UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

CAN HOLACRACY IN ORGANIZATIONS BE RELEVANT TO MILLENNIALS?

Dissertation presented to the Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a Master Degree in Communication Studies, in the specialty Communication, Organization and Leadership

By

Mariana Godinho Coelho Guilherme

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Abstract

In a dense and competitive labor market, organizations face difficulties in gathering attractive factors in recruiting and retaining young millennials, that is, meeting what these young people are looking for, both professionally and personally. This issue is important for organizations, as the higher the turnover of their professionals, the greater the effort / costs at recruitment and communication as well as at results. Such team management instability could be a problem. However, the challenge of attracting youth talent may relate not only to the profile of these young people but also to the organization's leadership structure, which may or may not meet young people's preferences. Thus, through a qualitative analysis, centered on interviews with a carefully selected panel of 8 millennial young people, it was possible to better understand the value attached to distributed leadership systems, also called holacracy, and at the same time to assess how young millennials , from different social backgrounds and backgrounds, perceive the concept of leadership and the different organizational practices, as well as value the more distributed and autonomous leadership structures. Our research study indicates a significant preference for more hierarchical leadership and for a supportive and mentoring structure.

Keywords: distributed leadership, organizations, holacracy, millennials

Resumo

Num mercado de trabalho denso e competitivo, as organizações enfrentam dificuldades em reunir fatores atrativos no recrutamento e retenção dos jovens millennials, isto é, em ir ao encontro daquilo que estes jovens procuram, tanto a nível profissional como pessoal. Esta questão é importante para as organizações, uma vez que quanto maior for a rotatividade dos seus profissionais, maior será o esforço/custos a nível de recrutamento e comunicação bem como a nível de resultados. Tal instabilidade em termos de gestão de equipas poderá constituir um problema. No entanto, o desafio em atrair o talento jovem poderá estar relacionado não só com o perfil destes jovens como também com a estrutura de liderança da organização, que pode ir, ou não ao encontro das preferências dos jovens. Assim, através de uma análise qualitativa, centrada em entrevistas a um painel cuidadosamente selecionado de 8 jovens da geração millennial, foi possível compreender melhor o valor atribuído aos sistemas de liderança distribuídos, também chamados de holacracia, e simultaneamente avaliar de que forma os jovens millennials, de diferentes perfis e meios sociais, percecionam o conceito de liderança e as diferentes práticas organizacionais, bem como valorizam a as estruturas de liderança mais distribuídas e autónomas. A nossa investigação estudo indica uma preferência significativa por uma liderança mais hierárquica e por uma estrutura de suporte e orientação.

Palavras-chave: liderança distribuída, organizações, holacracia, millennials

I - Acknowledgements

On the aim of the preparation and conduction of this dissertation, I'm glad to day I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

On a first notice, I would first like to thank my supervisor, professor Fernando Ilharco, for all the valuable inputs, suggestions and availability during every stage of the process, which was more than crucial to formulate the research questions and to correctly follow the methodology chosen. It was all the guidance and assistance that allowed this study to move forward. I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues from work at SPEAK, for their wonderful support and by being always willing to help me. In addition, I would like to thank my parents for the unparallel encouragement and constant motivation. Finally, my friends, who were always a great source of discussion, that allowed the ideas to grow and to give body to this study, besides providing, simultaneously enjoyable moments that helped me rest my mind from the research.

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1. Introduction

The search for an object of study that raised practical and relevant issues for today's society was a demanding and somewhat time-consuming process that required a certain level of commitment and research and, above all, curiosity.

The origin of the question came essentially from motivations, values and some concerns of my person. Therefore, I had to look for a topic that was not restricted exclusively to my field of study, but also involved my daily ambitions, fears, experiences, and issues that were complex enough to be the subject of deeper research and knowledge.

As an integral member of this Generation Y, or as many people call it, “Millennials,” what moves me and worries me regularly is the fast-paced and growing uncertainty that increasingly lives in a competitive labor market that, by day For the day, it makes me think and reflect on what is most relevant to me today and how it might change in a short, medium and long time. These thoughts not only address a career path but also attractive and motivating factors in an organization, such as working conditions, flexibility, team, among others. This meets factors such as the possibility of having a balanced relationship between work and personal life, a passion for the activities performed in a certain job and organization and, finally, the possibility of self-fulfillment through career growth tailored to one's needs. personal needs, motivations and demonstrated performance.

After a more introspective view, my current professional condition for the construction of the object of study was also taken into account. Being part of a startup has made me reflect on what I consider to be most valuable and beneficial for my comfort and motivation in my work, factors that have been described above and which I often evaluate in my daily life.

Apart from personal motivations, it was also necessary to make a more macro assessment, involving the needs of Millennials organizations and young people, and I came to some conclusions that contributed to the definition of the object of study, reinforcing the need and the importance of a better knowledge of the same.

In an increasingly dense and competitive job market, organizations face increasing difficulty in gathering attractive factors in recruiting and retaining young millennials. This is of great importance to organizations, as the higher the turnover in an organization, the greater the recruitment and communication effort / costs. However, the challenge in attracting youth talent may be related not only to the profile of these young people but also to the leadership structure in an organization, which may or may not meet these young people's preferences. Young people believed to be increasingly attracted to less autocratic and more distributed leadership (holacracy). This is how this theme arises and I believe that this object of study will shed some light on the relationship and influence that the leadership structure in an organization can represent for its younger employees who, in their Millennial status, constitute a profile unlike any other. another generation before it. A relationship of influence that may or may not have a certain level of impact on youth talent retention these days.

After the previous contextualization, questions emerge within the scope of the objectives of the theme and object of study. Thus, distributed leadership (holacracy), as an influencing and motivating factor for the retention of young Millennials in a more or less hierarchical organization, raises the big question of interpretivist character, which aims to prove the following relationship of influence:

Can holacracy be something valued by millennials in organizations?

In addition to the main question, other questions were raised and will be fundamental in conducting the study, such as:

- "What are the main structural differences in a more or less decentralized organization: Startup vs Corporate?"
- "How can an organization's culture / structure influence / enhance the distribution of leadership in an organization?"
- "What drives millennials these days (values and aspirations)?"

These are issues that will allow the construction of a consistent line of reasoning based on three fundamental pillars: the organizational structure, the concept of leadership, namely its more or less decentralization and the autonomy of the work teams and, finally, the characteristics and profile of a young Millennial. The intention will be to link the conclusions associated with these questions to, in the end, assume the final conclusion that combines all the literature and assumptions of each of these three dimensions essential to the study.

As explained earlier, this study will take into account three main concepts which are organizations, leadership, and millennials. Each of these three elements will be subject to a deconstruction and understanding of what they mean in the context of this study.

Initially, there will be a literature review regarding the concept of organization that will be touching on points such as the culture and structure of the organizations, highlighting the different formats and potential benefits of each, as well as an introduction to the main structural differences. between large multinational organizations and small organizations such as startups. Some of the authors will include Peter Drucker, Burton, Child and Zheng.

Next, the concept of leadership in organizations will be explored, namely its more or less centralization, according to the objectives, culture and organizational structure, which will be closed with the explanation of a management term applied to decentralized leadership, which is the holacracy. To study the notions of leadership and introduce the key concept for this study, holacracy, authors such as Yukl, Goleman, Brafman and Robertson will be considered, the latter two focusing on the concepts of holacracy and distributed leadership.
Finally, the third element to be explored will be "Millennials". This will begin by historically contextualizing the emergence of this new generation following previous generations, defining and framing social and technological circumstances, for example, to better understand the behaviors of this generation. After defining a chronological status, it will be necessary to identify in more detail some profiles and characteristic traits that define the generality of the people who make up this group, constructing different profiles and interpreting their differences, similarities, means, among others. In conclusion, it will be made another contextualization and characterization of these young people but applied to the labor market and its current dynamics.
For the empirical component of the study will have to be made a data collection from different sources and different natures.
Given that it will be an interpretative study, it will qualitative. Given the objective of the study, which will have an extremely subjective component in defining the profile of the Millennials, it will be extremely important to gather first-hand information from these young people. Qualitative data were collected by conducting interviews that targeted young people representing Generation Y, or Millennials.
Taken together, these data will contribute to the building of correlations between the different profiles of young people from Generation Y and leadership structures in different types of organizations in which they operate. From this information it will be possible to define different scenarios that will allow us to affirm the existence or inexistence of any relationship of distributed leadership and the appreciation attributed by the Millennials to such a leadership system.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizations and culture

2.1.1 Structure of an organization

When trying to deconstruct the notions behind an organization, its structure and its way of operating, Bolman starts by comparing it to a skeleton, a building's framework, something that sets the constitution, limitations and potential of an organization, "limited only by human preferences and capacity" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, pg.50). Thus, structure is what defines how an organization operates in terms of tasks distribution, activities and processes configuration (Zheng, Yang, & McLean, 2010) and is based on the distribution and allocation of certain roles and administrative mechanisms to control such processes (Child, 1972). To do so, the members and activities within the organization should then be organized, subdivided and accountable for specific roles, responsibilities to promote a certain level of layers and authority to carry out tasks.
As in Bolman (2008, pg.59), "structure needs to be designed with an eye toward desired ends, the nature of the environment, the talents of the workforce, and the available resources (such as time, budget, and other contingencies).
All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships between the different activities and the members and

subdivides and assigns roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out different tasks that which, without coordination and structure, wouldn't be possible to fulfill those so intended collective goals and purposes. This is what we can consider to be the main ingredients to the idealization of the term of "organizational design" and once the structure is defined, then coordination follows by setting the constituting elements together through technology, culture, leadership, incentives, routine and procedures, everything in order to reach a "good fit" (Burton & Obel, 2018, pg.4).

Following these previous notions, Bolman manages to find more evidence on how organizations structure and frameworks can be compared to even the most natural activities. The author uses the example of ants, that constitute an example of tasks coordination and specialization in one job. Thus, once an organization constructs its framework, positions and roles, the following part of the process is to define how such roles can operate together, in working units. Despite the opportunity for specialization, assigning roles and job units raises the issue of coordination and capacity to control processes. Nevertheless, when thinking about an organizational structure, one must consider the two main challenges on designing such structure, which is the way of how work is assigned to different roles – differentiation – and how the work and tasks of these roles can be coordinated – integration (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

There can be several different types of structures, varying from one organization to another and they can be more vertical or horizontal (Bolman & Deal, 2008), which can reflect on a more or less centralized decision-making power structure (Zheng et al., 2010). Centralization is what describes the capability of making decisions of an organization as more concentrated on top-level management (Zheng et al., 2010), and it's linked to a more hierarchical structure, a vertical type of coordination, in which the upper levels constitute the main authority and control agents, which are accountable to coordinate the activities of the employees on lower levels (subordinates) through regulations, organizational policies and strategic planning (Bolman & Deal, 2008). On the other side, less centralized structures differ in the sense that they have a more open communication system, in which everyone is encouraged to share should have a greater saying on each topic, according to the expertise, setting some decision-making power free from the upper management team and designated authority.

There are a lot of studies and scholar findings on this matter that conclude that a decentralized type of organizational structure is, most of the times linked to a bigger organizational effectiveness and responsiveness to the markets' conditions and fluctuations. This happens becomes there's more opportunity left for internal communication and interaction between individuals and working teams, which leads to a larger space for creativity and innovation. Besides this, it is also an important motivational factor for employees to have such freedom of sharing and individual growth, as it increases employee satisfaction (Zheng et al., 2010).

In the last couple of years, it has been observable, more incentives to design organizational structures with a higher flexibility. One of the main examples is the success case of one of the most relevant car brands, BMW, whose recipe relies mostly on fast innovation and quality of the products. Some factors for such success are described in Bolman (2008):

> « "Just about everyone working for the Bavarian automaker — from the factory floor to the design studios to the marketing department — is encouraged to speak out. Ideas bubble up freely, and there is never a penalty for proposing a new way of doing things, no matter how outlandish. Detroit' s rigid and bloated bureaucracies are slow to respond to competitive threats and market trends, while BMW' s management structure is flat, flexible, entrepreneurial— and fast.
> That explains why, at the very moment GM and Ford appear to be in free fall, BMW is more robust than ever. The company has become the industry benchmark for high - performance premium cars, customized production, and savvy brand management" (Edmondson, 2006, p. 72) »

Despite the differences, pros and cons of each type of structure, Bolman (2008) states that "organizations have to use both vertical and horizontal procedures for coordination" (pg.60). This means there should be a combination of both structures in order to optimize the organizational functions, depending on the current state of things and challenges faced on different situations. Usually, vertical structures operate in a more stable and predictable environment, where processes and tasks are well defined and understood. On the other hand, lateral designs have better results on a less static and fast-changing environment, with a higher degree of uncertainty, where tasks tend to be more complex. Thus, "every organization must find a design that works for its circumstances" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, pg 60).

2.1.2 Culture of an organization

According to the straightforward conceptualization of Burton and Obel on what we consider to be an organization, it is no more nor less than a "social unit of people" with the purpose of achievement collective goals and that follows a specific structure that enables a set of relationships between its activities and the members that constitute it (Burton & Obel, 2018). This is what introduces the notions behind the concept of organizational culture. Furthermore, the culture of an organization is a set of shared values, beliefs and assumptions from each of the elements and individuals that are part of the organization (Yukl, 2013).

Organizational culture is an abstract concept, something that permanently surrounds each and every individual in an organization, "constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behavior, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behavior" (Schein, 2004, pg.1).

There are four dimensions within the terms of organizational culture that are tendentious and reflect a greater organizational effectiveness. These are “adaptability, consistency, involvement, and mission” (Zheng et al., 2010, pg.765). Adaptability refers to the capability of an organization to change its structures, processes and systems, way of operating and behavior, so it can follow the shifts in the market environment. On the other side, consistency is how consistent are the values, beliefs and employees’ expectations are maintained throughout time. As for involvement, this one is related to the participation of each individual in the organization on the decision-making tasks. Finally, mission is what defines a common and shared purpose of acting among each and every individual in the organization (Zheng et al., 2010).

Having this said, culture has the power to make people understand the environment and teaches them how to respond to its different behaviors and uncertainty. Cultural values can leverage the performance of the organization, for instance, “shared values such as flexibility, creativity, and entrepreneurial initiative can facilitate innovation and organizational learning” (Yukl, Gary, 2013, pg.287).

Organizational culture is, therefore, the guide for behavior and expectations management, a way of helping individuals and team members on how to cooperate and ensure healthy and comfortable relationships with one another. In addition, when an organization shares values and beliefs, it works as source of sustained competitive advantage (Zheng et al., 2010), an important cultural mechanism to obtain a more stable environment and it not only contributes towards the continuity of the organization but to implementing and accepting new processes and changes Yukl, Gary (2013).

Back to the idea of an abstract concept, the culture of an organization and its presence among the individuals, at some point, becomes accepted and a familiar environment, something that no one is capable to notice anymore (Yukl, Gary, 2013). A very famous example introduced by McLuhan with his global notion of ‘media as an environment can be actually related to the previous statements. Afterwards, we are so deeply involved in the environment that we don’t seem to notice it. That’s McLuhan’s example of the fish living in the aquarium, where it doesn’t seem to notice that it’s underwater and so, it wasn’t the one to discover the water, to perceive every changing moment around it. The environment becomes invisible to the individual (Mcluhan et al., 1980).

Another approach on organizational culture is that it is situational influence on leaders, a relation that can become bilateral as leaders can also influence culture at some point. As for the relation of leadership with the culture of the organization, we can highlight one important characteristic of leadership as the capability of looking at the culture from the outside and to understand the limitations and, contrarily, its potential for evolution and adaptation to new processes.

As in Schein (2004, pg.1):

> "When one brings culture to the level of the organization and even down to groups within the organization, one can see clearly how culture is created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated, and, at the same time, how culture constrains, stabilizes, and provides structure and meaning to the group members. These dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make one realize that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin."

Following this previous citation, a leader can influence the culture of an organization in different ways, through different approaches.

Firstly, considering some of the foundations of what constitutes an organization, the mission, vision and values are undoubtedly a great asset for the influential power of the leader on shaping the organization's culture and the way they use it to communicate and inspire the teams and individuals in the organization is fundamental to set objectives, goals and strategies. On a more practical and objective approach, leaders can also affect the organization's culture by creating, developing or changing processes, systems, organizations structure and tasks assignment, development programs and other elements that constitute the day to day of the activities of the organization, which can work as a highlight on what are best practices and behavior in accordance to the organization's values (Yukl, Gary, 2013). Furthermore, the leaders' behavior is a reflection of their values, principles and perspectives and by sharing and communicating those within the organization is what sets the organizational climate and a "shared interpretation of work group experiences produces a work group climate" (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008, pg. 105). Moreover, the creation of such a climate can be also conducive to a develop skills and to perform according to the values and goals of the organization. This is what Wheatly refers as morphic fields, non-material fields of energy that "influence the behavior of species", by which "members of the same species learn something new" (1999, pg. 53). To better understand this, the author provides us the example of the process of bicycle riding, a skill that can be more easily learn by an individual if he's surrounded by the same behavior trend. Nevertheless, an individual ends up being influenced "by others like them" (pg. 53). Since this field is not visible or observable with our eyes, it can only be felt of perceived by looking at the behavior of the individuals. It's through this decoding action of understanding the messages that the individuals then interpret them and shape their behavior in accordance to that. Thus, "when organizational space is filled with divergent messages (…), this invisible incongruity becomes visible as troubling behaviors" and so "there is no agreement, there are more arguments, more competition more power plays" and the organization faces even more difficulties on finding its right track (Wheatly, Margaret, 1999, pg. 55). On the other side, when the organization has a strong congruence, the messages become more consistent, the behavior less chaotic and the more powerful the field becomes, therefore reaching more desirable outcomes. The "clearer the image of the destination, the more force the future would exert on the present pulling us to that desired state" (Wheatly, Margaret, 1999, pg. 55).

In Schein (2004, pg. 10) we can also get a subtle taste, through practical examples, of how these morphic fields can take part of our daily activities, which explains how situations and circumstances can differ from one another, by the influence of people, context and environment:

> "As teachers, we encounter the sometimes mysterious phenomenon that different classes behave completely differently from each other, even though our material and teaching style remains the same. As employees considering a new job, we realize that companies differ greatly in their approach, even in the same industry and geographic locale. We feel these differences even as we walk through the doors of different organizations, such as restaurants, banks, stores, or airlines. As members of different occupations, we are aware that being a doctor, lawyer, engineer, accountant, or other professional involves not only the learning of technical skills but also the adoption of certain values and norms that define our occupation."

2.2. Defining Leadership

2.2.1 Leadership as a collective process

Starting from the very beginning, the origins of leadership practices, it is very common and easy to observe how leadership can be present in several different contexts, situations and nature. Moreover, leadership can be found in the most natural and raw actions from human beings to other species. Moreover, leadership and followership "became instinctive and universal in much the same way as language did" (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 21). Also, there is an "ancient imperative" trend in which a minority group has the leadership tasks, whilst a wider group has the role to follow (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 21). On a natural perspective, leadership actions play a survival goal, to sustain something. Furthermore, leaders should do "whatever needs to be done for the group to succeed (Kaiser et al., 2008, pg 104). That would be achieved through group activities and team work. "In order to survive in the savanah, our ancestors needed to stick together" (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 21). Throughout the years, leadership and followership theories have taught human beings to act together and collectively and to overcome social coordination issues. Thinking of our ancestors, a major challenge of group work would be, for instance, finding shelter and food, as a mean to sustain and protect the group or tribe. Such tasks would be, essentially, taken by the leaders who, still today, "are responsible for identifying potential obstacles between a team and its goals, discovering solutions to those obstacles, and implementing a preferred course of action" (Kaiser et al., 2008, pg 104).

As the differences of circumstances arise, different leadership styles are needed and these can vary according to the individual, the person with the role to lead, and his personal characteristics such as the behavior or attitude, the context in which is playing and, of course, the environment from the relationship with the team and group of followers (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 24).

Even though it has been something quite always subject of studies and long years ago, speculation mostly, leadership has just started to show up scientific evidence and in the beginning of the twentieth century. The majority of such studies are, in a generic perspective, no more nor less than focused on what is leadership effectiveness, including "traits, abilities behaviors, sources of power or aspects of the situation determine how well a leader is able to influence followers and accomplish task objectives”.

Besides this, there is also the question of why some individuals are more likely than others to emerge as leaders and the attempt to understand leadership as a shared process, in a collaborative environment such as in a team or organization and if it can be effective or not (Yukl, 2013). One of the reasons why the term that we know as leadership has been object of study is due to its usual high degree of ambiguity and extensive meaning, carrying several different connotations. It’s a term brought from the common vocabulary on determining the limits of leadership is caused by other terms that influence the meaning and conception of leadership, raising some misconceptions of the term. These are, for example, power, authority, management, administration, control and supervision (Yukl, 2013).

John Kotter (2001) makes an effort to make clear the differences between two terms that to the technical and scientific glossary, lacking definition and precision. Such exactness and accuracy are often set as synonyms, management and leadership. For Kotter, management is the phase in which an organization develops the planning and the strategies for its functions, and this is what he calls “complexity”. He adds that “good management brings a degree of consistency to key dimensions” (2001). On the other hand, leadership will then cope with “change”, being these related to social factors, market shifts, environmental changes, globalization, among others. As so, “management develops the capacity to achieve its plan by organizing and staffing, (…) delegating responsibility”, while “leadership is aligning people” and “communicating the new direction to those who can create coalitions that understand the vision and are committed to its achievement” (Kotter, 2001). However, Kotter acknowledges the importance of both concepts together, as they are inevitable needed to influence one another and that the challenge today would to successfully “combine strong leadership and strong management and use each to balance the other” (2001).

As in Yukl (2013), researchers stand on different perspectives of “whether leadership should be viewed as a specialized role or as a shared influence process". This means that on the one hand all groups have a certain degree of role specialization and the “leadership role has responsibilities and functions that cannot be shared too widely without jeopardizing the effectiveness of the group”. The group of researchers that hold such view have the tendency to focus more on the attributes and behavior of a leader and the effects of the interaction between the leader and the other members of the group or organization. On the other hand, a different way to look at leadership is, in more simplistic terms, an "influence process that occurs naturally" (Yukl, 2013). For this perspective, researchers are keener to believe in leadership as a "social process or pattern of relationships" and not exactly as a specialized role, which implies that several different people are capable to perform leadership tasks and functions, therefore influencing one another in "what the group does, how it is done, and the way people in the group relate to each other" (Yukl, 2013).

On the agents of leadership interactions, the person designated with the responsibility and specialized leadership role is the one that we call the "leader." All the others are called "followers". This doesn't mean that all the followers play a similar role, as there might be some of them with the role to assist the primary leader in some of his leadership tasks. Nevertheless, this introduces the idea that an individual can perform both roles at the same time. There is the example of "a department manager who is the leader of department employees is also a follower of higher-level managers in the organization" (Yukl, 2013).

To fully understand the notion of leadership we need to have in mind the possible outcomes resulting from an influential attempt. These can be commitment, when the agent successfully influenced the target's behavior and attitudes towards some task; compliance, when the agent manages to influence its target's behavior but not its attitude, thus being less successful and resistance, when the agent didn't manage to influence its target in any way (Yukl, 2013). This is relevant as leadership can be put into practice in various situations, environments, contexts that are not solemnly depending on the competence of the leader. This is why leaders are eager to create the right conditions to more easily reach effectiveness on the performance of a team (Kaiser et al., 2008).

> "Schneider (1998) described this as providing a *context for performance*—the circumstances that influence the ability of employees to contribute to organizational goals. In this view, the links between leadership and organizational outcomes are complicated but real. The complexity arises because the links are mediated by other aspects of the system—the performance of *subordinates/followers,*4 the *teams* they compose, and *the organization* in which they are embedded" (Kaiser et al., 2008).

Furthermore, facing the complexity that involves leadership and managerial processes within an organization, it is, once again, essential to reinforce the complexity for leadership to become effective on different sources and audiences, various organizations, markets and businesses. This brings us to the theory that the leadership style can be the reason why some leadership practices and methods can be more or less effective according to its situation and context (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 33). Moreover, this is the reason why researchers have defined various types of leadership, each one with specific characteristics, benefits and limitations, for a set of different types of environment, context and nature. Talking about situation, there is one evolutionary theory that relates to the notions that were just mentioned and that puts leadership in a place where preferable or successful practices are mostly "situational" and it is based on the premise that the leadership practices depends and, as the name suggests, varies according to the situation (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 34).

Considering that leadership can adapt and perform in difference settings, we can explore some different types to understand how leadership can differ from one to another. About transactional leadership, for instance, which is one very straightforward and practical approach, an exchange practice, by which basically "the job gets done" and "workers get paid" (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 36). On the other side, there is a contrasting type, that is transformational leadership. On this type, the leader embodies a more inspiring character, someone that is able to reflect on the employees the true mission, values, principles that constitute a certain organization, in order to make them perform based not on individual but on a common goal instead. Unlike the transactional leadership type, which contributes essentially to each employee's self-interest and individual drivers, transformational leaders make an effort to change the way employees see themselves, not as one element of one big enterprise but as part of its whole, a vital part in a collective function (Kaiser et al., 2008, pg 104). That is one of the reasons why these leaders can be called as "agents of change and empowerment" (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 36), someone who has the power to inspire and leverage the overall performance of the team members and employees in an organization. Such inspirational tools can include things as role modelling and a clear communication of vision, goals and intellectual stimulation. Having this said, "if transactional leadership is about nuts and bolts, then its mirror image, transformational leadership is about hearts and minds" (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 36). These two types are visibly different, but both of them are capable of playing their part quite well on its adequate organizational structure and environment and, in the end, they can be actually complementary (Kaiser et al., 2008, pg 104).

> About distributed leadership: “This is a relatively modern leadership theory, which suggests that leadership is most effective when it is not concentrated in one pair of hands but spread around, with people of all ranks taking up leadership roles if they have the requisite expertise.” (Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. 2010, pg. 37).

Putting all together the notions introduced before, leadership is, in its most basic roots, defined as the influence that a certain leader performs on its followers “in order to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (Yukl, 2013). As previously mentioned, and, contrarily to what the term suggests most of the times, this relation is not essentially unidirectional. As so, in some organizations to successfully function on their communication practices, the middle and lower levels of management need to consider their influence level not only on their peers and subordinates but also on their superiors. Moreover, even if we think we’re facing a one-way direction communication process, sometimes influence in one direction tends to enhance influence in other directions, as citated by Yukl (2013):

> “As noted by Bradford and Cohen (1984, p.280), ‘Having clout with your boss gains respect from subordinates and peers; being influential with your colleagues lets you deliver what your boss wants and your subordinates need; and high-performance subordinates increase your power sideways and upwards because you can deliver on your obligations and promises.’”

2.2.2 Organizational Leadership

When thinking about leadership, it is inevitable to imagine that one of the most important tasks and skills is regarding decision making. This doesn’t rely solemnly on the functions of delegation and assigning tasks. It also requires the capacity for coordination of the working teams. Yukl (2013) introduces some findings on this matter:

> “The performance of a team depends not only on the motivation and skills of members, but also on how members are organized to use their skills. The design of work roles and the assignment of people to them determine how efficiently the team carries out its work. Performance will suffer if a team has talented people but they are given tasks for which their skills are irrelevant, or if the team uses a performance strategy that is not consistent with member skills”

This is why coordination represents such an important part for teams performing together interdependent tasks in a very synchronized rhythm, according to a clearly defined strategy before starting a certain task or activity.

Delegation is not only special by its influence on coordination and teamwork. In fact, delegation can be a “distinct type of power-sharing process”, which happens when the formerly called “followers” or “subordinates” become accountable for some of the responsibility and authority, being, therefore, capable of taking some decisions that would be usually made by the designated leader. This is an introduction to the notions of empowerment, the perception by which the members of an organization feel like they have the “opportunity to determine their work roles, accomplish meaningful work, and influence important events” (Yukl, 2013). This suggests something that Yukl (2013) calls as “participative leadership”. Like the work, it induces the idea “various decision procedures that allow other people some influence over the leader’s decisions”, meaning they can have a word to say and a chance to participate in the leading decisions. Some other researchers or findings on this topic might address to this notions and aspects of leadership through the terms of “consultation, joint decision making, power sharing, decentralization, empowerment, and democratic management “(Yukl, 2013).

Participative leadership increases decision quality; tolerance for acceptance by the individuals; a higher satisfaction level regarding the decision method and improvement of decision-making skills or competencies. This type of leadership process is more usual to be found in a smaller type of organization (like a startup, for instance), cooperatives, voluntary organizations or employee-owned companies.

It is not a surprise that, the more empowerment and leadership responsibilities within a team or members of a small organization (instead of investing in one single leader), the more autonomous and self-managed teams there will be inside the organizations. Thus, with this scenario, all the relevant decisions and daily leadership activities would be distributed and undertaken by everyone together, collectively, and rotated on a regular basis. Nevertheless, Yukl (2013) also adds that such conditions potentially lead to beneficial outcomes related to a “stronger commitment of team members to the work”, an increasing management effectiveness and efficiency of work-related problems, a greater job satisfaction, which results in less turnover, and less absenteeism from the team members.

According to further findings from Yukl (2013):

> “Any type of team can be “self-managed,” but this form of team governance is typically used for teams that perform the same type of operational task repeatedly and have a

> relatively stable membership over time. Unlike cross-functional project teams, the members of self-managed teams typically have similar functional backgrounds"

This introduces the notions of "distributed leadership", in which we are forced to recognized the existence and action of multiple leaders who share leadership roles among each other (Harris & Spillane, 2008, pg.31).

> "A distributed model of leadership focuses upon the interactions, rather than the actions, of those in formal and informal leadership roles. It is primarily concerned with leadership practice and how leadership influences organizational and instructional improvement (Spillane, 2006). A distributed perspective on leadership acknowledges the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice, whether or not they are formally designated or defined as leaders."

This leadership practice involves multiple leaders, with or without formal leadership positions (informal leaders) and it loses the up-down direction of something that is done to followers, who become a constituting element of leadership practices (Spillane, 2005).

These informal leaders are a first step to drop the so called "heroic leader", meaning that the role of leadership will be played by the working teams and not individuals solemnly. Like it was said before, leadership becomes distributed within teams and its scope of action gets enlarged as well, according to the number of individuals playing such a role, in an interchanging set of interaction between them.

However, it can be misleading to relate this leadership distribution to a clear improved performance and flattening hierarchy, as it can differ from organization to organization how the leadership role and tasks are distributed (how and with what effect). Therefore, it is the nature and quality of leadership practices that matters (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Nevertheless, distributed leadership is more about the practice itself than the structure, functions and role player or leader. Context and interaction between leaders and team players is, in fact, what leverages the potential of distributed leadership, rather than the leader's profile and skills set (Spillane, 2005). What research has been showing us, in an increasing trend, is that a distribution of leadership activities within an organization and teams is that it leads to positive effects and beneficial outcomes (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

2.2.3 Holacracy

It was during a nearly plane crash that the author and creator of the term “holacracy”, Brian Robertson (2015), came up with an evolutionary business and leadership idea. As in his book “holacracy: the revolutionary management system that abolishes hierarchy”, Robertson tells us his discovery journey and how he came up with the term and functions of this leadership practice.

Robertson starts by comparing organizations to a plane, “equipped with sensors”, which are the all the members playing a role in the everyday activities, who “energize its roles and sense reality on its behalf”. This is the way of saying that a significant part of the information flow within an organization is being neglected most of the times and it goes “unprocessed”. Nevertheless, “one individual notices something important, but no one else sees it and no channels are available to process that insight into meaningful change”. An organization is composed by several different elements, individuals and team players, each one with different backgrounds, experiences, roles and levels of expertise, which leads to a wider range of ideas and perspectives that could improve the working methods and leverage the performance of the organization. However, these new perspectives end up failing in the eyes of “bureaucracy, politics, and long, painful meetings”. As in Robertson (2015), “more companies die of indigestion than starvation”, an incapacity to process and “digest” all the information and inputs. The truth is that organizations are still subject to an organization structure and processes that used to work well in static environments (based on the industrial age, of when it matured) but not today, a reality much more complex and dynamic as well as more economically and environmentally instable. Long story short, “today’s organizations are becoming obsolete” and it’s crucial to be more adaptable, in a faster pace.

Despite the findings of the author and after reaching higher positions and later becoming the CEO of his own company, the limitation to process information and implement new ideas was still very little and inefficient. Later on, with more research, Robertson (2015) concluded that “to really transform an organization, we must move beyond bolting on changes and instead focus on upgrading the most foundational aspects of the way the organization functions”. In addition, “the new processes, techniques, or cultural changes we might try to adopt simply won’t run well on an operating system built around an older paradigm”. This means that it would be needed to break down the structure, processes and “operating system” to properly implement new business processes and reshape the operations and functional activities of the organization. Therefore, the organization would need to have to change completely its structure and the way the processes interact and cooperate and, of course, the leadership roles and the means by which the power and authority is distributed and allocated to different activities. This is the base that originated the term of Holacracy, "a social technology for governing and operating an organization, defined by a set of core rules distinctly different from those of a conventionally governed organization". The way to introduce Holacracy as a foundation of an organization is to basically follow the constitution that presents all the guidelines ("rules of the game") to be followed by each of the players and organizational elements.

To better understand the concept of Holacracy, we are provided with an additional example, in which Robertson (2015) compares an organization not to a plane this time but the human body instead. The idea is that an organization becomes capable to operate in autonomous and independent units, just like the human body does:

> "human body functions efficiently not with a top-down command system but with a distributed system – a network of autonomous self-organizing entities distributed throughout the body. Each of these entities, which are your cells, organs, and organ systems, has capacity to take in messages process them, and generate output. Each has a function and has the autonomy to organize how it completes that function."

This metaphor is mostly to highlight the limitations of centralized processes and decision making. Thus "is there any way that the body could function if it centralized all information processing at the top, in the conscious mind?". This raises the awareness for trying out a system where working units work are working separately, cooperatively and each member knows its part and plays a leadership role. Again, it's about the roles more than the individuals and the possibility to reach effectiveness and move forward rather than waiting for a never-ending search for consensus. In fact, holacracy is not about giving a voice to every member of the organization, but allowing an individual to do something with it.

There is, therefore, a limitation in thinking that consensus is a big step to an effective leadership system, as it has been proving its incapability to scale and lack of agility. As Robertson (2015) concludes, "if an organization wants to be dynamic and responsive, then to reject autocratic authority entirely just won't work" and "individuals need to be given the power to respond to issues". By implementing holacracy within an organization, the power simply shifts from the individual at the top of the organizational pyramid and becomes a process instead. Such process is defined and explained through a set of guidelines, a constitution. This is a new governance system, where power is not only distributed but is also an enhancer for self-organization, by which everyone is encouraged to think "if this was my company, what would I do".

The elements of an organization should have clear roles assigned to each operating team according to the nature or department (like marketing for instance), working autonomously and yet cooperatively with the different areas and departments inside the organization. This means that holacracy introduces a different organizational structure and framework for the team to interact and work with each other, being, thus, autonomous, self-managed and organized into separate 'circles' (Van de Kamp, 2014, pg. 16)

Holacracy has a foundation and it can find some roots on some other theories that somehow explore a couple of aspects that characterize holacracy's way of working. One theory is called "integral theory", developed by Ken Wilber, and it explores the meaning behind the name of "holacracy", which derives from the concept of a "holon". This concept is what is defined to be an entity and a part of a larger whole, simultaneously. In a holacratic organization, a holon would be the equivalent to a small working team and the aggregation of all the different working teams, by areas, would be considered an holarchy. Considering these notions, holacracy means "governance by the organizational holarchy" (Van de Kamp, 2014, pg.20). A second theory is based on sociocracy by Gerard Endenburg, which is somehow similar to the one before, and it is related to the governance practices of group units, a hierarchy of circles. The base is that, unlike a top-down structure that limits the learning ability of the team players, sociocracy is constituted by circles which are "policy-making" units of individuals that perform together for a common goal (Van de Kamp, 2014, pg.20). Third, there is a Requisite Control Structure theory introduced by Elliott Jacques, a concept that fosters adaptability and a rapid response to environment changes. Furthermore, through "dynamic steering on governance tensions, the quality of the structure of the organization can be continually improved as more can be learned from experience (Van de Kamp, 2014, pg.21). The conjunction of, for instance, these theories are sufficient for the organization to increase its overall effectiveness through different sources. It can enhance organizational learning, bring meaning and purpose to each and every task performed by the individuals, enhancing understanding and, lastly, the distribution of authority among the team players and generating self-managed teams.

In the holacracy system, there is not a ladder where you climb for manager to manager, until the very top where the CEO stands on. If there are no managers assigned to specific leadership roles, it might look like "democratic chaos", but actually it goes in a more organized flow. Regardless of having enough autonomy to move forward and take over decisions, each member can still ask for help from his colleagues, until he becomes confident to pursue his decisions. Besides this, there is also a positive note regarding the "bosses" activities, who, finally, get freed from the leadership burden, reaching the possibility to focus on different tasks and organizational questions, for instance creative and vision wise, rather than operational.

So how does a system like holacracy implemented after all and how is leadership distributed and assigned to roles instead of individuals? The right term to define this process is "governance" (Robertson, 2015).

Governance is something that happens to occur very frequently and naturally within an holacracy system. Furthermore, it's an ongoing process where the individuals by team gather for "governance meetings" to distribute the authority among different roles and clarify expectations and what is needed from each of the roles, so it facilitates daily decision-making actions. As in Robertson (2015) "What role has the authority to make that decision, within what constraints, and what can we expect from that role as a condition of its having this authority?" is the key question to governance and it's what generates clarity, order and constant learning an adaptation to the organization, according to the challenges and reality in which each role is playing. It's, afterwards, the greatest tool for growing knowledge and integrate every learning from each individual in a team. Thus, in holacracy, processes are "constantly being refined and modified in response to tensions sensed by individuals as they go about their daily work", so that method and practices can be improved in more effective manners to, in the end, "get the work done" (Robertson, 2015).

Furthermore, this continuous process of adaptation allows the organization to redefine the processes, tasks and accountability of each role. This means that when someone perceives that is not completely in line with one role, that individual can change position and be reassigned to a new one. Having this said, the work of defining roles is already a task itself and that's the reason why the holacracy system has one role with the single purpose of matching the individuals to tasks and responsibilities and connecting sub-units to bigger units or circles, for instance, connecting social media tasks to one greater unit of marketing and communication (Bernstein et al., 2016).

One of the valuable aspects of designing an organizational structure according to an holacracy framework, is, mostly, the fact that the individuals, the workers itself are the ones assuming and running the process, taking the entire control of tasks, thus having "a greater sense of making real progress on meaningful work" (Bernstein et al., 2016, pg.10).

At this stage there is room and opportunity to assess the potential and effectiveness of holacracy methodology and practices within the activities of an organization. Through the lenses of (Van de Kamp, 2014), holacracy can raise some issues and difficulties when thinking about the performance of junior employees, defending that this organizational framework would perform better with senior roles. Nevertheless, this also brings to the table the true fact that no one is equal and performs well in self-organized systems, which can compromise the positive results of holacracy implementation, as there is "no safety net", and the individuals which are perceived as less organized would eventually become less accountable and even excluded from some tasks. On a different note, and because a self-organized entity becomes subject to inexistent titles, clear and formal roles, there can be still raised the issue of decision making and problem solving and, therefore, "informal leaders play a vital role in making critical decisions and resolving conflicts" (Lee & Edmondson, 2017, pg 42).

Based on the experience of organizations that implemented a holacracy system, Van de Kamp (2014, pg.22), mentions the case of the founder of Stirman, manager at Medium and before at Twitter, who had the possibility to compare his experience at different organizational frameworks:

> « "With traditional management, tensions felt at the top of the organization were ordered to be resolved at the lower operational level of the organization by people who may not even understand these tensions, and the tensions felt at the bottom of the organization are not taken into account at all. Holacracy makes people accountable for the tensions they feel and gives a voice to all tensions felt throughout the organization." »

Despite these findings, this also leads to what can be considered to be limitations on the holacracy framework and way of operating. In fact, when it comes to practical application of the holacracy practices, there appears to be some things missing and these are "praise feedback and validation" (Van de Kamp, 2014, pg.24) and there are also raised some concerns regarding the workforce, the human capital.

One issue can be related to the performance levels and results from the employees, as they begin to hold a larger number of tasks, which tends to reduce productivity of each. This is observable, as individuals lose focus and struggle to define priorities in coordination with the rest of the tasks in a circle. Following the example of an organization playing by holacracy, "at Zappos, each of the 7.4 roles an individual fills contains an average of 3.47 distinct responsibilities, resulting in more than 25 responsibilities per employee" (Bernstein et al., 2016, pg.11)

A second problem is related with compensation, since now individuals are not assigned to a specific job role but to a set of different tasks, so it becomes way more complex and complicated to measure and follow market rates. An example of this issue would be defining the salary for an employee who is simultaneously accountable for tasks related to developing software, marketing strategies, events planning and internal trainings. To tackle this question, some organizations have started thinking of ways to measure objectively the fair amount to each team player. Zappos, for instance, thought of creating a badge system, by which you would get a badge or 'certification' for each skill acquired or task performed. Following this reasoning, it's also clear to notice that hiring processes become much more complex and at Zappos they have created a "Role Marketplace", which is a "tool to quickly post open roles and manage applications, with lead links ultimately deciding who fills the roles". Through this marketplace, an individual could, in less than one day, apply for and be assigned to a role. Due to the high number of roles to, it becomes too much of a complex process and a large quantity of information to keep track of (Bernstein et al., 2016)

2. 3. Millennials: Defining a Generation

2.3.1 Definition and concept of generation

When trying to define a generation, there is something more than stating a certain age or period range where certain amount of people shares common characteristics. Sociology also defends that a generation has to consider not only the same date of birth within a specific time range, but also sociocultural events and life experiences that are transcendent to that stratum (Pyöriä, Ojala, Saari, & Järvinen, 2017). Thus, a generation is defined by "age, period and cohort", where age and period describe the age and life events "within an individual's lifetime", while cohort is a consequence of a series of life experiences that a group of individuals have equally lived and that raised common characteristics such as attitudes and behaviors (Sharon, 2015, pg.11).

This is a generation born in the second half of the 20th century, between the years of 1980 and 2000 and some of the "societal or historical" events that contributed to common and unique "peer personalities" of this generational cohort (Hayes, Parks, McNeilly, & Johnson, 2018) are the early effects of what we know today as globalism and the Internet Age (Sharon, 2015).

When compared to its ancestors and previous generations, the Millennials generation became larger than Generation X (46 million) and almost as big as the baby boomer generation (76.4 million) and, are, as well, more racially diverse than the others (Sharon, 2015). Typically sons and daughters of Baby Boomer parents (Gong, Ramkissoon, Greenwood, & Hoyte, 2018), these millennials are the most well educated generation, and even though the ration of individuals with a college degree is one-fourth, which is not very different from the previous ones, it still surpasses the levels of education of the other generations as they grow on their lives and academic curriculum (Sharon, 2015), going further than before. Thus, millennials were born in a more protective and supportive environment, consequence of a parental behavior based on high expectations and investment on education (Gong et al., 2018).

Facing the fact that generations have more in common than what separates them, especially regarding their perspective of the following generation, "Baby Boomers complain about

Millennials use of slang, social rights, and tolerance just as the World War II generation criticized Baby Boomers over the same topics" (DeVaney, 2015, pg.42), still it's clear to notice that the young group of millennials has generated a "brain gap" between them and the former generations, as they learn, live and work with digital technology (Gong et al., 2018). Furthermore, according to Prensky, these "digital natives" are "native speakers" of what we consider to be the language of the digital era, born in a world surrounded by things such as computers, videogames, and Internet (2005). On the other hand, individuals that precede this generation (Baby Boomers and some individuals of Gen X) and that experienced mostly an "offline life" (Sharon, 2015), are what we know as "digital immigrants" and, despite their later acquaintance of digital tools, they are still frequently compared to the native ones (Prensky, 2005).

By this comparison and following the previously mentioned term of "brain gap", it has been conducted studies to present us relevant differences between generations and, according to Hershatter & Epstein (2010, pg.212), "a brain that developed prior to the emergence of word processing, email, the Web, or social networks must adapt to new technologies in order to use them effectively", while the Millennials "who have been hard wired by technology and for whom it is integral to their academic, social and personal lives" don't have the need to worry about such adaptation. For them, it's something inherent, like a "sixth sense", awakened by their way of perceiving, feeling and interacting with the world. There are some important influential tools that built the way of acting and living of these Millennials and which are cell phones and online social networks, that came up and grew up hands to hands with this generation. As in Hershatter & Epstein (2010, pg.212), "The world's first commercial cellular phone, weighing almost two pounds, was introduced when members of the high school Class of 2000 were celebrating their first birthdays" and "the iPhone emerged as they celebrated their 25th". Thus, "digital natives are more effective in some arenas, like multitasking, responding to visual stimulation, and filtering information" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). They function and communication in a fast pace and count on accessible and free sources of information, which then they appreciate to share within their social networks (Gong et al., 2018). Despite all these considerably valuable qualities, these Millennials have shown to lack some capabilities related to their nature such as issues with "face-to-face interaction and deciphering non-verbal cues" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

2.3.2 Millennials' characteristics and profiles

When it comes to traits, attitudes and behavior, Millennials are "entitled, optimistic, civic minded, close parental involvement, values work-life balance, impatient, multitasking, and team oriented" (Sharon, 2015, pg.13). Millennials have also been subject of a recession and economic crisis and that has led to several behavioral trends in respect to such life circumstances and social environment. Therefore, there is a propensity for social protest as well as moving back in with their parents, delaying marriage, delaying buying a house and creating businesses of their own (Sharon, 2015). On the other hand, institutions and organizations have provided an immensely positive experience for this generation, making them used to get "gold stars and shiny medals", which influenced their constant seek for approval now and then (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, pg.217). In comparison with the previous generations, Millennials are not much more "altruistic, family-oriented, or motivated to succeed" and they still carry the motivation to become financially self-sufficient, "making money" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, pg.212).

As one example of a first-handed perspective of what it's like to have been born in the condition of a Millennial, we are provided the testimonial of David Burstein, the author of Fast Future: How the Millennial Generation is Shaping Our World. According to Burstein, "the power for the young to influence and create new technology has grown tremendously in the last decade" (as cited in Sharon, 2015, pg.12) and the founders of some very well-known companies like Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Groupon, Foursquare and Tumblr have all been millennials. Besides that, Burstein highlights the fact that millennials demand that companies should be open to comments and criticism (Sharon, 2015).

Moving on to the professional characteristics of this generation, there are several different features to be found from both sides, the recruiter or organization and the young millennials themselves, on their personal needs, ambitions and work routines. We can start by constructing a timeline, by which we can find the first ever graduates to start their professional path during the summer of 2004, while the remaining ones will still do, until more or less around the year of 2022 (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

2.3.3 Millennials in the workplace

About Millennials in the workplace, there is a global common perception among workers that deal with individuals from this generation. They're described as ‘‘Generation Whine’’, which means that they require an enormous and even sometimes excessive amount of guidelines and instructions, becoming even "incapable of handling the most mundane task without guidance or handholding" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, pg.211).

Regarding their work mindset, "Millennials want to be happy in their work" (Sharon, 2015, pg.13), which means they value a greater desire work-life balance in a greater level when compared to other generations. They wish to achieve their career goals without neglecting their personal and family daily life and that's why it isn't a very unusual thing to take a sabbatical year or a work deferral in search of growing their passions and doing things that they love, for example volunteering (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Thus, Millennials are looking for building personal experiences in and outside of work, including the possibility to count on an inspiring workplace and a meaningful job (Pyöriä et al., 2017). This means this generation is adding a company's values, mission and purpose to their motivational factors, than simply the "making money" objective, reaching the stage of a purposeful and meaningful life both at professional and personal level (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010).

On a cohort basis, it is also relevant that circumstances and life events have influenced this way of overvaluing "purpose" and "meaning" over money, like seeing the previous generations working for longer hours, frequent layoffs and noticing such high divorce rates. This has put things on perspective, making personal lives a priority and "making a life" more important than making a living" (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Considering all these behavioral characteristics, it is expected that management teams working closely with this generation of Millennials are labeling them as a demanding workforce, by their "desire to move forward in their careers and to maintain a full personal and family life outside of work" and strong convictions about what the relationship with employers should be (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Therefore, according to what this generation expects from their employers, the trend relies on factors such as job security, good and positive atmosphere at work, with the prospects to learn, to be challenged and grow, without overstressing, and reasonable working hours and flexibility (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). The latter, such flexibility can also relate to the possibility to work remotely, by which more and more individuals are thinking as “I am more productive at Starbucks or at home and I should be able to work where I want” (Sharon, 2015,pg.13). Of course, there are Millennials thinking the opposite way and being mostly motivated by the fact of finding themselves surrounded by their working teams and the perception that “being seen mattered for advancement” (Sharon, 2015, pg.13).

More specifically on the profile, professional and personal characteristics of their superiors and managerial team, as in Hershatter & Epstein (2010), findings say that Millennials value managerial qualities such as honesty, being an open-minded person, active listener, with the disposition to listen and accept feedback, to guide and, also, the posture of, not only a co-worker, but somehow a friend as well. As it has been mentioned in the former aspects, Millennials appreciate working with a positive atmosphere and this includes the possibility to have a closer relationship with colleagues and with a manager they respect, being one of the motivational factors on their performance, even stronger than salary or monetary benefits (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Nevertheless, in comparison with other generations, Gen X, for instance, Millennials wish for proximity with the manager can be related to what has been previously mentioned before, which is the constant need for guidance, reassurance and the seek for affirmation, that has been raised not only at work, but also along with “parents, teachers, mentors and advisors” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). This is why managers gather in a common thought that the Millennials are indeed a more demanding generation, requiring more and “willing to change jobs to manage their perception of the good life”. A good life that not only asks for a bigger work-life balance but the growing expectation and need of a “flat hierarchy and access to senior leadership” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), meaning a closer relationship with the managerial team and the possibility of also having a strong mentor (Sharon, 2015), who can be “constantly available for feedback” (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010, pg.283). On the other side, despite the wonders of having a mentor to provide help and guidance, managers highlight the not so positive aspects of mentoring these young employees, finding themselves in “the unenviable position of having to spend a disproportionate amount of time managing people who were presumably hired to help them” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

While some individuals of this generation would prefer to work for bigger companies with centralized decision-making (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), other would rather be in a smaller organization, “where they believe they will be able to have a hands-on role and make a bigger impact" (Sharon, 2015, pg.13). Such impact not only involves all the previously mentioned factors like the proximity with the management teams and decision-making but how these Millennials also value and embrace the importance of corporate social responsibility (Pyöriä et al., 2017). This comes from the raising awareness and sensitivity to social issues and the growing desire to "save the world", therefore valuing the ways of working along with social responsibility and ethical behavior (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Therefore, it's, not anymore, a question of "whether or not they are right for the job, it's a question of is the job right for them" (Sharon, 2015, pg.13) and, once again, it's a matter of pursuing careers in search of purpose and meaningful work, by which they can find themselves in congruence of values with their employers.

Nevertheless, this would be a reason strong enough for these young employees to constantly shift and leave an organization, looking for a suitable organizational culture and values and more and more few are the ones who wish to remain together with the same employer for a long time (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010).

Following the last statements, this brings up the notions of engagement and what it takes for the Millennials to be happy at their workplace and to remain longer.

According to two authors called Saratovsky and Feldmann, as in Sharon (2015, pg.13), millennials are "digitally connected, creative, solution-oriented, self-organized, and open and transparent" and "motivated by their personal relationships and human connections as they are by the influences of their technological skills and social media". Having this said, the authors suggest that, in order to engage Millennials, the organizations should consider four different approaches: first to enable the millennials to develop their own leadership role and skills; second to promote transparency policies and allow these young employees to access information on how the organization is performing and affecting everything and everyone in surround; third to create the tools or platforms that promote social interaction both internal and externally wise and, at last, the fourth approach would be to generate and sustain a working environment that leaves room to create new ideas, solutions and the possibility to execute strategies for those solutions (Sharon, 2015).

3. Empirical Methodology and Data Presentation

3.1 Empirical Methodology

To find clear answers to answer the questions previously presented I will look for the perspective of the millennials in the matters of influence and distributed leadership skills and it value on their leadership experience. To do so, and according to Creswell's view on research methodologies, I will tackle the research questions through a qualitative method research to address the study issue which variables are not easily measured and, in order to hear the "silenced voices" within research material, we need to develop a more complex and deeper and detailed understanding of the subject (Creswell and Poth, 2017, p.45) and this would not be possible through a quantitative method. Moreover, due to the nature of the research questions previously mentioned and its complexity (what they intend to answer), I will directly address to individuals or target groups that I want to study so I can hear and see, in first hand, their view and perceptions on the issue, their answers, their body reactions and their emotional baggage implicit in every statement.

An evident characteristic and main quality of interviewing is that the data is collected within its social context and every answer is subjective and relative to the perspectives and own views of interviewees on the issue being studied.

To better reach conclusions on the main question regarding "influence of distributed leadership on retention of millennials in the organizations", it will need to be taken into consideration the perspective of the millennials as they are the individuals to whom this question is addressing. Therefore, it'll be organized a set of live interviews with a sample of selected people to discuss the topic on the influential effectiveness of a distributed leadership method and technique.

The interviews will be conducted in person and by phone call and the reason why it will be done like this will be a matter of time efficiency, even though one evident and undeniable disadvantage of such method will be the time constraints, as there is the difficulty to set a specific time and date that fits both parties (interviewer and interviewee). This was the selected method due to the existence of emotional, body expressions that could help assess the quality of the answers and their veracity, as well as the nature of the answers and the spontaneity and honesty behind them.

The interviews are going to be semi-structured, meaning that the questions will be contained in a guide to structure the reasoning throughout the whole interview process, in which each question will have a purpose and will try to provide an explanation for a specific topic related to the problem. Unlike the structured interview, like in a survey type, the semi-structured interview will be adapted to each of the audiences and this means re-arranging or reformulating the questions according to the context of the interviewee and how the interview goes. There will be asked questions regarding the leadership practices and the overall perception and characterization of self-managed teams, introducing the concept of holacracy, its practices, as well as its influence on the everyday life at the organization.

The fact that it will be asked the same questions for each of the interviewees will assure this study the possibility to relate each of them and analyze the main differences in a flexible and conducted interview, in which the researcher can also collaboratively contribute buy guiding the interviewee according to each answer and outcome (to collect the most meaningful information) aside with the guide.

Sampling is one initial fundamental part of collecting the data for the research and it needs to be carefully treated and selected according to the object under study and what we look for in our research questions. Samples can be either defined on a probability or non-probability basis. Considering the qualitative nature of problem and purpose of studying the beliefs, attitude and perception on distributed leadership (that can't be usually normally distributed on a probability/random approach), the best approach would be the non-probability one (Marshall, 1996).

This means, after considering the non-probability approach to be more adequate, that for this research, it will be purposively chosen (through a personal judgement) the individuals that I consider to be representative of the population in its whole (Kothari, C. R, 2004). I will select on a haphazard (convenience) sample approach as I consider knowing accessible individuals that can provide potentially relevant data on the issue. For sure, this method is susceptible to a high level of bias error, something inevitable to exist when resorting to this type of sample technique. However, I will try to diminish the existence of such error by carefully selecting the people to interview.

Regarding the young millennials, I will be choosing 8 different people, from different companies, studies and background to talk and answer on the topics of leadership and influence on their view and perception on holacracy leadership structure.

To analyze the collected data, I will do it manually to retain the most suitable information for a later interpretation in a categorization matrix. First, I will start by reading every answer given and by that I will proceed to a coding phase and separation of key ideas and object of analysis in each of the questions. This division is going to facilitate the process of transcribing the key notions of each interviewee on each key idea behind every question.

One big advantage of personal and phone interviews is be the faster data collection time and the recording possibility, which allows a later review and analysis of each interview.

Some possible ethical issues might emerge, especially when it comes to confidentiality and so I will guarantee and emphasize that no personal information whatsoever will be indicated during the research and none of the information and answers will be shared with other interviewees or other researchers for other different study purposes. Highlighting the company's representative intervention, there would be an issue when talking on the current company's leadership strategy as it could be internal and confidential information according to the company's policies and regulations.

3.2 Validity and Limitations

As Creswell and Miller (2000, pg.125) observe on the topic of validity:

> "In quantitative research, investigators are most concerned about the specific inferences made from test scores on psychometric instruments and the internal and external validity of experimental and quasi-experimental designs (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). In contrast, qualitative researchers use a lens not based on scores, instruments, or research designs but a lens established using the views of people who conduct, participate in, or read and review a study."

In fact, on what concerns a qualitative research type, the validity also relies on the collaboration and willingness to provide information on a subject, the conduction and quality of the social component, being this the relationships established between the researcher and the interviewees and of course, the content itself that stands for subjective material, relative to each one's background, circumstances and understanding on the issue being studied.

Therefore, a few issues can play a compromising role in this study such as the actual research method of emailing the individuals and so there can be the possibility of non-availability in the shortest range of time and not noticing the email, due to a reception failure or simply finding the email going to the spam box. As a contingency plan, I will trust other contact sources such as phone (this can mostly be possible due to the proximity and accessibility between me, the researcher, and the interviewees).

This study could be applied to a wider audience and generalized the current social and technological background in nowadays society as it related to the usage of digital media tools that more and more are part of our life within both professional and social contexts. Moreover, this could be easily applied to other populations, in different countries, and could be introductive and a deeper understanding on other studies such as 'how to perform an effective communication strategy in a digital era' and 'how to establish a relationship and engage with digital audience' or simply about the 'characteristics of a successful digital influencer', for instance.

Internally, the structure and methods inherent to this study were fundamentally based on credible theories and sources of information and there was the concern of avoiding selecting random the participants so that in the general picture the highest percentage and more useful information and great understanding could be extracted out of every intervention, meaning the interview and contact with the interviewees. This is a carefully considered margin of error for the sampling options as the sample can be too small and this could hardly represent the whole population if not being careful and aware of the circumstances within the selection phase.

Other consideration can be the possible unreliability on the answers, especially on the company's interview, where one constraint could be the omission of some views, perspectives and practices of the company for both personal and professional protection.

In a matter of validity and practicability, the general process and methodologies conducted to answer the research questions were cautiously selected and several theories were applied to support the decisions made during the study to provide sufficient and reliable insight and meaning on the issue being studied.

3.3 Data Presentation

For the research and the structure of the interview guide, there were created five main questions, strategically written with the purpose to introduce, to guide and to extract the most reliable and relevant information for the study. As mentioned before, the benefits of performing a semi-structured interview include the additional and valuable piece of information that goes along with the conversation and the physical behavior (body, voice) that also allow us to assess the degree of comfort, certainty and confidence from the interviewees.

The beginning of the interview starts with three closed answers that help to position and categorize the profile of the interviewee in a more objective way. These are the business activity, if it's private or public sector, area or field of activity; size of the company through number of employees, whether it's micro (<10), small (<50), medium (<250) or large (>=250) and, the last one, the number of team members in the department where the interviewee works and collaborates directly with.

The open questions, which are five in total, start with a very introductory one that helps the interviewee get into the topic with more clarity and confidence. Thus, the first question is "*how do you view leadership as an organizational practice*" and its purpose is to know how the individual perceives leadership as a concept within an organizational environment. Considering the ambiguity of the concept of leadership, it is important to evaluate what leadership approach the individuals are more inclined towards, whether it's a more inspirational or managerial approach (leadership vs management).

The second question "*what is your company's current leadership structure, way of leading and leaders' behavior?*", is mostly to understand the organizational and leadership structure of the company, which will be useful to understand better the reasons of why the interviewee sees leadership and how it influences the way of acting, behaving and thinking of leadership. Nevertheless, it's fundamental to consider the size and business activity of the company to its structure and way of managing and leading the working teams, so we can take conclusions on the satisfaction and motivation of the interviewees.

The third question is *“how do you define a successful leadership behavior/method/process/practice in one word?”*. This one is aimed to having a clearer the understanding of what the individual really values the most, as a personal conceptualization of leadership.

Moving on to the fourth question, *“have you somehow been influenced/affected by your company’s leadership practices? Describe the positive and negative aspects of it”*, the goal is to gather the pros and cons of the leadership structure and way of leading described in the previous question, once more to enhance the possible satisfaction or negative criticism regarding the leadership practices and how the individual sees it and what values the most.

The last and fifth question is actually the most relevant one for the topic of holacracy and distributed leadership and it goes “*what do you think of a distributed leadership system, where everyone had totally equal decision-making power on their own tasks. Would it improve your company’s performance? Would you feel empowered or uncomfortable?”*. This is, no more nor less, to put the individuals in a hypothetical situation in which the company, more specifically the working team, performs according to the rules and constitution of holacracy. This is a crucial question to understand how the interviewee sees the nature of holacracy and the success of its implementation in the organization, both regarding the process and the disposition of the employees to cooperate and to perform according to it.

The last and fifth question is *“how do you define a successful leadership behavior/method/process/practice in one word?”*. As this one comes after the interviewee understanding and reaching clearer conclusions on the idea of holacracy, the objective is to close with the ultimate understanding and what the individual really values the most, as a personal conceptualization of leadership. Furthermore, and after exploring the topic of distributed leadership, it is a way of observing a possible evolution on the interviewee and growth on the idealization of leadership practices and processes in the organization.

The research method, more specifically the interviews, were conducted via phone or in-person to the respective interviewees, which were carefully selected for this research as a matter of their background and professional experiences. The aim was to diversify both sector, industry, business activity and professional experience in order to provide better insights.

Interviewee A has a background in territory management and had a professional experience in the public sector, the city hall, which is a large organization and where had to work with a team of around 30 people; interviewee B has a background in business administration and works in the private sector, a large multinational enterprise, with a team of approximately 40 people in the department; interviewee C has a background in Marketing and works in the private sector, in a large FMCG (fact moving consumer goods) company and collaborates with 6 people in the department; interviewee D has a background in business works in the private sector, but now on a small sized company, a startup, where the team has around 12 people; interviewee E has a background in economics and works in the private sector, in a startup as well, with a team of also 12 people; interviewee F had a background in international management and works in the private sector, a startup accelerator, in which the team has 12 people in the department; interviewee G has a background in industrial engineering and is working in the private sector, in a consulting company, in which the team has 11 people in the department or project as it is called in this business activity.

There were always certain and relevant aspects within each of the interviews, that were semi-conducted and there was always room for more and additional information that complemented and enriched the conversation. The given answers were the following:

Question 1: "how do you view leadership as an organizational practice?"

Interviewee A)

"Leadership is mainly knowing how to act with people, is knowing how to divide the personal part of the professional and trying to make the best decisions for both employees and the company."

Interviewee B)

"*Being a leader is being someone who manages the resources he has well, who teaches, who criticizes, who motivates, who trusts the team he has."*

Interviewee C)

“Leadership is key to retention, because the first company made me join the team because I felt welcomed and if it wasn’t for the leader personality, I would have left the company way before”

Interviewee D)

“*It is bringing together and forming the right teams for the organization and developing those teams, it is defining the right vision and contexts for that team to have high performance.”*

Interviewee E)

“*A leader for me is an example person who works his self-knowledge to guide others, guide and motivate a group. A leader must have a holistic view of his team's needs.”*

Interviewee F)

“*Leadership is a group of people in the company that define the direction and align the workforce and they inspire with their action.”*

Interviewee G)

“*No, I think that a company should nature the leader inside us but we need a minimum structure, so if everyone has the same decision-making power it will be a confusion. Also, it should be based on competencies and not experience. Considering that I don’t have much experience, I don’t know if I would feel empowered and more uncomfortable, so I appreciate the learning by doing but I would still have someone to teach me more.”*

Interviewee H)

"Leadership is about being able to bring a group of people of an entire organization towards a same goal, a same objective”

Question 2: what is your company's current leadership structure?"

Interviewee A)

"A hierarchical structure but not very linked. There was a lot of connection between everyone. There was a person who made decisions but did not impose or give orders. Work flowed among all. In the office there were 5 people working and there was one person responsible and who gave guidelines and guidance. We had to report to this chief of staff and it was not very common to make decisions autonomously."

Interviewee B)

"There is a CEO and six other people above me, it's something hierarchical. It's very good in terms of processes, great communication, the CEO is in constant touch with us. We understand the direction well, what is expected of us, values are something that we follow in everyday life. We have personal goals based on our values and every 3 months we are evaluated based on our priorities and values"

Interviewee C)

"*There are 3 major areas, Trade Mktg, Marketing and Sales. There is a leader in Sales and a Head of Trade and Marketing and above is a Country Manager. There are 2 teams reporting to a leader. It's a vertical structure, no doubt.*

Interviewee D)

"*Flat structure, as much as possible. With everyone having clear ownership of their role, results orientation with capacity building along the way to ensure that everyone can perform their current tasks and grow and improve within the organization."*

Interviewee E)

"*It's a flat structure, there are, I would say 3 hierarchical levels. It is close, empowering, reliable leadership."*

Interviewee F)

"*We have seven co-founders and two people that are head of department and then all the team works together. We are going through a transition and it's still not clear, but it's more a flat structure for sure"*

Interviewee G)

"*There are only two people above whom we have to report. Since there are not many levels (or at least we do not feel them), I feel that the information is very direct and reaches those who want it quickly. The information is very clean and transparent, which is fundamental to our operation and this facilitates the processes."*

Interviewee H)

"We have a specific structure where we have no micro management. We have several goals, number and targets to reach (I'm talking for myself, the sales department) and the way we reach them is with the help of the people above us, from their leadership, coaching, ongoing practices and colleagues helping on self-experience. We have one direct so called "manager", to whom I refer to, who is today the head of business development and the person above is our vp of sale directly, with whom I also have a close relationship, so I refer to the head of business development to ask about the status of different prospecting clients, questions, etc and I ask to the vp of sales for a bigger matter. It's a really flat structure, there is not micro-manager and we have freedom to do everything the way we want, we are not obliged to work in a specific time, not obliged in working in specific ways, except, of course, the way we put the information to the CRM, which is really important in sales, but the rest it's completely up to us how we decide to approach the leads and it's up to us how we want to do our processes."

Question 3: how do you define successful leadership in one word?"

Interviewee A)

"*Assertive. Successful leadership has to be thoughtful, well thought out and has to be assertive depending on the project.*

Interviewee B)

"*It's what makes people motivated. Thus, motivation."*

Interviewee C)

"*It's that thing of seeing the leader with respect and seeing with hierarchy and at the same time seeing as a friend. Supportive and Friendly"*

Interviewee D)

"*Doing great things together"*

Interviewee E)

"Mutual Trust"

Interviewee F)

"*Integrity and Inspiring through action (giving the example)"*

Interviewee G)

"People Management"

Interviewee H)

"Encouragement"

<u>Question 4: "have you been influenced/affected by your company's leadership practices?</u>

Interviewee A)

"Yes, my chief of staff was often absent and with her lack of availability, some coordination was lacking and the work did not flow. There should be someone who could take responsibility for her, someone with more experience. Probably in other sectors it may not be possible to have this hierarchy, but in the public sector, especially something that has a direct impact on the functioning of the city, decisions need to be further analyzed"

Interviewee B)

"*Yes, I am influenced by my managers and my work. If you agree on how your manager works, then it is very positive, otherwise not. In my case they give me a lot of freedom to be responsible, they are simply there to guide, support and take responsibility when I do something less well."*

Interviewee C)

"*I've been positively influenced, where my leader made me see how to lead people, and which everyone sees as a friend, with little distance. Negatively, in my current work the country manager has mastery but does not know how to deal with people and this reflects the lack of support from employees. Everyone respects but is afraid.*

Interviewee D)

"*Yes, positive – the sense of ownership, learning by doing, ability to see impact of my role and my work. Negative – Sometimes I'm responsible for my own development so it's a bit on me to learn and research new things"*

Interviewee E)

"*As the form of leadership is so much about employee empowerment, I feel that I am given tasks and that I am positively forced to grasp and this speeds up the growth of employees in the team."*

Interviewee F)

"*Yes, the leaders are the ones that inspire and set the values of the company. They influence me positively because of that. If they do negative things, I will feel frustrated. I need to recognize myself as part of the leadership practice."*

Interviewee G)

"*Yes, every day I have to be leader of my projects and if I had not had a good example, I would not be so easy. I only have good things to point out. I work with the client and before any project I have to have a very well-defined plan and clear indicators and this was through the way of being and the knowledge that my managers were transmitting. We have a relationship that turns out to be not only professional and that makes them more understanding."*

Interviewee H)

"*Yes, positively, because now I'm able to work autonomously and by myself completely and to be driven by numbers and processes, working times and that's something that has had a positive influence on me and that has given a bigger responsibility as a collaborator. On the other side, negatively, the lack of motivation that there is sometimes, because I don't have any manager physically present with me, on a day to day activity and all of them are remote managers."*

<u>Question 5: "what do you think of a distributed leadership system. Would it improve your company's performance? Would you feel empowered or uncomfortable?"</u>

Interviewee A)

"*It would be good to see that your team trusts you and I think I would like it. However, initially I would be afraid and would need some experience. Even though it would be an asset even to learn from mistakes and improve constantly, it always takes someone superior to review and approve the work. It makes sense to have someone superior."*

Interviewee B)

"*If everyone has the same degree of leadership, there will be a conflict. I wouldn't like it, I would feel confused and lost, I wouldn't know who to report to, or who to ask for help with a problem. Leadership comes with responsibility and so it is logical that we cannot all have the same degree of leadership because we do not have the same responsibility:"*

Interviewee C)

"*I've been positively influenced, where my leader made me see how to lead people, and which everyone sees as a friend, with little distance. Negatively, in my current work the country manager has mastery but does not know how to deal with people and this reflects the lack of support from employees. Everyone respects but is afraid."*

Interviewee D)

"*If people had the right skills, I would feel empowered"*

Interviewee E)

"*No, because it is super important to have a person who makes a last decision, who takes responsibility for that decision and who has the responsibility to get an overview of the team's tasks. Otherwise it is really difficult to move forward if there is no person able to lead and take the next steps. I would be uncomfortable for the reasons described earlier. There would be no one to trust more and have the role of guiding the team. Ultimately it would be a team making decisions in a polarized way and that would bring me discomfort.*

Interviewee F)

"*No, I think that a company should nature the leader inside us but we need a minimum structure, so if everyone has the same decision-making power it will be a confusion. Also, it should be based on competencies and not experience. Considering that I don't have much experience, I don't know if I would feel empowered and more uncomfortable, so I appreciate the learning by doing but I would still have someone to teach me more."*

Interviewee G)

“*No, first because in the area I am in, credibility is needed and our society is not prepared to fully trust a less experienced person. In Portugal it is assumed that age equals quality. Not now, but maybe in a few years I feel empowered. I see myself as a good leader but I know that it takes tools and learning to support me to be a good leader in what I do and manage my project. However, I think my company is already a mix of this process, because despite being new, I already have a lot of independence in what I do.”*

Interviewee H)

“*On paper, a distributed leadership system sounds like a great idea, on theory, but to put it into practice is impossible, as I really think you need someone to be above you to give you direct feedback, direct recommendations, not putting you down but someone who tells you when something is not right and letting you know that they can help you when your results are not good. So, I think it’s a bad idea to completely distribute leadership, I think you need hierarchy.”*

4. Analysis and Reflection

In order to better analyze the interviewees answers, we can categorize and highlight main topics. After creating these main topics, the answers will be analyzed topic by topic in order to understand how the interviewees perceive that topic and what are the major similarities and differences.

Thus, in the given answers we can find two big themes of discussion: the general view of leadership and what the interviewees value the most and, second, the individual's relation and fit with the organizational structure.

Regarding the view and perception of the concept of leadership, interviewee A, who knows leadership practices within a public institution, the idea is that a good leader should be capable of taking the right decisions not only for the organization but thinking about the employees and team as well. In the department, individual A perceived leadership practices in the city hall as guidelines and not much as 'orders', where there was a lot of **connection** with everyone in the team and all the "work would run smoothly", even with the vertical structure. When defining a successful leadership system, the interviewee stated as "assertive, that is well-thought according to the project but that is mostly performed with assertiveness". However, and despite the previous thoughts, the individual reached the conclusion that not only is important to have someone providing you **guidance** but it's also important to enable others to do so, without being so dependent on a specific leader, which was the case in the department. Thus, when the leader was absent, the interviewee would feel more insecure and there was no one capable to provide guidelines or an equal level of comfort at work. This can be related to what Sharon (2015) and Schwitzer & Lyons (2010) explain on the matter, regarding the dependence of millennials on guidelines and guidance, who wish to build a closer relationship with the manager or superior and expect constant feedback on performance, both as a learning and empowerment process.

> «A good life that not only asks for a bigger work-life balance but the growing expectation and need of a "flat hierarchy and access to senior leadership" (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), meaning a closer relationship with the managerial team and the possibility of also having a strong mentor (Sharon, 2015), who can be "constantly available for feedback" (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010).»

Regarding the last question, which involved the perception of the individual on the practical notions of holacracy, the interview demonstrated some interest and excitement but, on the same level, raised some concerns and insecurity regarding autonomy and making decisions without supervision. This issue was related to inexperience, which the interviewee highlights as a reason to be concerned and unsafe without a stable and hierarchical structure. This fits the limitations raised by Van de Kamp (2014) as there can be some issues when talking about effectiveness of holacracy with junior levels or individuals that are still searching for experience, feedback and validation.

On the same line, interviewee B perceives also leadership in a managerial perspective, in which a leader is someone "capable of managing resources, someone who critiques, who teaches, who motivates and trusts in the team working with. As the previous interviewee, B also values communication and interaction with the team and especially proximity, despite the significant level of hierarchy. "We understand the direction" and "values are what we base our work on everyday" are key phrases that the interviewee stated with great confidence, enhancing the need for guidance and **motivation** through values and **personal goals** within the organization, being the leader essential and the main communicator of values and purpose of the organization. As in Schweitzer & Lyons (2010), Millennials aim for a job, a career that matches personal values, that brings meaning to the everyday tasks. Thus, as in Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. (2010), the leader should, indeed, transmit inspiration and to be able to communicate the true mission, vision, values and principles that are part of the core of the organization and what it stands for, so that the individuals, the Millennials, can understand and perform in accordance to those values, just like interviewee B mentions. Furthermore, for B, the road to succeed in leadership comes the capability to motivate and that's why the interviewee believes that "if you agree with the leading methods of your manager, then it's a very positive thing for you and your performance". This can be seen on Yukl's findings, «the mission, vision and values are undoubtedly a great asset for the influential power of the leader on shaping the organization's culture and the way they use it to communicate and inspire the teams and individuals in the organization is fundamental to set objectives, goals and strategies (Yukl, Gary, 2013)» and Kaiser as well as in «the leaders' behavior is a reflection of their values, principles and perspectives and by sharing and communicating those within the organization is what sets the organizational climate and a "shared interpretation of work group experiences produces a work group climate" (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008, pg. 105)»

Nevertheless, B also raises the importance of knowing the **responsibility** that leadership tasks represent, because of the reasons mentioned before, and the comfort that is to "take full responsibility of my work whenever I do something wrong". This relates to what Kaiser

(2008) states, which is the importance of a leader to do “whatever needs to be done for the group to succeed (Kaiser et al., 2008, pg 104) and how they are “responsible for identifying potential obstacles between a team and its goals, discovering solutions to those obstacles, and implementing a preferred course of action” (Kaiser et al., 2008, pg 104). As for the holacracy view of the interviewee, there is a high level of skepticism and uncomfort as well. The individual believes that a scenario in which everyone has the same leadership and decision making power is going to generate conflict and, on the personal note, the interviewee wouldn’t value ownership as stated on “*I would feel confused and lost, I wouldn't know who to report to, or who to ask for help with a problem”.* This means that the perception of the interviewee on distributed leadership (which then affects the vision on holacracy) is that it relies solemnly on autonomy and not much support from the team. Moreover, the interviewee also finds holacracy and the general concept of distributed leadership to potentially lead to more conflict, as everyone becomes equally accountable and leaders of their own tasks, which falls into agreement with Lee & Edmondson (2017).

Now interviewee C, who works in a highly vertical structure, refers mostly to the importance that is to consider not only the hierarchy but to balance it with **proximity**, **friendship** and **support** (just like interview before) as observed through the citation “I was positively influenced by one manager that taught me how to deal and behave with people and how everyone could see you as a friend” which contrasts with “my current manager doesn’t know how to cope with people and that reflects on the lack of support from the team members”. Nevertheless, individual C confidently said that if there wasn’t for the previous leader in another organization, the one with the better social skills, C would have left the organization way before and so that made the C hold on the previous organization for a bit longer. On the previous interview, we could observe and confirm that meaning and purpose can play an important role on the motivation of an individual to stay or not in a certain organization. However, interview C, introduces also the idea that also the managers, team and leaders can influence the decision of staying or going. As in the literature review, « Millennials value managerial qualities such as honesty, being an open-minded person, active listener, with the disposition to listen and accept feedback, to guide and, also, the posture of, not only a co-worker, but somehow a friend as well. As it has been mentioned in the former aspects, Millennials appreciate working with a positive atmosphere and this includes the possibility to have a closer relationship with colleagues and with a manager they respect, being one of the motivational factors on their performance, even stronger than salary or monetary benefits (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010) ». When asked about the implementation of holacracy in the organization, the interviewee didn't hesitate and stated this possibility to be an impossible practice, due to the inequality of the experience level among the team members, as the know-how and knowledge of each individual is what a leader should be take care of, in order to create a better performing team. This was also seen on the first interviewee (A), who shared some concerns regarding junior positions, who are still seeking for learning.

As for interviewee D, leadership is about "creating the right teams for the organization and develop those teams (…) in order to reach a high performance". Individual D works in an organization with a very flat structure, a startup, where everyone has "clear ownership of their role, results orientation with capacity building along the way to guarantee that everyone can perform their current tasks and grow and improve within the organization". Thus, the key aspect here is **training** and **capacity building** with the aim to reach for **autonomy** and personal growth. This is something that D sees as a positive thing and an aspect that influenced D in becoming more aware of the **sense of ownership** and impact of the actions and work and also to learn new things "by doing". On the other side, there is a negative note that is the self-development and to learn and research new things without the support of a manager. As in Zheng (2010), there is a relation between a decentralized structure of an organization and how it influences individual growth, creativity, innovation and, mostly, employee satisfaction. Also, as in Bernstein et al. (2019), having control of your own tasks can give you ownership and "a greater sense of making real progress on meaningful work" (Bernstein et al., 2019, pg.10), which is what the interviewee highlights the most. The negative aspect of the decentralized framework perceived by the interviewee is the difficulty of self-development and growth without the proper assistance and guidance from a manager, which falls into accordance with the previous interviewees and Hershatter & Epstein (2010), observing that Millennials are a type of generation that seek a constant guidance from a superior figure. Also, the findings from (Van de Kamp, 2014) that people are different and it's not safe to rely on a decentralized model effectiveness on every team member's performance. In comparison with the first three interviewees, it is noticeable the focus on the need for guidance and the healthy and close relationship with the leader or manager, however, it is also evident to see that, so far, the interviewee D, who's part of a more flat structure, a start-up, has highlighted more the benefits of such a decentralized leadership structure, which is to “be able to have a hands-on role and make a bigger impact” (Sharon, 2015)”. Moving towards the last question on holacracy, and considering the flat structure of the organization of D and its seeking for empowerment and ownership, it was not a surprise that this one would feel comfortable in this position, without referring to the need for guidance, approval or guidelines. The only condition for this condition to succeed and to make D happy about this leadership structure would be to have the perception and assurance of a great team to work with and the right people in the organization, that would make it possible to implement and sustain such structure.

Similar to this one, there is interviewee E who also works in a startup, with a flat structure, described the organization’s leadership as “very close, of learning and **trust**”. Furthermore, such leadership has influenced E to become more self-sufficient in the working tasks, leading to the sense of **empowerment** and a “faster growth of the team members”, just like interviewee D. This can be seen on Yukl’s findings (2013) on the relation of empowerment and the level of autonomy and individual growth, which is a positive and increasing relation, especially in a smaller organizational environment like a startup. Moreover, what interviewee E values and perceives as a successful leadership practice is to have a holistic view of all the team members their individual and collective needs, just like Van, V. M., & Ahuja, A. (2010) and Kaiser (2008) tell us on the basic notions of leadership and the role of the leader as a potentiator for common good. On the last question, interviewee E didn’t have a very positive view on holacracy and its effectiveness on the operations of a organization and highlighted the importance of having someone in charge of taking final decisions and an overview of what is happening in different tasks or roles. However, E justified these statements based on the need for having someone capable of leading the organization forward and on the same direction, while defining and setting the rhythm for reaching “the next steps”. This means that E wouldn’t feel comfortable in a framework such as a holacracy and, clearly would prefer to be in a position of having someone to rely on and to lead the way, which matches the majority of the first interviewees, who also value guidance as a leadership trait. This, of course, while having still the possibility of ownsership and an empowered figured in the team.

As for interview F, whose organization has a similar behavior as a startup but a bigger size (unlike interviewees D and E, whose startup has a small size), the perception of leadership is related mostly with **inspiration** and mission and **values** orientation and that “inspire with their action". Thus, the overall perception and the ultimate leadership trait is to be able to set the example and to embody a persona that inspires and that motivates the team to act and wish to become better, otherwise that would generate frustration and lower performance. That's why F delegates so much importance to the power that leaders have and how much influence they can have on the team members, by inspiring and touching on their aspirational needs. This is, therefore, a valuable leadership trait that crosses different types of organizations and different types of leadership structures, as interviewee B, who is in significantly more vertical structure, and still enhances the relevance of values, meaning and purpose and how well a leader is able to communicate the right values to the team. Regarding holacracy, F has a very similar vision as some previous interviewees and, even though F appreciates an organization that nurtures an inner leader and ownership capabilities, this one wouldn't also feel comfortable in a structure where everyone performs and decides based only on tasks and not roles or positions. The reason why interview F would discard this option would be, once again, due to the inexperience and perhaps lack of the right skills or competencies for the tasks and how confused it would be to have everyone with the same decision-making power, as Van de Kamp (2014) states as one of some of the limitations of holacracy.

As for interviewee G, who is part of a highly vertical and hierarchical structure, leadership should put its focus on people and effectively managing a team, both on a quantitative side and an eye on results but also on motivation, which turns out to be what influences results at the end of the day, as in Yukl (2013), that goes through some factors that leverages a higher performance of individuals, being motivation on important factor. Even though G works in a multinational with a large dimension, the fact is that the structure is, surprisingly, very flat and G only has two superior levels, for reporting purposes. Nevertheless, the communication and information flow are very smooth and transparent, allowing everyone to follow and to keep track of everything and to be updated quite fast. This is what the interviewee states as being essential for the operations and processes, that benefit from such flat structure. This fits perfectly the ideas of Sharon (2015), that has observed that transparency, clarification and deep knowledge and understanding of the surrounding activities and what's happening inside the organization is truly relevant for Millennials. Besides this, interviewee G perceives the leadership practices of the organization as great and that they positively influenced and facilitated work and performance. This was mostly nurtured by the personal aspects of the managers, that not only transmitted knowledge but also allowed for a relationship of trust that motivated communication, just as Hershatter & Epstein (2010) and Schweitzer & Lyons (2010) explain on relationship and personal characteristics of the leaders as an influential factor. As a positive consequence, such personal aspects of the managers and proximity resulted in a clearer understanding and a more proactive and focused way of operating and working on individual tasks. Furthermore, G was proud to state that is the leader of the projects that is accountable for, based on the knowledge and personal characteristics that is reflected from each one of the managers. This is something that is now new anymore, as it was previously observed through interviewee B, C or F, for instance, which is the personality and social traits of the manager that influences that way of working and how it can positively influence that way you respond and receive all the information and knowledge. On the notions of holacracy, interviewee G didn't show much excitement about it and believes it wouldn't be an efficient system. The reason would be related to trust and **credibility** that comes from experience and competencies. This means a less experienced individual would more easily be subject to lack of trust, which compromises the basic roots and nature of holacracy in its whole, as Van de Kamp (2014) explains on the potential limitations and impact a junior or senior role can have based on experience and how less accountable that individual can become due to the lack of trust or credibility for some specific tasks just because of experience (regardless of the skills or abilities). Despite these conclusions, interviewee G still finds the organization to be relatively close to an holacracy system, because everyone has a lot of independence and ownership of a significant amount of tasks and responsibilities.

Regarding the last one, interviewee H, an element of a big tech company, with a very flat structure, in accordance to the previous interviewees, also acknowledges the importance of having micro-management and someone to encourage you. Despite the positive factor mentioned by the individual H, that having the ownership of tasks allowed a more autonomous performance, a bigger sense of responsibility, which, is something that the individual values.

Looking at the table 1, with the overall results and answers given by all the interviewees, there is no evidence of relation with the size of the company and organizational structure, meaning that the more or less flat the organization doesn't necessarily equal a more positive perception on the leadership structure and practices implied.

Table 1 - Answers analysis

Interviewee	*Q1*	*Q2*	*Q3*
A	People management and social skills	Hierarchical	Assertiveness
B	People management and social skills	Hierarchical	Motivation
C	Social skills	Hierarchical	Supportive
D	Team/People management and performance	Flat	Teamwork
E	Team/People management and social skils	Flat	Trust
F	Team/People management and social skils	Flat	Inspiration
G	Team/People management and performance	Hierarchical	People Management
H	Team/People management and performance	Flat	Encouragement
Interviewee	*Q4*	*Q5*	*Size of company*
A	More negative influence (lack of managerial presence)	No	Big
B	Yes, very positve (high managerial presence)	No	Big
C	Yes, very positve (high managerial presence)	No	Big
D	Yes, very positve (low managerial presence)	Yes, depending on team	Small
E	Yes, very positve (low managerial presence)	No	Small
F	Yes, very positve (high managerial presence)	No	Small
G	Yes, very positve (high managerial presence)	No	Big
H	Yes, more or less positive (low managerial presence)	No	Big

In fact, what generates a positive view on leadership is what the whole number or interviewees highlights as the managerial competencies, level of guidance found in the leadership practices and the personal characteristics of the manager or leader. Thus, this reflects on the results of the answers for the last question, regarding holacracy, in which mostly everyone clearly stated and showed not being comfortable in a structure run by holacracy and self-managed teams. Only D showed a little more openness to the idea of holacracy, depending on the experience level of the team, which was also one of the reasons why the others didn't believe in the effectiveness of holacracy, because of experience and seniority issues.

Despite the majority of the interviewees having a positive perception on the influence of managers, the fact is that no one defined a successful leadership as being empowering and that is what can be considered as one of the pillars for distributed leadership, and more specifically, holacracy.

The two interviewees that had a positive perception with a lower managerial presence, are the ones who mention and value, strongly, individual growth and empowerment, which is, actually, one of the valuable aspects of a self-managed team. This proves the possible existence of a positive perception from individuals of a self-managed team regarding the benefits of working autonomously and having the ownership of tasks. However, and just like the limitations of holacracy that were mentioned before, the total inexistence of roles and guidance may not be comfortable for individuals who seek for some guidelines, approval and mentoring, which are typical characteristics of the Millennial generation.

Motivation, inspiration, support or trust are actually leadership traits more reflected on a non-self-managed type of leadership, with similar relevance for both flat and hierarchical structures.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was mainly to assess and better understand if the Millennials, among all the different factors they value while working in an organization, if they actually value a more distributed leadership, more specifically, a self-managed leadership system based on the theories of holacracy (a leadership system created by Brian Robertson).

Throughout the study we have observed and gone through three pillars, which are organizations, leadership and millennials. This has allowed the study to get a deeper literature knowledge on the different organization structures, culture, leadership practices, definition of holacracy as a self-managed leadership system and, of course, the definition and categorization of millennials within their profiles and characteristics.

In accordance to the nature of the research, which is interpretivist, the qualitative methodology through phone and in-person interviews was the one that allowed for a greater understanding on the topic and the interviewees were carefully chosen, in order to collect a variety of profiles, backgrounds and fields, so we could find (or not) relations with, for instance, structure and size of organizations and the perception of leadership and what the individual most valued about leadership practices. The interviewees were selected within a range of 23 to 30 years old.

The results were very clear and coherent and illustrated some of the literature collected, that stated the need for guidance, support, coaching and mentoring that these Millennials value, among different factors such as flexibility, easy communication, transparency and a close relation with their team, specially their managers or superiors. It is also interesting to see the inexistence of relation between other factors such as the structure, size and type of organization and the perception of the individuals of the notions of distributed leadership and teams that operate autonomously, with the ownership of tasks and decision-making power on things, directly.

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