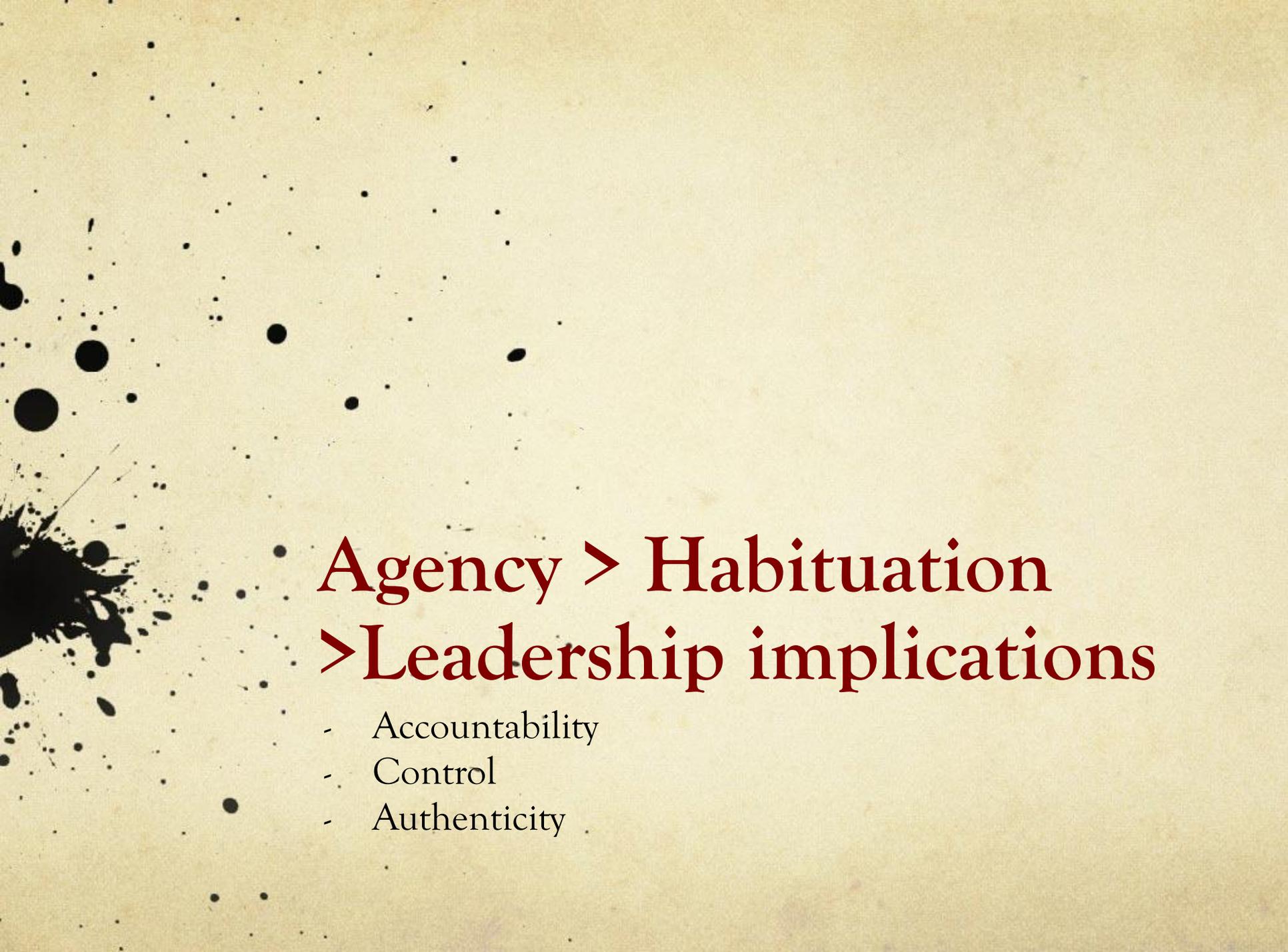


The force of relational space: implications for leadership

Mollie Painter-Morland
paintermorland@gmail.com



Agency > Habituation

> Leadership implications

- Accountability
- Control
- Authenticity

Traditional agency concepts

- Intentionality
- Judgment
- Values, beliefs
- Responsiveness to context: maintaining the ‘self’ , consistency, self-sameness

Focus on WHO are we, and WHAT we intend, and the EFFECT of our intentions.

Agency developments

- Many philosophical positions along a continuum

Rational autonomous subject

Relational subject



↑
Libertarian theories

↑
Poststructuralist accounts

↑
Communitarian

↑
Agency as assemblages

New conceptions of agency:

- Asking: “Who am I now, in this relationship to the Other(s) that confront me?” (Collinson, 2005, 2014)
- The self, and its grasp on what is real or true, is more of a relational work-in-progress, a dynamic mix of interrelationships (Cooper, 2005: 1690).
- Identity is constituted out of the relational mobility of dispersion, and that each moment of self-identification is therefore also the moment of self-multiplication and dispersal (Linstead and Pullen 2006: 1293)
- Authenticity should be defined not as the simplistic application of a set of core values, but rather a responsiveness to history, relationships, and context (Freeman and Auster (2011; 2013)
- The self as embodied, habituated subject

Agency redefined...

The powers and perils

Drawing on Deleuze...
agency emerges:

- embodied connections between the human, animate and inanimate create territories
- assemblages emerge, continually shaping and reshaping reality
- passive syntheses create 'decision'

ARE WE
DETERMINED?

Agency is redefined as
'agencing'

Territorialization and
deterritorialization: not
fixed, but not random
either

'Freedom' is redefined

'Agencement' / agencing

- “*Agencement*” refers to “a precise state of intermingling of bodies in a society, including all the attractions and repulsions, sympathies and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and extensions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations to one another”
- The assemblages that allow for this *agencing* (the verb form of agency) capacity, are not stagnant.

Implications for identity and agency

- Agency as “agencement” = becoming
- Self is not an integrated whole
- “Decisions” = an effect of “passive syntheses” rather than of active principled decision-making
- Sometimes we are on the receiving end of desiring production – the fascist within... > fixes flows, causes stagnation, and the end of “agencing”

The HOW of agencing

- The rhizomatic co-exists with hierarchies
- Rhizome is a network of influences , by which we as ‘agents’, our organizations and all other bodies are continually evolving, moving, and exploring creative possibilities
- The rhizome is a plane of immanence, i.e. what allows for the constant emergence of agency
- Body without Organs (BwO): *multiplicity* is freed from organismic functions typically part of identity structures
- But it is not as random as it seems....

Painter-Morland, M. J. (2012) “Rethinking Responsible Agency in Corporations: Perspectives from Deleuze & Guattari” *Journal of Business Ethics*, 101 (10): 83-95.

An aerial photograph of a rugged, layered rock formation, likely a canyon or a series of terraced hills. The rock is a mix of reddish-brown and dark brown colors, showing distinct horizontal strata. A winding river or stream flows through the center of the formation, creating a series of sharp turns and curves. The lighting is dramatic, with deep shadows in the crevices and bright highlights on the rock surfaces, emphasizing the texture and depth of the landscape.

The greater the portion of the past contained within the present, the heavier the mass being pushed towards the future to weigh in against the eventualities that are in the process of being prepared: the forward motion of the action, similar to an arrow, will be all the more powerful the further back its representation stretches.

(Bergson, L'énergie spirituelle, 1919)

Habituation as 'judgment'

Ravaisson:
philosopher
and public
servant

Habit is a
double-edged
sword

- Mind versus body? No: judgment = habit (or not)
- Habit is the “*general cause of our progress on the one hand, and our blindness on the other*” (Maine de Biran)
- dulls certain feelings and sentiments, while at the same time improving movement and sharpening perception
- How to harness the benefits, without losing capacity for judgment?
- Freedom is not undermined by habit, but rather made flesh

Who we are as 'agents'

- No longer the transcendental subject
- Org's are complex systems where plotting linear, hierarchical interactions becomes more difficult
- Multiple selves: different roles, cultures, episodic engagements
- Embodiment, neuroscience, practice-theory
- > Rather than being 'true' to principles and identities, we are patterned/habituated, relational creatures

Loss of normativity?

- D&G continually perform an evaluation of all of the various “assemblages” that we are involved in. The only criteria they offer us for this evaluation is whether assemblages are life-affirming or life-denying
- Spinoza’s Ethics , Deleuze (1970 , p. 33) explains that “there are always relations that agree with one another.” There is no evil (in itself), but there is something that is bad for me in relation to someone or something. An object that decomposes my body is bad, and one whose relation agrees with me, is good.

Approaches to Leadership

Entity perspectives:

- Focused on the individual: traits and behaviors, values, charisma
- Heroic leadership: 'Strong man' theories – example: transactional leadership
- Post-heroic leadership approaches
 - Transformational leadership
 - Spiritual leadership
 - Authentic leaders
 - Relational leadership focus on individuals

Constructionist perspectives

- Focused on the dynamic: emergent patterns, relationships
 - Responsible leadership
 - Systemic leadership
 - Authentic responding
 - Relational leadership focused on dynamics

Two ways of approaching relational leadership

- *Entity perspective*: maintains a focus on the identification of individual attributes of leaders as they engage in interpersonal relationships : some *leaders define themselves in terms of relationships with others and as such, possess a social self-concept*
- *Constructionist perspective*: views leadership as a process of social construction : leadership as a *social influence process* through which *emergent coordination* (such as social order) and *change* (new approaches, value, attitudes and ideologies) are constructed and produced

Uhl-Bien, M. and Ospina, S.M. (2012) *Advancing Relational Leadership Research. A dialogue among perspectives*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Relational critique of leadership concepts

- “Great man-theories”
- “Decision”
- “Vision”
- “Authenticity”
- “Accountability”



Painter-Morland, M. J. and Deslandes, G. 2014,
“Gender and Visionary Leading:

Rethinking “Identity” and “Vision” with Deleuze and Bergson”, *Organization*, 21(6): 844-866.

'Leadership' in the VW case

Winterkom: *“I am doing this (resigning) in the interests of the company, even though I am not aware of any wrongdoing on my part.”*

○ What does it mean when Winterkom says “he took full responsibility for the scandal... but denies any personal wrongdoing”? > nominalist role-responsibility that is vacuous

○ What is the alternative? Yes, executive should take responsibility, but when, how, and towards whom?

Ethical implications for leading

Identity

- Self as multiple
- Side-product of relationality and desiring production
- Self as embodied, patterned, habituated
- How does 'accountability' work?
- Who is in control, who leads?
- What happens to 'authenticity'?

Rethinking Accountability

Conventional strategy

- Accountable FOR assets, profits, losses, harms
- Hierarchical delegations and checks and balances
- Codify, generalize rules
- Protect against risk

Alternative conception

- Accountable towards others
- Relational control patterns of management dominance and control-sharing emerge in a dialogical manner

Painter-Morland, M. J. (2007) Redefining Accountability in a Network Society. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 17(3): 515-534.

Another perspective on identity and control

- The folly of 'sustainability' reporting, awards and credentials ... Assumes a measurable, fixed corporate identity across contexts. Not real!
- Governance as 'oversight', 'fiduciary duties' etc. does not prevent failures
- Broader influences of political economy, industry competition, consumption patterns plays more important role

Another way of looking at ‘accountability’ in the VW case

Is replacing VW’s CEO Martin Winterkom with another ‘strong man’ the answer?

Analysis would involve:

- Instead of assigning ‘blame, understanding the **‘assemblage’/‘territory’**: engineers, technology, chemical compounds, legislation, consumer habits, industry practice
- The double-edged sword of **habit**:
 - Consumer car-culture and driving habits
 - Industry practice of moral reassurance through lab testing

Rethinking Authentic leadership

Move away from ‘authenticity’ as...

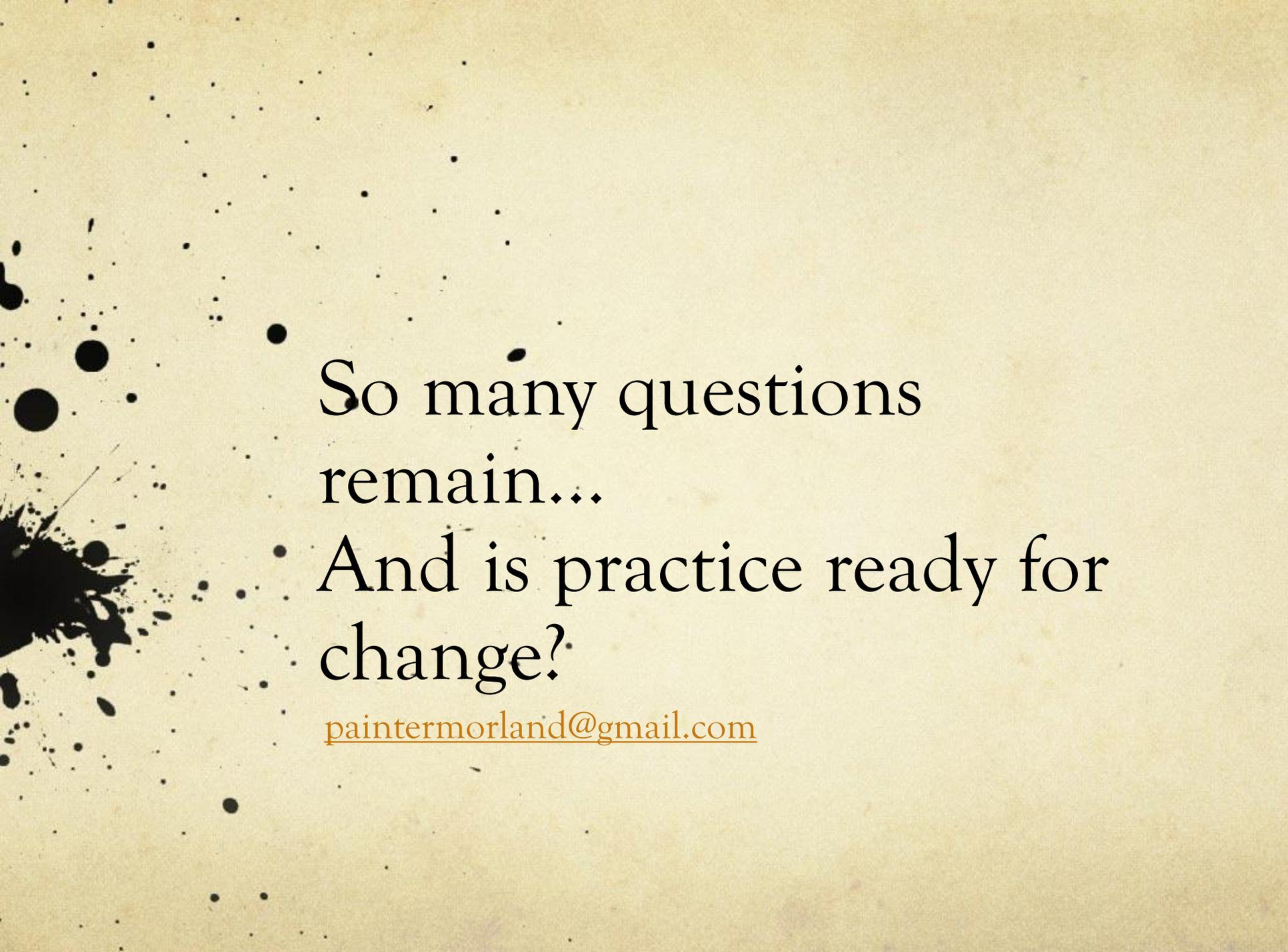
- Staying the ‘same’
- Repeating stylized behaviors
- Fixed identity

Alternative conceptualization

- Congruence over time
- Openness to respond to events that arrive, with congruent patterns emerging from experimentation and collaboration
- ‘Blended’ identities, but with the family resemblance being clear

Challenging the assumptions around Authenticity

- The idea of “authentic” is based on the assumption of a fixed inner sense of self, separate from an exterior world (Ford and Harding 2011)
- From a systemic perspective, the adaptations that leaders make can be authentic responses to very complex realities.
- Leaders’ “authenticity” should not be doubted as a result of their continuous adaptation to the variety of roles that they are expected to play.



So many questions
remain...

And is practice ready for
change?

paintermorland@gmail.com

How these questions emerged in my work...

- Redefining Accountability in a Network Society (BEQ, 2007)
- Systemic Leadership (JoBE, 2008)
- Voice as Relational Space (Mosaic, 2011)
- Rethinking Responsible Agency (JoBE, 2012)
- Identity Crisis and the Crisis of Control (JoBE, 2013)
- Visionary Leading (Organization, 2014)
- Rethinking Authenticity (Leadership, 2015)
- Critique of the 'business case' for environmentalism (Organization Studies, 2015)
- Recent work on Habituation, (PoM2014, EGOS 2015) and Creativity (OSW, 2015)