Preface

Emotions at work – in the forms of, for example, mood swings, tantrums, belittling of others and the stark exercise of power – is one of the fastest-growing areas of research within the fields of leadership and organizational behaviour and with good reasons. With increasing stress levels and strained relationships at work, the field of emotions deserves our serious academic attention (Ashkanasy and Cooper 2008; Rehn and Lindahl 2011). However, answering the question of how emotions influence leadership is a complex undertaking that cuts across multiple disciplines. Tackling this question – and the related question of how leadership toxicity and dysfunctionality influence organizational life and work – demands a broadening of perspective well beyond our own discipline of leadership.

Contributing to the field of critical leadership studies, the chapters contained in this volume set out to explore the relationship between leadership and emotions within organizations discussing leadership toxicity and dysfunctionality. The chapters in this volume question the general assumption that rationality's antithesis per excellence is emotionality. We recognize emotionality as being ever-present and a critical dimension of organizational life just as rationality is – still – the hallmark of mainstream organizational discourse. Moreover, the volume takes the discussion of leadership emotions even further and discusses critically how toxicity and dysfunctionality are not simply negatively coercive or repressive connotations, but also potentially productive and enable connotations. Emotions can, as the chapters here demonstrate, both be seen as interference and as nurture of organizational life. As this volume sets out to explore, issues of rationality-emotionality are not dichotomies akin to good–bad for organizations just as well as toxicity and dysfunctionality are not exceptional 'bad apples', but rather institutionalized rules or manifestations of systemic functions.

This volume provides an entry point to work from a variety of perspectives and across a range of topics, sub-disciplines and themes. The volume is divided into three parts. Part I of this volume opens with an overview of traditional leadership thinking related to the topic of emotions by Jeanette Lemmergaard and Sara Louise Muhr. The opening

chapter demonstrates how the complex dynamics of leaders' – and followers' – emotions make it impossible to distinguish between functional and dysfunctional emotional behaviour and between non-toxic and toxic behaviour. This chapter demonstrates the need for more nuanced theory and research which recognizes that leadership is mediated and shaped by emotions and it challenges current theorists, researchers and practitioners to develop more complex awareness about leadership. By critically exploring the dichotomy of emotionality-rationality, this chapter seeks to make an innovative and nuanced contribution to our understanding of leadership.

Part II, which follows the critical overview of the leadership theory in Part I, consists of five empirically based chapters critically exploring the grey zones of emotions, toxicity and dysfunction in leadership. The events and characters depicted in part two are unique, however, not uncommon. Each of the case studies represents positive as well as negative encounters of leadership principles and behaviours. They exhibit what characterizes the leaders as people; their personalities and their strengths and foibles in a decisive, evaluative and forceful manner. While the depth of the cases is important, they will all exhibit strong theoretical ties to the critical literature on leadership, emotion, toxicity and dysfunction laid out in Chapter 1.

The volume completes with a collection of theoretical reflections in Part III, which takes the introductory chapter and the case-based chapters in Part II as a reference point. These critical reflections all explore different phenomena – ignorance, authenticity, functional stupidity and vanity – and knit together the topics of leadership and emotion and open into further agendas of thinking and investigation. In these chapters the contributing authors philosophize in a pervasive and self-rectifying way, which question and provoke many of the mainstream debates we currently witness in leadership studies.

It is our hope that the book in its entirety will point to the future of leadership with particular emphasis on how best to advance the arguments, methods and effectiveness of leadership recognizing the mere fact that leaders are normal human beings with both ideal and flawed behaviours, habits and emotions. Recognizing that leaders, whom we expect to 'be themselves' and express personality authentically in all their uniqueness and difference (Fleming 2009; Fleming and Sturdy 2009) will fascinate and attract some while intimidate and corral others (Muhr 2010; Muhr 2011). This volume presents a fascinating challenge to our common-sense perceptions and judgements of leaders; and by bringing the competing perspectives into direct confrontation, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the pros and cons of both.

Before stepping into the fields of leadership and emotions, we would like to give a tremendous thank you to all contributing authors for their enthusiastic support and dedication to providing new perspectives to the study of emotion and leadership. We feel privileged to have worked with such an outstanding group of co-authors, and we owe each a debt of gratitude. Without their efforts, dedication and insights to the field, this book would not have materialized. The quality of the book reflects their efforts and is to their credit. We are also grateful to all the staff at Edward Elgar Publishing, especially Francine O'Sullivan and Jennifer Wilcox, who have worked indefatigably to bring this book to completion. Their assistance and patience has been invaluable and much appreciated.

Jeanette Lemmergaard and **Sara Louise Muhr**
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