

SYSTEMIC LEADERSHIP REVISITED: SYSTEMISITY AND RESPONSIBILIZATION FOR HUMAN FLOURISHING

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Abstract

This paper responds to the ongoing calls for ‘leaders’, ‘leadership’ and modes of ‘leading’ that navigate the unknown that VUCA conditions create. Ecological grant challenges raise fresh concerns to the scale of the ‘Anthropocene’ – human extinction. In this analysis, Anthropocene will be reframed to account for human flourishing. The growing momentum and focus on flourishing has emerged as a response to the ongoing calls for restoring wellbeing and the pursuit of happiness in work and personal life, placing flourishing as the end of leadership. I will elaborate on this thesis to extend accounts of ecosystemic flourishing to also revisit the way Systemic Leadership as a fundamental aspect of flourishing attends to the quality of relationships as a central dimension. I will introduce the notion of *systemisity* to account for the conditions that underpins modes of connectedness through inter-being and co-creation. The latter offers a fresh perspective on relational, collective and social accounts of leadership because it explicates the relationship between being human, humanity and humanness which refines our understanding of each towards responsabilization which is a mark of humane leadership. Emerging findings from an ethnographic study of PAFOS F.C. will provide empirically informed anecdotal evidence to illustrate the thesis.

Keywords

Systemic Leadership, *Systemisity*, Responsibilization, Human Flourishing.

Introduction

This paper responds to the ongoing calls for ‘leaders’, ‘leadership’ and new modes of ‘leading’ that navigate the Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) conditions that characterize the new world of work. Ecological grant challenges raise fresh concerns to the scale of the ‘Anthropocene’ (Pickering, 2019) threatening human extinction. Aside from ecological grant challenges, the threat is also orientated towards the ongoing digitalization in the ‘unavoidable’ embeddedness of Artificial Intelligence (and its various extensions e.g. generative, quantum etc.) in redefining the role of technology and its relationship to humanity and how work is being done (Einola et al., 2024). In this analysis, the focus will be on how the Anthropocene itself may be reframed from extinction to human flourishing. Etymologically, Anthropocene derives from the Greek - Ανθρωποκενο which means empty of humans. Hence, its association with extinction. However, if the same word is spelled as Ανθρωποκαينو is also means innovation, renewal and regenerativeness of humans. It is deployed here to account for the grant challenge of becoming human which aligns well with the growing momentum and focus on flourishing which has emerged as a response to the ongoing calls for restoring wellbeing and the pursuit of happiness in work and personal life (VanderWeele, 2017).

This reframing of Anthropocene also prompts fresh efforts to account for what counts as ‘humanness’ not only what would pass beyond the ‘Turing Test’ (human vs machine see Turing, 1950). It’s not so much the ‘threat’ or what previously were deemed as ‘crises’ calling for leadership that is the point

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in this analysis. Nor is it just about recognizing the urgency for Crisis Leadership given the state of the world the role of political, economic, social forces at play (Riggio & Newstead, 2023). Instead, it would be to revisit the way leadership scholars position leadership as a central concern in public debates steering the co-creation of ‘preferred’ futures’ by ‘rising to the occasion’ (Antonacopoulou, 2025; Antonacopoulou, 2022a).

If we treat leadership as a collective, relational and responsible endeavor what might a systemic orientation add? Systemic Leadership is not merely another convenient prefix (systemic) to a concept – leadership - that otherwise suffers from what I would term as the ‘premodifier curse’. This would be the case when prefixes such as ‘servant’, ‘charismatic’, ‘authentic’, ‘transformational’ and many more are attached to ‘leadership’ rendering the promise that such leadership exists simply because it is named as such. Failure to examine the conditions that contribute towards rendering such leadership possible results in many such leadership theories potentially becoming misleading. In short, the response to the question is the invitation it extends to examine more closely the connectedness that underpins co-creation of ‘preferred futures’.

Such a focus on co-creation and future-making as integral to leadership goes beyond relational, shared, distributed or practice-based perspectives all of which focus on interactivity between social actors (human and non-human) bringing attention to discourse, materiality and other valuable considerations. Perhaps more fundamentally, leadership that emerges and is embedded in acts of co-creation and future-making is also perforce to be catalytic to the ecosystemic changes that are systematically called for. An ecosystemic orientation in relation to leadership begins to shift the focus beyond units and levels of analysis as we have hitherto framed them (individual, group, organization, society – micro/meso/macro etc. Ritchie-Dunham et al., 2025). It would seem perhaps more so a call to embrace the challenge to both ‘see’ and engage with the ‘whole’ that systemic modes of thinking and acting have long argued for (Ackoff, 1974; Donaldson, 2026).

In this paper, consistent with the *Systems* journal’s definition and scope that ‘systems as interrelated elements form a unified whole where the system is influenced by its environment and described by its boundaries’, I invite a critical re-examination of systemic modes of leading and revisit previous accounts of and framings of ‘Systemic Leadership’ (thereafter SL). My motivation in doing so, is because I consider this as integral to the efforts to foster responsabilization. I do not pursue such analysis of responsabilization by revisiting responsible leadership (Pless & Maak, 2022) as I have not seen even in recent contributions much development or explication of the ‘relationality’ that underpins the ‘relationships between stakeholders’ that it is founded upon.

My thesis is that connectedness demands that we give attention to the ecology of conditions and resulting energy that underpins *connections* and not merely *connectivity* of sub-systems. I will submit that this presents a critical challenge to leadership research that claims to be relational, shared, distributed or indeed systemic (Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2015; Raelin et al, 2018). This is because it prompts elaboration not only of the nature of connections but also the conditions that fuel the variations in connectedness. This orientation towards what I will endeavor to speak of as ‘*systemicity*’, would seek to capture the ‘sensuousness’ that governs connectedness that extends beyond sensibility (cognitive) or sensitivity (emotional) and gives rise to sentience (sentiments) (Antonacopoulou, 2019).

I organize the analysis in three sections. In the section after the introduction I reflexively critique our re-engagement with systems thinking and acting in management and organization studies to draw attention to the need for greater understanding of the value-added contribution of systemic orientations to managing and organizing especially if orientated towards serving the common good that underpins ecosystemic flourishing. In the third section I will introduce the notion of *systemicity* and explicate this in relation to revisiting SL through the notion of responsabilization. I will illustrate this in practice through fragments from ongoing ethnographic research with PAFOS F.C. as a phenomenon where *systemicity* underpins the SL that differentiates their sportsmanship and not merely performance in the Football league tables. The analysis will conclude with a review of the implications for future research and business practice.

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Systemic Leadership Revisited

Systems Thinking has a long tradition in management and organization studies, not least because seminal contributions have drawn attention to the viability of managing and organizing through the interconnectedness that systemic modes promote (Beer, 1985; MacArthur-Kerr, 2019). A systemic orientation is receiving renewed attention with contributions that emphasize its currency (Bansal & Birkinshaw, 2025). Yet, these have done little to advance how systemic ways of being and becoming can be better embedded in the very systems we are part of. Failure to build on this connection not only undermines efforts for change and progress. They also fall short of supporting the ‘sense of coherence’ (Antonovsky, 1993) and I would add ‘sense of composure’ that connectedness would otherwise support, especially when engaging with the unknown that underpins VUCA conditions. Although reference to ‘sense of coherence’ is placed in relation to human responses to crises and stress, I am extending the deployment of this terminology to give substance to *systemicity* as a sensed aspect of SL. *Sense of coherence* in relation to SL fosters connectedness between elements of a system by providing meaning and aligning understandings emerging from past experiences. *Sense of composure*, on the other hand, reflects the emerging understandings between elements of a system when VUCA conditions demand navigating the unknown.

In this respect, I see a return to revisit and extend how we understand systems and systemic modes especially in relation to leadership as a way of connecting both the debates of systemic and responsible leadership given they both are founded on a focus on connections between stakeholders and related sub-systems. Perhaps more importantly, and given my ongoing commitment to contribute to our efforts to navigate the unknown VUCA conditions present us with, my priority is to position this work as catalytic to both understanding what responsibility is beyond current framings (Gherardi & Laasch, 2022) and explore how responsabilization (Antonacopoulou, 2025) may be possible as a force for strengthening how systems and stakeholders connect in service of the ‘greater good’ and ‘greater whole’. This orientation is often referred to as the ‘common good’ acting both as a new economic system (Ostrom, 1990) as well as, more widely, foundational principle in civic and political life structuring the way firms, institutions and other forms of governance promote societal, ecological, economic, and political wellbeing (Mazzucato, 2024).

My starting point is to acknowledge, that the significance of embracing a complexity perspective in leadership studies is well embedded in leadership debates (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007). Moreover, considering the popularization of ‘systemic leadership’ (Stam & Hagenboom, 2018; Senge et al., 2019) the systemic orientation is also well established. It merits explicating however, that SL is not only about shifting the focus on the structures, relationships, processes, culture and all other configurations of assemblages of people, affects, material artefacts, discourses, technologies, institutions, where leading becomes the ‘glue’ holding them together.

SL is more than the rediscovery of systemic modes of thinking and acting (Meadows, 2001; Jackson, 2019). And it is not even just about the potential interdependence and reciprocity in the dynamic interactions between various elements of a system. SL is not just about two way relationships not even only about networked modes of operation and ways of knowing (Allen & Cherrey, 2000). I would like to position SL as a mode of living and working where learning and developing is not predefined by steps and growth ladders in a predetermined upward direction. Instead, the whole system enables leadership at many levels and such multiplicity of modes of leading shapes and propels leadership within and of the system. In this respect, SL is not positioning leadership on a systems level (Croft et al., 2021).

By revisiting SL as hitherto conceptualized and enacted, I seek to unpack further the dynamics that socio-politico-ethical tensions present that could become extensions of possibilities for action, interaction and transaction. In this respect, SL like all other relational conceptualizations of leadership is a form of ‘dialogical exchange’ (Beech, et al., 2012) which promotes and mobilizes collective action to address common goal(s) as Cairney and Toomey (2025) propose. Ideally, collective action ought to serve the common good especially if the focus shifts on co-creation where the role of axiology—“timi” (honor)—as integral to leadership becomes foundational for partnering for impact when reflected in connectedness marked by *Inter-being* (co-creation), *Isotimia* (equal worth) and *Philotimia* (the commitment to respect each other’s worth) (Antonacopoulou, 2022).

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This does beg the question whether SL may be what could catalyze the level of impact (improvement in actions, Antonacopoulou, 2010) that would make collective action pragmatically possible. Hence, a focus on dynamics extends beyond the nature of interactions and draws attention to the conditions that underpin the quality of connectedness between and across human and non-human stakeholders as elements in a system. I term this focus as *systemicity*.

Systemicity and Responsibilization

Introducing *systemicity* as a condition underpinning SL my objective is to find a way to not merely name but speak of the otherwise ineffable ‘force’ that makes connections possible. Heraclitus attended to this through his concept of *logos* in the way opposites co-instantiate. In our mainstream ways of understanding how we relate and connect with each other and with the systems we co-create we make references to processes, practices, relationships and a variety of conditions that otherwise may be a source of tension that may in fact challenge unity and coherence.

I would like to propose that *systemicity* shifts the attention to the ‘energy’ and strives for ‘harmonia’ when fueled by reflexivity activating the dynamics created in and by the interconnections of all elements/stakeholders in the system. Such interconnections act as an energy force propelling individual and collective action by transforming tensions into extensions. Beyond alleviating tensions to create balance and alignment as Gordon et al. (2023) advice, extensions mark the elasticity that permits expanding beyond the current framing of the system altogether (Antonacopoulou, 2008). This perspective has affinity to Beer’s (1985) notion of ‘syncretism’, because it embeds auditing and reevaluating as integral to the viability of the system and that of its subsystems. I would also add that this reevaluation is central to the viability of the connecting forces holding the systems together. The dynamism and energy that fuels the connections and their reexamination is a mark of the reflexive orientation that underpins ‘*systemicity*’.

Reflexivity is not only about ‘Multi-Academy Trust – MAT’ in the context of educational change initiatives proposed by Constantinides’s (2023) framing of SL. Nor is it only about what Hobbs (2019) describes with reference to local government as ‘adaptive social learning’. Reflexivity as Antonacopoulou et al. (2023) illustrated empirically propels interconnectedness founded on *inter-being* (Nahn Hahn, 2015) which can be better understood as a mode of co-creation – *sympoiesis* – (Haraway, 2016). As elaborated elsewhere, inter-being is more than co-existence and co-habitation (Antonacopoulou, 2022a; 2022b). It is a mode of co-creation taking multiple forms including ‘dialogical exchanges’ (Beech, et al., 2012) not least because they challenge us to revisit the ways we understand connectedness not only through dialogue but the ‘*logos*’ in dia-logos. This framing is aligned with Barad’s (2007) and Ingold’s (2008) entanglements, because it focuses on the ‘symplegmatic learning’ (Antonacopoulou, 2014) that fuels connectedness because it promotes safety in vulnerability which is integral to reflexive ways of partnering for impact (Antonacopoulou, et al., 2023).

In this analysis, SL becomes a catalyst for reframing responsibility and accounts of responsible leadership (Pless & Maak, 2022). The choice to focus on responsibility is not only due to the renewed focus on the ability to respond (Gherardi and Laasch, 2022) but also as a foundation for impact (Antonacopoulou et al., 2026). This means that responsibility is a relational act, because the attention and intention extends beyond probabilities, plausibilities and projections of action consequences and outcomes. Instead, responsibility mobilizes the co-creation of possibilities and potentialities that serve the common good as part of the preferred future (Antonacopoulou, 2022). Hence, responsibility acts as a condition that guides action, interaction and transaction with others. It also has this dual capacity to both be prospective and retrospective which in terms of interconnectedness prompts attention beyond intentions underlying action and invites also attending to the capacity to anticipate consequences of actions. This is consistent with wider framings of responsible leadership that promote the relational and ethical orientation towards stakeholder management, sustainability issues and wider governance that demonstrates corporate accountability (Miska & Endenhall, 2018).

Yet, despite these developments a persistent ‘disease’ of our times is ‘euthynophobia’ which has been defined as “the reluctance to own up to one’s obligations and duties and the lack of readiness to act in relation to a challenging situation or to assume accountability for the implications of actions”

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(Antonacopoulou, 2025). This recognition prompts the shift to flourishing which would be marked by overcoming euthynophobia revealing the ways humans continue to redefine humanity and what being and becoming human means. The focus on humanness underpinning the agenda of responsabilization would catalyse flourishing because it denotes the way systems function to provide coherence and consistency as well as, composure amidst VUCA conditions.

The ongoing ruptures and discontinuities marked as ‘wicket problems’ are particularly amenable to systems science as Donaldson (2026) convincingly explains. This is because they focus on dynamics which cannot be formulated definitively, have no clear beginning nor end, demand learning differently – not through trial and error. In short, dynamics integral to all systemic configurations are not only mobilizing variations in modes of connecting. They also catalyse new levels of connectedness - akin to ‘co(m)-petition’ (Antonacopoulou et al., 2025) – co-creating new standards, values, virtues that serve the common good and advance humanness, humanity and humane ways of leading.

Based on all these considerations which account for dimensions of *systemicity*, I define this phenomenon as *the logos marked by a sense of coherence, consistency and composure when engaging with the unknown as part of the ongoing dynamics of inter-being that fuel individual and collective action on the way to becoming human while advancing humanness, humanity and humane ways of leading a life of flourishing*. A real-world example to illustrate this phenomenon is the way PAFOS F.C. exhibits SL fueled by *systemicity*.

Systemic Leadership and Systemicity at PAFOS F.C.

In this section I draw on emerging findings from a study of the ‘phenomenon of PAFOS F.C.’ and its unprecedented success in Cyprus Football League and Championship to illustrate how it would be reflected in dialogical exchanges. Despite being a newcomer in the global football stage, the Club’s rapid growth created amongst many other challenges the need to balance the desire for immediate success with the long-term development of the Club’s brand, infrastructure, fan-base and partnerships, but also secure its ongoing internal integration. With a mission and vision of ‘*Making History*’ PAFOS F.C. is dedicated ‘*to grow with the place and its people for the people, place and planet*’. This commitment to growing holistically was founded on an even greater discipline of learning as much as possible from everything and everyone, all the time.

The Club aims to provide a learning environment celebrating Cypriot heritage while fostering global connections and sustainable growth. The Club’s values include community engagement, inclusivity, excellence and integrity, innovation, and sustainability, all of which guide its operations and interactions with internal and external stakeholders.

The success of PAFOS F.C. is as much about developing connections and bonds that unite, the fans, the community, the partners and sponsors, as it is the internal orchestration of a variety of activities that comprise of the Club’s portfolio often referred to as a ‘superhuman act’ because, “*We are 50 people who are doing the work of 1,500 people*”. This common understanding pervades the work ethic in PAFOS F.C. with staff across levels and departments signing up an employment and psychological contract to join a Club where: “*We stay together*”; “*We work 24/7*”; “*We are united*”.

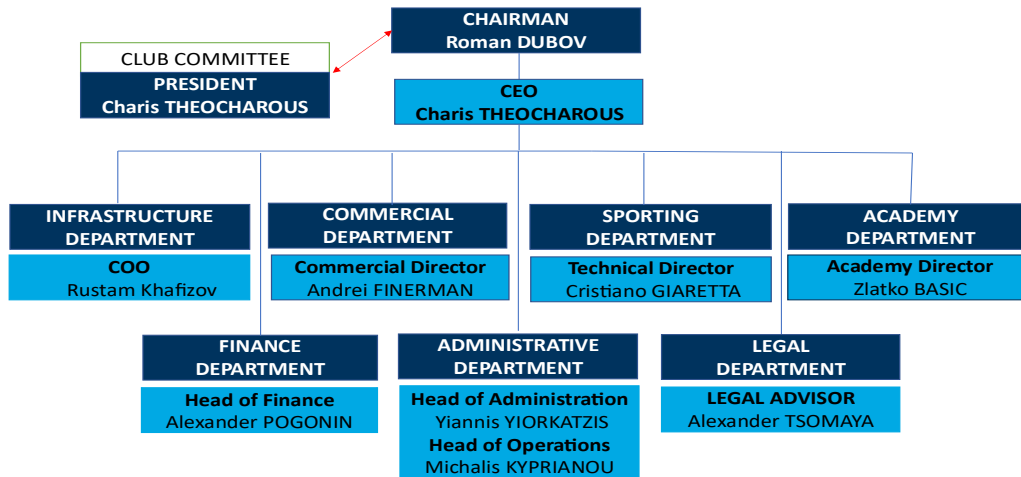
The Club’s CEO - Charis Theocharous - places as a key success indicator the internal connections between his staff. Although there is an organizational organogram (see Exhibit 1), the structure itself does not account for the connectedness between people occupying the various ‘boxes’. In fact, Theocharous explains the structure of the system he is leading using the train analogy to capture the interconnectedness between all stakeholders suggesting that:

“we are a train that is on a rail and has one engine... all carriages need to be aligned ... we have to click”.

Such an alignment is promoted as a key aspect of the way the organization functions *systemically* on a day-to-day basis and reflected in the Club’s presence in every game and competition. It gives a glimpse of the systemicity that extends beyond the culture of the organization and the values and history of the Club that give its already acknowledged distinctive way of doing things.

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Exhibit 1: PAFOS F.C. Organizational Structure



Any visitor to the Club’s premises would be impressed by the simplicity of the open space with hot-desking as the working mode and with people in constant movement. The only separate office in the same space is Theocharou’s office. There is no receptionist, no secretary and nothing that presents a hierarchy as such. Theocharous appreciates the quality of connections that foster ‘*systemicity*’ in the SL that underpins the PAFOS F.C. as a viable system. He communicates this to the Club members as follows:

“Its not just working hard; its about working with passion. To love your Club, to love not only football, but regional development... to be part of a community ... to put your life, your power – everything you have – into making this region better... to develop football, to develop sports, to support locals...”

Inviting his team to reflect on how they each understand the Club’s growth and how their contributions made a difference to the collective success, they spontaneously offered the following remarks demonstrating the *systemicity* that also reveals the humanness, humanity and humane ways of working as critical conditions shaping their interconnectedness.

Andrei Finerman, Commercial Director ... offers the following reflections:

“First of all, now I know that ‘impossible means nothing’... we are a small team maybe 50 people, who are doing the work of one and a half thousand. But it’s not just about working hard; we should be very accurate. We should be open-minded. Because it’s a small region with people who truly love their city, their town, their team. We need to support them. We need to be part of their lives... You cannot just do business here. Every movement must be tailor-made. It’s very, very specific. That’s part of my job.”

Xenofon Onisiforou, Team Manager ... building on Andrei’s reflection by offering his own experience and exemplifying the connections between staff members and their operations stating:

My role in the team is, to be the main contact between the coaching staff, the management, and the players... everyday I have to do something different, and everybody else can come to me if they need anything.... by building strong relationships between us we understand each other, we approach each other professionally and respectfully.

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Xenophon was particularly emphatic about the way everyone relies on each other for help. This is especially so, because mistakes happen.

“We are in football. Football is a game of mistakes. Every single colleague—every single employee—will make mistakes. Even if you don’t play, if you work in management, we deal with decisions and actions every day. So it’s not possible to be perfect every day. We try to be correct. But if something goes wrong, we try to understand our colleague. We try to put ourselves in their position and ask: What could we have done better, so next time, I’ll be wiser and more ready to handle that kind of situation? We don’t point fingers. We don’t say, ‘it’s your fault.’...I hate that. I really do. We’re not here to blame each other. At the end of the day, we are a team. We win together, we lose together, we fail together, we succeed together”.

There is something different about the learning that Xenophon seems to be referring to that extends beyond previous accounts of ‘systems thinking’ that promote a learning orientation. He accounts for the investment in learning to meet and understand others personally. He explained it as follows:

“Right now, I have to be with the team every single day, every training, every match, every hotel stay. I am the first person that the player meets—firstly by message or by email—when the deal is close to being done we meet in person. I communicate with the players, and I am responsible for organizing everything to bring the player to PAFOS. I know players who don’t like social media, who don’t like attention. Others want the cameras, the photos. I learn what kind of person each one is. Then I understood it wasn’t just about football—it was personal”.

Michalis Kyriacou, Head of Operations and UEFA Liaison ... complements this perspective drawing attention to the growth that the learning entails. He specifically pointed out that:

“My role is not just a position, it’s a responsibility. I need to understand the line UEFA wants to follow, and implement it through my role. With our mentality to keep our ears and eyes open, we try to gain as much as we can and we try to give as well, and to learn and stretch through this process—to get to the competition to meet and introduce ourselves—using the slogan: ‘Growing together’. We’ve used that slogan for every single match. So, growth in general—it’s not just the Club, it’s the community, it’s even the players and everyone around us.”

He went on to explain that:

“I came to the Club to implement a new energy. The energy was missing. Energy, you can’t find it everywhere, but you can create it. You have to change the mentality. You have to stretch a little more, go the extra mile—and enjoy yourself at the same time. That’s how you get better. And through all this, I believe that together we’ve achieved something. We consider it time well spent. We always say, even if it’s just placing a tiny stone into a massive wall—it’s something.”

Cristiano Giaretta, Sporting Director ... reflecting on the changing image of the Club by entering the European League, he drew attention to the need for players to understand what they’re stepping into. By positioning Cyprus as a serious league, and creating value for the Club by securing good players this still demands careful handling. On the one hand, it is about building capital—by selling players when the time is right, and in the meantime, supporting their development, even when it is also possible that players may not play every game. He explained it as follows:

“We’ve built a structure to support all of the players in our system, and it’s improving... There’s a lot of intensity... If you want to win the championship, you must treat each day like it’s a match. To win every match, you have to win every training session. And here at PAFOS, we are running fast—not just technically, but also humanly. The Club is very ambitious. I loved it from day one. I saw the ambition and the desire to see PAFOS succeed in Europe. And that’s a motivation in itself... That’s why keeping the group united is key. This group supports each other. They’re kind, respectful. I like the locker room. There’s balance ... the squad is solid—more players from high-

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level leagues tactically, they know what to do with and without the ball, they understand their roles. We train with high intensity, and we keep things organized.

Yiannis Yiorkatziz – Head of Administration ... drew attention that amidst the overall positivity everyone emphasized, he also recognized the absence of a human resource management department or a secretary and the additional demands this placed on his work portfolio. He explained:

“My job is to fix other people’s mistakes...I do what I do because I love it...my job on a daily basis is about finalizing things—preparing contracts, updating data, making sure everything that happens in the team is recorded—contracts, payments, social insurance, anything administrative. Also, about the Academy: registrations, coaches, planning, schedules, teachers—all that kind of stuff. The Academy must be structured properly and this falls under my responsibility as well...that’s 9 departments in the youth system. And I also handle ticketing, the fan travel logistics for away games abroad and I act as a kind of support zone officer, mainly for the fans—not the team of course. Risk management too—especially if there are possible clashes with fans from the other team. I’m involved in marketing and organizational support—not fully focused there, but I help. I’ve been almost three years in the Club, and I have a very good relationship with the community—with the Pafians to support outreach...Because we’ve built a more friendly relationship with fans they’ve started to learn what goes into organizing something like an away match.”

Christoforos Matheou, Head of Media ... completed Yiannis’ sentence adding that:

“This Club is doing something historic. It’s a local community Club, trying to represent a whole region of people. I decided to join PAFOS because first and foremost as a Club, what it represents, its values, I could relate to it and align my personal beliefs and ambitions which is not something I could do with other Clubs. At the same time, this Club is by far the most ambitious ...and seems at times unrealistic. Maybe at times pressuring and pushing staff into doing things that seem difficult or unattainable. Okay, maybe it helps if you love the Club you work for, because it gets you to put in the extra effort and go the extra mile. But at the same time, you need to limit your emotions in order to do your job on a day-to-day basis... So, you work toward a game—no matter your position: operations, media, and on the day of the actual event, there’s a storm, and you have to change everything. This is how football life is....You need to find a way to do what you have to do, what you want to do, and what pops up unexpectedly—all within a packed schedule. That way, you get the job done. But also understanding the context: the Club, the fan base, the culture of the city and the country. That’s difficult to teach ... knowing how to handle crises comes from understanding the audience and anticipating reactions... which is a way of also minimizing mistakes.”

The various perspectives of the members of PAFOS F.C. act as testimonios of their lived experience of being the system that is the Club. The SL is not only demonstrated in the interconnected ways in which they operated individually and collectively. It is also marked by the energy that acts as a bond holding them together fueling the deep sense of care that shapes how they conduct their roles not mechanically but in relation to each other. The logos of connectedness in the dialogue that the vignette explicates is not about their words and statements but the ways these hold clues about the principles and values, that enable their inter-being. The latter is signaled by the deep care that drives them to give not only their time and energy but a piece of who they are to making the Club what it is becoming. Such *systemicity* is marked not only by the dedication, commitment and willingness to go the extra mile. It is also demonstrated by the active responsibility demonstrated in all that is being done for the common good. The latter is also marked in the ways members of the Club irrespective of seniority or work portfolio pursue working with ‘philotimo’. Such *philotimia* is marked in the commitment to act honorably, responsibly, and generously toward others and the community, guided by conscience and respect and dedication to serve a greater purpose. These insights

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provide scope to extend our understanding of responsibility as integral to SL which itself is marked by a more humane orientation because it is founded on humanness and honours humanity.

Discussion

One of the most striking insights from the ongoing ethnography with PAFOS F.C. is the very '*Human*' disposition of all the people the Club seems to be attracting as internal and external stakeholders. This point speaks as much about their 'down to earth' attitudes as it does about their '*Humanness*' marked by the ways each of the informants is expressing their understanding of their role and contribution to the Club's growth also marks their '*Humane*' orientation whilst collectively I would argue, that they signal their '*Humanity*'.

This analysis points to 'being human' as the '*biological being*' that all members of the Club in this vignette explicate as part of the wider ecosystem of beings and doings that comprise of the Football and Club systems. Yet, it is also possible to argue that the 'humanness' of each and all of the informants is marked by their readiness to participate consciously in the life of the Club with their capacity to learn and regenerate themselves, each other and their common purpose which marks their '*existential being*'. Equally, when a holistic lens is employed, it is possible to recognize their inter-being through their 'humanity' which marks their '*collective being*' inspires and is inspired by their 'humane' orientation what could be framed as their '*moral/ethical being*' demonstrated through their responsibility and accountability in explaining not only what they do, but why they do what they do in the ways they do it.

Whilst these points merit a lot more development and analysis than space permits in this paper, the key message is that we cannot afford to advance systemic modes of managing, organizing and leading if we do not also align to these a better understanding of ways of being and becoming human. Through greater attentiveness and incorporation of systemicity in our gaze when examining the dynamics of, within and between systems we can acknowledge the wider ecosystem. It is not enough to call it a wicket problem nor seek to advance complex conceptual systems theories to guide our thinking if we continue to separate them from action. Systemicity as does SL prompts us to continue to explore and reclaim what it means to become human amidst these VUCA conditions that the dynamics in the wider ecosystem present us with. All the more why, we not only need to advance systemic modes of leading that celebrate humanness not as the antidote to the digitization. Instead, it may well be our finest moment yet as Religious Leaders also proclaim '*Magnifica humanitas*' (Pope Leo, 2026) to reclaim our humanity, by advancing our humane ways of being not through supremacy nor virtue alone, but through refining what we understand being and becoming human entails.

This offers a possibility for humane leadership to be marked not only by qualities (such as kindness, civility) but also by working to reveal our highest human potential. This may perhaps be marked by simply averting our tendency of human fallibility as the excuse for the humane poverty that otherwise lies in our midst expressed through toxicity, violations of dignity and other 'ills' that undermine not only our well-being but limit our flourishing. Hence, SL and systemicity could catalyse the momentum and inject the energy to practise becoming human serving the common good in humane ways that reclaim what being human means. If it can be done in a Football Club it is possible to do it elsewhere to frame the Anthropocene not as a threat but as an invitation for Global Flourishing (Karthikeya et al., 2021).

Conclusions

By coining and conceptualizing *systemicity* as a mode of connectedness marked by inter-being and applying this in revisiting previous references to SL as a mode of managing and organizing for a VUCA world, I offer insights about the possible ways leading fuels collective capacity to orient, connect, and animate the relationships and flows within and between assemblages. Doing so, redirects attention beyond the focus on the structure of a system and the lines of connection or the quality of interconnectedness and alignment. Instead, it offers a way of revisiting how interconnectedness is formed, performed and transformed revealing how responsabilization mobilizes collective action and may be contributing to leadership itself being made possible marked by *rising to the occasion*.

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Future research can usefully explore further *systemicity* as a mode of connectedness that manifests differently in other Football clubs as well as, other collectives across sectors. In fact a comparative analysis can shed further light on the underlying conditions that make *systemicity* viable.

Equally critical is for management and organization studies scholar serious about engaging with systems thinking to provide more nuanced accounts of dynamics capturing the tensions and not only interactions between stakeholders. It remains critical to show the role of power inequalities in the dynamics influencing collective action.

Finally, organizations interested to lead systemically need to invest in redesigning organizational systems so that the emphasis is not on the assumed connections between stakeholders but a more nuanced understanding of the motivations and commitments that make SL possible and are marked by humane leadership.

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