profit non-commercial organization would be an interesting interviewee as such a real life organization could help evaluating in which respect differences in leadership styles can be attributed to the difference between real life and game or commercial and non-profit.

5.5 Discriminate Sampling

The discriminative sampling is featuring interviews with three guild leaders and three real life leaders. The real life leaders are Jürgen Tiekött ter, manager of a major engineering service provider and leader of 90 people, Michael Dzygoluk, owner of a store and a workshop, and Emil Öberg, former Station Manager for Uppsala Student Radio. The guild leaders are among

\(^{40}\) If an avatar dies in WOW the soul of the avatar reappears at the next graveyard and has to walk back to the body to resurrect.
the most successful one in Germany with Benjamin Zschernack of the guild Affenjungs INC that has been the second best in Germany. The selection of real life leaders is with a leader in a big company, a leader of a small workshop and a leader of a non-profit organization fitted to answer the gaps of data shown in the axial coding. The selection of the guild leaders is supposed to dense the picture of what it is like to lead a successful guild and reach saturation.

5.6 Selective Coding

5.6.1 Interview with Jürgen Tiekötter

“Email can never ever replace a talk.” Jürgen Tiekötter (2008)

Jürgen Tiekötter is manager of the engineering department in InfraServ Wiesbaden Technik GmbH & Co. KG. He is leading 90 people. His company is an industrial service provider sending engineers to their customers.

The interview with Tiekötter yielded many new concepts. The reason for this might be that it was the only interview with a leader of a big company. The first new concept was outsourcing. The company had for example outsourced HR. The next and more important concept was buying help in form of a consultant. InfraServ had gone through a process of change called the project “Fit for Future”. This project also contained the formulation of the company ethics and the planning of their enactment in real life. Leader even got individual coaching to help them live the corporate culture. New is here bought-in policy making and the formulation of routines and actions for the leaders to follow from an instance outside the leadership of the organization. There is further the strong pressure of the company leadership on the management to be competitive on the market and a conflict with different interests of the leadership and the management.

Tiekötter stressed the importance of face-to-face meetings for leadership. He explained that efficiency and customer orientation were important aims and that the employees needed to be working well to ensure that. Another big difference of Tiekötter’s experience was that he mainly had to do with the leaders of different departments and groups that were directly under him in the company’s hierarchy and not with the simple workers themselves.

“If I would get under pressure I would first neglect the communication with the employees.”
Jürgen Tiekötter (2008)

5.6.2 Interview with Michael Dzygoluk

“You get amputated. You have to undress. Somebody has to get to your stump where a piece of life quality got lost, got cut off. A leg or an arm, whatever. You need a certain trust relationship. That is not so easy.” Michael Dzygoluk (2008)

Michael Dzygoluk is the owner of a store and workshop producing sanitary orthopedic technical products like prosthesis and corsets. The company has 14 employees who are working in the shop and the workshop. Dzygoluk is working in the workshop himself having contact with customers and producing corsets.
Dzygoluk stressed the importance of helping people as a motivation for him to work and to lead. He mentioned further strong personal connection to the company he had built up and explained that the most painful experience for him was to leave a company he had with a partner because of conflicts. A big influence of changes in the law and the significance of good business contacts and a good reputation were reported by him.

“Children’s laughter... She could stand for the first time in her life. Before she could only lie or sit in the wheel chair.” Michael Dzygoluk (2008)

5.6.3 Interview with WOW GL 3: Benjamin Zschernack (Affenjungs INC)

“Primary it is the success in the PvE contend. Secondary there is the community in addition.”
Benjamin Zschernack (2008)

Benjamin Zschernack is one of the three leaders of the guild “Affenjungs INC”. His guild has been the 2nd most successful guild in Germany until 13th of November. Zschernack is 28 years old. He studies machine construction in Aachen.

Zschernack stressed that a guild exists for raiding and nothing else. From his point of view, the guild is an organization that makes it possible to raid on a high level. He saw that there is a community connected to the guild as well but that was clearly secondary for him. He explained the practice to recruit good players from other guilds and the fierce competition among guilds that leaded to guilds collapsing because they lost key players to other guilds. He also noted that he did not feel bad about causing problems to other guilds through this recruiting practice. In this environment he put major importance on fast problem solving. Zschernack described the reputation of his guild as a group of “bad boys” and said that it was useful for the recruitment to have a strong reputation.

Zschernack mentioned as his worst experience an incident when a new player tried to take over the guild and caused conflict until he got kicked by him. Zschernack thinks about quitting the game but he wants to find a good successor first and not leave the guild he has created to break. His motivation to lead is power.

“Oh, you always want a bit more, to be able to say a bit more.” (Benjamin Zschernack 2008)

5.6.4 Interview with Emil Öberg

“Even though I have to be a CEO kind of type where I have to make decisions, I have to write contracts, it is much more important for me to be the human relations guy where I make sure that everyone is having... not a good time but are enjoying themselves because that is the only thing we can give to people.” Emil Öberg (2008)

Emil Öberg has been the Station Manager for Uppsala Student Radio for one year. Uppsala Student Radio is a non-profit student organization that is paid for by the University, state money, advertising revenues and funding. The Station Manager is the only person in the
organization that gets paid and there the only one who works at it full time while all the other members are studying at the side. Öberg is still working voluntarily as program director.

Öberg stressed the importance of giving the members of his organization fun, the feeling to do something important and the possibility to learn something and develop as an exchange for their work and time as they do not get paid. He explained that this was the most important to keep people motivated and keep them coming back. He further stated that it was crucial to have the necessary infrastructure and help for people. Öberg described the communication was personal and said that running into people and drinking coffee with people was a big part of it. That and the fact that the members were all studying and doing the radio on the side required the leader to be available. Öberg described the situation as so serious that he could not be unavailable for a day without it causing problems. He also said that problems evolved fast in the environment and a problem with the leader could lead to results instantly.

Maybe the most important information from this interview is that the Student Radio is a schizophrenic organization as it was an interest club for people interested in radio to the inside and a well-working radio station selling advertisement to customers from to the outside. Öberg explained that the aims of the radio were to make radio from students for the students that wanted to hear it and that it was not competing about market share with outer stations. Because of this nature of the Student Radio Öberg was not able to explain the basic values and morals of the organization.

“We got a kinda split personality on who we are because we have to function as both a one hundred people company and a group of people with similar interests.” Emil Öberg (2008)

“We are a third radio station, a third practice hall and a third… lunch room actually. People are hanging around with their friends. And I think every part is important for people enjoying this.” Emil Öberg (2008)

5.6.5 Interview with WOW GL 4: Tobias Weber (Nero)

“It is on the Internet a good amount more difficult to lead people or to hold together people as you do not see the people on the Internet directly. In addition, they don’t have any obligations. That means this is not their work where they go and where they can say ‘Yes, ok, I earn money. I have to go through this.’ but it is their hobby and you are practically responsible… or I’ll say they put their time in your hands and you have to try to plan and execute it in a way that everybody is satisfied.” Tobias Weber (2008)

Tobias Weber is the guild leader of the guild Nero. He is a student of media informatics.

Weber stressed the importance of respect for the leader to be able to lead a guild. He stated that it is impossible to lead on the Internet without respect. That is why a leader had to avoid making arbitrary decisions. He explained that his e-sports background had helped him a lot with the leadership of the guild. Weber gave good examples for divided leadership during raids and an example for a difficult decision where he had to tell a really good friend that he could not join the guild after a break again because he was not good enough. Weber recalled that decision as painful.
"One says always that there are some players that keep you in the game. And if they are not there anymore one thinks about quitting as well. And he has been one of those players. (...) It was hard when he said he would leave as he has been a big part of the guild and it was even harder to tell him that he just could not come into the rooster." Tobias Weber (2008)

5.6.6 Interview with WOW GL 5: Ruben Treubel (Unleash)

"Rather many people cancel something out of their private life for some raids. They don’t go to parties or don’t go out with the girlfriend, don’t study... they would have other plans but they raid because they feel that it is their duty to be there, which is also important as they are needed. And those people, if they are there and log in at 6pm, want to raid and wait for the invite and hear at half past “Well sorry, we are three people short, we can’t raid.” Then there is a problem. And if that happens more often those people ask themselves: “Why do I decline real life appointments? Why do I drop other stuff? Why do I get myself into trouble?” If those come less as well you have some kind of “death spiral”. Less and less people are there and more and more are not satisfied. Then it goes down. Many raids broke down over that that some people are missing, then more and more. In the summer over the football European Championship broke two guilds nearly completely down on our server just because there have not been enough people to raid.” Ruben Treubel (2008)

Ruben Treubel is the guild leader of Unleash. He is studying engineering.

At this interview saturation was reached. That means that the interview did not yield new concepts or categories about guild lead that had not been found before. However, it gave some good examples and clarified some already existing concepts.

Treubel stressed the danger of bad leadership and missing raid members for a guild as it could lead to a “death spiral” with more and more people leaving the guild. He mentioned the difficulty of leading a guild when having to bring bad news to people. He explained that it is necessary to keep people that are needed for the raid even though they are no good players or nice people and even though they will be replaced as soon as possible and of stringing someone along in case they will be needed later by the raid. He said that both felt bad but was necessary and happened often.

“One knows that one hurts the other one in a way in his self-esteem. What do I know what others interpret in the game. And you do not like doing that, you don’t enjoy that. To tell them something like that feels bad already... and if the other one starts crying or gets angry, that is rather hard. But you have to go through it.” Ruben Treubel (2008)

5.6.7 Results of the Selective Coding

5.6.7.1 Closing the Gaps

The aim of the selective coding is to close the gaps of the axial coding and to find the central category that will then be related back to the data. The gaps in the axial coding mostly been connected to the fact that playing in a guild is unpaid. The first connection of the fact that guild participation is voluntary has to do with the motivation of the members. Both employees of real life organizations and guild are supposed to spend their time and effort in
the organization. While employees of commercial companies get paid for that guild members as well as members of voluntary organizations do not. That means that they have to be rewarded differently. They have to be rewarded with fun.

“You cannot give them a salary but you give them satisfaction.” Emil Öberg (2008)

This means that the members of a guild or voluntary organization in contrast to the employees of a commercial organization do not have a reason to continue their engagement if they do not have fun any longer. This difference shows then in the importance of motivating exactly those unpaid members. This also shows in the reports of the guild leaders saying that they have to be successful all the time and if something goes wrong show point out that there will be a solution for the problems really fast. The importance of fun is also the explanation for the importance of conflict solving. If people are having personal conflicts at work they still come back the next day as they get paid for it. They do not need to like each other just to work with each other. In a guild people might leave if there are personal conflicts and they do not have fun any longer because of them. Those conflicts have thus been known to the leaders and solved to ensure the guilds survival. However, social relationships can also be a tool to strengthen the organization. Friendship among the members of the organization is both increasing fun while engaging in it and decreasing the chance that people leave the organization. Friendship between the members of the organization can even lead to better results of the organization.

“You cannot force someone to come down here if they are not enjoying themselves. And for that to happen I think you have to be friends with each other and respect each other.” Emil Öberg (2008)

In the tight interpersonal bonds and friendship lies also a risk for the guilds as a single leaver might take the fun out of the game for his close friends as well.

“One says always that there are some players that keep you in the game. And if they are not there anymore one thinks about quitting as well. And he has been one of those players.” Tobias Weber (2008)

As already mentioned above, people are not economically dependent on the guild and can thus leave it more easily than an employee can leave his company. This and the fact that it is easy to change the guild and to invite new members, there are no laws, no salaries to be paid. Furthermore, there is no need to move to another city or even get used to another way to the new office as it is all online. This results in a tough competition about skilled and needed key players between the guilds. Guilds try to take each others’ best players to enhance their own raid and weaken their competition. They might offer those desired key players good positions or seduce them with the outlook of more success than in his or her recent guild. In this situation there are two kinds of guilds, family-like guilds and mercenary-guilds. The mercenary-guilds, Affenjungs INC, the guild of Zschernack, was often classified as such by the other guild leaders, is held together by its success. They have a collection of good players but they do not share much besides the successful raid. This means that they can poach good players easily and those do not need to integrate long in a corporate culture but can start playing professionally immediately. In these guilds relating to create good and stable interpersonal relationships is not so important. It is simply success that keeps the guild together. However, there can only be a small amount of these guilds as they need to be among the most successful ones to be able to keep their players and disappear quickly if success is missing. The guilds that are described as family-like entertain a stronger social bond between
its members. They play together frequently outside of the raids and know each other a longer time. These guilds are aware of their social community as a protection against losing members to other guilds as the personal bonds tend to keep them in the guild with the players they like. Strong interpersonal relationships can thus be a defense of a guild against losing its best players, those who engage and carry the guild, to another one.

“One is rather fast alone if one puts the progress over friendship.” Ruben Treubel (2008)

Another defensive mechanism is homogeneity. Many cases of breaking guilds were attributed to different aims of the members. Groups in the guild wanted to move faster than others and left. Such a happening can destroy a guild completely as another difference to real world organizations a minimum of 25 players is simply required to raid. A guild that is left with less after a part of it split up simply cannot do anything.

These problems are even more serious as a guild leader normally does not have face-to-face contact with his members. In a real world organization, commercial or voluntary, talks and meetings are an important part of the communication and culture.

“Email can never ever replace a talk.” Jürgen Tiekötter (2008)

Personal meetings can even be connected to socializing and are giving the opportunity for small talk to hear what else is going on in the respective person’s life. Thus those talks are often connected to eating together or drinking a coffee together.

“You might call them to say: Come down here. I need to talk to you. And we do this over coffee.” Emil Öberg (2008)

A guild leader cannot do this. There might be a guild meeting every year but that is by far not comparable to seeing the members of the organization on an everyday basis. A guild leader has to adapt to this environment and learn to understand what is going on with people through the digital media to his disposal. He has to create an environment where everybody feels that it is possible to come to the leader with problems. A guild leader also has to accept that he cannot make everybody happy in such a big group. However, the fact that a guild is voluntary means that the leader has to explain his decisions and act to the best of the guild as he needs the respect of the members to lead. If the leader does not have respect it gets nearly impossible to lead on the Internet. Other people might try to revolt and take over the leadership and people loose discipline with the result of a failing raid.

“One can only lead people on the Internet if one is accepted. If you are not accepted every decision is doubted and that brings a bad mood to the guild and it explodes sooner or later.” Tobias Weber (2008)

“It is on the Internet a good amount more difficult to lead people or to hold together people as you do not see the people on the Internet directly. In addition they don’t have any obligations. That means this is not their work where they go and where they can say ‘Yes, ok, I earn money. I have to go through this.’ but it is their hobby and you are practically responsible... or I’ll say they put their time in your hands and you have to try to plan and execute it in a way that everybody is satisfied.” Tobias Weber (2008)

All these aspects are the social results of the fact that the membership in guilds is voluntary. They show why it is crucial for a guild leader to work well within the social environment of
his or her guild, to take care of problems and to know what is going on. The capacities needed to be successful here are first relating to be able to build strong interpersonal relationships and second sensemaking to understand the problems of the members and to have a clear picture of what is going on in the social community of the guild to be able to react to dangerous developments and to see problems and fights before it is too late. Visioning is also important to create a compelling vision of the future and get the guild to believe in it. The leader has to invest a lot of time to live up to these high expectations and spend a lot of time being available in case someone is needed to solve a problem. The leadership style required here would be close to a 1,9 leadership as it is important to make the members satisfied and to be really concerned about their individual problems. The importance of fast problem solving is show by the picture of a “death spiral” used by Treubel. The picture refers to a situation where a problem in a guild leads to more and more people losing the motivation to play or leaving the guild making the problem bigger and bigger until it is not solvable and the guild dies.

Another gap in the axial coding was about the implications of the fact that a leader in big real life organizations has a boss himself, mostly owners or stock holders. This means that such a leader is in the conflict of whom he feels more responsible for, his boss or his employees. The interview with Tieköttter has shown that in this conflict his loyalty would actually be with his own boss. While he cares for his employees he still sees them mainly as a means for the company to acquire its goal, profit.

“If I would get under pressure I would first neglect the communication with the employees.”
Jürgen Tieköttter (2008)

This is not only different in guilds where there is no commercial orientation but also in many real life organizations. While Öberg from the Student Radio feels responsible for his members and not for the customer who by advertisement or the listener and while the workshop owner Dzygoluk cares about his personal more than about the profit of the company the CEO of a creative company, Mattsson, stands somewhere in between with the strong feeling of responsibility for his company but a concern for his employees as well. This shows that there is no clear picture in this field. However, there is a tendency towards more concern for the company’s aims the bigger the company gets and more concern about the employees in smaller companies and in voluntary companies. The valuing of the employees and members is thus not guild specific but places the guilds among the smaller and voluntary businesses in the terms of member- or profit-orientation.

Very similar is the field of customer satisfaction. Here as well guilds are not focused on customers as there is none. Voluntary organizations are also more orientated towards their members with a possible difference. In real life there is one strong motivation that does not exist in MMORPGs, helping people. Helping people can be a strong motivation for companies.

“Children’s laughter… She could stand for the first time in her life. Before she could only lie or sit in the wheel chair.” Michael Dzygoluk (2008)

This can also be true for voluntary organizations. However, it is possible to notice that guilds are focused on their members well fare like voluntary organizations or small businesses but that the in the real world important motivation of helping people does not exist in MMORPGs.
5.6.7.2 The Central Category

The central category describing guild leadership is:

“Leading a Guild – between student radio and military.”

This category is referring to the social aspect and the raid lead aspect of leading a guild. The social aspect has shown many similarities to the leading of voluntary organizations. The raid leading has shown similarities to military leadership. Of the four tasks of guild leading, social, political and administrative tasks plus raid lead, the two most important ones and their interplay are part of the central category. Raid lead as the center of guild- and thus guild-lead-activity is influencing all the other fields that are grouped around it. The social tasks are having special importance deriving from the nature of a guild as a voluntary organization mainly related to the fact that guild members are unpaid. This character of leadership is even enhanced through the nature of online game and online communication as mediated through digital media and without personal contact and meetings. It is reflecting on the other aspects, administration and politics, as they are to a great extend tools to ensure the working of the social aspects and the raid. Political decisions are thus most often related to member politics and thus tightly connected to the social field or aiming at maintaining the respect necessary for leadership in a voluntary organization. The same is valid for administrative tasks that aim at ensuring raid organization and social interaction between the members themselves and them and the leadership of the guild. The central category also reflects the tension between the two leading styles necessary to ensure social success and raid success, Authority-Compliance leadership to yield results during the raids and Country Club leadership concerned about people at all other times. It therefore also displays the variety of leadership skills guild leaders must have and gives and outlooks on the personally difficult and painful decisions that have to be made where those two leadership styles and aims of the organization collide and meaningful social relationships have to be sacrificed for success or vice versa. It shows the necessarily schizophrenia nature of guild leadership in MMORPGs.
6. The New Theory about Leadership in MMORPGs

It can now be explained what leadership in MMORPGs is like and how it is similar or different to real life leadership.

Leaders in MMORPGs have different tasks. These are shown in Figure 4.

![Figure 6: Model of Guild Leading Tasks](image)

6.1 Administrative Part

The administrative part of the tasks of a guild leader contains the administration of forum and home page, the administration of the DKP of the members and the setup of the guild bank. This is comparable to the administrative tasks of a company leader making sure that everybody can communicate with each other and paying the employees. The administrative part is connected to raiding as its purpose is to make raiding possible and administer attendance of the members and distribution of items. It is connected to the political parts as administrative activities like giving somebody access to a certain bank depot box or deleting a certain post can be used as tools for making politics. The connection to the social part stands for the tight connection of forum administration to social communication and the creation of social relationships. The administrator has to give the members the tools to interact, organize themselves and have fun with each other. Human resource is also connected to the administrative part as it is the task of the leader to write out open places on the guild’s homepage and in certain forums.

6.2 Political Part

The political part of guild leadership contains setting the aims and policies of the guild as well as long-time management decisions and the ensuring of the leadership position in the future. It is connected to the raiding part as making the raid possible is the aim of it and as raid lead has a big influence on the politics of a guild and vice versa. The raid leader is often the leader of a guild as leading the raid requires the authority necessary to decide otherwise as
well. The political part is connected to the social part as many decisions in it have to do with human resources and the member management and are thus directly influencing or influenced by the social part. Furthermore, the requirement of retaining respect to make leadership possible, a central trait of the political part, is directly connected to the social part.

6.3 Social Part

Raiding is the purpose of a guild. This said the social part of guild leadership is the most important one. As shown in the result of the selective coding the most important factor for the social part of guild leadership is the fact that guild members are unpaid and thus have to be rewarded with fun for the time and effort they are spending in the guild. As players can easily leave a guild and join another one without high changing costs and as other guilds try to get important and good players to come to them providing a fun environment and community in the guild becomes even more important to be protected against the loss of important members. This trait of guild leadership that is shared with real life voluntary organizations is heavily influencing the setup and leadership of guilds. Guild leaders have to make membership fun and rewarding to the members through success and through social relationships. This stresses the relating capacity of the FCF. They have to be aware of the social changes and happenings in the guild in detail. This requires a lot of sensemaking. Finally, they have to get people to believe in their vision of the guild’s future using their visioning capacity. The maintenance of common satisfaction within the guild requires a leading style that is concerned about people and their wellbeing and would be marked 1,9 in the leadership grid. In the recruitment process social competence is important to be able to recruit members that fit in the guild, share its aims and attitude, to avoid having different interests in the guild that cannot be correlated and might thus break up the guild. In HR it is further important to have networks over members and friends to find good players to join the guild.

6.4 Raiding

Raiding is the central activity of a guild and for many guilds the reason for existence. Leading the raid involves fast decision making in a rapidly changing environment and with immediate results of mistakes. Leading a raid has been shown to be similar in many respects to leading an air force mission and the leadership cultures of the two fields are similar to a big extend. The leadership is given to the person that is best for this very job, it can be given to somebody else and even responsibility can be divided if the situations makes that seem advantageous. Leadership tasks can be given to people because of their tasks in the group, their abilities, overview and simply view. Data-links in war planes resemble raiding interfaces as both are giving information about the status of the group members. Conflicts are solved after the mission/raid and as long as it lasts there the leadership style is authoritarian and result-oriented scoring a 9,1 at the leadership grid model. The capacities stressed by raid lead are sensemaking as the leader has to know exactly what is going on at the very second to be able to give the right commands and take the right decisions. Inventing is the capability that is dominating in the planning of a raid when assessing new tactics and trying to go new ways to become successful competing with other guilds about who will be the fastest to beat the encounter.
6.5 Comparison to Real Life Leadership

Leadership in MMORPGs is similar to real life leadership because both make use of all four capacities of the FCF and both require changes in leadership style according to the situation. Both leaders in real life and in MMORPGs have to take policy decisions, create basic values for their organization and an organizational culture. They have to secure their leadership position, have the respect of their followers, be able to deal with people and motivate them to produce results. However, they sometimes also see things from the organizations’ perspective and act according to it against their own feelings or wishes. HR is a very important field in both real life and MMORPGs and can easily decide about the success or failure of an organization.

Leadership in MMORPGs is different from real life leadership because there is no customer, no financial dependency and no boss or authority above the leader. This is why personal relationships are more important for leaders in MMORPGs than in real life. They have to reward their members with fun as they cannot with money. It stresses human relationships even in an environment that makes them difficult to build and entertain because of the missing of face-to-face meetings. It also puts some weight on earning the respect of the members of the organization as a prerequisite to leadership and requires long-time planning and policy setting as well as changes of leadership style according to the situation and activity engaged in. This is shown in raids where the leadership style is authoritarian and decisions have to be made fast resulting in a different leadership culture than in the social parts of the guild lead. The social part of leadership is so important for guild leaders because it is reflecting the voluntary nature of the engagement in a guild while the authoritarian leadership style is emerging from the nature of raiding. Guild leaders are also only responsible for their actions to their members and not to another authority like an owner or share holders. They are not in the conflict between being loyal to their bosses or their employees. Here guilds are more like a real life voluntary organization.

However, some factors of real life leadership are completely missing. There are no customers, which makes the whole area of customer relationship as well as the aim of customer satisfaction and of helping people nonexistent. Customer satisfaction and orientation on the customer’s needs is a very important motive of real life organizations and can reach down to the basic values and principles the organizations are built upon. This is an important difference to real life leadership.

To sum it all up, it can be said that leadership in MMORPGs is as complex and challenging as real life leadership and that it stresses the intern relationships of the organization very much while neglecting outside relations to a big extend.
7. Discussion of the Result and Conclusion

7.1 Research Question Answered?

The aim of building new theory about leadership in MMORPGs has been reached to a certain extend. Much of the information gained through the interviews is new and gives new insides in the topic. The framework created in this paper as well as the model of guild leader activities can be used to discuss leadership in MMORPGs and to compare the different features of it with real life leadership.

7.2 Validity and Generalizability

The paper is first valid for describing leadership in German high-end raiding guilds in World of Warcraft. While there is no direct reason for that German guild lead should be different to guild lead in other countries it should be kept in mind that there can be a difference. A clear influence on leadership in MMORPGs comes from the actual game analyzed and its game mechanics. The number of people necessary for a raid is a simple example. If there are only five people necessary to raid this will result in a different leadership experience than a game design with teams of 100 players. Also the power of a guild leader is one such instrument of game mechanics. If a guild leader could for example exercise a certain material power over his or her members like banning them from playing for a short time in case they violate rules this would change leadership styles and experiences as players would have to fear actual physical punishments for misbehavior. This means that this paper is generalizable to leadership in WOW and to games with similar game mechanics. While some aspects like the missing of customer and the results of digital communication are more generalizable the social and political parts of leadership are quite dependent on game mechanics. This has to be kept in mind while using the findings of this study on other games or online environments.

7.3 Further Studies

Further studies in this field are needed. While a study working with the applicability of traits of MMORPG leadership in real life organizations and its results for future leadership culture it would be important to shed some light on the identity of the single guild leader. It would be interesting to find out if leaders in MMORPGs are also leaders in real life. It would be interesting to follow the life of those leaders to see if there are signs for a leadership tendency in real life as well. In the background of identity studies and cyberspace it would be interesting to see how the leadership identity in the web translates to real life. Is the guy who said “I am the guild” just like Ludwig 14th “L’Etat c’est moi” also a boss in real life? It would also be interesting to see if the hierarchy of the guild is preserved in real life meetings as the guild leader could easily be a young student and one of his followers in the game an influential and rich business man. How would the online identity influence their real life relationship?

There are many possible ways for future research and I hope that this study will provide a stable and useful base for it.
References

Printed References


Internet References


Interview References


Appendix: Last Version of the Interview Guide

1. Describe your organization.
2. What is your role in your organization?
3. Describe the ethical values and principles of the organization.
4. What are your tasks in it?
5. Describe a “normal workday”.
6. Please, describe the organizational structure and the power structure of your organization.
7. How much power do you have?
8. How does inner communication work, how outer communication?
9. How is your leading style?
10. How do you motivate people?
11. How do you handle a crisis in the organization? How do you settle disputes?
12. To which extend are you responsible for the success or failure of the organization?
13. How do you deal with that responsibility?
14. What makes a good leader in your opinion?
15. What is the consequence of poor leadership for your organization?
16. As what kind of leader do you see yourself?
17. How do you think do others see you?
18. What motivates you to be a leader? What are your kicks?
19. Do you meet the members of your organization personally? Do you spend spare time with them?
20. Are you also a leader in other areas?
21. What was your best moment ever being a leader? Why?
22. What was the worst one? Why?
23. What have you learned from being a leader?
24. Describe the influence of the environment on your organization and your leadership.