The Communication Gap:
Towards an explanation of the discrepancy between the Content, the Delivery and the Understanding of a leader’s message
Abstract
The aim of this thesis is to point out the importance of the ‘Communication Gap’ that exists within a leader-follower relationship, to present the factors that contribute to its creation and increase and to explain for which aspects either leaders or followers are responsible. Throughout this thesis, leaders will become aware how they personally contribute to the arising of the ‘Composition and the Perception Asymmetry’, which construct together the so-called ‘Communication Gap’. The asymmetries are based on the discrepancies between three pillars. Firstly, the content of a leader’s message. Secondly, the delivery of the latter. And thirdly, the followers’ understanding of the leaders’ message. Each of these three pillars represents important background knowledge that is necessary in order to truly comprehend the evoked discrepancies and to therefore understand on which elements the asymmetries are based on. Throughout this qualitative research, leaders will be guided thanks to the developed ‘Communication Gap Model’ (CGM) that visualizes step by step the crucial elements. Furthermore, six leaders from different areas of competencies shared their experiences on various details regarding the ‘Communication Gap’ within their reciprocal relationships with their followers. Subsequently, this paper will help leaders to anticipate communication problems and to smooth their personal leader-follower relationships on multi-communicative channels.

Keywords
Communication Gap; Composition Asymmetry; Perception Asymmetry; Message Content; Understanding; Message Delivery; Nonverbal Communication; Leader; Follower; Encoding; Decoding.

Declaration
We hereby certify that this master’s thesis was written by our own. Furthermore, we confirm the proper indication of all used sources.

Pauline CATREUX Victoria SCHMIDT

Kalmar, 31st of May 2016
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1. **Introduction**

‘Between what I think, what I want to say, what I believe I say, what I say, what you want to hear, what you believe to hear, what you hear, what you want to understand, what you think you understand, what you understand…There are ten possibilities that we might have some problems communicating with. But let’s try anyway…’ (Werber 2009, p.7)

This quotation from Bernard Werber demonstrates the complexity of the transmission of a message and the evidence that its original and underlying content is rarely understood in the same way as it was intended to be. Nowadays, more and more people become even aware that their words represent only one part of the message they transmit (Millar dir. 2008).

Quite early, researchers started to conduct investigations about communication, but the first true understanding regarding the necessity of mastering both, the verbal and the nonverbal communication dates back to the 1960’s. Indeed, the debate between Vice President Nixon and Senator Kennedy, both candidates for the US elections, has obviously been the turning point for the politicians’ valorisation of body language and appearance. During this first televised debate, more than 70 Million people were watching the candidates’ speeches on their televisions. Nixon didn’t really make an effort regarding his nonverbal communication, which might be linked to his previous stay at the hospital for his knee infection treatment. Despite his less attractive appearance caused by this incident, which was even underlined by the fact that he didn’t wear any makeup, he didn’t look much at the cameras. Basically, he did not address himself to the wide audience at home. In fact, he looked haggard, pallid, sweaty and transmitted a non-inviting body language. There was a huge contrast to Kennedy who appeared more attractive to the audience. Kennedy was tanned, accepted to put makeup on his face and had even time to relax before the event. He could have absolutely rehearsed his speech and body language if he had wanted to.

After this debate, the result was pretty clear: for the 70 Millions of US citizen who saw the debate on television, Kennedy won. However, for radio listeners, the performance of Nixon was perceived as more convincing and relevant than the one of Kennedy.

- How is it possible that such a difference arises in terms of the audience’s perception?
- Why were Nixon’s arguments not as convincing on the television as they were on the radio?
- How did the circumstances change the way Nixon’s message was judged by the audience?

The answer is simple: Viewers did not only judge upon the transmitted content and the accompanied verbal communication. They were equally influenced by the politicians’ appearance and their so important body language. In this situation, Kennedy obviously mastered the nonverbal communication better than his opponent, which made a real difference.
Why communication is essential for effective leadership

In fact, communication can be considered as the main tool for effective leadership, since the success of leaders depends on their ability to effectively transmit their messages throughout a well-mastered verbal and nonverbal communication. When Flauto (1999) cites Barge (1994, p.21) saying that “leadership is enacted through communication”, Barrett (2006) defined communication as determining component for managers desiring to become a leader. Indeed, they must motivate, encourage and influence rather to simply control. But who says influencing, says understanding in the first place. To cope with their rapidly changing environment, their transforming role and responsibility towards their followers, leaders need to deeply understand their teams, their words and their needs. Consequently, leaders have to pay attention to the followers’ nonverbal communication in order to be able to correctly analyse their messages. Moreover, they need to adopt a relevant and clear communication by themselves to be sure that followers can comprehend them equally (Goman 2008). Indeed, leadership can therefore be considered as a reciprocal communicative relationship between leaders and followers, whereby its success relies on the equal contribution of both parties.

With our first example, the importance and impact of communication was expressed concerning the political context. However, communication is as relevant, for any other domain of leadership. For example, for teachers or sports coaches, communication affects completely the perception and level of involvement of their students or athletes. The most respected doctors or businessmen differentiate themselves by their ability to communicate their interest for the people with whom they work. Both, the verbal and nonverbal communication, are therefore essential for all types of leaders whether it is to announce change, bad news or future opportunities, since followers get subsequently more involved in the leader’s proposed solutions (Goman 2011). Effective face-to-face interactions with their followers can build up trust and intimacy, whereas a poor, underestimated or even neglected communication is likely to induce negative interpretations about the communicated change.

Barrett (2006) outlines the necessity that lies within a leader’s ability to correctly communicate in order to create a common understanding, provide a vision and inspire people to be guided by him. Effectiveness in terms of communication leads to a cooperative environment between leaders and followers through which all further important steps will be accomplished. However, effective communication cannot be considered as straightforwardness for neither the leaders nor the followers and should therefore never be taken as naturally granted.

The communication process

The communication process, as it is understood by Barret (2006) is generally based on a triangular concept including a message, a person who sends it (the sender) and another one (the receiver), who receives it. Moreover, Barret included already the external interruptions that disturb the communication process. The presented concept is of course greatly simplified, since in reality the altering of the messages’ contexts, the chosen words and the receiver's perception complexes the procedure.

The communication gets therefore challenged, when the conveyed content differs from the captured understanding. This situation can be due to a lack of clarity, purpose or explanation, as well as to a poor structure, a special tone of voice, dissonance, cultural interpretations or even to a negative ethos (Barrett 2006). As a matter of fact, a true responsibility lies upon the leader’s ability to anticipate problems that might be caused through communication issues, to facilitate the complex communication process in order to smooth the reciprocal relationship with their followers and to subsequently exert effective leadership.
This responsibility becomes especially significant since people use different ways to encode, decode and interpret a same message (Waldherr & Muck 2013). Indeed, such as every brain varies from another, the way of interpreting things differs, which leads to the fact that the perception of nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, space and postures lies completely in the eye of the beholder (Goman 2011).

The observer (the receiver) forges his proper image upon the message he receives on multiple communicative channels. Under certain circumstances, special signals can be understood differently, which might lead to misinterpretations that endanger the leader-follower relationship and therefore the success of the business: While in some followers’ minds, leaders warmth might be seen as an indicator of openness, in some others, it can be perceived as a negative signal, for example.

If in a leader-follower relationship the communication process is disturbed, because one party understands something different from what the other one intended to convey, the so called ‘Communication Gap’ is created. Here the ‘Communication Gap’ is not treated throughout the usual reciprocal communication process, where a true interaction, with responses, questions and feedback between both parties is given. In this thesis we rather analyse this process only in one direction: The message transmission from leaders to their followers.

Since in our opinion, the ‘Communication Gap’ represents a threat to all leader-follower relationships, our research topic is the following:

**The Communication Gap:**
Towards an explanation of the discrepancy between the Content, the Delivery and the Understanding of a leader’s message

This ‘Communication Gap’ as we describe it in this thesis is based on the fact that a leader has a certain content, which he intends to convey through his messages. Throughout the process of composing his message a discrepancy is evoked between the content of his message and the way he delivers the latter with his verbal and nonverbal communication. This discrepancy is what we call in this thesis the ‘Composition Asymmetry’.

Furthermore, there is at the same time a difference between the leader’s transmitted information and the way his performance is understood by his followers. Because of the fact that hereby the followers’ perception is of major importance, we describe this discrepancy as the ‘Perception Asymmetry’. Together with the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ the latter builds the ‘Communication Gap’ that will be analysed and explained in more details throughout this thesis.

Since we decided not to treat the process of communication in a reciprocal way, the produced asymmetries can obviously not be assimilated to those resulting from two-way communicative exchanges.

The aim of our analysis is to point out the importance of the ‘Communication Gap’ that exists within a leader-follower relationship, to present the factors that contribute to its creation as well as its increase and to explain how the different aspects are interrelated. Furthermore we want to answer the following research question: Which aspects of the three main pillars of the communication process contribute to the arising of the two asymmetries that compose together the Communication Gap and which discrepancies can be produced by their encounter?
In order to simplify the complex process of communication, we create throughout this thesis a model that visualizes the factors contributing to the Communication Gap.

Hereby, our constructed model is based upon already existing researches and literature, which we will complete with our own insights, approaches and findings. Many previous studies focused already on different issues of communication. Indeed, in a century which is enormously interested in leadership and inter-relational communication between leaders and followers, various literature treated topics on how leaders’ communication style determines the effectiveness of their leadership (Flauto 1999) and how the latter influences consequently the followers’ perception, actions and decisions. Some of them even outlined aspects of our Communication Gap, but none of them treated at once the totality of the factors and reasons for its construction and especially not within the context of leadership.

Consequently, the understanding of the previous studies is in our opinion only fragmented. In order to grasp the systematic question of the ‘Communication Gap’ we see the necessity to enrich the pre-existing studies about communication with our findings and through interviews as well as in applying our work to the field of leadership.

Our subsequently developed communication model represents therefore a system that outlines an overall view of the relation and mode of action of the components that cause the ‘Communication Gap’ within the specific context of leadership.

This model and the accompanied explanations and analysis are meant to help equally leaders and followers to understand:

- In the first place, that the process of communication, and therefore the importance of the impact of the Communication Gap, depends to a consequent part on the leaders’ sphere of responsibility.
- That the other part of the responsibility is attributed to the followers, since their perception of a special content can be biased because of several factors.

These aspects are visualized in our model as the two different sub gaps appearing between the three following pillars: Content, Delivery and Understanding of a message. Indeed, instead of going too much into the details of each influencing factor, this thesis will rather give an overall view of how the various components are interconnected and how the different asymmetries arise. Therefore, the model of the ‘Communication Gap’ will be developed step by step. At the beginning of each new chapter, the reader will see the evolution of our model, acting as a state of advancement, which emphasizes at the same time the danger that leads from the Communication Gap as a whole.

The Communication Gap as a major threat

Indeed, the Communication Gap, which is evoked in a business context, represents a danger for both leaders and followers in the case of a widened gap since it represents a two-way exchange between leaders and followers whereby a ‘poor communication within a company can be costly, impacting on the bottom line directly and indirectly through ripple-like effects’ (Messmer 2004, p.87). As a matter of fact, the efficiency of the leaders’ and followers’ communication decides whether the internal productivity and morale is reduced or maximized. Hereby, efficiency covers not only their skills of expressing themselves, but it requires equally a certain ability to listen as well as a developed sense of understanding. Only under these conditions misunderstandings can be reduced or even minimized, which is from major importance for a company’s success. As Messmer (2004) describes it, the exchange of information throughout any
channel of communication within a business represents a competitive advantage that is highly valued in any kind of company or organization. However, ‘for communication to be effective, everyone must be up to date. A balanced flow of information reduces the frequency of misunderstandings and limits expensive mistakes’ (Messmer 2004, p.87). Here, it is important to balance over-communicating such as micromanaging and under-communicating, since both can reduce the followers’ willingness to follow through jeopardizing morale. Indeed, a ‘lack of communication can lead to rumours, distrust; anxiety – as a result – decreased productivity and motivation’ (Messmer 2004, p.88), wherefore we understand the importance of an active and harmonious communication within the leader-follower context.

Especially in situations of teamwork, cooperation or negotiations, the leaders’ skills of transmitting messages, advices, ideas or recommendations become undeniable and can help to reduce stress, conflicts, or even avoid those rumours, mistakes or misunderstanding. Since followers observe their subordinates’ every step and react according to the image they behold themselves from their leaders and their communication (Taylor & Lester 2009), it is necessary for leaders to be satisfying for their followers regarding the way the guiding vision or the purpose of the firm is conveyed.

According to what the authors Sahai, Kumar Jain & Bahuguna (2014) claim, positive verbal and nonverbal communication is a way of ensuring the followers’ satisfaction, whereas ‘non-chalant, abrasive, immature behaviour’ (p.218) can put them off. As a matter of fact, communication can be on the one hand a very powerful tool for effective leadership, through which leaders will be able to lead, to guide, to create a common understanding, to build trust as well as to encourage and inspire people. On the other hand, mismanagement in terms of communication on either side can cause confusion and leads to the famous and dangerous ‘Communication Gap’ as it is treated in this thesis.

**The Gap, its asymmetries and their sub-asymmetries**

In their article Sahai, Kumar Jain & Bahuguna (2014) set their focus on the interpersonal Communication Gap between customers and employees in a service delivery relation. If we project this relation into our leader-follower context, we can compare the customers with followers and see the employees in the leadership position. The article outlines that with the right communication the delivered messages can be strengthened and the relationship can flourish, whereas poor interpersonal skills will make followers forget the actual service, whereby the way a leader responds to them stays negatively in their mind. Since the negative impressions get amplified throughout this process, verbal and nonverbal interactions between leaders and followers possess important advantages.

The authors base their analysis regarding the gaps on the first version of the “Servqual model” introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1985), who describes the Communication Gap as the sum of various different sub-asymmetries. Sub-asymmetries through which our assumptions got inspired that we consequently developed further:

- Projecting the author's insights into our leadership-translated version we come to the conclusion that there is first a difference between how the leaders perceive their followers’ expectations. This discrepancy is more or less important depending on the leaders’ sensibility and capability to correctly see and understand their followers’ needs. In fact, ‘successful interpersonal performance entails adaptive skill in adapting one’s performance to novel situations’ (Sahai et al. 2014, p.218). Hereby, the context plays of course a major role.
Regardless of the leader’s ability in this point, a second gap can be created during the transformation process where the leader translates his perceived impressions regarding the followers’ needs into practice and develops a certain communicator style that will help him or her to conceptualize the message. There might be subsequently a difference between what the leader wants to say and how the content of the message looks alike in the end.

Throughout the active communication of this conceptualized message, there might be equally a deviation from the content to the delivery of the message, which outlines a third gap. These three sub-steps represent what we call and develop further in our thesis as ‘Composition Asymmetry’, which lies fully in the leaders’ sphere of responsibility and which might be created during the process of conceptualizing a message for the followers.

The following two points contribute to what we denominate ‘Perception Asymmetry’.

- Followers evoke certain expectations depending on their personal needs, past experiences and their personality. Therefore, they create their expectations on the leader’s way of acting, the leadership style they offer, what the leader should stand for and how he or she will and should appeal to them. There is consequently a discrepancy between the followers’ expectations of the leaders’ style and the way they perceive their leaders in terms of their verbal and nonverbal communication, which represents a fourth sub-asymmetry.

- In addition to that, another sub-asymmetry is created on the one hand through how a leader delivers his messages. On the other hand, the followers’ ability to decode the latter as well as to detect (in)consistencies between the leader’s verbal and nonverbal communication determines whether another sub-asymmetry arises.

In fact, the last two mentioned sub-asymmetries can be combined and used as important first insights for a further analysis of what is outlined in this thesis as “Perception Asymmetry”.

However, although the authors’ findings regarding the sub-asymmetries represent a solid basis and literature review to get a first impression of the Communication Gap, a multitude of knowledge, information, insights and new assumptions need to be crossed with the author’s standpoints in order to complete the communication model between leaders and followers and in order to develop our model of the ‘Communication Gap’, based on those previous model. We have decided to based our model on the models develop in the 40’s (as the information theory model from Shannon in 1947 or the descriptive model of Lasswell in 1948), which already mentioned the three main pillars of the communication process. Therefore, we presume that the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ and the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ contribute both to their special extent to the creation and maintenance of the dangerous ‘Communication Gap’ within the leadership context.

The Communication Gap as an eternal issue
The Communication Gap has and always will exist between leaders and followers wherefore it would be utopian to think that “closing” this gap is realistic. Being aware of this fact, and as well of the importance of treating the issue of communication within the leader-follower relationship, our goal was to create an understanding, to point at and to explain the factors contributing to the creation, maintain or even widening of this gap. Here, the aim is to help leaders to detect when critical situations arise that play in
favour of the creation of this gap and to depict on which elements they should pay attention to reduce it.

Getting this gap to a minimum is indeed in the interests of both, leaders and followers, therefore we can consider both responsible for creating the best possible understanding between the parties. Of course, we are not able to tell to which exact percentage the leader has the responsibility regarding the extent of the ‘Communication Gap’. However, our model outlines, that leaders intervene largely in the Communication Gap, since they are those in charge of the Composition Asymmetry and contribute as well to some point to the Perception Asymmetry.

However, readiness and willingness to contribute to reduce this gap are not the only factors that stand in between a successful leader-follower relationship. It is the ability of each party to work to their fullest extent on what they can improve to see, understand and evaluate the Communication Gap. Indeed, we recognize that the ‘Composition Asymmetry’, as we introduced it beforehand, is fully dependent on the leader himself, whereas the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ lies partly in the leaders’ and partly in the followers’ room for manoeuvre. Hereby, certain characteristics influence their capability of decoding the leaders’ messages, which we will analyse in the following chapters.

Before going into details regarding our Communication Model, the methodology section of this thesis will give an overall understanding of the applied methodological approach. Indeed, we will outline why our thesis research topic is predestined to be analysed throughout the System’s View and how we proceeded to collect our data for the theoretical part of the thesis, as well as how we gathered further insights through the conduction of interviews with six leaders from various domains. Then, we will go to the heart of this thesis, to the ‘Communication Gap’ and to the different factors that are responsible for its establishment. In fact, the latter is based on three key pillars, as well as on two essential asymmetries interrelating the different parts that exist directly within the ‘Communication Gap’.

2. **Methodology**

In the following part, we will develop the applied methodological approach of this thesis in order to explain and clarify the methodology used for the literature researches and the process of data collection.

2.1 **The Choice of the Systems view**

The ‘Communication Gap’, as central issue of our thesis is characterized by its subjectivity. Perception, interpretation and understanding are abstract dimensions that we cannot extract quantitatively. This is the reason why a qualitative approach was preferable here, which allowed us at the same time to have access to a large amount of data combining both, subjective insights and objective facts that are understandable as systems. Considering the different possible approaches of research, as well as the methods and techniques for selecting units or collecting data, it was logical for us to adopt the **Systems view**.
But, why is the Systems view exactly? This methodological approach sets its focus on the construction of a system, which became more and more famous in the 50’s for its new vision of reality. Indeed, the Systems view proposes a holistic presumption of reality as being a fact-filled system based on the combination of an objective vision regarding reality, in this case the communication between leaders and followers, and a subjective point of view concerning such structures. Reality consists of models and of their accompanied interpretations, which are judged upon the value they have for users. From our literature review we can assume that our topic is a fact-filled system construct based on objective information linked together within a subjective way, which made it equally logical to us to treat our research topic according to the Systems view. Hereby, the subjective part is obviously the way we, as authors of this thesis, put the different objective findings together as a whole. Therefore, from the beginning, we knew that we would define the thesis’ path and outcome. It is therefore necessary to mention the Principle of Relativity (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009), since we constructed our model with our conception of the reality.

Because indeed, to come up with this Communication Gap Model, we needed in the first place some profound theoretical insights to understand deeply this consequent subject. Even if we are aware that our personal interpretations and ways of interrelating the components might influence the Systems view, our personal judgement in the Systems approach is only an aspect contributing to the outcome and not the outcome itself, (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009) since our model is still based on objective information published by authors and researchers. However, the Systems view still gave us the opportunity to construct our own system by picking only the parts of communication in which we are interested. Therefore, we were able to set the limitation for our topic on our own.

Furthermore, the Systems view consists of a product-producers relation leading to different finalities that we constructed by ourselves. With the Systems view, it is completely possible that the producer of a first system is the product in another one according to the Principle of Mutuality defining this view (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009). The different elements of the Systems view can intervene at different time slots and still induce a certain result called ‘product’. The first possible finality within the Systems view is the ‘multifinality’, meaning that one producer leads to different products. The second one is the ‘equifinality’ and conversely here, several producers lead to only one product. Linking these insights regarding the Systems view to our thesis, we decided to develop our Communication Gap Model according to the concept of “equifinality”, which is constructed by two following main producers: the Composition Asymmetry and the Perception Asymmetry. At the same time, each of these asymmetries is a product produced by three main components. Meaning that the content of the message and the delivery are the producers of the Composition Asymmetry while the delivery and the understanding are the producers of the Perception Asymmetry.

Furthermore, our main issue is more than the simple sum of the different parts, which supports the idea of the Systems view (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009). Indeed, a simple summary of the already existing models of communication, previous researches and findings regarding communication and perception was in our opinion not sufficient at all in order to analyse and understand the whole system of the Communication Gap. The reason for this assumption is that previous researches treated only segments wherefore these findings are fragmented. So far, there is no study gathering the totality of
important information from all researches, putting them together into a concept, relating them to other findings and analysing the issue as one whole and complete construct. This thesis, however, respects the Principle of Totality, since it does not only sum up the findings from various researches. It gives rather an overall view about the interconnectedness of the whole construct and manages therefore to explain the discrepancy between the content, the delivery and the understanding of a leader’s message. As a matter of fact, the whole system is more than a simple addition of all the existing literature since we completed the pre-existing models of Shannon or Lasswell with our proper findings.

This model representing a system and its subsystems is developed step by step throughout this thesis. However, we have decided to limit our researches to the gap existing within a leadership context and to adopt the Principle of Complexity. This means that have chosen the magnifying level for this thesis and that the fixed limits can be questioned.

Each component, the Content, Delivery and Understanding, as well as both asymmetries, can be seen as possible subsystems, which are interdependent from the other ones. These insights confirm once again, the necessity to choose the Systems view since ‘every component in a system is a potential system on its own’ (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009 p.118). Indeed, the scientific ideal of this model consist of the growing amount of product-producer relationships, which will improve the classification of the different kind of systems.

Consequently, we looked at our thesis topic as if it was a system based on different sub-systems that can only be described, explained and completely understood in its deepest sense if it is seen as a whole entity in its proper context. Hereby, the whole entity is of course meant to be the Communication Gap. Moreover, those sub-systems do not necessarily need to act simultaneously. Once we have explained one sub-aspect of an important component, we have already defined a part of the whole nexus. Through magnifying certain facts, we could decide upon the level of complexity of our model with all its relations. Consequently, we were able to develop the model step by step throughout this thesis, which is equally helpful for the reader since he gets to know the whole concept of the ‘Communication Gap’ by degrees.

Analysing the former literature and case studies was helpful to build the base for the different parts of our thesis. Indeed, according to the Systems view, it was relevant to start with former researches of this area to set the path for the rest of our work and to complete the pre-existing ones (Arbnor & Bjerke 2009). Subsequently, we conducted our own interviews in order to supplement the data we already gathered and managed to specify certain aspects. Interviews are absolutely characteristic for the Systems view and matched with our issue. Those six, conducted after our main literature research period, were used to verify and complete our findings and to gain a practical view from active leaders on the research question. As a reminder, this question is the following: 

*Which aspects of the three main pillars of the communication process contribute to the arising of the two asymmetries that compose together the Communication Gap and which discrepancies can be produced by their encounter?*

From the beginning, we were conscious about the fact that we needed to be careful about some aspects. By creating this nexus, we integrated a certain kind of interpretation since we were the constructors ourselves. Since the influencing aspects depend on the constant interaction with the rapidly changing environment, the future can’t be predicted, confirming the Principle of Unpredictability, wherefore the
Communication Gap might be determined by other aspects in several years. The interviews showed us, that even depending on the domain, the importance of the interfering components differs. Moreover, depending on the situation, time, place, context and culture we do not see the same results, wherefore we will never get an objective view on this subjective topic. Nevertheless, we were convinced of the existence of the Communication Gap, which other authors pointed equally out already (Messmer 2004; Sahai et al. 2014; Parasuraman et al. 1985). We have furthermore the point of view that the content of leaders’ messages is often differently understood by their followers because of two main asymmetries, the Composition Asymmetry and the Perception Asymmetry. With this assumption, we aim to go further with our idea than previous authors. We wanted to give an overall view of the important factors and all the characteristics around this gap of communication by zooming on special aspects and their interconnectedness. Here, we will have a look on the different components existing within the communication process (i.e. the content of the message, the way it is sent and the way it is perceived). It will allow us to better understand the developed insights regarding our research topic and to explain the different asymmetries creating the ‘Communication Gap’ between these three components. However, before going further into this model’s development, we will explain how we collected our data, wherefore we used these special approaches and how we linked the findings together for the topic of our thesis.

2.2 Data collection

Theoretical researches
For the data collection related to the literature review and theoretical know-how, we used different available databases such as the ones from the Linnaeus University, from the University of Rennes or from various other research motors that are available online. Furthermore, we conducted our research in three different languages. Combining French, German and English literature, webpages and videos helped us indeed to collect as much data as possible. Thus, after constituting a solid base of knowledge thanks to the already existing literature, it was possible for us to develop our findings further. Consequently, we based our Communication Gap Model on all the available secondary data, meaning studies, researches and information, which we treated indeed as the base for further exploration and complementation of this topic. Nowadays, a large number of studies about communication have already been conducted by academics as well as by scientists who set the focus on issues related to the perception of communicational approaches and their influence. As a matter of fact, a multitude of books and academic papers interpreting almost each gesture, facial expression or emotion, as well as showing the way speeches are presented, can be found explaining the basic knowledge regarding the communication process. However, analysing our research question only with secondary data was in our opinion interesting for a first impression, but not sufficient. This assumption was born when we realized that none of the papers or studies looked at the Communication Gap as a whole. Most of the papers treated one aspect that we projected and transferred into the context of leadership and added consequently to our Communication Gap Model. Our contribution to society is therefore to give throughout this thesis an overall view about the influencing factors and their interconnection in order for the reader to grasp the Communication Gap as a whole nexus of interrelated forces that need to be considered.
Throughout the redaction of our thesis, we needed to consider as well the fact that sometimes, literature interprets facts in different and sometimes not even correct ways. Whereas some authors might talk about the influential elements of semantics for example, others might not even consider this as a necessary component, might use denominations that include or exclude certain aspects or give a completely different interpretation of how the elements are linked together. Therefore, we needed to define on our own which elements we wanted to treat and relate in which way.

This was especially challenging, since the border between the direct influence of the perception on the identity of the leader and the message it conveys for the organization is often hard to define from the various articles. For example, certain authors explain how the different communicative approaches influence the followers’ perception of the leader’s image while some others indicate how it influences the perception of the leader’s message. Of course we cannot treat a leader’s message on the same level as his image, wherefore we needed to deal with the different nuanced findings with caution.

We also conducted our research in this way since simple mathematical data revealing us a single result and a certain pattern, wasn’t sufficient for a research where a result of logic is expected since the individuality of the process of psychological perception does not allow generalizable answers without any context.

Moreover, some of the articles or books concerning nonverbal communication already indicated the impossibility to write a guide or proper dictionary of hand gestures that work everywhere and every time, since each gesture needs to be considered differently depending on the context, time, place and surrounding. Our thesis highly values this aspect since the component ‘Content of the message’ is strongly linked to the context and environment on which our whole concept is based on. Therefore, our thesis is not to be seen as a guide on how to close the communication gap, since from a realistic point of view, this gap can only be described, explained, comprehended and internalized, not closed.

Indeed, a certain importance lied in nuancing the information that we extracted from our sources regarding the context in which the source has been convoked. Depending on the situation of the study, the results might be therefore different. This is what Fussell (2002) explains as well by outlining that from a cross-cultural perspective, the understanding can change for example. On the other hand distinctions in studies regarding female and the male communication can lead equally to a different outcome than if we would have used studies including both sexes. Consequently, we needed to be aware of the critical points regarding our researches and specified these limits subsequently for our thesis.

The ethical question that is connected to our project is therefore that we do not try to show leaders, males nor females, how to manipulate people but rather how the content of leaders’ messages is perceived throughout the process of communication. Our thesis is therefore designed to give a better understanding on how certain actions can be perceived. Here, the reader needs to draw his own conclusions depending on his situation, context and surrounding. Throughout this thesis this ethical question was respected by us as authors and should be kept in mind by the reader in order to not head in the wrong direction.

To give the reader a direction, it was helpful to directly define the frame in which we wanted our work to take place. We focused ourselves in this thesis exclusively on the relationship between leaders and followers instead of analysing the simple relationship between any individuals. Moreover, we did not explain how people should act on becoming a leader, nor gave advices on how to act as one, since our idea is not to write a “cookbook” on what leaders should do in order to influence others. It is more about
the idea that the reader, leader or follower, can understand the present gap that is evoked within the communication process and to be able to see the indicators for possible misunderstandings. Indeed, it is impossible for us to quantify to which extent the performance of the leaders or even the interpretation of the followers exactly impacts the perception of a message. However, with the model that will be developed throughout this thesis, it is easy to see that both are involved in the process that contributes to the communication gap. We tried to make leaders become aware of their “contribution” to the Communication Gap and to make them understand why they might struggle to convey their message on the one hand but also to realize the importance of a clear communication to those who are listening and watching on the other hand. Moreover, from a follower’s perspective, this thesis can be helpful in order to understand which aspects, components and factors impact their decisions and understanding process when they hear a leader’s message and start interpreting as the logical aftermath since they are those who will interpret leaders’ messages.

Videos and pictorial research
The theoretical research and data collection through reading articles, books, research papers and analysing studies represents not the entirety of our data collection. Indeed, it just served as a basis for further researches, where we needed to apply our know-how already. For the part of the verbal as well as especially for the one of the nonverbal communication, we watched speeches via videos and analysed leaders’ behaviours on a verbal and nonverbal basis thanks to our beforehand gathered insights. The reader of this thesis can see that in the Nonverbal Communication chapter many pictures were precisely collected. Since our thesis intends to illustrate the concepts within the context of leadership, we tried to find known leaders from various domains in order to demonstrate the validity of our assumptions and findings for the leader-follower relationship. As a matter of fact, those pictures have been found on different webpages on the Internet, which were generally not related to the topic of communication (see pictography). Therefore, their presence in this thesis was a choice made by us, as authors, and is based on our personal interpretation of why these leaders showed certain facial expressions, hand or head movements during a special situation. The presented pictures are indeed used to visualize our insights on this chapter in an easy way, so that the reader is able to project himself into this situation and to better comprehend and internalize our explanations.

Interviews
Subsequently to our theoretical and pictorial research, we conducted our own interviews in order to supplement the secondary data we have already gathered and to specify certain aspects. This approach helped us to answer questions that haven't been treated in previous literature, to get a practical view on how the treated aspects are valued and handled in the real business life and to verify therefore if previous studies were consistent. The primary data collection was especially important for us since we find it necessary to not only see the theory but to relate it to reality. Moreover, the limits of our theoretical analysis were clearly that the studies treated only parts of the whole concept as we see it and most of the time not even in the context of leadership. Indeed, verbal and nonverbal communication as well as other articles about asymmetries did not relate their findings to the leader-follower relationship. However, in our opinion in this special case, there are many important links that need to be explained, wherefore we created our Communication Gap Model as a system based on various sub-systems and analysed, verified and completed each of them thanks to the interviews.
Without the interviews, some assumptions could not have been confirmed or disconfirmed. As a matter of fact, we intended our six interviewees to be leaders that are as different as possible in order to grasp insights from the most various domains of leadership.

Indeed, we interviewed an independent senior consultant in former leading positions, a leader from the banking sector, as well as officers in two different military positions, an associative chief executive scout and a sport coach. We prepared beforehand a catalogue of questions that correspond to each treated aspect in our thesis and interrogated them equally concerning their experiences regarding the interconnectedness of these factors (see questionnaire in Annex A).

Throughout these open questions they could describe the specific situation in which they have experienced the Communication Gap to be relevant. We knew from the beginning that some questions were more likely to get a positive response from a leader in the military position, whereas others were more adapted for a leader working in the consulting sector. However, we decided not to select certain questions for one leader and others for another one, since the context from which the situation is seen, plays obviously an important role for our research. We hoped to get interesting insights as well from those where we considered the question to be not suitable and indeed we were not disappointed.

Furthermore, in order to not betray or bias our own work, we only gave the interviewees an impression of what our thesis is about but we did not explain them the whole model or concept in details. Consequently, their responses were authentic and as unbiased answers really valuable. The interviewees conveyed their concrete feelings and attitude towards our questions, explained their point of views with examples from their work life and gave us interesting insights on how they learned from their past experiences.

Our conclusion derives therefore additionally from the perception of those interviewees. However, in order to not create an asymmetry between what they said and what we transmit in this thesis, and in order to stay consistent with our topic, we have decided to report their exact sentences in this work. It is still important to notice that we selected the parts of the interviews that we personally found relevant for the content of this thesis.

Furthermore, it is necessary to say that our interviewees have the French and German nationality and since we speak equally those two languages we decided to conduct the interviews in German and French. Indeed, the reason behind this idea was that we wanted to completely understand all the nuances that the interviewees told us in its proper meaning without fearing the problem of the language barrier. Since we recorded the six interviews and took notes at the same time, we were in a second step able to translate the insights into English. Of course, we are aware of the fact that there might be a discrepancy between what the leaders said in their mother thong and what we translated in English, however, we are convinced that the resulting discrepancy is less important in this way than if the leaders would have communicated their thoughts directly in English.

Nevertheless, we tried to give back their answers as correctly as possible. The insights of the six interviews are directly included into the main text, since they serve as examples and verifications of our previous findings. Hereby, some of the leaders preferred to stay anonymous, wherefore we will use their initials or positions when we refer to them. To better detect the leader’s contributions, the reader can search for the shifted parts written in italics.
To get an overall understanding of the leaders’ jobs, their domain and their credibility and importance for their contribution to this thesis, the following bullet points are evoked:

- **ELARD, S.**, former vice president of the confederation of German management consultants (BDU) in Bonn (today Berlin). The aim of this confederation is to secure the profession of management consultants and to give the over 400 member-companies the opportunity of quality assurance and coaching sessions, which represents at the same time an hedging instrument for the consumers. Furthermore, Elard S. is president of a Swiss trust company, where he had to deal with questions of leadership in many aspects, since he held presentations and seminars for about 150 people concerning decision-making processes, strategic management and systems of early detection.

- **ANITA, W.**, leader in the field of export trade, investment and securities transaction at the German saving bank “Sparkasse”. 37 years ago she started her career in this bank, interested herself for export trade, became inter alia compliance representative in 2010 and made seminars in money laundering and fraud prevention in 2012. Her all round-knowledge in diverse fields and her capacities in leadership and management let her become since 2013 leader for the export trade department and security transactions with about 7-12 direct employees and several indirect ones.

- **LUTZ, K.**, as a side-line one of the three chief executives in the executive committee for Scouts. His tasks are predominantly administrative and leading. His position encounters therefore the lead of the German Scouts tribe for a local branch, with its 84 members. He makes furthermore the strategic planning for superregional meetings, whereby he represents the head of the youth group leaders, who are themselves in charge of the different age groups, the Wolf Group (age 8-10), the Boy Scouts (11-17) and the Rovers (18 and higher). Since this kind of leader-follower relationship happens on a voluntary basis, his insights evoke interesting perspectives.

- **YVONNICK, C.**, leader in military position who started is career as a military in the French Army. After his experience at the National Gendarmerie Intervention Group (GIGN), he became military officer in the Security Group for the Presidency of the Republic (GSPR) for several years. In addition to leading groups of interventions, he is also in charge of training new recruits for these particular agents.

- **MATTHIAS, C.**, officer for the French Intervention Platoon. He is employed by the national gendarmerie as well as by the mobile gendarmerie for various interventions in France and worldwide.

- **FLORIAN, B.**, leader in the sport area. After his studies in sports, he became football coach for a team of young adults in France. He evolves in this position since few years and teaches sport as a professional activity.
3. The Communication Gap

3.1 The Content of the message

Which indispensable element do the communication process and the Communication Gap have in common: the Content of the message. Indeed, the content represents the base for all communicated messages that the sender encodes and that the receiver decodes, both in their own way, while possibly inducing misunderstandings between them.

In this part of the thesis we will focus briefly on the first pillar of the ‘Communication Gap’, the content of the message. We will talk about the impact of the context, the situation and the environment, as well as about the importance of time and place in which the content is evoked. Indeed, the content of the message constitutes the first pillar of the below model that we develop.

Although we understand the absolute necessity of the message’s content, representing obviously the reason for a following communication, we won’t go too deep into details since we prefer to focus our thesis rather on the reasons for the appearance of the ‘Communication Gap’. However, the model can’t be understood to its fullest extent if the global and spatiotemporal context in which the message is created, is neglected. The fact is that every new created content is accompanied by a new, different and specifically unique context. Without the special circumstances that arose at their times, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Hitler and all the others historical leaders would not have communicated their famous speeches with such a success. Because indeed, the content cannot be created on its own; there is always something in which the content is embedded in, whereby obviously environment and context interfere in the process of communication.

One of the military leaders we interviewed explained us that:

‘In the army, the communication is often direct since we need to deal with the situation at the present moment. Every situation is different and needs an accurate and specific message regarding the context. For example, the next mission we have, in Egypt, necessitates an entire reconfiguration and restructuring of our methods, even if we already went there before. Each time the situation is different from the ones before and everything needs to be redefined without any exceptions.’

Fact equally confirmed by our interviewed the football coach who explains:

‘It’s really necessary to adapt our message (i.e. the content) to each different situation or action.’
Among all the different situations and contexts where leaders can have a message to convey, we differentiate two types of message content:

First of all, the content of the messages, coming directly from themselves. This is the most common situation, often induced after the leader’s detection of a cue, signal or sign (e.g., an opportunity). As Scott Shane (2003) formulates it in the “Opportunity Nexus Model”, true leaders are able to recognize the existence of opportunities and detect the necessity to create a certain content. What Gaglio and Katz (2001) called ‘entrepreneurial alertness’ is what helps leaders to accurately pay attention to their environment and the signals that are sent around them. Subsequently, they act on it and define the reality for others, they enact their environment. As Smirich & Morgan explained (1982, p.258) ‘Leadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others’. Depending on the situation, time and place as well as the leaders’ ability to detect cues, they will see the necessity and their duty to create a content and to transmit it to their followers in order to achieve a certain outcome. Leaders try to make sense of the signals they detected and of what they need to encore. However, it is only when they communicate their messages that followers can as well try to make sense of the content.

If we take the example of Gandhi, we can illustrate his ability to create messages from the opportunities he identified beforehand. Indeed, as Hindu coming from a rich family of the Vaishyas caste, Gandhi was not forced to act like he did. However, he was able to seize the existing opportunity to defend his beliefs and values. Knowing the context, that he was born as a privileged and that he still decided to go against all odds, the content of his transmitted message became even more valuable, impacting and convincing. If there wasn’t the contradiction between the life he could have had and the life he chose to have, the content and its impact would for sure not be the same.

On the other hand, situations can impose the transmission of a certain content. In some particular cases when leaders have to transmit the order of a superior for example, the communicated content of the message is not chosen by the leader himself. His function is in this case only the transmission of an already fixed content. Hereby, there are various examples on how leaders from different domains treat this problem, when the content is imposed.

The former vice president of the confederation of German management consultant, Elard S. explained us in his interview that:

'The consulting industry often imposes a special treatment with messages that are imposed. In the consulting industry, the senior consultant is asked to communicate advices to the leaders of the client company. As a matter of fact, a consultant’s knowledge stands often above those of the company leaders, wherefore the consultants are demanded to intervene. However, there are special cases in which a consultant is hired in order to present certain things and give advices to a group. Hereby, a consultant’s job is to detect what needs to be conveyed, even if it was not discussed beforehand with the director and to equally transmit the content of the message as if the company’s director ordered it. One of the consultant’s primary duties lies in protecting the direct client, meaning hereby the director, and to transmit a certain content to the group without letting them know that the director did not have the qualifications, or know-how, to do so. I was personally often consulted in order to balance this flaw.'
As the example has shown us, the general importance of the message’s content depends on the global situation, the domain as well as on the social surrounding, its expectations.

- What happens around the leaders?
- Which are the needs, wishes and fears of their followers?
- To whom is the message addressed?
- When is it conveyed and where?

Indeed, the content of the message might differ depending on the initiator and his or her target group. There is a difference between which information regarding a special project is shared by the leader with a large audience through a well-prepared speech, what a colleague in a basic interpersonal conversation gets to know or what is transmitted to competitors during long-planned negotiations. The challenges, the topics, the interlocutors are always different and the content of the message is adapted for each target group depending on the given circumstances.

Then, when the content of the message is defined and transmitted by the leader, a certain asymmetry is likely to appear between what the initial content of the conveyed message includes and how the latter is finally communicated. This is why, in the following sections, we will develop our model in further details concerning the possibly created asymmetries as well as regarding the process of conveying a message and of perceiving it.

### 3.2 The Composition Asymmetry

Until here, we internalized that the content of the message, as one of the basic elements of this thesis, needs to be delivered in order for the process of communication to start. But before the delivery of a message, there stands its creation. Indeed, before a simple content becomes a transmitted message, leaders need to compose the information they want to convey.

Throughout the process of composing a speech they *unwillingly transform the content they intended to transmit by the way they are communicating.*

While trying to logically structure their thoughts, put them into words, “decorate” them with linguistic devices and a figurative language style as well as imaginaries, leaders add complementary information to the content, which we will discuss a bit later.

For now, we concentrate ourselves on the close environment and surrounding sending equally supplementary information that might transform the initial content. Hereby, we are talking about symbols, emblems etc. that decorate the place in which the speech takes place.

Indeed, the environment is considered as a nonverbal spatiotemporal code (Burgoon et al. 2011) because one’s surrounding (e.g. an office’s floor plan or decor) conveys indeed meaning. Symbols in organizations possess communicative properties. Artefacts conveying status (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz 2004) and service capes influencing a patron’s experience in a service organization (Ezeh & Harris 2007), are illustrations of the communicative properties of this code.

The environment is even sometimes manipulated to communicate something nonverbally to the audience (Schmitz 2012). For example, Compte (2013) explains that the cognitive perspective is biased when something is communicated through television. Indeed, she says in the first lines of her article (p.1) ‘to capture and hold the viewers’ attention, television has developed a specific writing mode, an actual TV rhetoric’ giving to those factors a way to be perceived and accepted by the audience. A simple
television apparition can motivate the observers to reflect or to perceive a message differently. If we take the disposition of the scenery during an interview or during a televised speech, we can see that leaders are able to create different climates or atmospheres by the environment surrounding them.

For example, by analysing the televised apparition of different American politicians, we recognize the staging aiming to appear as reassuring and powerful. The speeches taking for example place in the Oval Office, the office of the president of the United States, are always linked to a really special context, wherefore the environment is obviously manipulated in order to convey the underlying content of the message in a more powerful way.

On the first picture below, we can see George W. Bush, talking to the country after the attacks of the 11th of September in 2001. Here, the decor is staged and conveys that the president is working on the situation with the files on the desk, and that he is not afraid since he sits close to the windows, on purpose of course etc.

On the second picture, we can see Obama addressing himself to the world on the 7th of January in 2015 in a same kind of context: after the attacks in Paris. For the first time, he is standing behind a lectern during a speech in the Oval Office. Even if usually he prefers to speak from other rooms of the White House to deliver his messages, this time, in this special context, he decided to transmit it from the Oval Office to keep the magnitude of his intervention. By staying in this posture and not sitting down, he showed to the audience that he won’t stop the fight against terrorism. Some journalists, as Callum Borchers (2015), even said that in this case, Obama lost the impact of the Oval Office’s apparition with the choice of using a podium. Indeed, the flags, pictures and the simple desk, the true symbols in the eyes of audience, are less visible like that.

This means that the environment where the content of the message takes place is really important when communicating. Here, politicians are aware of this fact but it is not the case for all the leaders practicing in different areas. Indeed, without professionals advising them how to deliver their messages, they are already likely to create an asymmetry when they communicate just because of the external environment. Leaders need to take that into account in order to avoid as much as possible an asymmetry in the transmission of the information due to the simple choice of the place.

Consequently, the surrounding as well as the personal communication style of each leader and his expertise for situational leadership and detecting the followers needs interfere in the process of composing a message for the followers even before the verbal and nonverbal cues are added.
As a matter of fact, we understand that “there are other important elements besides speech content that seem to contribute substantially to the strong motivational and emotional effects that such speeches have” (Den Hartog & Vergurg 1997, p.361).

Indeed, these mentioned factors are likely to affect the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ to a very large extent since there is consequently a difference between a leader’s thoughts that will construct the content of his message and what the leader really says to his followers. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between the latter and what he thinks he transmitted to his followers.

Elard S. outlined that:

‘For consultants especially in the beginning of their professional career, this problem might arise quite often. Indeed, despite of my profound preparation for the coaching sessions regarding the decision making process, I often recognized in the beginning that the crystallized main emphasize turned sometimes into something else in the end, then what I intended to really communicate. In the consulting industry this can happen if the consultant does not have enough experience in estimating and evaluating the attendees, who obviously have another perception, impression and point of view about the topic. If the consultant is not experienced enough, even good preparation can often not hinder the attendees to steer the session into another direction. Although a consultant’s job is not to give the client the answers, I believe in my duty to facilitate their process of getting to the right decisions. Hereby, the emphasis lies on the word ‘right’, meaning that the consultant still knows what is better for the client, but can obviously not go against the client’s wills. Therefore, I think that the art lies in leading those sessions in a way that the client has the opinion that he extracted the important information for the decisions taking process himself but with the help from the consultant who has an overall view about the whole procedure’.

The military officer working for the GSPR admitted that an asymmetry between the content of its message and what he says ‘arises constantly, yes’ and he continues by explaining:

‘Even compared to what others understand, I see that there is a real difference. I cannot say exactly to what it is due, but I know that sometimes it is because some things are absolutely clear in my head and so I do not take the time to explain them properly or I do not do it in the right way. However, when it happens, we usually realized it very soon and we correct it directly, in order to convey the right content’.

In the end, what a leader thinks he conveyed and what he effectively says is equally likely to be different because of the aforementioned variables: we understand it as a Composition Asymmetry needed to be treated with caution.

For this new section, we will add a new dimension to our transformed model, explain the asymmetry appearing during the composition of a message and develop the different sub-asymmetries it induces.
Therefore, we will analyse the three following aspects in order to better grasp the idea of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’: The composition of a speech, a leader’s communication style and the necessity for leaders to adapt themselves to their followers needs especially according to the model of Situational Leadership of Hersey & Blanchard (1988).

3.2.1 Composition of the Speech

Regarding the composition and structure of a speech authors like Atkinson (1984), Conger (1991) and Fairhurst & Sarr (1996) interested themselves on how messages are framed throughout the evoked content. Based on their findings we came to the conclusion that the first sub-asymmetry of the Composition Asymmetry could arise in a scenario where leaders do not have the fullest and deepest understanding of what they intend to convey. As a matter of fact, they will be either ignorant or non-implicated which reflects itself equally in the way they compose the messages they deliver. As we have seen it, depending on the context, leaders are often not responsible for the content they need to transmit. Subsequently, they might personally have another opinion or don’t see every detail regarding the topic. Consequently, they might not find the appropriate words or linguistic devices or frame the latter in a different way than the true content-creator would have done it.

Anita W. who works in the banking sector clearly recommends for such situations: ‘To communicate a content that comes from a superior one-on-one. I recognized throughout my career that trying to communicate a content that I did not create transmits equally my personal interpretation. Consequently, I prefer to transmit the exact words of my superior to my followers, which will then open further discussions. When my colleagues have questions about the content of the message, I answer them as clearly as possible with my professional know-how or to confront my superior directly with the evoked questions. Throughout this whole process I always insist on the fact that the content comes from my superior.’
This same approach is what Lutz K., chief executive of a German Scouts team, uses during their meetings and negotiations:

‘If one member of the leading team is not present in person for any possible reason, his opinion is expressed with his exact words. Then I read out loud the email or written message of the absent person in order to complement the meeting with his point of view.’

In contradiction to these procedures, in general, Elard S. truly believes in reformulating what the company director told him:

‘In order to give the audience an authentic presentation of what needs to be conveyed, I need to stand fully behind my words. Indeed, if I completely support the leader’s content I see myself able to be even more convincing with my proper words that I consequently adapt to my target group. Giving target-group-oriented insights is always recommendable, as I experienced it throughout my 40 years of experience. However, if the slightest possibility exists that I do not truly stand behind the director’s decision, I will always express the director’s words throughout direct or indirect quoting.’

As the interviewees clearly stated it, the most important aspect for the composition of a message is for the leader to have the full understanding of the content. In the contrary case, the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ is certain to get widened. Of course, depending on the context, the size of the gap can be bigger or smaller, both, in terms of importance and impact.

However, despite of who is responsible for creating the content of the message, even a leader who is his proper superior can be a source of spreading the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ open. Indeed, depending on the leader’s personal emotions and the situation, he will be maybe not able to find the right words, because he is stressed, in tension or is full of anxiety, which represents another sub-asymmetry for the possible arising of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’. In such a situation the communication with his followers gets enormously reduced and the content of the message is different from what is obviously delivered. Consequently, behind the obvious, information is conveyed, which can be either positive or negative.

A case in which the content that is wished and even needed to be transmitted and whereby the actual delivered message is a completely different one, can be exemplified by the communication of lifeguards during an intervention. Certain information is hidden behind the actual transmitted words. The complexity and shocking truth of the famous quote from Werber (2009, p.7) ‘Between what I think, what I want to say, what I believe I say, what I say (…)’ can be perfectly illustrated: A man suffers from respiratory discomfort. The leading rescuer may feel anxious or excited because of the adrenaline, which makes him conceive a different message from the intended one.

Imagining the following situation (a bit exaggerated but still possible):

- **What the rescuer really says during the intervention:** I need O2
- **What he thinks he says:** Bring the oxygen bottle and place the mask on the victim’s face
- **What he wants to say:** Bring the oxygen bottle, which is in the intervention bag stowed at the entrance of the rescue station, and connect the bag valve mask crafted to the oxygen. Then, open the bottle on the relevant pressure.
- **What he thinks at the beginning of the intervention:** The breath of this man has stopped; we have to solve this problem by giving him oxygen.
Obviously, the acting parties were communicating on various levels of language at the same time. But often the differing levels of language can cause problems. In fact, for Willner (1984), throughout the level of language different ways of delivering a message are provoked thinking of the elevated, literal or colloquial language level. No matter the level, ‘effective message content should also be delivered in a style that utilizes clear and specific, unambiguous language that is accurate and consistent both internally and across messages’ (Sutton et al. 2015, p.3).

Indeed, across messages the leader’s relation to his transferred message is revealed. His personal preferences, prejudices, norms, values and principles affect the way he composes and frames the message around the content. As a matter of fact, this willingness, unwillingness, or incapacity of transmitting only the content, meaning the objective underlying information of the message, instead of adding any kind of subjectivity, creates, maintains or even widens the ‘Composition Asymmetry’. Hereby, the leader’s risk-aversion as well as the possible language barrier play equally an important role, depending from which county follower or leader come. Depending on his risk-taking level and habits the content will be complemented by the leader’s personal and subjective information.

Although complementary subjective information might widen the ‘Composition Asymmetry’, subjective information might be useful on the other hand. Indeed, leader can create charismatic speeches through transmitting the so-called ‘personal touch’ to their followers. This ‘personal touch’ is to a large extent built through the structure the leader embeds his content in. Wrapping the content into the company’s continuity between the past and the present while referring to the followers’ collective identity, their efficacy and their similarity to the one of the leader, makes the followers identify themselves with the situation and creates a certain relation, not only between leader and follower but between the content of the message and the follower himself. Indeed, a good composition of a message can increase the follower’s interest. They will consequently feel more involved, which might reduce the ‘Composition Asymmetry’. However, it needs to be treated with caution, because in fact, realistically seen, more points speak against the actual minimization of this asymmetry than in favour of it.

As a matter of fact, we clearly recognize that weight should be accorded to the leaders’ communication skills and understanding. Therefore, in order for leaders to get a better understanding of the so called ‘Communication Gap’ that is constructed through the Composition Asymmetry and the Perception Asymmetry, leaders need to reconsider the following 5 common mistakes apart from their way of fixing a content, composing the message, encoding the latter and verbally and nonverbally communicating it afterwards.

**Leader’s five common assumption-mistakes**

Indeed, the current following five assumptions are likely to widen the ‘Composition Asymmetry’. Therefore, according to Messmer (2004), leaders need to step away from their thinking that followers ‘just don’t understand’ certain things.

*Our interviewed sports coach who admitted:*

'Sometimes, I tend to thinks that during a game my players didn’t understand me because they are not focused enough. In my head the problem comes from them. It’s sometimes difficult to find the right words to help them to focus and to make them listening when it’s on the middle of an action.'
The fact that followers sometimes not fully comprehend every detail of what has been conveyed lies often not in their power. It is rather the inflexibility of the leader to adapt his communication style to the needs of the followers, which hinders followers from grasping the complete information with all its nuances. Leaders should be capable of altering their way of transmitting the same message in various ways to clarify their standpoint or facilitate the followers’ understanding.

Furthermore, leaders’ assumption that followers ‘don’t need or want to have a big picture’ influences the composition process of leaders and widens therefore equally the Communication Gap. Indeed, for followers having certain know-how is not enough. They need to see what their contribution is and how much weight is accorded to their work. Only viewing their proper task supports incomplete information that can endanger the leader – follower relationship, since followers might have done their jobs differently if they would have known the whole concept to which they contribute.

Sometimes leaders evaluate the necessity and importance of different things in illogical ways. Even though it might seem as if ‘there is not enough time to provide the background or strategy’ to the followers, they should be completely aware of how this mismanagement of time can widen the communication gap. Five minutes of explaining the vision and transmitting the so important context can save so much time of readjusting, improving, transforming, and resolving problems that can arise in the end if followers don’t get the communication they wish and need in order to do their jobs correctly.

‘They will tell me if they need more information’ is a phrase with which leaders distance themselves from their leadership role. How can followers know which information that they don’t know might be important for the process. In one-way or another, followers should be able to rely on the trustworthiness of their leaders. They should be able to think that the entire necessary information was provided to them by their leaders, since they will of course do their tasks differently with a different amount of information.

In addition to that, leaders often think that ‘they communicate best if they do it like this or that’. What leaders forget in this assumption is that they draw their conclusions from themselves to others. What they consider as senders of an encoded message does not necessarily represent the best way for each follower to gather a message. Indeed, the perception of each follower is different, such as their understanding of how the leader communicates in the best possible way with them.

As a matter of fact, instead of jumping from one insight to a whole concept of how to deal with followers in general, leaders need to understand that this procedure can endanger their two-way relationship and hinders their communication instead of facilitating it. Even if leaders think they make the situation easier to grasp for everybody with their assumptions, the mentioned five behaviours play in most of the times in favour of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ to arise.

The composition of speech, first factor responsible for the Communication Gap, is however not the only creator of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’. Indeed, we will now see that the style of speakers induces as well differences in the way they express their messages.
3.2.2 Communication Style

According to Norton and Pettigrew (1977) the authors Leginski and Izzett (1973) have indeed the point of view that how one communicates is however more influential than what is actually communicated, wherefore the analysis of the communication styles becomes of special importance. The communicator style, second factor of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’, adds equally a certain nuance to the transmitted content within the communication process. Additionally to the content, the message itself gathers a special character, which will subsequently influence the encoding phase. Consequently, leaders are not only saying what they think they are, but they are transmitting supplementary information that interferes in the composition of the speech. The delivered message is therefore determined by the style the leader used to communicate his message, which has a direct influence on the ‘Composition Asymmetry’. Furthermore, this style has an impact on how followers perceive the message. Surveys found out that leader’s communication style counts to 47% to the followers’ perception of their leaders and therefore to the reputation they behold themselves of their leaders (Messmer 2004).

Considering these insights, we understand the contribution of leaders’ communication style to the ‘Composition Asymmetry’, whereby they decide on how they create the message around the content that they wish to convey. Although some researches claim the communication style to be ‘learnable behavioural patterns, others regard them as personality dispositions’ (Waldherr & Muck 2011, p.21). Dirigible or not, Norton (1978) referred to this research by defining it as his “Communicator Style” which can be considered as ‘the way one verbally or para-verbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered or understood’ (Norton 1978, p.99).

Such communication styles could be for example an open, transparent, attentive or dominant style (Den Hartog, 1997). Some other psychologists such as Clair Newton (2016) or Norton and Pettigrew (1977) explain the communication styles in different ways. For example throughout a five-type model, whereby they distinguish between the assertive, the aggressive, the passive-aggressive, the submissive and the manipulative style. Indeed, we analysed that each of these styles have their weaknesses, which are likely to provoke or widen the Composition Asymmetry.

Leaders who naturally have an “Aggressive Style” might create a Composition Gap through their demanding style which is in an intimidating way that frightens the followers and through using a loud voice volume, sharp gestures and postures that obviously depict the leaders privileged position, they are not making them any friends. In fact, the composed speeches might appear as uncooperative and as success-oriented even if the content is in general accommodating for the follower.

The “Passive-Aggressives” are those leaders who have a passive way of composing their messages but who are under the surface aggressive. Since their way of composing a message is therefore never true to a 100%, their communication style induces a lack of authenticity whereby followers can get confused. Unreliability causes indeed misunderstanding, fear and comfortability wherefore Communication Gaps and especially Composition Asymmetries are likely to arise.
“Submissive” communication styles are equally not the most recommended once, since they are used by leaders who prefer to avoid confrontations and conflicts. As a matter of fact, the leader’s way of communicating is apologetic and inexpressive wherefore the necessity of getting things done might get lost or neglected sometimes. Consequently, followers might not see the immediate need of the leader’s demand, since he does not communicate it, which is hindering for the company’s success. Low levels of eye contact, soft voice and small postures are not what followers expect their leader to look alike while communicating an important content embedded in a message, wherefore the submissive communication style needs to be treated with caution regarding the Composition Asymmetry.

However, manipulation or persuasion is no effective option either. In fact, when leaders use a “Manipulative” communication style, they tend to calculate what people will do as a cause of their actions. Consequently, such leaders use the followers’ reactive behaviour for their own advantage. In a way they manage to make the followers feel obliged to give their best. Throughout the composition of the message manipulative leaders will try to imply past experiences where followers are reminded of their bad conscious and will therefore do what the leader asked them to. Hereby, the initial content is supplemented by personal and subjective cues that the leader wishes the follower to understand. However, what the content really is about and what is made out of it throughout the composition becomes often more personal than it should and creates therefore a true discrepancy.

Putting these ideas together, we recognize that leaders using an “Assertive Style” are probably the most successful, because they are neither passive, neither aggressive. As a matter of fact, things are getting done in a friendly way whereby the leader’s high self-esteem and polite confidence helps him to convey the messages he wants to without needing to manipulate people. Followers are consequently respecting their superior because they know he holds his word while being authentic and credible. These characteristics are equally reproduced in the nonverbal behaviour where assertive leaders have a clear eye contact, have an open posture but are in the same time very strong in terms of pitch of voice in order to make their standpoint clear. Such a leadership style is probably the best in order to reduce the risk of the Composition Asymmetry.

Regardless of those five styles, we recognized throughout our interviews that our leaders tended to categorize themselves with an either direct or indirect communication style. This approach corresponds to William Marston’s presentation of the spirited, the systematic, the considerate and the direct style as possible ways of communicating with followers.

Anita W. has a very interesting point of view regarding this aspect:

‘Indeed, I always prefer to adopt a direct style of communication, because I am absolutely convinced that the understanding of a message is dependent on the simplicity, correctness and honesty of the way the message is communicated. I believe that the probability of misunderstanding is therefore considerably reduced.’
According to our leader from the banking sector, leaders should never underestimate their followers:

‘Followers are indeed able to understand the messages without being put in cotton wool through the adoption of an indirect style in order not to upset them. Being friendly and polite, but direct to facilitate the communication is my motto.’

Elard S. says that:

‘Depending on the situation and time I adopt either a direct or indirect style while always trying to stay polite and authentic. Indeed the indirect communication style is strongly dependent on my temporal time frame. In emergency decision making processes, it is rather not possible to go for an indirect way of dealing with each individual, since tough situations demand tough decisions, often standing in a direct link with a direct communication.’

Finally, the military leader told us:

‘I am used to have orders to communicate. Hereby, I try to let the essence of the message unchanged even if sometimes I modify its form. However, this hasn’t always been like that. The way of communicating in the army has evolved since I started. Before, we used to say things in a rather crude way, without any exception. Now, empathy is becoming increasingly important and personally I prefer to communicate in my own way and according to how I judge the situation and to whom I’m addressing myself. Often, we have “Carte Blanche” (i.e. total liberty) during the trainings session we organize. Under this condition’s really our ideas and our communication that count. But it’s a well-established system so, yes, often we have orders to execute and to communicate to the team but we communicate most of the time in a direct and personal way.’

The direct style is clearly the one that does not leave much space for misunderstanding, since such leaders tend to say exactly what they think, want and expect in the moment the need is evoked.

Indirect leaders on the other hand often prefer the gentle style of politely asking if the followers ‘could perhaps do something’. This kind of leader often feels the need to explain himself why he asks his followers to do this special maybe time-investing task. For the direct leader the question does not even arise to ask their subordinates whether they could maybe not like the task. It has to be done and therefore the directive is given to execute the demanded tasks.

Lutz K.’s vision on this question is slightly different, since he explained that as a chief executive of the Scouts:

‘I need to treat my communication style with caution. Indeed, the Scouts can be seen as an honorary office, where people voluntarily work. In order not to lose members, I prefer an indirect approach with the youth group, whereas I can communicate in a direct way with the management board. However, my motto is, when business matters need to be evoked, a direct style is always recommended in order to clarify the content’s immediate necessity.’
The direct style does not only facilitate the process of understanding it reduces equally the chance of misunderstanding which at the same time comes naturally along with a greater likelihood of offending followers or being perceived as impolite, harsh or task-orientated. As a matter of fact, regarding our model, the directness of a leader can on the one hand reduce the ‘Composition Asymmetry’, but might increase the Perception Asymmetry on the other hand, since the followers could get a wrong perception of the leader’s natural state of mind, behaviour or personality, which can easily affect his reputation.

However, not choosing to be direct because it might create a Perception Asymmetry or to even decide actively on an indirect approach for this very reason, could be perceived by followers as a too indirect, too polite, too friendly and too accommodating approach and therefore as a weakness that they can take advantage of, for example by claiming that they did not get a clear demand, task or mission.

Elard S. explained us that during his coaching sessions:

'I always prefer to be very systematic, whereby I highly value preciseness. However, the consultant’s job is a job which is really close to people, wherefore I always try to be polite, friendly and sociable. I clearly despise to offend people. However, I adapt my communication style to the group I am coaching. If a notorious troublemaker is crystallised amongst the team of decision makers, I do not fear the direct communication and even confrontation. When my friendly indirect way is of little avail, I use in extreme cases a communication style that isolates this person from the group in a way that the group becomes aware of the non-solidarity of their team member.'

As a matter of fact, choosing an indirect approach might play sometimes in favour of the growth of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ and should be balanced throughout precise directive interferences, since either extrema produces a problem caused through the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ that takes effect through the ‘Perception Asymmetry’, that we will treat later in this thesis.

Besides all these different kind of methods, styles or strategies that evoke in our opinion the mentioned options for the ‘Communication Gap’ to grow, we equally see danger in the following aspects that might lead to the arising of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’.

We know that each leader has a certain kind of personal, naturally given and absolute subjective communication style. Imagining the situation, where a leader needs to communicate a content, which does not at all match with his natural communicator style. A directive leader, who uses a language that sounds imposingly in order to convey a content that should show the followers that he trusts them and that they have more responsibility on their own, is contradicting. As a matter of fact, in each case where the content of the message does not match with the used communicator style, confusion can be provoked and the delivered message does not transmit the wished content because of the way the communication style nuanced the content throughout the composition of the message. Consequently, such cases are typical examples of how the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ gets widened.
Another possible situation might be that leaders change their communication style because they are aware of the outcome of this first scenario, whereby a non-adapted communicator style can be the key failure factor. As a matter of fact, leaders often try to be flexible and to work on their natural or innate styles. However, pushing it to an extreme is not an effective option, since it could induce another possibility for the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ to grow. Indeed, by steadily changing, adapting, developing and trying to improve their styles, leaders are not consistent, which causes confusion.

This is equally what Anita W. experienced in her career:

'In the bank they have several seminars for leaders that serve as either learning sessions or refresher courses. These trainings consist of intensive sessions that deal with the discovery of the leader’s communication style and sequences concerning verbal and nonverbal communication. Throughout my 37 years that I worked in this bank I learned a lot. I tested different styles throughout negotiations with my followers or clients and internalized one special thing for myself. Those seminars that help people to adapt their communication style can only be seen as a module to find one’s personal style. Since authenticity is the most important aspect for me. Everything that I adapted that did not fit to my personality, or every time I switched between styles to correspond to what I thought would be good, minimized my credibility.'

Therefore Anita W experienced what we call ‘Composition Asymmetry’ regarding the steady change of styles or wrong adaptations, speaking of those who do not fit to the leader.

If one day a leader is direct in his communication followers will know what they should do and that they should do it directly. If the other day he adopts an indirect style, the followers will be less able to see the immediate necessity of executing the politely demanded task, which might cause problems, since the leader wanted to say something, formulated it nicely and thought that he conveyed what he intended to transmit. But at the same time, if way he really said it is less imperative than his usual way of announcing something, which appears for followers as if the importance of the message is less big than in other cases. Consequently, what the leader thought he said and what he really said differs if it is seen in comparison to his usual way of communicating.

Apart from a steadily changing communicator style, a simple difference between the leader’s and the follower’s communicator style can be sufficient to increase the ‘Composition Asymmetry’. As a matter of fact, instead of changing the style the leaders should be capable of adapting their style to the followers’ style and to flex it in order to come to a common ground, which of course depends on the situation in which they find themselves. Flexibility and open-mindedness will help them to better grasp, understand and internalize the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ throughout the model of Hersey and Blanchard (1988): The situational Leadership, which we will see in the following.
3.2.3 Leaders’ Emotional Intelligence

When leaders create a content, the latter is often dependent on what the leader think is needed by the company, by the followers, by the clients or even by himself. Depending on the discovered needs, the message will be composed around the content. Therefore, the so-called ‘Composition Asymmetry’ can be equally evoked, if a leader misinterprets the needs of one of the beforehand mentioned actors.

In order to detect and respond accurately to the needs of followers and to adapt the form of the messages effectively, while respecting the same content, having the ability to understand them is inevitable. In fact, how a leader understands the needs of his followers will determine his way of composing the message. Indeed, leadership is based on reciprocal interactions between leaders and followers, whereby its quality relies on the awareness, recognition, comprehension and the regulation of emotions (Wong & Law, 2002), the one’s of the leader himself as well as the ones of his followers. Detecting the followers’ needs goes therefore hand in hand with detecting their emotions. A leader’s wrong evaluation of his followers’ emotions misleads his impressions over their needs and affects the composition process of a message to such an extent, that the company’s success might get endangered. Indeed, whether the leader’s reasons for misunderstanding his audience’s emotions depends on factors like culture, gender, age, or personal preferences, a wrong appraisal does not conduce to a smooth collaboration.

Therefore, depending on the leader’s capacity to accurately detect emotions and presume the needs, the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ turns out either big or small. Indeed, leaders need to see, define and understand emotions to be able to use them to structure their proper thoughts and emotions and to subsequently better manage their teams. The recognition of emotions can help leaders to anticipate problems and to be prepared to deal with inconsistencies.

That adaptation is crucial is what Elard S. explained us. The senior consultant and decision-making specialist always tries to:

‘Understand the thoughts of my participants and to project myself on their level of comprehension. Furthermore, I believe that adaption is everything in order to detect what is needed by my attendees. Hereby, I want to emphasize that adaption is not meant in the sense of adapting one’s style to the followers no matter what, I truly believe in authenticity that is adapted to the level of the followers.’

Giving the right questions and answers to their followers is therefore basically depending on the leader’ level of and sensibility towards emotional intelligence.

Importance of a leader’s Emotional Intelligence

The concept of “Emotional Intelligence”, also called “EI”, was proposed in 1990 by Salovey and Mayer. They considered it as the ability to deal with emotions and define it as a set of skills, which are related with each other, allowing the perception, the appraisal and the expression of emotions (Salovey et al. 1999). Moreover, Emotional Intelligence permits to ‘access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought’ (Salovey et al. 1999, p.10) as well as the understanding of emotions and their regulation promoting growth both on an emotional and on an intellectual basis. Goleman completed in 1995 their original definition by saying that those emotions could be categorized. The author differentiates indeed between self-awareness, management of emotions, motivation, empathy and manipulation of a relationship.
In each of these categories we can see the possibility for the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ to grow.

- If a leader is not sensible to his proper emotions, his capacity of detecting them by others is likely to be very low. The sub-asymmetry of the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ is evoked.
- If a leader does not correctly manage his own emotions or mismanaged to lead the ones of his followers, he might provoke with his actions exactly the emotions that he thought he saw, whereas this was only an assumption. If a leader presumes for example that a colleague is angry and starts asking the latter for the reasons, whereby he is only neglecting his anger, because he is rather sad, the leader can unwillingly provoke feelings of anger towards himself.
- Depending on the leader’s motivation and empathy towards certain followers, he might privilege some. This process can be completely unconscious. However, if the leader is personally more engaged towards a person the likelihood of detecting emotions and evaluating them correctly is generally increased.
- The intentions leaders have are equally determining which emotions are either accurately detected or willingly wrongly perceived. In order to manipulate people, leaders might do as if they would have recognized certain needs, which are obviously wrong.

In 1998, Gross gives his own definition of emotions and describes ‘Emotional Intelligence’ as the evolving behaviour and mood that people adopt in response to a given situation. Emotionally intelligent people comprehend their emotions and are able to detect and understand those of others.

This is the reason why leaders with a good self-awareness and an ability to regulate their own emotions can “modify” the understanding of others by adjusting their communication. When they perceive a need they can act and give advises to their followers in order to help them (Chan & Mallett, 2011). For example, a sports coach who perceives information like performance anxiety for example through the feelings and emotions expressed by his or her athletes can react effectively upon this information and adopt a behaviour that regulates the detected anxiety.

Fact confirmed by the sports coach we interviewed who added furthermore an illustration of the utility of emotional intelligence for communication:

‘Fabien (e.g. The coach assistant) and I play sometimes with the emotions and reactions we detect, for example, when a player made a bad action during a game, which penalizes the whole team. During the debriefing of the end or of the half time, we talk about the game and we conduct indirectly the debriefing to the action that went wrong. Even without saying a name, we can see if the concerned player feels emotionally touched. This is when we insist on the bad action. We know the players of our team and what to say to provoke a reaction for them. It’s our way to make a player learn from his mistakes without obviously devaluing or accusing him in front of the rest of the team (often the others understand as well, but since there is really a collective responsibility in the team, they can learn together and also feel concerned).’
The leaders’ understanding of the emotions of their followers enables them to adapt their communication and to give all team members the best possible chance to be treated accurately and to subsequently perform well (Chan & Mallett 2011). Indeed, leaders’ understanding of their proper emotions and feelings will help them to navigate between all the emotions evoked by followers and to bring out therefore the best in their team members while challenging them despite or sometimes because of the emotional circumstances.

In the military area, leaders even use their emotional intelligence in order to test the limit of their soldiers during formations:

'We pay attention to reactions and everybody knows the others really well because we see each other in the worst possible states and it’s exactly what we are looking for. We constantly test the limits during the trainings and formations in order to really understand and see the personal attributes of each soldier. It helps us to see if he matches with the expectation of the GSPR or of the GIGN. During the formation, we have “Carte Blanche” for everything. We test and lead people to go beyond their limit, push them to discover themselves fully and to surpass themselves. For that we really pay attention to their behaviour and emotions. For us, it’s really the most interesting since it’s exactly in this situation that we discover their true personality. Some of them will adopt a destructive behaviour for the team or become completely individualist. If we cannot perceive that, we use some techniques. When I was in formation myself, my trainers gave us some chores at the end of each week during several months. At the term of our formation period, we had a meeting and they asked us to write the name of 3 people with whom we can go everywhere without any problems and 3 person with whom it would be impossible for us to work with. The instructor discovers things that they didn’t obviously perceive by themselves here (i.e. depending of the ability to detect every emotions).'

As the interview with the leader from the military position outlined it, depending on a leader’s emotional intelligence ‘a leader might vary his or her leadership style when the situation warrants it’ (Barrett 2006, p.390). Consequently, leaders are likely to adapt their way of delivering their messages in a directive, persuasive, participative or delegative way, if the chosen style acts in favour for the intended outcome (Blanchard & Hersey 1988).

Anita W. confirms that for her in the banking sector:

'staff appraisal needs a special kind of preparation in terms of adapting oneself to the needs of the staff. During the assessment phase I have a guide on which I see what needs to be communicated during the follower’s evaluation. In most of the times this procedures works fine, but sometimes the evaluation turns out in a bad way for the employee. I strongly believe in putting myself on the same emotional level as my follower, to understand the follower’s needs and in which way I might need to communicate with them. One time I promoted an employee because of restructuring measure. In the beginning I was sure that the person was happy about it but I quickly realized that the employee was on the one hand happy but on the other hand not assured at all if he could manage to take this huge step. '

Anita W basically detected the emotion, evaluated the need and understood the situation.
The importance of interpersonal adaptation and situational leadership

Burgoon, Stern & Dillman adopted in 1995 the “Interpersonal Adaptation Theory” or “IAT”, which recommends synchronizing the way of behaving to the audience’s expectations, needs and desires in specific situations. Moreover, because of culture, social norms or simply because of education, some leader’s responses and reactions are more adapted than others. Hersey & Blanchard (1988) explain, through their model of “Situational Leadership”, the importance for leaders to have the ability of adapting their leadership style according to their audience’s needs. Indeed, the leaders’ emotional intelligence increases their ability of detecting what is expected from them, the level of readiness of their followers as well as how they need to adapt their behaviour and their leadership style. According to Hersey & Blanchard (1988), leaders understand as well that they must change their behaviour depending on the readiness of the members of a group, seen on the one hand as individuals and the other hand as a whole regarding their ability and willingness to accomplish something.

Against all odds, Hersey & Blanchard (1988) manifest that followers are those who need the leader’s support and who are therefore responsible of determining his or her behaviour.

They basically distinguish 4 levels of followers’ readiness;

- The first level is called “Telling”. It means that the leaders make the decisions. Followers need to be guided, directed or structured because they are ‘Unable and Unwilling or Insecure’ (Hersey & Banchard p.171). Then, leaders give them advices by telling what to do, where and how.

- The second level is called “Selling”. In this case, leaders will not only guide followers. They will rather discuss and clarify things for them. Here, followers try to act already, even if they are still unable of doing so. The leader's' behaviour will be supportive, providing answers to basic questions and explaining the ‘Why’ with all its reasoning behind.

- The third step, “Participating”, means that this time followers are ‘able’ to act, wherefore their problems and restrictions refer rather to personal attitudes like unwillingness or insecurity. In this situation, leaders will encourage and communicate, facilitate or commit for their followers.

- Finally, in the fourth and last step, the followers take their decisions, since they are able and confident of doing so. Here, the leaders will adopt a “delegating” style and just observe and monitor the reactions and executions. Indeed, they give their followers the opportunity to act by themselves, taking responsibilities and implementing their proper projects on their own.

Considering this approach, leaders have the opportunity to determine their style of leadership. For that, they need to understand who their followers are. Amongst them, who are those who need help, to be convinced or guided. Once the leaders defined their target group, they need to investigate the group’s readiness level and decide finally which leadership style will be the most suitable and appropriate under the given circumstances.
Elard S. explained that:

‘a special importance lies in examining the readiness of each decision-maker. Especially in complicated decision-making processes it is inevitable to investigate the mental state of mind and feelings of each actor. This phase is so important since in the crucial moment when the decision is about to be taken, I need to know how everybody will react. In order to not get surprised in questions regarding decision-making processes, I need to know the evaluated weight of each sub-decision and to anticipate the attendees’ reactions throughout a precise evaluation of their readiness. Depending on the level of readiness, I will coach more in a certain direction to bring everybody on the same boat. However, my approach is strongly dependent on the size of the group. If the group is rather small, I usually split the groups depending on their readiness to present the same content on various levels of language and forms of expressions. When the group comes together as a whole, inconsistencies and misunderstandings can be eliminated on an individual basis before the decisive process of decision making starts. Throughout this process I usually try to create myself an assistant among each group which will function as a middleman between the leaders and the rest of the group. Subsequently, the group can be evaluated as a whole regarding its readiness for the decision making process. The art lies for me in directing the attendees in the right direction without letting them know that they were guided or evaluated upon their personal readiness.’

In fact, Chan & Mallett (2011) quote Napoleon Bonaparte with his famous sentence “Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide”. Indeed, whether it is for sports coaches, businessmen or politicians, there are plenty of information sources that have an influence on the decision process. Researches showed moreover that in situations of pressure or urgency, the best performers had the necessary willingness to analyse and interpret emotional information before considering a solution or deciding on something important. This assumption is particularly true for traders or coaches of high performance teams, who can’t accord themselves to be emotionally unintelligent if they intend to be successful.

Chan & Mallett (2011) argue that a poor emotional intelligence skill is a part of poor interpersonal relationship and affects the ability to develop trust and to inspire effectively followers. This is confirmed by Goman (2008) who explains that leaders who are not able to read the right signals from their followers or who don’t respond properly to them (whether it was with their verbal message or their body language), sabotage their relationships as well as their efforts of building it. Emotional intelligence is essential for effective leadership between coaches and athletes, CEOs and employees, public and politicians, believers and religious leaders in order to conceive effectively their message and to avoid the development of a conception gap. Indeed, great interpersonal skills are more and more necessary nowadays since the success of leader depend on their ability to transmit the right message (Goman 2008). In the business world, those who are able to decode other’s communication signs, have a real advantage. They can understand things the other expects and respond to that by an accurate body language, consistent with the personality they want to transmit and project.
The power of listening
For this process, listening plays an important role as Messmer (2004) outlines it. Besides fostering trust, it can prevent from making false assumptions and can improve and advance people as well as tasks in many ways. Hereby, focusing on the followers is of major importance since they try to transmit equally messages and in order to see and understand their needs.

As Hersey and Blanchard (1988) present it, leaders need to devote their full attention to their followers, meaning that before they interject their thoughts they should actively listen. Not to interrupt and little head movements, gestures and facial expressions show the followers that the leader is listening, that the leader wants to hear what they have to say, that the leader trusts and values them. Followers want to be needed (De Pree 2004). Therefore, leaders should not easily assume what a follower wants to say but give them the possibility to fully explain their thoughts.

This procedure will help on the one hand leaders to understand what the followers comprehend of their tasks and if their contribution really empowers the bigger picture. On the other hand it will offer the followers a positive feeling regarding the reliability, consistency, charisma, credibility and trustworthiness of their leader, which will shape their perception, as we will see it in the following chapters on perception and understanding of a leader’s message.

On both hands through active listening, the communication is activated, reduces the different asymmetries and helps to verify that the content of the conveyed messages are correctly understood.

As a matter of fact, listening is equally communicating and even a very important part of it, which can reduce the Communication Gap to a large extent. However, and despite a good level of emotional intelligence and an attentive listening, some sub-asymmetries can still appear here.

- Indeed, it is not possible to understand perfectly the needs of every follower, at any time, in every situation. The understanding can be erroneous (leaders can misunderstand or misinterpret a follower’s need) and in this case the response of follower’s expectations won’t be the best or the right ones.

- Moreover, it can as well be possible that leaders understand their needs correctly but that they are not able to respond to them accurately and in this case, another sub-asymmetry will appear. Leaders are human and sometimes it is not easy to formulate the right answer instantaneously. Even if they detect the followers’ expectations they might fail to respond perfectly to them when they encode their messages.
3.3 The Delivery of the message

In the previous sections, we presented the different gaps existing within the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ that is created throughout the discrepancy between the underlying content of the message and the way the latter is delivered. Indeed, leaders have to “encode” their messages in order to well communicate the information they convey. This means that verbally and nonverbally, their encoding skills will allow them to create a meaning and to transmit it (Burgoon et al. 2011). But more than the underlying content, they indeed encode equally their nonverbal expressions, attitudes and emotions. This supplementary information needs to be “decoded” by the observers in order for them to make sense out of it (Manusov & Patterson 2006; Ambady & Rosenthal 1998). For this thesis, we decided to go into further details in the chapter of the delivery of a message, since leaders can learn so much from these insights for their daily life. This part is represented at the core of the model we developed.

Indeed, through verbal and nonverbal communication, leaders present messages to their audience in a more or less figurative, structured, comprehensible way. As Holladay & Coombs (1994, p.362) explained it ‘poor delivery distracts listeners from message content, thus reducing the clarity of message content’. However, an exaggeration of the means of delivery is as well not recommendable. Of course, verbal and nonverbal communication intent to improve the understanding, make a speech more alive, interesting and impacting. But if the use of for example stylistic devices or any nonverbal means is too excessive, the contrary can be evoked.

In the following section, we will outline the methods and impacts regarding verbal communication that leaders use while conducting their speeches. However, we will present the verbal communication only in the entirety that seems to us necessary for leaders to grasp its importance. Since our focus does not lie in explaining all stylistic devices, all methods and all approaches, but rather to show leaders to which extent the verbal communication might impact the audience, we will focus our attention on the nonverbal communication, representing in our opinion an even more consequent part of the information leaders convey when they interact with their followers.
3.3.1 The Verbal Communication

The “Verbal Communication” refers to the spoken words but includes also non-vocal elements such as the writing or the sign language. Schmitz (2012) explains that people use two different parts of their brain when they try to communicate: While the right side of our brain is activated when we communicate nonverbally, the left side allows us to use the verbal communication. Fussell, (2002, p.4), goes even further when he claims that ‘paralinguistic and nonverbal channels in and of themselves are insufficient for expressing the full range of human emotional experiences’. While nonverbal behaviour like crying emphasizes the assumption that a person is sad, the concrete and meaningful reason of his emotional state can only be revealed by verbal expressions.

This is as well, what Lutz K., the chief executive Scout explained by:
‘Verbal communication is way more exact, whereas the nonverbal communication is completely based on interpretations. A follower might interpret something differently than in was intended to be understood. This can’t happen with verbal communication.’

Elard S. stated throughout his interview that:
‘For me the main value of a message lies obviously in the content itself. However, if you ask me to evaluate the verbal and nonverbal communication, I can honestly reply that in my business, the consulting industry, the verbal communication is more important when the consultant speaks. However, when a consultant analyses the situation or within negotiations the nonverbal communication might be of higher value. Nevertheless, the standing of the verbal communication can be explained throughout the fact, that it is the carrier of the factual information. Indeed, nonverbally we cannot transmit facts. Only it conveys with how much assertiveness, enthusiasm or rejection insights are presented. But only the verbal communication permits the speaker to transmit real tangible facts.’

Moreover, as a relational contributor, the verbal communication intervenes in interpersonal interactions. Its use includes or excludes people, it involves or not, it supports, explains and expresses what is expected in a way that the nonverbal communication could not do sufficiently enough. Indeed, even if many authors claim that the nonverbal communication is more important that the verbal one, we could assume that they have preferences in terms of their utility in one situation or another.

Anita W. from the banking sector states:
‘I really cannot tell which communication channel is more important. Depending on the situation I consider either the verbal or the nonverbal as more explicative. Sometimes a simple smile (i.e. nonverbal) can substitute a word (i.e. verbal). And in other cases, what needs to be said needs to be said in an explicative way that is only possible through verbal means that illustrate, explain or clearly emphasize, what needs to be conveyed. However, I have a preference for nonverbal means, since I personally think that they are more able to bring out my personality and to therefore create a link to my followers.’
**Importance of the context**

In either case, it is absolutely necessary to consider the context in order to judge whether one is more important than the other. For example, while military leaders, will only base their communication on non-verbal signs during interventions, in other contexts or areas of competencies, it will be seen in a completely different way.

Elard S. explains:

‘Although I personally think that facts are in certain situations more necessary than just conveying the emotions that are accompanied by the facts, I am absolutely convinced that neither the verbal nor the nonverbal communication can or should exist one without the other. When I am personally against something I try not to express it too much with nonverbal means since I know it will underline my personal disapproval of a decision. But it is in the end the client who decides, I give only the decisive advices. Nevertheless, there are job outlines like the notary or the moderator in law firms for example who are obliged to be neutral. They are not allowed to have preferences for either party. Hereby, the nonverbal communication is really important, through which they can send neutral signs and balance the negotiations.’

While the nonverbal communication is restraint to about a hundred signals, the verbal one offers a really large amount of possibilities to convey a message (Schmitz 2012). Indeed, if the main information source is a leader’s emotions, transmitted through his nonverbal communication, the verbal communication stays a really important part influencing as well the understanding of a message’s content. The different components attributed to words and their stylistic presentations must not be neglected, since they are the ones that make the difference in the specific context.

In addition to the global context, it is important to mention that the social context changes as well the verbal communication of leaders. Indeed, they have to respect the social rules that are already established by society and need adapt their communication to the addressed audience. Their language influences at the same time the personality they convey as well as the audience’ perception of their credibility. Norms and rules are internalized by everyone and their recognition represents a convenient way of understanding the culture and indirectly to avoid cultural mistakes that can occur for those who don’t see and comprehend them (Schmitz 2012).

Murray (2013) set his focus on the significance of the emotional connection within the audience, in order to create their engagement. ‘It’s all about them – The need for audience centricity’ (Murray 2013, p.143). In fact, the leaders interrogated in his book agreed that a speech can be brilliant in terms of the content, but such as Conger (1991) states it, leaders must be rhetoricians and capable of energizing and inspiring their followers which happens through the choice of their words and their ability regarding emotional expressiveness. The importance of engaging the followers through the process of verbal communication can be explained by the fact, that only if they feel listened to, needed and engaged in tasks they will present their full potential (De Pree 2004). As a matter of fact, leaders need to adapt their language to the audience since the latter’s expectations of the speech strongly depends on the specific context (Conger 1991), which can be underlined through verbal means, such as anaphors, metaphors and comparisons.
Stylistic devices, syntax and the choice of the right words at the right moment

Indeed, when we speak, we are using figures in order to transmit a meaning with our words. Those figures include the ‘similes’ (or comparisons), the metaphors (or implicit comparisons) or even personifications to visualize more concrete and abstract thoughts on a facilitated level.

Elard S. uses in his consultancies often overdrawn comparisons:

‘In order to make conducts more comprehensible for the seminar participants I often evoke overdrawn comparisons. This is especially helpful when I recognize that the attendees are about to make a wrong decision. In order to make them better understand what the impact of such a decision is, I embed personal stories in overdrawn comparisons. Consequently, the decision-takers are more likely to project their proper situation to this pictorial representation and to rethink subsequently their initial decision’.

Anita W. experienced it throughout her banking career that using too many stylistic devices can be perceived as staged, ridiculous, or even manipulative:

‘For me the number one rule is to convey a message correctly in terms of its content. Of course I sometimes use stylistic devices to point out or emphasize some aspects more than others. However, credibility and authenticity are still the most important factors when transmitting a message. Of which use is a beautiful embellishment of a certain message, if the content of the message is not honest, clear and focused? I realized throughout the communication seminars at the bank that too much decorative devices are more hindering than helping for a leader. Of course, alliterations can be insisting, metaphors can be clarifying and a certain syntax convincing, however, all of my followers participated in the same seminars that I attended and there is no doubt, that none of my colleagues is stupid. Followers recognize when leaders use linguistic devices or certain methods to be more convincing. Followers recognize when speeches are rehearsed. And followers are so clever to understand the difference between a thought through speech and a staged one.’

The verbal communication, allows leaders equally not to express their opinion only on a contextual basis, but on a personal basis through which their personality and identity get revealed by the words they use. Indeed, communicating, with connotations and denotations evokes a certain credibility towards the leader’s expressed thoughts. Furthermore, Schmitz (2012) explains that the quality of a verbal message depends on the chosen words in a special situation. For example, a message created without words with double sense (or denotations) or the wrong connotation will be easier to understand for followers and therefore probably more efficient for the business. This idea is supported by Schmitz (2012) who explains that misunderstandings often appear between speakers and listeners because of the abstract sense of certain terms, words or expressions. Those can refer to a different meaning in the listeners’ minds than in the speaker’s one. Here, it will be the perception of the message as a whole and not only the perception of some words that will impact the understanding of its content.
Indeed, the power of words was outlined by Conger (1991) through the example of Scholtz (2013) whereby the author depicts how easy the change of one word can affect the meaning of a whole sentence OR the whole meaning of a sentence. In fact, with this example we even understand that the syntax is of special importance, since it directly affects the content.

The correct use of grammar and syntax is as well important, since verbal messages differ from written ones in the sense that we don’t speak in the same formal and well-structured way as we write. Schmitz (2012) confirmed the existence of between five thousand or six thousand language codes worldwide, whereby sixty per cent of them are only evoked throughout the spoken language. Generally, all the people who share the same culture understand the symbols and codes constituting their language. In order to minimize the misunderstandings that might arise within cross cultural contexts or even within a certain culture, the leader’s adopted language (i.e. the verbal) needs to be accorded to the context, the area of competencies and is obviously dependent on the relationship with the followers and on the purpose of the message. Schmitz (2012, p.139) explains that leaders ‘need to be able to use language to put people at ease, relate to others, and still appear confident and competent’.

The interviewed military leader told us:
‘For the security unit, it’s the team before anything else. And because of the proximity between us, it would be strange to use a particularly eloquent vocabulary. We often transmit information spontaneously and I see myself primarily as a member of the team, the hierarchical rank is secondary for me. Everybody is a MEMBER of the team, even the leader. However, it doesn’t mean that we don’t use any figures of style. There are just more spontaneous. Usually we evoke comparisons, images or stories to illustrate what we are saying. These are mainly helpful when we want to transmit an ambiguous or complicated message that needs to be really understood. Also we adopt references to prepare and protect others from previous interventions, such as those in Algeria or in Mali for example, that we would avoid reproducing’.

Indeed the leaders’ chosen words and their elaborated order causes reactions in a follower’s brain because the latter associates them with certain experiences or events that might even evoke certain emotions. Scholtz (2013) outlines that words can be considered as triggering factors. Already when somebody only pronounces our name during we sleep, it causes certain reactions.

Consequently, we understand the importance of the choice of the words, their pronunciation and syntax, semantic rules and linguistic advices that need to be taken into account regarding the meaning of a statement. However, since many books were written about communication and especially about the verbal one, we see the main emphasize of our thesis not in explaining the various stylistic devices of the verbal communication. Even if we won’t explain all the rules of rhetoric here, we established a concrete link between the verbal communication and the context of leadership through an example, presented in the Annex of this thesis. Indeed, we developed this example in order to help readers, who are interested in understanding the classical structure of the HeForShe-speech conveyed by the female leader, Emma Watson. We want to outline, that disrespecting the traditional speech-structure can induce once again, dangerous asymmetries within the communication process. Because it distances us from our main
topic, and since it is not absolutely necessary in order to understand the concept of the ‘Communication Gap’, we have decided to develop it in the Annex B rather than in the heart of this thesis.

Considering different books, articles and scientific papers we recognize that the simple use of verbal communication is not sufficient at all, in order to deliver a message correctly and in a successful manner. In fact, in 1967, Mehrabian explained that words are responsible only for 7% of the listener’s perception regarding a message transmission. The 93 other percent are linked to the nonverbal communication. Regarding these important researches and their considerable impact, we will go further into the nonverbal communication in the following section.

3.3.2 The Nonverbal Communication

The necessity for leaders to master their nonverbal communication was illustrated quite obviously during the confrontation between Nixon and Kennedy in the 60’s. Indeed, Nixon’s weakness to communicate nonverbally was a real low point for his presidential re-election from which Kennedy benefited, who by the way really mastered his televised presentations. This concrete example reinforces the idea of Pease & Pease (2004) that nonverbal signals are five times more effective than the verbal version of the content.

Based on the experiment of Mehrabian (1967) who explained that the paralanguage is to 38% responsible for the understanding of a message, whereas the body language possesses 55%, several experiments were conducted to prove the importance of the nonverbal communication. Goman (2011), inter alia, explained an experiment, whereby a sociometer was used during different speeches. This device actually recorded what can’t be said through words, such as vocal nuances, energy, etc. Indeed, this MIT sociometer predicted which business plan would be adopted next for certain firms just because of the presentation and tone of voice of the speaking leaders. This experiment clearly reinforces the idea of Mehrabian that nonverbal communication is more impacting than the verbal one, at least for the listener’s perception regarding the communicated information.

Even before, between 1914 and 1940, several authors already interested themselves in facial expressions of people. Indeed, Sielski (1979) said that the primitive way to transmit a message is with nonverbal communication.

The awareness of leaders regarding the importance of their body language relies on the fact that they are constantly read by people and that therefore body language is indeed observed. In fact, followers perceive signals of the leaders’ nonverbal communication, interpret their emotional state and develop an understanding of the messages the leader conveys. They form themselves an idea of the leader’s credibility, of his charisma and of the level of trust they can accord to him.

Like several authors, Schmitz (2012) explained that the nonverbal communication has more weight than the verbal one regarding the perception of someone’s credibility. Someone who communicates a really powerful speech but this with a poor voice, a shifty look, a non-appropriate gesture, won’t transmit this speech in a credible way and its impact won’t be as powerful as it could be. Moreover, it’s important in business communication since it allows leaders to understand the interlocutor’s sent message.
As Janevski & Zafirovska said (2015 p.139) ‘People often do not say what they think, or while communicating try to hide certain information’ but it’s possible to detect things through their silent communication. This is the reason why people in leadership positions, whether politician or representor of a corporation or organization, must understand and master the nonverbal communication in order to convey their message properly and to accurately read those of others.

Indeed, leaders can as well detect emotions or signals when they pay attention to their followers, since nonverbal communication is equally reciprocal. Pease and Pease (2006) developed the idea that 60-80% of all entrepreneurs are watching the body language of people and put them subsequently into clusters during the first five minutes of observing. Our interviewees and other authors explain that in less than 10 seconds people form their ideas about a person based on the latter’s body language even before he or she has the opportunity to talk.

One military leader communicated us his consciousness about the prejudices that are formed throughout this process:

‘I’m aware that during my formation, some of my qualities or attributes played in my favour regarding what my instructors felt. I cannot say if I would be in this position otherwise today. When we recruit people, we have a preconceived idea about the man we want to have in our team. However, it’s a general idea, we are not machines and our judgement is obviously biased by the effect and how the recruits behave. Sometimes, we will have really nice candidates but their behaviour does not suit us and unconsciously we want to eliminate them from our list. We will be more critic with them while we will be less hard with someone who has made a good impression from the beginning. We push everyone to his limits in order to avoid that our opinion affects our decisions during the recruitment process.’

Nonverbal communication can repeat the verbal one, substitute and complement, accentuate or contradict it. The nonverbal cues complete auditory messages by additionally sent signals that can be interpreted in different ways according to the situation (Terrier 2013). The nonverbal can as well participate in the creation of a supportive environment conducing to higher performances in leadership (Goman 2011) and be used to transmit thoughts, emotions, needs and feelings to the listeners (Ambady & Rosenthal 1998). It is the most powerful way of conveying messages by naturally enhancing the used words (Goman 2011). However, its interpretation depends obviously on the listeners and on their culture (Bonaccio et al. 2016). Basically it includes behavioural and expressive channels of communication through body movements, facial expressions, tone of voice and includes cues of information that need to be interpreted even though they might be unconscious, spontaneous or even uncontrollable (Manusov & Patterson 2006).

In the following section, we will develop the different aspects of the nonverbal communication and its components in order to better understand in which way it impact the leaders’ communication of their messages.
3.3.2.1 Kinesics

As “Kinesics” we understand the parts of the nonverbal communication that consist of facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, postures and head movements, which we will analyse now in further details within the context of leadership.

3.3.2.1.1. Facial expression and eye contact

The face communicates and speaks for itself. Indeed, most of the misunderstandings are created because people tend to not observe people’s faces. Knowing that some of the most important and revealing facial expressions are really brief, considering the muscle movement of the opponent represents an opportunity that each individual should grasp in order to clarify how others really think and feel about the discussed topic. Seeing behind the façade increases sensitivity and comprehension for fellow men and minimizes misunderstanding, conflicts and rumours.

For a leader it is absolutely recommendable to be aware of the existence and importance of facial expressions. Instead of just producing them for others to be seen, we advise leaders to go through their world with open eyes, to “consume” the facial expressions of their followers and to use them for their leadership style. Indeed, a leader who is capable of detecting those expressions amongst his followers gets insights on how they feel. This aspect is very important, since in cohesion to how followers feel they will be engaged in their work. The outcome of the different tasks depends on the followers’ motivation, ambition, interest and mood, wherefore knowledge about their emotional state of mind can help the leader to manage his team easier. Even though he might not know why exactly or what provoked their state, it is still a very helpful indication that leaders should actively welcome to get to know when their intervention, support or advices are helpful or even needed.

With profound knowledge about this topic leaders will recognize that mirroring expressions has a strong impact on the followers (Goman 2008). By facing them in a positive motivating way through smiling, followers get the positive emotions transferred to them and will be therefore happy and motivated to go on working. Consequently, they will bring out their bests. Knowing that feelings might get contained is absolutely important for a leader if his team members are working closely together. Leaders might be able to prevent throughout their motivation the transfer of sad, negative, angry or nervous emotions from one follower to another. Indeed, leaders can therefore smooth the collaboration within the team just throughout the simple knowledge that group feelings can be created whereby emotions can spread from one person to another. Furthermore, the correct observation of facial expressions can help to reduce doubts and big problems, which could reduce the company’s competitive advantage. Especially since there is often a certain hierarchy, followers don’t dare to ask their leaders for help, wherefore it is recommended that the leader takes the initiative to face the follower and to show him that he understands him. As a matter of fact, the company will run smoother, teams are working better together and the company is successful.

This part of the thesis will not only help leaders recognizing the facial expressions of their followers, but it will help them to understand that the followers are equally seeing the leader’s proper facial expressions, which are equally able to let specific communication problems arise. However, “simply” reading the other’s faces is not that simple. Rather the faces need to be actively observed, studied and compared with normal situations in order to recognize deviation in then usual facial muscle movement (Ekman & Friesen 2003).
The problem lies in the fact that people tend to control their facial expressions for multiple reasons. Often society imposes how people should react in certain situations, meaning that they need to adapt their face to what is socially and culturally accepted in public. A very good example to prove this assumption is what Ekman & Friesen (2003) described in their book. In fact, researches have been made on how Americans and Japanese reacted when they saw video sequences of unpleasant situations. When each individual saw the film alone, ‘Japanese and Americans had virtually identical facial expressions’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p.24). However, the presence of a second attendee changed the outcome. Japanese were more likely to cover their facial expressions, because of cultural rules.

If it is not culturally, the capacity of controlling their face is imposed by their jobs, speaking of actors, models or salesmen for example. Other cases are when people personally need to cover their true feelings in order to protect themselves from getting reminded of bad experiences that evoke corresponding negative feelings.

However, ‘some of the confusion about facial expression arises, then, because the face conveys both true and false emotion messages’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p. 20). Regarding these facts, it is important to consider that there are four different types of facial expressions. The “macro”, “micro”, “masked” and “false” expressions.

- **The Macro expressions** are the usual ones that can last up until 4 seconds and fit naturally with what the person says; they are true.
- **Micro-expressions** are those, which last for just a split second, making them almost invisible for people to notice. These expressions are evoked by suppression or repression of any kind and show equally the person’s concealed feelings for a very brief time. These micro-expressions get only revealed throughout the transition from one expression to another.
- **False expressions** are those, which are faked or simulated by a person throughout a longer period, since the latter does not truly feel this emotion.
- **Masked expressions** are equally false expressions but are evoked for the purpose of covering a true macro expression, often out of personal reasons.

Regardless of those four clusters of expressions Darwin (1872) came up with his theory that those expressions are universal and innate not only for humans but as well in the animal world, whereas in the 60’s and 70’s important scientists tried to link facial expressions to what people learned throughout their culture. For sure, we cannot say that all existing facial expressions on earth are universally explainable and can be understood. Depending on the culture of the people various expressions have a different meaning. However, Darwin (1872) was right with the idea that some are indeed innate.

It was Paul Ekman, professor for anthropology and psychology at the University of California who proved that there are seven expressions which can be considered to be universal: *Surprise, happiness, sadness, fear, anger, contempt and disgust*. The professor based his assumptions on his findings when he went to Papua New Guinea to analyse the tribes that have no social contact to other people. Because he was aggressed by the Kukukuku who threatened his work, he started to study their faces to get first indications for aggression. Throughout this experience he developed a system of 43 face movements, whereby a variety of seven signals can be considered as universal. This means that those seven are common amongst all human beings around the world, no matter their age, gender, social class, culture or religion. Each of these cues is encoded unwillingly and unconsciously throughout the delivery of a message. The sender’s true feelings can be therefore revealed and recognizing these signals might reduce the
‘Communication Gap’. However, the word ‘universal’ needs to be treated with caution. Indeed, the facial expression of all people if they feel in one of these 7 ways is the same, but the reason for their feeling is different. As a matter of fact, within the micro-expressions excellent observers can detect the cues, but the explanation for why they felt in this way stays unrevealed. This fact evokes asymmetries in the case where the reasons behind the emotions do not get questioned.

Situation, environment, time and place are the causes for such facial expressions to arise, which indeed varies from one person to another for its arousal as well as for its intensity, since this is completely subjective. This insight means concretely that an Indian recognizes the fear of an Eskimo even though they can’t communicate in the same language with each other. However, it is possible that the same cause would not have made the Indian afraid, for example. Indeed, the face is communicating for itself, wherefore all people speak the one same language for the seven mentioned cases: the mimics.

Hereby, the face provides the observers with information on three different levels. There are static signals, slow and rapid ones.

- **Static signals** include the shape, colour and structure of the face.
- **Slow signals** are considered to be those, which appear throughout a longer period of time, such as permanent wrinkles.
- **Rapid signals** are signals that are evoked throughout the movement of the muscles that are in the face (Ekman & Friesen 2003).

So, the face can be understood as a multi-signal system, wherefore a human’s face provides us equally with multiple ‘messages about emotion, mood, attitudes, character, intelligence’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p.11). Those kinds of messages are transmitted only throughout the rapid signals of the multi-signal system. Although the transmitted information depends only on the rapid signals that move the face muscles, the static and slow signals can affect the subjective impression the observer might have, since a person’s age, sex and race is mirrored by the static and slow signals.

**Micro Expressions and the Communication Gap**

The facial expressions on which we will focus in this part are based on the rapid signals that include macro and micro expressions. As the co-father of the micro expressions, which are involuntarily provoked in a split of a second and which ‘can cover real emotions the person is attempting to conceal’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p.14), Ekman found out, that even people who try to mask their real feelings can’t actively hinder themselves from revealing the truth within this brief split of a second. Goman (2008) explains the reason for it with the following words: ‘we don’t think before we feel. Initial-reaction expressions tend to show up on the face before we’re even conscious of experiencing an emotion’ (Goman 2008, p.62). Hereby the art lies not only in detecting the micro-expression, since the real understanding of this nonverbal cue can be only gathered if the face is observed and analysed throughout its subtle changes, which can be considered as a method that reduces the Communication Asymmetries enormously.

Whenever people try to mask their true emotions either for themselves through repression or to others, micro-expressions are created, which slip out in one-fifths of a second. Consequently, unlike regular macro-expressions, micro-expressions can’t be faked but can’t be detected that easily either. However, sometimes people recognize the subtle expression and have the feeling that another person is sad even though he laughed.

Putting these insights into the context of leadership we clearly see the connection. If a leader manages to get more sensible to subtle changes and deviations in the facial
expressions of his followers, he will be able to see which follower might be a silent opponent, who would never show his disapproval in public. In another scenario the leader might be able to support one of his team members who might fears not being capable of doing the job he is asked to. Since people do often not show their fear by covering through a simple smile, such an ability to understand facial expressions can help the leader to anticipate the Communication Gap and to better lead and support the individuals in the group, detect eventual problems, avoid conflicts and communicate on a trustworthy basis. The latter is especially depended on the leader’s sensitivity towards facial expressions, since followers will recognize the leader’s help and might come directly to the leader in case of future inconsistencies.

But in general, covering one’s feelings does not necessarily correlate with wanting to tell a lie. Often people experienced horrible things wherefore they just try to forget or suppress the related emotions. As a matter of fact, detecting a certain micro-expression can never be considered as having revealed the truth, because we may ’still misinterpret the motive behind the behaviour’ (Goman 2008, p.59). Furthermore, from the facial expression we cannot jump to the conclusion if the attempt to hide the emotions is done as an unconscious personal concealment or in order to avoid that others detect them deliberatively. However, detecting them helps to anticipate the Communication Gap and to actively work against its arising.

The findings of Ekman are so important, that he even developed the Facial Action Coding System, which is a system that has been successfully used so far by many airports to increase the security through the detection of people who might be willing to import or export drugs or who are involved in other crimes. Nevertheless, we should not forget that a person who shows that he’s stressed and sad, is not necessarily a culprit. He might just be said because his brother died and he is stressed to get his plane to be in time for the funeral. ‘There are a lot of words for the messages you get from the face (…), but few to describe the source of those messages’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p.8) Indeed, we never truly know the reasons for the evoked emotions, wherefore we can never judge a person upon this without knowing the full background.

It is therefore important that a leader does not directly jump to his conclusions when he sees certain expressions. Detecting facial expressions should be indeed the start to communicate with the team members, not the end. After the recognition, the actual verbal communication needs to happen. Consequently, this part of the thesis is dedicated to give leaders an understanding of how they can see when further communication is necessary and what they might communicate themselves throughout their faces, since the leader’s facial expressions can have a direct impact on the followers’ understanding of the message and their perception regarding the leader. Instead of presenting therefore a guide on what leaders should do or how to behave regarding their nonverbal communication, we want leaders to be aware of the universal existence and impact of those 7 facial expressions within a leader-follower relationship.

**Eye contact and what the eyes prevail about the thinking process**

The first step in understanding the facial expressions is to observe and hold eye contact. Indeed, with a single glance people convey all of their inner feelings, thoughts and even their secrets, since all anger, amusement, boredom, suspicion, tension and happiness is revealed through how the eyes express themselves nonverbally. Hereby pupil dilation is treated as an indicator of interest. Indeed perceiving pupil dilation stimulates the brain unconsciously and makes the person appear more attractive in the observer’s eyes. Therefore, emotions are conveyed that are based on reliable indications that can’t be
manipulated unless the person uses some drugs or finds himself in special lighting conditions that affect the dilation.

At the same time, having good eye contact increases equally sympathy, social connection and evokes the association of listening during conversations. However, too much eye contact can be at the same time negative. People who are staring, for example, are likely to decrease the link between both parties, since it might induce a frightening or threatening side effect. Therefore, overdoing eye contact can be respect less, intimidating or dominating.

This is especially important since people focus on imaginary triangles that are either created between the eyes and the forehead or the eyes and the mouth. Hereby the latter represents the social gaze area (right picture) that is frequented while flirting whereas the first option outlines the Business gaze area (left picture). It does not necessarily mean that in a business situation the social gaze area needs to be completely avoided.

However, in serious business interactions a business gaze is more impacting. On the other hand, insufficient eye contact is often considered as impolite, dishonest or uninterested. Liars are for example avoiding eye contact in the case of a spontaneous lie whereas long prepared and rehearsed lies are often staged by the liars by holding too much eye contact, which is equally a sign of dishonesty. However, we are not able to jump directly to the conclusion that in such cases of eye contact avoidance the opposite party is lying. It can equally be the case that the topic is so intimate that it is difficult for the conversation partners to keep up their eye contact as it would be normally. Non-involvement or disrespect regarding the other person are equally possible reasons of breaking the eye contact.

Often however, people tend to break the eye contact if they are thinking. Through NLP (neurolinguistic programming) thoughts of people can be detected by observing their eye movements. Indeed, different parts of the brain are stimulated when people think. Depending on the thoughts or information that is searched for, eyes proceed in different movements and reveal therefore what kind of thing was in the mind of the observed.

The seven universal expressions

Now, we will have a closer look on the seven facial expressions that are universally applicable. The following insights are intended to be helpful for leaders in order to better understand how their followers, communication or negotiation partners really feel and to therefore anticipate communication issues before they arise. At the same time, leader will get aware on how their facial expressions look alike when they are surprised, terrified, disgusted, scorning, angry, happy or sad. These expressions will be first of all exemplified throughout an explicative picture from the book “Unmasking the Face” (2003) which was created in co-production with the father of the micro-expressions Professor Ekman, who we mentioned previously. Since the pictures come from this co-production, they represent the perfect aid to illustrate the information we wish to convey. In a second step, we will show examples of leaders in different situations where their facial expressions are showing the universal expression.

- **Surprise**

According to the researchers Ekman and Friesen (2003), there exist different kinds of surprises that create slightly different facial expressions. However, in order to cope with the complexity of the problems that might arise during a certain communication, it
might be helpful to see which kind of surprise is evoked by the conveyed message, since indeed each kind of surprise will subsequently cause a different reaction. Indeed, their difference depends on whether a surprise was really completely unexpected or only ‘misexpected’. The latter is for example given if leaders from various departments of the company are invited to a meeting and many enter at the same time. We expect a leader A and B to be amongst the crowd. When we recognize that instead of A and B, the leaders C and D enter the room, we ‘misexpected’ the situation. Instead of the heads of the marketing department, the leaders from logistics presented themselves. However, ‘unexpected’ would be a situation when people expect that all leaders are there and then suddenly the Vice President arrives; a situation for which nobody was prepared. In short, every unusual happening is surprising if it could not be anticipated beforehand. Hereby, it does not matter if it is a smell, a taste, a sight or a sound, which appears out of a sudden.

At the same time, surprise is the briefest of all universal facial expressions since ‘once you have evaluated the unexpected or ‘misexpected’ event, you move quickly from surprise into another emotion’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p.35). Because people often get surprised in situations that are dangerous, the following expression is very often fear.

Surprise shows itself by high raised, but curved eyebrows and wide opened eyelids. The mouth is very often opened whereby the lower jaw drops open without any tension. So the mouth is not stretched at all. Across the forehead we can additionally recognize horizontal wrinkles, which appear all across the forehead. Of course surprise can vary in terms of intensity whereby the more wrinkles or wider opened eyes or different raised eyebrows can result.

We can basically distinguish between 4 different intensities of surprise that might be helpful to know in order to reduce the Communication Gap already in this early stage through the nonverbal codes. The first one is the ‘questioning surprise’, the second one an ‘amazed surprise’, then the ‘dazed surprise’ and finally the surprise that presents itself in the face of a person who is physically exhausted (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). The following four pictures show four different leaders, which found themselves in the situation of surprise. We can see the surprise written on George W. Bush’s, Pep Guardiola’s, Lady Diana’s and Bill Clinton’s faces. (From left to right). Each of these situations represents moments in which an unexpected event happened. We can see it clearly that Lady Diana was truly surprised by the Paparazzi who took this picture, since she did not anticipate a paparazzi to be standing her where she was, even though her life makes this to a common habit and usual circumstance. At the same time, we can see that George W. Bush is not only surprised. Indeed, some indicators of fear are mirrored in his eyes, too, which can be caused by the fact that he feared to get arrested in Geneva on torture charges.
Fear

Indeed the facial expressions of fear and surprise are really close, which confirms our previous example. However, according to Ekman and Friesen (2003) there are three ways in which the expressions and feelings differ from each other.

- First, surprise can generally not be seen as unpleasant or terrible whereas strong fear is considered to be the most horrible emotion that people can have.
- Secondly, people cannot be surprised by something familiar. However, they can for example still fear going to difficult meetings although they know what he will do and how the pain will feel like.
- The third difference is that surprise and fear do not have the same duration. While surprise is considered as the briefest of all emotions, fear can generally last for a longer period.

Furthermore, fear is one of the emotions that are most of the time followed by other expressions since fear is not a human’s natural state; it is more a state of emergency. Often, emotions are blended together, inducing fear simultaneously with either sadness, anger of disgust. Indeed, people might become angry or disgusted and if the painful moment is enduring sadness follows fear in many cases. When the threat no longer exists happiness gains the upper hand.

Fear shows itself on the face through raised eyebrows. In contradiction to what surprise does with the eyebrows, they are not highly raised and curved. The expression of fear lets them be straightened while the inner corners of the brows are drawn together (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). Such as for surprise, the eyes are widely opened through a raised upper eyelid, but a certain tension can be recognized in the lower lid.

This process is indeed universal for all people since it is ‘triggered by impulses from the nervous system’s fight or flight response’ (Goman 2008, p.46). Furthermore, when people stand under stress, have a certain tension or are under pressure the blinking rate of six to eight times per minute strongly increases. Consequently, the assumption that blinking rates are linked to lying is not necessarily correct, since light conditions or other external factors can play against or for a more important need to blink.

While ‘surprise’ has wrinkles across the complete forehead, the facial expression of fear reveals horizontal wrinkles across some parts of the forehead. Very extreme is the fact that the eyes that reveal fear can occur with or without other indicators of fear (Ekman & Friesen 2003). Consequently, different meanings are transmitted, where it sometimes means worry, pain or apprehension. Depending on what the wrinkles and the mouth look like, this grading can be made. As a matter of fact, the mouth does not necessarily show fear as much as the eyes do. Like in the situation of surprise, the mouth is opened but the lips are tense, drawing back the corners of the lips. However, the ‘intensity is shown in the eyes, with the raising of the upper lid and the tensing of the lower lid increasing as the intensity of the fear increases’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p. 55).
The first picture shows Becky Hammon during her time as a professional basket player, when she was afraid of her enemies during a game. She later became the first female assistant coach in the NBA for the Spurs Basketball Team. We can clearly see the fear in her eyes and the eyebrows, which are raised and pulled together. Lady Diana’s face is mainly talking through her eyes. Her fear was caused by her haunted thoughts of getting murdered in a car accident. In this moment she revealed that she recognized the animosity of Prince Philippe towards herself. The high raised eyebrows that Diana has can be equally detected in Berlusconi’s face (third below), whereby his lips are slightly stretched horizontally back to the ears. George W. Bush opens his mouth in the shocking moment, whereby he shows more fear than the other treated female leaders or the president of Milan. Indeed, we can see that former U.S. President George W. Bush was afraid of getting arrested during the scheduled trip to Switzerland for the torture charges. Since Switzerland represents international territory outside the U.S. it would have been legal to arrest him. Because of this fear he cancelled his speech at the Jewish gala in February 2016.

- Disgust / Contempt

“Disgust is a feeling of aversion” (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p. 66). People can either find a taste, a smell, a sight, a sound or a touch disgusting, which induces a certain kind of disagreement and a natural ‘getting-rid-of’ or ‘getting-away-from’ response (Ekman & Friesen, 2003). But apart from the senses, people can equally be disgusted by an appearance, idea or action of another person that stands in strong contradiction to the beliefs of the observer. Disgust is very close to contempt in terms of feelings. However, contempt cannot be induced through a smell or a sight for example. It is always dependent on another person’s action or appearance. After experiencing disgust or contempt people often tend to feel angry. Moreover, disgust is often used to cover the anger of people, since society does not allow anger to be expressed towards other people. Interestingly, the reason why people mask their true angry feeling does not match with what people prefer to see. Indeed, followers prefer to be faced with anger than with disgust, although anger is the one, which is not socially accepted (Ekman & Friesen 2003). This insight is extremely important for leaders. Instead of trying to mask their anger because a follower did something wrong, leaders should show their anger in order for the team to understand what went wrong. Masking anger will induce facial expressions of disgust or contempt, which followers might take personally. This is a psychological problem that complicates the leader-follower relationship.
Disgust manifests itself in the first place not through the eyes specifically, but rather through the lips. The expression of disgust is usually accompanied by elongated blinking rates often used when people naturally try to exclude their communication partner or in order to block the information from coming through. Often people look down at the same time as their head moves behind. During this movement, the eyes are closed and open themselves afterwards. Indeed, the nose and mouth are way more informative in this case. The nose is wrinkled, which induces that the upper lip gets raised; the cheeks are high, pushing up the lower eyelid.

Depending on if the situation evokes disgust or if the person is speaking about something disgusting, the intensity varies. Indeed, people who speak about a disgusting meal which took place several weeks ago might not be disgusted anymore when they talk about it. However, certain micro-expressions reveal still disgust. ‘With disgust you cannot make the variations in facial expression by changing one part of the face, as you were able to do it with fear and surprise’ (Ekman & Friesen 2007, p.77), because the used muscles to create the facial expression of disgust are connect all movements at the same time. Raising the upper-lip raises therefore equally the cheeks and minimizes size of the eye since the lower eyelid is folded upwards. We do not necessarily always see the teeth of the disgusted person, as in the case of Sarkozy. In July 2014 Sarkozy was revolted by the people’s attempt to charge him for corruption and the violation of legal secrecies, which let him have this facial expression (left below).

In situations where leaders try to hold back or even hide their feelings from the public, because they know that they are steadily observed by their followers, the lips stay together, as we can see it in the picture of Pep Guardiola (second above) during a press conference where he confirmed that he would leave the Spanish football club Barcelona for the FC Bayern Munich. Indeed, he was disgusted that he needed to leave even though it was his personal decision, as he claimed that Lealing Barcelona was a decision that truly hurt him. This same expression of disgust can be seen in José Mourinho’s face (third one from the left). Both coaches forbid themselves any further comments about the situations by keeping the lips shut. Angela Merkel showed disgust in an even more expressive way, where her whole face depicted her feelings. Indeed, the chancellor was disgusted by the fact that even after so many attempts to get to know what Russia wanted in the Ukraine, she got again no more from Putin than just denials. Merkel was obviously nauseated by this recurring behaviour.
Contempt

Contempt represents itself on the face in a slight variation of disgust. It’s characteristics are closed lips that are even pressed together whereby one corner is raised up on the side. This facial expression evokes associations of an arrogant person who clearly disregards what the communication partner said. It basically stands for rejection and is a facial expression that kills all further communication and relationships between any leader and follower, even if contempt shows itself often only within the micro expressions.

The facial expression of contempt we can see in José Mourinho’s face, which made him often to a coach who is not loved by football fans. His reputation was already not that good and at the same time the football club Chelsea had bad results, wherefore he was fired. In the same time his contempt is blended with anger. However, a certain deviation of contempt is arrogance or too much self-confidence, which we can recognize in George W. Bush’s face during the State Department ceremony in January 2009. With the example of Hillary Clinton we can see, that often contempt or scorn is very well hidden and only by correctly observing the transition in her facial expressions, contempt gets revealed (which we tried to grasp here in the picture below on the right side).

Anger

Anger, as it is blended within the picture of contempt of José Mourinho, can be considered as one of the most dangerous, if not, the most dangerous emotion of all, since it is directly linked to losing control in a certain way. Of course anger can arise from different aspects. Frustration plays an important role if the anger concerns things that are within the person’s personal sphere of responsibility. If on the other hand anger is caused through another individual, like for example within a leader-follower relationship, it can be easily transformed depending on how threatening the individual can be for you. If a follower is ‘obviously unable to hurt you, you are more likely to feel contempt than anger’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p.79). If on the other hand a follower’s action makes a leader feel powerless, fear is likely to be engaged. But not only cases where leaders or followers feel personally engaged, can make them angry. If their morals, values and beliefs of team members are neglected because of any suitable reason, they can easily become angry as well. Moreover, people differ in terms of what
can make them become angry, how they will afterwards react upon this angeriness and then equally for how long they will be in this mood. Indeed ‘anger varies in intensity, from slight irritation or annoyance to rage or fury’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p. 81).

As a matter of fact, there is no recipe that can help leaders to avoid their followers’ anger, but by detecting the indications of this expression, leaders might be able to smoothen the situation before it escalates completely, if not the leader is the angry one.

Anger appears as a facial expression in the following way: The eyebrows are lowered and the corners of the eyebrow are pushed together, wherefore vertical wrinkles are created between the two eyebrows. Such as in fear, the eyebrows are drawn together but they are raised at the same time. Furthermore, the eyelids are tensed, supporting the intense gaze. The nose gets a little bit wrinkled and depending on the intensity and situation of the anger the mouth has its shape. The mouth can be for example in a lip-pressed-against-lip shape (Ekman & Friesen 2003), which people often do if they need to hold themselves back. This situation can we observe in the first picture below on the left, where Obama is clearly angry. Although the perspective of this picture makes it more difficult to clearly see the indicators, we are still able to detect them. By pressing the lips together, leaders assure indeed that they won’t scream even though they feel like doing so. That Angela Merkel feels this need depicts the second photograph below, as well as the one of the French football manager Arsene Wenger. The picture of Anna Wintour, the English editor-in-chief of the American Vogue, visualizes that even without knowing how the eyes look like we are able to understand her anger, just by observing her narrowed lips.

Nervous people have dry mouths and need therefore to lick their lips more often than others in cases of anxiety or concern. Biting on the lips can be seen as an indicator of trying to hold back something. Knowing this can be absolutely important since in business transparency is one of the key factors for success. If information gets hold back asymmetries are likely to be built which can be deadly for the company. Therefore it is sometimes good that anger is not always silent. Often leaders can’t hold themselves back from shouting. If people really scream, the mouth is opened and forms a square shape, whereby the whole rest of the indicators like eyebrows and eyes glare are comparable. As a matter of fact, the shouting represents the increased intensity of anger. We see Putin on the right side (below) starting to increase his anger while he blends his anger with disgust. This same glance in the eye is what we perceive by looking at the picture of Tyra Banks. The nose wrinkling and the lips and position of the lower jaw
with the teeth look exactly alike. Of course, anger is as well an emotion that can blend with others. In the case where anger transforms itself slightly to disgust, we can see that the mouth is not in a square but we can still see the teeth while the lower jaw is pushed in front. Mussolini shows us with his facial expression an even more increased form of anger. The picture of Arsene Wenger is perfect to visualize the square shape of the mouth, which is formed in the highest extent of anger. Depending on the tensed eyes we can assume the intensity of the anger and whether this anger results for example in sadness or contempt. However, as Eleanor Roosevelt explains it, anger is to be treated with caution, since “anger is only one letter short of danger”.

- **Happiness**

Comparing happiness with the other emotions, we can tell that happiness is indeed positive whereas the others are negatively associated. Only surprise can be either positive or negative. However, happiness can occur in the most different moments and for the most various reasons. Pleasure is for example something that can make people happy, since it concretely represents the opposite of pain. Excitement is a happy feeling since people are not bored. Relief-happiness is what is induced when we have good news that makes us happy and when our self-concept is affirmed we equally feel happiness.

But not only the source for happiness can vary from one situation to another, the intensity is equally different, starting from a silent smile to a grin to a huge laughter that might even end up with tears. Happiness shows itself through any intensity of smiling, raised cheeks and eyes crinkled in the corner of the eye. However, if the eyes don’t truly smile, the mouth just tries to mask another emotion.

In addition to that, we do not only see happiness in really happy moments or just after it was blended with other emotions like surprise for example. When the surprise is positive, happiness is the consequence. Blending contempt with happiness is equally possible if someone is happy to feel superior to others for example. But people do not only blend naturally. Especially for example during interviews with ambiguous questions, where interviewers try to trap politicians, the latter blends their fear for example with happiness. The politicians do consequently as if they were not personally
touched in a negative way. They might fear the situation, which can be seen in the upper part of the face, the eyes and forehead, but still they smile with their lower part of the face, inducing that they will stay to get their teeth done.

‘A fake smile is the most common facial expression used to mask other emotions’ (Goman 2008, p.72). However, fake smiles do not necessarily mean that people are lying. Especially in a business setting, smiles are used that differ enormously from the true smile since individuals tend not to feel such an emotional closeness to the colleagues that the real smile is revealed. As a matter of fact, one of the other 18 ways of smiling that Paul Ekman found during his studies is used to express on a professional way the happiness. However, the fact that a leader is for example not completely implicated in the process or idea can be revealed since a genuine smile creates always wrinkles in the corners of the eyes, whereas the faked smile does not reach the eyes. But smiles are not only created through eyes. The crow’s feet wrinkles on the eyes are indeed very important indicators to be sure that the happiness, joy or laughter is real. On the first picture we can see Sarkozy, who is obviously satisfied with the situation. This picture was taken four years ago, when he thought for a moment that the problem with Greece was solved. Aung San Suu Kyi, the Leader of the National League for Democracy shows equally satisfaction during her visit in Germany in April 2014 for the “Dining for Woman”. The pictures of George W. Bush and Mark Zuckerberg, the chairman, chief executive, and co-founder of Facebook, show a slightly more intensive happiness, since they even open their mouths to give a genuine smile.

This true happiness is what we can equally perceive from Lady Diana’s face (first below) and the one of Nelson Mandela, where the smile covers truly the whole face including raised cheeks, wrinkles on the eyes and a bright smile. Both, Angela Merkel and Bill Clinton (the last both pictures) smile like we normally don’t really know them. In 2014, during a televised press conference in Belgium, the reports started to sing a birthday song to Angela Merkel, who turned 60 that day. Bill Clinton’s smile is equally a birthday grin, which happened in 2015, when he became 69 years old.
Sadness

Sadness is an emotion that stands in contradiction to happiness. Sadness can occur out of multiple reasons, which are most of the time closely linked to disappointment, hopelessness and losses. The loss of a love, an opportunity, a person can create this long-lasting passive feeling. However, it is able to blend with other emotions such as anger and fear. Sometimes sadness is even blended with happiness in the rare melancholic moments where reflections are made regarding the past, which appears to be so much better than the present.

In general, sad people have eyebrows where their inner corners are raised and maybe a little bit drawn together. Consequently, the upper eyelid follows this movement and appears equally raised, whereby a triangle is formed at the outer corners of the eyelids. Moreover the corners of the mouth are downturned. But when sadness is only detected on the mouth, the facial expressions are not clearly definable anymore.

We can see clearly in Angela Merkel’s and Nelson Mandela’s faces (below from the left) that the eyebrows are raised in their inner corners. Their sadness is pure without being blended with any other emotions. Lady Diana’s face visualizes the lost focus in the eyes. Her eyes ‘speak in the most revealing and accurate language because of the vast amount of information they convey about internal processes’ (Goman 2008, p.41). Sad people are often with their thoughts somewhere else, which we can clearly see here. In addition to that, the corners of Lady Diana’s lips are pulled down. This same expression is what Obama shows us after holding a discourse in 2008 about the scandal surrounding Illinois Government. Nevertheless, he slightly presses the lips together, which shows little signs of anger. The same missing focus in the eyes can be recognized in Sarkozy’s gaze, whereas his sadness is really blended with anger, as his pressed-together lips reveal it. This picture was taken when the discussion arose about his attempt to bribe a senior judge because of the allegations that he faced starting by ‘illegal financing’ of his presidential campaign four years ago and many other accusations, which made him obviously not only sad but angry as well.
**Styles of facial expressions**

Apart from how these insights on facial expressions help leaders to understand what followers might feel, we already explained why it is important for leaders to equally be aware that they send information throughout their personal facial expressions. Since the developed seven facial expressions are universal, they can be understood everywhere in negotiations with any country and between leaders such as between followers, while we do not even need to hear the words to see how someone feels about something. As a natural fact, followers observe their leaders and try to read their faces to get to know whether they did something good or wrong for example. Consequently, leaders should analyse for themselves in which of the eight existing categories of facial expression-styles they would put themselves according to Ekman and Friesen (2003), in order to better grasp why followers react in certain ways.

- **A ‘Withholder’-type** is somebody who holds back his feelings and tries not to be too expressive.
- **A ‘Reveller’** on the other hand is very expressive and followers will directly see the emotions the leader show through the feelings they have. Obviously the question of expressiveness finds its roots in the static facial signals.
- **Then there are of course those leaders who can be considered as ‘Unwitting expressors’.** They are not aware of the fact that they reveal their feelings if they show some emotion. Consequently, they find themselves in the situation where they cannot understand why followers know that they are angry even though they tried so stay friendly for example.
- **‘Blanked expressors’** are the contrary. Those leaders are absolutely sure that their face is an open book and that their followers can and should see how they feel and what they want. However, their face is completely neutral and can be rather be compared with an unwritten page.
- **‘Substitute expressors’** are those who unwillingly substitute the facial expression of anger with the one of sadness. Followers might therefore become confused and will be hindered from correctly understanding the leader’s message since a message from a sad person is comprehended in another way then if it is transmitted by an angry one. Consequently, especially leaders who are substitute expressors should be aware of the image they transmit and that the sent signals do not correspond to their feelings.
- **Leaders who show certain emotions with some parts of their faces whereas they do not even feel like this are called ‘Frozen-affect expressors’.**
- **The problem of ‘Every-ready expressors’** is that their ‘initial response to almost anything is to look surprised, worried, disgusted, etc.’ (Ekman & Friesen 2003, p.156). Consequently, followers might be afraid of approaching those ‘every-ready expressors’. If the leader is able to make the first step in communicating, this problem can be reduced.
- **‘Flooded-affect expressors’** are those who reveal exactly what they feel. Their problem lies in their incapacity of being neutral. Indeed, those leaders are considered to be moody and jump from one feeling to another instead of coming back to their neutral standpoint in between the switchings.

Indeed, as a leader it is absolutely important to know to which of these categories one can count himself in order to analyse why, where and when communication problems might arise between them and their followers and how to approach the discussion about this topic.
3.3.2.1.2. **Gestures, postures and head movements**

Gestures are particularly effective to communicate a memorable message or to capture and enhance followers’ attention during a speech. Thanks to gestures like hand movements, leaders can help their followers to better understand their messages and this especially when the used words are rather weak (Holler et al. 2014). Indeed, according to several previous researches, Krauss et al. (1996), gestures help their speakers to deliver coherent contents of speeches that are difficult to understand for the audience or when the used words refer to things that can be represented in “spatial or motoric terms”. The hand gestures of leaders express and highlight the important, relevant and outstanding things of their speeches, which consequently allow them to show their ‘feeling, needs and convictions’ (Goman 2011, p.53). Moreover, in some cases, gestures manage to communicate special aspects that words cannot explain as clearly as hand movements. Thanks to this nonverbal channel certain terms, expressions, parts of speeches or whole messages can become more relevant and meaningful.

The level of these hand gestures grows in terms of height when leaders become passionate about what they are transmitting. Indeed, those gestures show their whole engagement and involvement regarding the message. For this reason, the necessity of the employment of gestures during a presentation gets clarified. Indeed, throughout this procedure, leaders become deeply connected to their audience. The utilization of hand gestures and their importance depends as well on the context, the time and the culture of the user. For example, orators like Hitler (left picture below) and Mussolini (right picture) used their hands a lot to convey their messages and to amplify their immediate necessity. When we look at their communication from today’s perspective, their performances might appear as ‘too much’. However, at that time it allowed them to transmit their message efficiently to their audience, since the audience could feel their passion and involvement.

Goman (2011) explains that if speakers don’t use their hands (by letting them hang limply on their body sides or if they clench them in the basic “fig leaf” posture), it often induces for followers that their leaders are not emotionally involved in the issue he or she is talking about. Moreover, when they hide their hands, it can even have an impact on the trust and credibility the audience beholds upon their leader. They might think that their leaders don’t the importance and necessity of the topic or even that they are inefficient communicators.

In contrast to this, by using their hands with purpose, they can gain credibility and attention from the audience. Coaches like Carol Kindsey Goman (2008, 2011) advise leaders to use hand gestures in a “proper way” because it can help them to stay personally focused on the message they are about to convey.

As Krauss et al. (1996, p.4) said, ‘all hand gestures are hand movements, but not all hand movements are gestures, and it is useful to draw some distinction among the types of hand movements people make’. Indeed, according to several authors, (Krauss et al. 1996; Schmitz 2012; Bonaccio et al. 2016; Goman 2011; Ekman 1976), we can classify
hand gestures in three categories: Adapters, Emblems and Illustrators, which we will discuss in further details on the following pages.

- **Adapters**

First of all, there is the category of “Adapters”. The latter refers to movement such as self-touch, that reveal the speakers’ internal state (Bonaccio et al. 2016). Hereby, listeners can detect if their leaders feel nervous or if they are uncomfortable when they communicate through distracting mannerisms. If we take the example of anxiety, speech-performing leaders are likely to touch mechanically their faces or hair during their speeches, conversations or interviews (Krauss et al. 2016; Schmitz 2012). For James (2013), whether leader or not, people have gestures they make naturally and unconsciously. For example, people clench their fists when they are angry or they agonize. In a general way, when leaders touch the top of their bodies or caress their neck with their hand no matter if it’s during a speech, an interview or a simple discussion, they can appear anxious or uncomfortable. When they scratch themselves or when they just don’t know what to do with their hands, listeners can interpret that as a sign of discomfort depending, of course, on the context. As Pease & Pease (2006) explain, leaders are constantly observed. It’s a natural behaviour for all high performance coaches, CEOs, politicians, celebrities or members of royal families to try to hide their personal feelings for professional manners and especially when they are nervous. Obviously, they don’t want to convey their anxiety but it often happens that their body language talks for itself. Their feelings appear through gestures that simply escape them naturally. Unconsciously, they will readjust their clothes, their watch or jewel or they will touch their bag. Pease & Pease (2006, p.119), exemplify in this context Prince Charles and his famous ‘Cuff-link-Adjust’ to feel more secure each time he walks in the middle of the crowd. Such as any other ordinary person, he has this special feeling of anxiety when he is confronted to the judgement of the audience during his public appearance.

For women, “Adapters” exists as well. However, they are presented in a slightly different way and are definitely not as easy to detect, as for men. Indeed, women can shadow their nervousness and reassure themselves by touching their handbags for example. Taking the example of the British Royal family, experts in body language such as Pease & Pease (2006) explain that the women used to clutch their handbag or flowers when they walk in front of a crowd. On the following pictures, Princess Ann and Queen Elisabeth are probably hiding their anxiety. More than just holding their accessories just with one hand, both women used two hands and protect themselves from their insecurity, thanks to that kind of constructed barrier.
It is therefore necessary not to assimilate too quickly the meaning of each gesture since it is the whole body language that needs to be interpreted. While some gestures, have a certain meaning in a specific context, they are just natural movements without any meaning in other contexts. Taking the previous example of people adjusting their clothes, we can say that in some cases, they do that because they are uncomfortable. In some other cases, they just need to readjust their clothes without any emotional link behind. Here, we can illustrate effectively this same example with Nicolas Sarkozy (first picture below). During an interview he expressed his discomfort through readjusting his jacket while he was arguing against some scientists. On the second picture, it is however more difficult to say if the American actor, scriptwriter and producer Will Ferrell, feels insecure, or not.

The barrier that leaders place between themselves and the rest of the world shows that even the greatest ones can feel sometimes uncomfortable. In the following pictures, we clearly see that Lady Diana and Michelle Obama are caressing the top of their hands. This is clearly, a natural movement to comfort and reassure themselves. On the third one, Hitler adopt this same kind of gesture that he used to do in order to balance his feeling of sexual inadequacy due to the fact he didn’t have his two testicles. For men, it generally reveals a social insecurity, rejection or vulnerability (Westside Toastmasters 2016). By positioning their hand in this way, it feels for them like if another person holds their hand.
Not only in public situation like the beforehand mentioned once, but equally during meetings and negotiations, the gesture and postures of people around the table and the place of the coffee cup in front of them, send signals concerning their openness regarding a new project (Pease & Pease 2006). When people are not convinced, once again, they have a tendency to form a barrier with their drink. The study of all those unconscious gestures is called ‘Synergology’, word created by Tuchet in 1996, which explains that the hands allow an unconscious language.

On his website “Speaklikeapro.co.uk”, Skellan (2015), animator of seminar and authors of Body language manuals, develops as well what he calls ‘Batons gestures’. For him, they constitute the essential gestures for a speaker. For Goman, 2011, this category regroups as well the ‘facilitators’ (p.53). Indeed, she analysed hand gestures that are located in the area between the waist and the shoulders and evokes several examples of how those gestures can facilitate the understanding of someone’s communication. More than giving rhythm to the presentation, leaders transmit information according to the words that are evoked by the presenter. Those ‘Baton gestures’ of ‘Facilitators’ transmit feelings even better than the words themselves and appear so often that many people use them even unconsciously. However, generally listeners perceive information but are not able to describe precisely what the exact meaning of those signals is.

If we link hand gestures with leadership, we can say that leaders facilitate the understanding of their audience through their gestures. For example, several authors as Goman (2011) assume that when leaders’ palms are open, showing the top, it communicates a need or that they are requesting something. However, when these same palms are in the same position but inclined to another angle (to 45 degrees approximately), this sends a message of openness and of candidness. Gestures that the famous Michael Jordan is used to make ritually during his matches. The Business man Steve Jobs and the American politician Sarah Palin used as well those specific gestures during one of their speeches.

When, conversely, leaders direct their open palms towards the direction of the floor, they show how powerful and confident they are (such as Silvio Berlusconi, former US admiral Michael Mullen or the prime British minister David Cameron on the following pictures).
If we consider equally the gestures that are not only articulated from the waist up to the shoulders we can perceive even more information. The experts on body language, Pease & Pease (2006), developed different interpretations regarding the face-hands positioning of people. For the experts, leaders are communicating boredom when one hand is supporting the head (below right). When Bill Clinton is touching his chin, he is toughing about something and trying to make a decision (left picture below). Finally, when he covers his mouth with his hand he is rather sceptical or has doubts about something (middle). The following images of Bill Clinton are perfectly illustrated by Nick Skellan in 2015.

Moreover, the simple positions of leaders’ feet and the direction of their body generally communicate information. As Goman (2011, p.38) explains, more than just being a simple way of locomotion, ‘our feet and legs are (…) also the forefront of “fight, flight, or freeze” reactions. And they are “programmed” to respond faster than the speed of thought.’ This means, that it is possible to see what people really think by looking at their feet and the orientation of their bodies. Indeed, the lower part of the body is unrehearsed. Often, even if people try to fake gestures or attitudes, they are not aware that the truth is revealed throughout their feet.

Pease & Pease (2006) proof with an experiment that managers, weather men or women, increase considerably the amount of their unconscious feet gestures when they communicate a lie. Indeed, they try to take the control of their gestures and of their facial expressions but in the majority of the cases, they do not think about their feet. Moreover, Ekman (2003) found out that it was easier for listeners to detect a lie when they can observe the speaker’s whole body.

Pease & Pease (2006) also developed the different meanings of each feet and legs position as well as those of the postures. They explained indeed that ‘the direction in which a person points his body or feet is a signal of where he would prefer to be going’ (p.279). Here, we can clearly see that the body can communicate the internal state of the speakers.

- **Emblems**

Secondly, there are gestures considered as signs, which are symbolic and generally understood by people belonging to the same community (Ambady & Rosenthal 1998). Those kind of meaningful gestures, called “Emblems” (or less often ‘Shrug’ (Ekman 1976)), can even substitute words and are more useful to clarify the communication between people in day-to-day interactions than during speeches. It can be when people agree, thank, congratulate or says goodbye with the simple use of their hands (Krauss et al., 1996).
Here, emblems are illustrated by the pope Francis, showing that he didn’t hear, what has been said, David Ovelowo showing to Neil Patrick Harris that he does not completely agree with him during the animation of the Academy Awards and Nelson Mandela, saluting the audience.

It is therefore important to be aware that the cultural context can change the meaning of some gestures, even for the emblems, which are subsequently not always “universal”, conversely to what Ambady & Rosenthal (1998) presented. Such as in general for body language, some gestures can create confusion since they might have a different meaning in different cultures. We must be careful when we interpret body language since it’s necessary to consider the whole communication and the global context to be able to interpret the meaning of body language and gestures properly.

There are 3 main emblems (among other gestures) that especially create confusion since their meanings can be understood in a completely different way regarding the context and the culture of the communicator:

- First of all, if we consider the example of the fingertip touch or the “ring” (Pease & Pease 2006), its delivery can be understood in the following way. While it means “OK” in the USA (like in the Nixon picture), it can be perceived as an insult for people coming from Latin America or from Iran. It is comprehended as “Zero” for Russian citizens, as “Money” for Japanese or as “Perfect” for Europeans.

- Secondly, the Thumb-up of Richard Nixon in the picture is an Ok sign. However, it can as well be used and understood in various different ways regarding the culture and the context where the exchange takes place (Pease & Pease, 2006).

- Thirdly, the “V” sign illustrates as well the fact that the spatiotemporal context and the culture can change the interpretation of a symbol. Here, we can see Winston Churchill, showing “Victory”. However, if we go back to some earlier centuries, British soldiers showed their two fingers when they wanted to depict to their enemies that they still had their fingers to shot them. Today, in some European countries, it just symbolises the number two or “peace”. But when the V is reversed, it induces something obscene for some other cultures.
The symbols of the emblems and of the gestures in general should be analysed with a lot of precaution regarding all the different meanings they can adopt depending on the time, the culture, and the situation. Generally, during speeches, emblems are more common for politicians in America than in Europe. They are more used by leaders in areas where they need to communicate expressively, whereby they need to have communication not only through speeches but as well within direct dialogues. Emblems are especially helpful for sport coaches or police officers during the execution of certain missions, since they cannot always be heard by their players, or don’t want to be heard during interventions with criminals. In the military jobs for example, soldiers of a national army learn a non-verbally specific code, understandable for all of them in order to communicate together during regulatory interventions.

Matthias C., member of a military intervention squad explained us during the interview: ‘We know that we must join the man in front of us when he communicates the special signal that there is no danger or that we have to advance in another way (This can be by bending his knees, placing his fist on the right side of his heads etc.). The signals change according to the platoon where we work but most of the signals are harmonized within the entire National Army.’

- Illustrators

Finally, there are the “Illustrators” which help the speakers to clarify and to support what they are saying (Ambady & Rosenthal 1998). Illustrators accompany and/or illustrate the verbal message. During a speech, when leaders are talking, they can convey their message powerfully by helping themselves with those illustrators to show the semantic content of their message to the audience (Krauss et al. 1996). Illustrators include different movements (Bonaccio et al. 2016, p.7):

‘Batons’, for example when leaders use their hand to underline a special word or a specific point. Here the word “Batons” doesn’t have exactly the same meaning as the “Batons” of Skellan (2015), previously explained, but its meaning is really to emphasize a certain personally touching moment by a specific gesture.
For example, when leaders express how important something is for them, how much they care about an issue and how they are deeply involved and passionate about it, they often turn their palm towards their chest (Skellan 2015). In the previous pictures Barack Obama, John McCain and Bill Clinton are affirming that something is personally important for them.

Once again, it is necessary to be careful with the interpretations of gestures since regarding the context they can be classified in different categories.

For example, the fingertip touch of “precision grip” can have another meaning in this case (below) than the previously explained emblem. Sometimes its aim is to deliver precise, sensitive or really crucial information or arguments (here Tony Blair, Mussolini and Kofi Annan are making this baton gesture). In this case we are more dealing with a gesture that the leaders use to accompany their verbal communication.

To give a last example of “Baton gestures” and of their complexity, we need to talk about the gesture of the “fist”, used by many leaders while talking to their followers. Once again, the fist can have multiple meanings depending on the situation. It can be perceived as deep determination, it can as well be perceived as strong belief, but also as a sign of anxiety, violence or dissatisfaction. This baton gesture could as well be categorized as emblem in some cases since it represents a universal symbol of fight or of emancipation struggle in the case of Mandela for example. Indeed, as Cassely (2013) explained, that the South African leader will remain associated with the gesture of the raised arm with the clenched fist that he evoked from his condemnation in 1964 to his walk for the liberty the 11th of February 1990 (as we can see on the following pictures). This release, followed by the entire world live on television, was the symbol of the “fight for liberty”-movement, a symbol of courage and solidarity.
But even before Mandela, the fist was used and thereby more recognized as an emblem. For example, in Europe in the 30’s, no matter whether it was in France, Spain or in Germany, the sign of the tight fist was used by the members of revolutionary leftist politic movements and was well understood by everyone. In the last years, it was a general sign of protestation (Occupy Wall Street movement or Arabic revolutions). In the 60’s, this symbol has been adopted by the Black Panthers in the United States and was associated to their slogan “Power to the people”. Finally, during the Olympic games of 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos carried out one of the most iconic raised fists of the 20th century (picture on the right), which was not necessarily seen as a Black Panthers salute as many people thought, but more as a cry for freedom, (Haddow 2012).

‘Pointers/deictic movements’ this gesture is one of the most current ones since it is often used by leaders to underline, to point at or to illustrate something. Pointing at someone can as well be used to denounce something or someone, as Kobe Bryan, Lakers player does it on the first picture bellow. It can be equally used to indicate a direction: On the second picture the professional football coach of the Bayern Munich Team, Pep Guardiola, indicates to his players where they should place themselves during the game. Finally, pointers are even used by some politicians to appear closer to their audience. The expert in Body Language Marc Geffrey (2015) explains in Millar (dir., 2008) that when politicians are coached, they know how important it is to create an illusion. Then, they create an impression of proximity with the audience, as if they know them personally and it can be just by pointing at people in the crowd. On the following picture, Hillary Clinton points directly at someone. Marc Geffrey explains here that when someone is in the audience and she points him, he asks to himself if it is real or if she points at someone around him. But in television, people think she is someone really great, close to her audience and that she knows many people. The variety of the possible meanings induced by the same gesture underlines the importance that lies within understanding the gestures while taking the general context into consideration.

‘Spatials’ illustrate a distance or a size. Here for example, former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke showed a size during his recommendation speech for the security services reforms; Mark Zuckerberg (middle) presented the development of functionality and how it will grow; And Jeff Bezos explains his techniques of the two pizza rules for the efficiency of smaller team.
‘Rhythmic movements’ transmitting rhythm, frequency or time.

‘Kinetographics’ when leaders imitate actions.

For example, the sports coach we interviewed shared with us that he uses kinetogaphics to show what he expects from his players:

‘It is useful for several reasons: it helps me to explain the exercise and to keep up the attention in the meanwhile. It helps as well the team players to understand how they should do it and finally, it encourages them to act because they see that their trainer acted just before. This is especially helpful when players can show reluctance or when the exercise is complicated.’

‘Pictographs’ are used by leaders when they draw a figure just with the use of their hands to visualize or depict a fact. Once again, something that our interviewed leaders confirmed: For the sport coach and the officer responsible of a team in the “GSPR” (Or Security Group for the Presidency of the Republic in France) pictographs are used really often when leader don’t have paper or black board to show the different schema of the group’s actions or just to sum up quickly an operation before it takes place.

We can add to the Bonaccio et al. (2016) movement, the gestures of counting with the fingers which helps to illustrate and facilitate the comprehension of the outlined facts.

Here above, we can see Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft during the University of Washington graduation, Adolf Hitler during one of his speeches and Bill Clinton during a presidency campaign counting illustratively with their fingers to reinforce what they are saying.
In order to summarize and to clearly state that the hand gestures are really depending on the situation, we can take the example of Dominique Strauss-Kahn from his televised interview following the scandal of the Sofitel New York hotel. During this case, Nafissatou Diallo accused the former IMF chief of sexual assault, attempted rape and sequestration. Before he took the opportunity to explain himself, he prepared his interview in order to appear as credible as possible. However, we can detect the hidden gestures through the different insight about body language. When DSK qualified his act as a “fault”, he tightened his arms and joined his hands. This is a reserve gesture in order to protect himself. The right hand (related to control and what is exterior to us) covers the left hand (related to emotion).

With this gesture, Dominique Strauss-Kahn transmitted that he wanted to keep this interview and his emotions under control. He didn’t communicate the emotional affect during his speech. However, when the presenter encouraged him to pursue, he overcame his weakness and simultaneously, his left arm started to move. These were his emotional and personal parts that have spoken.

During the whole explanation part, DSK didn’t use a lot of hand gestures. Yet, at the end of the interview, the presenter spoke about economic issues. Directly, his gestures became animated and vivid again, since the topic made him confident. His recurring control over his gestures indicated that the interview was prepared and how uncomfortable he was with this topic.
Hand gestures, as an essential part of communication, are however better understandable when listeners observe the whole body language. This means that it is often not dissociable from the posture and the head movements. For Koppensteiner et al. (2016, p.102), a relation exists ‘between dominance and expensiveness in body postures and body movements’. Indeed, there is not only the gesture that influences the interpretation of the leaders’ communication but the movement of their whole body. Leaders can appear dominant when they associate both expansive and powerful postures and gestures like for example when they have the head up, the chest forward and their hands firmly positioned around the hips. Conversely, they will appear more trustworthy when they take less space while making less hand gestures (Koppensteiner et al. 2016) or when their head will be low this time, and their arms dangling (Bonaccio et al. 2016). This is of course completely subjective and alters from person to person.

This is what the senior consultant confirmed us as well during the interview:

'Too much hand gestures are indeed counterproductive since the audience gets distracted.'

Moreover, it’s often possible to perceive information regarding the interest and attentiveness of someone, only by reading the posture and the head movements (Schmitz, 2012). As several authors like Schmitz (2012) or Pease & Pease (2006) explained: when someone is holding his head high, he can transmit his commitment; when his head is down, he transmits negative or aggressive signals. Some head movement from high up to down low will indicate interest and encourages other people to pursue what he or she is saying.

The simple posture of sitting leaders can as well communicate interesting insights. If they are indifferent about something or if the conversation is happening in an informal context, they lean back while they lean rather forward when they are interested in something.

Finally, in this part, we need to talk as well about the touch and classify the accompanied hand gestures. As Goman (2008) explains, politicians – and leaders in general – reinforce their communication thanks to different forms of touching as well as by the avoidance of touch. When people touch someone with a higher status, it can be considered as a lack of respect or as a sign of defiance, which breaks the traditional boundaries. A few years ago, during a formal visit, Michelle Obama briefly touched the back of the Queen Elizabeth II, a fatal mistake that was equally done by the Australian Prime Minister. British citizens considered it as a lack of respect or even for some of them as an insult to the British Royalty. More broadly, in business environments, touching is considered as a signal, indicating the relationship between leaders and followers. Indeed, a leader can congratulate one of his or her followers by touching his shoulder, his back or his arm. It is less common in the reversed way.

Throughout this section of gestures, head and hand movements, we have understood that all of them have certain meanings. However, the multiplicity of meanings is the reason why movements that are evoked by leaders might be understood differently depending on the cultural and contextual surrounding. All these “rules” depending on the culture can induce misunderstandings and misinterpretation by both leaders and followers. As a matter of fact, it is important that leaders understand that their movements have a certain impact on followers and that this impact might not be the one, which was intended to be evoked. In this case, misunderstandings might arise that widen the ‘Communication Gap’.
3.3.2.2 Vocalics

The courant expression “It’s not what he said that matters, but the way he said it” shows the importance of Vocalics. Indeed, speech is not just a matter of words, or of body language, it is as well defined by paralanguage (Markel et al., 1973). For Bonaccio et al. (2016 p.8) ‘Vocalics are just as important as the message itself: Pitch level, range, intonation, volume, accent, and pronunciation influences the perception of discourse’.

The different aspects of vocalics and even the quality of voice can be useful for several reasons. Vocalics generally reinforces cues (repetitions), to complement a meaning, to accent or emphasize a part of a message, to substitute another verbal or nonverbal message, to regulate the communication, or even to contradict other signals (Stel et al. 2012; Schmitz 2012).

*Lutz K.* explains that throughout his career as chief executive Scout:

‘My tone of voice helped me a lot to get a hearing when many attendees were discussing at the same time. On the other hand, it helped me to set the focus and give a direction to the meeting.’

If we take the example of Martin Luther King (1963) in his famous Speech ‘I have a dream’, we hear that his arguments came in a crescendo (Conger 1991), wherefore the words are indeed memorable. He managed to keep up the attention until the very end and transmitted emotions through his message.

*Elard S.* sees this aspect from the same perspective:

‘Throughout my career in consulting I recognized that some of my habits provoke always the same reactions and results for followers. Especially the pitch of my voice was always of major importance. Good presenters play with different sounds, paces and volume in order to customize the listeners to a certain base value. Depending on the pitch the attention can be then drawn to certain elements of the speech, wherefore the discourse becomes much more alive, interesting and memorable. At the same time, the tone of voice exists to guide the listener through the speech and to facilitate the understanding. During hours and hours of presentation the listener needs a little help from the presenter when the crucial aspects are outlined.’

**The voice as a channel for transmitting emotions, personality and credibility**

For Goman (2011), paralinguistic communication or vocal body language (volume, pitch, inflection, pace, rhythm, rate, intensity, clarity or pauses) reveal supplementary meaning for followers. As a matter of fact, listeners won’t only evaluate the content of a message but equally the voices through which the information gets transmitted. The author even explains leaders the following (2011, p.65) ‘your voice is as distinctive as your fingerprint. It conveys subtle but powerful clues into feelings and meanings’.

Indeed, the voice, considered as a paralinguistic channel, allows leaders to express feelings and emotions through all its different aspects (Ambady & Rosenthal 1998). Mehrabian (1967) outlines in his study that Vocalics is responsible for 38% of the emotional perception of a message, a considerable amount that leaders subsequently need to take into account, since a lot of paralanguage signals exist to convey emotions.
(the energy, duration, frequency, tempo etc.). Mullennix et al. (2002) studied the so-called ‘emotive communication’ through those kind of signals and defined the vocal communication as an ‘intentional controlled expression of the emotional tone of voice’ (p.257).

The voice, as an essential nonverbal channel of communication, provides as well information regarding mood and attitude of the speaker (Laplante & Ambady 2003). It provides information about leaders attributes as their capabilities, bias or even personality (Schmitz 2012).

Elard S. gave us some insights from his daily business:

‘As a consultant for important decision-making processes it is extremely important to show the clients the necessity or danger that lies within a decision they are about to take. However, the consultant must be really careful with the emotions he conveys, since fear, hesitation or uncertainty is equally transmitted throughout the voice.’

Paralanguage helps leaders to communicate effectively on a supplementary level. Indeed, thanks to the accurate sound of speech, they can transmit self-confidence and power or a positive image to their followers. During elections, negotiations or when a change needs to be implemented, it is particularly important for leaders to make use of this gift. Conger (1991) explains that during a speech, when the speaker is anxious, stressed or lacks of confidence, he or she has usually the tendency to speak less loudly or even to make more mistakes (for example incomplete sentence, doubt or pauses, omission of a part of a sentence or of some words). Things that confident speakers obviously won’t do. A previous study shows as well that leaders with a powerful paralanguage will appear as more credible, attractive and trustworthy.

The leader’s combination of rhythm, volume and tone of voice will help followers such as athletes, employees or the believers to understand the message that their leader is trying to send them (Goman 2011).

Obama is distinguishable from others politicians for his ability to coordinate accurately those different aspect of vocalics. If we consider his “Iowa Caucus Victory” Speech (2008), we recognize that his words resonate. Indeed, his words sound like a melody and progress in a crescendo. No matter the content, his voice is so powerful that he manages to capture, involve and engage the audience with him. He encourages them to react.

For Patti Wood, expert in nonverbal communication, Obama plays with the rhythm and breaks in such a powerful way that the content of his message would be possible to become even just secondary. In the documentary Secret of body language (Millar dir., 2008) she explains that besides the content, it was especially his voice which gave the audience the indication what and how they should feel. Patti Wood even concluded her analysis by saying ‘you might not even remember the message’s exact words after he finished speaking but because of what he did, you feel something really, really powerful’.

Paralanguage represents a major determinant for communicating emotions and credibility when leaders deliver a speech. Schmitz (2012) gave the example of the transmission of intensity. If, in people’s minds, intensity is conveyed with high volume, a message can be perceived as intense when a speaker uses a loud voice accompanied by an accurate tone of voice.

Furthermore, the volume is determined by the relationship between people and gets adjusted upon its intensity and closeness. Some leaders use for example loud voice in
order to convey their message in a powerful way. Some others, however, use their voice in the exact opposite way. For example, the American Senator John McCain doesn’t try to impress people with his voice; he wants to give them the impression that he tells things as they are. He sometimes read his note, like if he was delivering crucial and specific information and appeared therefore as an expert or at least as really well prepared and informed since he did not need to make use of his loud voice. Indeed, his communicational strategy isn't based on impressiveness or spectacularly speeches. He wants people to simply perceive that he is delivering important information (Millar dir. 2008).

The power of pitch

As we said, with their pitch leaders can change the perception of meaning; they can regulate the discussion or transmit intensity (Schmitz 2012). Stel et al. (2012) even added that the tone of voice is not only influencing the followers, but has even a direct impact on the leaders themselves during the delivery. Based on 3 experiments, the authors showed that according to the level of the voice pitch, speakers perceive themselves personally in a different way.

Anita W. thinks however that:

‘The pitch of my voice is more important for my followers than for me personally. Sometimes I recognize that my pitch makes me obviously more severe than I actually feel I am. Therefore, I often need to adapt it depending on the content of my speech. But when I change my pitch, I do it to clarify things, or to convey a certain value to my message, but I never do it in order to feel better for myself.’

Previous researches already demonstrated that the perception of someone’s power is depending on the pitch of his or her voice. The highest tones of voice are indeed considered as less powerful than the lowest ones. Atkinson (1984) explains that one of the problems that leaders (and especially female leaders) can face is to speak with a low pitch of voice. Moreover, a female voice appears generally as more emotional, less powerful and affects naturally male brains. Margaret Thatcher, the famous Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1979 to 1990) was advised by Laurance Olivier to improve the image she communicated (Atkinson 1984). In 1960, when she arrives at the British parliament, her young voice was particularly high. The problem is that this high tone could be perceived negatively. The latter was indeed associated with a condescending tone and made her appear less credible. In 1983, during her second term, Margaret realized that this high-pitched voice could be an obstacle to her election (Millar dir. 2008). Then, Laurance Olivier suggested her to take lessons at the National Theatre. The evolution of Margaret Thatcher’s voice is indeed interesting and can be seen in Video clips that are still available nowadays whereby the difference of the 46 Hz is quite easy to notice. After her lessons, she didn’t only change her pitch of voice, she changed equally the rhythm of her speech. For Atkinson (1984), this second change is the normal consequence of the pitch change. There is a natural correlation that pushes all humans to slow down when they reduce their pitch. Moreover, trying to transmit a message with a lower pitch can make leaders feel nervous because it’s not natural. If we consider the example of Thatcher, when she was really involved or passionate about a topic, despite the given advices, her natural high tone of voice exceptionally reappeared.
Nowadays, coaches frequently advise leaders to lower the pitch of their voices in order to feel on the one hand more powerful, and on the other hand to appear more credible. If Obama’s voice seems natural, it is not the case of all politicians and leaders. Leaders can report bad news but thanks to their communicational skills in Vocalics, the message will be more acceptable for followers (Goman 2011). In a same way, they can support and underline positive news through the use of both pleasant tone of voice and highest speech rate (Schmitz, 2012).

Our interviewed consultants relinquishes that he established during his career what he calls the “santa-clause-effect”:

‘With this special effect, whereby I lower my tone of voice, the pitch and the pace of my words, I am able to underline certain aspects. I often use them when I come up with overdrawn comparisons, that I was talking about before, in order to present and underline with wit the consequence of the decision the decision-takers are about to make.’

The power of interruptions
Rhythm and interruptions are as well a significant part of paralanguage. Indeed, the authors Kupor & Tormala (2015) found out that temporary interruption or rhythm changing can increase the processing of the message content wherefore people are more likely to be persuaded by interrupted messages than they would have been by the same content delivered in a non-interrupted way. In fact,

‘If a message recipient’s attention is momentarily drawn away by an interruption, his or her ability to continue processing the original message may be compromised, reducing elaboration on, and retention of, the message’s core arguments’ (Kupor & Tormala 2015, p.300).

Indeed, interruptions draw in general the attention away from the processing of information. Consequently, very emotional body language as a way of delivering the message can interrupt the message itself and be persuasive, since ‘momentary interruptions can increase message processing and persuasion’ (Kupor & Tormala 2015, p.311).

Hereby, there are different types of interruptions that can be on the one hand factors that reduce the follower’s thinking of a task. In fact, moving stimuli are distracting from the content of the message. On the other hand, interruptions that prevent people from fulfilling a task might be remembered in a better way since the ‘task completion fosters unresolved tension and a need for completion’ (Kupor & Tormala 2015, p.301). As a matter of fact, this opposite effect tends to increase the processing. This can be explained by the fact that ‘when an interruption momentarily prevents message processing, completing message processing becomes more attractive’ (Kupor & Tormala 2015, p.301). Consequently, the followers’ interest is set on what the following content of the message will reveal.

As a matter of fact, concrete interruptions are likely to persuade followers to focus on special parts of the content of the message, depending on the way the leader delivers his information throughout the rhythm of his words.

Moreover, excessive interruptions or the use of verbal fillers such as “hmmm”, “huuu” or “ah” can as well convey the feelings or emotions of leaders that are either playing in favour or disfavour for the leader (Bonaccio et al. 2016).
Nonverbal communication can indeed interrupt the information flow, distract followers from following the leader’s every word and highlight the content that is evoked when the nonverbal cues are reduced. This is clearly a persuasive method that has an impact on the followers’ perception, which animates them to still follow their leader through overshadowing certain important facts. However, the effectiveness of a persuasive message depends not only on the follower’s subjective perception of the situation, which is maybe willingly caused, led or manipulated by a leader’s purposeful interruptions. If someone is persuaded or evokes a certain perceptiveness regarding a situation, depends as well on the follower’s personality, his taste and risk-averseness.

Despite Kinesics and Vocalics, other nonverbal means of communication, such as Proxemics and Chronemics need to be taken into consideration.

3.3.2.3 Proxemics

‘Proxemics refers to the study of how space and distance influence communication’ (Schmitz 2012, p.210) and represents together with ‘chronemics’ and ‘environment’, one of the three spatiotemporal codes (Bonaccio et al. 2016).

Like all the different attributes of the nonverbal communication, Proxemics transmits equally information. In fact, the used space provides insights on the relationships between people (Goman 2008). Consequently, through the distance they establish and maintain between each other, secret information is transmitted.

Regarding the distance, five zones can be defined (Goman, 2008).

- The “Intimate zone” (6-18 inches) represents the zone where people are emotionally closed and permitted. Interferences of this zone cause physiological changes within our bodies. ‘The heart pumps faster, adrenaline pours into the bloodstream, and blood is pumped to the brain of the muscles as physical preparations for a possible fight or flight situation are made,’ (Pease & Pease 2004, p.196). As a matter of fact, in order to make people feel comfortable we need to give them room and keep a certain distance to them. Obviously the leader-follower relationship does not take place in this space.
- The intimate and even the “Close personal zone” (18inches-2 feet) are reserved to family and pets and consequently inappropriate for a business relationship.
- However, the “Far personal zone” (2 to 4 feet approximately) is possibly used by leaders showing their interest without touching their followers.
- The “Social zone” (until 12 feet) is more common for the business interactions. As Goman (2008, 2011) explains, the majority of the interactions between US Businessman start in this zone. It is only when the relationship -and the level of trust of the members- will evolve that the distance will decrease.
- Finally the “Public zone” (12 feet and more) is mainly used by leaders when they speak in public (like during speeches). These zones, invisible for everyone, are not less real and depending on the trust a follower has in his or her leader, the needed space will decrease (Goman 2008).
For Anita W.:
‘The job at the bank only functions throughout keeping a certain distance. Of course, we work really hard together and my door stands always open if someone has personal or professional problems. However, I personally always keep my distance during discussions. Everything needs to happen on a professional and respective level, where all employees get treated the same way.’

However, it is important to consider that **what in one business might be a golden rule in terms of Proxemics might be completely different in other areas of competencies.** At the same time it is of course a matter of context. Therefore a consultant will not necessarily respect the same distances as a sports coach, but depending on the number of seminar participants even the consultant will respect different distances.

**Elard S. explained that:**
‘Depending on the amount of attendees I adapt my distance. The more we have, the more important it becomes to keep up a physical distance, but to become emotionally closer to several participants in the audience.’

In the sports business, disrespecting certain distances happens often unconsciously, but does not even evoke a strange feeling amongst the communication partners if the context plays in favour of such interventions.

However, **the personal space is primitive and depends equally on the culture of each individual**, wherefore problems can arise not only on a contextual but equally on a cultural level. According to Pease & Pease (2004) the needs and wishes for distance and the definition of an appropriate personal space vary. Whereas Italians stand quite close to each other in normal conversations, Australians see this as a sexual advance towards them. Matsumoto & Hwang (2013) found in their studies that North Americans’ highly value a great physical space of at least 8 feet in public interactions and about 4 to 8 feet during professional conversations, whereas Mediterranean or South Americans were much more open to physical closeness (Bonaccio et al. 2016). ‘Personal space is therefore culturally determined’ (Pease & Pease 2004, p.194) and the norms for touch vary strongly.

Individuals from “contact cultures”, such as the Mediterranean, Latin American, Middle Eastern are more likely to be engaged in a more important frequency of touching as individuals from “non-contact cultures” such as Asia for example.

The authors Pease and Pease (2004) equally mention the importance of country vs. city special zones. If followers or leaders come from a crowded populated city they tend to stand close to each other while handshaking and step forward, whereas people from small population or the countryside keep their distance and stay with the feet on the ground.

As a matter of fact, we cannot claim that we are able to jump to any detailed and completely correct conclusions just by observing the distance people keep between each other, since their natural need for a certain distance is absolutely dependant on the culture and origin. However, variations regarding a follower’s needs for distance concerning his leader can still be valuable since it compares a usual behaviour with a certain situation. Being sensitive regarding this aspect can indeed help to anticipate when communication problems might be likely to arise.
According to Goman (2011) if either leader or follower mismanages to maintain the distance that the opposite party needs for example through leaning forward to try to show interest in the follower, the follower’s personal zone gets neglected, which he could consequently understand as a treat. Consequently, although the content of the message might have been convenient, the body language sabotaged the idea because of the leader’s territorial invasion. Indeed, if the violation is unwanted, it can be perceived negatively and therefore respecting the personal space is of major importance (Bonaccio et al. 2016). This point can be equally supported by universal guidelines along which people naturally behave according to the grounded rules of “keeping their distance” in order to not disturb or invade into another person’s comfort zone. As a matter of fact, Pease and Pease (2004) researched the phenomenon of elevators where instead of talking everybody is quietly focused on the floor or actively staring at a book. The aim is hereby to hide or mask emotions in order to feel a bit more comfortable, to save their proper territory and respect the one of the others. Indeed, this happens especially in places where people’s personal or even intimate zones are crossing each other.

As a grounded rule we can consider the fact, that people generally avoid eye contact and choose the option where the widest space is available between two people, seats or jackets in order to respect both individuals’ personal zones (Pease & Pease 2004). Still, people often react aggressively if they presume, fear or realize that their territory was crossed. Consequently, they answer with suspicion, distrust or even anger (Goman 2008). Their reaction, as well as the needed size of their territory is strongly connected to their personal status and the status of the opposite party and if they usually respect each other or not (Schmitz 2012).

Furthermore, the authors Pease and Pease (2004) outline, that the property or cues of ownership should be respected under any circumstances, meaning that a dean's chair should remain a dean’s chair within a meeting. Even though leaders might be open-minded to less rigid seating rules, people might intervene unwillingly in cues of ownership, which can create various associations and feelings that might widen the ‘Communication Gap’. A new follower sitting on a place where a non-admired previous college sat, might remind the leader of bad past experience which might be hindering the future collaboration without any obvious reasoning behind.

Anita W. gave us interesting insights on what she can learn through how followers position themselves during meetings:

'It is not me who defines the sitting rules; I personally prefer to let my followers choose their seat. This is important information that reveals me who prefers to keep a distance to someone else. Often, I can therefore anticipate problems or even avoid them before they arise. However, a leader should never interpret too much, since sometimes there might be no reason behind the followers’ reactions. Seats might be already taken and their decisions might be subsequently completely random.'

Goman (2011) emphasized equally the importance of the positioning of people around a table. According to her, there are different positions such as the “Control Position”, the “Collaborative Position” and the “Confrontation Position”, which determine in which atmosphere the meeting will take place, how the relation between the parties looks alike and often as well what the outcome of the meeting will be.
Concerning the emplacement on the table Pease and Pease (2004) found out that sitting at the “Corner Position” of a table increases the chance of positive outcome since people are ‘engaged in friendly, casual conversation’ (Pease & Pease 2004, p.332), whereby one can present a topic, holding eye contact and the other one can actively listen and collaborate.

Cooperation and teamwork is done when people sit together on the same side in a “Co-operative Position”, which is a metaphor of sitting in the same boat. ‘When sitting directly next to another person, 71% said they were having a friendly conversation of co-operating’ (Pease & Pease 2004, p.337). As well, the authors found out that 55% of the cooperative negotiations are conducted in co-operative table positions.

“The Competitive / Defensive Position” is engaged when both face each other, whereby one has another opinion than the other one, which can be illustrated as well. If B is seeking to persuade A, the Competitive Position reduces the chance of a successful negotiation unless B is deliberately sitting opposite as part of a pre-planned strategy’ (Pease & Pease 2004, p.335)

When two people sit diagonally they are in the so-called “Independent Position” that allows no interaction and shows diametrical opposite.

Despite the position of the people and the table’s orientation, the form of the table represents equally an important determinant. According to Pease and Pease (2004) round tables can define the solution for smooth negotiations since it creates an atmosphere of relaxed informality, whereby the circle becomes a symbol of strength where everybody is on the same level. Moreover, if few people are sitting on a round table, a triangular seating rule can help to keep everybody involved.

As a matter of fact, the seating should be well reflected in order to either gather the necessary information from the position of the opposite’s party either to create a trustworthy, clear, motivating and effective environment where the active exchange of ideas, advices and wisdom is generated and where a collaborative atmosphere can flourish to its maximum.

3.3.2.4 Chronemics

Another spatiotemporal code as Bonaccio et al. (2016) define it is “Chronemics”. In fact, ‘Chronemics refers to the study of how time affects communication. Time can be classified into several different categories, including biological, personal, physical and cultural time’ (Schmitz 2012, p.216). Indeed, time represents a very important nonverbal cue that determines the efficiency of the leader-follower relationship.

As a matter of fact, we can consider Chronemics moreover in the context of if a leader’s behaviour and mood is dependent on the time he has to wait for his followers to understand something or how leaders deal with long presentations where they need to be captivating even after several hours of performance.

Our interviewed chief executive Scout claims that:

‘Changing the medium is always important during several hours of performance. It can live up the atmosphere, incite people to new ideas and is even perfect to smooth arising conflicts.’
Regarding these points, it is absolutely necessary to consider that, as for Proxemics, culture plays an important role. Whereas some countries talk about time from the “spending, saving or wasting” point of view, others like Italy, Japan or Brazil see it as a flow of experience that can be gathered (Goman 2011). Consequently, the approach and how leaders and followers deal with the factor time differs enormously, since the value lies upon contrary point of views. As a matter of fact, Chronemics represents ‘the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of time as a specialized elaboration of culture’ (BasicKnowledge 101 2012, p.1).

Indeed, there is difference between the monochronic and polychronic management of time, whereby the monochronic time systems indicates that one thing will be done after another, segment by segment throughout a sequential and structured completion of tasks. Monochronic societies such as the Japan, Germany, Swiss or Scandinavia break the time down to weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds and structure their days according to this organized time management. Especially in the United States, “time is money” and needs to be carefully used and exploited. The leaders coming from these countries are therefore very time conscious and controlling the time more effectively stands at the top one level of their natural duties. This is especially important when one party in the leader-follower relationship comes from a different management style, wherefore Communication Gaps and conflicts are likely to arise.

Polychronic cultures on the other hand are multitaskers who are less focused on the preciseness of their tasks. We are talking hereby about countries like South Asia, Latin America or Africa for example. Indeed, in those countries, leaders and followers accord much more importance to interpersonal relationships, traditions and freedom that will lead them to success in all businesses.

That a clash of cultures between the mono and the polychronic one is predestined is not difficult to imagine. However, co-cultures are equally likely to have discrepancies in terms of understanding another culture’s time definition. Co-cultures have for example the Haole time and the Hawaiian time, whereby three o’clock “haole” time means precisely three o’clock, whereas the same understanding in the Hawaiian co-culture indicates a meeting whenever the participants are ready to get there. Letting someone wait is of course not nice, but if there is a lack of understanding since time is treated differently, we often can’t avoid that people are waiting. However, letting a leader wait is not helpful for a leader-follower relationship, wherefore followers need to be aware of their leader’s definition of time. On the other hand, leaders need to be aware of the cultural differences in terms of time management in order to adopt a coherent communication with his or her followers. This can indeed avoid issues concerning the Communication Gap to arise.

Of course the discrepancies between mono and polychronic orientated people can be critical for negotiations, since the style of negotiating is strongly linked to their cultural uniqueness. Indeed, ‘the monochronic-orientated approach to negotiations is direct, linear and rooted in the characteristics that illustrate low context tendencies’. (BasicKnowledge101 2012, p.3). When time runs out, they tend to hurry to still close a deal, which might be perceived as harsh. Polychronic cultures on the other hand are high-context cultures, which set her focus on the verbal, while according weight as well to nonverbal communication.

However, we cannot jump directly to the conclusion that a leader who adopts a different style of handling “Chronemics” than his followers can’t or won’t be followed. Although there are certain discrepancies, because followers might prefer leaders who do things like they do, being enthusiastic vs. silent or thought through vs. spontaneous, the content of the leader’s words can be decisive.
Indeed a leader’s way of presenting himself and his messages that might not necessarily fit the followers’ taste, does not induce that both parties do not want the same thing regarding the content of the message (Goman 2011).

Especially in teams, which are characterized by differing temporal compositions, the leader’s role is to manage Chronemics and to positively influence the structure, coordination and pace of time (Bonaccio et al. 2016). Hereby, individual as well as cultural differences are normal and absolutely acceptable. However, leader react in various ways upon time urgency within a project, the capacity of their teams to multitask and whether the leaders want their followers to focus on the past, present or future.

Indeed, time orientations can differ from person to person, which makes Chronemics not only a cultural phenomenon but really a completely unique, subjective and individual one at the same time. A person’s orientation has an impact on the structure, organisation, content and urgency of communication, as Burgoon (1989) found out. People who tend to live in the past might have experienced a hard moment in their lives wherefore they can’t let go of the past and whereby they confuse it with the present. Present-oriented individuals are people living in the here and now, enjoying the moment while having a low risk-aversion. In contradiction to that, people who are living for what will come in the future are considered to be more goal-oriented and they see the bigger picture, purpose and possible outcome of their actions.

In a leader-follower context, peoples’ differing preferences regarding this point might induce conflicts or higher levels of stress within their relationships, which can result in competitive disadvantages for the company. Additionally Chronemics consist as well of the leader’s decision how time is used at the workplace. They define the waiting time, the talk time and work time as well as when the right moment is to convey a certain message.

For our interviewed consultant, the right moment is indeed really important:

‘The right moment is for me when I have the impressions that all the attendees are mentally able to evoke thoughts through decisions together and to clearly see the consequences. In such situations I am willing to have severe discussions. However, it is necessary that everybody is on the same level of understanding.’
3.4 The Perception Asymmetry

Anita W. shares her experiences on the Perception Asymmetry with us:

‘I absolutely recognized that there is a discrepancy between what I communicated and what one of my followers understood. Indeed, when our bank needed to merge the sector of bonds and another one, there was a responsibility restructuring. I asked to one of my colleagues to become leader of a certain part. I transmitted my message as a valuable, new responsibility for him; way of climbing the professional leather for him. A challenge. But after several days of him working in his new position I recognized that he obviously understood my message differently. He took it as something negative to have more responsibility, more work, and different tasks than before.’

The way leaders are communicating their messages is obviously really important. There is equally no doubt about the necessity for them to master their nonverbal communication as well as to choose their words accurately. Moreover, the whole message as well as the general context needs to be considered by followers when they interpret a message. Indeed some gestures, head movements or tone of voice are not universally understood. They might be perceived differently depending on the context and culture. For example, while some people will perceive leader’s hands in the pocket as a sign of dominance, of authority or as a powerful attitude in a special situation, in some other cultures and within another context, followers will just interpret that as a sign of discomfort.

Consequently, there is often a discrepancy between the information the leader think he/she is communicating and the way it is understood and interpreted by his or her followers. While a leader thinks that he/she is communicating a message with relevance and accuracy, followers can still misunderstand or misinterpret his or her
communication. This phenomenon is due to a second main asymmetry, which is this time linked to the perception.

When we interviewed Anita W. she gave us interesting insights on the reasons she came up on why the Perception Asymmetry is arising. In her opinion:

‘There are three options. Either my followers really don’t understand me, either they cannot understand me or they don’t want to understand me. It is absolutely important to nuance this part. Indeed, if someone wants or does not want to understand me depends on the sympathy, antipathy and level or respect and trust that lies within this leader-follower relationship. If someone can’t understand me, it might be my fault because I did not express myself properly, or it might be due to cultural or contextual reasons. However, the case when someone really does not understand what has been said, might be caused by insufficient education, personal reasons, their or my emotional intelligence or just because of the fact, that perception is subjective, and nobody functions in the same way.’

In this new chapter of the thesis, we will develop this ‘Perception Asymmetry’ (in red below) and its components. This includes the subjectivity aspect of the perception, and the sub gap linked to the Regulatory Fit and to the personal abilities of followers.

3.4.1 The concept and subjectivity of perception

Indeed, leadership is about the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers. As Kouzes & Posner (1990) explain, the successful collaboration and communication between the two parties depends not only on the leader's perception of himself, but rather on the followers’ perception regarding the capabilities of their leaders. As a matter of fact, the perceivers are those who construct leadership (Trichas & Schyns 2012).

How the followers perceive a certain message determines whether they attribute importance to the leader’s message, whether they value their leader and whether they decide on actively following this personally appointed leader. However, the followers’ perception is not a value that can be measured since it is absolutely subjective and created by the followers' individual interpretation of what they consciously and unconsciously depict.

Although it exists no special recipe for leaders to lead the followers’ perception into a certain direction, they can still influence slightly how a follower perceives their transmitted message, if they actively encode their gestures in order to underline the point they claim through their verbal communication. Hereby, it is important to know that this won't affect each follower in the same way, since ‘prior research has shown that personality is one source of individual differences that could add to explanations of perception’ (Santon 2015 p.66). Consequently, the followers’ personality determines their perception of leadership, the accompanied judgement and the following actions.

The personality gets categorized in five different clusters of anxiety, pessimism, stress coping, sociability and positive dominance sensation seeking (Stanton 2015).

However, the universality of certain hand gestures might induce a comparable perception for several people at the same time. For example ‘certain hand gestures are more effective than others at creating immediacy between leaders and followers’ (Tally & Temple 2015, p.69). Taking the authors’ example, positive hand gestures such as
‘community, humility and stealing hands’ are more likely to contribute to the leaders wished nonverbal immediacy than defensive or neutral ones. Consequently, we understand even though leaders can try to influence the followers perception, *perception is and will always be subjective* and not possible to influence to one hundred percent, wherefore ‘Perception Asymmetries’ are likely to arise. Furthermore, perception and perceptiveness vary from one person to another and can therefore not be measured. Although we can therefore not draw any conclusions about the followers’ perception, we can however observe their reactions, which reveal an idea of how a certain message could have probably been perceived by them.

We therefore comprehend the problematic of grasping perception and the importance of the Perception Asymmetry, since ‘perception, which is primarily contextual, can affect the message received’ (Anders 2015, p.82). As a matter of fact, this different understanding might create conflicts if leaders can’t manage to convey clear messages and if followers are not able to correctly decode the delivered information.

Hereby, the variety of actors, cross cultural communication and multi-sector communication plays in favour for the creation of the “Perception Asymmetry”, since this variety induces differences that might lead to misunderstanding. Consequently, there is a difference between on the one hand what a leader encodes in his message and the way the message is perceived by the followers. Their perception can deviate and cause understanding problems between the two parties that contribute to the ‘Communication Gap’ to a very large extent. Such a misunderstanding can represent indeed a very critical point since ‘perception gaps between the leader and follower demotivate the follower, impair the business relationship between them and reduce the business performance of both’ (Eales-White 2004, p.234).

As a matter of fact, it is absolutely necessary to try to at least reduce the asymmetry in terms of perception between the leaders and the followers, since it can of course never be fully eliminated. However, it is crucial to understand how the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ arises in the first place.

According to the author Eales-White (2004) the Perception Asymmetry consists of two sub-asymmetries that are constructed by both, leaders and followers throughout the *difference between the way a message is transmitted by leaders and the way it is decoded by the followers*. Hereby, because of the leaders’ way of communicating, followers might interpret a message differently than the leader intended it to be understood.

- On the one hand, the leaders possess a conscious intent towards the message they want to encode and convey. However, the way their message is perceived in its manifested version throughout their chosen words, the tone of voice and their body language, depends on the leader's level of stress, their subconscious intent that they carry in their inner corps and their communication. If indeed, the leader is stressed, if he has another intention with his message than the one that is obviously communicated, or if his communication lacks of clarity, consistency and logic, the manifestation of his message is perceived in another way. Furthermore, ‘a positive conscious intention may hide a subconscious or implicit intention that is more negative’ (Eales-White 2004, p.236). Consequently the first sub-asymmetry that builds the base for the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ is constructed through the leader himself and depicts the *discrepancy between a leader's conscious intend and his manifestation of the message*. 
On the other hand we have the sub-asymmetry that lies in the eye of the beholder, the follower. There might be a discrepancy between the manifestation that is represented through the words, tone of voice and the body language and the impact on the follower himself. Hereby, the environment plays an important role, since ‘if the message is delivered in a way that is consistent to intention and manifestation, the impact can still be negative because the environment is wrong’ (Eales-White 2004, p.237).

Of course, depending on the context, the followers’ background, mind-set and capacity to actively listening determine how the followers perceive the leader’s manifestation and what final impact this will have on the follower.

As a matter of fact, Eales-White (2004) underlines the standpoint of this thesis that the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ is created through both, leaders and followers. If there is one of these discrepancies ‘the manifestation of intent will produce an impact, necessarily different from the intent’ (Eales-White 2004, p.236)

However, in this concept we recognize that perception is strongly linked to the expectations, since the manifestation will be compared to how the followers expected it to be. Consequently, the idea of mutual belief and expectations by Kanno, Furuta and Chou (2013) can be seen as a categorization for the created Perception Sub-asymmetries. As mutual belief we understand ‘the ability to estimate or simulate the status of the mind of others that is beliefs of others, is innate and emerges in early childhood’ (Kanno et al. 2013, p. 383).

The authors outline that there exist two different types of expectations that induces the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ as it is presented in this thesis. In fact, there are the so called

- ‘will-expectations’ outlining what will happen according to the followers’ point of view
- ‘should-expectations’ explaining what the followers feel they deserve, what they presume should happen next and how the manifestation should look alike.

Consequently, there are will and should expectations regarding the leaders’ conscious intent, how they will and should manifest it and on the impact it will and should have on the followers. Considering these two types of expectations, we understand that there are some sub-perception asymmetries, shaped through the different combinations of mental constructs.

We have on the one hand the self-expectations of the follower depending on his mind-set, his beliefs and background, but we are equally dealing with the followers’ expectations towards their leaders, as well as the belief that the followers behold themselves of which kind of expectations the leader believes that the followers have regarding himself, his actions and leadership style. Since each of these expectations can be analysed by ‘will’ and ‘should’ expectations, various combinations of sub-perception asymmetries are constructed (Kanno et al. 2013).

Of course, the gathered information on the sub-perception asymmetries helps us to understand the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ as it is outlined in the model of this thesis. All these aspects contribute consequently to the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ that builds together with the ‘Compositional Asymmetry’ the ‘Communicational Gap’ that we intend to analyse and develop.

Hereby, it is absolutely important to understand that one of the biggest possible asymmetries is due to the fact that the followers’ perception of their leader and even the
perception of the leader towards himself are completely subjective. This *subjectivity leads indeed to the ‘Perception Asymmetry’*. If followers perceive leaders for their personal and subjective reasons in a certain way, they might equally get unwillingly and subconsciously influenced or persuaded.

### 3.4.2 The Regulatory Fit Theory

The extent to which followers get convinced depends on their perception and on their understanding of the leader’s message. Studies concerning the Regularly Fit Model (Cesario et al. 2004), which has been invented by Higgens in 1997 show that people do things because they have the “right feeling” about this situation. This feeling can result from previous similar experiences that confirm the follower in his perception of the current situation. As a matter of fact, the Regulatory Fit helps people to review experiences during particular message deliveries. Indeed, after the delivery of such a message followers decide upon the rightness and correctness of a leader’s message depending on if they feel that it is right to follow and do it or not.

But “feeling right” refers to evaluation of the object and the situation, meaning on how the message is delivered (verbal and nonverbal communication) and not on the object itself, meaning the content of the message (Cesario et al. 2004). Consequently, the verbal and nonverbal communication is an important factor for people regarding their decision making process.

Hereby, whether someone has the feeling of that something is right, depends on the framing of the message and therefore if he/she prefers a positive or negative way of delivering a message. This distinction of either using the promotion or the preventing style throughout the encoding of a message can have a persuasive character for the recipient of the message.

*If the leader’s encoding style (Promotion or Prevention) does not match with the follower’s decoding style, the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ is likely to arise.* Indeed, this scenario has even a direct impact on the size of the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ since the misunderstanding caused through steadily changed styles affects the comprehension of the followers.

- **‘Promotion’** - focused individuals are more likely to see the cost of not doing something. In general, men are seen as such individuals who prefer an eager strategy of communicating regarding their risk taking processes (Jacks & Lancaster 2015). People preferring “promotion” consider that no decision can ever be a mistake since every mistake can lead to new insights from which they can learn.

- **‘Prevention’** - focused individuals are more often using vigilant goal-pursuit strategies and prefer to see the benefit of doing something. In their communication they are therefore more likely to say what will positively happen if something is done, instead of emphasizing the negative causes that a negligence of the duty might have as an output (Jacks & Lancaster 2015). This strategy is more effectively used by women, since they are more likely to be risk averse and value highly safety and security.
Indeed, if the sender's encoding style fits the receiver’s taste, we are talking about the “Regulatory Fit”, which people experience ‘when they pursue a goal in a manner that sustains their regulatory orientation’ (Cesario et al. 2004, p.389). Logically, the Regulatory Fit has an impact on the perceived persuasiveness of a leader’s communication and can determine whether a follower agrees on the conveyed message or not (Jacks & Lancaster 2015).

Hereby, researchers found out that ‘matching nonverbal delivery style with motivational focus increases persuasion’ (Jacks & Lancaster 2015, p.210). This question was equally researched by Burgoon et al. (1990) who were interested in the idea that there is direct link between nonverbal behaviour with its credibility and persuasiveness. As a matter of fact, Burgoon et al. (1990) created the association between Vocalics, Kinesics and Proxemics cues to proximal precepts such as pleasantness and immediacy, potency and dominance and arising.

3.4.3 Capacity of decoding messages

Followers observe the behaviour of leaders, their Vocalics, Kinesics, Proxemics and Chronemics. They interpret the meaning of the conveyed message and react ultimately on the perception they got regarding the transmitted information. This idea described by Goman (2008) has its roots in the assumption that our ancestors’ actions were already based on the visual perception of what they observed from others and reproduced them almost instantaneously.

When followers decode the messages leaders transfer to them, they extract important elements coming from the direct information that is transmitted through the leader’s verbal communication. But at the same time as a reader always reads between the lines of a book, followers perceive subconsciously information that goes far beyond simple words. Indeed, the leader’s verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as the external environment, plays an important role through which followers recognize influencing aspects. According to the coherence of what the followers hear and what they see, they draw their conclusions concerning the leaders’ credibility, transparency and authenticity as well as regarding the importance of the message itself.

Importance of context and culture

Each follower being different, their ability to decode cues and attributes of leaders can as well create a sub gap of perception. It is important to notice that the context and the situation play a huge role in the understanding of a message since it’s pretty clear that the same words can be understood completely differently in two different situations. It is the same things for the nonverbal communication: as Peleckis et al. explained (2015, p.70), ‘all gestures should be evaluated according to the situation, according to the context’. Sielski (1979, p.240) added the idea that both ‘body language, just as spoken language, can be accurately understood only in the context of the entire behaviour pattern of a person’ since spoken language alone can’t reveal the complete meaning.

Moreover, in an international context, body language will be valuable in some countries while in others it will provide confusion or misunderstanding. Goman (2011) develops several examples of the different possibilities of understanding cues regarding the culture where it is decoded: The simple greetings of leaders will be perceived differently in Asia than in Europe, as well as the appropriateness and perception of emotions or the well-known issue of time for example. While in some countries a personal space must be respected between leaders and followers (Germany, Australia,
Japan), in some others (Brazil, Mexico) leaders need to be really close of their followers and perceived more as colleague in a workplace. While in some culture eye contacts are essential during an exchange between leaders and followers (USA, Brazil, Germany), in some others, it’s a sign of respect to avoid eye contact (China) and especially for followers (Japan). These examples are just a tiny fraction of all the examples that can be given to illustrate the different ways cues can be decoded according to the context and to the culture of decoders. Here, culture and context create asymmetries that can take place and which form a gap between the way a message is delivered and the followers’ understanding of the latter. Nevertheless, and even if the context always really matters, some others factors influence directly and often unconsciously the followers’ interpretation of a message, speaking for example about their education.

**Importance of the followers’ emotional intelligence**

Indeed, followers are listeners and because of their attentiveness and their ability to listen to their leader’s message, their interpretation will change. The more followers pay attention to these messages, the more they are likely to get valuable information from the speaker, of which they can make sense. As a matter of fact, the ‘Perception Gap’ is likely to get widened through a low emotional intelligence of the followers. Followers, who are emotionally not intelligent enough, won’t be able to detect the right cues that make them understand the leader’s verbal or nonverbal communication (Petrovici & Dobrescu 2014). They will perceive and interpret things in a different way than followers who are emotionally more intelligent. Consequently, the ‘Communication Gap’ might grow.

However, the difficulty for listeners to decode the messages of their leaders relies equally on the speakers’ ability to hide their emotions and to transform or disguise information (Janevski & Zafirovska 2015). It is common that leaders hide emotions because they don’t want to transmit their stress, their fear or even because they want to appear in a certain way. We can just consider the example of the British Royal family and their hand gestures during public appearances that we previously explained for illustrative reasons. If we take the example of Bill Clinton who was considered as a good communicator, we can see in his public appearance that he speaks formally, expressing himself with his hand and from his heart. He uses his finger to insist on special point that he wants to underline. Bill Clinton appears here as honest and authentic. He uses gestures before saying something. But the most interesting thing is that he is able to regain composure immediately; he reacts quickly to be sure to be the man of the situation. A new asymmetry of perception can appear here due to the ability of leaders to hide some of their emotions and the resulting difficulty for followers to decode the messages. Depending on the level of Emotional Intelligence of the follower, it can be indeed hard (or not) to detect the important cues and to understand what the leader is really conveying. Someone with a very high level of Emotional Intelligence will be maybe able to detect the brief signals that are transmitted through micro expressions.

They can equally perceive when their leader tries to insist on certain things to cause emotions. In a working environment for example, depending on the employee's level of “EI”, they can respond to the emotional stimuli they perceive. Wong & Law (2002) made assumptions regarding EI at work whereby one of the hypotheses they formulated was that the Emotional Intelligence of leaders could be correlated with the behaviour of followers and especially with the followers with a higher level of Emotional Intelligence. Moreover, they made a study showing the importance of the Emotional Intelligence of employees and the effect on their satisfaction at the workplace.
Not only for Wong & Law (2002) it seemed logical to consider the Emotional Intelligence of followers and not only the one for leaders. Since we know that leadership is a reciprocal relationship, the emotional intelligence of followers should not be neglected (Chan & Mallett 2011).

Furthermore, the followers’ capacity of being emotionally intelligent is equally demanded in the following situation. When a leader inspires positive emotion to their followers, they are likely able to see “the bigger picture”, they are more creative, provide more innovative solutions and are more involved in their relationship with their peers. On the other side, when leader inspire negative emotions (disappointment, boredom, anger or frustration), followers will focus their attention on the bad things rather than on things that concern them. The emotions they perceive are a source of information and an important aspect of their own mood and performance. It’s the reason why the communication of emotions by leaders, and the decryption of emotion by the followers will, depending on their emotional intelligence, conduce to reactions in the followers’ behaviour and decision-making process.

Indeed, followers need to be emotional intelligent to decrypt the cues and to understand and correctly interpret the leaders emotions. Depending on the level of EI, followers might be even capable of detecting, understanding, interpreting and reacting and sometimes even not letting themselves manipulating by the leaders’ cues. There might be consequently a ‘Perception Sub-Asymmetry’ that depends on the level of the followers’ emotional intelligence.

Furthermore there is obviously a ‘Perception Sub-Asymmetry’ depending on the followers’ accompanied persuasiveness. The influence of people (Chan & Mallett 2011), not only through persuasion, can appear thanks to a special process: the “Emotional Contagion”. It means than when followers, athletes, public, are able to detect how passionate, determined, authentic etc. the leader is, they can pay attention to this leader and be equally more engaged, involved or excited as well. This phenomenon is close to the mirroring since because people see something, they will act in a same way and often even unconsciously. This is especially the case for the sports coaches and their athletes during a pre-game speech. Followers’ mood and reactions depend on their perception (on their ability to detect and understand the emotion they saw) (Chan & Mallett 2011). When a coach is angry and the athletes can perceive this anger, their emotions can bias their thoughts.

The coach we interviewed told us that:
‘As previous player, I realize how the team players’ perception of the coach’s emotions is important. During games, when I detected special signs from the coach, I was sometimes focused on that. Without consistency or relevant behaviour to continue, all the team players are confused and it can change the end of a game.’

The problem here is that sometimes, leaders can feel bad or angry for another reason than for the message they are communicating. In this condition, it’s totally possible that followers misunderstand the communication of leaders and react in the emotion they perceive even if those emotions are not destined to them. Here a misunderstanding between leaders and followers can appear just because the perception is biased by an external factor, independent from the communicated message.
3.4.4 Consistency between verbal and nonverbal communication

If emotionally intelligent followers perceive a certain “fit” towards their leaders, it depends equally on the perceived consistency coming from a leader’s words. Indeed, in a survey conducted by Kouzes & Posner (1990), the respondents claimed that honesty was one of the major aspects, contributing to their willingness to follow. Indeed, followers want to follow someone trustworthy, with ethic, values and principles. This is only possible if they perceive those attributes through the consistency laying in the leader’s words. They want someone inspiring, who communicates his or her enthusiasm, passion, and motivation, someone conveying confidence and encouraging a positive attitude. In a general way, followers perceive the behaviour of leaders through several characteristics and attribute a certain charisma to their leaders according to these attributes.

Even though ‘self-rated better decoders also tended to rely on nonverbal cues more than on verbal cues when communicating with a person’ (Graham et al. 1991, p.57); the strong interconnection between the two approaches can’t be denied. We can even claim, that the nonverbal communication can induce a complementary character to a verbal conversation and vice versa, since ‘by becoming aware of specific hand gestures, and changing which hand gestures a leader uses, leaders might have a better chance of acceptance of their verbal message’ (Talley & Temple 2015 p.70). This idea can be explained by what Meeren et al. (2005) outline by ‘observers judging a facial expression are strongly influenced by emotional body language’ (p. 16518). Moreover, Laplante & Ambady (2003) demonstrated the influence of the tone of voice in the perception of a verbal content of a message. It influences the perception of both positive and negative message by reinforcing an impression when the tone of voice is coherent with the evoked words and adopted body language. Conversely, when someone uses words with an inconsistent tone of voice, it decreases the perception of the listeners. In situations where words say one thing and gestures indicate another, a leader hinders himself from his sensemaking (Goman 2008) and ‘Perception Asymmetries’ are likely to grow. Consequently, the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ arises when leaders mismanage for any reason to create coherence between their verbal and nonverbal communication.

It is only when a synchrony exists between the words and the tone of voice that leaders can communicate effectively their message and emotions (Markel et al. 1973) and that this asymmetry is hindered to increase even more. However, since there is no word matching to a hundred percent to a special vocalics, the perception of this synchrony is a matter of intuition. Indeed, every follower is different and doesn’t attribute the exact same meaning to a special vocal signal. Then, a leader can think that he is conveying the information in a good way while a follower won’t perceive it correctly. Indeed, the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ is equally evoked if followers mismanage to detect the coherence between the leader’s verbal and nonverbal communication.

As we saw it earlier, the use of nonverbal communication helps leader to transmit their message by ‘reinforcing, substituting for, or contradicting verbal communication’ (Schmitz 2012, p.186). Verbal and nonverbal communications come from different parts of our brain but they support each other, helping us to convey a relevant message. Conversely, in situation where the facial expression of a leader is not consistent with his or her message, people will have doubt regarding the honesty or the credibility of the message he or she is conveying.

Already in 1967, Mehrabian & Wiener explained the absolute necessity of the coherence between verbal and nonverbal communication to communicate properly a
message. The congruence between the verbal content of a message and the way it is delivered as well as the emotions expressed during a speech has a huge impact on the followers’ perception (Newcombe & Ashkanasy 2002). All leaders can express emotions, enthusiasm, kindness, interest or confidence - as well as they can demonstrate arrogance, apathy or even annoyance through their body language. When the nonverbal communication of leaders does not match with their verbal message, followers become disconcerted. Indeed, in situation of lack of consistency, followers don’t know what to believe anymore and might misunderstand ideas (Taylor & Lester 2009) because of the fact that the leaders ‘conflicting emotional body language biases facial judgment’ (Meeren et al. 2005, p. 16521).

When leaders, whether they are CEOs, captains of a team or supervisors, are confusing within their way of communication, followers won’t build up a relation with them that is based on trust (Goman 2008). Indeed, the assumption of many managers needing to hide their emotions from their subordinates can send contradictory signals that might confuse the employees in a way that affect their productivity and trust towards the leader (Graham et al. 1991).

Of course another inconsistency is created when either leader or follower are lying. Hereby, verbal and nonverbal communication mismatch obviously. For Peleckis et al. (2015), liars generally don’t manage to emphasize their verbal message. Indeed, ‘the liars use cognitive functions of the brain to decide what to say and how to cheat, but rarely think of how to present lies’ (p.70). Moreover, for Driver J. (2015), it’s impossible to control what is commonly called “Micro-expressions” (Pleckis et al. 2015). These micro-expressions are not much long that a fraction of second and reveal what a person is really thinking. It is therefore possible to hide it quickly and it’s one of the reasons explaining the difficulty to decrypt the communication of people instantaneously.

In leadership, even if people can be coached (and especially politicians), it is still possible to detect some of the told lies due to the inconsistency of the leader’s verbal and nonverbal communication. If we take the famous example of Bill Clinton when he denied his affair with Monica Lewinski, we can assume that he lied. Indeed in the documentary Secret of Body Language (Millar dir. 2008), the different body language experts explained that it’s a good case to illustrate incongruence. Indeed, he pointed with his finger to a certain direction and looked in another one when he talked, didn’t align his body language, his eye gesture, his face and emotions. In this special situation, it’s hard for listeners paying attention to his body language to perceive integrity since his nonverbal communication was not coherent to his words and his usual assured body language appeared not as convincing as usual. In this situation, what did the followers possibly perceived? Did they misinterpret the signs or did they only perceive one part of the multi-channel message?

It is interesting that through verbal and nonverbal communication people can say the exact opposite of what they think.

In the following picture, we can see that with the former president of France, in 2007, during an interview about the issue of the immigration. On the three images, we can see the evolution of his gestures when he say “I want France to stay an open country”. When we want something to be open, the arms are opening, not closing. From a body language look of his communication, it can be perceived as if his words don’t really match with what he does.
Therefore, according to the ability of followers to decode cues and detect consistencies in communication, an asymmetry is created here. Nevertheless, according to the coherence of what the followers hear and what they see from their leaders, they draw their conclusions concerning the leaders’ credibility, transparency and authenticity as well as regarding the importance of the message itself. Indeed, consistency regarding the verbal and nonverbal information is the key for successful communication, since information is often not perceived in the same way as it was intended to be understood. As a matter of fact, discrepancies of what the body shows and what the words say can lead to misunderstandings (Graham et al. 1991).

3.5 The Understanding of the message

Indeed, we have seen how important an explanation of the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ is, in order to understand the concept, causes and consequences of our ‘Communication Gap Model’ in the leadership context. Perception creates the climate of the environment within the leader-follower relationship. Followers will act according to what they consider as being serving to them. Therefore, there is always a discrepancy between the followers’ consideration of the actions and the actions themselves. For Otara (2011), more broadly, people’s reactions are based on what they see and hear, not obviously on what the reality is. Even if leaders have great intentions for their followers, those intentions won’t be perceived correctly if the leaders are not able to communicate effectively and if the followers do not accurately understand the communicated. Many studies and experiments show the importance of the verbal and nonverbal communication for the interpretation of the speakers’ emotions or generally regarding the understanding of a message (Manusov & Patterson 2006; Ekman & Friesen 1974; Matsumoto et al., 2000; Buck et al., 1974; Rosenthal et al. 1979).

The majority of psychologists who have analysed the perceptual process agree to say that there are three main stages in understanding communication

- The first stage is linked to the sensory stimulation. Our memories conduce us to build differently our perception of a given situation.
- The second stage concerns the organization of those stimuli in our brain in order to make sense of something.
- Finally, the third stage is the response of the stimulus by the expression of the thoughts.
Projected into the situation of leadership, the described process of perception and the aspects that lead to the growth of the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ explains for example the dissatisfaction that can appear when leader and followers don’t hear or see what they expect the other to say or to do. Followers (but also leaders) can omit details because they want to perceive, select, organize and then interpret information that will comfort them in their expectations. Depending on what they expect based on their personal experiences; the understanding of the message can vary.

According to Manuslov & Patterson (2006), people possess individual differences regarding their ability to receive a message and to decode nonverbal communication. Some other factors influence the understanding of the message and the ability to decode correctly cues such as the Emotional Intelligence of the followers and their ability to decrypt consistency in the leaders’ communication. Manuslov & Patterson (2006, p.81) even explain that ‘Skills in nonverbal decoding involves sensitivity to the nonverbal messages of others as well as the ability to interpret those messages accurately’.

But it’s important to notice than some other and more personal aspects influence the followers’ understanding of a message. Indeed, those depend directly on the followers and will be explained in the following in order to complete the last important component of our model, which is illustrated in blue on the next page.
3.5.1 Followers’ Frame of references

3.5.1.1 Personal Background, capacity of sensemaking, frame of references and cues

Followers face masses of raw data coming from their leaders or other colleagues every day. Unconsciously they perceive all of them, but more often than they might think, their past experiences within different teams and with various leaders shape their understanding and perception of the most distinguishable situations. But in order to clarify, understand and assimilate those different impressions, followers have to structure the flows of information. However, mastering this kind of sensemaking of the different impressions that are gathered from daily conversations or collaborations with their leaders appears often to be quite complicated. Nevertheless, the ability to make sense out of messages from different context is undeniably indispensable in order to minimize the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ that is constructed in leader-follower relationships. A follower's ability to understand and therefore to make sense in the first place depends on three elements:

- the follower's personal frame of reference
- his perceived cues
- the interconnection between those two elements

Hereby, we can assume that a follower's frame of reference is constructed through his identity, his interests, and previous experiences from his private life and is clearly determined by the interactions with his social surrounding, the people that this person meets, talks with and from whom he learns. Interestingly, the social surrounding can be shaped in private as well as in corporate life, meaning that colleagues their histories and stories, their know-how and their work contribute equally to the follower’s steadily growing wisdom; in short, the followers’ frame of references and therefore the general knowledge is developed. Nevertheless, the social surrounding with his environment can be equally enacted by followers when they actively decide on talking with others about the current situation, asking questions and trying to complete the picture they have from their leader through interactions with others or the leader himself for example.

On the other hand, cues represent fragments, which are consciously or unconsciously perceived by the follower when the leader communicates with him. Cues can be verbal or nonverbal and might consist of any of our beforehand mentioned elements on verbal or nonverbal communication. But depending on the follower’s capacity of detecting these cues, a follower’s ability of correctly decoding a leader’s message is either high or low. Hereby, it is important to know that especially the nonverbal communication encoding and decoding ability is ‘both instinctive (innate) and acquired (culturally determined)’ (Goman 2011, p.102). Consequently, how a leader uses his nonverbal communication and how followers perceive their way of doing so might depend on their origin. Low-context cultures communicate through verbal statements and written words, whereby they are direct and precise (Goman 2011). On the other hand, high-context cultures relate more to body language and proximity. Furthermore, people from reserved countries only speak up if something needs to be added, but not just for the idea of talking, whereas effusive cultures encourage people to talk.

As a matter of fact the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ is likely to be even bigger within cross-cultural contexts where communicating differently is naturally given. Moreover, the
cultural origin does not only determine how someone is communicating but as well which cues are detected when another person is interacting with them. Often the accumulation of many perceived verbal and nonverbal cues that the follower extracted from constant information streams throughout a longer period can be puzzled by followers with higher level of experience or frames of references. Indeed, the different perceived cues can be put together and construct a certain mosaic in the eye of the follower, which gives him consequently a certain understanding of the situation. As a matter of fact, followers are able to draw their conclusions of the different gathered impressions of their leaders, their messages, as well as their trustworthiness, consistency, transparency and credibility. Hereby, followers who are good decoders sort out cognitively triggering signs or signals in order to make sense out of them. This process is what Weick (1995) describes as “bracketing”.

Such as for the perception, we can consider the extraction of cues as subjective as frames of references themselves. Depending on the individual's background, age, religious beliefs, norms, values, habits, motivation and preferences, the frame of references is a different one. Gender plays equally an important role regarding the ability to decode nonverbal cues. Since women ‘pay more attention to facial cues than males do’ (Graham et al. 1991, p.48), females are considered to be more likely to transmit coherently and decode correctly the messages for example (Hall 1978; Graham et al. 1991).

As a matter of fact, complementary to what Otara (2011) says with ‘objective perception is difficult if not impossible. Each individual selects, organizes and interprets information gained from their senses and internal awareness differently’ (p.22), we understand that the process of detecting cues is completely individual and subjective and can never be universal. Consequently, to which cue weight is accorded is fully determined by the follower himself, his frames of references and the context in which the bracketing takes place. As a matter of fact, one will source out cues that another individual would not have detected.

Therefore, a follower's capacity of decoding a leader's message depends on the follower’s frame of references and his ability to detect or perceive the right cues, connecting the dots and finally understanding the idea behind the leader's verbal and nonverbal communication and their interaction.

Followers ‘receive stimuli as a result of their own activity’ (Weick 1995 p. 32). Consequently, both components – context and frame – affect the meaning that is attributed to a special incident by a follower. Furthermore, both elements are responsible for how the cues are interpreted and which justifications a follower will accept from his leader (Weick 2001). Followers’ sensemaking is therefore not less than the creation of a plausible meaning out of the given context, based on the follower’s background and a triggering incident taking place under certain circumstances. Plausible, because ‘accuracy is nice, but not necessary’ (Weick 1995 p. 56). Indeed, followers need to have a plausible reason of why their leader is acting in one way or another. Often their ability of decoding has an direct impact on the plausible reason they attribute to the leader’s behaviour, although they might have just misinterpreted the leaders verbal or nonverbal communication because of either the leaders inability or the followers proper insensibility of detecting the right cues and interpreting in the same way as the leader intended his message to be understood.

It is important to draw attention to the word “creation” of meaning since the cue itself does not incorporate the researched signification. The signification of the extracted
verbal or nonverbal signs is only attributed by the follower himself. This explains again why perception is subjective, since each individual perceives on the one hand other cues, and on the other hand interprets the same cues in different ways depending on what they experienced so far. People interpret things with their eyes and their ears through the filter of their emotions and feelings, their own ideas as well as their expectations (Otara 2011). Indeed, their interpretation relies on factors that do not necessarily stand in direct connection with the current situation.

Therefore, we cannot imply an existing reasoning. Rather, each follower generates and constructs retrospectively his proper meaning throughout the on-going process of trying to understand the leader’s decisions, his actions, nonverbal behaviour and attitude. The meaning of a special stimulus is ascribed by the follower himself and once he managed to define for him personally the situation, he decoded the message and will consequently act upon what he perceived and understood. As a matter of fact, we are not able to measure the followers’ perception, but we can observe their reactions and judge upon those whether leader and follower managed both to minimize the ‘Perception Asymmetry’ or not, since as Weick (1995, P.54) illustrates it: ‘extracted cues are crucial for their capacity to evoke action’.

Regarding these insights we can assume that experienced followers are more likely to better decode leaders’ messages than new employees. However, often it is not even necessary for a follower to be a long-term follower of this special leader. Experiences from other leader-follower relationships can create associations in their heads that contribute to a better understanding of the cues that are extracted as well from an interaction of a relatively new leader-follower relationship. However, the sensemaking process is contingent of the following seven factors because it ‘involves identity, retrospect, enactment, social contact, on-going events, cues and plausibility’ (Weick 1995, p.3).

Indeed, those three components, frame of reference, cue and the link between those two elements determine how followers reveal signals and make sense out of each of them. But in comparison to the sensemaking that individuals have to make in their private life, the corporate life helps individuals facing this step, since leaders are normally there to ‘organize meaning for the members of the organization’ (Bennis & Nanus 2007, p.37) throughout their clear verbal and nonverbal communication.

3.5.1.2 Leaders’ reputation, Ethos & Actions

The followers’ perception on leaders can indeed be influenced throughout several factors. One of those is the leader’s reputation. This reputation communicates for the leader, before the latter can start communicating in an either verbal or nonverbal way. Listeners have already an opinion about the background or the person himself and forge themselves an impression about their superior (Barrett 2006). Flauto (1999) evoked that in a previous study (1984), Eisenberg et al. showed that the perception of the leader than followers get throughout the reputation, can even be more important than the accuracy of his or her communication. Within a team, when a new member arrives, the leader’s reputation is the information in which the new one bases his assumptions about the general character or actions of the leader. This data biases of course his judgement from the beginning of the relationship, even before the leader had the time to deliver his/her first message.
Moreover, the way the message is delivered and the general behaviour of leaders induce a different perception for followers. Indeed, previous researches showed that a presenter and the credibility of his message are perceived differently according to the way the speech is delivered (Holladays & Coombs 1993). When leaders deliver speeches in a weak or non-animated way, followers will perceive them probably as not as consistent and credible as if they convey it in powerful way through the use of a great verbal and nonverbal communication (Barrett 2006). Leaders can use different things to suggest or inspire a feeling for their followers. If they look people in the eyes, maintain the contact, speak clearly and in a consistent way, they can inspire trust for example.

Then, leader’s effectiveness depends on their ability to communicate and to create a positive ethos. This last term “Ethos”, means in this case the followers’ perception of their leader and of his credibility. Leaders with a positive ethos appear as ‘trustworthy, confidant, believable, knowledgeable, and a man or woman of integrity’ (Barrett 2006, p.388). Conversely, when the audience judges negatively upon the speaker, while basing their assumptions on superficial perceptions, and on the bad image or reputation, they behold themselves from their leader, the ethos happens to be negative. The ethos refers to the character himself, evaluated by the listeners according to their frame of references and culture. The danger with the ethos is that it is not because someone inspires trust and honesty that he or she necessarily has strong ethics. Indeed, honesty and integrity are not obviously perceptible to the audience.

The perception of a person and his or her transmitted message is created in the follower's mind in the earliest moments. No matter the sector, whether it is within the education, military or sports area, Thelwell et al. (2013) showed that reputation and the accompanied impressions play a huge role regarding our expectation of people. Moreover, they conducted a study to show to which extent the judgement of followers can be biased by reputational information of a leader within an athlete-coach relationship. In their study, they showed two videos presenting two coaches. The attributes age, gender and even the body language as well as the way of dressing were similar in order to avoid as much as possible the bias that this variables could induce. Before watching the videos, the leaders were presented:

The first one as a former coach on a professional club during 4 years with a good reputation while the second one was presented as a former graduate on IT, working for a gym club but having no reputation at all. The result of the study showed that respondents attribute significantly more ability to the coach with a good reputation than to the one without any reputation. Indeed, he was considered as more competent to motivate, build character and for technical competencies as well. It seems quite clear here that the leaders’ reputation impacts in a large way the perception of the followers.

Moreover, Zinko et al. (2012) developed a sensemaking of why the leader’s reputation will help them even for their personal career. With the reputation they have, leaders convey their ability of performing efficiently in their jobs. They outline their ability to manage and to work in teams. Their reputation is not something that appears from one day to another, it is constructed day by day throughout a continuous process whereby the leaders’ behaviour is observed by his followers.

The idea of creating or building this identity through the reputation helps followers to minimize eventually constructed gaps in relation to the future action of those leaders and allows them to anticipate their reactions and behaviour (Hall et al. 2004). Moreover,
Ferris et al. (2003) explained that the better the reputation of leaders, the better the trust and accountability accorded by followers.

The reputation and the credibility of leaders are linked to their personal attributes and needs to be explained through 3 dimensions that should be balanced. Indeed, Hall et al. (2004, p.8) saw the reputation of leaders as a link to ‘human capital, social capital and leader style’. Moreover, characteristics as the age and experiences are often taken into account in order to build up leaders’ reputation.

Elard S, entrusted us during the interview that:

‘It was really difficult in the beginning. When I started my career I was really quite young and after my studies in Business Administration I did an extra training as credit underwriter. The banking director and the clients, who might be considered in this case as followers were really experienced. My reputation was based on my age and was, quite hindering. I really needed to convince them. But once my followers created my reputation based on my knowledge and capacities, I was directly warmly welcomed by them. Therefore, I know how important reputation is for a leader, but as well that everything depends equally on the followers. However, through a solid know-how and the correct way of verbally and nonverbally conveying them, I could lead my reputation in a certain direction.’

However, this is not always linked in a logical way (Hall et al., 2004). If we take an existing example; Mark Zuckerberg or Steve Jobs were considered as brilliant from the beginning of their careers. However, many other leaders gain in experience and credibility when they get older.

Finally, for Trevino et al. (2000) the reputation of leaders is based on 2 pillars:

- The first one is the perception of leader as a moral person since the latter represents the basic characteristic for ethical leadership. Indeed, the personal traits, the decisions of leaders as well as their behaviour are constantly evaluated by followers who form their opinion regarding their leaders throughout the way they perceive their actions and personality. A CEO who was interviewed by the same authors explained that he sometimes noticed to which extent the actions of leaders speak more than the words, which had been actually conveyed. They are constantly judged and evaluated by people (followers) who construct an impression of them and consequently of their reputation, based on what they perceived. The interviews that Trevino et al. (2000) conducted were taking place in the same period as the scandal Lewinsky-Clinton and the interviewers agreed on the importance of the personal morality regarding the reputation of leaders. If we take other personal scandals, like for example the one where Dominique Strauss-Kahn was implicated after the investigations on sexual assaults, we can clearly illustrate that even the personal reputation of leaders will impact their professional career, their leadership and induces important consequences for their credibility and ability to lead properly. People judge leaders even for what they know from their private life. The importance of basing a leader’s reputation on his private life can be illustrated by those celebrities who needed to publicly apologise for their private mistakes even when the incidents didn’t have a direct link to their professional life. Tiger Woods – for his extramarital affairs, Mel
Gibson – for his words against Jewish people when he was drunk. Hugh Grant – after being seen with a prostitute, Chris Brown – after he hit his former girlfriend Rihanna, etc. Those people are aware that their personal image affects their entire reputation, even on a professional basis.

- The second pillar impacting the reputation of leaders is linked to the perception of followers regarding their professional behaviour (Trevino et al. 2000). Indeed, followers also construct their judgement concerning the perception they gathered from the leader as a moral manager (in business role at least). Leaders need to have ethical values, which they embody, in order to convey the right signals within the organisation. Once again, employees observe the behaviour of leader and based their opinion upon them. It’s particularly important nowadays since there are not always direct contact with leaders and followers. Zinko et al. (2012) explain moreover, that many leaders try to always create a positive image in order to have a good reputation since they know that it will help them to consequently develop a successful career.

Consequently, leaders’ actions, ethos and reputation play a huge role for the followers’ mind during their process of judging the leaders’ messages. Often this happens even without being aware of this phenomenon. If leaders can manage to guide, lead or properly define the image they convey to some extent, the followers’ perception is not as easy to manipulate. Furthermore, the latter depend as well on other factors influencing more or less consciously the follower's understanding of a leader’s message.

3.5.2 Gut Feeling

The globalization changed the world in many ways into a turbulent, complex and rapidly transforming environment and contributed therefore to the wish of managers to adopt new management approaches to decision-making processes in order to cover all the different existing cases. Under each condition another strategy is approved and the authors Sinclair and Ashkanasy (2005) outlined that Nutt (1999) found out that rational approaches in terms of decision-making do not even reach the fifty percent success mark. Hereby, it has been clarified that managers rely nowadays often and on purpose on their 'gut feeling' and trust therefore their intuition (Sinclair & Ashkanasy 2005).

The authors Katkin, Wiens & Öhman (2001) outline in their article that people might get influenced by unexplainable feelings that have an impact on their ‘gut feelings’. With their studies the authors claimed, that ‘gut feelings are based in part on the sensation of visceral vues’ (Katkin et al. 2001, p.370), meaning intuition.

‘Four discipline fields – emotions, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and cognitive science – are all studying intuition and decision making analysis’ (Patton 2003, p.994). Intuition is being seen as a ‘non-sequential information-processing mode, which comprises both cognitive and affective elements and results in direct knowing without any use of conscious reasoning’ (Sinclair & Ashkanasy 2005, p.353).

Furthermore, intuition as a decision making tool is however dependent on emotions, imagination and experiences that drive occasional insights, but can’t be measured universally for everybody in one way or another, since it is too elusive to define.

Indeed, 'emotions provide a unique data source that can aid decision-making, such as acknowledging a “gut instinct” or alternatively, for taking time to thoroughly review a decision because ‘it doesn't feel right’ (Chan & Mallett 2011, p.322).
There are even three sources of intuition:
- The innate response which is inborn,
- The general experience which represent accumulated knowledge
- The focused learning that is specialized on certain reactions, cues and habits.

In order to enhance the intuition of followers they need to get a high sensitivity for the situation (Patton 2003) and understand that intuition is a dual-process theory where we need to distinguish between intuitive judgement and intuitive insight (Dörfler & Ackermann 2012).

Consequently, for decision makers relying to 100% on intuition is a ‘no-go’, wherefore intuition is often used in conjunction to rational analysis to reinforce a certain standpoint. Agor (1984) found out, that using intuition as a tool is the most adequate in situations where the individual faces conflicting facts or illogic information.

**LUTZ K., the chief executive at a German Scout team told us**

‘I often recognized that the gut feeling is something that leads followers. Of course depending on in which category of scouts they are, they have more or less experiences, which obviously determines equally the outcome of their gut feeling. Experienced scouts are more likely to take the right decisions, since past events taught them how they should behave in dangerous situations for example. Therefore the gut feeling becomes an intuition that often leads to decision taking processes that are influenced by past experiences.’

Regarding this insight we understand why followers often trust their gut feeling concerning their leaders and whether they wish to follow or not, if the leaders give them contrasting factors and cues that irritate their rational decision making process. Such as Isengerg (1984) and Simon (1987) outlined that the recognition of patterns is important for the process of intuition, we comprehend that the followers’ state of mind, affective feelings, emotions and their mood might influence their gut feeling. However, there exist various types of intuition that can even develop to an expert level that is considered to be more nonverbal. Decision makers with an expert level of intuition base their analysis only on nonverbal cues and often do not even need rational analysis in order to make the decision they intent to pursue. This point is obviously strongly linked to the followers’ capacity to correctly decode the leader’s nonverbal messages. A follower who is less capable of seeing, understanding and relating to the important incidences, might base their followership on a false, insufficient or insignificant gut feeling without reconsidering his decisions.

Nevertheless, the ‘multidimensional construct encompasses both cognitive and emotional elements’ (Sinclair & Ashkanasy 2005, p.359), meaning that having a certain knowledge, experience or any kind of shaped frames of references is a necessity for intuitive decision making, since it completes the emotional aspect. As a matter of fact, a wide range of frames of references can help fostering a personal intuition, which is especially of major importance in cases with uncertainty, great complexity of the situation or under conditions with a wide volume of information (Patton 2003). ‘Making sense of complexity requires holistic, lateral, intuitive thinking – right-brain skills that can be improved and developed’ (Lank & Lank 1995, p.18). Therefore, intuition can be trained when people continuously expose themselves to different situations and learn from the patterns and rules that they can use for following occasions (Patton 2003).
However, it is clear, that the perception of a follower regarding his leader depends nowadays more often than thought on a gut feeling decision that lies not in the hands of the leaders. As a matter of fact, the gut feeling of followers is crucial for their willingness to follow a leader. Depending on their ability of decoding their leader's nonverbal cues the followers base their decision making process to a very high percentage on their intuition, rather than on rational analysis (Sinclair & Ashkanasy, 2005). However, ‘a decision maker, who is aware of intuitive influences and their impact on the choice of alternatives, is likely to strike an effective balance between consideration of analysed data and alternatives, and the intuitive component’ (Patton 2003, p.992).

*Nevertheless, followers often do not see the intuitive influences, which are created by their gut feeling, which depend instantly on their personal frames of references.* Sometimes followers just decide to follow or not, because they feel that following is the right thing to do. Without even knowing why, they perceive their leaders in one-way or another (intuitive insight) and base their judgement on the way they perceived the leader and his performance. Hereby we are talking about ‘intuitive judgement’ (Dörfler & Ackermann, 2012), that can easily lead to a sort of Communication Gap.

However gut feeling of leaders can be impacted by several factors as the Halo or Horn Effect that unconsciously influence the perception of followers. In the following part we will develop these ideas in further details.

### 3.5.3 Halo and Horn Effect

Thelwell et al. (2013) took the example of an experiment conducted by Manley et al. (2008) in which three factors are developed to explain how athletes can form expectations on their leaders: It seems that the reputation of the leaders and his/her way of communicating plays an important role. However, a third factor appears here: his or her general characteristics such as the simple question of age, physical appearance, gender or origin.

*Usually followers have biases or prejudices that influence their social judgement. This begins with the first impression.*

As Goman (2008) explains it, when people meet each other for the first time, they mentally draw their conclusions upon others. They make personal judgements, decide subconsciously whether they like someone or not and they even build relationships upon this special filter depending on the first impression they had. When the followers’ first impression of their leader is that his is unlikeable or not trustworthy, they will become suspicious for each of his actions. As Goman (2008) outlines it, the first impression is four times more impacted by the nonverbal communication than by the verbal one.

In fact, there is a phenomenon whereby one single trait of a person can determine how another person perceives him. One good quality can blind us for a clear judgement and we tend to jump from one specific trait to a general impression of the whole situation, object or person (Rosenzweig 2009).

The Halo Effect is a powerful mental model coined by the American psychologist Edward Thorndlike in 1920 who found out that such “Halo Effects” occur when people
shape biased impressions of a person based on restricted information that might be even subjective or objectively incorrect (Burton et al. 2015).

Beckwith & Lehmann (1976, p.418) outlined this subjectivity with the following words: ‘Halo Effects can provide an upward bias upon the explanatory power of individual-level multi-attributes attitude models using subjective beliefs indicated by respondents’. This subjective belief is based on the global perception, which is widely influenced by the perception regarding one special detail (Rosenzweig 2009).

As a matter of fact, both Halo and Horn Effect are for example created by the respondent’s perception of their superior. In the leader-follower relationship, the effects arise when a certain characteristic of a leader is put into the focus which is unintentionally misleading the followers’ perception regarding the whole personality of their leader as well as his skills and competencies.

When followers are given a positive characteristic that they like; for example the enthusiasm or the nice personality of their leader, it might affect the followers’ perception in a way that increases the leader’s attraction of all other attributes, or blinds them even to negative ones. Although the judgement for likability differs from one person to another, Nisbett et al. (1977), explained throughout various experiments with college students evaluating teachers regarding their personality that people who appear as physically attractive are in general associated to people with a more pleasant personality. The study outlined furthermore that the physical appearance, the mannerism and the way of talking of the teacher was judge really differently regarding if he was nice or not. While for the teacher’s ‘warm’ personality, physical appearance and mannerism was considered for more than 60% of the student as appealing, it was irritating for almost 80% of the student when the teacher showed his ‘cold’ side.

This problematic is provoked through the idea of the personality theory whereby people consider that traits are interconnected (Kennon 2011). If a follower has an overall impression of his leader, which is very good, he perceives the other non-interconnected skills as much better than they really are. All the other things get a “halo”, whereby attractiveness a special trait is likely to induce the non-connected idea of competence or sociability (Belludi 2010).

We talk about overgeneralizing special traits, when the process of ‘extending favourable perceptions of one attribute to other unrelated attributes’ is occurring (Burton et al. 2015, p.240) and creating a ‘cognitive bias that causes you to allow one trait, either good (halo) or bad (horns), to overshadow other traits, behaviours, actions, or beliefs’ (Kennon 2011, p.4).

When a follower attributes characteristics to his leader based on one single trait, he labels him and put him into clusters. Since the human being has the wish to be confirmed with the cluster, the follower searches for evidence that the leader is a good one, trustworthy and professional (Buschman, 2013). People are even more likely to ignore negative aspects because they don’t fit with the positive quality they associate with their leader. Even if the follower detects a mistake in the leader’s behaviour, he is more likely to consider that everybody can make a mistake once in a while. Consequently, the observing follower accepts what has been said in a more positive way than he would have done it under normal conditions. Bad things that the leader does are being forgiven without any reason what for another person would have gotten challenged, just because the follower wants his decision to be correct (Buschman 2013). Hereby, the positive character trait that has been chosen and “haloed” clouds consequently the follower’s judgement of the whole situation and ‘influences what you observe about that person’ and ‘how you react in a situation involving this person’ (Buschman 2013, p.3).
This fact is equally presented in a case where a follower is waiting for a leader’s answer regarding a certain question. If a follower gets his answer from the leader after the first demand his perceived waiting time is reduced even though he might have waited the same amount of time as someone who asked two times for the same thing. Although the waiting time has nothing to do with the quality of the answer, the follower is however more satisfied about the waiting time in the first case scenario, without any reason besides the Halo Effect (Rosenzweig 2009).

Depending on if the fact regarding a special trait is coherent with how followers perceive leaders, they attribute a correct judgement. When a fact is considered to be “negative”, meaning that for example a leader is very structured and organized but we evaluate him as impolite and therefore not good, the Horns Effect is activated. Consequently, the followers’ negative judgement interferes with the true fact that their leader is very professional, but still, they are not able to perceive the leader in a positive way (Belludi 2010).

On the other hand, if the leader is really not structured at all and possesses insufficient organization skills, but he is however perceived as very polite in an overall view, followers get influenced by the Halo Effect, thinking of the leader as being nice and professional, whereas the truth reveals the contrary (Belludi 2010). This is especially what happens often in elections, when people do not know whom to vote. They are generally going for the person where they feel more attracted to, for no matter which reason. Hereby, the risk to be trapped in the vicious circle of the Halo Effect is quite high.

Because of their category-level expectations, followers make potentially incorrect inferences about certain aspects of their leader that need to be disconfirmed in order to open the followers’ eyes and to distance their biased decision making from their usual perceptiveness (Burton et al. 2015). As a matter of fact, erroneous preconceived opinions can be corrected. Especially in the case where unbiased quantitative data is provided that stands in direct contradiction to the follower’s prior expectations (will or should), inappropriate Halo Effects can be reduced, since ‘when existing expectations are contradicted by the additional objective data, the pattern of results should provide evidence of a disordinal interaction’ (Burton et al. 2015, p.241).

Indeed, a flow of information is necessary for this process to be successful. Although a higher rate of information can reduce the power of the Halo Effect, since rational data has a certain effect on the followers’ emotional perceptiveness, it still cannot be eliminated since the halo effects’ base lies in the subjective perception of each individual and their Emotional Intelligence. Indeed, they need to be so emotional intelligent to see by themselves, that they are and always be blinded to a certain extent by the attractiveness or impression they have of their leader. Depending on their maturity and intelligence, they internalize that the leader’s idea should be able to withstand the pressure and force of the Halo Effect. Consequently, ‘every idea must stand on its own merit regardless of who proposes it’ (Kennon 2011, p.4). Indeed, the followers’ ability to correctly decode their leaders’ messages depends on their sensibility of the Halo and Horn Effect and their awareness that the effects are always with merit and even though they actively try to remove them from their cognition they still cloud their judgement and influence their behaviour even if they know about it (Kennon, 2011). More problematic, the understanding of a message by the followers can be distorted by a high level of followership, which blind the judgement they make of their leader. In this case, the already complicated phenomenon of perception will be influenced by the conviction they have, new aspect that we will develop in the last point of this section.
3.5.4 Blind Obedience

When the level of followership is high and when the followers are deeply convinced that the right thing to do is to follow their leader, followers might be likely to find themselves trapped in the vicious circle of “Blind Obedience”.

In this case, they accord a total trust to their leader and they don’t take enough time to rethink and analyse the transmitted message, causing subsequently a distortion of their understanding. Although blind obedience is not caused in each follower-leader relationship, a special importance lies however in outlining the possibility of its appearance in the sense that the followers’ final understanding of a message differs from its original content.

Since the dawn of time leaders determine their followers’ happiness and quality of life (Bennis 2009). Even though leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King inspired various generations positively to see the world from different perspectives and to understand the importance of independence and equality in terms of gender, age and religious affiliation, history showed harmful examples in leadership, which represent a threat for the well-being, engagement and prospect for the future for followers from many nations. Indeed, leaders like Hitler, Franco or Stalin set important examples to the world regarding their ability to influence and spur their followers to accept, support or sometimes even to commit the worst atrocities themselves, including dangerous experiments, tortures or mass-murders.

This unethical behaviour that those leaders had, needs to be treated with caution. Indeed, the author Hinrichs (2007) outlined that blind obedience can be seen as a type of unethical behaviour ‘where followers are influenced by a leader to engage in behaviour they would otherwise consider unethical’ (Hinrichs 2007, p.69).

Hereby, the author claims that a follower's willingness to unquestioningly obey unethical demands depends on their personal likelihood, which is determined on the one hand by situational variables and on the other hand by personality variables. As some studies showed it, obedience can be created through the followers’ different levels of moral development, social intelligence, authoritarianism, education level and culture.

Our interviewed senior consultant told us regarding the question of blind obedience:

‘Depending on the social or technical surrounding of people, their blind obedience is triggered in a different way. Indeed, people have different levels of needs concerning the necessary information for their decision-making processes. Sometimes a strict minimum of information is already sufficient for a person to become a follower, whereas he might not have decided in this way if he would have heard the rest of the information. Leaders who provoke blind obedience start on different levels to collect a maximum of followers. For blind obedience to arise, leaders need either fanatics or followers with such a low knowledge level that they can be manipulated.’

According to Hinrichs (2007) the self-regulatory standards which are internal and which prevent followers from committing crimes of obedience are called “moral disengagement”. This disengagement is more likely to occur if the questionable behaviour gets reconstructed, if the involvement of the followers gets restricted, or if the victims get blamed.
Furthermore, the Hinrichs (2007) depicts in which scenarios followers are more likely to commit crimes of obedience. According to him, ‘people who believe that leaders have more responsibility for ethical decisions and behaviour than followers will be more likely to obey an unethical directive from a leader’ (Hinrichs 2007, p.71). Moreover, followers with high leadership self-efficiency will be less likely to defer moral questions and responsibility to a leader, whereas people will a high romance of leadership are rather deferring it to a leader than the other way around.

This idea correlates strongly with the sensemaking of Kellerman (2008), whereby people are able to execute the superior’s wish, even when they are not completely convinced by the leader’s message, concept or personality, as long as they presume that the leader takes the responsibility for their actions. In addition to that, people in a leadership position and with a high esteem consider leaders as more responsible for moral decisions than followers, meaning that if they are put into a follower position, they are ‘more susceptible to commit crimes of obedience through the process of moral disengagement by displacing responsibility for their behaviour onto the leader’ (Hinrichs 2007, p.75).

However, team pressure, as well as any other kind of group dynamic can be considered as important components for obedience. Indeed, followers who are part of a group and who see all of its members thinking something will be likely to adapt their understanding of a message. Sometimes this phenomenon is unconscious; sometimes however, they understand the message in a way but change their interpretation of it just by what the group say. The Asch conformity experiments developed by Salomon Asch in 1951, showed in which extent someone could be influenced by the rest of a group. In this experiment, the subjects were asked to say which line was about the same size than the model between 3 propositions (including 2 obvious fake ones). Here, fake members of the group of respondents were asked to participate and was voluntary placed before the subjects of the study. The experiment showed that after the 7 wrong answers of fake members, 36,8% of the subjects interviewed transmitted the wrong answer even if they were aware of it.

Although people should have learned from the past, life proves us that followers obey their emblematic leader as long as they consider following the leader’s concept, vision and purpose as the right thing to do – for no matter which reason. In fact, it is all about their awareness and assertiveness that can vary under certain circumstances or in special contexts, wherefore the understanding of the leader’s message is not only determined by the leader himself and more precisely by his communication and his ability to correctly encode, but as well by the follower’s capacity to correctly perceive and decode.
4. Conclusion

4.1 The Communication Gap

Throughout this thesis we managed to give to leaders and followers an overall understanding of both, the importance and the impact of the ‘Communication Gap’ within a leader-follower relationship. Furthermore, we treated the significant aspects that contribute to its arising and increase and demonstrated the possible communicative issues that might get evoked throughout the complex process of communication within the context of leadership.

Based on various examples from well-known leaders from different areas of competencies and through interesting insights from the experiences of our six interviewees, we created an analysis that truly completed our theoretical research.

Step by step, leaders as well as followers could gather an understanding of its whole complexity, thanks to our explicatively simplified model that visualizes the interconnections between the significant elements. The model, that is represented in its full entirety below depicts indeed the aspects of the three main pillars of the communication process that contribute to the arising of the two asymmetries, which compose together the ‘Communication Gap’ and shows which discrepancies can be produced by their encounter.
As the above-presented model outlines it, *asymmetries* (in red) can quickly appear between the **three key pillars** (in blue), compromising hereby the transmission of a message from a leader to his followers because of several factors. Each of the three pillars explains in details the background knowledge and elements that are determining for either the Content, the Delivery or the Understanding of a leader’s message. From our point of view, as the authors of this thesis, these three pillars are extremely necessary in order to fully comprehend the totality and complexity of the asymmetries, resulting in the case of inconsistencies during the communication process.

The first essential pillar, expressed in our model, is the **Content of the message**, which is completely dependent on the context and which is the initial reason of the transmission of a message. Since each situation is absolutely unique, each context induces another possible content. Indeed, the latter represents the base for every further communication, verbally or nonverbally, and is therefore of major importance for the explanation of the ‘Communication Gap’.

However, as soon as a leader defines a content and decides to communicate it, a first asymmetry is likely to be created. Then, the so-called ‘**Composition Asymmetry**’ is produced by the leader during the formulation of the content. Here, more than simply because of a cultural difference, a misleading environment or a non-mastered language, a first sub-asymmetry can appear: the **Composition of a speech**. This first component of the Composition Asymmetry regroups several aspects being restrictive for the right formulation of the leader’s message. These restrictions are due to the fact that leaders have assumptions about their followers that underestimate their capabilities. They might be presuming that followers don’t understand certain things that they don’t need more details or that time is too short to convey more information for example. Furthermore, the leaders’ **Communication style**, might act equally as a sub-asymmetry, when the style does not match to the situation or the affected communication partners. Finally, the ‘Composition Asymmetry’ is impacted by the leader’s **Understanding of the audience**, which means a sub-asymmetry appears when leaders are not emotionally intelligent enough to first correctly detect the needs of their followers, to second adapt their communication to the given circumstances or to third give the relevant answer to what is expected from them.

The second step of the communication process is represented by the “encoding”, which constitutes indeed the second key pillar. The **Delivery of the message** – or the leader’s process of conveying a content to his or her followers – includes both the verbal and the nonverbal communication.

The **Verbal Communication** serves as a method to explain, clarify, emphasize or develop the precise information that lies within the underlying content of the message. Hereby, leaders can embellish their speeches through the use of decorative figures, personal stories and through the choice of the right words, presented at the right moment. Although the elaborated rhetoric reveals their capacity of nicely formulating messages, it should always be evoked in purposeful moderation since it can transform or mask their content. Additionally, communication is happening on multiple channels at the same time, wherefore leaders need to be equally aware of their **Nonverbal Communication**. The latter conveys significantly precious information regarding their personal states towards their conveyed message, a certain situation or even concerning their followers. Through **Kinesics** such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and postures, their speeches can be either reinforced or weakened on a nonverbal basis. Each of these aspects is a determinant, constituting either a memorable message, that captures or enhances the attention of the audience, or being the reason that the leader’s
verbal communication gets completely unmasked or even discredited. Indeed, while words represent only a few percentages of the impacting factors regarding the communication of leaders, the body language ("Kinesics") and the paralanguage ("Vocalics") influence the perception of the followers to a considerable amount. Moreover, the time ("Chronemics") and the space ("Proxemics") complete the components of nonverbal communication that might intervene in the process of communication. The verbal and especially the nonverbal communication were of major importance for the understanding of this thesis since a poor nonverbal delivery or even the slightest inconsistency between both channels can lead to asymmetries. This second pillar has a special standing since it is wilfully situated in the core of our model, because it interrelates the other two pillars and represents the main reason for the arising of either asymmetry.

Consequently, when leaders communicate their messages, a new asymmetry appears, ‘The Perception Asymmetry’, which depends on what followers understand. Hereby, the evolved sub-asymmetries are rather created in the followers’ personal mind than being produced by the leaders’ incapacity of properly formulating their message. Indeed, the Concept and Subjectivity of perception outlines that the uniqueness of each follower induces a uniqueness of impressions, interpretations and therefore an understanding that is completely individual from one follower to another, wherefore asymmetries can arise. The Regulatory Fit Theory explains the sub-asymmetry that is constructed when the followers’ style of decoding doesn’t match with the leader’s style of encoding a message. The followers’ capacity – or incapacity – to decode messages in a special context can as well influence the final understanding and might therefore contribute to the creation of the Perception Asymmetry. Furthermore, the followers’ proper level of Emotional Intelligence is necessary to detect the (in)consistency between the verbal and nonverbal communication and, once again, the perception of the followers will depend on their ability to do so.

Finally, the third key pillar, which is the Understanding of the message, represents the last step of the process of communication and determines how followers personally perceive the content of a message. Depending on whom is the information receiver, his or her own frames of references will interfere in this procedure, since the personal background of the followers, as well as their past experiences, set the frame for their capacity to detect the right cues and to interpret them correctly. Furthermore, leaders’ ethos, reputation and actions can bias the followers’ judgement upon the credibility and value of the leader’s message. In addition to that, the Understanding of a message is equally based upon unconscious phenomenon, known as Gut Feeling (the personal intuition of the follower) and as Halo or Horn Effect (the follower’s judgement of a leader’s attributes through his simple appearance). Here, both components create a cognitive bias regarding the interpretation of the messages’ content, simply because of the followers’ judgement, prejudices and instincts that will enlarge the ‘Communication Gap’. The last component influencing the understanding of the message is the ‘Blind Obedience’, which is linked to the level of followership. A high level of trust towards their leaders is often not explainable and their actions make followers sometimes less attentive to the underlying content of the leaders’ conveyed messages.
Those mentioned aspects and their interrelation were treated in this thesis and helped to construct the final Communication Gap Model (CGM) that we have seen in its entirety above. Regarding the visualization, we simplified its complexity in order to make the comprehension as easy as possible. However, we still recognize the importance and impact of each aspect contributing to the asymmetries that constitute the ‘Communication Gap’. Indeed, it will be never possible to close this gap between leaders and followers, since too many components are interfering in its arising, maintain and increase. Therefore, we strongly believe that wishing to close this Gap is an utopian thinking, wherefore instead of dreaming to close a non-closable gap, we took with this thesis the realistic chance of making leaders and followers become subsequently more sensitive to certain indicators, making them anticipate communication issues, even before they escalate.

We strongly support when leaders set their focus on their verbal and nonverbal communication in order to reduce the ‘Communication Gap’. Indeed, it can be helpful for them to understand the importance of composing a clear message with an underlying content, delivering the latter purposefully with the help of the different communication channels and to decode finally the followers’ reactions. We are furthermore, absolutely convinced that mastering communication can help leaders to give the teams the so important guiding vision and to encourage, involve and motivate them to a maximum. However, we would like to clearly emphasize the huge difference between mastering communication in order to empower or persuade, motivate or manipulate and involve or influence followers.

Morality Questions and Ethical Issues associated to Communication

With our thesis and the created model, we absolutely did not intent to write a paper on how leaders can manipulate their followers or a guide on how they could use the verbal and nonverbal communication for their proper advantage in order to persuade, convince or psychologically influence their followers. Indeed, this thesis sets its focus on providing a model that visualizes the aspects that might contribute to misunderstandings within the leader-follower relationship. Therefore, the main outcome for interested readers was to gather a true understanding of the ‘Communication Gap’, get an explanation of the interacting factors and to point at critical aspects that might harm a smooth collaboration within a leadership context.

However, during our researches we recognized that the topic of the ‘Communication Gap’, the verbal and nonverbal channels as well as the one of perception are most of the time strongly linked to influence, persuasion and manipulation. Although we clearly obstinate ourselves on purpose from the manipulative character that the topic induces inter alia, we still need to take this aspect into account, since it sets the frame for profound discussions.

We actually realized throughout the elaboration of this paper that this topic could generally be confronted with ethical questions and analysed regarding the morality of its treatment that is associated with the understanding and well mastering of the reciprocal communication within the leadership context.
4.2 Discussion on the ethical risks concerning this topic

Although many leaders contribute to positive change, History revealed more than once the danger of appointing the wrong leader. As it has already been treated in this thesis, a major importance lies in the followers’ ability to clearly see, analyse and understand their leaders, their vision and real intentions as well as their actions in order to judge them by ‘the content of their character’ (King 1963). However, this aspect becomes especially difficult for followers in situations where leaders actively decide on manipulating the followers’ understanding of their message by embellishing its content through their communication.

This aspect induces the first ethical issue, that some leaders willingly intent to convince others about the truth of their words by manipulating them and by biasing their understanding of the conveyed message.

Indeed, the more leaders try to learn how to manipulate, persuade and influence, the more followers need to be emotionally intelligent and mentally prepared to cope with such situations and to resist against ‘blind followership’. However, the excessive wish to analyse peoples’ communication and to search for criminal intentions evokes a second ethical issue, which endangers people’s intimacy.

The persuasive character that the topic of communication generates within a leader-follower relationship is indeed to be treated with caution. Therefore, we would like to give in the following discussion-part food for further thoughts regarding these three aspects that entail a manipulative character:

- Coached Performance
- Communication Guides
- New Technologies on Nonverbal Communication

The coached performance

In order to “fit” to the followers’ expectations in terms of verbal and nonverbal communication, politicians, businessmen and other kind of leaders work hard on their performances. Since the famous debate between Kennedy and Nixon, all kind of leaders are aware of the fact that their image matters more than anything. Consequently, some of them employ coaches to change and master their image in order to be admired by the public eyes. Taking the example of Hillary Clinton: In 1993, she was very soft and characterized herself with a feminine, cautious body language and an even more reserved verbal appearance. It is as if she communicates that she is not the president, but just his wife (Millar dir. 2008). Since then, she was obviously coached, because her performance back then is not comparable to her actual behaviour at the presidential election.

In fact, coaches work with previous experiences they gathered from other cases and observe carefully the followers’ reactions. Like that they are able to anticipate for their next client how the follower’s perception might be affected by certain kinds of communicative approaches and are therefore able to play with the factors influencing their understanding. As a matter of fact, when followers perceive something they might have been influenced not necessarily only by the leader’s performance but might have been rather attracted to the persuasive delivered message that has been researched, studied, trained by and rehearsed with a professional coach whose job is to create a persuasive leading identity. Here, a Communication Gap might be voluntarily introduced.
In one way or another, we can even talk about a professionally staged performance that sometimes really manipulates the followers’ perception of their leaders, because their nonverbal behaviour is slightly faked, in comparison to their natural habit. Marc Geffrey, coach in body language, adds that ‘when you coach politicians, you have to create the illusion, the impression that they are interested by people like if they know those people personally’ (Millar dir, 2008). This kind of prepared performance induces of course unconsciously a persuasive character for followers since coaches have obviously researched the target group, their needs, wishes and expectations.

During one of her meeting for the elections in the USA, Hillary Clinton started crying and her voice changed. She got quiet, cracked and broke up through all those emotions. This situation was perceived very differently by people. The commentator at that time strongly believed that this moment would play in favour for her. While some people supported her, being overwhelmed by her “honesty” and dedication, some others were sure that it was intentionally, a well-prepared and coached act. Indeed, at that time she was accused to be cold and asked to show more emotions. Doubts existed as well, because people presumed that if she had real emotions she would not have wanted to show them in this way but she would have reacted few seconds before. Here, the way this act was perceived lies completely in the eyes of the beholder and is therefore completely personal, regardless whether it was coached or not. The interpretation of the message and the disparities regarding its perception outline the subjectivity of the understanding as well as the gap, appearing throughout the communication process.

As we can see, coaches help their clients to improve their charismatic performance by making them understand and internalize the importance of their verbal and nonverbal communication. They generally set a special focus on teaching them how to align both in order to become more persuasive and to emphasize their existing but internally hidden charisma with little advises. Although these seem to be really small, there are of enormous importance for the followers’ perception. Indeed, by doing so, leaders do not only recognize that the use of proper body language is an effective way of attracting the audience’s attention, but it can help them internalizing that the adoption of positive, impacting and powerful gestures and postures affect the followers’ reactions and therefore their mental state and the success of business (Goman 2011).

According to Goman (2011), in order to convey a message with true honesty that can be perceived as credible, leaders need to be honest. However, she explains that it can be tricky for leaders to show feelings or emotions, which they either don’t feel at all or just not anymore, because their passion for content was reduced throughout the multiple repetitions of the same speech in front of different audiences. Goman outlines that in order to captivate every audience’s attention even if the leader is not passionate anymore, he or she needs to recreate a certain kind of enthusiasm that can be conveyed honestly during the transmission of his/her message. Therefore, leaders can use the so-called ‘Method acting technique’, which was developed in the 1800s by Constantin Stanislavsky.

Techniques exist for leaders to reduce their stress level, to appear more confident or to make a good entrance. Each of these points is counted among the necessary skills to deliver a great performance. Questionable concerning this point is not the fact that leaders try to improve their communication skills. On the contrary, the more leaders try to effectively communicate, the better. But hereby the ethical risk is that leaders recognize the power that lies within coached performances and therefore become...
tempted to use communication to their fullest advantage, willingly accepting to manipulate people for their proper good. This, sometimes even with a performance that does rather belong to a coach than to themselves and which intentionally enlarges the Communication Gap, inducing a biased perception of the original message’s content.

If it is not a personal coach, leaders can refer themselves to literature or persuasive guides of communication, which we would like to challenge in the following, since the latter or body languages dictionaries can be misinterpreted, and therefore misleading for both, leaders and followers, interfering once again the authentic communication process.

Guides of communication

Guides of communication promise often indeed pie from the sky. Although they might list some interesting insights regarding verbal and nonverbal communication and their “proper” use, they can’t be adopted as universal Communication Bible for every leader. As we have seen in our thesis, there are already enormous differences between leaders from different areas of competencies and consequently, differences regarding both their verbal and nonverbal communication.

Moreover, the interviews with our six leaders enlightened us that a leader cannot just adopt any verbal or nonverbal communication since it depends on many different things, especially on the context and on the leader’s personality. We are fully aware that it is not because one of our interviewees, expert in his or her area of leadership, adopts a certain style that every leader from the same area possesses the exact same style, skills and techniques to communicate. The used Kinesics, Vocalics, Proxemics and Chronemics must be coherent to who the leader is and to how he behaves normally.

Furthermore, we recognized that there is a certain necessity that lies in interpreting each gesture, expression or posture not only partially but as a whole and regarding the special context and circumstances.

Therefore, the communication must fit to the communicator and the context, which represents obviously a limit for the guides of communication, since they cannot be personalized.

The problem with this kind of document is that it can never depict the exact situation in which a leader finds himself and explain what cues might be perceived in which way if they are combined together. Even if some signals are universal, the majority of them are completely dependent on the situation, culture and environment in which they take place and depend equally on the subjective vision of each follower. Indeed, the wish to decipher nonverbal communication from one single movement ‘is like trying to find narrative meaning in a single word. However, when words appear in sentences, or gestures in clusters, their meaning becomes clearer’ (Goman 2011, p.33).

Considering subsequently only one action is not sufficient at all: If people focus on a person’s feet, orientated to the direction of the door, they will think according to the Communication Guides that the individual wants to escape. However, this analysis is wrong if in this same configuration, the body of the latter is leaned forward, showing a deep interest to what is been said.

Here, followers or leaders will misinterpret the communication signals because they didn’t read the communication as a whole with its multiple channels (Goman 2011).

Since reading the totality of the sent cues is a necessity in order to decrypt the whole communication, which is obviously not possible with a Communication Guide, technologies are about to be invented that should take the lead regarding this point. We challenge this aspect equally.
New Technologies on Nonverbal Communication

Indeed, people think that there lies an enormous competitive advantage in understanding people’s communication and especially the exact meaning of their nonverbal signals. However, Communication Guides are not sufficient, precise and situational enough to cope with the expectations of ambitious researches. Moreover, seeing and analysing all the sent signals from Kinesics, Vocalics, Proxemics and Chronemics at the same is barely manageable for the human eyes and ears. Therefore, technologists push the analysis even so far that machines are developed in order to “read” the expression and body language of people in an electronic way. New inventions are always interesting and might open new opportunities. However, from an ethical point of view, decrypting people’s body language, and therefore interfering in their privacy is truly questionable. Although proponents might outline many advantages, like the possibility to easier detect criminal intentions, exposing human feelings to such an extent that everybody can read how we feel, think and how we will probably act, evokes morality issues.

In the frame of its artificial intelligence project ‘Project Oxford APL’, Microsoft has developed an emotion recognition Software that can “read” and “determine” people’s emotions by analysing photos of their facial expressions. The feelings get rated by the programme and are valuated with different scores, representing the percentage to which extent the person is either angry, surprised or sad for example. However, this tool, as well as any other future invention regarding verbal and nonverbal communication, must be treated with caution in our opinion. Considering our thesis topic, we are indeed deeply convinced that an invention, which simply analyses the emotional state of someone, cannot solve the problem of the Communication Gap. Rather it can widen or even produce the latter. Throughout our researches, we managed to get an eye for ethical risks, and this represents indeed an extraordinary one. A machine might be able to detect the emotions from facial expressions; however it does not know the underlying reason for the evoked feelings since they are linked to their primitive instincts. Therefore, not each of the gathered impressions is accurate (Goman 2011). A leader can express a certain emotion that might be linked to an exterior cause, instead of to the message that the leader is conveying in the very moment. Therefore, confusions can quickly arise, especially with non-human-detectors. Technical devices will alarm without considering the general context, the special situation, all the circumstances, the time, environment and personal state of the observed, as well as his/her relationships with others that might interfere in the production of the detected emotions. Consequently, future inventions must be questioned rather than praised to the skies in order to conserve and protect the ethical dimension and the privacy and intimacy of individuals.

We strongly believe, that communication within a leader-follower relationship is really a complex construct that needs to be analysed with caution, rather than with shortcuts, in order to fully comprehend the whole situation.

Each of those three mentioned factors possesses indeed ethical risks and needs therefore to be analysed from a moral point of view. Literature regarding Communication needs subsequently to be read with a special regard on its influencing, persuasive and manipulative character, in order for readers to extract the information that can truly be used for their proper situation without disrespecting other individuals.
Although we clearly point out that verbal and nonverbal communication might be used by leaders for their proper advantage for manipulative reasons, we do not claim that it is always the case. We absolutely support the idea that leaders work on their communication in order to anticipate, facilitate and smooth the reciprocal relationships between leaders and followers, which will obviously lead to successful collaborations, whereby the Communication Gap gets reduced. However, the art lies in balancing the ambition to correctly compose, convey and deliver messages with the wish to bring all followers on their sides. Indeed, a correctly encoded message minimizes the Composition and Perception Asymmetry and lets the followers the opportunity to judge and to decide whether they want to follow. In contradiction to that, an influencing, manipulative or persuasive and probably coached performance convinces or sometimes even “forces” followers to follow without respectfully giving them a true chance to reflect upon their decisions. As we have seen, the topic’s accompanied morality questions are indeed significantly important, wherefore it would be interesting to analyse to which extent a leader’s mastery of verbal and nonverbal communication can be tolerated in terms of the underlying ethical risk.
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Appendices
Appendix A - Basic questionnaire for interviews

- Did you ever notice a mismatch between what you wanted to convey in terms of content and the way how you expressed your message in the end? Did you ever perceive a difference between what you said and how someone else understood it?

- Some people have a very particular style of communing. In which way do you personally encode your messages? Do you use a direct or indirect style? And is your approach rather cautious or are you going straight to the point?

- Are you responsible for the content of your messages or does your position forces you sometimes to convey a certain information coming from a superior? Is there consequently a discrepancy between how you communicate a message you personally wished/decided to encode and deliver and the way you transmit an information coming from a higher authority?

- When you transmit a message, of which the content was beforehand determined by a superior, do you rephrase the information with your own words or do you communicate the content in the exact same way? Why?

- When you adapt your communication style, is it because you feel a particular need for your followers or is it because you prefer to communicate information in your own way?

- When you do not adapt your communication, is it because you think that this information needs to be transmitted in this particular predefined way, or is it because you don’t care about the way the message gets conveyed?

- Do you pay attention to your followers’ communication and reactions before exchanging important information with them, in order to understand their needs and to possible adapt your style of communication, or do you communicate the message directly?

- To what kind of signals do you pay attention? Which are the followers’ reactions that you analyse?

- What do you think about the verbal and nonverbal communication? Have you already worked actively on either of these channels before?

- Are you forced to adopt a special verbal or nonverbal communication because of your leading position in your special sector? In which context or under which...
circumstances within your sector do you regard the verbal or nonverbal communication as more important?

- Have you ever noticed different reactions from your followers depending on your behaviour and did you actively try to test how the reactions differ? Do you deliberately use stylistic devices, such as metaphors, comparisons, etc.?

- Do you usually adopt many hand gestures? Do you do either verbal or nonverbal communication deliberately or is it naturally evoked?

- When you are preparing a speech, to what are you paying attention (Rhetoric, posture, etc.) or are your speeches completely spontaneous?

- Did you have any role models in terms of verbal or nonverbal communication at the beginning of your career? Were you inspired by someone's communication?

- Regarding your tone of voice, what do you consider as being the most important aspect? (Tone, rhythm, pitch etc.)

- Do you respect a certain distance (proxemics) towards your followers during a meeting with lots of people? And during an interview/presentation?

- During negotiations, how do you assign places? How do you organize the space? Are there any orders or rules that you personally respect and for which reasons?

- Have you ever invaded the personal space of followers? If so, have you felt that it made them uncomfortable? Do you keep deliberately some distance to them?

- Does punctuality (chronemics) affect your mood? Do your feelings, associated with this vector, change the way you behave? What do you do when you try to keep up the attention of your followers even after hours?

- If you perceive that the time is not appropriate, do you decide to postpone a meeting or the delivery of a certain message? How can the "right moment" be characterized for you?

- According to you, what are the factors influencing the ability of followers to decode your messages? Do you have any examples?

- Have you ever noticed that the gut feeling of followers was playing in your favour/disfavour?
Appendix B - Analyses of Emma Watson’s HeForShe Speech

Here, we have develop a concrete example in order to explain the necessity of mastering the verbal communication and to illustrate how leaders can “envelop” their message’s content with the use of the verbal communication through a recent and specific case. For that, we have decided to analysis the speech of Emma Watson, as UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador on the 20th September 2014 and available on the following website:

We strongly believe that readers will get a better understanding of the use of verbal communication throughout a concrete example, wherefore we explain in the following speech regarding our personal and therefore subjective analysis and interpretation.

In her “HeForShe” speech, the Britannic actress speaks for all humans on earth and for the equality of their rights, regardless of their gender. In addition to depicting how this gender inequality affects women all around the world, Emma Watson explained in her clever and well-structured speech why this issue represents a problem for everybody without any exceptions. The speech is characterized by the typical structure of speeches that are performed by leaders in front of an audience. In our opinion, this speech is a good example to illustrate the verbal communication part since it is presented in a relevant and logical way.

The analysis through the classical 5 rhetorical canons of speeches, allowed us to outline several important aspects of her presentation.

- First of all, there is the “Inventio” of speeches (or the invention). Here, we can see that she invites people to react to the inequalities existing by advancing logical arguments and by reasoning on them (Logos). She provokes emotions and feelings for her audience (Pathos) through her really personal speech during which she often illustrates her opinion throughout personal examples. The latter indeed helped her to catch the sympathy of the listeners, which can be seen in their reactions. At various moments the audience is applauding. Sharing her emotions and her anxiety for holding this special speech and showing that she is well informed about the important facts and references, shows that she is truly implicated and engaged in this topic. Indeed, the personal experiences and information she shares with the audience increases her credibility (Ethos). Since leaders cannot force their audience to have special feelings, they convey information helping them to process their own impressions and emotions regarding the issue they are talking about, which is likely to be projected on the audience. Of course this whole process of evoking emotions and creating empathy and credibility is strongly linked to the art of choosing the right words for a certain content.

- Secondly, the “Dispositio”, which is the way leaders arrange their speech to facilitate the transmission of their message. Leaders who want to be credible always try to well structure their speech to clarify their thoughts and present the content of their message in a logical way to provoke the right reactions in the follower's' mind. The dispositio is therefore all about choosing the right order of presenting the arguments. It starts with the introduction, pursuing with the Narratio (or the statement of facts) and the Probatio (or the delivery of proofs for those facts) and ending with a conclusion.
In this speech, this young female leader starts with a direct introduction. It could be inquisitive, paradoxical, corrective, narrative, or preparatory. Here, Emma Watson is more informative; she starts without any superfluous examples and goes directly to the aspects in which she is interested in. She defines the term “feminism” correctly to avoid any misunderstandings about its definition, shares her stories and enlarges the subject by citing the inequalities all around the world.

Then, for the Narratio, the characteristics establishing the different statement of facts, she uses clear and concise examples (even her personal example) and advances realistic facts that she proofs and argues (probatio). She includes all the audience from the beginning by inviting them to participate to the equality movement and addresses her directly to them. She plays with the confirmation and the refutation and her arguments seem obviously logical: “If there is no need to be aggressive for men, then, women won’t have to submit”. “If men are not forced to control, then, women won’t have to be controlled”. Generally, leaders use to illustrate what they say with stories, examples, data and inductive or deductive examples to be more “convincing”. They confirm what they say by inducing logical deduction or induction but also with the use of refutation (especially when they have to make a speech against opponent or counter arguments). Therefore, we can see that the choice of the syntax plays a huge role for the correct understanding and emphasize on certain aspects, as well as the choice of the right stylistic devices, such as anaphors or repetitions, that Emma Watson uses, is of great importance.

The disposition of the speech finishes with the conclusion (peroration), the most important section of the speech. According to Aristotle, the conclusion needs to include a summary of the main facts and arguments, ordered by increasing impact. The conclusion needs as well to inspire the audience through the Ethos of the speaker, and must create emotions for the listeners (Pathos). Here, Emma Watson requests people to reflect and to react after having summarized her arguments in a more and more impacting way: She evoked the inequality for wages, forced marriages and then, finally, the impossibility for women to have a simple access to education. At the end of her speech, she shows as well that she is a person like the others who has finally decided to react. She explains that she already asked to herself ‘If not me, who? If not now, when?’ (Watson, 2014) and will even use it again, making a kind of echo of those questions in the last sentence of her speech, suggesting to the audience that they can react like her if there are touched by this topic. She clearly states that even as a simple person, they can transform the world regarding feminism. It’s a classical way for leaders to call the audience to action. They make people aware of the situation and invite them, directly or indirectly to react on the topic. With such speeches, leaders like Emma Watson motivate actions and provoke reactions.
As a third aspect, the “Elocutio” (or style) is important for a well-presented speech. Everybody has of course a different style and this style differs even when the speeches were well prepared beforehand or if they are less thought through. Many leaders use elocutio to share their stories in an authentic, personal and emotional way. Therefore they use special and well-chosen **figures of styles and words**. In her HeForShe speech (2014), Emma Watson uses actively repetitions of words, expressions and of structures to create ‘echoes’ on several points (especially with anaphors). With parallelisms and arguments presented in crescendo, she facilitates the understanding for her audience. She projects herself in their positions, asks questions and conducts her speech with the words “we”, “I” and sometimes even the “you” to make it personal. However, she doesn’t integrate as many figures of words as many leaders usually do. Many of them use a lot similes, comparisons, metaphors, antithesis, hyperboles etc. to illustrate what they say. Here the only image that she used is when she called her tolerant relatives “the gender equality ambassadors” or the “inadvertent feminists”. She speaks with her heart and on her speech, there is nothing to manipulate or hide information. She appears as well authentic because of her simple language. Too many figures can confuse the audience’s understanding of the original content of a message.

- The fourth canon of rhetoric is the “Memoria” (or how the speaker memorizes his speech and make it memorable), which Emma Watson obviously manages since she is an actress. However, through the elaborated words, their structure, the evoked pictorial understanding and the personal storytelling, she created this “memoria”.

- The fifth one consists of the actual delivery of the message (or Ponuntiatio).

These two last canons are less relating to the verbal communication than the three first points. However, it doesn’t mean that they are not important. For this UN speech, Emma Watson transmits powerfully her message not only because of her verbal language and the structure of her message. She communicated it accurately because of the emotions she transmitted, and this also involved her voice, the rhythm, interruptions and breaks she took, and the expressions she presented.

In this section, we saw thanks to all the different canons of the rhetoric, that the HeForShe speech was conducted according to the traditional way to conveying a message. Furthermore, we have seen how the stylistic devices, syntax and structure of the whole speech defined Emma Watson’s successful verbal communication throughout this speech.