



Habitual Leadership Ethics: Timelessness and Virtuous Leadership in the Jesuit Order

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Abstract

This paper is about the relationship between leadership, organisational morals, and temporality. We argue that engaging with questions of time and temporality may help us overcome the overly agentic view of organisational morals and leadership ethics that dominates extant literature. Our analysis of the role of time in organizational morals and leadership ethics starts from a virtue-based approach to leading large-scale moral endeavours. We ask: how can we account for organizational morality across generations and independently of the leader? To address this question, we studied the leadership model of the Jesuits, a Catholic Religious Order. Our case reveals that a virtue-based model of leadership does not necessarily imply that those who are selected to lead the organization are themselves virtuous, but that the processes underpinning the exercise of leadership are cyclical and repeated as truthfully as possible. Virtuous leadership, for the Jesuits, is therefore about the construction of an ideal type of leadership against which the processes which sustain it were designed. Our theoretical contribution is twofold. First, we propose an habitual understanding of moral forms of leadership, in which the procedural is constitutive of moral forms of organising; second, we explain how “timelessness”, understood as the quality of not changing as years go by, allowed the Jesuits to centre the processes which sustain their ethical model on the repetition, across space and time, of said processes, rather than on their outcome. We conclude that the search for virtue might be more relevant for large-scale moral endeavours than virtue itself.

Keywords Leadership · Ethics · Jesuits · Time · Virtues

Introduction

Temporality has a normative element that allows a socio-temporal order to emerge and regulate “the lives of *social* entities such as families, professional groups, religious communities, complex organizations, or even entire nations”

(Zerubavel, 1985, p. xii; italics in the original). Such ordering results out of time when, for example, actors acknowledge the need for “time keeping” or for “being on time”, bringing to the fore the “rational elements of temporal organization” (Zerubavel, 1985, p. xvii), as well the normative elements. It is not only about “time keeping” or “being on time”, but also about how one “should keep time” (as when an organizational calendar is to be followed), or about how one “should be on time” (as when being on time for a meeting is considered the correct thing to do).

However, just as there is a normative element to our understanding of temporality, normative theories are also constitutive of a temporality. For instance, Kant’s categorical imperative is formulated as a timeless rule that transcends the temporality of life and excludes the circumstantial/situational; situational ethics, as advanced by Fletcher (1966), meanwhile, emphasises what possibly never happened (past), and will never happen (future)—the ‘situational’ excludes the temporal by reducing it to the present; consequentialism is mainly future-oriented (Butchvarov, 2003)

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insofar as it is predicated on the assumption that the moral agent can somehow know what will be best; lastly, virtue-based ethics and the emphasis it puts on how one “becomes virtuous” (Jimenez, 2020) brings to the fore a sense of continuity—past habits can inform possible ‘present’ behaviours, as well as diminish uncertainty concerning how actors might behave in the future.

Notwithstanding, temporality and organizational morals have grown as separate fields of inquiry within organization and management studies. In this paper we will reconcile temporality and organizational morals through ‘leadership ethics’. Leadership is also about “good and timely leadership decisions” (Contu, 2022, p. 1), meaning that *bad* decisions are often *untimely* decisions; moreover, ‘*leadership ethics*’ (the application of ethical theories to leadership) has been informed mainly by virtue-based, deontological and utilitarian theories (Lemoine et al., 2019) which, as we will discuss, cannot be detached from the temporality inherent to the way they devise moral order. Therefore, just as ‘ethics is located in the heart of leadership studies and not in an appendage’ (Ciulla, 1995, p. 6), so is temporality. However, the ‘great man/woman’ orientation (Rost, 1995, p. 132) and ‘the centrality of individual characteristics’ (Price, 2018, p. 698), namely their virtues, has overshadowed the role of temporality in ‘leadership ethics’. We therefore ask: what is the role of time in ‘leadership ethics’, namely in the context of large-scale organisations?

To address this question, we examine the leadership model devised by the Society of Jesus (henceforth Jesuits), the biggest Roman Catholic Religious Order. Founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola, the Jesuits are a case ‘*par excellence*’ to study moral forms of leadership with respect to time. First, the Jesuits developed their own moral form of leadership, centred on the prototyping of the leader around a set of virtues and on a set of processes and aids which sustain and support the leader; second, the Jesuits’ ‘moral leadership model’ has remained the same across almost five hundred years.

Our findings reveal that the form of leadership adopted by the Jesuits is habitual in its nature. Habitual leadership is about the emergence, into time, of morality through the replication of the processes that sustain the exercise of leadership. Although the Jesuit leader is prototyped along a set of idealised virtues, such virtues cannot be fully embodied by anyone. The Jesuit way of ordering morality therefore constitutes an alternative to individual-centred constructs. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the impossibility of reaching the prototyped leader allows the Jesuits to devise a moral form of leadership in which the replication of its processes over time and space sustains the pursuit (not necessarily the accomplishment) of virtuous leadership. We refer to this as timelessness—the pursuit of virtue-based leadership transcends time, allowing the Jesuit order to move forward

towards virtue, even when in the presence of less virtuous leaders.

Theoretical Context

We divided our literature review into three sections. First, we discuss how extant approaches to temporality within organization studies have the normative implicit in them. We argue that we cannot think of the temporal vis-à-vis the accomplishment of order without the normative, even if frequently in an unsubstantiated way. Second, we discuss how the achievement of moral order cannot be disassociated from specific ways of ordering and understanding the nature of time. Lastly, we bridge the temporal and the normative through ‘leadership ethics’.

The Normative Side of Time

Within organisation theory, studies on time and on ethics have grown as separate fields of inquiry. Notwithstanding, studies on temporality have a normative element which, even if often implicit, pervades most of the literature. For instance, studies on grand-challenges are often about the future and about when should such future happen. A case in point is Bansal and DesJardine’s (2014) study of sustainability, in which the obligations that result from the responsibility towards sustainability bring the normative into their discussion about short-termism: “it is about time” (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014, p. 70). Moreover, “sustainability obliges firms to make intertemporal trade-offs to safeguard intergenerational equity” (idem). Claims about the future, namely about our obligations towards future generations, tend to be normative (Mulgan, 2003).

In yet another example, Augustine et al.’s (2019) study of geoengineering as an eventual solution for climate change shows how “societal-level imaginaries [...] were built on deeply held moral bases” (p. 1930). Augustine et al.’s (2019) notions of near and distant future imply different forms of engagement, of concreteness and diverse moral bases. Adopting (or not) a specific technology to tackle a grand-challenge, like climate change, is a moral decision: questions related to responsibility towards the future and how it is feasible are in the near future, whereas what is desired and is grounded in belief systems, is located in the distant future. Distant futures “become treated as a reality that orients action”, “suggest a radical alternative to the present”, and establish a “normative critique of the present” (Augustine et al., 2019, pp. 1935–1936).

However, it is not only the future that brings about the normative. For instance, Bailey et al. (2017) show how the meaningfulness of work can result from a sense of continuity of the past, as it happens with craftsmen such as

stonemasons: what they do in the present only acquires significance in relation to history (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 17). Time can also act as a normative device: “While the masons viewed working slowly as the mark of quality, the refuse collectors saw working quickly and getting back to the depot early as signifying a job ‘well done’, enabling them to return home to ‘their time’” (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 14). Therefore, the loss of meaning in work (meaninglessness) can be associated with a “lost present, a temporal landscape lacking in past and future horizons” (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 15).

The above-mentioned studies reveal how the temporal gains a normative character. Such normativity is often concealed by an objective/clock view of time (Shipp & Jansen, 2021). However, once a subjective approach to time is considered, temporality and the normativity it conceals, allows individuals and organisations as collectives of individuals to experience the past, the present and the future, and, as important, to co-construct time. “Intersubjective time”, collective in its nature, is “created through social norms that provide the meaning of time, or event time (e.g., shaped by events, rather than the clock), to include event-based cycles and rhythms” (Shipp & Jansen, 2021, p. 303). Put differently, “intersubjective time” can be ordered through social norms.

The ordering of time through its subjective and objective elements allows us to look for how it is that “individuals and collectives coinstantaneously perceive, interpret, and mentally travel across past, present, and future” (Shipp & Jansen, 2021, p. 322). However, such line of inquiry might overlook the role of the normative and the context in which “practical beliefs [and] supporting habits of thought, feeling, and action” (MacIntyre, 2007, p. ix) unfold. This context is crucial for perceiving, interpreting, and evaluating the situatedness of individual and collective experience. Put differently, bringing together the objective and the subjective dimension of time solves the temporal dilemma at the expense of the normative by apparently taking for granted that the normative can be reduced to “standards of truth and of rational justification [without fully acknowledging that] contexts of practice vary from one time and place to another” (MacIntyre, 2007, p. xii).

The Temporality of the Normative

Normative calls for alternative economic orders often invoke alternative temporalities. For instance, George Woodcock’s *The Tyranny of the Clock* (1944) makes a normative plea for anarchism through a critique of objective time: complete liberty can only be achieved by reliving individuals from the tyranny of the clock. Such a plea is also present in recent calls for shorter working weeks, and for more balance between work time and private time as an alternative

to neoliberalism (Adam, 2013). The normative does claim for the temporal.

For instance, one cannot detach consequentialism from an understanding of the future as something we can represent and experience. The consequentialist approach implies one can somehow foresee the consequences of present actions, through, as an example, a rational modelling of the future which accounts for expectations (Beckert, 2016). Even if one cannot fully represent the future, as in distant futures (Augustine et al., 2019), these are still “tied to the abstract features and the belief systems that are used in constructing them” (p. 1934). Distant futures are therefore about what is uncertain and ambiguous, in line with a virtue-based approach to ethics, which can tackle “how alternatives are imagined in the first place, and the corresponding problem of how such largely hypothetical possibilities may orient” action (Augustine et al., 2019, p. 1934). In line with this, the virtue of practical wisdom can be “especially suitable for making strategic stakeholder decisions in rapidly changing and complex environments” (Tsoukas, 2017, p. 327).

In the above examples, responsibility towards the near and distant future (Augustine et al., 2019) and responsibility towards the firm and its stakeholders (Tsoukas, 2017) inform ethical decision-making and bring forward underpinning conceptions of time usually overlooked. However, responsibility is not only about the future—it can also be about the past, a point made by Graeber (2011) through the idea of indebtedness regarding past generations. Responsibility towards the past is also made visible in Bailey and Madden’s (2017) study of craftsmanship, in which the “embodied practice” can be “situated within a timescape that extends as much as 800 years into the past” (p. 14). Hence, just as “an organization may rely on past stories to reinforce its current culture” (Shipp & Jansen, 2021, p. 299), it can also be responsible towards that same past.

The temporality of the normative can also be about escaping temporality. Deontology, for instance, is not amenable to temporality: “if the rules of morality are rational, they must be the same for all rational beings, in just the way that rules of arithmetic are; and if the rules of morality are *binding* on all rational beings, then the contingent ability of such beings to carry them out must be unimportant—what is important is their will to carry them out” (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 43–44). Such deontological/Kantian view of morality emphasises general laws and diminishes the relevance of the uniqueness of the situational. By doing so, the interplay between the embodiment in praxis and in the present of virtues is overshadowed by atemporal and rational rule-following: rules can become eternal, devoid of a past and of a future.

However, one cannot escape the situatedness of morality: “The subjective source of the variety of moral standards is to be found both in the imperfection of people’s knowledge of the moral law, and in the erroneous views which they form

concerning it” (Finance, 2011, p. 327). Accepting the situational does not necessarily imply not accepting the existence of general laws. It means, instead, that no universal moral law is sufficient to inform the individual on how to decide or judge in every given situation. In the Thomistic tradition, this is about the “impossibility of knowing the singular perfectly by means of universal concepts” (Finance, 2011, p. 336).

The situational is, in this context, the singular, and it primarily involves the individual. Notwithstanding the possibility that different situations might share commonalities, the situational has no past and no future: it erupts into the present in its uniqueness. Such uniqueness carries with it, however, the need to judge in the present, using the ‘resources’ from the past. Such resources can be experience, perceived similarities with past ‘situations’, or virtues that act as guides for interpreting and judging the situational. Situational ethics also implies a creative elaboration of the situation (Guardini, 1931). Such creativity is guided, in Fletcher’s (1966) proposal for situational ethics, by love. Instead of guiding the creativity needed to tackle the situational, virtues can serve as the pillars on which the creative assessment of the situational rests. If one accepts the latter, then, although the situational is about the uniqueness of the present, judgments on the situational will still (a) rely on individual virtues developed in the past and (b) further contribute to individual virtue development. Put differently, one ‘becomes virtuous’ also after creative engagement with the present uniqueness of the situational, which is what allows the individual to move from abstract constructs (like virtues) or general laws (as in deontological norms) into the mundane, the concrete, and the existential.

There is not one temporality of the normative. Instead, different understandings of the normative imply different engagements with temporality. However, temporality, as we presented it so far, is mainly experienced by the individual. How is it, then, that the temporality of the normative manifests itself at the collective level? To unpack this question, we will look at leadership ethics, namely at how is it that leaders can create and maintain a moral order.

The Leadership of Large-Scale Moral Endeavours

Moral forms of leadership have been subsumed under leadership styles, which include authentic, ethical and servant leadership (Dinh et al., 2014). However, as Lemoine et al. (2019) observe, the assessment of moral/ethical behaviour is done resorting to items like ‘my manager sets an example’, or ‘my manager holds high ethical standards’, or even ‘my manager makes difficult decisions’ (p. 158). Moral forms of leadership studies therefore have an overly agentic and heroic character, made visible through the widespread belief that the individual leader ‘has the power to do whatever he

or she chooses simply by virtue of holding office’ (Khurana, 2010, p. 215).

However, a ‘post-heroic’ view of leadership has recently been put forward as an alternative. For instance, shared leadership (Pearce et al., 2008), collaborative leadership (Collinson, 2007), distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002), or processual approaches to leadership (in which leading and its associated practices, processes and interactions are the centre of analysis; Crevani et al., 2010) are all examples of an attempt to privilege the collective over the individual (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Nevertheless, moral forms of leadership are still largely trapped within heroism and an uncritical acceptance of the traditional leadership construct (Price, 2018).

The search for the individual leader’s characteristics that might account for ethical leadership (Price, 2018) has underpinned a virtue-based approach, which dominates the field. Following MacIntyre’s (1985) work, virtue ethics has the status of ‘the one ethical framework that has some relevance and applicability to the postindustrial world’ (Rost, 1995, p. 140). In addition, because virtues cannot be routinised and ‘transferred from agent to agent as any sort of decision procedure ‘package deal’” (Hermberg & Gyllenhammer, 2013, p. 129), the predominance of a virtue-based approach is concomitant with a heroic view of leadership, potentially fostering the illusion that organisational morals rely heavily on the leader’s morals and on their influence in bringing about said moral forms (Lemoine et al., 2019).

This is particularly acute in the context of large-scale moral projects, in which processes capable of normalizing virtues “de facto” disempower the individual (Anteby, 2013, p. 5). The calls for research on large-scale moral orders are not new. For instance, Rost (1995) calls for ‘new thought on putting ethics to work regarding complex problems and dilemmas that confront human beings in their large scale, modern organizations and communities’ (p. 131). However, very few studies have explored theoretically ‘leadership ethics’ in large and complex organizations, mainly across time and independently of the leader. This might have occurred because, as Lord puts it, “most leadership researchers miss the deeper importance of time” (Lord, 2018, p. 150).

For instance, it is widely acknowledged that leaders play a key role in the development of organisational culture. However, we often miss the fact that such cultural development takes time to develop. Schaubroeck and colleagues’ (2012) study of the military is a good example. In it, ethical leadership is identified as crucial for the development of an ethical culture and for such culture to cascade down the military ranks. However, we tend to overlook how much time such cascading takes and the role time eventually plays in the development of an ethical culture. There are exceptions though. For instance, Mayer et al.’s (2009) study of how ethical leadership trickles

down is particularly enlightening in this regard: “subordinates *learn over time* that positive behaviors are valued and rewarded, and unethical behaviors are punished” (p. 3; emphasis added). For the trickle down of ethical leadership to occur, followers must have trust on their leaders’ rewards for ethical behaviour (Mayer et al., 2009), something which takes time to develop.

Temporality vis-à-vis ethical leadership also comes to the fore when we think of how extant literature takes stability, regularity and tameness for granted: leadership literature often does not account for disruption, meaning that “many important processes and behaviors related to leadership, including the development of leadership skills, coordination in groups, sense-making [are] grounded in the past” (Lord, 2018, p. 150). Therefore, radical future disruption, during which “employees may be more prone to look to their leader for guidance on how to behave (Mayer et al., 2009, p. 11) tends to be overlooked. Furthermore, in organizations exposed to a multiplicity of contexts, high levels of moral intensity might be required due to an eventual multiplicity of ethical dilemmas brought about by contextual/situational ambiguity—followers are therefore “likely to encounter ethical ambiguity and values conflicts”, which demands “more ethical guidance” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 132). For instance, Zheng et al.’s (2015) study of the military shows how ethical decision making is contingent on the moral intensity of the situation: “moral issues vary in saliency and strength, impacting the moral awareness and ethical reasoning involved in the situation” (2015, p. 732), leading to potential ‘emotional exhaustion’. As we have discussed above, situational ethics brings about the uniqueness of the present. In the context of leadership ethics, however, “in situations that are ill-defined, and standards of practice are not well-established, the ethical guidance of leaders should be more important” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 132).

However, this view is still overly agentic, failing to account for how it is that we can envisage a large-scale moral order which is resilient to time. Or, as Kunisch et al. (2021) put it, why is it that some “temporal structures and routines [are] so easy to disrupt, whereas others withstand external and internal pressure for change” (p. 3). An overly agentic view of leadership in the face of situational wickedness, disruption, or ambiguity can generate future repercussions that are ethically questionable (Werhane et al., 2011). Organisations can commit an ethical oversight, not only because of not paying adequate attention to ethical issues, but ‘because of the temporal and spatial scale of the underlying processes related to the issue’ (Bansal et al., 2018, p. 217). To address these issues we will analyse the Jesuits’ leadership model and discuss its resilience for almost five centuries.

Methods

The analysis of the Jesuit Constitutions, a foundational normative document produced in the sixteenth century, will make visible the apparatus developed by the Jesuits, and which allowed them to overcome time and geographical distance. We advance a view of leadership ethics in which emphasis is put on the procedures, processes and activities surrounding leadership, rather than on the individual characteristics of the leader.

A process perspective implies methodological challenges to uncover the act(s) of leading ‘in the wild’ (Parmigiani & Howard-Greenville, 2011). Different methodologies have been used to undertake process-based leadership studies, like discourse analysis (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012) and ethnography (Larsson & Lundholm, 2013). Recently, calls have been made to undertake historical and archival research within process theory, to overcome the limitations of short-term approaches like ethnographic studies. Historical methodologies have the potential of tracing processes and routines through ‘patterns across long time spans’ (Howard-Greenville & Rerup, 2015, p. 20). Also, historical methods can enlighten the role of time and space in the performance, change and stability of processes and routines (Mutch, 2016). This paper endeavours to answer such call.

Archival data has been used previously for studying leadership, namely processes of sensemaking and sensegiving (Humphreys et al., 2011). That said, this paper is not about the history of organisations, but about organisational history; it is not about the history of the exercise of Jesuit leadership, but about how a particular understanding of what leading the Jesuits meant as it emerged within the organisation and was maintained across almost five centuries. Through the uncovering of what a Jesuit leader is supposed to be and do, of how he (all Jesuits were and are men) shares the leading of the Jesuit entity, we will bring to the surface a leadership model which is underpinned by a procedural view of what constitutes leadership ethics.

Drawing primarily upon the Jesuit Constitutions, we detail the processes and routines devised by Ignatius of Loyola (the Jesuits’ founder) to support the exercise of leadership. The Constitutions are the Jesuits’ main foundational document, and the processes devised in it are still in place today. Our historical data is complemented with secondary sources, used to bolster the hermeneutical analysis of the primary sources. The themes which surfaced from this analysis inform the structure of our findings. Temporality emerged as a fundamental theme, even though it is not systemically referred to in Jesuit primary sources. However, the regularity and frequently cyclical

nature of the processes underpinning the exercise of leadership informed our search for time and temporality in the primary sources. For example, we looked for the processes which underpin the becoming of a potential Jesuit leader and how long those take; we also went back to the sources and uncovered the time regularities found in the training of Jesuits and in their assessment.

Moreover, our data analysis was also driven by a search for shifts in the understanding of the Jesuit model. We were particularly interested in looking for (a) changes made (or not) to the procedures devised by the Jesuit founder to support leadership, and (b) critiques to such procedures. To do so, we analysed three different types of sources. First, we consulted primary and secondary sources on the “*memorialistas*”, a movement within the Jesuit order which criticised the monarchic style of leadership found in the Constitutions. Second, we consulted the General Congregations decrees. General Congregations are akin to general assemblies, which gather representatives from all the regions in which the Jesuits have a presence. Throughout their history, the Jesuits have had only 36 of such meetings, most of which to elect their Superior General (akin to a CEO). The General Congregation decrees have a legal status within the Jesuit order and are used often to clarify questions regarding issues on government.

The search for shifts in the understanding of the Jesuit leadership model was fundamental for our findings. We noticed that the Jesuits did not change the procedures supporting the leadership model. For instance, the use of correspondence, namely the “*Informatio ad Gubernandum*” which contain details on the candidates for leadership positions, has not changed. However, the format of such correspondence has changed, although not significantly: the topics put forward in such letters still follow the prototyping of the leader we found in the Constitutions. This reinforced our initial analysis of the Jesuit Constitutions and of the General Congregations’ decrees allowing us to conclude that, in what pertains to leadership of the Jesuit order, the model designed in the sixteenth century remains in place.

After our analysis of the eventual shifts to the Jesuit leadership model, we looked for critiques to it. We found that it was criticised mainly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by a movement within the Jesuit order known as the “*memorialistas*”, who sent letters to the Spanish King, the Pope, and the Inquisition about internal affairs of the Jesuit Order. Their main critiques pertained to the Superior General’s authoritarian style of leading, the increase in legislation coming from Rome and, related to the latter, the claim for more autonomy for the various regions (namely for Spain, where the “*memorialistas*” were from).

Out of our analysis, ‘habitual leadership ethics’ emerged as a theoretical construct. The Jesuits do not rely on the ideal of finding the perfect virtuous leader. Instead,

the Jesuit case brings to the fore the possibility that virtue can be a trait of the processes underpinning leadership—it is performing the processes, repeatedly, cyclically and locally, rather than the outcome of the processes, which assures virtue within the Jesuit organization. We expand below.

The Jesuits

Having been founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola, at the peak of the Reformation movement, the Jesuits became famous for their education network and their scientific endeavours. Less well known is the fact that the Jesuits devised a new way of leading their members, departing from monastic ways of leading that had been part of the Catholic Church’s tradition for centuries (Knowles, 1966; O’Malley, 1993; Friedrich, 2009). The Jesuit way of leading, carefully designed by Ignatius of Loyola and his personal secretary, Juan de Polanco, is still in place today.

The Jesuit way of leading served two main purposes. First, it represented a reaction to the Reformation movement’s claim that the priesthood of the Catholic Church was poorly educated and lacked exemplary moral attitudes. Hence the Jesuits’ emphasis on education, specially of their own members (O’Malley, 1993). Second, it was designed to accommodate their global dispersion (Clossey, 2008) and sustain some form of ‘control at a distance’ of their members’ activities and behaviour (Bento da Silva et al., 2017; Friedrich, 2011). Given that traditional monastic Religious Orders’ members were, in the sixteenth century, confined to the space of the monastery, the Jesuits, who had no monasteries and were present in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, were the first Religious Order to design a way of leading for ‘action at a distance’.

Recent scholarship has agreed on the influence of geographical distance in the development of the Jesuits’ ‘large scale administrative’ apparatus (Quattrone, 2015, p. 411). However, the relevance of the Jesuits’ way of leading for the temporal maintenance of charisma in the context of geographical dispersion and succession (Etzioni, 1975; Weber, 1978) has been largely overlooked. In *Economy and Society* (1978) Weber refers to the Jesuits as an example of the ‘rationalized application of the principle of discipleship’ (p. 245) in the context of charismatic authority. Furthermore, in the same text, Weber also refers to the Jesuits as an example when discussing the nature of charisma and its role in moving from patriarchalism into bureaucracy (1978, p. 1114). However, neither Weber (1978) nor further scholarship on Jesuit leadership have deepened the analysis of the procedures and routines devised by the Jesuits to maintain and replicate an ideal form of leadership across time and space.

Findings

Our findings reveal what we call ‘habitual leadership’, in which a procedural understanding of virtues and of leadership takes precedence over what virtues mean and over who the leader is. We divide our findings into three sections. First, we outline the prototype of the Jesuit leader and how virtues should be embodied. Second, we describe how the limitations associated with the embodiment of virtues inform an understanding of virtue as ‘knowledgeable execution’. Third, we discuss how the impossibility of ‘knowing and seeing’ underpins the design of a habitual leadership model in which the replication of its processes over time and space sustains the pursuit (not necessarily the accomplishment) of virtuous leadership.

Prototyping the Leader—the Embodiment of Virtue

The prototyping of the Jesuit leader is put forward in the 9th part of Jesuit Constitutions, entitled ‘*The Society’s head, and the government which descends from it*’. Such prototyping applies to all Jesuit leadership levels: the General (equivalent to a CEO), Provincial (equivalent to a regional/country manager), and local Superior (equivalent to a middle manager). Gonçalves da Câmara, a Jesuit contemporary of Ignatius, acknowledged that the prototyping of the Jesuit leader reflected Ignatius himself (Gonçalves da Câmara, [1553–1555]/1992); Ribadeneyra, also contemporary of Ignatius, concurs with such view (Ribadeneyra, [1583]/1863). However, it was not Ignatius who portrayed himself, but Juan de Polanco, his personal secretary who prototyped the Jesuit leader in the Constitutions (Aldama, 1999). However, Ignatius did edit and correct the text, which allows us to better understand what some of his intentions were when designing the Jesuit model.

The prototyping of the leader did not serve the purpose of describing Ignatius. Like all the sections of the Constitutions, the description of the Jesuit leader served a spiritual purpose, just as it served a normative/legal one (Bertrand, 1974). Furthermore, said prototyping also served a rhetorical function (Coupeau, 2010), which means that how the model is described in the Constitutions must be interpreted against an argument: the Constitutions follow ‘an inductive chronological order (*order of execution*) whereas the chapters within each part follow a deductive *order of intention*, moving from principles to their application’ (Coupeau, 2010, p. 89; emphasis in the original). Therefore, as the Constitutions state, the order after which the characteristics of the leader are made ‘*indicates the importance at which they are rated*’ (§724).¹ Our findings follow such order.

The Jesuit leader is prototyped along five main dimensions: spirituality, virtues, intellectual attributes, physical attributes, and external endowments. The leader’s spiritual qualities refer primarily to a way of praying which was novel, representing a rationalised form of asceticism. As Weber puts it: ‘*No other church rationalized asceticism, and used it for hierocratic purposes, as the Occidental church has done, most consistently through the Jesuit order.*’ (1978, p. 1173). The Jesuit way of praying was deprived ‘*of all unhygienic elements of the older asceticism*’ (Weber, 1978, p. 555). The Jesuits did not pray like monastic orders’ members did: communal forms of prayer were replaced by individual ones, and the choir, characteristic for centuries of monastic orders, was abolished in the Jesuit order (O’Malley, 1993). Furthermore, the Jesuits abolished the monastic practice of temporal coordination: ‘all members of a monastic community would engage in the same activity—whether it was reading, eating, meditating, working, praying, studying, or going to bed—at the same time’ (Zerubavel, 1985, p. 64; emphasis in the original). The Jesuits abandoned the synchronisation of spiritual activities, namely the scheduling of communal prayers, and determined less hours devoted to praying.

Ignatius considered this new way of (dis)ordering praying crucial for ensuring uniformity of behaviour across the organisation (Bangert & McCoog, 1992). The ‘abolition of the *stabilitas loci*’ (Weber, 1978, p. 1172), characteristic of pre-modern monastic orders, meant that Jesuits were not bound to a specific monastery. Monks, after entering a monastery, took a vow of stability (*stabilitas loci*), which meant they would never move to a different monastery (even if from the same religious order). As for the Jesuits, they made a vow of precisely the opposite: obedience in the Jesuit order meant being available to be sent anywhere in the world. Such geographical dispersion therefore explains the Jesuits’ ‘*gradual rationalization of asceticism into an exclusively disciplinary method*’ (Weber, 1978, p. 1172). The Jesuits did not enter a monastery; instead, they entered a geographically dispersed ‘*body*’ of individuals. Therefore, distance made the temporal coordination and synchronisation of a Jesuit’s prayers impossible. Hence the option for a disciplined method of prayer, based on meditations, and which took maximum 1h30 hour per day. In the first decades after the Jesuits’ foundation, such reduced amount of time was the target of much contestation. In 1565, the second General Congregation allowed the Jesuit General to increase the daily time for praying; in 1581, the fourth General Congregation determined a distinction between the one hour devoted to prayer/meditation, and two slots of 15 min for examining the conscience at the end of the morning and at the end of the day; in 1615, the seventh General Congregation determined that the daily hour of prayer should be prepared with 15 min of spiritual reading the night before; more recently, in 1965–1966, the thirty first General Congregation

¹ Citations from the Constitutions follow their original paragraphs.

determined that the hour of prayer plus two 15 min slots for examining the conscience should be maintained as distinctive of Jesuit identity.

The Jesuit leader's virtues, as per the Constitutions' description, are charity, temperance of passions, humility, gentleness, perseverance, and fortitude. These virtues can be divided into virtues for the leader himself (temperance of passions), relating to the relationship between the leader and his followers (charity, humility, gentleness), and those proper of the leader's office (perseverance, fortitude). Temperance of passions is about being '*independent of all passions*' so that '*the judgment of his intellect*' is not disturbed and he is seen by his followers as someone '*composed*' and '*self-controlled*' (§726). As for the second set of virtues, charity is to be applied '*above all toward the members*' (§725) of the Jesuit order; it is connected to humility, both making the leader '*highly lovable*' (§726) to those they lead; gentleness is about mingling '*rectitude and necessary severity*' so that followers '*recognize that in what he does he is proceeding rightly*' (§727). Lastly, the virtues of fortitude and perseverance relate to the leader's ability to '*initiate great undertakings*' (§728), '*bear the weaknesses of many*' (§728), and reveal constancy and courage in '*the face of contradictions*' (§728).

These qualities of the Jesuit leader should be paralleled by physical attributes and external endowments. The leader must be of good '*health, appearance and age*' (§731). The reasons for this are twofold. First, physical attributes account for '*prestige*' (§731); second, the leader needs the '*physical energies which his charge requires*' (§731). The external endowments entail everything that might contribute to the leader's authority: '*Such are normally esteem, a good reputation, and whatever else contributes toward authority among those within and without*' (§733). The leader's reputation must have been established prior to his election: '*(...) he ought to be one of those who are most outstanding in every virtue, most deserving in the Society, and known as such for a considerable time*' (§735; emphasis added), though '*he ought to be neither of very advanced age, which is generally unsuited for the labors and cares of such a charge, nor of great youth, which generally is not accompanied by the proper authority and experience*' (§732; emphasis added).

The prototyping of the Jesuit leader's spiritual qualities, virtues and external endowments must be interpreted against the backdrop of a geographically dispersed '*body*' of individuals and the challenges raised by such dispersion. The impossibility to use temporal synchronisation to coordinate and control every single Jesuit fostered the development of a leadership model underpinned by the necessity to '*see what cannot be seen*' once the *stabilitas loci* was lost. The qualities of the Jesuit leader were therefore made visible to the centre through a system of letter writing with

the objective of retrieving information about each individual Jesuit. Throughout their career in the Jesuit order, each Jesuit is supposed to write letters to Rome reporting whatever they deem relevant about, among other things, their fellow Jesuits. Such panopticon-like system of surveillance allows the centre to gather relevant information about various dimensions of a Jesuit's individual behaviour. Some of the letters are annual letters. These used to be sent, as per the Constitutions, every four, six and twelve months and were known as '*litterae quadrimestres, semestres, annuae*'. However, in 1564, General Laínez reduced the periodicity to twice per year, and in 1565 the second General V Congregation reduced the periodicity to once per year. The Jesuits occupying positions of leadership should write letters to their superiors every week. Lastly, whenever a Jesuit is about to be promoted, either as a leader or through the various predetermined steps before they are ordained as priests, letters have to be sent with specific information on the individual. Usually, four other Jesuits can be asked to provide such letters, known as '*informatio ad gubernandum*', and the General is entitled to prepare a guide beforehand.

Virtue as Knowledgeable Execution

The Jesuit leader's virtues aim at the exercise of leadership and the perfection of the will (Aldama, 1999; Lewis, 1961): they should be '*free from all inordinate affections*' so as '*not [to] disturb the judgment of his intellect*' (§726), not letting '*himself be deflected*' (§727), and using '*all means to achieve a full and lasting result*' (Aldama, 1999, p. 26). Such emphasis on execution is reinforced by the understanding of yet another set of virtues, intellectual virtues, put forward in the Constitutions: intelligence, learning and prudence. Intelligence and learning are seen as '*highly necessary for one who will have so many learned men in his charge*' (§729). There is an understanding, underpinning the prototyping of the Jesuit leader, that he must be somehow "better": excel in spiritual matters, in virtues, in intelligence and "know more" about the individual Jesuits and the Jesuit '*body*'. This is also achieved initially through prudence. Prudence should be understood as part of a long medieval tradition of enquiry into the different virtues and into what constituted wisdom. In the Constitutions, prudence refers to '*practical understanding*' (Aldama, 1999, p. 49) and relates to the Thomistic tradition which classified prudence into two types: '*prudence to rule oneself, and prudence to govern a multitude*' (Aldama, 1999, p. 48). Prudence is therefore related to discernment of spiritual matters and discretion regarding external matters (Coupeau, 2010). This distinction between discernment and discretion distinguishes the Jesuits from previous monastic orders, '*which disdain any compromise with the sinful world of power and property and which [were] independent of institutional charisma because*

its own charisma [was] immediate to God' (Weber, 1978, p. 1171).

Unlike monasticism's Abbots, whose action was limited by the walls of the monastery and the monastic Rule, the Jesuit leader had to 'know more': so '*that by means of this knowledge they may be able to direct and govern them better*' (§91). However, what the leader is supposed to know is never specified. Put differently, prototyping, and disciplining charisma is not needed when the walls of the monastery establish a hard border between the organisation and the external/mundane world. It is only when such walls are broken that the distinction between discernment of spiritual matters and discretion regarding external matters comes fully to the fore: Jesuit leaders, unlike monastic Abbots, should excel in '*a manner of handling such diverse affairs as well as of conversing with such various persons from within and without the Society*' (§729). Hence the Jesuits need to discipline virtuous charisma, following geographical dispersion and the transformation of stable '*charity operations into itinerant activities*' (Weber, 1978, p. 1172).

However, as we will show in the next section, the problems associated with the prototyping of the Jesuit leader are twofold. First, no single individual can match the prototype; second, no one can know fully whatever is needed to govern at a distance. Hence the aids put forward by the Constitutions to assist the leader. The aids fill in the individual leader's absent virtues. Put differently, and rather counter-intuitively, it is the impossibility of finding someone who is virtuous enough and able to manage the complexity associated with geographical distance that allows the Jesuits to design a model which, once replicated over time and space, fills in the voids left open by the absence of individual virtues. We expand below.

Virtue as Replication Over Time and Space

It is widely accepted that the Constitutions make visible the constructed image Ignatius' followers had of him (Aldama, 1999). Virtuous leadership, in the Jesuit Constitutions, is therefore not about the existence of such an ideal type of leadership, but about the construction of an ideal type of leadership against which the processes which sustain it were designed.

Ignatius and Polanco were aware that very few people, if any, would manifest all the virtues outlined in the Jesuit Constitutions. They therefore allow for the imperfection of the leader and attempt a hierarchy of the leader's attributes: '*If any of the aforementioned qualities should be wanting, he should at least not lack great probity and love for the Society, nor good judgment accompanied by sound learning*' (§735). Aldama (1999) calls these the indispensable qualities, favoured by Ignatius. As an example, '*sound learning*' was added by Ignatius when correcting the first draft of the

Constitutions, which attests to its relevance for the founder. The hierarchisation of virtues found in the Constitutions is coherent with their rhetorical function (Coupeau, 2010). The prototype's hierarchisation is as follows: spiritual characteristics are more relevant than virtues, which are more relevant than intellectual attributes; and they are both more important than physical and external endowments. Put differently: the 'embodiment of virtue' is more important than 'knowledgeable execution'. Notwithstanding, what the Constitutions do right after the prototyping of the leader is to precisely disembody the leader.

The disembodiment of virtues occurs through the introduction of '*Aids to the Superior General for the Proper Performance of His Functions*' (§735). These exist to '*supply to a great extent for many deficiencies*' of the leader (§735), which justifies the '*need of good helpers*' (§791). These helpers are, primarily, those who govern the various regions of the Jesuits, called Provinces: '*his more usual dealings will be with the provincials, just as the provincials dealing will be with the rectors and local superiors*' (§791). This form of subsidiarity exists so that the deficiencies of one leader can eventually be complemented by other leaders in the Jesuit 'body' (Aldama, 1999). As each of the supporting leaders is also lacking in perfection of virtue, each of them supplies '*for the defects*' (§791) of the others, bringing '*to perfection what has been imperfect in them*' (§791).

However, for Ignatius this was not enough. Each Jesuit leader '*requires to have someone to assist him*' (§798) in the form of supporting offices designed to overcome individual limitations of memory ('*for it is certain that no one man's memory could remember so many things*', §789), of understanding (given '*the nature of human intellect, which is unable to turn toward so many directions with proper attention or to make proper provision of them*', §803), and of the will (the aids should perform '*diligent work in carrying out or executing what was ordered*', §806).

The main supporting offices (Personal Secretary and Assistant) are designed to help the leader with the extraordinary amount of correspondence he receives daily (see above): the secretary must '*gather from all the letters and reports the substance and the points which must be referred to the superior and which require that a reply should be given or something should be done*' (§800); as for the Assistants, they ensure '*affairs may be more thoroughly analyzed*' (§803). The Constitutions never specify what the leaders and their assistants must achieve. Furthermore, what they do is not centred on specific objective outcomes, but on following the processes associated with information gathering.

There are three types of information the leader must gather from and about all his subordinates. First, information about '*what is occurring in all the provinces*' (§790); second, '*a list of all the houses and colleges of the Society with their revenues*' (§792); third, a list '*of all the persons*

who are in each province' (§792) in which everyone's qualities are stated. The simplicity of these advices is remarkable when compared with the bureaucratic apparatus it originated. Information gathering through correspondence and the reading of letters for promoting individuals became the main function of leadership, to the extent that the most significant expense the Jesuit headquarters in Rome had was stamps (See Moulin, 1964). The amount of letters exchanged could be impressive ('250 letters in a short period of time', letter from Ignatius to Pedro Fabro, Rome, 10 December 1542). As one secretary put it in 1620: *'In every task, profit and success depends on compliance with certain routines and protocols. Persons with many obligations are particularly dependant on diligent support. In the Society of Jesus this holds particularly true for the Father General and his Provincials. Since the epistolary communication between the General and the Provincials is the backbone of our order's administration, and since this communication relies on letters, it is important that the writing of these letters is done with the utmost care and accuracy'* (cited in Friedrich, 2009, p. 50).

However, what the letters should contain was not stated. It was the regularity with which they were sent that was determined (see above). Correspondence and information gathering established a rational-legal system (Weber, 1978) capable of governing geographically dispersed individuals. It was through information received via correspondence that the organization was governed, allowing the leader to know more than any other (which does not mean he knew everything).

Discussion

The leadership of large-scale moral endeavours across generations remains largely overlooked. Exceptions include, for instance, the work of Anteby (2013) which has shown how scripts and routines can sustain a moral endeavour. Anteby (2013) has also shown the role of silence in the manufacturing of morals: what is not said can guide morality as much as what is said. Anteby (2013) departs from a view that puts moral leadership at the top: moral endeavours are dependent not only on the values of those in charge, who then signal them to the rest of the organization. This is not necessarily sustainable, because it is tied to the specific values and behaviours of present leaders.

In this paper we have furthered this view through the analysis of the relationships between processes, temporality, ethics and leadership at an organization that has sustained a rather peculiar model across approximately 500 years. While we do not suggest that the Jesuits have been devoid of moral problems, we argue that an examination of this case reveals the importance of perceptions of time and temporality that

have wider implications concerning how moral leadership can be sustained across generations. We expand below.

The Jesuit Leadership Model

The Jesuit leadership model is procedural in its nature and driven by (a) the search for virtue (not necessarily its accomplishment), (b) the recognition that no leader can ever fulfil the requirements of virtue and (c) the attempt to overcome the distance between the centre (located in Rome) and a geographically dispersed population of individuals. However, the procedures which sustain the leadership model of the Jesuits, like correspondence for information gathering, cannot guarantee the achievement of morality, nor that those appointed as leaders are necessarily the best, nor that the leader knows everything he should know. Instead, they guarantee the pursuit of morality.

However, not everything gets reported through written accounts. Hence these being complemented by annual visits made by Jesuit leaders to all their subordinates: oral accounts (Bento da Silva et al., 2017) were, and still are nowadays, taken by the leader through a conversation, akin to a performance review, in which the oral eventually complements what is absent from the written. As in Anteby's (2013) discussion of how what is not said can guide morality just as what is said, the written and the oral guide the pursuit of morality in the Jesuit order, without ever guaranteeing that morality (or ethical leadership) will be achieved.

The pursuit for morality is performed by the individuals who are the target of the processes (neither processes, nor virtues, practice themselves). This means that without the leader there is no process. Yet, this does not point towards a heroic view of the leader. Instead, it portrays the leader as the guardian of the processes, which is akin to Selznick's (1957/1984) understanding of institutional leadership as being about the "promotion and protection of values" (p. 28) in large-scale organisations. Selznick's (1957/1984) approach does not make the leader devoid of virtues. However, although the leader must still be sufficiently virtuous to be selected, the answer to institutional leadership, as pointed out by Selznick (1958/1984), when referring explicitly to the Catholic Church, has been to 'to avoid selectivity in the choice of leaders while emphasizing indoctrination in their training' (p. 14; emphasis in the original).

We found evidence of such emphasis on indoctrination of Jesuit leadership, even among the Jesuits who criticised the model put forward by the Constitutions. For instance, Mariana (1625/1768), identified the lack of uniformity among Jesuits as one of the problems of their leadership model. Such uniformity was indeed pursued throughout Jesuit history. However, it was not only doctrinal uniformity (Friedrich, 2011) that the Jesuits looked for, but also procedural uniformity: the Jesuits' leadership model accepted the

possibility of failure of individual leaders and emphasised the need for leaders to protect the processes. Just as Selznick (1958/1984) claimed that ‘institutional integrity is characteristically vulnerable *when values are tenuous or insecure*’ (p. 120; emphasis in the original), so the Jesuits seem to claim the same regarding institutional processes supporting leadership.

The reason for the Jesuits’ insistence on the procedural was clear: gain insight into the local and situational (through letter-writing and oral annual accounts) and hence overcome as much as possible geographical distance. Therefore, soon after its inception, the Jesuit order relied on local leadership as central pillars of the administrative apparatus created around correspondence. Hence, the local had the most impact within the order since they were (and are still today) supposed to protect the processes of governance. This did not mean that the processes did not fail throughout Jesuit history. Hence the prototyping of the leader, the mechanisms to elect him, and the role of those who assist him. However, because you cannot know “about everything and everyone?” (Mariana, 1625/1768, p. 153; authors’ translation), the Jesuits created a unique process, exclusive to them within the Catholic Church, known as the annual Account of Conscience (Bento da Silva et al., 2017). Through it, the leaders gain in-depth knowledge of each of their subordinates, and overcome what is left absent from the written correspondence. This means that the centre of government of the Jesuits had a global reach (through standardised processes), while attempting to remain a highly localised institution attentive to situated circumstances (through individual oral accounts taken annually).

The standardised processes were not designed having in mind the linkages between them: they do not provide order through a system that is designed having a purpose in mind. The processes were designed having in mind their calendarized repetition. Had the processes been designed in a systemic way, then their eventual moral failure would be an issue. Furthermore, the processes per se are not perfect: there is no guarantee they will accomplish morality. They are not even necessarily the best way of doing it: they simply reduce the reliance on individuals and allow the Jesuit order to cope with the situational. That is why, we claim, the procedural approach that informs the Jesuit ethical leadership model is underpinned by an ethics of cyclicity, the guardianship of the present, and the renunciation of new visions for the future. We expand below.

Temporality in the Jesuit model

In leadership studies, one of the most significant contributions on time was that of Thomas Carlyle (2013), whose lectures on the ‘Great Man’ effectively operated to both promote and remove time. That is to say, since it was only

ever Great Men that moved the wheel of history along, time was irrelevant in the sense that leadership did not change with the times; leadership was always restricted to heroic superhumans not specific times. On the other hand, in the absence of such great men, time would not move along, so the status quo (however disastrous) would remain until such times as a great man arrived to change the times. Since Carlyle’s time, if there is a constant in leadership studies, it is some variant of contingency theory that implies a constant process of change in leadership in line with a constant change in context (Grint, 2011). So, the question for the Jesuits was always, how do we maintain a form of leadership across time that is neither heroic in Carlyle’s sense, nor constantly changing with the times?

The Jesuit Constitutions assemble a comprehensive set of processes and aids, which take a centre stage in the Jesuits’ way of leading and which have remained unchanged: the processes have been repeated over and over during the last circa five centuries. This imbues the Jesuits’ way of leading with timelessness. This unchangeable nature was made possible by the acknowledgement that the emphasis is not on achieving ideals (outcome), but in the search itself. That is, the process takes over the content. In summary, it is not the leader that matters (who will never match the prototype), but the processes and aids that support him, and fill in for the absence of a heroic/virtuous leader. In this sense, a habitual model of leadership emerges, relying on an unending repetition, ensuring simultaneously its timelessness and resilience. Habitual leadership is not about habits, but about habitual action: the continual and perpetual can also be a way of diminishing the temptations of power: when those in power change procedures that also does not necessarily guarantee the achievement of morality.

Habitual leadership in the Jesuit order follows a calendarization of correspondence, of the regular replacement of the leaders and of their aids, and of oral accounts. As Zerubavel (1985) has shown, calendars are inherently normative and act as ordering devices: they “preserve particularistic sentiments by means of maintaining distinct temporal arrangements” (p. 75). Put differently, calendars provide a sense of unity, they unify a social group’s destiny and, particularly important in our case, they sustain a “commonality of hopes” (Zerubavel, 1985, p. 74). Calendars regulate “the lives of *social* entities such as families, professional groups, religious communities, complex organizations, or even entire nations” (Zerubavel, 1985, p. xii; italics in the original), and are therefore fundamental for the constitution of normative “sociotemporal” orders. Moreover, calendars allow for “temporal segregation” (Zerubavel, 1985) which underpins a social group’s identity. Hence the relevance of the Jesuits’ abandonment of monastic orders’ traditional ways of ordering time within the confines of a monastery.

“Sociotemporal” orders parallel Shipp and Jansen’s (2021) “temporal mindsets”, in which both the objective and the subjective understandings of time are brought together: “concepts such as synchronization and duration, or mechanisms such as learning and accumulation, may be subjectively experienced and interpreted, yet they simultaneously require the actual passage of time to unfold” (p. 321). In the Jesuit case, the passage of time is ordered through a variety of mechanisms: the long training of individual Jesuits, the time Jesuit leaders and their assistant spend reading letters, the time in-between letters, and the time in-between oral accounts. It is not only about what is calendarized, but also about what is in between calendarized events and which escapes both the written and the oral.

It is through the passage of time, as well as in specific calendarized events, that virtue eventually reveals itself and the situational is made visible. However, neither the revelation of virtue through correspondence, including the one used to gather information on possible leaders, nor the visibility of the situational, are about the accomplishment of ‘desirable ends’ (Gardiner, 2018). Instead, they are about a way of enquiring what can never be fully reached. Our case therefore adds to Hernes’ (2014) plea for mystery regarding the temporal: “what is not yet” (p. 184), but which we can pursue. Habitual leadership is therefore not about the accomplishment of virtue, nor about the infallibility of the processes which sustain morality. Habitual leadership is about the pursuit of morality as a tradition of enquiry (MacIntyre, 2007) which is cyclical, hence guarding the present and renouncing new visions for the future.

Conclusion

It should be self-evident that the Jesuit model does not engage with internalist Transformational Leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Burns, 1978) theories because the Jesuits agreed on the purpose of the organisation—there was no need to ‘lift’ the minds of the followers to a different place—the question was how to get to that already agreed place. Nor was there a need for charismatic leadership—of either the strong Weberian (1978) variant rooted in social crises and theologically predestined and extraordinary individuals, or the weaker neo-charismatic model of Bass (1960) and House (1999), where the strength of character and relationship was a pre-requisite, because charismatics are necessarily destabilising characters and the last thing the Jesuits needed was destabilising.

What the Jesuits recognised from the very beginning under the leadership of Ignatius of Loyola is that leadership cannot be restricted to a particular individual—such as Ignatius himself—because an individual’s finite mortality could not be allowed to interfere with the infinite existence

of the Jesuit ‘*corpus*’. Furthermore, the Jesuit way of leading could not be reconfigured to suit every point in space and time because that way the diversity of the leadership would undermine the unity of the ‘*corpus*’. In contemporary organisations, leaders do not survive for long; indeed, few organisations survive longer than a single life span (Daepf, 2015; Lam, 2015), but for the Jesuits the mortality of the individual was a reason not to rely upon individuals and to shift the concern from individual leader as sacred hero to individual leader as guardian of the sacred. But how could they ensure this?

First, the importance of governance was stressed—this was to be a bureaucracy not in the Dickensian sense of the ‘Circumlocution Office’ in Little Dorritt where decisions are endlessly caught in the system (so well captured in Dickens, 1996; Graeber, 2015) but in Weber’s (1978) original definition of efficiency where writing, records, and information systems were to provide the legal and rational infrastructure to obviate the necessity of relying upon the whim of individuals’ decision-making and judgement (du Gay, 2000). Weber (1978) accepted that some forms of proto-bureaucracy existed in Ancient Egypt, China and Rome and these were distinguishable from the mainly patrimonial or familial based governance systems, but he suggested that ideal type bureaucracies were the construction of ‘modern’ (i.e., nineteenth century Europe) and comprised five composite aspects: free and full time employees; organised in a hierarchy; some form of distinct sphere of competence and employed on this basis; promoted through seniority or competence or both; subject to strict and systematic discipline.

In this sense, the Jesuits formed an early modern bureaucracy before European states engaged in their construction. And it was this form of governance, we argue, that enabled the Jesuits to steer away from charismatic leadership and maintain disciplined leadership across space and time. For Weber, bureaucracy—legal rational authority—was normative in the sense that it could be judged correct or erroneous by reference to a set of rules, and it was rational because it was derived from expertise and calculability. Of course Weber’s primary concern was actually the rise of state governance and the displacement of traditional and charismatic authority in conjunction with the Enlightenment, and he recognised the limits of bureaucratic control. However, we are more interested in his argument that bureaucracy was often the only way that charismatics could extend the viability of their organisation beyond their own lives by calcifying their personal—and extraordinary—characteristics into organisational processes and practices. And this is precisely Ignatius’ goal in the construction of the 9th part of the Constitutions in which the leader is described.

Second, the Jesuits would be staffed by individuals who would go through the most rigorous selection and assessment scheme, not to pick prototypical Jesuit leaders based

on personal (and often idiosyncratic) traits but to pick Jesuit leadership prototypes based on the social identity embedded in their original construction of procedures and regulations. The difference was that the latter embodied recognition of the limits of individuals' wisdom and knowledge and thus the necessity for collective deliberation and decision-making.

In effect, the Jesuit solution to the complexities of time and space facing their attempt to build a permanent network of churches and schools across the globe was to unconsciously mimic fractals (Falconer, 2013)—a replicating system of self-similar individuals at every scale of the institution—that would ensure system survival irrespective of the fate of individuals. The result was a way of leading that transcended the externalist/internalist dichotomy because the Jesuits tried to create their own environment rather than just respond to it, and yet attempted to do this by grounding their approach in a series of procedures and behaviours, not a set of personal characteristics.

Declarations

Conflict of interest There are no conflicts of interest to report. Furthermore, neither the research for this paper has received any funding, nor have the authors shared it for comments, nor present it at a conference/workshop.

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