LUISS

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Cattedra: Global Organization Design and HRM

The effect of leadership and values on organizational liminality: transformational leadership as a mitigating factor

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Anno Accademico: 2020/2021

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Introduction

In an ever-changing and evolving global scenario, the need for organisations to adapt is at the heart of the agenda. An organisation may undergo a phase of externally imposed evolution or change, e.g. due to market conditions, or it may decide to modify its internal processes, whether in terms of norms, practices or organisational culture.

Regardless of the nature of the changes, whether they are implemented voluntarily or out of necessity, they have an extensive impact, not merely on the corporate environment, but on all individuals operating within it, especially on employees. For the latter, in fact, distancing from customary internal equilibrium may be a source of great uncertainty and ambiguity, generating stress and anxiety in seeking the most appropriate means to cope with it.

The state in which the worker finds himself when he goes through a phase of transition, either within his personal working career or as he is immersed in an organisation which is changing its usual practices, can be defined as being liminal. Liminality is a concept that finds its origins in anthropological literature, particularly in the sphere of the, frequently symbolic, rituals that are characteristic to a number of societies. In this regard, liminality occurs in the intermediate phase of the ritual, when the subject is immersed in an uncertain reality, separated from his community of origin, in a physical or fictional space which holds an intrinsic symbolic character. The subject involved in this passage, the liminar, experiences a state of in-betweenness which causes him to temporarily lack a precisely defined role, as a result of the abandonment of his previous reality and in view of the acquisition of an unprecedented status.

The way in which this transitional phase is experienced by the individual employee differs greatly in the degree and nature of its impact, activating feelings of acceptance and tolerance or, conversely, states of severe stress and inadequacy. Indeed, the perception of realities that generate change and uncertainty is closely related to the value system expressed by the culture which characterises each individual. Applying this phenomenon to Hofstede's model of the national cultural dimensions provides an almost convincing basis for assessing the impact a state of uncertainty has on a number of different individuals bearing differing cultural values.

Given the wide variety of possible responses to this phenomenon on the part of employees, the negative impact on their efficiency and the consequent ripple effect on the entire organisational performance, the involvement of a leader who is able to mitigate the potential adverse effects is required.

The leader must be able to bring a certain degree of flexibility to the organisation, making significant changes when necessary, including changes to the organisational culture. It is necessary for him to be able to develop an innovative vision and an orientation, primarily focused on solving problems of the contingency, transferring his ideas firmly to the workforce and aligning their individual goals with those of the organisation. It is essential that he establishes a long-term relationship with employees, providing them with the necessary inspiration and motivation by means of ongoing feedback, yet without neglecting their individual needs and demands, operating on an emotional level.

These features could be found in the transformational leadership model. This makes it possible to hypothesise that transformational leadership represents the most effective approach in managing organisational crises as well as changes that generate uncertainty and lead the employees towards a state of liminality.

In the first chapter of the thesis, after a brief outline of the origins of the term liminality and the first studies carried out on the subject, the inclusion of liminality within the organisational context will be discussed, as well as similarities encountered. Emphasis will be placed on the impact that crossing a liminal state generates on the condition of the employee. In addition, reference will be made to the evolution of employment patterns, which are increasingly linked to contingency drivers.

The second chapter is centred on the role of culture in the organisational environment. More attention will be given to the individual, analysing how cultural values they possess affect the way they experience the workplace and the developments related to the organisation. In this respect, organisational culture will be mentioned as an important instrument of identity formation for the organisation itself. This will be followed by a consideration, through the lens of Hofstede's national culture dimensions, of how employees possessing certain values are likely to react when faced with situations of ambiguity and uncertainty. From this, it will be hypothesised the way in which they respond to instances of organisational liminality.

In the third chapter focus shifts to the topic of leadership. First, its roles and competences will be distinguished from those of strictly managerial figures, noting their intrinsic significance. Next, a connection will be made between the organisational culture and the leader as the subject engaged in creating and shaping the same culture. Subsequently, the issue will be explored by analysing how leadership relates to the need for change and uncertain contexts, acknowledging its key role. This will form the prelude to an investigation on the impact that successful leadership has on mitigating the negative effects arising from the entry into liminality.

In the concluding chapter it will first be confirmed that leadership represents the major element in addressing this issue, as the variable that enters into play ex post the occurrence of eventualities that potentially have a negative impact on the organisation's overall performance. Next, some of the main leadership styles adopted in the organisational context will be considered, namely charismatic, autocratic, ethical, participative and authentic leadership, in order to identify the characteristics that prove to be most effective in managing uncertain events in connection with the relationship it has with employees. The above-mentioned leadership styles are then identified as being tendentially inadequate, with particular regard to contingency and the support provided to employees, and a shift is made towards a classification of the same, subdividing them into the macro-categories of transactional and transformational leadership, with the aim of identifying the most suitable one. The two styles of leadership will be analysed according to the formulation provided by Bass (1985) and, therefore, in terms of how they operate within the organisational context and based on their fundamental characteristics. Finally, it will be assumed that leaders who are able to integrate a transformational

leadership style into their management practices are selecting the best option for the proper handling and mitigation of the potential negative effects of organisational liminality on employees and on the organisation's performance in its entirety, due to their focus on continuous support and motivation, their charismatic traits and their ability to set up positive scenarios for the future in the minds of individuals, aligning their own personal goals with those of the organisation.

Literature review

a. Organisational liminality

The profound changes that have taken place in recent years in employment and organisational forms have led to the inclusion of the theme of liminality within the corporate sphere.

The analyses conducted in this field place this theme in various levels and frameworks of analysis. Literature focuses on liminality both in terms of how it is created within a single organisation (Swan et al. 2015) and as a subject status that divides one's employment into two or more corporate contexts (Zabuski and Barley, 1997).

In its anthropological sense, the liminar state is described as a situation of in-betweennes, an experience undergone by the subject within the transitional phase of a ritual which causes the subject to abandon the previous status, in view of reconstructing a new identity (Turner, 1969). On the basis of these insights, a central element in the subsequent analyses is that of transition.

Indeed, the dynamics that emerge in role transitions have also been analysed within the occupational and broader life sphere of the individual, reporting the circumstances in which the person exits one role to engage in a different one (Ashforth, 2001). This reality can either take place in the physical space as a consequence of the necessary transition between roles in the individual's life, work and family (Jachimowicz et al., 2021) or be circumscribed, and thus sequential in nature, within the exclusively work-related sphere (Ashforth, 2001).

Organisational liminality has been interpreted in a spatial sense, with specific regard to the absence of rules that characterises organisational boundaries (Sturdy et al., 2006) or the fluidity of structures within organisations themselves (Garsten, 1999). Yet, the majority of the literature is concerned specifically with the condition of the worker undergoing a transition phase of varying nature, which brings with it the fear and ambiguity of changeability (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003, Zabuski and Barley, 1997; Ellis and Ybema 2010, Garsten, 1999).

Thus, the negative effects of ambiguity resulting from the condition in which the subject is no longer X and not yet Y (Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011) are highlighted, causing a sense of frustration for the worker who experiences it (Czarniawska and Mazza 2003). Among the darker interpretations of the phenomenon, it is depicted as an enduring stalemate (Garmann Johnsen and Meier Sørensen, 2015), emphasising that the state of exemption from pre-existing norms is not a separate and momentary condition, but has become a founding feature of modernity.

Today's society would thus be characterised by the fusion of public and private spheres, leading to the creation of a *zone of indistinction* (Agamben, 1998 as cited in Downey, 2009) which takes on all the characteristics of a liminal space. Liminality would perpetuate itself by creating an imbalance in the subject whereby he would not be identifiable with either X or Y or even encompass both statuses simultaneously. (Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011).

In the new liminal realities within the organisation, further elements of alienation of the individual emerge, as he risks losing control not only over his identity but even over his time and his actions and goals. The results of an analysis conducted on business consultants categorise this type of employment as a proper "condition" (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003). In fact, this role involves a continuous movement through the liminal space, which never includes a complete detachment from the place of belonging (e.g. consulting company) (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003) in contrast to what is mentioned in literature on rituals.

Liminality has also been identified as a structural feature of today's organisational jobs. In fact, a correlation can be seen between the change in organisational structures, which are increasingly devoted to a type of employee relationship that is occasional and no longer trusting and lasting (Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

In some analyses, this is accompanied by a shift towards new company forms with an increasing focus and importance on flexibility rather than structure, at all levels of the organisation (Garsten, 1999). In fact, this tendency touches also apical ranks, as in the case of the interim manager, an emblematic figure in today's definition of corporate liminality, as his role is by nature strategic and therefore limited to the resolution of a contingent problem (Inkson et al., 2001).

This type of subject is very attractive to companies that seek adaptability: it allows them to take advantage of his know-how without any sort of obligation with regard to a possible long-term contract.

Indeed, the contract type that is transitional by nature is the temporary employment.

Thus, generally, research that focuses on the phenomenon as it occurs within the corporate space has conceptualised it as a provisional phase, in which the worker lies in a space in which all orders and apparatus are frozen (Sturdy et al., 2006; Powley, 2009). They find themselves living on the edge of organisational structures (Garsten, 1999), in a condition of in-betweenness, i.e. of suspension of their identity, functional to the subsequent and necessary reconstruction of the same (Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011).

However, several authors paradoxically use this same condition to highlight also the positive aspects that can occur in the liminal moment, which would present itself as a real advantage (Garsten, 1999), with relevant learning outcomes and experiences, both at individual and organisational level (Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

The condition of the liminar can therefore take on diametrically opposed meanings in that the same experience of estrangement can cause a positive or negative reality for the subject. The ambiguity and flexibility of normative structures can therefore mean liberation from social obligations (Garmann Johnsen and Meier Sørensen, 2015), conceptually retracing the analysis of the essentially turnerian rite of passage phase. The overcoming of the previous limit can lead the subject to a beneficial and advantageous reconstruction of the self, also in relation to the environment in which he finds himself (Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011).

It thus appears as a real opportunity, with reference to temporary work, presenting itself as a valid alternative and almost a promise or hope to full-time entry into the company (Garsten, 1999).

b. Organisational culture

With reference to culture, which takes the form of an abstract construct elaborated by individuals' minds (Schein, 2004), it has been noted that humans possess ways of thinking and acting that they have acquired throughout their lives and that differentiate them profoundly according to the cultural group to which they belong (Hofstede, 1991). The way in which culture is expressed and shaped comprises a series of values, perceptions, rules and behaviours (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952).

Throughout the literature, the process of creating this basis within the mind of the individual has been considered from various perspectives. Its relevance has been exalted to such an extent that it has been argued that its impact on the formation of the individual is so overwhelming that it is almost impossible to understand their actions when considered outside of their cultural context (Gutiérrez and Rogoff, 2003).

Given that culture permeates every aspect of individuals' lives, it is impossible to consider organisations as disengaged from its impact. In particular, it has increasingly been advocated how the same processes of forming value bases that occur at national culture level can emerge in organisational settings.

Organisational culture is a concept that is constantly being interpreted and can appear significantly different depending on how it is delineated.

During the 1980s, it became object of numerous reflections in organisational literature.

In particular, the principle that allowed the term itself to be formed was the abandonment of the concept of organisational environment or climate (e.g. Johannesson, 1973; Guion, 1973), which was by then considered insufficiently inclusive as regards organisational dynamics, making necessary to delineate the boundaries of the definition (Alvesson, 1987).

In this regard, over the last few decades, understanding schemes and models have been developed with reference to this phenomenon that has taken hold in the organisational sphere.

Deal and Kennedy (1988; 2000), for example, have identified in the organisational culture a series of combined characteristics and attributes that constitute it. These include a set of values that form the basis for the emergence of internal practices.

This intuition has been of considerable importance and is, indeed, endorsed by other authors (e.g. Azhar, 2003; Rousseau, 2000; Barney, 1986), who have similarly considered organisational culture as comprising basic assumptions that are widely shared by members, which take the form of their normative and value base.

Hofstede's (1991) analysis of culture as a common mental programming that forms a shared value base that allows the organisation to distinguish itself (Rousseau, 1990) from the others, has generated a strong impact in the literature, becoming one of the points of reference when it comes to choosing to embark on this analysis. On this basis, the relationship that said values have with various aspects of the organisational context was then identified. A correlation of organisational values with the structure of the organisation has been identified (e.g. Hinings et al, 1996; Peters and Waterman, 1982), with performance (Ouchi, 1981; Sapienza, 1985; Gordon, 1992; Jarratt and O'Neill, 2002; Young , Yom and Ruggiero, 2011), with the alignment of employees with

corporate objectives (e.g. Klepper, 1999) and with their satisfaction and motivation (e.g. Koberg and Chusmir, 1987; Koçi, 2014; Yusof et al, 2016) , with the competitive advantage attainable for the organisation (Barney, 1986; Denison and Mishra, 1995).

The significance of the concept is particularly visible in Schein (1986; 2004). The author refers to the culture of an organisation as a set of beliefs that have necessarily emerged jointly within the organisational environment. These ideas and opinions, in order to emerge and form the basis of the organisation, must be approved by all designated members. Once the same ideas are transformed into practice during the resolution of the first problems at organisational level, the organisational culture stabilises, taking shape and assuming a normative and customary function.

c. Leadership and culture interconnection

The increasing globalisation, in all spheres of human endeavour, also affects the business environment and calls for continuous adaptation (Ristovska and Ristovska, 2014).

In studies on corporate leadership, conflicting views emerge regarding the influence of a particular culture on the formation of an appropriate management and leadership framework and the connection between these two areas.

Dorfman (1996) identifies two opposing ways of understanding the effect of culture on leadership, one universal and one culturally specific. The first view states that the characteristics of leadership are generalisable and therefore there is no need for a precise adaptation to the changing cultural context (Dorfman, 1996 as cited in Spreitzer et al., 2005). According to some studies, greater interdependence brought about by globalising forces and an increasing level of exposure to different cultures is creating a *global village* that defines the rules of a world that places less weight on cultural barriers (Zagorsek et al., 2004). This would lead to a decrease in the influence that the specificities of a culture have on the leadership model implemented in companies.

The impact of culture on leadership practices would therefore be less than expected (Zagorsek et al., 2004). Globalisation, in any case, has pushed towards different definitions of leadership, but particularly has provoked the idea of the importance in developing a leadership that is transnational, effective in various contexts of culture. This would constitute an extremely important element that would determine the success of organisational practices (Raskovic, and Krzisnik, 2010).

Contrary to this stream of literature is the culturally specific notion according to which leadership theories developed in specific frameworks are non-transposable when applied by a subject possessing a different set of values (Schein, 2017; Hofstede, 2001). This is due to the fact that different cultural orientations correspond to different perceptions of the same leadership pattern.

Culture, therefore, assumes a crucial role within the organisation because, despite its fictitious nature, being an abstract construct, it is capable of having noticeable repercussions within corporate affairs. Its connection with the function of leadership appears also as essential. The values of a given culture determine a precise approach of practices and a definition of their own leadership. The latter is intimately connected to this process, as leaders are the subjects designated to understand, lead and shape the underlying cultural aspect in the organisational environment (Schein, 2017). Different models of leadership would therefore be needed at the global level due to specific idiosyncrasies of the theories of leadership in some cultures, that do not allow for adaptability in different cultural contexts and any universalisation (Hofstede, 1993).

Consequently, the globalising force is also seen, counter-intuitively, as a divisive force in which the relevance of cultural differences increasingly surfaces. Such a phenomenon thus leads to a world in which the analysis and understanding of cultures within the organisational context is of crucial importance, as is the relative influence on leadership modes (House et al, 1999 as cited in: Raskovic, and Krzisnik, 2010).

In fact, it has been noted that the effectiveness of a given type of leadership is country-specific (Sabri, 2012). Some studies have shown that most of the leadership models developed have limiting characteristics (House and Aditya, 1997).

The drive towards interculturalism requires a broader analysis of the complexity of existing cultural realities, since attempts to universalise the analysis on a partial, mainly Western basis do not provide a comprehensive view of leadership, whose theories are of limited applicability (Bass, 1990 as cited in: Raskovic, and Krzisnik, 2010).

It has thus been asserted that a limitation of a large portion of the literature in the field lies in its reference to assumptions that primarily reflect traits of the North-American culture. Concentrating mainly on characteristics that typically relevant to that environment, they place more emphasis on individualism and on a sense of duty, assuming a democratic set of values and neglecting the importance of religion and collectivism (House and Aditya, 1997).

But in fact such application can’t bring about the desired results, since leaders must necessarily take into account interculturalism, both within the workplace and as a result of integration with foreign markets. Thus, the global interconnectedness into which organisations are drawn pushes leaders to increasingly confront themselves interculturally and to question the framework of theories they encounter. It appears necessary to be able to expand one's competences at the cross-cultural communication level (Patterson, 2009).

It has been noted that the company plays an important role in this respect. It presents itself as the space in which learning processes occur, where it is essential to control and manage them in order to foster the emergence of best practices. The inference that organisations have the capacity to learn has made it relevant to the performance and effectiveness of responses to periods of change and transition.

Stimulating the processes through which a social order is created is an indispensable prerogative for handling situations of crisis and ambiguity with dexterity, as it allows one to reinterpret reality in all circumstances and to act extemporaneously (Patterson, 2009).

d. Leadership in organizations and management of ambiguity

When reference is made to the culture of an organisation it appears necessary to also mention the role of the leader as creator and shaper of the organisational environment and culture (Schein, 2004; Patterson, 2009).
The concept of leadership has been considered since antiquity, but entered the interest of the more specifically social studies in the last century. Early research on leadership in social sciences includes, among the most salient works, the contribution of authors such as Weber (1946), Stodgill (1948), Tannenbaum and Massarik (1957), House and Mitchell (1974), Bass (1985).
Subsequently, from the 1980s onwards, the term was incorporated into the organisational literature and became increasingly popular (Clegg et al., 1999). Indeed, in the organisational environment, the leader is the only figure capable of managing culture in such a way as to ensure that it does not impede company's routines (Schein, 1985). In this sense, his role is critical, and this is what distinguishes him from professionals more strictly related to management and administration (Schein, 2004).
Literature has paid attention to both the personality traits of the leader, as well as its declination in various different models and forms.
It has been argued that the characteristics of an individual that can be seen as a leader do not depend on his training or experience (Drucker 1989), but are innate virtues (e.g. Ekvall and Arvonen, 1991).
Other theories refer the effectiveness of the leadership role to exogenous factors, stating that there is no single style that can be considered appropriate in each circumstance (e.g. Greenleaf, 1977); attention must be paid to a multiplicity of variables (e.g. Blanchard, 2008) and one should focus on the impact of contingencies, including those relating to subordinates (e.g. Bass, 1997).
Relatively in line with the latter, the behavioural theory similarly supports the possibility of acquiring the ability to be a good leader by applying one's own skills and behaviours to the leadership style that best suits the circumstance (e.g. Katsuhiko, 2007).

Nowadays, the complexity and multiplicity of stimuli deriving from the external environment and the amount of information it brings result in a decrease in clarity and a difficulty in defining unambiguous meanings (Gluesing, 2016). This need to discern amidst an extreme multitude of signifiers leads to a search for leadership models that can make sense and interpret them.
Organisations are, therefore, looking for people who are able to grasp the complexity of circumstances in an ever-changing environment (Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy, 2014). It has been argued that one of the most demanded competences appears to be flexibility, both at the level of competences implying an openness to global thinking, and at the level of processes to better cope with states of change, thus allowing a rapid adaptation to ambiguous situations (Gluesing, 2016).
In this, the motivational aspect (e.g. McCall and Morgan, 1986) that some theories claim to have on workers is of considerable importance.

Among the models of leadership that perform this function, a set emerges that is based on the charisma of the individual (e.g. Burns, 1978; House, 1977). The leader, in these instances, does not only provide a directive and supportive function. The relationship that would be created would in fact have a further symbolic value, leading to the transmission of intrinsic values in the followers themselves. The considerable attraction exerted by the figure of the leader allows him to develop a strong influence on the followers (Shamir et al., 1993), increasing their ability to be effective and therefore to perform well (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).
The fundamental relevance of this set of theories is that it relies on strongly emotional and symbolic aspects and the importance of these as highly motivating (Shamir et al., 1993).

However, charisma is not the only element that can be leveraged for stimulating an increased motivation in workers.
It has been argued that leadership styles that can be adopted in organisational contexts are manifold and have distinctive and unique characteristics. Precisely for this reason, there is not one of these that fits perfectly in every situation: each leadership style is appropriate to a given contingency (Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006).

Another classification was introduced by Burns in 1978. His theory states a difference among two distinctive varieties of leadership styles: transactional and transformational (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1997).
Among the two, the transformational model is the one that touches on the motivational and emotional aspects of employees as well as of leaders (House and Shamir, 1993). Indeed, it has a considerable connection with charisma, although it is only one of the various components of this model (Bass, 2014).
It has been stated that the distinguishing element of the latter type is that it is not expressed in a simple demand for conformity towards followers, configured as a mainly economic and reward-based exchange, as in the case of the transactional. Rather, this type of leader promotes and provokes change in the values and needs of the followers (e.g. House and Aditya, 1997; Bass, 2014).
Such a leadership strategy therefore provides, through the transmission of a new vision, marked by change, a higher level of inspiration and incentive to achieve results (Burns, 2003).
This causes an empowerment of employees and enables them to accomplish more than they had anticipated or imagined, which naturally aligns their long-term goals with those more broadly defined by the work group and by the company (Bass, 2014).
This typology of leader has in fact been analysed in the field of organisations according to the effects that its actions have on followers (e.g. Jung et al., 2008). One of the specific traits that distinguishes it from other models is precisely an *inspirational motivation* (Barbuto, 1997; Bass and Avolio, 1990), which pushes workers to develop an optimistic mentality towards the achievement of results; the intellectual stimuli provided, also serve as a basis for an analysis that would lead individuals to the resolution of contingent problems (Avolio and Bass, 1988).

A crucial aspect that follows is that this type of leader is able to provide each worker with the consideration he needs in order to propel them towards the best. An important basis for specific dialogue is thus provided on the basis of the worker's individual particularities (e.g. Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987).

The suitability of a leadership is conditioned by several factors. Some investigations have focused on the relationship between the leader's behaviour and the organisation's performance. It has been shown that there exists a strong connection between transformational leadership style and the behaviour of subordinates, including their commitment and satisfaction (e.g. Hanaysha et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2004; Eliyana and Muzakki, 2019). The leader belonging to this profile is able to pay considerable attention to the individual, creating a climate of respect and trust (e.g. Katz and Kahn, 1978).

As a result, the overall organisational performance improves, driven also by the strong aptitude towards the needs for change and transformation inherent in a transformative leadership style (e.g. Thamrin, 2012).

Chapter 1

Origins of liminality and its relevance within the organisational environment

1.1 Anthropological roots and origin of the term liminality

The term liminality denotes a diffuse and widely shared concept which refers to the feeling of being at a boundary or crossing point, either spatially or temporally. It may affect a substantial part of the overall social nucleus or the single individual who intimately experiences a process of adaptation or transformation. Humans undergo such experiences quite frequently. These characterise the sequence of events that compose the everyday social life of human beings, which is made up of customary and routine actions and events, interspersed with occurrences that fall outside the norm. Individuals' tendency to ritualise these moments gives rise to the creation of a symbolism (Horvath et al., 2018).

Although the term liminality has been widely used in social sciences, there have been, and still remain, disagreements over its etymology. While some choose to discuss it by conjugating it with the English word "limit", other authors (e.g. Turner) opt to interpret it on the basis of the Latin term "limen", i.e. a threshold that recalls the underlying spatial dimension of the phenomenon. In this sense, it thus indicates the condition in which the customary state of being is momentarily removed, by means of a ritual, in preparation for the passage to a further state. Another origin to which it is traced concerns the Latin term "limes", which indicates a spatial dimension referring to a frontier or a limit (Balduk, 2008).

Arnold van Gennep, an outstanding personality from French ethnology, is credited with the coining of the term, but fails to explicitly state the etymology. By transposing liminality to an anthropological sphere, the author renders it key to his book *Les rites de passage*, which was published in 1909 (Andrews and Roberts, 2017). Van Gennep was himself aware of the utmost relevance of this concept, defining his intuition as an *inner illumination* (Horvath et al., 2018).

However, the work was only popularised outside the restricted niche of experts when translated and made available outside France in 1960 (Söderlund and Borg, 2017). The underlying reason behind the lack of recognition for this publication in the academic system was its profound divergence from Emile Durkheim's insights. The sociologist published *Elementary Forms* in 1912, analysing the same concept but using positivism and constructivism as a basis (Szakolczai, 2015).

The substantial difference between the two analyses lies in the function of rituals. In Durkheim, they constitute mere channels that allow individuals to integrate with society as thinking and acting entities, through a process of dispersal within the social body. In contrast, in Van Gennep a genuine process of metamorphosis is found in the individual's dynamics, in group formation and in the social process (Horvath et al., 2018).

Les rites de passage describes the dynamics that characterise the symbolic passages that individuals undergo within a society. These rituals mark and symbolise experiences of transition, lived individually or collectively

during the course of a lifetime. According to the author, this phenomenon can be universalised, since each individual's life is articulated by a succession of natural and social adaptations. The role of these is therefore crucial in the different societies and cultures, and is detectable at all levels of civilisation (van Gennep, second ed.1972). Not only the universalisation but also the pervasiveness of rites is highlighted: the impact of nature and its cyclical pattern is itself considerable in human life. Thus, rites of passage are analysed in detail ranging from transitions from one social status to another within specific communities or societies, to those, for instance, brought about and influenced by lunar and seasonal alternations (van Gennep, second ed.1972).

With regard to a purely defined analysis on the social level, rites are structured in three distinct phases. The structure is essentially sequential and almost identical for each ritual. The phases include an initial separation from the group to which the initiate belongs, a second transitional phase of estrangement and then a reconciliation with the other members of the society.

- In the first phase, the initiate is distanced from the everyday life of the social group to which he belongs, and alienated from the structures to which he is accustomed. This can take place purely on a symbolic-spiritual level, through the conferral of a new name or appellation that identifies the subject's current status, or combined with an experience of physical detachment from the group. Thus, this rite of separation, including the moment of isolation, metaphorically mimics the subject's death (Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman, 2014).
- In entering the limen i.e., the transitional phase, the *passenger* (Turner, 1970) passes through a state of totally new and inherently vague and uncertain reality that has no connection to the previous environment or to the condition he will subsequently experience (Hawkins and Edwards, 2013). It is at this precise moment that the lack of social order fosters the emergence of a creativity that enables and stimulates the construction of novel social realities (Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman, 2014).
- The third phase, represented by the rites of incorporation, symbolizes the rebirth of the individual, but in new guises (Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman, 2014). Thus, there is a reacquisition of an identity for the subject, who is reincorporated within patterns and norms defined by the social framework of reference. Entry, however, occurs through a new status, where stability is again created in the individual, but defined through other norms and a new social role (Hawkins and Edwards, 2013).

Van Gennep points to the moment of liminality as the central and crucial transitional phase in the rite of passage, which occurs after the so-called pre-liminal phase and before the post-liminal phase (van Gennep, second ed.1972). This in-between point marks an actual crossing of the threshold that constitutes the neutral boundary between the previous state and the subsequent one. Thus, during this experience, there it occurs a suspension from the community (Szakolczai, 2015).

Despite being a highly structured analysis, the authors' approach toward rites does not aim to create a theory in which they are tightly organised according to an identical purpose and configuration. Therefore, the intention is not to lump the entire universe of rituals within a common pattern, minimising or belittling the

peculiarities. Rather, a framework is elaborated that provides a basic reference model for possible reflections on multiple transitional realities (Horvath et al., 2018).

Since van Gennep's intuitions, initially at least, failed to attract attention by remaining stuck in the French borders, greater notoriety and renewed light to the theme itself was later provided by Victor Turner, in his book *The Forest of Symbols*, published in 1964 (Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman, 2014).

The formation the author received in Britain, mainly centred on the cornerstones of structuralism and Marxism, became restrictive once applied to his activities in the field. It was thus out of necessity that his analysis and departure from van Gennep's structuralism emerged, leading him to move even beyond the functionalistic anthropology he largely used previously (Horvath et al., 2018).

Interestingly, his conceptualisation went further, with the ambition to transpose liminality into the societal analysis of that time. Thus, he approached the issue of the liminal in its associated sense with contemporary reality, a space in which, due to the lesser rigidity of structures, constructs on a social level could not easily be abandoned or reconstructed. At this level of analysis, he adds a variation to the term creating the concept of *liminoid,* which still remains vague as Turner does not present a straightforward definition. The *liminoid* seems to have similar characteristics to the liminal space in that the same interruption of ordinary social norms occurs, which makes this space a fertile ground for creative leaps (Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman, 2014). The element of uniqueness, instead, is how the phase itself has abandoned its transitional aspects to become a permanent and stable instance (Thomassen, 2009).

Turner’s conception of liminality appears to be not so far from van Gennep's basis. In fact, the author refers, likewise, to inherently ambiguous situations, in which the individual finds himself *betwixt and between* clearly defined social categorisations, no longer identifiable in accordance with previous canons of identity (Turner, 1970). He is therefore waiting to enter the condition which the social structure of reference assigns to him after the loss of his former status. The subject maintains his purely physical presence, while lacking any social standing (Turner, 1970).

A peculiarity of the turnerian liminal phase lies in the coercive nature in the coordination of the trials to be faced. The plan of conduct is in fact defined in an autocratic fashion by the *master of ceremonies* and is then administered to the subjects in the limen (Skjoldager-Nielsen and Edelman, 2014).

Those experiencing liminality can be individuals, or minority groups, or the whole social body. In the case of the single entity, limen is functional in creating a period of intermission of individual identity with respect to the social structures in which it lives, a space imbued with indeterminacy.

Focusing mainly on the implications of the transitional phase, Turner highlights how, in crossing a material, temporal or psychological space with blurred boundaries, there appears the possibility of recomposing one's values and a new personal identity (Küpers, 2011). A resulting implication is that, in Turner, the liminal experience can be simulated and is therefore not necessarily linked to an external event. Similarly, the individual can deliberately carve out for himself a space outside of ordinary societal structures (Turner, 1970).

Shifting the focus to society's viewpoint, a momentary invisibility of the subject occurs, no longer and simultaneously not yet framed, which appears *transitional* (Turner, 1970), and creates an imbalance in the ordinary categorisation of society itself.

The core insight of Turner's elaborations can be found in the first effort to transpose liminality outside the strictly anthropological boundaries. In his precise interpretation of the term, the author did not ascribe it to a specific tribal phenomenon and in the realm of rites of passage, as van Gennep did. Turner is conscious that the liminal phenomenon can also be applied to other contexts, and recognises the importance of the consequences in terms of individual's emotional responses (Horvath et al., 2018). This proved crucially important as it made possible the expansion of the concept of liminality to any circumstance in which there is evidence that a previously existing status is being disrupted. Thus, the term can also be associated with phases of subversion of the rules of power (Wels et al., 2011).

Indeed, the liminal state can be found both in space, material and non-material, and in time, in its various extensions ranging from the single moment to eras. These spaces also take the form of mere thresholds, including symbolic ones, or of more extensive areas, such as the borders of a nation, though they can also consist of an entire continent. This deliberate generality in delimiting the pertinent boundaries of the term was therefore functional: it is precisely this characteristic that made Turner's analysis more palatable, as, stripped of its rigidity, the term was made adaptable and exploitable (Turner, 1970).

The great evocative power of the concept has therefore allowed it to be transposed into various fields and has preserved its relevance, yet it has also legitimised it to undergo various interpretative variations. In the multiplicity of interpretations, deviations from its original meaning are found. An extreme is reached with the postmodernist conception, which considers the whole of human existence as a path marked by successive liminal phases (Balduk, 2008).

Originating in anthropology, the concept of liminality is now extensively used in various disciplines dealing with individuals and societies (Szakolczai, 2015). Any circumstance that implies the breaking of a linear habit or the abandonment by the subject of a clear position within the society is ascribable to a liminal experience (Balduk, 2008).

1.2 Rites: from tribal and traditional ceremonies to organisations

In anthropological and sociological literature transition experiences have been described as a phenomenon often accompanied by diverse types of rituals. Indeed, these occupy a central role in that they represent a validation and acknowledgement that a transition has occurred and thus bear witness to the entry into a new identity (Sleight, 2016).

Within van Gennep's analysis of tribal and traditional domains, the primary function of the rite is not merely to facilitate the passage from one status to another, but rather to reconfigure order at a social level.

Rituals comprise a series of formalised, emotionally significant and socially meaningful conducts in which the parties involved interact with each other and share relevant meanings. Therefore, it is generally considered an essential element that allows the analysis of the formation and functioning of institutionalised systems. Assumptions and analyses on the subject, being deemed inconsistent with the conceptions and action logics of the modern world to a certain extent, have been previously only mentioned in relation to archaic cultural environments and outside the Western living realm (Islam, 2015).

Despite criticisms in the wake of Durkheim's theorisation on religious rituals, van Gennep himself affirms how the importance of this phenomenon is also readily apparent in different environments. Turner, similarly, reports the major relevance of rites in contemporary society since, despite all the hierarchical formalities a society needs for its survival, individuals strongly need to feel part of a *communitas* (Islam and Zyphur, 2009).

Undoubtedly, ritual practices in their narrow tribal connotation are far removed from current thinking and lifestyles. However, they, in other forms, exist in various contexts, encompassing practical activities and occurring in specific areas of performance.

Indeed, in recent decades there has been a renewed interest in reintroducing the ritual framework even within the organisational sphere. Literature has given ample space to this issue, recognizing that internal corporate practices are frequently constituted on ceremonial grounds. Hence, ritual represents an important element in understanding a company's functioning mechanisms (Islam, 2015).

Application of these theories to the organizational field is mainly focused in three distinct macro areas (Islam, 2015). Firstly, the analysis investigates the formative and integrative function of social ties and shared visions, which is widely exploited by management within the corporate context. It further explores the aspects linked to changes in internal norms and the consequent balancing of rupture and newfound stability in the environment.

A different stream of literature deals with ritual as an element that holds organisational structures together and, therefore, useful for institutional stability. In this respect it allows for a change in practices, while not disrupting the apparatus, preserving the continuity of institutions (Islam and Zyphur, 2009).

Finally, the concept of ritual has also been used to describe the nature and formation of formalised everyday processes within the workplace, where phenomena such as group work can result in an institutionalisation of the same, contributing to the *formalisation of the everyday* (Meyer and Rowan, 1977 as cited in: Islam, 2015).

Specific examples of rituals, as experienced within organisations, have often been reported with regard to the experience of consultants (Gbadamosi, 2005; Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003). Meetings that initiate the consulting moment are in fact described as ceremonies of investiture for the external workers; the latter will then be similarly disinvested with a further ceremony at the end of the experience, which is marked by the presentation of the final project. In some instances, the consultant has been portrayed as a *master of ceremonies* (Turner, 1969), a shaman-like leader in the ritual process who guides participants towards the achievement of a solution, through non-ordinary organizational norms (Gbadamosi, 2005). This process allows the actors within the organisation to break out of the ordinary patterns, experiencing a real disorienting experience before being able to re-enter the normal routines through re-incorporation.

Rituals inherently have a strongly symbolic nature.

Turner and van Gennep emphasise this aspect by describing how every element of the ritual phases is ascribable to a precise meaning. Each detail included in them represents a means of indicating status or an element of distinction for the initiate (Turner 1969).

Similarly, in organisational literature, what emerges most, even to the detriment of the more practical features of rites, is their functionality as moments of profound analysis, aimed at understanding the values of actions. More than the ritual itself, reference is in fact made to the perception and to the meaning attribution processes. Indeed, it is less the action of the ceremony itself, as organised by the manager or other entities in the company, but rather the underlying dynamics, which emerge from the interactions of the subjects within the ceremonial space. Moreover, these are often not recognised by the participants themselves. This is due to the presence of an underlying state of latent dynamics, which are consequences of consciously taken decisions in terms of the organisation's objectives (Islam and Zyphur, 2009).

1.3 Organizational liminality: contingent employment and organizations

New developments in work patterns are allowing for the emergence of a conception of employment linked to circumstance and contingency, gradually abandoning the static nature of the employment patterns of the past decades. In fact, the number of individuals who remain involved and tied to a single occupation or organisation is now dramatically reduced. Thus, liminality, in this context, assumes crucial importance and increasing relevance since the feeling of being betwixt and between, as the opportunities for transition multiply (Tagliaventi, 2020).

Previously, an individual's career was characterised by a stable and lasting relationship within a single work environment or, in more dynamic cases, involving relatively few moves within an organisation.

In recent years, this has ceased to be the rule, and has become an exception. Indeed, there has been an increase in contractual and inherently more job-specific and adaptable recruitment models. The underlying reason is a gradual abandonment of the recognition mechanism on the part of the employer, which used to lead to a preference for a trusting relationship with a particular individual as a result of a demonstrated commitment by the latter (Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

Among the first intuitions regarding the interconnection between fluidity and uncertainty of modern jobs and the concept of liminality, Garsten's (1999) work is fundamental.

The author provides an in-depth analysis of the contemporary worker within the framework of liminality, with particular regard to internal learning practices and organisational context (Garsten, 1999). In fact, the drastic change in occupational patterns is accompanied by that of organisational contexts and boundaries, which appear increasingly fluid and indefinite, compromising the long-established hierarchical schemes (Barley and Kunda, 2001). A changeable and versatile organisational model begins to flourish, in contrast to highly stable and bureaucratic structures. The temporariness of jobs is accompanied by a greater emphasis on adaptability to circumstances: the structure of the organisation is thus shaped in such a way as to be functional for the resolution of the imminent issue (Garsten, 1999).

Within this changing environment, various are the circumstances, elements and individuals that can be subject to liminality within the organisation.

The transitional nature that work has acquired leads even the employment contract to increasingly abandon its initial psychological and relational dimension (Tempest and Starkey, 2004). The new mode of employment that becomes dominant and gains academic attention is the so called “contingent work”. This definition is intended to encompass all occupations that imply a non-traditional and therefore not permanent contract, but rather temporary or part-time (Tagliaventi, 2020).

Contingent work has been deemed attributable to a state of liminality due to its temporariness. In fact, individuals find themselves operating between the company that provides them with temporary work and the company which benefits from the employee's work. Since the individual is only at the company's disposal for a certain period of time, he is not affiliated with the organisation for which he provides the service (Garsten, 1999).

Thus, the workforce lays in a position where it is required more flexibility with respect to the company, which itself is subject to flexibility, requiring a path towards ever greater decentralisation into different divisions. If the condition of the temporary worker is therefore considered, he is betwixt and between being a labour resource for the organisation, yet not effectively being part of it due to the changed nature of the employment contract (Garsten, 1999). This can cause a sense of alienation with regard to the workplace as the employee is not permanently integrated into its corpus, but nevertheless must necessarily respond to the imperatives of dedication and loyalty arising from his position (Winkler and Mahmood, 2015).

Organisations today are imbued with liminality at various levels.

Firstly, the company has external relationships with other organisations and builds up a network of contacts with suppliers and customers which is often changeable and transitory, depending on the circumstances or needs in question. Indeed, situations may arise in which the organisation simultaneously employs temporary workers, in the various divisions, with diversified skills. This is, for instance, the case of project workers, technicians and consultants (Tagliaventi, 2020).

Czarniawska and Mazza, in their work, offer an interpretation of consultants as the liminal category par excellence amongst the individuals gravitating around the organisation. For the purpose of carrying out their support work, consultants enter into contact with the client organisation and its regular employees.

As soon as this happens, a place is created outside the fixed routine of the company, in which all regular employees are also led to an unavoidable detachment from their ordinary roles. This is a transitory space which results in the creation of a transitional entity.

Thus, liminality of the consultant spreads throughout the organisation, which maintains its previous legal and physical boundaries, but acquires a bipartite configuration. This is reflected in a continuation of the regular activities in the traditional work space, while simultaneously witnessing the establishment of a new artificial space, in which liminality is shared by those who enter the consulting project. Within this new space, work is carried out on matters that will then be transmitted and will necessarily be conditioned upon approval by the ordinary work organisation; the liminal space merges with the internal and stable infrastructure of the company (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003).

Interestingly, several liminal spaces can be created simultaneously. This is because consultants are just one of the possible drivers for such relationships, as it can also occur in the case of other cases of contingent or temporary worker. Meanwhile, the organisation may change its external linkages and come into contact with new customers, suppliers, and divest some previous collaborations.

Thus, whatever circumstances are created, a liminal place is fluid and transitory. It can take place at different levels of space and business relationships, involving them in change, and can therefore itself mutate in form (Tagliaventi, 2020).

While this continual movement may benefit workers in the form of increased supply and opportunities for reduced commitment or learning, the same contingent work and weak relational ties conceal certain risks to the stability of long-term organizational goals. Tempest and Starkley, on the basis of earlier studies (Putnam

1995, Sennett, 1998), have pointed out how an excessive focus on contingency and the anxiety of re-composition can lead to a disintegration of the social capital which is the major contributor to collaboration in the corporate context. If trusting and reciprocal relationships are missing, and there is a failure to ensure continuity of purpose, the value of internal practices gradually dissipates in the many rapid changes of the organisational structure. With the loss of the vital pillar of social capital, trust and the principles shared by organisational actors are eroded, reciprocity is dispersed and a collapse of the institution is generated, rendering impossible the organisation's sustainability (Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

Conversely, other authors noted that the organisation undergoing a phase of structural status quo alteration and of its ties has to pass through a phase of liminality in order to acquire renewed stability. In order to overcome such an intermediate phase and make the most of its potential, optimal management is essential, which involves posing greater attention and understanding its renovating and discerning function.

The liminal indeterminacy is a characteristic embedded in the change, and therefore requires a renewed management of the organisation, abandoning the traditional schemes of management and control and adjusting to contingency (Söderlund and Borg, 2017).

Thus, an approach similar to that taken in case of dismantling hierarchical and vertically integrated structures is required in this case, in order to foster a different kind of growth (Tagliaventi, 2020).

The liminal space created within the organisation can bring benefits in terms of renewing ideas and processes, but this must be assisted by a momentary upheaval of existing norms and the exploration of additional frameworks (Söderlund and Borg, 2017).

The mutability of organisations' boundaries and ways of working, which are increasingly linked to contingency, has driven the need to analyse new processes within organisations under a completely different lens, to understand their real underlying dynamics. To comprehend the implications that the shift towards a post-industrial economy has brought to business dynamics, the analysis of work processes must necessarily be re-joined to organisation studies, and new concepts must be created in order to describe new phenomena and dynamics (Barley and Kunda, 2001). For this reason, the metaphor of liminality seems the most effective and adequate to describe the deviation from traditional organisational and employment patterns (Tagliaventi, 2020).

1.4 Liminality of the worker

The change in organisational intents can be interpreted in several ways, but the liminal condition of employees is what is generally analysed within this framework (Tempest and Starkey, 2004). In particular, the focus is on the psychological sphere of individuals, who, amidst blurred boundaries or in mutable environments, frequently experience a lack of security and anxiety (Barley and Kunda, 2001).

Indeed, in the absence of a permanent job, they find themselves representing a peripheral figure around the organisation, bringing advantages to what actually represents the core of the company and the workforce (Garsten, 1999). The extreme individualisation and high substitutability of contemporary employees shatters the security that was intrinsic to the relational type of employment relationship (Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

On the basis of Garsten's insights, with reference to the condition of temporary workers, other authors have carried out studies on liminality, reaching a research model which takes into account two dimensions: a temporal and a spatial one (Winkler and Mahmood, 2015). In a study conducted on employees of four Danish companies, it emerged that the individual who enters the company as a precarious worker may feel excluded both on an individual level and more largely as part of an anomalous category.

This is due to the fact that although connections are established between the class of permanent workers and the class of flexible ones, these latter claimed to never feel really part of the social reality of their work environment. An important implication of this is that their demands and needs are often not taken into account, as they do not share the same status as the other internal workers. This happens regardless of the value of the contribution they could offer (Winkler and Mahmood, 2015).

The continuous feeling of marginalisation from the reality of the organisation is further highlighted when considering consultants. Although it is expected that the consultant is able to manage the client by establishing a relationship that is as balanced and dynamic as possible, it has been shown that this often does not happen (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003).

Drawing on the anthropological literature on liminality, the consultant experiences the same state of uncertainty, insecurity, and frustration (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003) associated with the loss of identity as described in rites of transition.

The peculiarity that characterises this type of employment, which distinguishes it from anthropological insights, is identified in the moment of crossing the liminal space. In fact, in the case of the consultant, is characterised by a continual passage in and out of their sending agency, as they are employed at the client's request. A similarity is found in the role of supervising the ritual. In the case of ceremonies, the control is in the hands of the *master of ceremonies* (Turner, 1969), while the temporal space of the consulting experience is conducted by the client.

Liminality intensifies in cases where the client proceeds to hire the consultant. Indeed, it occurs an assimilation of the two individuals' will, objectives and action. This reality becomes extremely pervasive and, going beyond the strictly work-related sphere, forces the consultant to reduce his contribution, leaving him no possibility of deviating from the client's intentions (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003). Therefore, liminality in this instance is

associated with the role rather than the individual, and does not end unless one chooses to leave that specific type of employment.

Another related example where liminality is linked to a particular class of workers is examined in the study by Zabuski and Barley (1997), concerning industrial scientists. Their task is intrinsically movement-based, since they act as transmitters of scientific knowledge developed in research areas to the R&D divisions of user companies who request it. What one would most logically expect is that scientists would feel a certain sense of affiliation within the company and thus a concrete inclusion, but the study made it clear that this phenomenon did not occur. The affiliated scientists felt alienated when working for the employing company. Paradoxically, however, they also experienced the same estrangement from the scientific research field from which they drew the relevant knowledge, a distance that goes beyond a mere cognitive detachment. The profile of a professional who finds himself in a state of liminality, feeling that he does not fully belong either to the purely scientific community or to the operational part of the company, has thus been delineated (Zabusky and Barley 1997).

Employees are not the only individuals within companies to be subject to liminal statuses. In order to understand the implications of fluid organisational contexts on organisational learning, managers, in particular the role of the inter-organisational manager, have been included in the same framework (Tempest and Starkley, 2004; Inkson et al. 2001). In the same vein, front-line and middle-managers, intermediaries in supply chains, have been examined (Ellis and Ybema, 2010). The latter are forced to constantly reformulate their identity in relation to whom they deal with. Whether they are customers or suppliers or even competitors, intermediary managers take on a circumstantial profile each time, delineating a boundary between themselves and others. Thus, different patterns of adaptation emerge, based on relational variables (type of employment), spatial variables (distance from the company's formal boundaries), and strategic variables (hostile competitors).

The constant tension arising from the numerous interactions with these external actors leads inter-organisational managers to experiment with a highly variegated universe of repertoires. The act of constantly redefining one's own identity always occurs through a personal definition of the same (self-definition) and not through recognised and persistent decisions and feedback.

Again in the managerial universe, the case of managers coordinating knowledge sharing communities was considered (Swan et al. 2015). Here the state of liminality takes place entirely within the same organisation, in a relatively traditional environment. Thus, this type of manager still maintains a traditional function or a conventional job within a specific department. But it is precisely the fact of combining the two roles, the ordinary and the new, part-time, that creates a difficulty in identifying a formal employment title for such figures. Despite their efforts to enhance the role and relevance of the community and strengthen membership, the feeling that emerges from the managers' reports is a lack of clarity around their activities (Tagliaventi, 2020).

A lack of clarity in roles was also found in the case of employees who choose to pursue different careers at the same time. Often this choice is dictated by a desire for personal growth in terms of skills as well as

flexibility and versatility. In this respect, several professionals benefit from the expansion of competences resulting from frequent transfers (Tagliaventi, 2020).

However, even when the change of career is a mere a shift from one role to another within the same context, it can pose an identification challenge. In fact, individuals who undergo or choose to move to another position are confronted with completely new practices, skills and relational forms, and adaptation may require considerable effort. The risk of falling into a liminal space in the phase of adapting to the new job is thus quite high, almost certain in the case of a significantly different task (Tagliaventi, 2020).

Although this condition creates ambiguity and imbalance, some individuals, especially younger ones (Garsten, 1999) see temporary or precarious work as a potentially advantageous long-term prospect, which translates into a phase of exploration and training in view of obtaining a stable employment. The momentary difficulty leads them to view temporary work as an opportunity to avoid unemployment, while waiting for a higher employment rate phase, or as an opportunity to gain new experience (Garsten, 1999).

In the light of the new employment forms, working on different tasks simultaneously is becoming the new custom for employees, whose choice is often oriented, paradoxically, towards achieving identity coherence.

This issue is of utmost relevance today as companies interested in profiles with a solid knowledge base are increasingly aware of how individual's *career capital* (Arthur et al. 1999 as cited in Tempest and Starkey, 2004) develops precisely from the frequent transitions (Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

Examples of how transient job creates added value for the company can be found, for example, in Silicon Valley firms, where a large pool of high-tech skills has been created. In this particular case, the benefits of displacement are as follows: when permitting employees' turnover and movement from one company to another, a high rate of specific skills and know-how is achieved within the industry (Shankar and Ghosh, 2013).

Thanks to the nature of the contemporary working relationships, which are defined as more flexible and inherently temporary, it is possible for the individual to experience a different kind of learning, not necessarily bound within the boundaries of a company: a *cumulative learning* (Gagné, 1968). Thus, it creates a wide range of experiences, which otherwise, with more static modes of employment, could not have been acquired (Tempest and Starkey, 2004).

Chapter 2

The influence of culture on the organisational environment and liminality

2.1 How culture enters the organisational field: the significance of individuals' values

Despite being classifiable as a purely ideal and abstract social construct (Schein, 2004), culture plays a pervasive role in individuals' everyday existence.

With Geert Hofstede (1980) it emerges how culture can be considered as a lens through which individuals perceive the world and make sense of the contexts and spaces in which they engage. According to his approach, individuals possess three different planes of arrangement in their minds, that relate to the way they interact with the environment. The structure of these three elements can be imagined in pyramidal form.

- At the bottom of the scale lie the essentially biological and basic factors and reactions that characterise the human race on a wide basis and, therefore, are shared universally by all human beings;
- the vertex of the pyramid, instead, can be equated with those features that characterise the distinctiveness of each individual compared to the others. These are the personality traits and the characteristics of the individual, which are necessarily a unique and distinctive attribute of a person;
- the intermediate layer of the scale corresponds to culture (Hofstede, 1980).

The author provides a definition of the latter: *culture is the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture, in this sense, is a system of collectively held values* (Hofstede, 1980 pg. 24).
The aforementioned description depicts the pattern whereby members belonging to a given social group are inclined to share fundamental norms and values, which configure them as part of a collectivity. These core elements differ depending on the social group in question.

Notwithstanding the apparent comprehensiveness of this definition, countless different approaches to culture have been developed. Originally, these were mostly devised in anthropology and in the social sciences field. References to concepts concerning ideologies, values and activities related to a community, a social nucleus or to the individual, in the narrow meaning of the term, are included in most of these understandings.

The concept of culture is subsequently incorporated into the organisational literature.
It primarily appears in the analysis with the aim of describing style, the managerial practices and in general the atmosphere surrounding the organisational set-up (Schein, 2004).
The concept itself has served as a categorising variable. In this sense, relying on culture, it has been created a basis as a means for categorising the company, bringing it into clear-cut typologies. The corporate workplace,

as a result of the distinctive cultural development within it, has been regarded as a development and emergence site for defined practices. Organisations have thus been categorised as stronger or weaker according to the established values. Moreover, those cultures have also been defined as the dominant, or more suitable ones, which, in the contingency, allow optimal management practices to be achieved (Schein, 2004).

Companies, being constituted by individuals, are one of the several bodies that can be enclosed within the social environment. Just as individuals are shaped by the cultural environment in which they live, organisations should not be dissociated from it.

The conduct of an individual is primarily driven by the behaviour of others sharing the same circles or environment and is necessarily subordinated to a source of recognition arising from a codified cultural identity (Busino, 2010).

In the corporate environment, similarly, culture has an intrinsically important part, as it determines a specific value framework that establishes a degree of legitimacy for the organisation. In fact, it is essential that it obtains a minimum grade of recognition in relation to the social values of reference, since otherwise there arise risks of sanction-type actions which in the most favourable circumstances take the form of a mere call for compliance (Sagiv and Schwartz, 2007).

This parallels suggests that it is fundamental to focus on the role of the societal sphere which inhabits and works within the organisation in order to understand the different cultural aspects of the latter. Since the company appears to be completely immersed in the social context, it would be misleading to approach it in a way that fails to address its cultural dimensions.

The ongoing interactions with the external environment make it possible to state with certainty that the same elements of a particular national culture which permeate the lives of workers are, through their daily work activities, brought into the corporate environment. For this reason, it is common to see how different work ethics, degrees of rationality or ideologies generally belonging to a given cultural context, produce different organisational patterns (Alvesson, 1987).

Thus, within the corporate sector, culture is characterised as one of the most significant forces in the establishment of the driving factors, which can be manifested in positive or negative impulses with respect to the implementation of certain practices or methods (Evan, 1975).

In Hofstede's analysis, culture impacts the organisation in multiple manners (Hofstede, 1993; 2001).

In the first place, cultural influence is expressed in the way a certain distribution of power and hierarchy of structures takes shape. A minimum degree of structure is unavoidable and necessary within the work environment, but it is the specific way in which power is distributed that is profoundly influenced by the value patterns held by the members of the work environment.

Another channel expressing the relevance of culture is determined by the extent to which the personalities and actions of the organisation's management and leadership are imbued with a given culture. In this regard, various interpretations have been conducted on the correlation between a given management model and a certain culture.

By applying Schwartz's model concerning values, it was possible to identify how often the top levels of the organisation's hierarchy are, additionally, deeply influenced by the cultural context in which they operate. Therefore, there would be a tendency towards egalitarian norms where these modes would be found at the national cultural level; where, on the other hand, there would be a hierarchical culture, this trait would have a high probability of being transferred to the organisational system (Smith et al., 2002).

The relevance of managerial profiles is considered at the point where the *dominant coalition* (Hofstede, 1980) sets goals and priorities for the organisation. These are intimately linked to underlying social and national preferences. Indeed, it has been observed that these goals are outlined in such a way as to be made consistent with the culture of the host country (Sagiv et al., 2015).

The cultural dictates arising from the surrounding environment therefore outline and represent major constraints on the organisations' conduct in terms of freedom to operate. Organisations will therefore outline coherent courses of action that integrate approaches more akin to utilitarianism where permissible or focusing more on social responsibility where necessary (Hofstede, 1980, pg.28).

Specularly, it can be noted that even a given ethic embedded in the organisation can be interpreted under widely differing frameworks of analysis, which vary according to the personal and work experiences of the individual (Filby and Willmott, 1986 as cited in: Alvesson, 1987), which are also intimately connected to the cultural context in which they are formed.

In fact, the narrowly personal values of an individual intersect with the culture in which he is forged.

This can be stated because, although there are inevitable differences linked to the individual's personality traits and background, there is a remarkable similarity among the values of subjects belonging to the same environment and cultural tradition. Such a result can be traced back to the process of socialisation and peer interaction (Sagiv and Schwartz, 2007).

With regard to these phenomena, the aspect and role that culture has in shaping the universe of norms of conduct of the different social groups has been highlighted. The expression *subjective culture* (Triandis, 1972) has been used as a concept to encapsulate the ways in which a given community nucleus of a given culture unconsciously perceives the tangible aspects of cultural norms.

Therefore, it can be deduced that culture enters the corporate environment also as channelled by the individuals themselves, by all subjects belonging to the company, including the workers. The relevance of the latter is determined by the extent to which they represent the vast majority of the corporate community (Hofstede, 1980) and, therefore, carry a considerable influence despite falling into a non-directive category.

It has even been held that ultimately the employees within the company are responsible for shaping the organisational structure (Schneider, 1987), partly through the incorporation of their own values.

Their role is also extremely noteworthy with regard to the judgement they express on the corporate environment itself. In fact, individuals tend to seek out a nucleus which, on the basis of their values acquired from their culture, can lead them to satisfy their personal objectives. The preference for one organisation over

another can also be determined by the congruence of the underlying values between the organisation and the individual (Sagiv et al., 2015).

In practice, employees' values are given an additional role as they form the social basis for the analysis of circumstances, primarily determining their perceptions and consequently their decisions and action plans. By analysing the character and consequences of value systems and individual behaviour, the cultural dimension that develops within the corporate environment thus provides a valuable aid to the understanding of organisational elements, circumstances and environments (Sagiv et al., 2015).

During routine activities, workers interact and implicitly or explicitly express their relative priorities and opinions, making assessments concerning the work environment. In this way, the member's individual value systems also condition the definition of the targets and aims adopted by the organisation; in the same way, work habits and methods are formed or modified, based on the set of evaluations, preferences and interpretations of the company's actions (Sagiv et al., 2015).

Schwartz's approach in dealing with the individual's beliefs succeeds in effectively capturing the real weight of the latter within the development of the personal goals pursued. He breaks down the concept of value from its function of a mere qualitative attribute of the individual, placing it instead as an analysis parameter on which to build models (Schwartz, 1992).

The value models differ according to the different degree of motivation of the goals they aim for.

An analysis of the type of motivation expressed reveals ten different categories of values in the cultures analysed. Some values were found to be more shared among the sample of national cultures analysed than others. However, what is relevant in this instance is that a form of singularity, originality and distinctiveness at the individual level persists. Personal values are therefore of paramount importance (Schwartz, 1992).

In fact, through the routine exchanges of opinions, the members reveal those features on which they place most emphasis, which reflect their personal value system. This results in the formation of a set of shared thoughts and interpretations regarding the company's aims; the outcome of this process is the emergence of a body of practices and an internal culture within the organisation itself.

2.2 The interplay between national and organisational culture

National culture and the values of individuals undoubtedly have a strong impact on the organisational environment, contributing to its formation. Therefore, it appears that shared values on the part of the members of the company would be the founding element of compliance and respect for internal rules.

In recent decades, the phenomenon of the emergence of an organisation-specific culture has been considered. In this sense the term culture takes on a different meaning, being understood as the collective cognition that enables the living and progress of organisational practices (Alvesson, 1987).

There are several interpretations and definitions of organisational culture.
It has been argued that it emerges as a result of the interaction of individuals in the organisational community producing a normative and value system that brings together what it shares with others (Sun, 2008).
It is further made to coincide with the development of a system of metaphors within the organisational environment (Morgan, 1986; 1997), which is then put into practice and realised by managerial figures and leaders (O'Farrell 2006), which are the individuals in charge of monitoring the proper functioning of the organisational *software* (Sun, 2008).
Among these, a general and widely acknowledged definition is that of Schein. He defines it as a culture that can be ascribed to the set of practices and ideas developed in the setting of the organisation in order to optimally lead and manage the conduct of its various members (Schein, 2004).
From this definition it can be assumed that organisational culture has similar characteristics to culture in its national meaning and can, therefore, be associated with it.
Organisational culture and national culture are in fact two distinct notions and accordingly it is not possible to make them coincide, so that one of the major questions regarding organisational culture is indeed its relationship with the national dimension. National culture continues to have greater relevance since it belongs to the very individuals who constitute a given organisational configuration.
In order to point out the power of the national identity of individuals, Laurent (1983) indicates that there are wider divergences of opinion and ideas among the managers of the same company than there can be among managers belonging to different companies but originating from the same nation (Laurent, 1983 as cited in: Trefry, 2006).
Therefore, it would not be possible to accept the extreme statements of the literature which considers the impact of organisational culture to be such that it outweighs the relevance of national values, arguing that companies will increasingly identify with their own unprecedented value dimension (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003).

On the contrary, it is worth mentioning that the national culture is the element that inescapably guides and influences individuals and consequently also the company at different degrees (Hofstede, 2001).

Following this reasoning, although a solid internal value base may be developed, the organisation as well as the mind-sets of the members who lead it, remain permeated by the influence of the nation to which they belong.

In order to understand the reason why attention is paid to organisational culture and to understand its emergence it may be useful to consider the concept by dissecting culture in all its parts.
Schein (1985, 1990, 2004) states that three layers can be identified.

- The visible part is merely made up of artefacts;
- at the immediately lower level one finds the values expressed by that culture, which are consciously cultivated. The latter are of interest in that they explain and decipher the observable part of the culture;
- deep down, in the lowest stratum, are those underlying assumptions shared in the culture, which are the ultimate source of individuals' values and actions.

Thus, the deep mechanisms and elements, although largely subconscious and not visible, are expressed and brought to the surface by what is referred to as culture.
On this basis, it can be assumed that organisational culture may represent what is most superficially apparent in the organisational environment, which undoubtedly makes it a noteworthy element, as it is immediately perceptible.
However, it is necessary to observe the dynamics beneath it.
Based on the equivalence between the culture that exists in a group of individuals and that minor part of the attitude that emerges from the individual (Schein, 2004), a further analogy can be developed.
The practices, rituals, programmes and goals assumed by a company might delineate its external conduct; the national culture of the individuals that make up the organisational environment, on the other hand, might appear as the processes underlying their personalities.
However, the hypothesis that an organisational culture acts as a mere harmonising or unifying factor, only in a superficial layer, has been considered over-simplifying (Trefry, 2006). In fact, it is undeniable that organisational culture can alter or intervene to varying degrees on the national baggage introduced by workers within a company, representing the catalogue of basic assumptions and values.
A survey of cultural diversity within a corporate group in Luxembourg showed that once the organisational culture had begun to take shape, it altered workers' thoughts quickly enough to suggest that it played a determining role.
Thus, the most obvious and preponderant behavioural nuances of the individuals considered were blunted once they were immersed in the interaction. Although these personal and traditional barriers are not completely annulled and disintegrated, they are visibly attenuated and adapted to the contingency. This phenomenon is the cause and the adaptive purpose itself: it results in a necessary and better adaptation of the team members in question towards the company's objectives (Klepper, 1999, as cited in: Trefry, 2006).

Organisational culture can thus be interpreted as the shared and collective mental projection that distinguishes the members belonging to a given core group of individuals from another (Hofstede, 1984).
Indeed, it is a concept that stands for those traits that are distinctive of a given organisation and which emerge precisely in the form of the strongly held values and beliefs common to the members of an organisation.
Thus, it appears as if the corporate workers were a group embedded in a nation, for example a subculture. This group would be the creator of a certain conduct, which in this case is the organisational culture, that emerges as the expression of *the way we do things around here* (Lundy and Cowling, 1996).

Organisational culture is therefore the element that emerges from scratch within the working environment of a given company. It provides the organisation with its true identity and establishes, through rituals, rules, symbols, codes of language, an unprecedented setting (O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008) which has a significant impact on the employees' actions. For this reason, it can be stated that there is no universally shared culture, and neither a fixed number of organisational cultures. It would be almost unbearable any attempt to categorise them precisely, given the great multitude of organizational forms and the differences that logically emerge at the level of routines and practices.
Moreover, to complicate the issue of categorising, it has been noted that it is likely to find a variety of cultural levels even within the same workplace, appearing as subcultures living on the borders of the organization (O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008).

A certain pattern of organisational values has therefore a high potential for change and formation, resulting in the possibility of creation and disintegration of practices within the same organisation. Nevertheless, there seems to be a correlation between a certain organisational culture and a certain structure and typology of company. The structure in its turn supports and determines the success of some core values and objectives over others. Hence, the two elements are presumably interrelated (Janicijevic, 2013).
The organisational structure appears as the showcase through which the underlying values are exposed to the outside world, stemming from the culture, which may be predisposed or emerge naturally, but is nonetheless moderately solid, once defined.
Thus, the choice to opt for a culture is also determined by the organisation's objectives and aims. Regardless of whether the choice falls on favouring a particular set of stakeholders, shareholders or other entities, culture is the instrument that vehiculates efforts to achieve these goals.
It has been argued, accordingly, that it matters that culture is created so that it is effective and acts as a driver for the pursuit of goals and for performance improvement.
Effective management and shaping of organisational culture can be a great challenge for organisations, but it is necessary to achieve the optimal competitive results. Research has consequently been conducted on how certain types of organisational cultures are more or less related to economic goals (Denison, 1990).
While some of them are, in fact, expressly geared to economic performance, there exist organisational structures that severely constrain it. These include the instance of traditional, simple structure forms, such as

those used in bureaucratic domains. The excessive focusing and convergence of problems and uncertainties in the hands of a small circle of individuals can prove to be a hindrance to effectiveness. High levels are reduced to the lowest possible number of staff, often identified in a boss and a very few managers, leading to the formation of a culture that tends to be despotic and limiting of counter-power (Litton, 2006).
The potential performance character of the organisational culture is thus reduced to zero (Litton, 2006).

In determining the successful implementation of practices or the successful achievement of the objectives set by the organisation, a sound organisational culture is therefore not sufficient.
Moreover, although it constitutes a cornerstone of the organisation, it should not be considered in isolation when analysing the organisational environment. A thorough understanding of organisational dynamics can hardly be developed without taking into account the underlying national cultures of both management and employees.
The reason behind the above is that, in order to be able to assess the extent and functioning of a corporate culture, it is necessary to identify the joint values from which it is created. The emergence of these factors is to be found among the individuals who make up the organisation and therefore in their national cultures (Schein, 2004).
Given further the possible volatility and multifacetedness of these, a commitment on the part of the management engaged in goal-setting or a leadership tailored to the contingency is required.
According to Schein, the role of the leader in defining the corporate environment and managing the diversity resulting from the combination of different, sometimes divergent, cultures within the same working environment is particularly crucial: the extreme action of the leader is to dismantle a culture when it appears to be questionable or malfunctioning (Schein, 2004).

2.3 How employees from different national cultures deal with and change and uncertainty

National culture is arguably one of the most salient components of the organisational environment, reflecting to a large extent the values held by the top level figures within the organisation.
These same individuals themselves hold an exceptional authority over it.
They must be able to rule out a priori the pursuit of a certain path in cases where it is acknowledged to be unsustainable in the long term, opting for those approaches that are made available by the underlying set of available cultures, and by the resulting organizational culture. Setting the organisation's strategy is a matter that needs to be effectively weighed up. The issue is rendered even more complicated once it is grasped that the national and the organisational culture do not represent the sole limiting and determining forces concerning the choices that decision makers have to face.

Indeed, they must take into account the interchanges that the company establishes with the external environment. Operating in an open system, the company finds itself exposed to the numerous effects that exogenous factors can bring in, in terms of challenge, opportunity or threat.

Thus, in the process of strategy formation, the emergence of ideas and the formation of the appropriate culture, the organisation is linked to national cultures, to possible choices, and to the eventuality and uncertainty dictated by circumstances (Harzing, and Hofstede, 1996).
Generally speaking, individuals tend to desire to be in control of the situation, so that things happen in a programmable and predictable way. Similarly, it is preferred to be able to manage the circumstances and the context in which one operates and works, avoiding having to deal with uncertainties and facing the uncontrollable (Grote, 2009).
Over the last few decades, not least because of increasing globalisation and the drive to compete, companies find themselves dealing almost incessantly with factors of variability and insecurity, which can only be partially or temporarily mitigated. Motivation increases even more within organisations when dealing with unforeseen events, as these could jeopardise the success of the business.
However, at the same time, these same uncertainties are sometimes sources for the development of innovative elements. Therefore, one of the main challenges faced by management is to create a compromise that may help to circumvent the choice of categorically avoiding uncertainty. It emerged clearly that precarious situations need to be dealt with and confronted in order to maximise their utility, while avoiding undermining the stability of the organisation (Grote, 2009).

Culture again assumes a key role at the very end of the selection process for the correct direction to follow in order to mitigate the risks posed by uncertainty, as it demarcates the perceptual boundary with regard to the different inputs received from outside.

A different assessment and response to change, imposed or desired, is what occurs not merely at the managerial level but also especially at the employees' level. Therefore, organisations should be able to recognise and anticipate the psychological state of employees in relation to change. The reason for this is that emotional perceptions towards a given event condition employees' attitudes, which are expressed in support or opposition, to varying degrees of intensity.

Consequently, it seems necessary to be aware of the role that culture can hold in moulding certain types of reactions and attitudes towards change.

One possible argument in favour of this statement can be grounded in Hofstede's (1980; 1991; 2001) work concerning his classification of national culture dimensions. The author presents a distinctive and attractive pattern of categorisation in order to encompass the various cultures in a series of identifying and characterising dimensions (Aldulaimi, and Sailan, 2011).
The framework has been developed to classify different countries' populations, which are assessed according to their approach towards the challenges faced by their society. On the basis of surveys conducted on employees, since the late 1960s, four (and later six) dimensions have been determined. The aspects of national cultures identified by Hofstede were found for 53 nations and territories on a global scale (Podrug, 2011).

Following the author's study, one can, within a certain margin, distinguish the different national cultures, described by means of the following variables distributed on a two-dimensional spectrum.

- *Power distance* regards the inequality, within societies, that rests among individuals. It is specifically the degree of expectation and tolerance, within a given culture, of an unequal distribution of power. Therefore, it reflects the way in which a culture relates to authority.
- *Collectivism vs. Individualism* has been developed on the relationship between the individual and the group. The more a society has to do with collectivism, the more individuals are dominated by the interests of the solid and cohesive groups to which they belong. Conversely, in societies in which individualism prevails, the interests and characteristics of the individual members, which define their self-identity, prevail.
- *Masculinity vs. Femininity* reflects the extent to which the customarily intended as masculine orientations of ambition, accomplishment and affirmation are valued over the traditionally feminine orientations of affection, modesty and caring for interpersonal relationships (Yang, 2014).
- *Indulgence vs. Restraint* is the most recent of the dimension that have been developed. Indulgence indicates the society that allows quite easily the satisfaction of basic and spontaneous desires of the human being related to pleasure and disengagement. Restraint refers to a society that stifles the gratification of desires, which are disciplined by strict social conventions (Hofstede, 2011).
- Concerning *Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation*, Hofstede considered that this perspective was missing in the beginning phase of the survey process as the definition of the presented questions had

been formulated by the mind-sets of Westerners; it became possible to discover it when the research was carried out via Eastern mentalities. Long-Term Orientation has in fact been initially defined as *Confucian dynamism*. Indeed, this latter represents a long-term oriented approach, which implies the cultivation of future-oriented qualities, such as tenacity, and endurance. In contrast, in Short-Term Orientation societies the emphasis is placed on tradition and preservation (Hofstede, 2011).

- Finally, *Uncertainty Avoidance* concerns the degree to which people within a given cultural context reject uncertainty, seeking to reduce it while maintaining stability. In the case of cultures with a high degree of Uncertainty Avoidance, it is likely to find many strictly defined rules of conduct; it is a culture that wishes to continuously find solutions to all risks (Hofstede, 2011).

These dimensions define how each culture perceives stimuli from outside differently and how cultures can form shared mentalities that permit their classification.

Indeed, according to Hofstede, culture represents the mental codification shared by a set of people belonging to one group with respect to another (Hofstede, 1991). This type of mental formation can take place at different levels and at different times in the life of the subject.

The individual identifies himself as belonging to a given nation also and above all on the basis of the values that derive from the culture in which he is immersed, but this does not preclude that he may be under other influences in the course of his life. In fact, at occupational levels, a further adherence to a completely new value system may occur.

The individual may present a twofold way of behaving and may be influenced relatively by the relationships he enters into in the organisational environment. However, this influence remains confined to certain areas of the employee's mind because, as it has already been argued, a clear distinction must be made between the role that the two types of culture play in shaping the personality of the individual.

National and organisational cultures are necessarily interrelated but intrinsically distinct.

At the national level, traditions include deep convictions, value systems and habits that are common to a large part of a country's population. When applied to the corporate environment, the concept becomes peculiar, describing the habits and customs adopted in that specific context, which are often only related to the work environment. In fact, they are not necessarily transposed to the outside by the members of the organisation (Van Oudenhoven, 2001).

Once this distinction is known, it is impossible to overlook the influence that national culture has on individuals and consequently on the formation of corporate practices. This is supported by the basic conviction of authors such as Hofstede, which confirmed the partial overlapping of national culture with that which can be found within the company.

Thus, if this assumption is taken as a premise, it can be concluded that there is, albeit to a limited extent, a translation of numerous cultural traits into the workplace by the individuals employed in it. Consequently, the

relationship they have with variables such as uncertainty, ambiguity and change, and the manner in which they deal with them, will inevitably derive from their cultural background in terms of the nation they belong to.

2.4 Cultural values and liminality

In the different formulations of the concept of liminality, starting with its application to the anthropological field, the same concept is described as a moment of passage and transition which at the same time implies a certain degree of change and ambiguity.
When the idea was first transferred from the merely rite-specific analyses to the several other disciplines, its existence was found in a range of societies and therefore it was possible to verify how it relates to differing individual values. In diverse cultural contexts, it is interesting to note how modalities of learning, understanding and reacting to uncertainty encourage or facilitate certain reactions with respect to the entrance into a liminal state.

One of the ways in which this can be understood is by analysing how the values of a particular culture condition the behaviour and minds of individuals, producing different responses to external or internal changes in the social system and in the subject himself (Moore and Myerhoff, 1977).

The social agents that make up the organisational community can themselves generate structural change within organisations, for example by introducing a new organisational culture. Even in circumstances of this sort, liminality can be invoked, as it can result in the creation of a completely changed working environment that may appear ambiguous to employees, despite the fact that the change was desired and intentional.
Therefore, individuals within organisations, can experience a liminal state both in the case of unexpected changes and also in that of an intentional modification of the organisational environment.
In this context the concept is considered essentially in its spatial sense. Thus, the analysis of the phenomenon intended in these terms implies the investigation of the response to the change in structures, norms, business practices and how individuals react to it.

Shifting the focus to the realm of culture, a state of liminality would make it possible to investigate the sphere of symbolism that is present within the social domain. Indeed, the individual may undergo such crises even merely on a psychological level, in response to being exposed to values that do not belong to him.

This layer of analysis regarding the transitional moment is significant in that the simultaneous coexistence of what is habitual and what is alien and unusual enhances and amplifies one another in the subject's mind. In this respect, liminality consists and binds in a significant relationship with the values present in certain structural and traditional features of a given culture, emerging from them (Howard-Grenville, 2011).

Culture and the phenomenon of liminality can therefore be analysed in parallel, since both have an effect on one another: culture defines the way in which the liminal experience is lived by individuals, and liminality takes shape as a symbolic experience often arising from certain values.

Although culture is a social artefact and liminality a transitory state which is quite complex to define, it can be said that both contain a visible and a submerged part, which corresponds to the vaster part of the concept itself. In this sense, it is necessary to consider the elements that underlie the value system of individuals, rich in symbols and representations.

Schein emphasised a particularly important element in this respect. One of the characteristics of culture is the fact that it significantly reflects the deeper, non-visible mechanisms of human action, taking shape as a kind of collective personality of the group members (Schein, 2004).

Applying the concept of multilayer culture to the corporate sphere, one can consider the symbolic space of organisational culture as structured in three distinct layers. Schein argues for the coexistence of observable layers with underlying and latent ones. The visible parts include the most easily identifiable and identifying patterns such as practices, celebrations, transmitted images, tangible routines. The submerged part concerns the basic value system, principles, beliefs, habits and deep perceptions (Schein, 1990).

At this point it can be assumed that, in the same manner as for the corporate culture there are various degrees of visibility, one layer of which is reserved for the external perception, so it can be said of the other circumstances in which situations of liminality occur.

For example, the various visible forms and practices concerning symbolic or religious rituals, when considered through the anthropological analysis, are only the apparent side of a deeper meaning. Only that which is actually manifested can be appreciated by individuals who do not actually engage in the ritual. However, all that the initiate or group that experiences the transition undergoes does not transpire externally.

Liminality has much of its impact in a latent form and can be traced back to that non-visible part of the result that a given event produces on the individual, even at an unconscious level, in the psychological sphere.

Thus, although it is known that organisational changes produce instability, ambiguity and uncertainty in the individual, this may not be sufficient to understand the real magnitude of a given circumstance. This fact makes it highly difficult to understand when and, especially in what modalities, an employee is going through a phase of liminality.

Given the diversity of individuals in organisations, brought from different cultural backgrounds, they will have different responses when faced with instability or a circumstance that breaks from the usual routine.

For this reason, it may be useful for the management to be aware of the values underpinning national cultures in order to take into account at least a small part of the impact that changes have on the community of workers.

Analysing the phenomenon of liminality, and uncertainty circumstances in general, from the perspective of the national culture dimensions of Hofstede's model, two categories appear particularly relevant.

- Uncertainty Avoidance seems to be the dimension that best describes the contingencies which quintessentially encompass the likelihood of individuals facing situations of ambiguity. Indeed, it

describes exactly *the degree to which members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, leading them to support beliefs promising certainty* (Hofstede, 2001).

Indexes that refer to this measure are based on questionnaires provided to workers which aim to identify whether fears of uncertainty generate anxiety in the subject.

Low values of the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) thus indicate a lower average rate of concern and anxiety about change among individuals in a given national context. This results in a greater acceptance of change and a greater acceptance of the inherent uncertainties of everyday life (Hofstede, 1983).

The characteristics of cultures with a low UAI include:

- less desire to preserve the status quo and less attachment to traditionalism;
- a greater willingness to take risks;
- a willingness to operate in an environment that is as unregulated as possible;
- where the norms in question may not exist, a renunciation or change in the norms is willingly accepted (Hofstede, 1983).

Assuming that any situation arises within the company that generates uncertainty or concern, such as employees being forced to abruptly switch roles or a necessary change in organisational culture, the response of individuals with a low Uncertainty Avoidance would be as follows. Workers who hold cultural values of this type would be the ones who react most favourably to a change. Thus, these are cases in which the employee would feel a lesser impact from liminality, experiencing the moment of transition, whether personal or in the organisational context in general, in a definitely more relaxed way.

On the contrary, high values of the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) therefore suggest a higher average rate of concern among the individuals of a nation and the consequent refusal to assume positions or behaviours that might aggravate this condition.

Among the characteristics of cultures exhibiting a high UAI it has been found:

- the condition of feeling the precariousness inherent in living as a permanent insidiousness to be faced;
- an increased general level of tension and anxiety;
- an aversion to contrast and competitiveness as they are likely to generate forms of agitation;
- a strong need to obtain consensus;
- the perception that ideas and actions that are not aligned with the norms represent a violation and therefore an increase in the rate of intolerance;
- a tendency towards conservative attitudes and a predilection for discipline;
- success measured by certainty of results;
- the need to follow written, pre-established laws;
- a feeling of guilt arising from not adhering to rules, even if they cannot be followed (Hofstede, 1983).

Uncertain circumstances are different from usual, unknown and above all unexpected. Employees who possess values based on a culture where uncertainty is avoided, try to minimise the possibility of such situations arising, through adherence to the rules in force and religious rigour in adhering to the established canons of behaviour.

Therefore, these are likely to be the individuals who will experience the greatest difficulties should the internal norms of the organisation, for whatever reason, whether of necessity or will, fail. Individuals with values characterised by a high UAI index are probably also the ones who are most concerned and anxious about a possible change in their role, a change of job or any break in their personal or work routine. Accordingly, it is this type of employee which is most susceptible to be overwhelmed by uncertainty and suffer from the state of liminality in which he finds himself in a time of change.

From the analysis of the impact of liminality on employees it can be deduced that there exist strong implications deriving from the culture to which the members of the organisation are associated. These implications do not only concern the personal sphere of the individual employee, but have an impact on the organisation as a whole. Since an individual, on the basis of his values determined by the national culture that characterises him, is inclined to accept or not to accept certain phenomena, the same will be true for all the members of the organisation.

If employees are, therefore, unable to continue to work as they would otherwise when a certain circumstance alters the status quo, this could lead to a decrease in performance and a failure to achieve the objectives set by the organisation. Indeed, it has been argued that culture can facilitate or hinder organisational restructuring depending on the degree to which it conforms or does not conform to the standards of expected change (Zalami, 2005, as cited in: O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008).

- From the consideration of a further dimension of Hofstede's model, that is, Long-term vs. Short-term orientation, it is also possible, to a certain extent, to identify the propensity of a given culture towards the perception of the liminal state as a negative or positive experience.

In this instance, in order to prove the effectiveness of using this dimension, it would be sufficient to mention the characteristics emerging from the second, adjusted, questionnaire that allowed the development of this further categorisation. The questionnaire, after having undergone modification through the inclusion of questions created by Eastern, Chinese and Hong Kong respondents, was cleared of its previous fundamentally Western basis which limited its possibilities of investigation on a multicultural scale. From the relevance of the results obtained from the so-called Chinese Value Survey, the dimension known as Long Term Orientation (LTO) was incorporated (Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

Hofstede and Bond (1998) clarify that cultures characterised by LTO are marked by values such as perseverance, resilience and the ability to adapt their habits and customs to new contingencies.

In order to read this dimension from an organisational perspective, it can be argued that workers in the organisation coming from Eastern and Confucian cultural traditions would be the most resilient in facing

moments of disruption of the established dynamics and of uncertainty. This is due to the fact that, being characterised by a LTO, these cultures yield individuals that act and live pursuing a long-term line of objectives and are thereby able to cope with momentary situations of instability in view of later gratification and recognition.
Therefore, it can be assumed that liminality, in these individuals, takes on a more positive meaning and the challenge of facing a momentary transition could be willingly accepted.

Conversely, a short-term orientation, involving the valorisation of past practices and the need to have rewards and to notice results in the immediate future, would not allow individuals to look beyond when experiencing a momentary difficulty. It can be imagined that the liminal state leads to frustration among this type of employees, as it would not allow them to receive what they expect or what they want and especially at the time they desire it.

The correlation between culture and values on the one hand and reaction to uncertainty on the other is a relevant element that suggests that culture cannot and should not be neglected when analysing the possible responses of workers to a situation of precariousness. Culture determines the degree of acceptance of uncertainty and, consequently, also how the transient liminal state is perceived, which may be experienced by the worker as extremely negative and to be resisted, or simply acceptable, or even welcomed as a challenge. Thus, values have a decisive impact on liminality as it appears in the corporate environment since they determine the intensity of the subjects' resistance to the anxiety generated by change and the degree to which they are able to escape it without compromising the overall environment and the pursuit of set objectives, both at individual and at organisational level.

Chapter 3

The role of leadership on ambiguity management within organizations and on liminality

3.1 Importance of leadership in the organisational context and its relationship with management

The idea of leadership has been highly debated and controversial, to the extent that there is still no clear cut definition of it nowadays.
Since early times there has been a search for a more accurate understanding of the role and characteristics of leaders and the manner in which these merge resulting in the unique quality they enjoy, i.e. trust and legitimacy supplied by their followers. In applying what he considered to be the fundamental characteristics of this personality type in the formation of Alexander the Great, the Greek philosopher Aristotle enumerates three features that are required for a leader to be recognised as such.
This character must therefore possess:

- *ethos*, which concerns the ethical profile of the person, who must be able to adopt techniques of persuasion and represent a source of inspiration for followers, convincing and motivating them;
- *logos*, which is an aptitude and ability to provide valid justifications for one's initiatives and decisions in order to stimulate individuals intellectually and cognitively;
- *pathos*, which consists in making emotional contact with his followers, arousing emotions and effectively moving their feelings (Ali, 2012).

Despite its success in promoting the development of the relevance of the concept of leadership, its definition fails to shed complete light on the underlying complexities.
It can be said, from a general standpoint, that the term leader refers to an individual capable of stimulating, motivating and conditioning other individuals so that they can undertake actions that, in the absence of his inspiration, they would be unlikely to undertake (Bertocci, 2009).

However, there exist a multiplicity of attempts at determining the boundaries of the very notion. It can be supposed that there are a number of definitions of leadership in the literature that almost equals the amount of scholars who have attempted to come up with a working definition of the same (Stogdill, 1974).
This many-sidedness stems from the fact that leadership is an image that is subject to various interpretations, which can change, even radically, as the perspective of those who observe and evaluate such an experience changes. Each individual assesses his experience with the person of a leader according to his own expectations,

resulting in innumerable possibilities of how this could be considered; either adequate and effective, or inefficient and dysfunctional (Bertocci, 2009).
Leadership is a construct of an extremely articulated nature, susceptible to judgement deriving from the feelings provoked in individuals on the basis of their nature, experience and training.
This element therefore makes the position of leader constantly dependent on obtaining a form of authenticity on the part of those who surround him. In fact, as it has been mentioned, its assessment is strongly dependent on the ideas and preferences of its followers.

Besides the complexity of the delimitation of this concept, a further difficulty arises in that it varies depending on the framework in which it is applied and discussed.
Indeed, leadership is object of interest in various fields of human endeavour, particularly in social research. In the 1980s, the term was introduced into the latter area of literature. Even and especially in this domain, there is a certain incongruity in the range of interpretations, which continue to emerge and bring new elements to the analysis.
Some common points can be found within the elements that are taken into consideration that fall within the area of leadership in a fairly shared way among researchers. These same traits can also be traced in the concept of leadership in an organisational context.
Agreed elements on leadership are:

- the ability to influence and condition others;
- the existence of a body of individuals being driven and motivated;
- a target to be reached (Clegg and Hardy, 1999).

The role of leadership within an organisation includes action on a range of major issues.
In the current environment, permeated by increasing globalisation, it is necessary for organisations to participate meaningfully in changes and developments. Therefore, there is a requirement to continually undergo transformations, to be more receptive to these, faster, agile and to try to abandon, where possible, any limiting structural constraints. The leader provides a suitable personality to direct the development of the organisation in order to cope with ever-changing circumstances.

Although top leadership, all forms of management, still represent the highest level of accountability, it is expected that an increasing proportion of multinationals will rely even more on the competence of the under-management figures, as they are able to quickly adapt the status quo to contingent circumstances (Bertocci, 2009). This is partly due to the role of leadership within the organisation that takes place at various stages of the organisational structure.
Its relevance is expressed in a series of functions and competencies.
Indeed, it is precisely these individuals who are in charge of providing a strategic orientation. For the definition of an adequate strategic scenario at business level, leaders hold the key to this process. They seek to identify

what the company wants to achieve and how it wants to configure and categorise itself within the outer environment. The elaboration of a line to follow gives importance to the leader as a person who allows the passage from one status to another, allowing the abandonment of outdated strategic objectives, in view of creating a greater capacity to compete and adapt to the environment in which the company operates with its renewed identity. This is an essential step as it allows the organisation to take a clear position and develop a more concretely defined image and imprint to be transmitted internationally (Bertocci, 2009).

The leader is the one who is able, at this stage, not only to imagine the path and a more profitable and competitive company profile, but also to spread the idea in an attractive way to the members of the organisation. Building trust and confidence is an important step and it is exactly on this occasion that the leader's competence and communication skills are recognised. The effective formulation of a mission builds a solid and essential consensus, which leads to increased involvement of members.
Thus, the leader is distinguished by his ability to persevere and convince, since it is highly complicated to succeed in getting followers to picture an idea that has not yet acquired any material form. By focussing thoughts on an ideal perspective, he intervenes directly in the psychological sphere of the employees, thus enabling a recomposition of ideas and values. This leads the organisation to redefine its ambitions and accordingly its objectives (Thompson et al., 2006).

Goals in particular have a tendency to be influenced even by the evolving and changing external circumstances. The leadership is confronted with innumerable demands with respect to its traditional responsibilities. The uncertainty of the future and the concern for competitiveness has meant that inventiveness and competitive skills have moved to the forefront of the priorities for the vast majority of organisations. It is necessary to seize every new and potentially profitable opportunity in order to maintain one's advantageous position in the industry.
The creative element plays a crucial role as it is part of the best options available to a leader to effectively cope with change and deal with its ambiguities. In fact, the creation of an original and innovative path has been appropriately considered a determining requisite for leadership to be considered incisive and a resource within the organisation that is faced with resolving issues of an indeterminate and undefined nature (Mumford and Connelly, 1991). It is again the leadership's responsibility to develop and inherently possess this necessary creativity (Guo et al., 2016).

In an attempt to explain the connection between leadership and the ability to contribute novel ideas, certain points of contact have been developed which support the assumption.
The most explanatory point is that leaders are those who are most confronted with specific and highly articulated problems at the organisational level. They manage the structural elements of the culture and the various member identities of the organisation. This requires know-how of a cognitive nature, which the leader

must necessarily possess. Consequently, it is essential for him to be able to manage difficulties in a constructive and novel way.

Another circumstance in which the leader's role is particularly evident is in project management, i.e. in team work. In fact, in this situation, he represents the person capable of achieving the maximum performance by directly implying an impact on the expected outcomes (Shenhar et al., 2002).
The reasons for the importance of the leaders' role in projects are manifold.
Above all, it is necessary to recall the emotional influence he has on his followers. In this sense, the great popularity of leadership in projects also stems from the progressive change in the idea of an optimal result, which in recent decades has involved more and more qualitative and less strictly budget-based traits. The fulfilment and happiness of all stakeholders involved has a specific weight in organisations today (Nixon et al., 2012). Some of the organisational literature emphasises the importance of this, indicating that the success of the project should be assessed from the various perceptions of the stakeholders (Davis, 2014). The leader here becomes an instrumental player in moving and involving individuals in favour of developments concerning project work.
In any case, management continues to exert a role in this. However, despite the consistent expansion of the various determinants of project success, which now include sustainability, performance and output, planning and stakeholder readiness, the role of the project manager is rarely mentioned. Therefore, the role and expertise of management remains relegated to a marginal position when it comes to assessing the progress and performance of a project work.

This gives a cue to introduce an essential distinction between the relevance of the leader and the scope and function of management. Taking the influence of leadership skills on the success or failure of a project as an example, this distinction is indeed clarifying.
Management enters the project mainly to plan and regulate the actions to be carried out. He asserts his competences through the use of schemes linked to the decision-making and resolution process, and is responsible for establishing a certain degree of functionality and performance to be delivered by the project itself.
The leader fits into this picture by carrying out activities that involve directing and leading the process and individuals. His role is therefore important in the process, at the level of supervision and assurance of commitment. He pushes and directs participants to realise their professional resources in order to channel them in the most appropriate way in the pursuit of broader organisational goals (Anantatmula, 2010).
In addition to channelling forces towards a single goal, the leader also participates in the personal growth of the employees by encouraging and enabling them to jointly develop their technical and work skills. At the same time, he motivates them to meet project-related requirements by leveraging individual abilities to develop teamwork skills (Anantatmula, 2010).
In general, this distinction is also well delineated and evident in the wider corporate environment.

Management performs a number of more or less relevant day-to-day tasks related to the functioning of an organisation. Its role becomes crucial in the case of larger organisations which require greater care given the multitude of factors to be managed. In this case, good management ensures clarity and balance within the company's practices, allowing an appropriate level of precision and homogeneity to be achieved with respect to what it delivers, also in terms of requirements and profits.
For its part, leadership deals with imagination and orientation, it allows to synthesise and identify possible ideal future scenarios and to manage the adaptation to these accordingly (Bertocci, 2009).

Given the globalising drive within the economic system and its unpredictable fluctuations, it is necessary to give greater emphasis to the position of leadership, as it appears to be more in line with the today’s changing realities. In order to ensure the sustainability of companies in such ambiguous settings, it is imperative to introduce significant changes in the model and structure of the organisation. The leader is the perfect figure since, if skilled, he knows how to deal with change-oriented organisational development, defining and conveying the strategic purpose and perspective, unravelling and configuring the organisational culture that best balances obstacles with prospects.

3.2 The leader's role and the connection between leadership and organisational culture

In several analyses of the leadership role in the organisational context, there is some connection between the focus on the latest forms of leadership and the concept of organisational culture.
One study in particular has clearly shown the links between the above two elements:

- the fundamental characteristics of a form of leadership are related to the values of a culture;
- a substantial manifestation of the characteristics of a given culture is generally recognised in leadership;
- the qualitative aspects of leadership can only be assessed through a process approach;
- the study of this interconnectedness takes the form of an analysis that must touch on several criteria (Hendrickson, 1989).

It is possible to find in a variety of contributions that the ability to produce culture is part of the concept of leadership (Clegg et al., 1999).
In some cases, it has even been argued that the basis of the leader's functions consists precisely in the management, mastery and ability to modify the organisational culture (Schein, 1985).
In this regard, it is crucial to consider the importance of leadership already in the start-up phase of any activity involving a collective experience. In order to understand its significance, it is necessary to explore the dynamics, particularly at the beginning, of the creation of a group.
In the initial moments of an experience of this kind or even, more broadly, in the establishment of a membership of an organisation there is a rather complicated moment of transition. Indeed, it is here that the ideas of individuals begin to emerge, which can often be characterised as extremely divergent. An environment of doubt and uncertainty, as well as imbalances and disagreements, therefore arises. This may result in the loss of some members, although this situation is characterised as a favourable event for greater group cohesion (Schein, 2004).
At this point, there is generally a dynamic of redefining the balance of power.
In fact, in the event that the primary promoters of the group experience a lack of originality in ideas and projects and fail to untangle the conflicts that arise in the first phase of creation, new players may emerge. These subjects in question are the leaders.
They intervene through the imposition of their solid projects, appearing in the eyes of the other members as authoritative and competent individuals. Although they qualify as strong elements and this may suggest some form of coercion, in truth it is the state of ambiguity itself that creates the favourable climate for their escalation.
Indeed, it is the state of concern connected to the initial creation of the team that leads individuals to externalize an appreciation themselves in order to restore order to the group's environment and functionality (Schein, 2004).

It has been found that organisational standards and interests stem fundamentally from the personality traits of the leader (Schneider, Goldstein and Smith, 1995). Thus, a certain culture does not emerge spontaneously; on the contrary, it is shaped by the choices of the high-profile role holders. Moreover, it emerges with an intrinsic purpose and goal (Shein, 1992).

Leadership roles at the top of the organisation include the director or president or related figures, who may be comparable, and sometimes coincidental, with those individuals Schein places at the very beginning of the group' s birth. The actions and ideas taken or assumed by the top managers of the organisation clearly have even more important implications in determining the composition and strategic approaches of the organisation (Giberson et al., 2005).

The organisation's culture and leadership are mutually dependent and appear to be conditional upon each other. Leadership by these members is peculiar in that the very intentions and reason for the organisation's existence reflect almost precisely the description of the traits of attitude and subjectivity of the individuals who gave birth to the organisational experience.

Two fundamental lines of thought have emerged regarding this assumption in an attempt to find the real reasons behind the existing correlation between the leader's personality and corporate characteristics.

- One of these is the so-called Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick and Mason, 1984). This body of literature formulates an initial hypothesis according to which the values, customs and psychological and individual characteristics of leaders are able to intensely condition the way they evaluate and perceive a given circumstance. Their personal perceptions would then be a strong determinant in shaping their own preferences (Hambrick, 2007).

  This theory serves as a basic tool for interpreting an organisation's actions and objectives from an essentially individual perspective. Thus, the interpretative element is brought to light as the focal point of the analysis; this is the essential component of the understanding of the various ways in which top leaders deal with ambiguities.

  Another crucial point, which is a corollary of the theoretical argument, is the belief that there is no need to analyse the group as a whole. The reason for this is that the actions of a leader in a modern, structured organisation do not necessarily result in actions and decisions that are shared by all members of the group. It is therefore sufficient to stick to the study of individual leaders if one wants to find answers about organisational behaviour and performance (Hambrick, 2007).

A further approach to analysing the role of the leader and his influence on the dynamics of the group and the organisation relates to the path by which members are included in a given work group and are, therefore, part of the organisation.

- A view that places the leader and the emergence of a group in a more processual framework is what is known as attraction-selection-attrition (Schneider, 1987). Following this line of reasoning, it is found that the personal characteristics of leaders are what implicitly or manifestly shape the organisation as

it is configured externally. Therefore, leaders, who configure themselves as such, root their specificities in the organisation through the determination of certain ideals. Thus, everything relating to objectives, infrastructure and organisational culture mirrors the personality of the leaders. For this reason, even the diversities reflected in the results achieved at company level always find their basis in the founding members.

The peculiarity of this theory is that the personality elements of the aforementioned leaders act as a magnet for the participants and members of the organisation itself. This results in dynamics of involvement of individuals that tend to favour and attract those who present affinities on a personality basis with those of their leaders (Schneider, 1987 as cited in: Giberson et al., 2005).

A phase of clash between personalities is necessary for the emergence of a functioning atmosphere.

This transition can be likened to Schein's analysis of the group. That is because in this instance as well, at the moment of the emergence of the corporate identity, what is most sought after is a certain form of homogeneity at the level of values, so as to make mutual understanding and communication instances easier, thereby harmonising the working environment.

By means of the dynamics of attraction-selection-friction, it is therefore possible to form organisations that are more compact and less uneven at the level of interacting personalities, resulting in a lower level of resistance among members (Schneider, 1987).

Furthermore, in terms of organisational culture, the leader has the power and the possibility to provide rewards or not to those who choose or manage to correctly align themselves with the values established as priorities. The authority he enjoys therefore allows him to ensure a high level of adherence to the organisational culture he defines (O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008).

At this point, a close correlation between organisational culture on the one hand and the leaders and founders of the organisation on the other appears unquestionable.

Inevitably, leaders are able to brand the organisation with the distinctive traits of their personalities, regardless of subsequent developments and possible slight deviations in aims and objectives (Schein, 2004). As for the leaders who subsequently step in, when an organisation is already going through a phase of maturity, they often tend to pursue the same line as the founders without upsetting the essential features of the company, but reserving the right to ensure the preservation and operate a consolidation of the organisational culture they are faced with. Only at a later stage can one come to the consideration that such a framework may represent an obstacle insofar as it is obsolete and outdated, and therefore a modification may be considered (Clegg et al., 1999).

Although for reasons of appropriateness only a few are presented here, the processes through which leaders tend to transmit their tradition, personal values and ideas within the organisational environment can take on various forms.

One of the simplest but still relatively effective techniques that leaders possess in order to convey their views and use to build a solid working base around a project is to explicitly place more emphasis on what they themselves consider crucial. In fact, through consistent behaviour, they signal to followers the details on which they need to focus (Schein, 2004).
This is relevant in that, it can be argued that the dynamics on which leaders place more attention seems to be a natural reflection of their inclinations and personalities. The reason why these ideas are followed is not only attributable to the consensus base that is created around leaders and the mechanisms that make it possible for this to occur. The course of action outlined by the leadership in shaping the organisation is successful because they effectively represent the most effective options for the path forward.

From this it can be deduced and concluded that the culture of an organisation, although influenced in its creation by numerous dynamics, has at its centre the figure of the leader. Without the leader, therefore, no organisational culture would emerge. The leader is not only able to create it from nothing, but also to manage it adequately; either implicitly and unconsciously or voluntarily, but in all cases through the transmission and dissemination of his values and personality traits.
Finally, it is relevant to consider that it is the leadership itself that is able to modify and change the shape of the culture when necessary, for instance in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity or in view of a better adaptation to the change of the environment or of some of the exogenous variables.

3.3 How leadership manages uncertainty

The internal spaces of organisations can easily be joined and interrelated with systemic elements of the external environment in which companies operate. For this reason, the concepts of uncertainty, ambiguity and transformation have entered the interest of this discipline.
Precisely because of the wide range and variety of these items, there is no univocal interpretation in the literature. The difficulty increases if one considers that uncertainty can be determined by the occurrence or non-occurrence of a multitude of situations.
As far as a state of indeterminateness is concerned, it can be said that it involves a pattern of interactions between the components of the required decision-making situation, the context and the decision-maker.
The latter is faced with a multitude of alternatives concerning the most appropriate choice of the way forward. The capacity to choose between options can be associated with the evaluation mechanisms or with the values and needs of the person concerned, as well as with the demands of interest for the organisation. As for the degree of precision, the decision-maker's knowledge in handling a circumstance in which the organisation's habits or norms are suspended will have a significant impact on the employees' perception of uncertainty (Grote, 2009).

In order to cope with such situations, especially if the ambiguity created is from the external environment, it may be necessary for the leader to adapt the organisational culture to them. Knowing the correlation between leadership and organisational culture again makes its contribution essential (Clegg et al., 1999).
In fact, when an organisation encounters a period of transition that generates uncertainty it creates an environment that is more than conducive to conveying new norms that form the basis of organisational culture. This is because in times of ambiguity individuals are induced by high stress to a collective state in which there is a strong emotional transmission and a great potential for learning. The leader fits into this context in his function as a shaper of organisational culture, and presents himself as an opportunity to show his competence (Schein, 2004).

The need for change manifests itself in various ways. Among the most relevant threats to the stability of the organisation are abrupt changes in market direction, a sudden advancement of technology in the industry in which the organisation operates, the creation of new balances due to the emergence of new competitive forces. Forms of change at the organisational level may concern many aspects and involve many factors. Thus, they may result in the continuation of very different strategic paths.

A macro distinction has been made between two possibility of changes' conformation, that are incremental or transformational.

- The incremental type involves changes to match and adapt current management and the way the business is run. No substantial changes are made, as the chosen strategic path, the composition of the organisational form and the cultural apparatus are not affected.
- On the contrary, transformational changes imply strong and deep modification strategies. In this case, in fact, there is a reconstruction of the structural apparatus as a whole that includes the removal of old practices, replaced by new ones, and a modification of the management and in general a new combination of the various levels of authority. Thus, the basis of the organisational culture and consequently the strategy are undergoing change (Robinson and Griffiths, 2005).

If organisational change takes a transformational form, the implications for employees are exponentially greater. Indeed, once the leader's efforts to comply with this change, necessary or desired, have been put in place, all parts of the organisation need to align themselves with the new revised strategy.
The realisation of a different perspective and definition will be highly dependent in its effectiveness on the degree to which employees are themselves willing and incentivised to learn and engage. In this regard, one can understand the importance of the learning processes implemented by the leadership personalities who are closest to the workers within the organisation.
Indeed, it has been argued that within the organisational environment, when proposals for renewal emerge that challenge the cultural and structural status quo and the entrenched vision of management, these elements are unlikely to be taken forward by the management profiles in question despite their involvement (Beer and Eisenstat, 1996, as cited in: Appelbaum et al., 1998).
This results in a lack of effectiveness of vertical communication practices. This is problematic as it acts as an inhibitor to the alignment of the various organisational levels towards acceptance and readiness for change (Beer and Eisenstat, 1996, as cited in: Appelbaum et al., 1998).

It is, therefore, necessary to take into account the workers' perspective regarding their perceptions of the risks or opportunities that may emerge from a state of transition or uncertainty. If they find themselves in a circumstance where the norms and routines to which they are accustomed are lacking, they may not have the directives that allow them to act effectively in line with the desired organisational change (Nadler, 1982), or even enter into a state of anxiety regarding their career path (Nadler, 1982).
Thus, their concerns may relate to various elements that are subject to change within the employment context, ranging from their specific position, salaries to adaptation to the change in management. There may be dismissals, or substantial changes in roles with potential reshuffling of ranks.
On an inner level, such experiences impact on employees by creating states of liminality similar to those described in anthropological literature. In fact, the worker who, due to exogenous circumstances and not depending on his person, is forced to a sudden and abrupt change in his functions, lives an experience of deep ambiguity.

This is expressed in a loss of self-confidence, and a state of disorientation and confusion that goes beyond the mere work-related level and directly affects the psychological sphere of the individuals involved.
Moreover, this experience is necessarily shared since the change involves the whole organisation at a structural and systemic level. Thus, workers not only lose contact with the environment as previously established, but also with part or all of the social apparatus with which they were accustomed to spend their daily lives (Robinson and Griffiths, 2005).
Additional elements can then be found to complete the parallel image with the lived experience of the various rites and ceremonies in the communities analysed in Turner and van Gennep. In fact, transformational changes can generate in the individual a feeling of loss on a personal level, as the disappearance of the routine that surrounds their tasks, a given organisational culture and contacts with their colleagues leads to a necessary modification of their status.

When employees are faced with these moments of transition, as individuals they can individually put in place techniques, attitudes to cope with the change. Indeed, when employees find themselves immersed in an organisational environment undergoing change, they have resources at their disposal.
The attributes that have been considered as the strongest to cope with such situations are self-esteem and the ability to perceive one's own abilities and direct them towards the desired goals.
Subjects who implement these mechanisms show a greater propensity to dominate the feelings of anxiety that arise from uncertainty. The reason for this is that they are more actively and continuously involved and dedicated to solving problems and insidious circumstances (Moos and Billings, 1982 as cited in: Ashford, 1988).
The real characteristic that distinguishes them from the others and makes them abler to deal with uncertainty is their capacity to perceive these moments, which are indeed transitory, as formative experiences. They might interpret them as moments in which they can test themselves and their skills and competences, as well as their strength.
However, being able to draw out these techniques and dealing with ambiguity in such a way as to see it as a personal opportunity is not inherent in the psychological traits of each individual. Responses to change are varied and unexpected.

As mentioned above, workers who find themselves immersed in a changing environment or facing a change in their role are presumably more likely to experience anxiety and stress than to overcome it easily.
In this regard, one study (Ashford, 1988) has verified that if they are facilitated in the development of a coping strategy towards situations of uncertainty, their levels of worry can be effectively reduced, especially at the time of the transformation itself. From this it can be deduced that a guidance figure is essential for employees and this role can be undertaken by leadership within organisations.
Therefore, it is not merely the way in which the leader faces the change himself, and how he interprets and transmits it, but also and above all his function in relation to what is perceived by the workers that counts.

The challenge facing leadership therefore includes the possibility of creating learning processes that would serve to teach workers how to deal with ambiguity.

3.4 Leadership and liminality

Ambiguity and uncertainty, for individuals, are almost synonymous with experiencing a liminal state.
Therefore, given the crucial role of leadership in change processes affecting corporate culture, structure and norms, leadership can only be necessary when workers experience the typical transition of liminality.
In most situations liminality is an almost obligatory transition, although it may be experienced differently by workers, depending on their propensity to accept uncertainty and their strength to cope with it. Thus, while in some circumstances dealing with a change in the organisation may be essential, other times it is an unforeseen event that has to be dealt with in order to minimise both economic and psychological damage.

In any case, despite the inevitability and unavoidability of the transition, what may not be unavoidable is the possibility of leveraging the capabilities of the leadership in mitigating the amount of anxiety that accompanies it.
In fact, if it is not possible to make the organisational environment adequate, as it is marked by change towards a probably uncertain future, the importance of resorting to instruments of support and good management of the sources and resources available has been noted (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

Regarding transition phases, both organisational and otherwise, the role of the supervisor was considered essential (Day et al., 2017).
It has been argued that these phases can result in real scarring experiences, which can also have negative effects on the psycho-physical health of employees (Dahl, 2011, as cited in: Day et al., 2017).
The result of the research on the effects of supervised workers has made it possible to state that there is a rather convincing correlation between the presence of a support figure and the reduction of the negative effects of anxiety and stress and their side effects experienced by individuals. A close connection was also found with respect to control functions. Techniques for monitoring work positions, which are designed to train and direct work practices towards desired goals, correlate with minimal values in perceptions of tension and emotional stress (Day et al., 2017).

Given the important influence that the personality of the leader has on the employees, it can be affirmed that this supervisory role can in some cases be entrusted to him. Indeed, leadership, in its definition, presupposes to a certain extent the ability to condition and influence the behaviour of its followers. It is precisely the leader who acts as a vector within the change process, being able to influence the roles and performances of the workers.

A practical example of how the leader is the most appropriate individual in managing times of liminality can be found in a survey conducted in the health sector. Here the crucial role on his part, as an activator of feelings of resilience in the minds of followers is highlighted. (Teo et al., 2017).

Applied to the corporate context, this encouragement for endurance and coping results in a kind of stability and robustness when the organisation is faced with an unexpected event.
The aforementioned study specifically investigates the effectiveness of government and health system leadership in intervening in the spread of the SARS epidemic in a Singapore hospital in 2003. Liminality in this case is associated with the state of loss of previous norms that had momentarily become inadequate to manage such an unexpected, risky and large-scale event.

Similarly, leadership is an extremely important element in coping with a state of crisis even at an organisational level. What emerges as relevant from the above study is an understanding of the idea of leadership that differs profoundly from its more practically oriented conception. In fact, leadership can also be understood in a symbolic sense, which provides the cue to consider it in the same way as the spiritual guide who conducts rituals and ceremonies.
The leader is the person capable of processing the elements of the circumstance to make them comprehensible to individuals in distress, preparing in their minds a scenario as positive as possible, by instilling confidence.
It has indeed been observed that liminality can bring about the creation of a more creative space, in which the redefinition of the status quo is presented as an exploration of new alternatives. In this space, it is possible to engage in the understanding of new impressions and perspectives. Therefore, it is possible, for example, to redefine the previously existing organisational culture and create new courses of action. This is why in certain circumstances it can be effective to actually create a fictitious liminality, as it were, to act as a vehicle for change with strategic aims (Howard-Grenville et al., 2015).

However, all of this is possible through a joint action supervised by a leader, although it may not be sufficient. Effectiveness is a critical point in the evaluation of a leadership in relation to followers.
A good leader must be able to communicate consistent, coherent and positive emotions within the workplace, as the followers' response is processed accordingly (Madera and Smith, 2009). In a business emergency situation, a leader who displays feelings of frustration and emotional tension by avoiding his commitments receives a negative evaluation and his effectiveness is diminished.
Thus, it can be assumed that personal characteristics are decisive in effectiveness and in overcoming the moment of uncertainty and ambiguity. Similarly, the traits of a certain type of leadership can positively or negatively influence the process.
The analysis is therefore to be made of which leadership style is the most appropriate and suitable for dealing with crises on the various organizational levels and for supporting employees in overcoming the troubled liminal phase they go through in such circumstances.

Chapter 4

How leadership styles manage uncertainty: transformational leadership as a better option

4.1 How can leadership be the element that enables improved management of organisational liminality

In the previous chapters it has been analysed how different variables can have an impact on the organisational environment. In this regard, it was considered in particular how employees perceive the inevitable occurrences of change or periods of transition that can take place within the company. These can be configured as necessary phenomena, to which the organisation is bound to conform, or as intentional, and therefore not needed but welcomed. These can affect both the organisational environment as a whole and a specific employee cluster, as well as the role of a single employee. Moreover, the drivers of change may come from within the company, such as a change in organisational culture, or even from the external context, such as demands dictated by the market.

Organisational change factors affecting the company as a whole may imply all that involves a disruption of the previous structural set-up, protocols and norms, organisational goals and values. Thus, it is considered as anything that causes an internal reorganisation that subsequently leads to a redefinition of the organisation's status and equilibrium (Quattrone and Hopper, 2001).
There may be changes that bring about new, mainly productive and favourable arrangements, or transformations that imply a decrease in the performance or in the general direction of the organisation. Nevertheless, in all cases it has been ascertained that, regardless of the outcome of the aforementioned change, it engenders in workers some feelings of ambiguity and uncertainty related to the future.
All these variables have to be taken into account, as they have the potential to generate a highly negative effect on the employees' psychological condition.

As regards the changes affecting the employee, these are considered to be both intra-organisational as well as any internally required changes in his career and role. The common denominator is the state in which the individual finds himself when faced with these experiences, since he is generally pushed out of his familiar routines and circumstances, and his adaptive and resilience skills are severely challenged (Latack, 1984).
Transitions and possible changes of roles or employments affecting the personal sphere of employees seem to be more relevant, as these often show more clearly the tendencies behind relational patterns within the company.

This can be said as it has been noted that the dynamics produced by a change of role for an employee can have effects of a significant magnitude, leading to modifications and new balances both at the level of the body of workers and the organisation as a whole (Nicholson, 1984).
The worker is particularly attached to the role assigned to him since, mentally, he delimits his tasks, separating them strictly from what he is involved in outside the work environment, but also from that which is not his responsibility in order to create coherence around his position (Ashforth, 2012).

It is possible to argue that all these circumstances lead employees to experience states of liminality, as in the definition of the term, an idea of transition is incorporated and this essentially presents the core of the problem, activating dynamics of transience as well as uncertainty and ambiguity. At this point it is necessary to consider some elements that can act as mitigating agents for the stress and uncertainty that is generated in the worker as a result of entering a liminal state.
The impact that the cultural values of individuals may have with respect to the handling, and more precisely the evaluation and subsequent acceptance of the transition phenomenon has been analysed. Undoubtedly, the values system provides a basis of some relevance in that it leads the individual, almost innately and without the need for the application of particular efforts, to live these experiences in a more positive way.
However, it has also been found that not all individuals possess the necessary basis to cope with the above problem. Especially at a time of increased globalisation, organisations welcome workers from different nationalities and, thus, are faced with essentially diverse coping strategies.
The presence or inclusion of a figure who would act as a guide for employees and, in particular, who would encourage them to remain high-performing and resilient at times of organisational change was therefore considered to be necessary. It is permissible to imagine that this function can be fulfilled by the leadership as an activator of motivation and participant in change.

With regard to the cultural and value bases of a given individual that may have an impact on how they perceive periods of transition, it was found that this is experienced as a more positive phenomenon by:

- individuals with a low Uncertainty Avoidance Index, as they deal more proactively with uncertainties arising from change, accepting it and, sometimes, taking it as a challenge;
- individuals with characteristics attributable to long-term orientation (Confucian dynamism), as they are more likely to endure periods of instability in view of stabilising and regaining certainty in the future;
- personality traits of the individual. This is because the substratum of culture referring to what is not manifested externally by individuals is comparable to the experiences of liminality, in that the latter is also largely configured as an experience lived individually and internally in the psyche of the person. Therefore, it is necessary not to dwell on the surface, but to investigate in depth to understand the real impact of the liminal experience on the worker.

Regarding the practical support that any sort of guiding personality can provide when workers are not trained in organisational change and liminality, it was found that:

- the leader is the individual who, due to his intrinsic characteristics that allow him to provide motivation and instil a vision of a future scenario in the minds of his followers, is best suited to provide hands-on support to workers who experience difficulties in situations of ambiguity;
- the leader is closely in touch with the organisational culture as, through his values, he is able to influence it highly. Therefore, he possesses the elements to modify it according to the needs of the organisation;
- the leadership is able to provide, through the balancing of its opinions with a form of coherence, a basis of priorities on which individuals should focus, thus provoking coherent attitudes in its followers as well;
- the function of reframing elements that characterise a given circumstance in such a way as to provide a positive and confident interpretative basis has been recognised in the person of the leader;
- with reference to the above, the leader is also able to make circumstances of uncertainty appealing through the creation of a state of creativity; in fact, he may even be the originator of artificial liminality situations for this very purpose.

Referring to both is, naturally, possible, so that the values of individuals are taken into account while leadership implements strategies to encourage and support in change. However, there exists a fundamental difference between the two variables. It is possible to state that cultural values and leadership intervention act on two completely dissimilar planes.
Culture, as an element that individuals already possess at the moment of entry into the organisation and, therefore, also in the change phase, acts as an input that can minimise ex ante the possibility that the worker will find himself in difficulties due to uncertainty.
On the contrary, the leader is among the instruments that operate an ex post solution, so as to help, where necessary, to diminish the negative effects on workers who do not possess adequate coping strategies.

Thus, it can be concluded that employees' possession of certain cultural values enables them to cope with moments of uncertainty in a more favourable way. However, as this element may not be taken for granted due to the relatively circumscribed diffusion of Long-Term Orientation and Low Uncertainty Avoidance indices, it is better to focus on how to provide effective assistance subsequently once cases of stress from liminality are encountered.

At this point, having acknowledged and proven the relevance of leadership, it must be considered that various leadership models are applicable within the organisation and not all would be likely to function in this specific circumstance.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider which traits or leadership style may be best suited to handle delicate situations involving change and uncertainty.

4.2 Outline of some relevant leadership styles: charismatic, autocratic, ethical, participative and authentic leadership

The emphasis on the role of the leader reflects the fact that he is gaining an increasingly crucial role in the organisation. Indeed, the leader is seen as a real asset for competitive advantage, since good leadership generally leads to an improvement in company performance.
However, a major driving force behind the change in the balance of power previously established within the organisation's environment has been the profound change in the foundation that enables it to pursue its objectives: the workforce (Kippenberg, 2002).
Indeed, employees are increasingly oriented towards desires for a specific identity that includes personal satisfaction and self-awareness. What makes it possible to achieve these results at the work base level is the very presence of a leader. Such a figure allows employees to feel disengaged from the previous dynamics of obligations and coercion imposed from above in a hands-off manner and, as a consequence, to feel only guided by the demands of the management. An appropriate leadership style allows them to feel fully involved in the achievement of the organisation's objectives, through their aspiration to offer the maximum possible contribution.

However, not all leadership styles successfully accomplish this result. Indeed, it has been argued that a form of leadership that assumes certain negative or inappropriate inclinations, such as attitudes of emotional detachment and lack of involvement in relation to followers, and personalities that lead to the discouragement of them, can result in a highly dysfunctional approach (Kets de Vries, 2003).
It is necessary, then, to develop and apply an effective leadership style in order to achieve the desired benefits.

The definition of what is meant by leadership style is considerably more complex than it might appear.
The question is not simply on how an individual behaves towards his followers. In fact, the overall impression a certain type of behaviour makes on the outside is the result of a variety of factors. Moreover, a certain attitude adopted by a person may reveal only a small part of what lies behind it, by hiding certain aspects of the character that are of crucial importance in the impact they implicitly have on other people.
A certain approach to the other may be the result of a construction that an individual consciously chooses to share or apply, but it will still be, at least in part, a combination of modes of communication and the by-product of more or less unconscious processes that act inwardly in the individual's psyche (Kippenberg, 2002).

While it is correct to assume that the leadership style reflects the personality traits of the leader and his values, it is also true that the contextual aspect of the setting must not be overlooked. Indeed, a leadership style comprises the personality of the leader and his behaviour, all that is transmitted to the followers; but it also includes the personality of his followers and the specific circumstance, which entails the context of the

organisation and its culture, the external environment in which it operates and the role that the leader is called to assume in this instance (Kets de Vries, 2001, as cited in: Kippenberg, 2002).
On the basis of this definition it is now possible to analyse some of the most relevant leadership styles that emerge within the organisational environment.

a. Charismatic leadership style

Charismatic leadership has been proven to be very effective in today's organisational environments. This has been affirmed because organisations nowadays receive numerous stimuli from the external surroundings that can be identified in both competitive and profit-related forces, as well as essentially regulatory forces, but also in complying with the technology needed to survive in a given industry. For this reason, it is necessary that the company is placed under the guidance of a leader who takes into account the results, image and credibility of the organisation as well as the inspiration of the employees.
A charismatic leader is able to comply with the above in a convincing way. However, what characterises this type of leadership in a particular way is the possession of competences that are superior and acknowledged as such, a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence, and the tendency to exert a certain influence on followers. This refers to individuals who possess a personality that tends to dominate and a strong will to generate inspiration (Bertocci, 2009).
Charisma has been a much-discussed topic in the social sciences, leading to the formulation of several definitions that have some common ground. In short, charisma can be defined as a particular mechanism of interpersonal exchange that confers, following a recognition of behavioural qualities, a particular value to an individual, through the evaluations that followers express of him and the need they have to rely on a leader figure (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).
This personality trait would, therefore, be a distinctive mark that causes such leaders to be identified and recognised as having a superior status. This type of recognition takes the form of a particular devotion (Weber, 1968 as cited in: Conger, 1993) and fascination that can go so far as to trigger situations of dependent subordination on the part of followers.

Within the organisation, working with a charismatic leader also benefits the followers themselves, and not just in terms of performance. Having a very strong influence on the workers, this type of leader is one of the most appropriate in the conveyance of his values, strategies and perspectives. In this way, these elements are internalised in the minds of the individuals, who will consequently be more oriented towards the pursuit of the organisation's objectives. In addition, given the high motivation, they will be more likely to adhere effectively to their tasks, obtaining good results and, consequently, increasing their own self-esteem (Hesselbein and Cohan, 1999, as cited in: Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).

An essential element that is relevant to the analysis proposed here, and central to this type of leadership, is that it is particularly suited to handling crisis situations. A leader who can be defined as charismatic, indeed, succeeds in bringing order and preparing a climate of action in circumstances of organisational crisis (Roberson, 2010).

Indeed, there is a subtype of this leadership typology that is called upon to operate precisely in circumstances where existing approaches fail to accommodate the contingencies dictated by the particular circumstance. Thus, the charismatic leader enters the organisation with the aim of finding solutions to problems and dictating guidelines to workers that go beyond their routine roles and tasks (Bertocci, 2009).

b. Autocratic leadership style

The autocratic leadership typology is one of the most widely exploited but at the same time also much debated. That is because it is generally associated with a form of authority that recalls dictatorship and, consequently, deemed incompatible with modern democratic systems, especially within an organisational environment.

However, in fact this would only be an overly critical formulation and interpretation of the concept. Autocratic leadership is configured as the leader's near totalitarian engagement over the group that necessarily places the workers in a position of inwardness, as their insights are given little consideration compared to other leadership styles. This point is an essential detail as a distinguishing element of an autocratic leader, but it does not comprehensively capture all the facets of this typology.

A rather general definition describes autocratic leadership as one in which authority is strongly centralised, with limited scope for listening to the ideas of subordinates and having incentives in the form of sanctions or rewards (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).

The individual called upon to lead is allowed to assume such control on the basis of the feeling of trust that he instils within the organisational environment. Indeed, despite criticisms of authoritarianism, this leader is called upon to behave in a morally excellent manner towards his followers, precisely in order to create the basis of legitimacy that allows him to exercise this function. If the mechanisms of trust creation are particularly effective, indeed, it could be possible to attest cases in which the worker is pushed to conform to the dictates of the leader out of self-indulgence rather than in order to avoid possible sanctioning mechanisms.

At this stage, it is apparent how authoritarian leadership can take shape even in circumstances that appear unfavourable to it, such as in a purely democratic environment (Hinnebusch, 2006).

Moreover, in these contexts, it may even be essential in some circumstances. One may consider, for example, occasions when the need to develop a decision or an action plan in a short period of time is imperative. In this case, in a freer environment risks of overlaps and discrepancies may arise that would slow down the decision making processes.

Indeed, this type of leadership is also primarily suited to the management of momentary crises. It is exactly the speed with which the autocratic leader is able to form a rapid adhesion base among members around his

decisions that makes it advantageous and allows him to protect the organisation's objectives, by avoiding divestment while optimising time and costs.

c. Ethical leadership style

In the last decades, organisations have increasingly focused on the individual as an intangible resource. Therefore, a perspective is emerging according to which human capital, although still maintaining its role, in some degree instrumental, to the achievement of the company's objectives, enjoys greater relevance as crucial within the organisation's practices.
Although technological resources have their role to be considered, the human element cannot be neglected as it constitutes the basis and the birth of the organisation (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).

This renewed importance of the individual is necessarily followed by a greater focus on the worker, which translates into the latter acquiring power and a strong identity. In ethical leadership this point is of fundamental importance. Indeed, workers are called upon to share and take an active and autonomous part in decision-making (Brown et al., 2005).
Here, again, the leader is the one who is able to transfer motivational elements into the minds of his followers through the support he provides.

Every aspect of human life is imbued with ethical values. These principles form a basis for individuals to think and lead their actions towards conformity with what is deemed morally appropriate. Initially conceptualised by Brown et al. (2005) as a leadership model based on sincerity and integrity, an ethical leadership style implies that there is an infusion of moral values into the employees' community, which are transmitted to them by the figure of the leader, who, as the bearer of such values, undertakes to constitute a support base within the interchanges and the deliberative processes (Brown et al., 2005, as cited in: Demirtas and Karaca, 2020). Therefore, this is a type of leadership that provides a form of direction which is essentially different from the others, in that it takes place on a moral level.
The leader, an individual who enjoys respect and admiration due to his ethical personality and mentality, undertakes his role to outline ethical frameworks that represent the ideal basis for workers to follow, clearly indicating what the consequences of non-compliance with morals would be. If the latter occurs, workers are subject to corrective mechanisms (Brown et al., 2005, as cited in: Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).
Thus, it can be said that internal value systems are created according to which individual instances are evaluated and the adherence or non-adherence of individual behaviour to the established norms is acknowledged.
Therefore, as opposed to despotic and coercive leadership, it is possible for organisations to refer to softer management tools that create consensus through the construction of a strong moral value base, which subsequently, translates the need for conformity into impressions of credibility and trust.

d. Participative leadership style

Within the literature of organisations, it has often been argued that higher levels of employee involvement and participation can bring significant improvements, not merely at the internal relations level, but also in terms of positive returns in the achievement of objectives. Indeed, such mechanisms would activate a twofold phenomenon: on the one hand, the inclusion at the level of decision-making dynamics brings more congruent results, on the other side, a greater gratification at the individual level of workers. In fact, it has been noted that at an organisational level, in recent years, there has been a growing tendency towards inclusion mechanisms, and the future looks increasingly geared towards this line of action (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).

Participative leadership takes the form of a democratic approach to management, which, therefore, distances itself from authoritarianism but also from complete individualism and excessively loose norms. The focal point is the concept of mutual consideration between the leader and the workers, who are engaged in a relationship of reciprocal respect (Lewin's study on participative leadership, as cited in: Demirtas and Karaca, 2020). Another distinctive feature concerns the empowerment of employees, which translates into high motivational drives and is reflected in the results achieved at organisational level (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997, as cited in: Huang et al., 2010).

An argument in support of participative leadership is that a leader's effectiveness lies in the proper management of personnel, including at the individual level, since they are one of the greatest resources within the organisational environment and are, therefore, the main driver of results (Rumelt, 1991).

e. Authentic leadership style

In recent years the leader has been perceived as untrustworthy on some occasions, causing feelings of distrust and lack of faith within organisational environments.

A number of implications have been discussed that stem from the lack of authenticity of the leader's person, which have caused literature and organisational spheres to pay more attention to this characteristic when identifying the person destined to lead.

Leadership that can be called authentic differs from others in terms of its approach. An authentic leader may adopt a different style of leadership, but what distinguishes him is the authenticity with which he pursues the goals of the organisation and the strong dedication he brings to the process of leading workers (George, 2003). This is made possible by his personality, exhibiting mainly positive traits of optimism, ambition and self-esteem, characteristics that allow him to be perceived as ethically and morally brilliant (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).

This style is effective in that authenticity brings with it honesty, both with others and with oneself. In this sense, the leader acts very consistently and pursues his convictions, generating the same feelings in the minds of the followers. It has been stated that an authentic leader provides the ideal supportive climate and clarity at the interpersonal level that is essential to stimulate individuals to develop their most virtuous character traits. The positive effects on workers are found at the psychological and action level as it has been shown (Leroy et al., 2012) that the high integrity and consistency of the authentic leader, which is seen in the setting of goals and openness to dialogue, results in feelings of trust. Hence, the worker is convinced in the pursuit of the actions assigned to him because he is provided with explicit models of moral reference in which he can feel integrated.

It can be assumed that these types of leadership are all potentially effective and can lead to results at an organisational level, but it is essential to examine whether they perform in the face of uncertainty and whether they are viable when liminality affects employees.

4.3 How different leadership styles deal with ambiguity and liminality: focus on contingency and on employee support

The investigation into the effectiveness of a particular leadership style can be conducted from different perspectives.

One of the first attempts to analyse how a leader is recognisable was made on a genetic basis. Genetic theories of leadership advocated a certain form of inheritance in the characters that lead to the recognition of the leaders in their role. In this respect, a legitimacy was accorded to the son of parents who held high-ranking positions within society, such as the ruling dynasties, necessarily implying that he would be configured as a descendant, since he would acquire the typical traits of a dominating personality.
This scheme of reasoning was abandoned when it was acknowledged to be flawed. Indeed, in the first decades of the 20th century, a reverse trend was observed whereby individuals from more modest backgrounds reached industrially relevant positions (Bertocci, 2009).

The theory of leadership traits differs from the above in that it abandons the element of inheritance. At the same time, however, it can be assimilated with it in that both claim that the individual is born to be a leader.
In this specific case, the leader is identifiable by precise intellectual and personality traits, but also by certain peculiarities on the physical level, which distinguish him from other individuals, determining the degree of effectiveness of the leadership itself. Among the countless personality traits that have emerged as determinants, it has been considered that a leader possesses higher intelligence than the average individual, particularly than his followers (Stogdill, 1974). A number of studies have identified certain distinctive traits that assume greater relevance in the organisational environment. It has been argued that traits such as owning a high self-esteem and an ability to take initiatives in an enterprising and autonomous way are related to the individual's position within the organisation: the greater the degree to which these traits are present, the higher the level of leadership assumed by the individual (Ghiselli, 1963).

What strongly limits the possibility of analysing whether one of the leadership models defined in the previous paragraph ensures adequate and effective management of ambiguous situations is the fact that both place excessive emphasis on the leader. While the former, the genetic theory, could not be taken as a framework for investigation as it is outdated, the latter, the trait theory cluster, is also limiting in many circumstances. Both do not take into account the external variables that constitute the environment, circumstances and interactions that the leader is confronted with in his work.
In fact, it may be true that it is the very circumstance in which the leadership acts that determines the effectiveness of its work. In particular, trait theory is controversial in that the range of hypothetically relevant traits is too wide to be evaluated as a reference, since it is the theory itself that states there are as many

functioning traits as there are confirmed leaders. This immense breadth of references creates a rather confusing model, which fails to clearly delineate which are the most relevant ones (Bertocci, 2009).
Moreover, an element that has been repeatedly found to be a predominant feature of the leadership style under consideration is neglected, namely the focus on the followers, the employees in this case. The trait theory excludes the individual needs and requirements on the part of the followers from being a source of legitimisation and effectiveness of the leadership style analysed.

Despite attempts to identify a unique typology comprising particular and identifiable characteristics, studies have shown that a given leadership style is not always effective in a versatile and globally-universally applicable manner (Schermerhorn, 1997). Once it is realised that investigating the most suitable personality traits does not provide the hoped-for understanding of how good or bad a leadership style actually is, attention must be shifted to what surrounds this figure.
The circumstance in which the leader acts, the context and the environment are at the heart of the situational leadership theory (Bertocci, 2009). Here it is considered that the way in which the leader accomplishes his goals is conditioned not only by his personality, but also by contingencies linked to the situation, thus, leading to the observation that a particular leadership style that suits a particular circumstance is not likely to produce the same effects if applied in a different context.
The situational leadership model was developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1982, 1988) in order to capture the characteristics of the given situation. This is based on the consideration of the joint analysis of:

- the degree of command and guidance offered by the leader in the performance of his duties. This dimension considers the amount and manner in which directive information is expressed by the leader in order to lead followers towards the accomplishment of assigned tasks;
- a relational element that concerns the amount and degree of psychological and emotional support and encouragement that is provided to followers. The two-way relationship that is put in place must provide a basis for facilitating the execution process;
- the rate of willingness and speed with which followers relate to their tasks, assignments and towards the goals set by the leader. The possibility and ability of the follower to take charge of fulfilling his commitments by modifying his behaviour is then tested (Schermerhorn, 1997).

According to this leadership theory, as soon as the follower is shown to be willing to comply with his tasks quickly, the leader can gradually decrease the level of control and direction, while amplifying his support.
Thus, the leader is called upon to show more attention to the relational component of his engagement until an adequate level of swiftness and ease is shown by the follower. In this way, it is ensured that the employee is prepared for the task but at the same time is also comforted and reassured. It is through acting on these levers that the situational leadership theory demonstrates its particular focus on followers (Schermerhorn, 1997).
Thus, it is evident how the suitability of a particular type of leadership is strongly related to contingencies, which stimulates the ability to adapt to the conditions required by the situation. This same element has entered

the interest of organisations following an awareness of the relevance of the various elements that come into contact with the leader (Bertocci, 2009).

At this point, starting from the assumption that liminality is a contingent factor, occurring in certain circumstances, given its transitory character, it is possible to analyse whether the leadership styles set out in the previous paragraph, in the light of a particular attention to the situation and above all to the help provided to the employees, can be considered valid for decreasing the level of uncertainty and ambiguity that the liminal state brings with it.

a. Charismatic leadership style

Although research has generally presented charismatic leadership as a model that provides inspiration as well as instils ideals in the followers, leading to consistent positive effects on the performance of the organisation and the quality of work of individuals (e.g. Supratman et al., 2021), its possible negative effects in terms of ethicality and well-being of workers are well known (e.g. Zhang et al., 2021).

Despite the fact that this type of leadership is often taken into consideration in times of organisational crisis, as it is trusted to have a strong influence on the behaviour of employees, it may not be effective in all circumstances of organisational change.

The reasons for this have been recognised in the mainly egotistical essence of this type of leader, which is apparent in the way it exerts his influence through persuasion and manipulation techniques (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1992). In fact, the communication processes that take place at the level of the organisation, both between leadership and workers and between groups of workers, are decisive in order to have greater coherence that then allows the expected results to be achieved. The problem of the charismatic leader is that he tends to exploit these opportunities for dialogue as an arena for the use of alteration and manipulation techniques through the transmission of propaganda-like ideas about him and also with respect to the achievement of objectives (Aaltio-Marjosola, 2000).

Therefore, in these cases it can be affirmed that communication assumes a dysfunctional character, since the leader could be led to transfer values, meanings, ideas to the followers in a deceitful way. Therefore, a distortion of reality may occur and attempts to offer support to the worker who is struggling with uncertainty would take the form of a mere manipulation of perceptions and emotions, trying to decrease liminality in a fictitious way, thus providing superficial help.

Moreover, attempts at persuasion and manipulation do not affect all individuals equally and in all circumstances (Aaltio-Marjosola, 2000). Thus, the very words used by the charismatic leader that instil confidence and support for a particular group of workers may not have the same effect on others.

Thus, a charismatic leadership style may not work in managing workers facing periods of liminality. Indeed, it would appear not to provide the adequate psychological support that workers need when navigating uncertain futures and any situation of ambiguity.

b. Autocratic leadership style

Autocratic leadership, despite having undergone a reappraisal primarily based on the infusion of trust within the worker base, problems were found for the same with regard to strong failures in the transfer of the motivational aspect.

It was verified that individuals develop a basis of loyalty and dedication to the leader, which is transformed into a commitment to follow his ideas. However, this mechanism is only activated under favourable circumstances and, therefore, not every type of leadership is capable of creating it. In the case of autocratic leadership, this mechanism does not tend to take place. This is because these types of individuals are perceived as activators of coercive mechanisms when the total responsibility for decision-making lies with them. This creates highly limiting dynamics with regard to the freedom of workers to express their opinions, who will tend to progressively detach themselves from the figure of the leader, leading to a decrease in the motivational element, as a result of the perception of a negative form of stimulation (De Cremer, 2006).

A further element to consider is the relationship between autocratic leadership and the realm of self-sacrifice. In fact, it has been considered that, compared to other types of leadership, autocratic leadership leads to a near cancellation of the effectiveness of self-denial, as it pays the consequences of its shortcomings in terms of respect towards followers, resulting in less emotional attachment and empathy and lower levels of motivation (De Cremer, 2006).

The motivational aspect constitutes an essential and non-negligible part to which leadership must necessarily pay attention when faced with feelings of distress of workers entering a liminal status. Therefore, this is not the best option for managing organisational liminality.

c. Ethical leadership style

Ethical leadership has been the subject of significant consideration as it would be able to have a strong influence on workers, provoking in them feelings of trust towards the leader and commitment to the pursuit of attitudes determined by high morals. Despite this, a study conducted in organisational contexts in Taiwan, after proposing a research on the relationship between this leadership style and the level of well-being and happiness of employees, found that an ethical leader has a negative impact on the satisfaction of individuals (Yang, 2013).

In order to explain how this happens, it is necessary to take into account a number of variables, including the interpersonal relationship created between the leader and the employee, but also the employee's value and cultural system. It is well known that the leadership style must be adapted to the cultural context.

The reasons why an ethical leader can potentially put in place mechanisms that can be negative for the well-being of the worker at an individual level include the following:

- a mismatch of moral reference values between leaders and employees. The need to conform to an ethic that does not belong to them leads the employees to feel great tension and stress;
- ethical leadership is not suitable for the management of organisational contexts of certain cultures, particularly those characterised by a Confucian value-orientation. Here, employees are accustomed to social relations that are strongly influenced by principles of harmony and lack of formalism, which are so pervasive that they are carried over into organisational contexts. Ethical leadership would run counter to these by failing to align with the desires of employees in these cultural traditions;
- in certain circumstances, it is possible that such a leader, despite the strong drive to conform to the ethics he demands from his followers, will then fail to adhere to the values he proposes (Yang, 2013).

An ethical leader, thus, carries the risk of employee impatience, discord and ethical inconsistency that undermine his respectability. These elements may preclude the ethical leader from efficiently managing situations of uncertainty as, on some occasions, he himself generates stress and compliance anxiety in the individual and may lose sight of his supportive and motivational role.
Therefore, also this leadership style does not seem to have positive results on a possible motivation or help to employees in times of liminality.

d. Participative leadership style

The participative leadership style is also referred to as democratic, which suggests a broader involvement of the organisation's members in decision-making processes. Generally, under normal conditions of organisational stability, this characteristic is very favourably received by employees, as they feel empowered and a feeling of greater self-fulfilment and happiness ensues.
Problems arise as soon as an internal or external event undermines the norms and routines and thus disrupts the workers' daily routine, potentially leading them to experience a condition of liminality.
In fact, in order to analyse the effectiveness of a participatory leadership model when the organisation goes through a phase of uncertainty, change or crisis, it is necessary to take into account the change in situational variables, i.e. the contingency (Schoel and Bluemke, 2011). It is assumed that, in defining and recognising the effectiveness of a given leadership style with respect to contingency, the perception workers have and the judgement they develop depends largely on a perceptual factor.
In times of uncertainty, individuals are inclined to seek to minimise it at all costs, perceiving it as a major factor hindering performance and the normal execution of tasks. In this respect, there are differences that can be associated with the character and personality of the individual taken alone: different results are often noted for individuals with different personalities.
The personal characteristics that make it easier for an individual to handle an ambiguous situation are self-esteem and emotional stability. The above-mentioned study (Schoel and Bluemke, 2011), which uses uncertainty as a situational variable, found that, in normal circumstances, participative leadership is always

preferred. On the contrary, in times of crisis, the entire portion of workers lacking high self-esteem and stability consider leadership of a more authoritarian type to be necessary.
This result, which may seem paradoxical, is in fact intuitive, since one of the main characteristics of a participative leadership style is that, in the face of broad worker involvement, it omits essential elements related to uncertainty. Indeed, it does not provide detailed direction for workers in practical terms on what action to take, and it does not provide the preparation and support for individuals to deal with episodes of failure (Schein, 2010, as cited in: Akpoviroro, 2018).
Thus, it follows that democratic leadership lacks the assertiveness and authoritativeness required to handle crisis situations, and fails to provide motivation to individuals, who consequently, if naturally predisposed, will suffer from liminality.

e. Authentic leadership style

The authentic leader, who demonstrates loyalty, integrity, and dedication in achieving his goals, those of the followers and those of the organisation seems to be the most appropriate type of attitude to manage moments of uncertainty as his consistency, transparency and the passion he introduces in carrying out his tasks have a strong positive impact on the perception of him developed by workers.
In authentic leadership there are characteristics such as a strong bond with followers, high levels of motivation provided to workers, a focus on ethical attitudes and the ability to change the fortunes and directions of individuals. All the above characteristics are, therefore, gathered in the authenticity of the individual.

The leadership models discussed above appear to lack either a focus on workers' demands or a recognition of the significance of situational aspects. Therefore, in a situation of uncertainty they may appear to be underperforming and, consequently, appear to be suboptimal in terms of reducing the negative consequences of liminality. An authentic leader might be the best option as it is able to capture that which is not frequently considered in other management approaches.
However, authenticity features relate more to the individual who takes the leadership position rather than to a specific leadership style. In fact, it has been argued that distinctive features of authenticity are to be found in various leadership styles, ranging from the more or less authoritarian to the more or less moral-based. This is admissible since authenticity represents an underlying structure that has both ethical and transformative matrices within it (Avolio et al., 2004).
Hence, it is necessary to investigate on what leadership style comes closest to the abovementioned positive traits on an intrinsic level and in terms of practical developments, so as to be able to assess what characteristics are needed in a leader to cope with organisational liminality and to support individuals in the transition phase.

4.4 Dual classification of leadership styles: transactional and transformational

Organisational changes have a wide impact, affecting all levels of the structure. Hence, they have to be managed by all leadership ranks in the organisational environment, starting with administrative managers and ending with executive leaders (Katz & Kahn, 1966, as cited in: Gilley et al., 2009). Any kind of change causes partial or total destruction of the status quo with a need to redefine norms, priorities and organisational set-up, which necessarily leads to states of uncertainty.

With the aim of identifying the leadership style that has the potential to better manage situations of organisational change at various levels, and the consequent feelings of uncertainty, ambiguity that result in a liminal state, the transactional-transformational paradigm is now considered. This model was developed by Burns (1978) and later expanded and revised by Bass (1985) and aims to identify leadership effectiveness.

The focus will be on the theory as developed by Bass, who, applying it to the organisational environment, defines these two different leadership styles as disjointed, which may or may not occur together. The effective leader, however, is the one who manages to integrate a transactional view, with the transformational part being added, which is crucial to employee performance (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020). These two leadership styles are broad and encompass several of the more specific types, thus making a macro subdivision of how a leader relates to his tasks.

a. Transactional leadership style

Among the two typologies, the transactional one is generally understood as the leadership style with more conventional and traditionally defined characteristics. In fact, it is mainly developed by focusing on a relationship with followers that typically takes on a character of contractual exchange (Howell and Avolio, 1993, as cited in: Brymer and Gray, 2006).

In the occurrence of such an exchange-based system, the leader enters into it by clearly defining organisational expectations and goals and addresses the followers by indicating the tasks and attitudes to which they must adhere in order to achieve these results. Followers are stimulated through traditional reward-punishment mechanisms, through which they are urged to conform to defined norms (Burns, 1978). In fact, this is precisely the type of motivation that is aroused in workers: high performance is associated with rewards, on the contrary, in case of failure to achieve the standards set by the leader or a failure to comply with the dictates, reminders and punishments are given to the follower (Bertocci, 2009).

The main focus is on the expectation of a good result and the expected benefits, which act as a fundamental guiding force towards the obedience of the workforce, which is driven to stick to its tasks by the expectation of personal gain. The same is true for the leader: he also adheres to his tasks in view of benefits on an individual basis (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020). For this very reason it has been argued that this type of leadership has the pursuit of individual interest as its main objective above all other things, and that its interest in employees and their needs is diminished (Gerstner and Day, 1997).

Despite the supposed complementarity of transactional and transformational characters in a leadership figure, the two typologies remain essentially distinct.

What characterises specifically a transactional leader, exclusively, are three distinctive elements:

- contingent reward. This is the mechanism that underlies the transactional form of leadership and consists of the explicit declaration of the connection between commitment and expected rewards for workers (Bass et al., 2003, as cited in: Rezvani and Khosravi, 2012). It takes the form of a dynamic balance between worker and leader, as the latter is engaged in a continuous goal-setting process that should include discussion with the follower about tasks, expectations, and possible recognition or promotion;
- active management by exception. This refers to a management scheme that includes actions aimed at confirming the motivation of workers, mainly through rewards and sanctions, in order to guide them towards the achievement of ideal results, including at the level of a better quality of task performance (Hasija et al., 2019);
- passive management by exception. It is based on the concept of direction of the followers, which allows them large margins of autonomy. Indeed, they are not continuously supervised during the work, but rather the transactional leader intervenes only when strictly necessary (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).

On this last point it is interesting to introduce the distinction between passive and active management by exception. What substantially differentiates these two approaches to management is the amount of support provided by the leader to the followers not only in terms of supervision, but even in terms of time.

Indeed, in active management by exception there is continuous monitoring of the situation by the leader, who provides practical support at all stages of the work, from the beginning until the task is completed. The way in which activities are carried out is clearly explained by the leader, who undertakes to detect any kind of potentially negative inconsistencies and discrepancies, thus limiting the risk of non-alignment with the defined standard.

In contrast, in a type of passive management by exception, which is the case with the transactional form of leadership, monitoring and intervention take place at a later stage. The leader, therefore, only takes charge of monitoring the worker's performance in the event of a difficulty or defect in implementation. The action of the leader is subsequent to the occurrence of negative consequences. At this point he intervenes through the imposition of corrective mechanisms that are used to rebuke the workers who have caused the error. Thus, the explication of the objectives as to how they are to be pursued also occurs at a later stage, i.e. once the workers have completed their tasks.

The great advantage of active management by exception lies in the prevention mechanism implemented by the leader when supervising and supporting the follower throughout the whole process.

It is possible to assume that this brings an advantage not only in terms of the total final effectiveness of the worker's work, but also in terms of the psychological support needed by the worker during the performance

of the task, which enables him to immediately understand where he went wrong and to continue in the right direction.
Thus, it is only in this way that the subsequent punishment, or negative judgement, which in both cases must be expressed at the end of the process, acquires value and is presumably acceptable.

b. Transformational leadership style

Transformational leaders are oriented towards performance and the achievement of the organisation's goals, but they achieve this through a relationship that is essentially different in nature from that of a transactional type of leadership. In fact, transformational leaders are able to combine the optimal attainment of the organisation's goals with a renewed focus on the workforce in the form of a greater presence and support within their assigned tasks.
The mechanisms they put in place to amplify motivation in workers are also consistent. A transformational leader stimulates followers to behave beyond expectations. Their ability lies in the transformation they bring about at the follower's values and intentions by leading them towards the organisation's goals. This allows a greater and more effective internalisation of organisational values, which is of great value as it facilitates the alignment between individual and organisational goals (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).
This type of leader shows typical traits of a charismatic leadership (Hater and Bass, 1988, as cited in: Handbook). This is relevant as it allows them to have a strong influence on workers, providing an important source of inspiration. Such influence mechanisms transfer the typical traits of a charismatic personality, leading them to attitudes of resistance and positivity that enable them to deal with problems in a more proactive way by means of a mainly solution-oriented approach. It is in this sense that the action of the transformational leader is significant, as he pushes workers out of their normal routines, proposing solutions to address goals that would otherwise appear too ambitious (Atwater, and Yammarino, 1996).
From Bass' perspective, transformational leadership is distinguished from traditional transactional leadership through the manifestation of the following elements:

- idealised influence. This element relates to the great trust and esteem that followers have for the transformational leader. This form of trust creates an incentive for them to align their attitude with that of the leader, as the latter is taken as a good example due to his highly ethical attitude. It is this that allows the assimilation of the leader's values and consequently the matching of the followers' missions with the organisational one;
- intellectual stimulation. Through this phenomenon, the leader predisposes the individual to develop solutions to problems in an individual manner, leveraging the exaltation of his mental skills. In this way, workers are able to foresee future scenarios and develop an active willingness to change, which is essential to overcome any problematic and uncertain situations both in the immediate and in the future.

- inspirational motivation. This aspect refers to the leader's mental predisposition to have confidence in the possibility of achieving a future scenario representing what is preferable. This translates into the transformational leader's ability to predispose followers' minds to imagine future events in a positive way. Followers are given the tools, including mental assets, to face and overcome contingencies through a commitment to the ultimate goal.
- individualised consideration. This is the process by which the transformational leader is able to place his attention and help, equally, on all individuals under his control. In this way he is able to provide adequate guidance, assessment and support by acting as a mentor. This characteristic also allows him to form individualised perspectives and paths in order to transfer high levels of self-esteem, motivation and encouragement to each individual in order to achieve individual and organisational results (Bass, 1990, as cited in: van Eeden et al., 2008).

Therefore, it is possible to say that the appellation of "transformational" of this leadership style can be associated with the related effort he makes on his followers. In fact, he could potentially be able to bring about important changes on a psychological level in the workers, as he transforms their values on an individual level. These are in fact made to conform to organisational values, which makes it possible to eliminate the sanction mechanisms and the tacit social pact that would lead them to adhere to organisational objectives out of mere obedience.
Moreover, within the framework of individual needs, it instils security through the infusion of higher levels of aspiration. Finally, it operates a leadership style that is not entirely authoritarian, but at the same time is very present, balancing the possibility for individuals to maintain a certain autonomy in the performance of tasks with effective supervision that allows them not to lose sight of the objective.

On the basis of the elements considered in this section, it seems that a transformational leadership model includes broader categories of leadership and more modern features than a transactional one, it pays more attention to the problems of the individual so that it becomes an almost indispensable qualification of good and effective leadership. It can be considered that, compared to transactional leadership, it is more suitable for the management of situations of ambiguity and uncertainty, especially given its focus on the employee and the specific type of relationship that is established. However, it is necessary to analyse more in depth in which features exactly a transformational leadership style can be considered better than a transactional one in this instance and whether it really succeeds or to what extent it satisfies the security needs of individuals in circumstances of change as well as organisational uncertainty and liminality.

4.5 Why transformational leadership might be the most appropriate option for dealing with organisational liminality

After analysing some of the most studied leadership styles in the organisational field and learning that none of them, if taken individually, possess all the appropriate traits to form a solid supportive base for the worker experiencing liminality, a different subdivision must be made.
When distinguishing between a transactional and a transformational leadership style the dichotomy is revealed and the classification is mainly based on the relationship between the leader and the worker. From the analysis of the characteristics of both types, it emerged that while a transactional leader establishes a relationship essentially based on exchange and focused on the achievement of objectives, mainly on a personal level, a transformational leader shows more tangible care to the whole path that the employee undertakes to reach the result, showing a support and motivational elements that are markedly superior.
The hypothesis that a transformational leader is the most viable option for managing cases of organisational liminality will now be reinforced and clarified.

In support of the assumption that a transactional leadership style is not adequately suited to dealing with the distress arising from uncertainty and ambiguity due to the relationship it establishes with its followers, a fundamental difference between the two types of relationships that take place at the organisational level between the leader and the workers must be analysed in more depth.
A confrontation and exchange between the two categories of individuals can occur on different levels, leading to the configuration of two types of established relationships.

- Relationships that create low-level interactions. In this case the leader is called upon, in carrying out his tasks, to establish a purely contractual type of relationship with the employees. Thus, the elements that are to be discussed and taken into account in outlining this relationship mainly concern formal issues such as the discussion of salary, the duration of the employment contract and days off, everything including the insurance plan and in general the rights and duties of the individual. In terms of how the tasks assigned to workers are managed, a relationship that creates a low-level interaction sees the leader involved in prescribing the norms and standards to which workers are expected to conform and the organisational objectives that follow. The leadership must, then, clearly define any rewards or sanctions that will be applied based on whether or not workers adhere to these standards. In particular, the rewards applied essentially include the allocation of tangible and practical resources to the worker, such as an increase in salary, advancement to higher levels in rank or tangible rewards.
- Relationships that create high-level interactions. Interactions that take place on such a level are grounded in feelings of esteem, consideration and care that take place on the basis of tangible bonds and ongoing commitment, which stimulate the growth of mutual trust between leader and follower. The leader who establishes relationships that lead to high-level exchanges incorporates in his daily activities a function of support and help towards the employee, creating a favourable climate for

openness, dialogue and consultation. Therefore, on an emotional level, involvement on both sides occurs, with the leader using emotional tools to create an impact on the follower that goes directly to a psychological level, thus strengthening the relationship with the follower. The function of the leader in this case assumes a relational nature by providing the follower with rewards and gratifications in terms of intangible resources. Indeed, workers are spurred to the achievement of objectives through mechanisms of motivational stimulation rather than through the promise of rewards or the threat of sanctions; in this sense the leadership is requested to provide constant support and assistance during work, honesty and authenticity in the relationship, consideration at the level of the individual worker, as well as a certain degree of protection. In response to this behaviour, the employee must present an attitude that can be regarded as trustworthy and loyal and show conscientiousness and commitment to the path (Demirtas and Karaca, 2020).

This differentiation between relationship types perfectly reflects the leader-follower interactions within transactional leadership and within transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership is best analogous to the case of low-level interactions. It is possible to affirm this as contingent transactional reinforcement, which is a founding characteristic of this style of leadership, involves precisely the determination of tangible rewards or sanctions to the worker and excludes consideration of the worker's needs and his psychological sphere, basing the relationship entirely on the pursuit of self-interest (Avolio and Bass, 1995).

In contrast, high-level interactions are found in the case of transformational leadership. This can be affirmed because, by examining the core of the relationship typology involved in this type of leadership, i.e. individualised consideration, one finds a greater focus on the problems and aspirations of the individuals (Avolio and Bass, 1995).

The transformational leader considers and operates an analysis of individuals singularly and equally in their needs, preparing ad hoc strategies of appropriate influence and guidance to lead them to the pursuit of improved performance and results (Avolio and Bass, 1995). In this way, the support and motivation that is needed to cope with circumstances that deviate from the normal scope of the individual's tasks is provided, in order to prevent or mitigate the anxiety that may arise when the employee is faced with the execution of an unexpected task.

Furthermore, as the needs of the individual regarding the contingency are progressively ensured, the leader predisposes the individual to a shift in focus from one that is purely personal and circumstantial, towards a more holistic approach that looks to the long term and the total interest of the group and of the organisation (Avolio and Bass, 1995). By doing so, the transformational leader manages to move the individual away from the uncertainty that preoccupies him and could paralyse him in the short term, thus, avoiding the risk of precluding the achievement of excellent results both at an individual level for single workers and at a broader level of the organisational goals.

In this regard, a study (Nielsen and Munir, 2009) has confirmed that transformational leadership is positively related to the well-being of workers as it determines their ability to develop feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem, causing in them a positive impact that would go far beyond the need for resilience dictated by the contingency of the liminality phase.

With regard to the well-being generated in individuals by a transformational leader, further evidence of this was verified when the variable of spirituality applied to the working sphere was included in research (McKee et al., 2011). In this sense, it has been shown that transformational leaders have a positive impact on both the individual and the group because they stimulate the creation of an environment that encourages a sense of spirituality, which includes a perception of intense relevance of the tasks they are asked to perform, as well as a shared value orientation that generates a strong sense of belonging to the group (McKee et al., 2011). On the basis of these statements, it can be assumed that this type of leadership is suitable for creating the best environment in the case of organisational liminality. In the anthropological understanding of liminality from Turner and van Gennep's analysis of rituals, it was seen that it can often occur as a phenomenon involving an entire community of individuals. The transformational leader would provide the basis for dealing with the transition process because, when liminality is experienced at the organisational level and is felt as a group phenomenon, as can occur in the case of structural changes at the level of regulations or organisational culture, a cohesion is created that fuels the prospects for effectiveness at the final performance stage.

This is possible since workers tend to have a particular trust in a transformational leader. They would be inclined to follow with pleasure the advice and direction they provide when the organisation is faced with change in order to adapt to a given contingency, as they see it as the most effective form of leadership in terms of favourable impact on the change path. A more permissive or libertarian type of leadership, on the other hand, would not have been considered appropriate by the followers. This is because, in order to better manage the transition that accompanies a change, the presence of the leader was considered to make a difference in terms of creating an interaction between leader and worker, which is indeed the basis of transformational leadership whereas it is not found in a more libertarian style of leading (Yasir et al., 2016).

Culture and leadership are closely related. While on the one hand the leader is the shaper of a certain organisational culture, on the other hand, the culture in which the organisation is immersed creates a basic space that influences the values and type of leadership chosen. Indeed, the leader defines the organisational culture according to the cultural values of the context and the elements on which he chooses to focus most (Bass and Avolio, 1993). Indeed, in a context of organisational change or crisis, if the leader is focused on this element, he will adopt strategies aimed at minimising its negative impact.

With regard to the relationship between transformational leadership and the culture that characterises the context of the organisation, it has been noted that the characteristic elements of this type of leadership can be welcomed by a wide range of cultures. This has been argued by analysing transformational leadership from a culture-universal perspective (Zagorsek, 2004). Indeed, leaders who adhere to this typology exhibit traits and

inclinations that acquire a transnational character, favouring its application regardless of the cultural context in which the organisation operates (Bass & Avolio, 1993) and, presumably, also regardless of the cultural values of the individuals with whom it interacts. This versatility is made possible by what lies at the heart, and gives its name, to transformational leadership, i.e. its ability to bring about a transformation at the level of values, objectives and behaviour in workers, who are thus led to achieve levels of performance not yet contemplated within the organisational boundaries (Bass & Avolio, 1993). In support of this thesis, one study verified that among the elements that make the universalisation of transformational leadership possible is the ability to imagine positive future scenarios and transfer this optimistic image to workers (Den Hartog et al., 1999 as cited in: Ergeneli et al, 2007); two other studies conducted on leaders of two different nationalities reported that no substantial distinctions were found in the transformational leadership style applied in one and in the other nation (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Dunn, 1999, as cited in: Ergeneli et al., 2007). With this, it is possible to conclude that a transformational leadership style appears adaptable to different cultural contexts and can, therefore, efficiently manage workers bearing differing values, also with regard to Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Despite their strong pervasiveness, transformational leaders do not have aspirations to change and shape the culture in which the organisation is situated. On the contrary, they operate within it with agility, proposing to change what is instead distinctive of the organisation's identity, namely the organisational culture.
Transactional leadership proposes to operate within an already prepared and defined organisational culture, adding its personal contribution but adhering to pre-existing norms, methodologies and criteria. (Bass and Avolio, 1993) From this it can be deduced that its impact will be minor in terms of the extent of the values incorporated and the contribution to the formation of a shared cultural base for members. On the contrary, transformational leaders, once they have taken over the management of an organisation, implement a profound change on the value base of the same through a thorough analysis of the previous structure and a redefinition of the same according to the objectives considered of primary importance (Bass and Avolio, 1993). It can be said that this is of particular relevance when transition is taking place due to an external change, as it allows the organisation to conform to the needs of the contingency in a deeper and more definitive way.
Moreover, it is precisely the same characters that the aforementioned leaders choose to include as a cultural base that are most appropriate for contexts of this kind. This is because, as has already been mentioned, the transformational leader's focus on the workers prepares, by stimulating them intellectually and psychologically, an environment in which they find the motivation for drastic improvements in terms of self-fulfilment and growth at an individual level (Bass and Avolio, 1993). In support of this, it has been found that workers who are directly managed by a transformational leader see the organisational culture as more encouraging, flexible and more oriented towards clearly defined goals (Block, 2003).
The transformational leadership's strong willingness to break out of previous patterns through a creative attitude fosters an environment where both organisational and personal growth of members is found which is essential to cope with times of uncertainty by developing greater resilience and stability.

In comparison with the other leadership models analysed, the transformational approach appears to be the most suitable for this purpose, not least because it encompasses a wide range of elements from other leadership styles that have been identified as appropriate for dealing with periods of uncertainty and establishing a positive relationship with followers. Specifically, it can be stated that:

- a transformational leader certainly presents, among the preponderant ones, the characteristic of charisma. This is apparent in the strong influence he has on workers. Specifically, however, it can be assumed that it is a completely dissimilar type of charisma from that implied in a charismatic management style. Indeed, in the latter it has been noted that the individual can use this quality dishonestly, developing persuasion and propaganda techniques in order to achieve purely personal interest. This circumstance generates a highly risky and dysfunctional type of management (Hogan et al., 1988). There is a considerable difference when the same personality trait is oriented towards the organisational and self-fulfilment goals of the employees. The latter is the case for transformational leadership. This becomes evident in the characteristic of idealised influence which, through the clear definition of goals and their relevance, generates feelings of trust and inspiration in the workers. This enables them to develop the appropriate tools to deal with change in the most successful way and by themselves.
- Transformational leadership is also to a certain degree autocratic. It is possible to assume this because it is the leader himself who is in charge of setting goals, making changes in the organisational culture and providing direction to the worker, on an ongoing basis. However, the degree of absolutism at the level of power differs in that a purely autocratic leader leaves no room for the needs of individuals, which a transformational leader, on the other hand, considers to be of fundamental importance through the establishment of individualised consideration, precisely for this purpose. This makes it easier to develop an organisational climate that allows for dialogue and the emergence and general exposure of problems encountered by workers so that these can be resolved by the leader.
- In transformational leadership moral and ethical aspects can be found. Indeed, it is recognised as having a high moral character, which is what essentially generates a sense of admiration and willingness to emulate on the part of followers.
- It can be said that a transformational leader presents, at a fairly consistent level, the character of a participative leadership style. Indeed, as just stated, he favours the discussion of workers' needs, showing attention to their concerns. In addition, individuals are treated distinctly and fairly, their differences are identified, and the most suitable approaches to managing the problems encountered by each of them are outlined accordingly.
- Finally, the transformational leader also exhibits elements of authenticity. It has been suggested that these leaders operate and provide help and support to workers not out of mere self-interest, but rather because they firmly hold what they claim and the values they convey (Bass and Avolio, 1993). This

element allows followers to perceive authenticity in the support provided and, therefore, a greater assumption and absorption of the values established by the leader.

In a changing context and where organisations are threatened by external variables that potentially undermine their stability, fluidity and adaptability is a necessity in order to conform to such demands and to better manage uncertainty. In fact, in such circumstances, it is not possible to implement mechanisms that are employed in circumstances of normality, neither by the leader nor by the employees. The need to move from defined structures implies the onset of consequences that may also turn out to be highly negative for individuals and the organisation (Mumford et al., 2007, as cited in Shadraconis, 2013).

To enable such adaptation, which is necessary in order to maintain one's competitive position, it is imperative for the leadership to take into account the organisational and external context and to formulate strategies that allow for a rapid path of change. In such circumstances, it is, indeed, necessary to act as quickly as possible and, at the same time, to keep alive the relational element with the employees.

A transformational leadership is able to meet these requirements through its essential features of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration; furthermore, it manages to provide significance to the transitional phase that individuals are facing, operating essential sense-making strategies in order to reduce uncertainty and anxiety levels (Mumford et al., 2007, as cited in Shadraconis, 2013).

In conclusion, it is possible to affirm that transformational leadership represents the most appropriate approach when acting in a situation of uncertainty and ambiguity that is likely to generate negative effects on employees living in a liminal status, which may lead to a decrease in their performance and consequently in the efficiency of the organisation. A transformational leader, particularly in the period of transition, stimulates organisational learning processes, encouraging employees to give their very best at an individual level, yet without sacrificing the relevance of a perspective of collective action, working to "*unite employees and encourage them to make the organisation's vision a reality"* (Bryman, 1992).

Conclusion

Organisations are embedded in the global context and, therefore, part of the globalisation process and continuous change it generates. Furthermore, they are entirely inserted in the societal sphere, as they are essentially and primarily made up of individuals.

From the available research, organisational liminality can occur on the level of the organisation as a whole, affect a group of individuals, a particular category of employees or managers, or take place as a personal experience of an individual. It is understood that each of these circumstances should not be overlooked due to the impact they may have as a detrimental factor on the employees' performance, given that this eventuality would generate a cascading effect on the total organisational output.

The analysis carried out by means of Hofstede's national culture dimensions showed that culture is a determining element in organisations and in the lives of individuals, presenting itself as the key to interpreting any external phenomena they are confronted with. For this reason, the value systems possessed by employees have a strong impact on their perception of instances of ambiguity, uncertainty and, therefore, of organisational liminality.

Given the wide variety of possible responses to this issue on the part of individuals, due to the transnational nature of organisational environments, it has been found that, irrespective of the impact of values on employees' perception of liminality, a leader who is able to motivate them and develop a coherent and defined vision of the strategy to be adopted is of crucial importance in mitigating the possible negative effects. In particular, the comparative examination of the charismatic, autocratic, ethical, participative and authentic leadership styles showed that, although each of them possesses characteristics that are successful in solving the problem under consideration, none in particular is devoid of major flaws that indicate a lack in effectiveness.

By further sub-dividing into transactional and transformational leadership styles and observing their main characteristics, it can be concluded that a transformational leader is the best among the most popular choices in case of employees suffering from the liminal status. It is possible to affirm this as it, through idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration, provides a certain degree of charisma that inspires individuals, gives close attention to the conditions of the single employee through continuous feedback and identifies ad hoc solutions for specific situations. Furthermore, it succeeds in developing a coherent vision that implies the development of positive scenarios, succeeding in transferring them in the individuals' minds, so as to align their personal purposes with those more widely related to the organisational performance.

Managerial implications

From the findings derived from this analysis some relevant implications for management practice can be identified. Firstly, it appears essential not to overlook the impact that situations of uncertainty at the organisational level may cause on the employee. Indeed, it appears that the type and extent of an individual's response to uncertainty depends on both cultural and value factors, as well as the intrinsic personality traits of the individual. Thus, a presumably infinite variety of reactions exists with respect to the same liminality condition. This implies that the leadership needs to focus its efforts on providing guidance and support in a highly individualised and tailored fashion, in order to better identify those employees suffering from the consequences of liminality and correct the potentially dysfunctional and deviant behaviours before they spread throughout the organisational environment. Maintaining a high degree of motivation, inspirational capability and efficiency is vital since employees, if motivated and convinced to align their objectives with the organisational targets, constitute a key resource for competitive advantage. Nevertheless, in implementing these solutions, although both deliver great results in situations of organisational crisis, a transformational leadership style seems preferable over a charismatic one. This is due mainly to the fact that the latter includes, within its high level of persuasive and inspirational effectiveness, the potential for manipulation for purely personal ends, placing significantly less emphasis on the followers' values, and resulting in an artefactual, illusory or not universally effective form of support. A further practical implication is deduced from the above, concerning the nature of leader-follower interactions. In this regard, a transformational leadership might be preferred in cases of organisational liminality as it provides the basis for the creation of mutually considerate and respectful exchanges, involving continued support for the employee. Emotional involvement on both sides stimulates the worker and creates an ideal climate for dialogue, building authenticity, and consolidating the long-term effectiveness of the relationship.

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