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MIXING CHINESE AND WESTERN LEADERSHIP STYLES: SWEDISH FIRMS IN CHINA

ABSTRACT

The purpose is to contribute to research on global leadership, in particular to the trade-off between local responsiveness and global integration in emerging markets. We study to what extent managers in Swedish firms adapt to the local Chinese leadership style, while also mixing it with the overall Western leadership style of the investing firm. Based on a framework on global leadership theory, viewed from an institutional angle, a comparative leadership style theory is developed. A case study of ten Swedish firms in China is conducted with managers of both Western and Chinese origin. Findings show that there are no pure Western (WLS) or Chinese (CLS) leadership style in the firms studied. Rather, there is a mix between WLS that represents global integration and CLS that represents local responsiveness. Here Western managers perceive the firm to have adapted more than what the Chinese managers do. Cultural challenges are faced and Western firms circumvent these through hiring Chinese middle managers adapted to a Western context, constituting a bridge between the WLS and CLS. Thus, for Chinese managers an adapted mixed leadership style could be a competitive advantage or even prerequisite to attain a position in a Western firm.

Keywords: Global leadership; local responsiveness; global integration; institutional approach, leadership functions; Chinese/Western.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to a review by Osland *et al.* (2012), global leadership is still an emerging research field, where knowledge is especially scant on leadership in rapidly emerging markets such as China. We know too little about how global leaders manage local employees and how local leaders adapt to the foreign leadership style brought in by Western multinational enterprises (MNEs), especially since recent research indicates that in emerging markets, local leadership being traditional and paternalistic, is still common (Aycan, *et al.* 2013). Knowledge is also scant about how corporate leaders respond to competitive threats from new MNEs now rapidly internationalizing from such countries (Jansson & Söderman, 2015). This research is also a response to the call by scholars for more context-specific research to draw on indigenous thought when developing new theories on management practices throughout the world (Fang, 2010; Meyer, 2006; Li, 2012; Zheng & Lamond, 2009).

Concluding from most research on the trade-off between local responsiveness and global integration in emerging markets, summarized in Jansson (2007a,b) based on the framework developed by Bartlett & Ghoshal (1989), one would expect that international firms adapt partially by extending some leadership styles from abroad at the same time as it adopts some local leadership styles. Such partial adjustments are then also made by indigenous managers, resulting in a mix of foreign and local leadership styles at the firm. This challenge of dual adjustment of the international firm and local parties in emerging markets is studied in this paper.

The purpose is to contribute to the research on global leadership, in particular to the trade-off between local responsiveness and global integration. We study to what extent managers in Swedish MNEs adapt to the local Chinese leadership style, while also integrating it with the overall Western leadership style of the investing firm.

New research indicates that leadership is a key area in which Western firms in China adapt to the Chinese authority system as part of their international strategic management (Jansson &

Söderman, 2015). Therefore, given the importance of China in today's globalising economy, we examine the mix of leadership styles in the hybrid organizations established in China by foreign firms. This mix consists of two different leadership styles. Previous research shows that the contemporary principles of leadership in mainland and overseas Chinese organizations are similar to those of more than 2000 years ago (Chen & Farh, 2010; Drew & Jansson, 2015; Drew, *et al.* 2014) and are distinctly different to the principles of leadership in Western firms. There is some research on the cultural background of Chinese management practices to build on, particularly how they are founded on Confucianism (Redding 1980; 1993; 1995) or Taoism (Hayley, *et al.* 2004), or both (Jansson & Söderman, 2013).

We find that the classical typology developed by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1992) on four types of international managers (country, functional, business, and corporate managers) founded on their four types of international organization (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989) is still relevant, but needs to be advanced and adapted to the current global leadership situation in emerging markets. This is done here by studying how responsive country managers are to the local market in also improving on global efficiency and MNE competitiveness, and how responsive local functional managers are to the Western leadership style of the host country firm. Global leaders are then defined as 'high level professionals such as executives, vice presidents, directors, and managers who are in jobs with some global leadership activities such as global integration responsibilities' (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2009, p. 336).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on previous research, we distinguish between five major semantic spaces regarding leadership, or general functions of leadership: Authority, Planning, Decision-making, Organizing, and Control (Drew and Jansson, 2015). Below the view of leadership defined as institutions will be given as ground for the comparative leadership style theory, thereafter the functions within Chinese and Western leadership styles are presented.

2.1 Leadership defined as institution

In accordance with Smircich and Morgan (1982), we assume that these leadership functions are socially constructed through interaction between individuals. Leadership is then very much dependent upon the context in which it is expressed. Since context matters, we define

the type of leadership practiced in a specific environment as leadership style. We specify leadership style further from an institutional perspective in that it comprises a relatively durable 'system of established and embedded social rules that structure social interaction' (Hodgson, 2006, p. 13). Institutions provide individuals with social rules on how to lead when faced with different types of shared reoccurring social problems (North, 2005; Ostrom, 2008; Redding, 2008). In this way, leadership styles are standardized by transferring rules, norms and ways of thinking between individuals within social groups. Institutions give stability and meaning to collective social behavior (Jansson, *et al.* 2007). In the context of leadership, these social rules refer to the authority system of the organization (Whitley, 1992). Authority is a power concept, which deals with inequality in organizations (Hofstede, 2001). Since leadership is enacted in the authority system, we finally define leadership as the execution of authority through formal and informal superior-subordinate relationships, viewed from the perspective of the superior.

Based on Kakar's (1971) authority ideologies, we distinguish between three types of authority systems in which leadership rules are embedded: formal hierarchy, patriarchal and nurturant. Authority in Western organizations is legitimized by impersonal laws and rules, which in turn are based on agreed principles of rationality. This type of authority is defined as hierarchical authority, where superiors legitimize their power and control of subordinates by their formal authority. Emotional affiliation and task control are both low in such rule-determined organizations. This leadership style is based on legal authority (Weber, 1947). Kakar (1971) suggests that authority systems in Asian and pre-industrial societies are parental in nature. Parental authority systems are family-like in the way that the parent-child relationship is extended to the superior-subordinate relationship in organizations. They are based on traditional authority and/or charismatic authority (Weber, 1947).

In parental relationships the status also contains a cultural or ideological element. The leader is more than a leader, being a superior person in control because of their superiority. Social interaction is characterized by obedience and conformity. Security for the subordinate is obtained by relying on the leader. Leadership is the property of a person's family or ethnic group and not the right to a competence field determined by the capacity of an individual. Legitimacy is based on everyday routine and an unchanging past. Informal 'blood' relations become important, often as patron-client ties (Scott, 1995). There are two types of parental authority systems, patriarchal and nurturant, resulting in two types of traditional leadership

styles. The former is based on the father-child relationship, while the latter is based on the mother-child relationship (Kakar, 1971). The patriarchal relationship emphasizes the superior's right of decision. Emotional affiliation is low and task control by the superior over the subordinate high. The nurturant leadership style emphasizes the concern of the superior for their subordinates. Benevolence and compassion are key aspects and are mainly taught by example rather than giving orders.

2.2 The comparative leadership style theory

The theory used to study the mix of leadership styles mainly builds on the comparative strategic management theory developed by Jansson & Söderman (2015), which integrates strategic management theory and institutional theory. The main idea is that due to the variation of institutional set-ups, strategic management practices differ throughout society. The firm is viewed as an institution, where strategic behavior is interpreted as rule-like. It is expressed as organizational routines regarding how actions and decisions to act are formed, as well as how these acts and decisions are executed. Institutions are defined as the rules, routines, and codes typical of a legitimized social grouping. Institutions work as instruments for describing, explaining, and predicting management behavior, thereby reducing uncertainty and risks. Strategic management is influenced by the rule system within the company, at the same time as it is influenced by the rule systems in organizational fields and in society in general. Based on the three institutional pillars identified by Scott (1995); cognitive, normative and regulative, institutions are further specified into four major types of basic rules valid for societal institutions in general (Jansson, *et al*. 2007). The cognitive substance is defined as thought style, the normative substance is divided up into norms and values, and the regulative substance is specified as enforcement mechanisms. Due to the many similarities between cultural and institutional theories, cultural models are used in institutional analysis to develop informal rules. Culture is crystallized into institutions (Hofstede, 2001).

Major theories about comparative management research focus on the cognitive substance or **Thought Styles**. The most useful theory to develop further this basic rule is Redding (1980), which compares Western and Chinese management. This theory focuses both directly on the Chinese business culture and how it relates to Western business culture. Four cognitive dimensions from this work are therefore used as sub-concepts to express differences between

Chinese and Western management. *Self* concerns how people mentally relate to their social environment, for example if they look on themselves as belonging to groups or not. *Causality* is a dimension that directly focuses on the mental process itself, for example whether logical connections are made between categories. *Probability* concerns how people mentally relate to the fact that the future is unknown, for example whether the future can be calculated or whether fatalism prevails. The conceptualization of the latter two sub rules has also been influenced by Trompenaars (1993) and Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (2000), viz. the *Specificity* (atomistic, analytic, objective) vs. *Diffusion* (holistic, elaborative, synthetic relational) dimensions. *Time* is about how people perceive time, whether it is monochromatic or linear.

The normative sub-concepts of **Norms and Values** are mainly developed from the same cultural theory (ibid.): *Universalism* (rules and generalizations) vs. *Particularism* (special circumstances and unique relations); *Achieved status* (performance) vs. *Ascribed status* (connections); *Inner direction* (conscience, convictions located inside) vs. *Outer direction* (examples and influences located outside). *Trust* is chiefly conceptualized based on the *Individualism* (personal freedom and competitiveness) vs. *Communitarianism* (social responsibility and cooperation) dimensions. *Morality* (Redding, 1980) has been conceptualized as a normative rule, i.e. virtues related to what is right or wrong, expressing the difference between a shame culture and a guilt culture.

The **Enforcement Mechanisms** mainly build on Whitley (1992), which is from where we define two sub concepts, viz. the *Authority system* and the *Sanction system*.

2.3 The Chinese leadership style

Cheung and Chan (2005) provide interesting insights into the influence of Chinese philosophies on contemporary leadership by identifying Confucian-based leadership principles. The most prominent principle was benevolence, including the following themes: paternalism, sympathy, forgiveness, friendliness, reciprocity, trust and fulfilling the needs of others. The next most common principle is related to learning. It is deemed to be the most effective path through which people might grow and achieve a virtuous position in society (Redding, 1993). The Confucian and Taoist principle of harmony was also strongly identified through themes including solidarity, partnerships, networking, loyalty and the absence of

factionalism. Other key themes identified included humility; Taoist flexibility and reversion and; the Legalist themes of righteousness, a strong interest in the social welfare and interests of their people, thrift and self-control. The literature also suggests that moral behavior is an important element of paternalistic leadership (Cheng, *et al.* 2004). Wu (2012) suggests that such findings are consistent with the Confucian and the Taoism ideology of governing on non-interference (*Wu Wei*). He also identified that benevolent and moral leadership have notably positive effects on job satisfaction, whereas authoritarian leadership negatively impact intrinsic job satisfaction. In relation to the concept of authoritarian leadership, it should be noted that Chen and Farh (2010) suggest that negative perceptions associated with authoritarian leadership might be related to the fact that the dimensions of authoritarian leadership were originally developed in Western settings. They suggest the dimensions should be re-contextualised from an indigenous Chinese perspective as authoritative leadership. Based on the literature review and standards of the institutional theory above, the functions of the Chinese leadership style are presented below.

Thought styles derived, replicated and institutionalized from Confucianism infer that ***authority***, and thereby leadership, is paternalistic; originating from one source of power in an extended family-like environment, and executed in vertical and symbiotic networks. Visions are important in the Confucian tradition, being the key ingredient of ***planning***. However this is somewhat modified by the fatalistic outlook informed by Taoism. This suggests that Chinese leaders have a general sense of where they want to go, but are not locked into any given strategy. The strategic process is viewed as a winding way to the future. It is both short and long-term. Examples of other influences coming from Taoism are that ***organizing*** is nurturant by being founded on harmony and benevolence and that leading might also take place without guidance or intervention (*wu-wei*). In general, ***decision-making*** is binary, synthetic, emotional, modest and pragmatic.

Norms and values are that leadership relationships are ***organized*** based on traditional trust virtues and that trustworthiness is the expected norm based on the social network. However, there is also the inference institutionalized from Legalism that subordinates may be ***controlled*** by manipulation, if it is in the best interests of the whole. Since ***organizing*** is highly influenced by face (*mianzi*), it is a very strong norm in guiding and controlling subordinates.

Enforcement mechanisms originate from Confucianism and infer that ***controls*** or sanctions are based on informal conventions, mainly face and blood ties. Sanctions are also based on merit and seniority, derived from Legalism. Both of these meta-traditions suggest strong monitoring of subordinates and Legalism suggests controlling employees through fear of punishment. Yet according to principle of non-interference or *wu-wei* in Taoism, there is no need to monitor employees. These apparent contradictions in enforcement mechanisms may appear at odds with Western logics, but they work well with the Chinese and/also cognitive style (Nisbett, 2003), which, as influenced by Taoism, allows for the pragmatic use of both patriarchal and nurturant leadership styles, dependent on the context.

2.4 The Western leadership style

Leadership in Western firms is usually defined as both a property and a process (Jago, 1982). It involves establishing a direction, aligning people, motivating and inspiring people and producing change (Kotter, 1990). Based on Jansson (2007a,b); Jansson *et al.* (2007), Hofstede (2001), Redding (1980; 2005), and Whitley (1992), and in following the standard of the institutional theory above, the functions of the Western leadership style is presented below.

Thought styles, in the form of ***decision-making***, or *Causality*, in Western firms is based on Judeo-Christian tradition and Cartesian rational forces of logical, analytical, asymmetrical, and atomistic thinking. E.g. decision-making is asymmetrical or unbalanced among alternatives and atomistic, i.e. the whole is broken down into parts. Western firm ideology follows an either-or logic. Decisions are based on rationality and objectivity, which are symbolized by the 'brain', e.g. decisions are based on facts and on pre-determined principles. The time perspective in ***planning*** is shorter or mid/long-term. This also influences *Probability* so that risks and uncertainty are based on a linear time perspective. This means that planning is central. Strategic change is incremental and based on recurrent evaluation through strategy analysis. The view is that the strategic process is a straight way to a defined future. This also fits with the idea that future is calculated, i.e. decided by man. The way to reach this particular goal is subordinated to the goal and is not important by itself. Major principles behind ***organizing*** the Western firm are individualistic. Thus, the firm's identity, or 'Self', is based on its own operations in an organizational network. Risks are taken by the

firm, and are not shared with others in the network. The network orientation is then that the relationships emanate from the individual firm representing itself.

Norms and values is an organizing principle in which the status of Western firms is achieved from merit, which can be seen by that organizational status is based on competence. This implies that ***organizing*** is performance-oriented with the aim of maximizing profits. This is achieved by the notion that the exchange of goods is a key driving force in a secondary group-oriented market. ***Control*** is 'inner-directed' and based on effectiveness according to the optimization and the either-or principle, e.g. firms emphasize a confrontational approach to maximize profits as well as they are conflict-ridden. Control is thereby 'inner-directed', since it is guided by conscience, originating from the Christian guilt culture. ***Organizing*** is universal and therefore relatively open and where everybody is supposed to be treated in the same way. Accordingly, business is codified with the help of contracts and other documents, resulting in that *trust* is based on organizational and professional trustworthiness of the firm rather than on individual and social trustworthiness of the employees of the firms (Jansson, 2007b). Boss-employee relationships are based on professional *trust* and not social trust. Regarding *morality*, action is decided based on whether it is instrumental.

Enforcement mechanisms as found in Western firms pinpoint that leadership is professional by being based on multiple sources of power. Managerial capabilities are specialized rather than being generalized. Leadership takes place in an ***authority*** system that is characterized as a mechanistic system consisting of homogeneous parts rather than being a traditional organism based on the family. Ownership is separated from management. The firm consists of lateral networks and decentralized decision-making, which implies that ***organizing*** is based on the competence and individual performance of the subordinate managers. ***Controls*** or sanctions are also based on merits, or performance-based. Actors are encouraged and supported, where incentives guide action.

3. METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework presented was developed through an abductive approach (Alveson & Sköldberg, 2008) by mixing deduced extant theories, and complementing those with empirically-based constructs induced from reality. In accordance with this approach, the

theory is operationalized and examined by conducting case studies (Hilmersson & Jansson, 2012; Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Welch, *et al.* 2011; Yin, 2009).

3.1 The cases and data collection

The ten cases are Swedish firms assumed to represent a Western global leadership style that is mixed with a local Chinese leadership style. They range in size from small firms to large MNEs, and are all established in the Shanghai area. The number of cases is, in line with Eisenhardt (1989), regarded to provide empirical support to discuss the findings as valuable also for other Western firms in China. Two respondents per case were interviewed: nine Western (eight Swedish and one Spanish) managers and nine Chinese managers (one of Taiwanese origin). A majority were titled general manager/CEO/owner, or for example project/sales and operations/ purchasing manager. Further firm and respondent characteristics are seen in Table 1.

---------- Table 1 about here ----------

As recommended by Meyer (2006), qualitative and quantitative methods have been mixed in order to capture indigenous characteristics of leadership practices. Primary data was collected on site in China through structured face-to-face interviews with the executives, sitting side by side with them and discussing their answers. A standardized questionnaire was utilized, followed up by qualitative semi-structured interview. The development of the questionnaire was based on literature on global leadership in Western markets and China, and institutional theory to build a conceptual framework to compare leadership styles (see operationalization in 3.2).

The statements are expressed as two endpoints representing Chinese and Western leadership styles (CLS and WLS). They are related to each other in the research instrument as opposites along a six-point interval scale, where one Western standpoint is set in opposition or comparison to a Chinese standpoint regarding different angles on global leadership theory viewed from an institutional angle, based on mainly Jansson (2007b), Jansson *et al.* (2007) and Jansson & Söderman (2015). Since each executive represents the company´s leadership style, every filled-out questionnaire shows a profile regarding the mixture of leadership styles held by the firm. On the scale, ‘1’ expresses a wholly Western leadership style and ‘6’ a

wholly Chinese leadership style. Numbers in-between (2-5) express a mix of these styles, where numbers around the mean 3 represents an equal mix. To define the mix better, three classes are specified: the mix of leadership styles is oriented towards the WLS for numbers 0-3,2, while numbers 3.8-6 mean a CLS orientation. Numbers 3.3 – 3.7 then represent an even mix between the styles.

The semi-structured interview guide contained questions regarding adaptations made by the interviewees while working at this position, driving forces of adaptation made as well as challenges experiences while working as manager at a Swedish firm in China. The interviews were conducted in English by Swedish researchers, also for the Chinese respondents, which could result in a bias if the statements and questions were not understood as intended. This was counteracted by being on site to explain statements if needed, but particularly to do the semi-structured follow-up interviews. In total each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes The main purpose was to have as good control as possible of primarily the reliability but also the validity of the questionnaire. The answers to the semi-structured questions were transcribed and entered into a database together with the quantitative information.

3.2 Operationalization of the leadership functions

The theoretical basis was the three basic rules of '*Thought styles'*, '*Norms and* v*alues'*, and '*Enforcement mechanisms'* developed by Jansson (2007) based on Scott (1995). Based on these, five functions of leadership styles were derived, namely: Authority, Planning, Decision-making, Organizing and Control. These five leadership functions are operationalized as follows.

As seen in the theoretical framework, leadership concerns the execution of **authority** through relationships. Three of the authority systems, in which this execution takes place, are then specified further by contrasting the Western formal hierarchy to the traditional Chinese authority system as being a mix of the patriarchal/nurturant ideologies. The basic rules are used as a comparative standard to operationalize differences between the authority systems as four pairs of statements or opposites of the basic rules construct enforcement mechanisms. Leadership in a patriarchal authority system is expressed, e.g. as 'Leadership is paternalistic', while its opposite in a formal hierarchy is expressed as 'Leadership is professional'. Leadership in a nurturant authority system is operationalized as a normative expression as

that ‘Bosses lead by acting as role models’, while the opposite in the formal hierarchy is ‘Bosses lead by delegating responsibility to subordinates’. In total Authority contains six statements (A1-6).

Differences between the Western and the Chinese leadership styles regarding **planning** are specified by operationalizing two sub concepts of thought styles about the future, viz. time and probability. E.g. in accordance with the Confucian tradition vision dominates in Chinese organizations, which is contrasted to the dominance of plans in Western firms. Four statements (P1-4) represent Planning.

Differences in **decision-making** are also expressed by specifying two thought styles, viz. one operational concept describing Self, and the others describing Causality. The holistic, binary or synthesis-based type of problem-solving in Chinese organizations is operationalized and contrasted to the logical and optimizing decision-making in Western organizations. The CLS orientation towards opportunities in relation to the WLS orientation towards analytic problem-solving is expressed in other statements. Expressions about that decision-makers are unobtrusive rather than obtrusive, and strategic response reactive rather than pro-active, are meant to indicate an orientation towards CLS, perhaps even being influenced by the wu-wei principle. Based on this, eight statements (D1-D8) cover Decision-making.

Regarding **organizing,** the thought style Causality is operationalized into two pairs of statements, e.g. the harmonious relations typical of the CLS is contrasted to the effectiveness typical of the WLS. The difference between the network identity of the CLS and the market identity of the WLS is expressed using the thought style Self. The other statements are operationalizations of sub concepts of the basic rule Norms and Values, e.g. the Universalism vs. Particularism concept. All together seven statements (O1-O7) are included to represent Organizing.

How subordinates are **controlled** is a critical part of the leadership style. Such a sanction system of the basic rule Enforcement mechanisms is dimensionalized through three pair of statements regarding Control (C1-C3): whether sanctions are based on seniority or performance, whether actors are supported or monitored, and if punishment or incentives guide action.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The empirical result is presented in Table 2 for each respondent on the statements on the individual leadership functions, and summarized in Table 4 as an overall result.

Regarding the **authority** on which leadership is based, there is a strong WLS orientation of the mix for all firms. Leadership is mostly professional, managers largely lead by delegating responsibilities, the authority is based on competence and performance, and strategic control is formal. However, there is also a minor CLS orientation in that decision-making is mostly centralized, and that trust mainly comes from relying on individuals. The mean value for each firm is oriented towards the WLS for five firms, towards the CLS for one firm and being an even mix for two. The differences between the Chinese and Western managers on how they view the leadership style are also noted. The major pattern is that the Chinese respondents view the leadership style to be more Western than the Western managers, who also often view the style as Western, but less so, or as an even mix. This pattern is especially strong for the two companies, where only one Western or Chinese manager answered (Firm I and J).

The leadership function **planning** is reflected in the firms as a mix, which is even more Western-oriented than the authority function. The average for all statements and firms indicate such an orientation, especially strong is that deadlines and forecasting are important, and man decides that future. The mean values for the companies show the same thing except for Firm I. According to the Western manager interviewed, it has a CLS. Even if some of the other Chinese and Western managers disagree on the degree of WLS of the firm, they all mean that the leadership style is future oriented in a Western sense.

A more complex picture emerges for **decision-making** as a function of leadership. Only two statements indicate the WLS, viz. that goals are mostly pre-determined (D5), and that decisions are more based on facts than emotions (D8). As indicated by statements D1-2, and somewhat by D3, decision-making is more holistic, binary or synthesis-based and somewhat pragmatic (D4) or Chinese, than logical or Western. The CLS orientation is also observed in the importance of opportunities as indicated by D7 and somewhat by D6. That decision-makers are unobtrusive (D9), goals emergent (D5) and strategic response reactive (D10) indicate an orientation towards the CLS, even being passive and influenced by the wu-wei principle. This complex mix of leadership styles is also observed among at the individual

firm level, the complexity increasing more by the often large differences in views between the Western and Chinese managers. According to the Western managers in five firms, the orientation is toward the CLS, while the Chinese view it to be the WLS. In total, this large variation in leadership mixes is summarized as an even mix of styles for most firms. Even if one firm has a slight orientation towards the WLS, it is close to this equal mix. However, the total mixture of 3 firms is oriented towards the CLS. It also goes for the Western manager at Firm I, while the Chinese respondent at Firm J believes that the mix is equal. In addition problem-solving is mostly consensus oriented in the Swedish subsidiaries, which differs from the more individually-oriented decision-making found in Chinese firms.

Of the seven statements representing the leadership function **Organizing**, five (O1-5) demonstrate an equal mix of leadership styles, while two (O6-7) show a WLS. Together these latter statements indicate that major factors of the traditional Chinese leadership style such as face, and virtues related to benevolence/loyalty and righteousness play a minor role in the Swedish firms. However, harmony is an important ingredient of the style, being of equal importance as effectiveness. The same goes for the defensive strategic action, the blurred organizational boundaries inside the firm together with that the identity is network-based and management competencies general. This mix between a WLS and an equal leadership style is also reflected in the firms. Five have the latter style, four a strong WLS, and one (Firm E) a weak CLS. For Organizing, there are also rather large differences between how the managers view the leadership style. The major pattern is the same as above: Western managers lean more towards the CLS than the Chinese managers by perceiving it to be less Western or more Chinese. The Chinese managers, on the other hand, see more of a WLS and less of a CLS than their Western counterparts.

The statements expressing the **Control** function show a strong WLS, meaning that sanctions are mostly based on performance, actors encouraged and supported, and that incentives guide action. This is also reflected in all the individual firms except two. In both Firm E and Firm H, the Chinese managers mean that the leadership style is strongly oriented towards the CLS, while the Western managers perceive it to be strongly oriented towards the WLS. This polarization of views is typical but not that the Westerns experience more of a WLS and the Chinese more of a CLS. On average, the mix of these separate views gives an equal mix for the two firms.

---------- Table 2 about here ----------

The total leadership mix shows the overall empirical result presented in Table 4 for the leadership functions at eight Swedish firms in China. The total leadership style of most firms based on the five leadership functions is Western-oriented. Four of five leadership functions are classified as WLS for firms A, C, D, F, G, and J, while three of the five are WLS for Firm B. The only company with a Chinese oriented leadership style is Firm I with three functions classified as CLS. The equal mix dominates for Firm E (3) and Firm H (4).

---------- Table 3 about here ----------

The mix dominated by WLS is still blended with CLS. Some main results of the qualitative part of the study, summarized from interviews with Firms A-J as a complement to the quantitative results above, are that an atmosphere is created at the firms, where people are encouraged to make decisions themselves and receive no punishment for it. This is not a problem with Western employees and managers, who are upfront and honest with their boss. To get genuine feedback is often difficult from Chinese employees. People are therefore hired, who have worked or studied abroad. The Chinese work very hard, but they need guidance while Westerns are more creative. The leadership mix is balanced over time by that Swedish leadership is developing responsibilities and support subordinates to come to a decision and pursue issues and solutions. The Chinese boss keeps track of everything that happens in the organization. Swedish leadership is more to decide first, and if problems occur, solve them together. Some Swedish bosses act Chinese straight through and take all decisions; following up that everything get done. However, this is hard to Westerners, who is not used to it. Those Chinese managers, who have adapted to the WLS at the same time as they have kept some of the CLS state that they are more Western than Chinese, mainly because they are open, result-oriented, and more risk avoiding. They also think more about preparation and planning. Chinese who have worked in European companies are controlled less than those that have not. Chinese management is less result oriented, where relationships are more important.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A major result of this study is that there are no pure Western leadership styles or Chinese leadership styles detected in the Swedish firms established in China. Rather, there is a mix between WLS that represents global integration and CLS that represents local responsiveness. Western as well as Chinese managers adapt to each other so that every leader has both a WLS and CLS for the functions studied; Authority, Planning, Decision-making, Organizing and Control. This mixture of leadership styles varies considerably both within and between functions, but the WLS dominates. The position of the managers in the Swedish firms in China is the major factor behind these mixes and their variation. The vertical relationships between managers are mainly studied at two levels of authority: between the Western expatriate country manager and the subordinated Chinese local functional leader, e.g. a marketing, purchasing or financial manager; and between the Chinese functional leader and the subordinated Chinese employees. Western country managers therefore find the mix to be more towards the CLS than the Chinese functional managers, and vice versa.

The characteristics of the WLS are extended as much as possible to the Swedish firms in China. Although the organization is more centralized than decentralized, the vertical authority system is more flat than hierarchical, since responsibilities are delegated. The Chinese employees are empowered to take responsibility and need to adapt to acting independently instead of obeying orders in dependency relations. The firm more invests in them than the boss takes care of them in accordance with the nurturant traditional leadership type. Leadership is also more professional than paternalistic. Bosses inform more than telling the subordinates what to do, supporting and encouraging them by coaching, guiding and consulting them rather than having a paternalistic leadership style by giving direct orders or being morale leaders by acting as role models or being passive leaders by not intervening at all (wu-wei). The vertical relationship is founded more on the norm trust than the subordinate virtue loyalty and the superior virtue benevolence. This suggests that the orientation towards individual rather than organizational trust should be interpreted in a Western rather than Chinese sense. The Chinese managers adapt more in the way described above towards the Western bosses than towards their subordinates, where the leadership style many times is more oriented toward the CLS than the WLS.

Preparation and planning are vital in the Swedish firms, which is clear from the strong orientation towards the WLS for all statements and firms except one. Thus, the Western thought style predominates over the Chinese. Still decision-making is more opportunity than problem-seeking, and even if it is less emotional, it is more holistic and binary than logical, and pragmatic than being a matter of principle. Decision-makers are also more unobtrusive, which together with more reactive strategic responses and emergent goals indicate a rather passive leadership style in how decisions are made, even getting some influences from the wu-wei principle. This is mainly due to the dominance of Chinese decision-makers, to which the Western managers adapt. This is also noted by that the Western managers experiencing a stronger orientation towards CLS, while Chinese managers experience it to be more Western oriented. An interesting finding is that problem-solving is more consensus-oriented or collectivistic than individual in most firms. It is contradictory, since it is an extension of the WLS, while the CLS here is more individualistic. The main reason is that the WLS is represented by Swedish firms, which have a more collectivistic orientation than for example U.S. firms, or in this case, even Chinese firms.

Most firms have an equal mix of leadership styles for organizing. Adaptation to the CLS has mostly been done for harmony or causality but less so for face, benevolence, and righteousness. This means that the norms and values are less Chinese. Adaptations to a CLS are also done by having more defensive strategic actions, and a network-based identity. Similarly, by having more particularistic than universalistic norms (blurred organizational boundaries). Communication is mainly Western-oriented by being one-way, and open rather than secretive. The loose controls of the WLS is mainly extended to China, and where the Chinese employees have adapted to the Western sanction system by being more rewarded than punished and that sanctions are more based on performance than seniority. Employees are also encouraged rather than the boss monitors every step taken. However, the opposite seems to be valid for the relations to the Chinese middle managers, who are more oriented towards the CLS in relations with their Chinese subordinates.

The limitations of this study cover the number of cases; ten Swedish firms established in China from which 18 managers of different origin are studied. Future studies could benefit from a richer in-depth qualitative material on mixtures and adaptions of leadership, complementing further and larger surveys to capture a quantitative perspective on the phenomena in order to generalize for Western firms and Western/Chinese leadership styles and functions.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

When Western managers adapt to a Chinese leadership style they tend to overestimate the problems in doing that. The Chinese leaders, on the other hand, adapts to the Western leadership style both in their relations to their Western bosses as well as to the Chinese subordinates. It is necessary, as a Chinese leadership style cannot be fully practiced in a Western firm, not even among the Chinese. Still, the adaptation is more towards the WLS in their inferior relations with their Western bosses, than in their superior relations with the Chinese subordinates. Thus, Western firms can circumvent clashes due to different institutional backgrounds by hiring Chinese managers adapted to a Western context, such 'bi-institutional' leaders constituting a bridge between the WLS and the CLS. For Chinese managers aiming to work in Western firms in China, the situation tends to demand adaptation as such a mixed leadership style could be a competitive advantage or even a prerequisite to attain such a position.

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Table 1. Firm and respondent characteristics

Firms	Firm A		Firm B		Firm C		Firm D		Firm E		Firm F		Firm G		Firm H		Firm I	Firm J
Industry	Packaging		Consulting		Technical trading		Consulting		Manufacturing		Packaging		Automotive		Manufacturing		Incubator	Packaging
Establishment	Cn: 2006		Cn: 2009		Swe: 1970, Cn 2009		Cn: 2009		Swe: 1985, Cn: 1999		Ger: 1888, Cn: 2004		Swe: 1988		Swe: 1941		Cn: 2010	Swe:1951
Empl total	11		14		643		12		400 (Cn: 108)		500 (Cn: 14)		5 568		46 000		n/a	23 000
Respondents	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**
Position	Director	Supply chain manager	Owner	General Manager	Mana-ging Director	Financial Manager	CEO	Project Manager	Comm-ercial Manager	Quality Manager	Sales & Operations Manager	Purch-asing manager	CEO Asia Pacific	General Manager	Process Manager	General Manager	Founder/ CEO	Project Manager R&D
Nationality	Swedish	Taiwanese	Swedish	Chinese	Swedish	Chinese	Swedish	Chinese	Swedish	Chinese	Swedish	Chinese	Swedish	Chinese	Spanish	Chinese	Swedish	Chinese
Age	32	32	52	32	32	32	31	29	30	32	40	34	48	45	52	45	28	30
Yrs in comp	8	1	7	3	7	2,5	3	1	3	1.5	1,5	1	21	9	25	5	3	5.5
Yrs in comp in Cn	8	1	7	3	5	2,5	3	1	3	1.5	1,5	1	15	9	2,5	5	3	4

Table 2. Empirical results from respondents and average of firms

Firms	Firm A		Firm B		Firm C		Firm D		Firm E		Firm F		Firm G		Firm H		Firm I	Firm J
Authority	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**
Statement A1	1	3	2	3.5	2	1	2	3	2	5	2	1	2	2	3	4	4	1
A2	3.5	3	3	5	3	1	6	2	2	3.5	3	2	4	1	4	2	5	3
A3	2	2	5	3.5	3	2	1	2	1	2	3	1	3	1	2	5	3.5	2
A4	3	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	2	6	4	1	4	4	3	6	6	2
A5	4	3	5	5	5	5	6	2	2	6	4	1	5	4	5	5	6	2
A6	3	3	5	2	3	1	3	2	4	5	3	1	2	1	2	1	5	5
Ave	***2.75***	***3.17***	***4.17***	***4.00***	***3.50***	***2.50***	***3.50***	***2.50***	***2.17***	***4.58***	***3.17***	***1.17***	***3.33***	***2.17***	***3.17***	***3.83***	***4.92***	***2.50***
Mean value company:	**2.96**		**4.08**		**3.00**		**3.00**		**3.38**		**2.17**		**2.75**		**3.50**		**4.92**	**2.50**

Firms	Firm A		Firm B		Firm C		Firm D		Firm E		Firm F		Firm G		Firm H		Firm I	Firm J
Planning	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**
Statement P1	2	1	2	3.5	1	1	1	5	6	3.5	2	2	3	4	5	5	3.5	1
P2	5	3	5	1	2	3.5	3.5	3	2	2	4	2	5	5	4	5	6	3
P3	4	1	3	1	2	5	2	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	3.5	4	6
P4	3	1	4	1	2	1	2	2	5	5	3	3	4	1	2	1	3	4
Ave	***3.50***	***1.50***	***3.50***	***1.63***	***1.75***	***2.63***	***2.13***	***3.00***	***3.75***	***2.88***	***2.75***	***2.00***	***3.75***	***3.00***	***3.25***	***3.63***	***4.13***	***3.50***
Mean value company:	**2.50**		**2.56**		**2.19**		**2.56**		**3.31**		**2.38**		**3.38**		**3.44**		**4.13**	**3.50**

Firms	Firm A		Firm B		Firm C		Firm D		Firm E		Firm F		Firm G		Firm H		Firm I	Firm J
Decision-making	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**
Statement D1	2	3	5	3.5	3	5	4	6	4	3.5	4	1	5	5	5	2	5	4
D2	6	4	4	1	6	1	4	3	4	6	5	6	5	3	3	1	5	2
D3	3	2	5	1	5	1	4	5	2	5	5	1	5	3	4	6	5	1
D4	5	3	6	5	4	3.5	5	3.5	2	2	3	1	5	4	3	2	5	3
D5	5	5	4	1	4	3.5	4	1	2	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	4	4
D6	3	2	5	1	5	3	5	2	1	3	3	3	5	4	5	3.5	6	5
D7	3	1	2	1	3	1	5	1	3	5	5	1	3	1	2	3	3.5	2
D8	3	3	4	3.5	5	3.5	3	1	6	1	4	6	4	4	4	5	3.5	5
Ave	***3.75***	***2.88***	***4.38***	***2.13***	***4.38***	***2.69***	***4.25***	***2.81***	***3.00***	***3.44***	***4.00***	***2.50***	***4.25***	***3.13***	***3.50***	***3.06***	***4.63***	***3.25***
Mean value company:	**3.31**		**3.25**		**3.53**		**3.53**		**3.22**		**3.25**		**3.69**		**3.28**		**4.63**	**3.25**

Firms	Firm A		Firm B		Firm C		Firm D		Firm E		Firm F		Firm G		Firm H		Firm I	Firm J
Organizing	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**
Statement O1	5	3	2	1	4	3.5	3	2	4	5	5	2	5	4	3	5	5	3
O2	5	2	5	2	5	3.5	4	5	5	1	2	2	4	3	5	4	5	5
O3	5	3	3	2	4	6	5	2	4	2	3	6	5	2	5	4	2	5
O4	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	2	2	5	3	2	3	1	2	3	2	1
O5	2	2	2	1	1	3.5	1	1	5	2	4	2	2	1	1	5	1	1
O6	2	4	2	3.5	2	5	1	5	1	5	3	5	2	2	2	2	4	1
O7	4	2	2	1	3	1	3	2	2	3.5	4	1	2	4	4	5	3.5	3
Ave	***3.86***	***2.71***	***2.57***	***1.64***	***3.14***	***3.50***	***2.57***	***2.71***	***3.29***	***3.36***	***3.43***	***2.86***	***3.29***	***2.43***	***3.14***	***4.00***	***3.21***	***2.71***
Mean value company:	**3.29**		**2.11**		**3.32**		**2.64**		**3.32**		**3.14**		**2.86**		**3.57**		**3.21**	**2.71**

Firms	Firm A		Firm B		Firm C		Firm D		Firm E		Firm F		Firm G		Firm H		Firm I	Firm J
Control	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**
Statement C1	3	3	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	5	2	2
C2	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	4	5	2	2	2	3	2	5	2	3
C3	1	1	1	6	2	2	1	1	2	6	3	1	2	2	2	4	1	1
Ave	***2.33***	***1.67***	***1.67***	***2.67***	***2.33***	***1.67***	***1.67***	***1.33***	***2.67***	***4.33***	***2.67***	***1.33***	***2.00***	***2.33***	***2.00***	***4.67***	***1.67***	***2.00***
Mean value company:	**2.00**		**2.17**		**2.00**		**1.50**		**3.50**		**2.00**		**2.17**		**3.33**		**1.67**	**2.00**

Table 3. The total leadership mix

Firms	Firm A		Firm B		Firm C		Firm D		Firm E		Firm F		Firm G		Firm H		Firm I	Firm J
Leadership functions	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**	**WestMan**	**ChinMan**
Authority (ave)	2.75	3.17	4.17	4.00	3.50	2.50	3.50	2.50	2.17	4.58	3.17	1.17	3.33	2.17	3.17	3.83	4.92	2.50
Mean value company:	*2.96*		*4.08*		*3.00*		*3.00*		*3.38*		*2.17*		*2.75*		*3.50*		*4.92*	*2.50*
Planning (ave)	3.50	1.50	3.50	1.63	1.75	2.63	2.13	3.00	3.75	2.88	2.75	2.00	3.75	3.00	3.25	3.63	4.13	3.50
Mean value company:	*2.50*		*2.56*		*2.19*		*2.56*		*3.31*		*2.38*		*3.38*		*3.44*		*4.13*	*3.50*
Decision-m (ave)	3.75	2.88	4.38	2.13	4.38	2.69	4.25	2.81	3.00	3.44	4.00	2.50	4.25	3.13	3.50	3.06	4.63	3.25
Mean value company:	*3.31*		*3.25*		*3.53*		*3.53*		*3.22*		*3.25*		*3.69*		*3.28*		*4.63*	*3.25*
Organizing (ave)	3.86	2.71	2.57	1.64	3.14	3.50	2.57	2.71	3.29	3.36	3.43	2.86	3.29	2.43	3.14	4.00	3.21	2.71
Mean value company:	*3.29*		*2.11*		*3.32*		*2.64*		*3.32*		*3.14*		*2.86*		*3.57*		*3.21*	*2.71*
Control (ave)	2.33	1.67	1.67	2.67	2.33	1.67	1.67	1.33	2.67	4.33	2.67	1.33	2.00	2.33	2.00	4.67	1.67	2.00
Mean value company:	*2.00*		*2.17*		*2.00*		*1.50*		*3.50*		*2.00*		*2.17*		*3.33*		*1.67*	*2.00*